

Dare

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 19

TENNESSEE'S GAY AND LESBIAN NEWSWEEKLY

MAY 12-18, 1989

Memphis community center nears

by **STUART BIVIN**

Memphis lesbians and gay men moved one step closer to an independent community center Saturday when they elected a board of directors at a "town meeting" held at Agape New Life Church.

Vincent Astor, longtime community activist and a member of the center's new board, said that the group has approved a constitution and bylaws and is "looking at spaces now. Some might think that might be putting the cart before the horse, but we do have to have some idea how much money we will need to raise."

Astor said that the community center would have a large meeting space, rehearsal space for groups preparing nonprofit and benefit shows, and space for a reference/reading room as well as a kitchen and restrooms.

The new board will set policy for the center and direct fundraising efforts.

• continued on page 3



Knots Landing's Donna Mills (right), with National Gay Rights Advocates' 1989 Humanitarian Award winner, AIDS activist Barry Krost, at NGR's 11th Anniversary celebration in Los Angeles. The group also honored author Susan Sontag and Ohio Governor Richard Celeste for their support of lesbian, gay and AIDS issues. —PHOTO COURTESY NGR

National Task Force director in Tennessee, looks for change

by **HARRISON HICKS**
Contributing Writer

In addition to the continuing AIDS crisis, the issues of most concern to lesbians and gay men in the 90s will include lesbian and gay families, sodomy law reform, and the persecution of lesbians and gay men in the military, according to Jeff Levi, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF).

Levi, who is leaving the 15,000-member organization in August after six years of service (three as director), was in Nashville last weekend on a fundraising tour.

He spoke of the challenges facing the lesbian and gay community at a Sunday brunch sponsored by local NGLTF board members at the World's End restaurant.

Levi said it was his opinion that the viability of lesbian and gay family units would be a key issue as more and more lesbians and gays opt to form nontraditional family units, with children being raised in lesbian and gay households. Levi noted recent publicity dealing with lesbian and gay couples adopting children, winning custody battles, and in some cases, using artificial insemination to have children.

"The government should be affirming our lives," stated Levi, who asserted that lesbian and gay family units, couples, and individuals are entitled to the same rights and privileges accorded to heterosexuals.

NGLTF has already begun work on issues such as sodomy law reform and a project designed to halt the persecution of lesbians and gay s in the military, but predicted that both issues will become more prominent in the months ahead.

The Task Force, said Levi, has also worked to assist the formation of lesbian and gay organizations at the state and local level, which he said are critical to the success of the lesbian and gay political movement.

"If we want to be strong in Congress, we don't just need people back home who are writing letters to their Members of Congress, but we need people who are indeed politically organized," he said.

Levi acknowledged that there will sometimes be opposition to such organization, citing the recent emergence in Nashville of the Tennessee Coalition for Traditional Values (TCTV), a loose coalition of Christian fundamentalist congregations in the area which have pledged to fight pornography, abortion and what they termed a "pro-homosexual atmosphere."

Fear, said Levi, is what drives such groups, adding that the fact that TCTV was organizing is a compliment to the level of organization happening within the lesbian and gay community in Nashville.

• continued on page 3

Action expected soon on Tennessee sodomy law

by **JEFF ELLIS**
Managing Editor

With state lawmakers feverishly trying to tie up loose ends before the Tennessee Legislature adjourns its 1989 session, action is expected on proposed revisions of the state's sodomy law.

Earlier this month, members of the Senate Commerce Committee defeated a bill which would have re-established job discrimination protection for Tennesseans with AIDS. Legislators in 1987 had removed people with AIDS from the statute which protected them from discrimination by employers, and Gov. Ned Ray McWherter signed the bill into law. McWherter later said that he did not realize the bill would strip legal protection from people with AIDS.

Changes in the state sodomy law — or the crimes against nature law, as it is also known — were included in the massive report issued last fall by members of the Tennessee Sentencing Commission (TSC). TSC, charged with "eliminating archaic language" from the state's criminal code, had proposed the revision.

If adopted, TSC's proposal would change the current prohibition against "crimes against nature" to a specific ban on all homosexual acts. Since the crimes against nature statute has rarely been invoked against heterosexuals, TSC members said the legislature should make the law more specific if they are attempting to enforce the ban on homosexual acts.

Capitol Hill sources earlier had indicated to *Dare* that some legislators were willing to strike the sodomy statutes from the code. However, following a marathon session last

week to hammer out final compromises in order to gain McWherter's approval, the ban on homosexual acts remained intact.

The proposal being considered by legislators calls for the reduction of homosexual crimes against nature to a Class C misdemeanor, carrying a sentence of not more than 30 days and/or a fine of \$25.

Tennessee criminal code currently prescribes a sentence of not less than five years and not more than 15 years to be levied for committing a crime against nature.

If the revision becomes law, Tennessee will join five other states which specifically classify homosexual acts as criminal.

Homosexual acts are misdemeanors in Texas, Arkansas and Kansas. Montana and Nevada statutes classify such acts as felonies. More than half of the United States classify sodomy or crimes against nature as felonies.

"The way of thinking now seems to be that the new law, if adopted, classifying homosexual acts as misdemeanors is better than the old law which makes them felonies," said Penny Campbell, a member of Advance, the political action committee of the Tennessee Gay and Lesbian Alliance (T-GALA).

T-GALA, along with various other groups including the Tennessee Sheriff's Association (TSA) and Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), had lobbied state lawmakers to make changes the TSC's massive report. Most of the attention of the public and the media has focused on proposals designed to help alleviate current overcrowding in Tennessee correctional facilities.

• continued on page 3

I N S I D E

Happy Mother's Day

Jeff Ellis investigates sexual orientation "change therapy."
A Promise Broken, page 4.



Let me talk more about me.
Marlene.
Pages, page 7.

Nashville Ballet: *en pointe* and on target with *Cinderella*,
Curtains, page 8.



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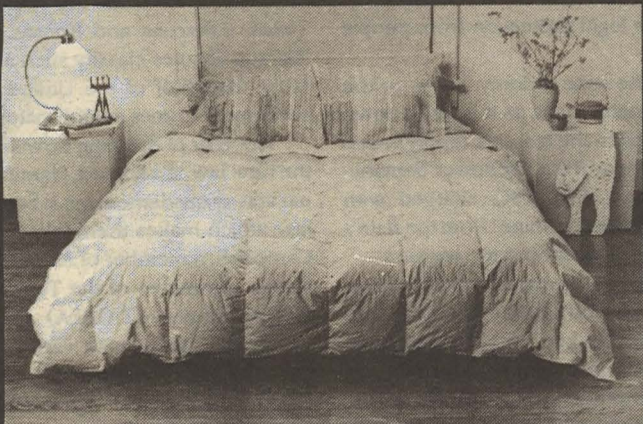
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D A T E S

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Gay Alternative Hour Radio show, WEVL-FM 90.6-7pm.
Phoenix (Gay Alcoholics Anonymous) Open meeting. Memphis Lambda Center. 8pm. Info 901-272-9459.

Tuesdays

Phoenix (Gay Alcoholics Anonymous) Open meeting. Memphis Lambda Center. 5:30 and 8pm. Info 901-272-9459.

Wednesdays

Phoenix (Gay Alcoholics Anonymous) Open meeting. Memphis Lambda Center. 8pm. Info 901-272-9459.

Thursdays

P-FLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) Support group. St. John's Episcopal Church, 322 S Greer. 1st Thursday only. Info 901-761-1444.
Phoenix (Gay Alcoholics Anonymous) Open meeting. Memphis Lambda Center. 5:30pm. Info 901-272-9459.
Into the Light (Women's Alcoholics Anonymous) Meeting. Memphis Lambda Center. 8pm. Info 901-276-7379.

Fridays

Phoenix (Gay Alcoholics Anonymous) Open meeting. Memphis Lambda Center. 5:30 and 10pm. Info 901-272-9459.

Saturdays

Twisted Sisters (ACOA) Open meeting. Memphis Lambda Center. Noon. Info 901-276-7379.
Phoenix (Gay Alcoholics Anonymous) Open meeting. Memphis Lambda Center. 8pm. Info 901-272-9459.

Sundays

Agape New Life Church Sunday School, 9:30am. Worship service, 11am. Info 901-276-1872.
Holy Trinity Community Church Worship service, 11am. 1216 Forrest Ave. Info 901-726-9443.
Into the Light (Women's Alcoholics Anonymous) Meeting. Memphis Lambda Center. Noon. Info 901-276-7379.
Phoenix (Gay Alcoholics Anonymous) Open meeting. Memphis Lambda Center. 8pm. Info 901-272-9459.

NASHVILLE

Mondays

Gay Overeaters Anonymous Open meeting for lesbian and gay overeaters. MCC. 5:30pm. Info 615-327-4614.
Nashville CARES HIV+ Education/Support Group. 6:30pm. ARC/AIDS Support Group, bimonthly. 6:30pm. Family Support Group, bimonthly. 6:30pm. Info 615-385-1510.
Lambda Group Closed Alcoholics Anonymous meeting for gay men and lesbians. Unitarian Church. 8pm.
MAGNET (Married and Gay Network) Support group for married gay men. 1st & 3rd Mondays only. MCC. 8pm. Info 615-320-0288.

Tuesdays

Nashville CARES ARC/AIDS Support Group. 4pm. Info 615-385-1510.
Al-Anon Closed meeting. MCC. 6:30pm.
P-FLAG Meeting of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, 4th Tuesday only. Unitarian Church. 7:30pm. Info 615-662-0332.
MTSU Lambda Association Meeting for lesbian and gay Middle Tennessee State University students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Murfreesboro. 7pm. Info 615-890-3787.
Sober Sisters (Lesbian Alcoholics Anonymous) Closed meeting. MCC. 8pm.
Gay Cable Network Viacom Channel 35 (Community Access Television). 9pm.

Wednesdays

Sex Addicts Anonymous Closed meeting for gay men and lesbians. MCC. 5:30pm.
Nashville CARES ARC/AIDS Support Group. 6:30pm. Info 615-385-1510.

Thursdays

Incest Survivors Anonymous Closed women's meeting. First Church Unity, Franklin Rd. 6:30pm.
Nashville CARES Visualization Group. 6:30pm. Info 615-385-1510.
Alternatives (Alcoholics Anonymous) Closed meeting for lesbians and gay men. MCC. 8pm.
Lesbian Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOA) Meeting. 8pm. Info 615-385-4776 or 615-352-5823.

Fridays

Sexaholics Anonymous Closed meeting. MCC. 5pm.
Gay Parents Support Group Meeting. MCC. 1st Friday only. 7pm. Info 615-831-2941 or 615-320-0288.
Alcoholics Anonymous Program Study Group Meeting. Belmont United Methodist. 7:30pm.

Saturdays

Nashville CARES HIV/ARC Support Group, bimonthly. 4pm. Info 615-385-1510.
Incest Survivors Anonymous Open meeting. First Church Unity, Franklin Rd. 5:30pm.
Metropolitan Community Church Community Dinner, all you can eat. 7:30pm. \$5. Info 615-320-0288.
Gay Cable Network Viacom Channel 35 (Community Access Television). 8pm.

Sundays

Metropolitan Community Church Worship services, 11am and 7pm. Info 615-320-0288.

Special Events

Saturday, May 13

Flea Market *Spring Cleanup*, to benefit Metropolitan Community Church/Nashville and AIDS/Southern Kentucky (ASK). MCC, 131 15th Ave North, Nashville. Info 615-320-0288.

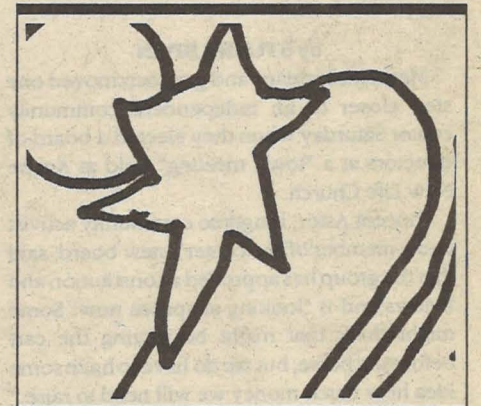
Women's Dance *May Dance*, Laurel Theatre, 1538 Laurel Ave, Knoxville. Set-ups, beer available. \$4 admission. 8pm. Info 615-688-3428.

Sunday, May 14

MOTHER'S DAY

Meeting Planning meeting for Nashville Pride Week '89. 1pm. Free. Info 615-297-4293.

Fundraiser For Nashville Numbers softball team. Shows 10:30pm and midnight. At The Chute, 2535 Franklin Rd, Nashville. Info 615-297-4571.



Monday, May 15

Meeting Planning meeting for those interested in the Southern Women's Music and Comedy Festival (begins Friday, May 26). Centennial Park Bandshell, off West End Ave at 25th Ave North, Nashville. 6pm. Free. Info 615-292-0113.

Consciousness Raising Black and White Men Together, Memphis. 7:30pm. Free. Info 901-726-1461.

GayRap *Gay Pride '89, the 20th Anniversary of Stonewall*, discussion. At Memphis Public Library, Peabody and McLean, Meeting Rm A, Memphis. Free. Info 901-324-GAYS.

Thursday, May 18

Potluck Dinner Vanderbilt Lambda Association. For Lesbian, gay and bisexual Vanderbilt University students, faculty, staff and alumni. Covered dish. Peabody President's House, 1801 Edgehill Ave, Nashville. 7pm. Free.

Saturday, May 20

Forum *Deflection*, Church and Community Forum featuring Krzysztof Krakowiak. 8:00pm, following Community Dinner (formerly Mortgage Meal). Free. Metropolitan Community Church/Nashville, 131 15th Ave North, Nashville. Info 615-320-0288.

Your nonprofit event can be listed free in **Dares**. Write to **Dare**, Box 40422, Nashville, TN 37204-0422, or phone 615 327-3273 and leave a message. Please include information about time, location, cost, sponsor, and a contact person's name with address and/or phone number for verification. Deadline noon Tuesday for publication next Friday.

...sodomy law revision

• continued from page 1

Advance had lobbied legislators throughout the session in an effort to have any mention of homosexual acts stricken from the state criminal code.

The final compromises to the bill were negotiated during a marathon session lasting until 3 a.m., orchestrated by Rep. Tommy Burnett (D-Jamestown). McWherter gave his seal of approval after the bill was okayed in its final form by the House Judiciary Committee.

Taking part in the final negotiating session were Davidson County General Sessions Judge Barbara Haynes, current TSC chair; District Attorney General Bill Pope, representing the state's attorneys general; Ike Hill, executive director of the TSA; Paroles Board

chair Charles Traugher; state Sen. Joe Haynes, the Senate sponsor; Reps. Karen Williams (R-Memphis) and Jimmy Kyle Davis (R-Knoxville), members of the House Judiciary Committee; Billy Stair, a McWherter aide; and Nashville attorney David Raybin, who chaired the TSC when the report was issued last fall.

The governor's blessing, however, did not prevent more grandstanding from members of the legislature who sought to include amendments to certain parts of the bill. Last Thursday, lawmakers were told to make any final changes to ensure quick consideration of the bill.

Lawmakers are scurrying to finish business for their 1989 session before the Memorial Day deadline for adjournment. •

...Levi visit

• continued from page 1

With the grassroots organization in Nashville and other cities across the country, Levi said he expects to see significant progress made on issues concerning lesbians and gays in the next five to ten years, but cautioned that for such benefits to occur that the lesbian and

gay rights movement needs more of a sense of direction.

"What's been missing is a sense of where we want to go," Levi said. "We can get increments of what we want, but if we don't have a sense of where we want to go, we won't necessarily choose the right increments." •

...Memphis community center

• continued from page 1

A major fundraiser for the center, under the coordination of center treasurer Matthew Presley, is planned for June.

Ken Horton, president of the Memphis Gay Coalition (MGC), was elected president of the community center board.

Astor noted efforts to include a wide representation of the community on the board, and said that the meeting had drawn "lots of brand new faces."

He also said that there was a strong feeling

that the board would make the center an "alcohol-and-controlled-substance-free space."

Many lesbian and gay community centers around the country have such policies. Administrators point to the lack of such spaces in the lesbian and gay community and the need to avoid competition, real or perceived, with nightclubs and bars. Intoxicant-free spaces also allow many centers to provide meeting space for under-21 groups.

The center's board will next meet Saturday, June 10. •

ARTS NOTES

from STAFF REPORTS

Nashvillians' new show at Vol State

NASHVILLIANS JUDY ERON and Greg Armbruster's new show *The Business of Marriage* premieres Thursday, May 18, and runs for eight performances at Volunteer State Community College in Gallatin.

Eron, well-known both as a performer and as a counselor for her support of lesbian and gay issues, said that the show offers something for everyone in its examination of romantic relationships and the strains that day-to-day living places on those relationships.

The musical play looks at "whether children, monthly payments and busy schedules must inevitably erode the romance in marriage."

Armbruster directs Jacque Scarbrough and Denny Morice in the lead roles.

Tickets are \$5. Evening performances are Thursday, Friday and Saturday, May 18-20 and May 25-27, with Sunday matinees May 21 and 28. For more information, phone (615) 452-4000. •

Soviet show at Memphis' Circuit

MEMPHIS' CIRCUIT PLAYHOUSE and Partnership, Inc., will present Theatre Mossoviet's production of *My Dear Helena Sergeevna* Wednesday and Thursday, May 31 and June 1.

The show, a Soviet production, is rare in this country because no one involved in the production is American. The performances are just as Moscow audiences would see them.

To help with language problems, a synopsis of the plot will be printed in the program, and a member of the group will answer questions at intermission, with a symposium featuring "People's Artist of the USSR," Theatre Mossoviet artistic director Eugene Lazarev and the company following the show.

The Ludmila Rasumovskaya play, which is critical of the Soviet educational system, stirred controversy when it was first released in 1980, and was banned for two years.

The show runs two performances only. Tickets are \$8 for adults and \$6 for subscribers, seniors, students and children. For more information phone (901) 726-4656. •

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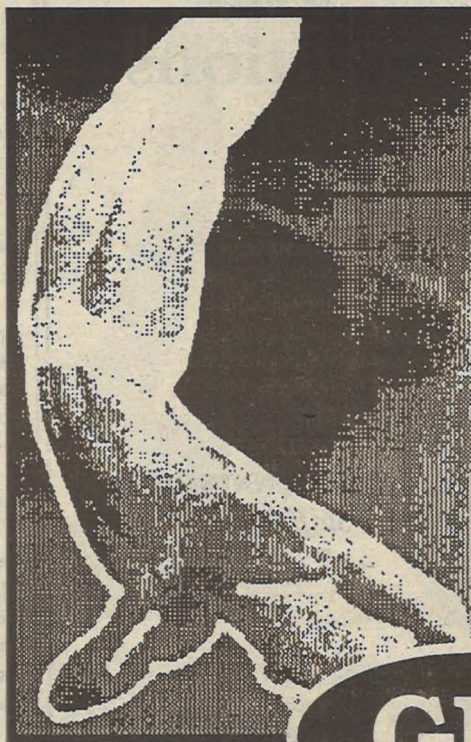
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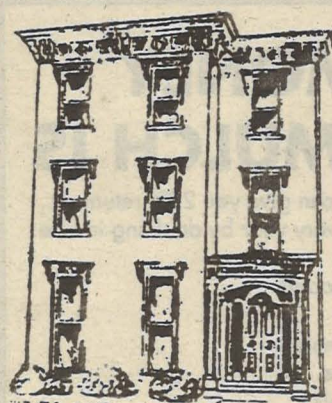
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Issues and answers. And questions.

CAROLE CUNNINGHAM
Staff Writer

Dare

Tennessee's Lesbian and Gay Newsweekly

by **JEFF ELLIS**
Managing Editor

"YES SIR, MY NAME IS RICHARD and I have a problem. I have a girlfriend but I have a sexual attraction to men. I've struggled with this by myself for several years, but now I think I need help and a friend said maybe you could help me..."

With those words, spoken into a telephone last January, I became a candidate for change therapy — therapy which ultimately could change my sexual orientation, according to the voice on the other end of the telephone line. If I followed the guidelines, changed my thought patterns and prayed for God's help, I, too, could someday become an ex-gay.

In return, I promised to work to bring about those changes in my life — through individual counseling, selected readings and group therapy.

But now, it is a promise that must be broken.

PROMISE IS THE NAME of the sexual orientation change program administered by the Nashville-based Christian Counseling Services (CCS). Located in an unprepossessing bungalow on Woodland Street in east Nashville, CCS is, according to its brochures, "a two-fold private non-profit ministry offering counseling and social services... supported primarily by the Christian community of Middle Tennessee."

The Promise program is affiliated with Exodus International, a coalition of evangelical ministries across North America, "dedicated to lifting up the ultimate hope of Jesus Christ to those struggling with homosexuality."

"We define homosexuality as romantic and/or sexual involvement with a member of your own sex," a Promise brochure reads. "We do not believe the attraction to the same sex or homosexual orientation is sin. How that orientation is acted upon makes the difference."

CCS serves as the mid-south's primary Christian counseling and social services center dealing with "the sensitive topic of homosexuality," according to the brochure, and reportedly attracts people who travel hundreds of miles for counseling.

During my initial telephone conversation with CCS' executive director, Mike Malloy, we discussed the group's existence — a fact vehemently denied by CCS several months earlier during a conversation with another reporter.

"We don't have a group that's meeting at the present time, but we hope to have one going soon," Malloy told me in January.

In order to become a member of the larger group, I would be required to come for individual counseling for at least six weeks, Malloy said. Later, when the group was actually formed, at least four weeks of individual counseling was required for membership.

The Promise program itself would last for 24 weeks.

"The meetings have a group leader who acts as more of a facilitator than anything else," Malloy said. "Although sometimes other people will, for lack of a better term, come in to teach. The program is somewhat didactic in its approach with some teaching needed because of the time limits."

With those things in mind, we made an appointment to further discuss "Richard's problem." During that time, it would be determined if Richard was right for Promise — and if Promise was right for Richard.

U N D E R



A Promise

Jeff Ellis' report on
six-month investigation of full
sexual orientation change

The story I told, as Richard, was one of a young man, currently involved with a woman, who in the past had experienced sexual relations with other men. Now, hoping to marry the young woman, he sought help to eliminate his homosexual tendencies.

THE ANSWER I, as a reporter sought, was the lengths to which counselors would go to bring about change. CCS literature states that counseling is offered to individuals, and their families, who "do not wish to act on the same sex attractions they feel."

"Promise makes a distinct difference between accepting a person with homosexual feelings and desires — that is affirming the person as an individual in God's image — and accepting their homosexual behavior," reads an informational brochure.

Promise acknowledges the variety of theologies, philosophies and theories ranging "from total acceptance of the homosexual lifestyle to the 'zap theory' of healing."

"All of these," the brochure states, "will no doubt confuse the individual struggler."

For both Promise and Exodus International, their reason for being is to "help the individual consider all the information and solutions."

But do they think change is the answer for everyone with "homosexual tendencies?" Or do they think it possible for someone, anyone, to live a happy life as an openly homosexual person?

The answers, unfortunately, were not as easy as the questions.

"The scripture does speak against homosexual behavior. Some would say it speaks against only certain homosexual behavior. We think not," reads the Promise brochure. "In the midst of personal relationship with God — diligent prayer and study — scriptural and otherwise, we stand on the promise that as individual believers truth will be revealed to us."

"This revelation is personal and it continues



se Broken

report on his
of fundamentalist Christian
on change therapy

throughout our Christian walk. The freedom we have may not be from the homosexual orientation but from the control of it — from the bondage that so many experience. For some their freedom is more complete."

During the initial counseling session, Malloy listened intently to Richard's story, questioning some statements and gently prodding his client to open up.

It was obvious, even from the very beginning, that Malloy was well-versed in change therapy.

It was even more obvious why so many people had sought Malloy's counsel. He was reassuring and caring, extremely easy to talk to and seemingly open-minded about homosexuality.

To his way of thinking, homosexuality was not necessarily orientation, but rather preference — a preference which could be sublimated, possibly even eliminated, through changing one's thought processes.

"In this society in which sex is so prevalent, we are often sent conflicting messages about men as sexual beings," he said. "It's okay to see a handsome man and think, 'He's a nice-looking guy.' What's not okay is when you allow yourself to have sexual thoughts about him. But sometimes that can be difficult for someone who thinks he is homosexual."

Supposedly that was Richard's problem: too often he allowed his mind to go beyond the thought of "he's a nice looking guy," to "I want to have sex with him."

THE KEY WAS CONDITIONING the mind not to wander off into dangerous territory. Proper conditioning would allow Richard the opportunity to enjoy heterosexual relations without fear of a homosexual liaison.

By the end of that first meeting, Malloy termed Richard (and me) an ideal candidate for change therapy.

After the initial session, there followed sev-

eral weeks of individual counseling. Changing thought patterns remained the primary topic, along with discussions of religious faith and the importance of finding a "church home" to facilitate Richard's recovery.

The individual counseling, Malloy said, was necessary to "make sure everyone is appropriate to the group."

Some people, he explained, wouldn't feel comfortable expressing themselves in the midst of a group, while others might be interested in something else entirely: "You can let your mind go on from there."

Apparently, past groups were disrupted by sexual activity among the participants. That issue — sexual activity between clients — was addressed in the Promise group's administrative policies given to participants on April 24.

"SEXUAL ACTIVITY," the policy stated, "that being sexual play, erotic overtures, phone sex or actual genital contact is out of order between clients."

If sexual activity did occur, the two parties involved would be excluded from the group meetings for five sessions. Their return would have to be approved by the other members of the group.

"It is strongly recommended that no two members stay overnight with one another," the policy continues. "Be aware of your own vulnerability. If there is such a situation, three or more members should be involved. Separate beds are the rules in such contexts."

To further Richard's therapy, and to help him repel the temptation to indulge in sexual relations with another man, a book entitled *You Don't Have to Be Gay* was recommended. Written by ex-gay J.A. Konrad, the book's format follows the correspondence of two friends: one ex-gay and another struggling with his homosexuality.

"*You Don't Have to Be Gay* is their step-to-step road map to a happy, healthy, fulfilling, heterosexual future — a road map drawn by someone who has been there and came back," reads a blurb on the book's cover.

The book's tone, although designed to be conversational and engrossing, instead seemed didactic and dogmatic to the activist in me, as it sought to pin blame for an individual's homosexuality on parents, environment or peers. "Homosexuality isn't an innate sexual problem but one of gender identity... in order to change... you first ascertain the 'roots' of your homosexuality... Homosexuality is but a symptom... of a disturbed personality which hasn't yet reached its maturity due to unresolved emotional turmoil and needs left unmet in the course of growing up," Konrad writes.

Perhaps surprisingly, in Konrad's scenario blame for a son's homosexuality does not fall upon the mother, but rather says "the greatest single common denominator among gays was a poor relationship with their male parent."

Thus, Konrad continued, "the homosexual condition is itself a deficit in the child's ability to relate to the parent of the same sex which is carried over to members of the same sex in general."

And, perhaps, the promise of change could help a young man to learn how to better relate to other men — a theory which would be put to the test when Richard met the other men of Promise for the first time.

Note: This is the first in a series on sexual orientation change therapy.

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Whose traditions?

by **CAROLE CUNNINGHAM**
Staff Writer

We stumble and are impatient at the least dividing of one visible congregation from another, though it be not in fundamentals; and through our forwardness to suppress, and our backwardness to recover any enthralled piece of truth out of the gripe of custom, we care not to keep truth separated from truth, which is the fiercest rent and disunion of all.

—John Milton, *Areopagitica*

Between ourselves, these are two things that I have always observed to be in singular accord: supercelestial thoughts and subterranean conduct.

—Montaigne, *Of Experience*

FROM VETERANS PICKETING an art exhibit in Chicago featuring an American flag displayed on the ground, to the Ayatollah Khomeini's death threats against Salman Rushdie for allegedly blaspheming Islam, political and religious orthodoxy have enjoyed a resurgence of unparalleled popularity in the last year. Now a group of Tennesseans hopes to ride on the coattails of this resurrected religious fervor into our bedrooms, bodies, and books under the under a red-white-and-blue banner of intolerance and hate.

These (by their own accounts) right-minded Tennesseans, like their Islamic counterparts in Iran, have formed a group whose principal aim is to return their country to the "traditional values" upon which they claim it was founded. The Tennessee Coalition for Traditional Values (TCTV) has targeted three areas it hopes to reclaim from the pale and godless grip of "secular humanists."

TCTV plans to lay siege to pornographers, supporters of abortion, and those who are willing to accept homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle. Because battling pornography causes little sensation even among secular humanists, the TCTV doubtless hopes to buy the legitimacy it needs for the "real" battles ahead involving "family values" by jumping on the anti-pornography bandwagon.

The comparison of TCTV's strategies to those of the Ayatollah is not a frivolous one. Khomeini, too, believed his country had fallen into the grips of godless humanists with little respect for orthodox religion. Building upon the dissatisfaction of many Iranians with the regime of the Shah — dissatisfaction having more to do with economic and political savagery than with religious disillusionment — the Ayatollah built "a mighty engine for his Lord" similar to the one TCTV hopes to build — an engine that ruthlessly and tirelessly steamrolls over the civil and religious rights of anyone whose "alternative" values are not in accord with the "traditional."

It's easy to believe that orthodoxy of this sort has become the sole domain of "fanatics" in other parts of the world, but not in our own backyard. But the TCTV not only mimics the steely, narrow-minded rhetoric of the Ayatollah, but does so in the name of America's roots and traditions. But whose roots and which traditions?

The roots of Christian pilgrims, answer spokespeople for TCTV, pilgrims who came to these shores not to pursue freedom, they

explain, but to convert Indians to Christianity.

While lipservice is paid to Tennessee Jews by way of including "synagogues" in their list of organizations who will receive updates on TCTV's lobbying efforts, the group is clearly

The Tennessee Coalition for Traditional Values not only mimics the steely, narrow-minded rhetoric of the Ayatollah, but does so in the name of America's roots and traditions. But whose roots and which traditions?

anti-Semitic in its aims, purposes, and ideology.

WE SHOULD BE NOT ONLY curious about any group claiming to have a monopoly on truth about our country, our customs, our character, our beliefs: we should be shaken to

our very bones with fear. A mentality that promotes "traditional values" today based on the beliefs of a white Christian minority may tomorrow be extending their ideological claims to purity based on the color of their eyes and the blondness of their hair.

"SECULAR HUMANIST" TENETS have always ensured the many Christianities a place for expression and practice. The founders of our country and the framers of our Constitution, some Christian and some not, understood well that allowing and protecting the legitimacy of many truths meant one truth could never take precedent over another or limit the opportunities for religious expression.

From the Inquisition to the Ayatollah, the attempts of one religious group to enforce its doctrinal truths upon others has resulted in unspeakable offenses against humanity. The sad legacy of those Christians, however well-intentioned, who hoped to build a heaven on this earth in Salem, Massachusetts, should instruct those Americans today who take to building castles in the air.

We and those in TCTV would do well to take on the humbler tasks of living: the patient work of making on this earth an earth, not a heaven, and of making ourselves human beings, not angels.

The founder of Christianity certainly asked for no more and expected no less. •

ONE IN TEEN

Being out, being comfortable

by **JASON ANDERSON**
Contributing Writer

THIS WEEK, I THOUGHT I would discuss something that has confused me some lately. In the past year, I have met various lesbian and gay teenagers. Only one of these teenagers goes to Nashville's Hillsboro High, where I go to school. One gay teen I met goes to Overton High and knows several other gay teens at his school.

Other friends have told me about lesbian and gay teens they know at their schools. But, for some reason, I have met only one lesbian at my school. I know that there are many more lesbian and gay teens at Hillsboro and any other high school. The only explanation I can come up with is the fact that I am so open with my sexuality and publicly speak out for lesbian and gay rights.

It's not that I think this directly turns people off, but it's the only thing that really separates me from the teens I have met. I am not saying that this makes me better or worse, just more vocal.

I can understand why some gay teens would avoid contact with me. If a guy who they might suspect of being gay talks to me very often, fellow students usually assume that this means he is gay. This cycle has taken place with one gay guy who used to go to Hillsboro. True, he is gay, but before contact with me, people did not think he was. Rumors began going around

that we were boyfriends. Similar rumors have gone around about me and a male friend of mine. He is not gay, but people have begun to talk about us. Fortunately, my friend is understanding enough to not be bothered by this gossip. We just find it amusing in a way.

I think this keep a closeted lesbian or gay teen from associating with me. This has surprised other lesbians and gays with whom I have discussed this problem. They were surprised; they felt that my openness would lead others to come to me. They thought I would be the focal point of the lesbian and gay teens at Hillsboro.

MAYBE SOME OF THE OTHER lesbian and gay teens are either not sure if what they have heard about me is true or not comfortable approaching me about it. I know I am not comfortable going to teens I suspect are gay.

I think this same theory might apply to some extent to my efforts to establish a lesbian and gay teen group I think that it might explain why I have had so little response for my group. While I am on the subject of the group I will plug it. If you are a lesbian or gay teenager and want to meet others like you and me, write me at Box 158002, Nashville, TN 37205-8002. I guess that is all for now. I hope to have something new to share about my choice of colleges next time. •

Marlene: a drag queen's drag queen

Marlene. by Marlene Dietrich. Translated by Salvator Attanasio. NY: Grove Press, 1989. \$19.95.

reviewed by **JOE MAROHL**

Staff Writer

I HAVE BEEN A FAN of Marlene Dietrich movies for a few years now. I don't know exactly what it is about her I like. Of course, her movies with director Josef von Sternberg in the 1930s are visual feasts, but Dietrich herself admits modestly that she played only a marginal role in the artistic success of these. I don't think she's as beautiful as Norma Shearer, Greta Garbo or Gary Cooper. She can't sing (I'm sorry, but it's true). She can act, but her individual performances are less memorable than those of some of her contemporaries. She isn't even politically correct — always idealizing feminine duty, obedience and sacrifice, on screen and off.

She is, however, the only woman ever allowed to attend the Annual Transvestites' Ball in pre-World War II Berlin. That's something.

But I think I like Marlene Dietrich because she is so very German. Her memorable traits are self-contradiction and naïve egotism; to me these characteristics are peculiarly "German." She reminds me a little of my Wisconsin and Minnesota German female relatives, especially my late grandmother Ida. She reminds me obliquely of my father, also.

Marlene, her autobiography published in 1987 in German and now in English translation, begins with a remembrance of her girlhood infatuation with Marguerite Breguand, her French teacher at school, whose company she lost when Germany declared war on France in 1914, but whose image inspired young Marlene throughout the war years. Next, she remembers her mother in touchingly sentimental abstractions ("Perhaps she didn't love, perhaps she was just trustworthy.

It didn't matter. She was there — strong, courageous, full of compassion.") And then her grandmother, a woman of a certain creative energy and vivacity with which, no doubt, Dietrich identifies herself.

THE BOOK IS, in short, a catalog of Dietrich's career as a hero-worshiper. Most of her idols were men whom she regards as mentors, protectors and misjudged geniuses (à la Ayn Rand): most notably von Sternberg, Orson Welles, Ernest Hemingway and, you probably guessed, Burt Bacharach. Nearly every male figure in the book is admired for his being strong, generous and, in one way or another, tragically wronged by selfish moguls and an uncomprehending public.

The eulogistic tone of the book is reminiscent of the positivism of old Hollywood films. And her writing style reminds one especially of 1940s women's pictures. She casts herself variably as a "little girl lost" (in search of her male "Rock of Gibraltar") or as a "lioness" (fiercely protective of her wounded heroes).

In all this, Dietrich's weakness is delineating character. Particularly weak is the distinction between her many heroic benefactors. Von Sternberg, when he is directly quoted, talks ex-

actly like Nat King Cole, who, in turn, talks like General Omar Bradley. In fact, all of her characters, male characters especially, sound amazingly like Dietrich herself, who has so thoroughly mythologized her life as to make herself and her world virtually indistinguishable. That, too, in a society that is almost entirely other-directed, becomes something to like about her.

Ever opinionated, Dietrich criticizes her foes with Teutonic gusto. The result is usually fun, as when she talks about her *Blue Angel* costar's predilection for women with broad asses ("Despite my baby fat, I've never had a prepossessing posterior...Nevertheless, my rear seemed pretty round to me. But probably not enough so for Emil Jannings"). Her acid comments about Jimmy Stewart, John Wayne, Bruce Cabot and Fritz Lang are likewise amusing, and significant. As with her heroes, the persons on Dietrich's shit list have common characteristics. Incompetent, arrogant and undeserving of their success and fortune, they are the opposite of "genius."

BE IT NEVER forgotten, though, this book is preeminently about Marlene Dietrich herself — or, perhaps I should say, "Marlene Dietrich." Following an overly long digression about another performer (it is a short paragraph), Dietrich remarks simply and impatiently, "Now to get back to me." She is always getting back to herself in this book, even when she hasn't ever really strayed from the subject. She portrays herself as a simple, sometimes clownish, and sublimely decent human being.

Thank god, her modesty is more apparent than real. She remembers every word of praise anyone ever gave her and habitually (and exhaustively) quotes the nice things other people have said about her.

She states her opinions about diverse subjects (American women can't cook, all Air Force doctors are handsome and smoking doesn't cause cancer, just three that come to mind) as if they could be proved scientifically, and she is ever quick to remind the reader that this autobiography was written by no upstart dummy.

Her world embraces Immanuel Kant and Danny Thomas — both heroes accorded the same status in her book. And in her world, she is no mere celluloid goddess, but rather an existential hero, with feet planted in the soil and head raised daringly amid the stars. It is she, not Hitler, that Wagner was all about, after all. A little ridiculous, yes! (Germans are born with Original Kitsch), but in her book Dietrich portrays herself as the Ideal German — stubborn and passive by turns, intellectual and superstitious by turns, dispassionate and sentimental by turns, patriarchal and subversive by turns and, even while denying it, dizzily and archly theatrical.

A drag queen's drag queen, thank you. •

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CURTAINS

Nashville Ballet's Cinderella

reviewed by **JEFF ELLIS**
Managing Editor

MANY, MANY YEARS AGO when the tale of Cinderella and her Prince Charming was first told, the original storyteller probably concocted the legend as an entertainment or distraction for children.

Only last week when Nashville Ballet presented Edward Myers' *Cinderella*, performed to the score by Sergei Prokofiev, for three performances, they proved the heroine's timeless appeal for children of all ages.

Nashville Ballet's *Cinderella* could well become a classic in the young company's repertoire. Premiering in 1988 and performing to sold-out audiences, the new production proved a popular and enduring choice.

This year's production, starring Karen Portner as Cinderella, was superb entertainment, evidence that Nashville Ballet is an artistic force to be reckoned with. Under artistic director Dane LaFontsee's guidance, the young company has attracted new balletomanes by the score to Tennessee Performing Arts Center's (TPAC) James K. Polk Theatre.

And who can guess the number of new ballet fans brought to the theater by the promise of seeing a childhood classic performed? For those whose first taste of ballet was Cinderella, it's likely they will return for more.

Cinderella was a colorful, fanciful pageant of romantic music, splendid costuming and exceptional dancing. Portner and her Prince Charming, danced by Barry Gager, were perfectly cast as the storybook lovers — ideally paired, the two make an attractive couple; he is tall and dashing, she vibrant and stunning.

Portner was at her best during Cinderella's introduction to the Prince at the ball. Her toe work in that sequence was especially good. Gager's performance was both athletic and reserved — ideal for his character.

Their second act *pas de deux* was graceful and romantic, due in large measure to Prokofiev's lush score, but due mainly to Myers' skillful choreography.

As Cinderella's stepsisters, Elga and Masha, Melissa Krantz and Maria Gillespie were delightful. Mugging and clowning for all their worth, the two almost stole the show with their flat-footed dancing.

Luis Cataldi, the Argentine-born, Ohio-bred Nashville Ballet veteran, was effective as the Prince's court jester, although his performance seemed lacking in energy. Still, he proved himself more than able with his strong and theatrical performance.

Also distinguishing themselves were Alyce Andrews, Lindsay King, Jennifer Niemeyer and Cassandra Molchan as the Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter fairies respectively.

AS WAS EXPECTED, the costumes created by Nashville Ballet wardrobe mistress Mimi Shimmin were exquisite. Colorful and imaginative, the costumes could have made even the most mediocre dancer look good.

Luckily, that was not the case, the entire cast — from Portner and Gager to the scores of Nashville youngsters pressed into service as the fairies' attendants — performed admirably. And, once again, Nashville Ballet reaffirmed its place in the city's arts community.

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QUOTES

Me neither, Mom, me neither

"Snaring the men who cruised Edgefield might be one way of eliminating any suggestion that Tony was, as his mother puts it, a 'faggot, which he is not, and I want to make that perfectly clear.'"

— **Bill Andriette**, writing in *Guide to the Gay Northeast*, a New England monthly, on Tony St. Clair, the Nashville teenager who served as bait in a teen-prostitution sting.

"There's still great prejudice. A lot of male actors are afraid that if they support AIDS fundraising, they'll be known as gay and then they won't get work. The horrible thing is that it's a legitimate fear."

"[Except Richard Gere.] He's fearless."
— **Susan Sarandon**, on the dearth of male celebrities involved in fundraising for AIDS research and service.

"After being held hostage for over four months...I felt I could no longer tolerate the abuse and threats."

— **Olympic gold medalist diver Greg Louganis**, in a statement to the court on his suit against his former "live-in" manager Jim Babbitt. Louganis said that Babbitt tried to extort half of Louganis'

assets and half of his future earnings with the threat of revealing "intimate details" about Louganis' personal life to the media.

"He couldn't blackmail you, Greg, if you weren't closeted."

— **"Dirty Dishes"** columnist Dawn Ivory, writing in *Guide to the Gay Northeast* on Louganis' lawsuit.

"We threw that out there to confuse people...an inside joke for people in New York."

— **Singer Madonna**, telling *Rolling Stone* why she said on NBC's *Late Night* with David Letterman that she and comedian Sandra Bernhard frequented Manhattan's only lesbian bar, the Cubbyhole.

"Next it will be necrophiliacs, and you know what they are. And why not? They like to fool around with dead bodies. It's a danger to our society and our children in this state. Why don't we so-called straight people have our rights to say and do what we feel?"

— **Eugene A. Migliaro**, Republican member of the Connecticut House of Representatives, on the recent close defeat of a state gay rights bill.