
gay writes: the essays
1992-1996

july 1, 1992

I have only seen my father cry twice in my life. The first was when his mother died. The second was when I told him I am gay.

I first came out to other gays by attending the men's support groups sponsored by the Fort Collins Gay and Lesbian Alliance. This was my first exposure to other gay men and occasionally the group discussed coming out. I listened intently to the men's stories and experiences; however, I always became uneasy when they told of coming out to their parents. At the time, I swore I would never come out to mine. Hearing the other men's experiences did not necessarily scare me--most of their stories were positive. What bothered me was the fact that I had not yet come out to my parents and therefore, could not share with the group. I was also jealous of these men because they had already come out to their parents. For them, the deed was done.

Coming out is like tearing down a wall. Two years after I came out to the men at the support groups, I was ready to raze the biggest barrier of them all: telling a member of my family. My brother was readying to move in with me to go to college and I knew we could not live together again without him knowing the

truth. On May 23, 1987, I told him of my sexual orientation. One year later, on June 23, 1988, I told my parents. The events are so etched in my mind I have not and will not ever forget those exact dates. I had come a long way from “I’m never going to tell them.”

Before telling my parents, I had to make a decision: to tell them separately or together. I chose together. I did not want one of my parents to tell me to never tell the other--that would have been too much pressure for me. I had to reveal the news to both at the same time. Why reveal my homosexuality at all? What made me change my mind? Two reasons became very clear to me.

First, I did not want my parents to die without knowing. I never wanted to ask myself “what if I had only told them?” I never wanted it to be too late. Having a parent dying without knowing the truth would have kept a wall in place forever. For me, it came to the point that not telling them was worse than telling them. I decided I could handle whatever reaction they had. I was financially independent and if it blew up in my face, well, at least I had done it.

Second, I did not want them to hear the news from someone else. It is a small world and revelations happen. Additionally, I decided it wasn’t right that some of my friends at work knew and my parents at home did not. I really don’t believe that any of my friends would let it “slip” to my parents. Most of my friends do not have the opportunity to even meet my parents, let alone talk to them. Consider this possibility: I am injured at a gay bar. My parents are contacted by a doctor, or by police and told the news. Or, supposing I avoid that horror, a newspaper identifies me as a member of the gay community after being photographed at a gay function. “Outing,” as a formal practice, was not a phenomenon in 1988 when I came out to my parents. It is a reality now.

With two solid reasons and a lot of guts, I got in my car and drove home.

But how do you tell them? I think we have all examined the option of leaving evidence lying around so that our parents would find out by “accident.” This is a cruel way to come out in my opinion. It is human nature to believe what you want to believe. People will choose to believe you are not gay, no matter what evidence is encountered. People will not believe it until they hear it come from your lips--and even then they may not accept it. At least it is fair.

It is ironic, then, how my brother and father really found out. My brother did find evidence that I was gay: some magazines.

My brother acted contrary to my theory. He believed what he saw! He told my dad and together they chose to deal with it together and alone. I never planned it to happen that way. I wish that it hadn't. The pain these men felt was evident. The pain was so deep in fact, that my brother recommended to me that I not tell mom and dad knowing that my father already knew. I took his advice for a while. He only revealed to me how he and dad found out after I had come out to my parents.

I had two pressing reasons for telling my parents, but everyone comes out at their own speed. If you are not ready, then don't do it. If you are ready, then be sure you are doing it for your own reasons--not someone else's. The choice is yours: only you can take the risk, and only you can face the consequences. I hope that my story has helped you. I hope it is an example of a positive experience. My life has continued as normal. My brother still lives with me, and I still visit my parents for dinner every weekend. Nothing has changed, because I haven't changed. I am the person I have always been. Lucky for me my family recognizes this. Perhaps the key to it all is: know yourself. Be happy with yourself. The rest comes easier.

august 16, 1992

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me"

The phrase is a common theme among gays. We are often the butt of cruel, unkind words. But this road runs both ways, and "*an eye for an eye*" is an ugly method of combating verbal abuse from non-gays.

A glut of words exist to describe non-gays which, at best, are offensive. Hets, homophobes, breeders, the list goes on... While none are as abhorrent as, say, "nigger" or "spic," they are yet derogatory. Coming from the mouths of people (us) who supposedly disfavor name-calling, it is appalling.

There is an inherent immaturity in this and it goes beyond "you call me a name, I'll call you a name." It's how we act, too. We are rude in public. I cannot see why any gay person would feel satisfied by making a scene at a restaurant, at a theater, at a mall. If you embarrass someone, they are going to remember it--and if they have a negative view of gays to begin with then you have surely nailed the coffin. Some straights think that the hateful actions they take on gays is cool. It's not cool and gays who imitate this childish behavior toward straights can only cause problems--especially in an election year.

Upon examination, then, gays behave like the majority. We classify people. Life is rather short to be preoccupied with who is gay and straight, but we are!. We bitch because straights discriminate against us because of our sexuality--sexuality that we know is only a fragment of our entire, composite character. Then we turn around and assort all straights into one herd because of their sexuality.

Such "reverse" discrimination on our part fosters an "us against them" attitude. We are living in a time when many non-gays understand and accept gays for who we are. We are not going to educate those who don't by assailing them verbally and generally making fools of ourselves. As a minority, we need our own identity. Setting ourselves apart in negative ways does not put forth a positive image.

A positive image is critical in Colorado and Oregon where gays are gearing up to defeat ballot initiatives on November 3 which, if passed, will set all of us back. Even those living outside of these two states. Hopefully, educating the voters will result in the defeat of both amendments. But, unfortunately, we cannot count on this alone. Our behavior, past and present, will play a key role in voter's minds. As alluded to before, many gays live exclusively in the gay subculture. These gays thumb their noses at the "straight world" when nothing is at stake, and then expect favors from the same "straight world" when it comes to critical voting matters. Think about it. If I pissed in your soup, you wouldn't vote for my cause. And straights may not vote for ours.

There are many gay issues and personal issues we have a right to defend: to straights and even to other gays. We forget that others have feelings. We forget to fight fair. Playing fair is important in a world that basically isn't. Gays (YOU!) can set a standard; an example which others can proudly follow into future generations. By doing so, in an adult manner, you can change negative opinions and prevent the ignorance which spawns anti-gay amendments.

I cannot overemphasize this basic belief: gays and non-gays cannot come together in peace if we are speaking war.

december 24, 1992

I think my grandfather must have been a remarkable man, because he raised my father who, I know, is a remarkable man.

man will face in life. The father loses so much in the transaction. When the truth sinks in, the father; the provider; the man of the house has much to grieve. My dad is no different. His visions, hopes, dreams all changed once he learned of my orientation. But, this is not a sad story. This essay is a celebration of all that is good in the world of fathers and sons.

Dad grew up in a tiny farm community in Iowa. He shipped off to sea in the Navy to fight in World War II, becoming disabled when he lost two of his fingers in a gun accident. After the war, he married the woman he loved. Together, they worked hard at low pay so that Dad could get a college education and a good job. Only when Dad knew he could afford to raise a child, he and Mom conceived a boy. A boy, born in the spring of 1963: me. I was not their first attempt at having a child. My mother miscarried my potential older siblings. So, I became the oldest. The one for whom there is always great expectations. I am lucky. For I may not have lived up to all of my parents', and particularly my father's, hopes and dreams; but I am a product of love. Though I will not carry forward my family's name, I hold the best possible values a man could ever have thanks to my Dad.

It is truly funny how I used to swear up and down that I would never, ever be like my father. But I am. I have his passion for excellence, his strength of character, his belief in self, and his quest to always reach higher. There are probably an infinite number of other similarities, but reciting them here would probably only scare me.

There is one value; however, I would like to especially appreciate. When I came out to myself I was not devastated by the fact. It was like opening a window I had already been looking out of. Things just became clearer. I immediately accepted myself for who I was and this always puzzled me until I related it back to my father. You see, Dad knows who he is. He is a family man through and through. Everything he does, he does for his family. This value was probably given to him by Grandpa who, in turn, probably got it from my Great Grandfather. I have chosen not to be a family man in the sense of raising children. The value was not translated to me that precisely. But I have the undying conviction that who I am is right for me and that I have a place in this world.

If my grandfather was alive today, I feel confident that I could tell him I am gay. I'm sure my father worries about me being a part of the populace that is, on many levels, not accepted. But, this is not some clique that one joins and it is not a decision someone wakes up and makes. And Dad knows it and so would Grandpa. I live my own life.

Thank you, Dad, and Happy Fathers Day.

I love you.

february 28, 1993

"Two thumbs down!"

This is Oscar Awards time of the year. One movie title reminds me of a theme for many in the gay community. The Unforgiven. Actually, for the purposes of this essay, I will review the non-movie called The Unforgiving. Us. We of the gay and lesbian community are unforgiving in many ways.

For starters, how many lesbians have said "I hate men." I have heard this many times since I came out eight years ago. Granted, many lesbians are referring to straight white males. Nevertheless, when you say "I hate men" that is usually what people hear--AND BELIEVE. Second, how many gay men have said "This must be dyke night at the bar--let's go somewhere else." I have heard this too many times as well. Finally, I am most appalled at gays and lesbians together excluding straights from gatherings, parties, dances, bars, etc. just because of their non-homosexuality. The world isn't getting any bigger and the time has come to discontinue the unforgiving nature of our gay and lesbian culture.

Gay men and lesbians are at war in many circles in this community and, I assume, nationally. It is demonstrated in many ways: Separate bars for lesbians and gay men, cliquish groups in mixed bars, etc. Let's take a look at a specific example close at hand: United Voice. This newsletter caters more to gay men than lesbians--but not by design. Lesbians avoid this publication. Rarely do I see an article submitted by a lesbian. Perhaps this is because women view this as a gay man's forum. And, instead of participating and making it an avenue of equal dissemination of information, lesbians choose to shun it all together--or to publish their own newsletters in competition.

What causes this division between the men and the women? Could it be that the lesbians feel that they bear the burden of the gay rights movement--that gay men are too wimpy to contribute and be useful? Do the men feel they have to bear the burden of society's hatred because lesbians are more accepted in our world than gay men? The reasons are countless and ultimately, unimportant. What matters is that there is a rift. But what if this is a Humpty Dumpty effect? What if we cannot put our community back together again? Maybe we were never together

in the first place. So the big question to ask yourself is: Can I live with this schism? The answer should be no, and if it's not--we've got problems.

This, of course, is not the end of the story. We all should be making and taking challenges to make the gay and lesbian community stronger and healthier. Politics should not be the glue that tries to hold the community together. Diversity is the grand buzz-word tossed around these days. We should learn the definition right now, because this discrimination among us only helps those who would divide and conquer our causes.

So, we all discriminate against fellow gays. And, when we aren't doing that, we discriminate against straights. You read correctly: straights. We are so repressed that we have to lash out at everyone gay and straight alike. Heterophobia will not get any of us anywhere. Let's look at it this way: I am a firm believer that homosexuality is biological in some way or another. The trend may follow that 10% of the population will continue to be gay in the future. It may even increase, although not likely as gays do not generally procreate. So, folks, we will ALWAYS be a minority. As if that isn't enough--you need to realize that we will always be an INVISIBLE minority. Not everyone will be out of the closet at the same time, so there will never be strength in gay numbers alone. Therefore, we need straights on our side: our friends, our family, our acquaintances, our neighbors, our neighbor's neighbors.

It is my understanding that there was an objection to allowing straights come to some recent UGLW activities. That straights might compromise the privacy of gay members. With this type of exclusionary thinking the gay rights movement will expire. Don't believe that you can ignore this issue and that everything will be okay. Every discriminatory act has consequences. I recommend that non-gays be allowed at all UGLW functions and that we celebrate their acceptance and participation. I recommend it strongly.

Forward thinking starts with you. You don't need to come out of the closet to masses of people to be a "diversity-correct" gay person. Being accepting of other gays and of straights will take you a long way toward creating a community and a world worth living in.

Let The Unforgiven win an Oscar. Let The Unforgiving go unreleased.

What if you died tomorrow?
What is your legacy?
Is it one of secrecy?
Of hiding?
Or is it one of celebration and open-ness? Do you have a
choice?
I say yes.

It is difficult being gay. There are rules and games and protocols
and choices and decisions and...it is endless. But death happens.
It comes. And when you are gone you will leave people behind.
HOW do you want to leave them behind?

In my very first essay to UNITED VOICE, I revealed that
I came out to my parents because I did not want either one
of them to die without knowing. This was because I did not
want to live the rest of my life not knowing what would have
happened or how our lives would have been had I simply
revealed the truth. It would have been a heavy burden to bear-
for me anyway. So, I revealed the truth and came out to my
parents. It turned out to be a very positive experience.

Now, imagine the converse. Suppose I had not come out to
my parents, and suppose I died before they did. Cruelty strikes
on this path as well. For it would be a certainty that the truth
would come out sometime. And I would not be around to pick
up the pieces of broken lives--and there would be lots of pieces.
For, my parents would not have survived my passing just once
with my physical death, but twice with the revelation of hidden
homosexuality. It is said that parents "die" anyway when sons
or daughters come out of the closet--hopes, dreams, futures
all wash away as if death had really happened. But coming out
while alive is humane, because you are still physically alive to
defend yourself and your true future.

Let's look at your friends. If you die and your immediate family
does not recognize your homosexuality, then what hope do your
gay friends have of mourning your death? Do they crash your
funeral? Will they even know you are dead--outside of a chance
reading of the local paper's obituary column? Again--the loss is
twice as hard. You are dead and they have no opportunity to say
good-bye.

I am not advocating that you immediately come out of the
closet to your family. That is a very personal choice and must
be made on an individual basis taking into consideration all of
your own private life parameters. Your mental and physical
safety is of utmost importance. What I am suggesting is that
you think about this issue of death and how it plays out in your

own situation. It is easy to become self-absorbed when dealing with gay issues. It is a tremendous strain on us to be inundated with these rules, games, protocols, choices, decisions, etc. as I mentioned before. We forget to think about others--to take responsibility for more than our actions alone. By thinking about this one issue (and there are thousands of others--life is complex), you will have taken a solid step toward being more than just a gay-exclusive person.

december 27, 1994

“Save yourself for marriage”

Mom did have a way with words, didn't she? So, you ask, what does it have to do with anything gay?

Lots.

When you first came out of the closet did you ever contemplate--even for one moment--about saving sex until you met the right guy? The answer for most gay men is “no.” Why not? It is sort of a mind-boggling question. We usually grow up without gay role models--gay men from whom we can imitate behavior. We learn our behavior from our straight surroundings. The first exposure to gay life is usually in the form of sexual experimentation--after all, sexuality is what defines us as gay. So, why do we pursue this experimentation sexually instead of the way mom taught us--by being nice boys and dating other nice boys? Your guess is as good as mine.

Let's look at this from another angle. If you have been out for awhile, do you date many guys who have just come out of the closet? Most of us, again, say “no.” Why? Because we know that guys who come out of the closet probably need a period of “fun,” i.e. messing around, playing the field, getting it out of their system before settling down. We know that we are unlikely to form a bonding, lasting relationship with someone fresh out of the closet. We know this for a couple of reasons--first, we don't want to be hurt when he dances off with someone else. Second (and most important to this topic) is that we know that if the relationship does survive, there will come a point down the road when he may become resentful because he settled down with the first guy he met.

So if this theory holds, why doesn't the converse hold? Let's suppose you have a man and woman who are virgins and are about to be married. Both have dated extensively before, but have saved themselves for marriage. [This does happen by

the way. Perhaps even more than we are led to believe simply because of the inundation of sex in the media.] Why is it enough for a man and woman to wait for each other (dating but without sex of course) and not feel resentful later in life, but it's not enough for gay men to do the same? Why do we base "experience" not upon dating, but upon sex?

A-HA! Aren't we the ones who sneer at those straight people who ridicule us for being SEXUALLY preoccupied and whorish? Isn't this the image we are trying to annul? Perhaps we are only sweeping the matter under the rug by pretending that we are no worse off than those who fall victim to the nasty national divorce rate.

None of us can go back and "un-do" the sex we have had. Some of us are in long-term relationships and are there because of the experiences we have had over the years. It is difficult for men to be come friends let alone lovers, so why not do whatever it takes to get there in the end? For those of us not so lucky to be in relationships, what can we do about this now?

I would suggest that it is not impossible to start hunting for the hidden gold you want in your life right now by meeting someone and dating them. The next guy you meet or the guy after the next guy doesn't have to see your bedroom on the first date. Or second or even third. Just as it shouldn't be wrong to have sex on the first date, it shouldn't be out of the question to skip it for awhile either. Everyday gay life doesn't have to be supermarket sex. Practice dating. It might be fun--the anticipation of hot sex in the future can be a fantastic turn-on in the present!

Anyone who has read GAY WRITES knows that this is one of my favorite topics--that of gay dating and sex vs. societal standards on heterosexual dating and sex. It's a phenomenon which interests me even though I have been out for nearly ten years and have had my share of dating and sex. Mom's puritan comment of "Save yourself for marriage" may be a bit outdated even for the straight world, but the philosophy behind the statement can always be revisited.

may 23, 1996

The Supreme Court reversal of Amendment 2 should be viewed as a defining moment for gays and lesbians. By "defining" I mean that we have the opportunity to define ourselves and set a course for our future. Part of that future is to let the outrage of the past...be the past.

How can we define ourselves? Perhaps we should start by deciding what it is we want others, specifically our straight neighbors, to see when we are out. I think it is important to realize that we cannot control what others think of us, so it is up to us to set good examples and to be good role models. I attended the rally at Old Town in Fort Collins on the day the Supreme Court decision was handed down. I heard several statements about “tolerance not being enough”—that we must have “acceptance.” I don’t disagree with this statement, but I doubt we insist on acceptance just because we deem it necessary. I’m not sure we have even reached the tolerance milestone yet.

Who will lead the way toward our visions of tolerance and then acceptance? The pied piper must be each one of us—working inside the frame of our own individual comfort zones. Remember, we are on the front edge of the gay movement. We may not see peace in our time. And, we cannot internalize the agony of the slow pace at which society moves. In ourselves there is a light that we each follow and, through it, others will see that acceptance of all diversity will keep future generations from evolving into some Orwellian nightmare.

I am not suggesting that confrontation be eliminated as an option. There are a lot of thick skulls out there and when discrimination takes place, when our rights are endangered or when acts of violence are committed against us, yes, we confront it. Bring attention to it. But do so in a way that you can look back and be proud of your actions. If you can do this, then others will also be proud of your actions.

We will go forward with this wisdom that we are not liked by everyone and will never be liked by everyone. We will go forward and hit roadblocks: legislation directed against us by those who speak in polished tongue and bend words to suit their logic. As long as we go forward. Amendment 2 is over. Let it go. Forget the anger and the frustration of what was.

Similarly, forget that Amendment 2 helped bring our community together in its’ aftermath. Starting fresh means from the beginning. We must look to revitalize our community—making it even more cohesive, but without the negative springboard which launched us into action in 1992. Complacency cannot set in. Make the future your personal responsibility, but do only as much as you are comfortable with. Don’t let anyone tell you that you have to be an activist to change the world. Begin by re-thinking your own values and position. Are you happy with who you are? Be accepting of yourself first. Next, be accepting of your straight neighbors. Never forget that the street runs both ways. A little heart and soul from you will help take all of us far.

Change, more than ever, is the way of life. Jump on the bandwagon and lead the parade. Do so with maturity and common sense. Let those who pass judgement on us stand up and justify their grandstanding against the good examples we will set. They're going to look pretty silly. Just as they did when a certain bogus amendment bit the dust.

july 5, 1996

“I'm not gay, but I'm here to show my support.”

Beautiful words. Words we would like to hear more often. Unfortunately I recently heard a horror story from someone who spoke these very words at a meeting which she assumed was for both gays and allies. Apparently not. The retort she received came something in the manner of, “why do you have to say you aren't gay--do you think you are better than us?”

I am not sure how the exchange went after that point, but in my book that one sentence, spoken by one of our peers, was unnecessary and damaging. I have tried to understand why anyone would say such a thing to someone who sincerely tried to show compassion. I don't believe in exclusive gay meetings or any other clique. Perhaps it is we who should try to discern what it means to be a gay supporter.

GAY ALLIES 101:

1. Most often, a gay supporter is an acquaintance, our neighbor, a friend.

But...

2. Straight people don't have to support us. They are the majority. Simple arithmetic states that if indeed our numbers measure ten percent of the total population, then we need 41% of their numbers to ensure any hope for a majority decision in our favor. In this light, we might need a few allies.

3. Being a gay supporter can be confusing. After all, gay allies cannot see all of us--we don't have different skin color, we don't speak a unique language. We can chose to be invisible whenever we want to be. Why would someone go out of their way to support something they cannot always see? I am amazed at how simple human kindness can manifest itself in such a wonderful way.

4. Sometimes, gay support rides on the coattails of a greater

cause. Putting an end to discrimination is one such cause. Obviously, gay rights is a piece of this bigger picture. It would be easy for someone to “be on our side” without really understanding what being on our side means. You know: save the earth, save the whales, save the gays. What better gift can one donate to a cause than to understand, to the fullest degree, the cause they support?

Even with these simple truths, one gay person in our midst chose to deny access to the knowledge of who we are. It has taken us a long time to open doors and there are still too few open for any of us to be slamming them shut on our allies.

I am encouraged by the fact that our gay ally from paragraph one is still our ally. Luckily, one of her best friends is not only gay, but a very good role model too. I am thankful we have not lost a friend.

august 26, 1996

November 1996 has an important significance for me. It reminds me of the dark days of Amendment 2 when a friendship was born which lasts not only to this day, but grows stronger with passing time. With this essay, I wish to honor this friendship and to urge you, this Thanksgiving, to celebrate your friendships. For some of us, long stretches of time may pass without a significant other in our lives. For me, I know that regardless of my romantic status, my soul is always filled with the love from my friends and from one friend in particular.

I met Ben at a meeting of the Fort Collins Gay and Lesbian Alliance (now known as the Student Organization of Gays, Lesbians and Bisexuals, or SOGLB) on November 11, 1992. This particular meeting was designed as a tension release for the just-passed Amendment-2. Even though things looked bleak, I was on a boyfriend hunt at the time. Ben doesn't know this (at least not until now), but I decided to be aggressive and meet one of two men at the meeting whom I thought were cute. One of them was Ben, who I did end up meeting during the icebreaker. The other guy...well, I never saw him again and can't even remember what he looks like now.

The first chance Ben and I got to spend alone was on a long walk through Old Town. For me, one thing stands out: it was the first time Ben mentioned he was going to be gone for a year to Denmark beginning in the summer of 1993. I think I was immediately struck that this was a bad thing. It was almost as if I could see the end of something before it really began. For the

time being good news prevailed: we decided to go out again.

Ben and I dated for two months. For a number of good reasons, we broke up in January of 1993. We remained friends, but were not very close during the remainder of that school year. Then, things changed. The day of Ben's departure for Denmark approached and I began thinking about him quite a bit. I decided to tell him, in a letter, that I wanted to try our relationship again when he got back. I never mailed that letter. Instead, I wrote a different one later that year--in September. By this time, Ben had acquired an email account in Denmark and we began writing to each other over the internet. I occasionally danced around the topic of reuniting, until finally I had to get it out.

From the wintry days of late 1993 until Ben returned, we would often use our cyberspace communications to discuss the topic of reuniting. We came to the conclusion that we faced too many unknowns and we were so far away from each other to make a decision. I tried to be realistic about our status and not sit at home. I did end up dating one other guy while Ben was away. It was hard to commit to something with something else up in the air. Thus, I was single again when Ben returned to the States in July of 1994. I didn't get a chance to talk to or see Ben until school started that August. In retrospect, this was the best thing that could have happened because it buffered me for the inevitable.

The first, or maybe it was second, day of school had just ended at the university in late August, 1994. I sat waiting, at the one major intersection on campus, for the light to change so I could proceed home. At that very moment, Ben crossed the street. Ben never saw me, but as I watched him walk away down the sidewalk I knew in my heart that he and I would never again get back together. I can't explain the feeling, it was just something that was so true and evident. I was in denial over that "moment," which led to the eventual "let's just be friends" talk. And, that is when the magic began.

That our friendship is woven in magic is only one testament of Ben's wizardry. Ben's long-time relationship with Rich is evidence that two people can have the best of both worlds: love and friendship. For me, looking back, I am grateful that truth was discovered: Ben and I are much better paired as friends than as more-than-friends. But, it was through exploration of romance that made us the best of friends.

Years have passed and Ben rapidly approaches his graduation day in May, 1997. I have faith that he will succeed in his goal to be a world traveler and I know I will miss the closeness that proximity

currently allows. Spring offers the opportunity to tread a new path in our friendship journey.

So, Ben, this is my way of saying thank-you for four wonderful years. Words really aren't powerful enough for me to express what you mean to me. I am blessed. Here's to many more anniversaries of our friendship.

december 13, 1996

What would a boy born in the year 2000 want us to do today to make the world a better place for him when he grows up to be gay? I don't have a perfect answer to this question. One has to start somewhere. Here are but four opportunities to consider.

Start to embrace the straight community.

"We are not alone." "The truth is out there." These are common science fiction television themes of the day. But in our real world, we are the aliens. We are the odd fish in the big glass bowl to be peered at by our straight counterparts. What do you want them to see? The only way they will come to an understanding of what "gay" is, is through their experience of you. However you are with them will be tallied and recorded for future use. Their children will benefit or not from how good an impression you left.

Start to be responsibly "out."

It is not enough to be grateful that we have already made great strides. The future will be forged by individuals like you and me and by what we do in the here and now. To summon such personal courage will be difficult. It will be a soul-searching, draining affair. Am I suddenly advocating "outing" yourself for someone not yet born? To an extent, yes. Being "out" as a gay person, in the long run, will make a difference. Innately, we all realize this and our coming-out process mirrors our comfort of showing our true selves at our own paces. Those of you who are not comfortable being out just yet can keep this message for your future. The rest of us must admit that being out is not enough—it never has been. You can be out to America, out on your college campus, or just out to your roommate and none of that will amount to anything for the future unless you represent the community well. Being a good example will help ensure that the people, who have been touched by your openness, will teach their children that the world is diverse. Your legacy will then mean something to future gay men.

Start to emulate lesbian sexual behavior.

Exactly what is the point of cruising bathrooms, bathhouses, rest stops, parks? What fulfillment is gained from sucking off married men in your local public toilet? Does it give you a sense of adventure or maybe even danger? Well, then take up skiing or snowboarding. Being gay is more than sex. Lesbians know this. I don't hear of them cruising other females in the john by the side of the road or circling the park hoping for some action with a young "sister" who absolutely must orgasm before the sun comes up. Lesbians have just as much sex as the men, let me assure you. They just choose to do it in private and with dignity. Maybe we can forgive, as youthful stupidity, this inappropriate "outreach" when it is performed by teen men who know of no other way to express their sexual desires. But when will you consider yourself a grown-up? Will it be when you are caught by the police and you have to apologize to your friends and neighbors for embarrassing yourself in front of everyone? Find yourself a real relationship or stay home and practice your self-love skills. Sex by yourself is still sex. An orgasm is an orgasm.

Start being gay.

Since gay is more than sexual orientation, why not show the world who you are? Being gay opens so many special doors that others will never even have the key to. Look around. History, the good gay male history, is full of individuals who were creative, ingenious people. Composers, writers, dancers, singers, actors, scholars...you name it. Gay men are more than their sexual orientation. Be something for yourself.

What gay past do you want to perpetuate into the future? The years ahead can no longer be about "me." As our path changes to a road, a street, a highway, the gifts you give today will sow all of our tomorrows. The children of 2000 will thank you.

All essays copyright © 2006-2007 by James Fred Farmer. All rights reserved.

No part of these essays may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any information storage and retrieval system without written permission from the author: James Fred Farmer.

You are encouraged to share the website address with others and/or link to it from your website.