

THE OPEN DOOR

pridefully presenting gay and lesbian issues, views and events to the entire Bloomington community

VOL. 1, No. 2

March-April 1987

The Doors Are still Open

When one looks at history, one tends to think of specific names and events. Those who study the matter more closely, however, see things more in terms of trends and movements. Even one as brilliant as Sir Isaac Newton, for example, would not have likely articulated the Laws of Physics at a much earlier date; by the same token, if Newton had not accomplished what he did, it is safe to assume that some contemporary would have eventually made an analogous "discovery." The time was ripe; the precedents had been set.

So it is with *THE OPEN DOOR*. By any measure, it has been an outstanding success. Within one week after the first issue was delivered from the printer's, Mike Leonard's front-page article in the Bloomington *Herald-Telephone* (Jan. 23) was being raved over and displayed on bulletin boards and refrigerators all over town. There was also coverage in *The Works*, out of Indianapolis, and Chuck Avery, who first brought gay journalism to Bloomington in the early 1970s, generously showed our work to all of Indiana in his newspaper, *The Mirror*.

Comments by individuals were even more gratifying. That friends (and even relatives) of the staff had nice things to say was perhaps no surprise; what truly made our efforts seem worthwhile was the response of new acquaintances, many of whom quickly became new friends. From the closeted undergraduate guy to the retired, heterosexually married woman; from the former (and future) gay activist who first came out to a staff member by merely saying, "Hey, *THE OPEN DOOR* looks great," to the radical lesbian who poured out her feelings to the editors one evening about how much the paper meant to her and how much she was looking forward to working with us (and she has)—from these



You never know where you'll find THE OPEN DOOR!

and so many others have come the message: Bloomington is ready for *THE OPEN DOOR* and Bloomington wants *THE OPEN DOOR*.

The success of *THE OPEN DOOR* is the event; we must now ask ourselves what are the underlying factors that have made it possible.

In lieu of embarking on a treatise on the evolution of the local lesbian/gay community, it will have to suffice here to reflect on and appreciate the efforts of a great number of individuals who have helped Bloomingtonians learn to live in harmony with one another. (A frustrating attempt by the authors to choose a few personal accomplishments for mention here only served to point up the broad base of the movement.) To all of those who have been fighting for these gains or are themselves committed to show due respect to their fellow humans, the staff of *THE OPEN DOOR* can truly say, "This could not have happened without you."

It is true that our charming little town is not all love and acceptance. There are problems. But it is still a feeling worth rejoicing in, for example, when we can sell a large and supportive advertisement to a straight-owned business, or can be turned down by other such establishments for reasons other than the nature of our publication, but in a sincere and implicitly respectful manner.

It is perhaps only a matter of perspective as to whether one considers this a reflex of an accepting populace or of a powerful gay/lesbian community. But either way, let us not ignore the advantages of being here, let us not forget the plight of our sisters and brothers in less ideal localities, and most of all, let us not allow anyone or anything to take away what we have earned here.

NOTICE

Due to production problems beyond our control, we have combined March and April issues. Look for *THE OPEN DOOR*'s next issue in May!

Letters

Dear OPEN DOOR:

Thanks so much for the copy of THE OPEN DOOR—also your kind words about COMING OUT TO PARENTS, and the review of it in your publication. I think your idea of doing a publication which aims at increasing the understanding of the gay community, which seeks to bridge whatever distance there is between heterosexual and homosexual populations—and sometimes it is very great—is an excellent idea. May THE OPEN DOOR grow and prosper!

Mary V. Borhek

THE OPEN DOOR

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THE OPEN DOOR

Issue No. 2, March-April 1987

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Dear OPEN DOOR:

Thanks so much for the first issue of THE OPEN DOOR. It was very good, and I was particularly impressed by two things: your commitment to inform the whole Bloomington community, and not just gays and lesbians; and the article by Karen Lane about coping with the knowledge that her eldest son is gay—an excellent example of how so much can be said in so few words! Please give her my compliments.

I find it heartening to know that your newspaper is attempting to involve heterosexuals as well as homosexuals. Not only is this an intelligent thing to do, but a brave thing. I think it is most fitting that this should be happening in the same city that graced the world with Dr. Alfred Kinsey and now Dr. Bell. In a much smaller way I am also attempting to do this through my voluminous letter-writing to public officials, church leaders, and members of the general public.

Sincerely,

N. David Williams, Director
Kentucky Gay & Lesbian
Educational Center
1464 South Second St.
Louisville, KY 40208

Dear OPEN DOOR:

Congratulations on the re-appearance of idealistic gay voices with your first issue of THE OPEN DOOR. Your information and above all your spirit and attitude is so valuable. The gay father who spoke of the necessity of sustaining self-doubt and self respect together—in meeting the challenge and living now—I needed to hear. I wish you courage and continuance.

JD

Warmest greetings to the staff:

I am a gay senior in high school; therefore, I have not "formally" come out—yet. Throughout my childhood and even adolescent years, I have been exposed to many biased and subjective people who have expressed their personal views on a myriad of topics—including, of course, homosexuality. I have heard so much closed-mindedness and negative views, I have often wondered if there was any hope for the Gays of Tomorrow. With publications such as THE OPEN DOOR, there is hope! Thanks! Sharing all my love,

Jerry

Calendar

National Women's History Month Events

A sampling of Bloomington events celebrating National Women's History Month is listed below. The Bloomington Commission on the Status of Women has produced a calendar which has a complete listing of events. The free calendars are available at Dreams & Swords Bookstore, Monroe County Public Library, and the Monroe County Museum.

March 17, 6 pm
Films on Domestic Violence
1514 E. 3rd St.

March 28, 7:30 pm
Arts & Crafts Fair; Information Fair; Films
Unitarian-Universalist Church, 1210 N. Fee Lane

March 31, 4 pm
Opening: Tribute to Women Athletes of the
Pan American Games
111 S. Jordan, International Center

March 31, 9:00 pm
Lesbian Women in History
Bryan Room, IMU

Month-Long Exhibitions
Portraits of American Indian Women from the
Wanamaker Collection
Mathers Museum, 416 N. Indiana
Monroe County Women from 1860 to
the Present
Monroe County Museum, 202 E. 6th

STRAIGHT TALK

by Cheryl E. Compton

To borrow an often used phrase, "I'm really over" a lot of my straight friends. Admittedly, I was quite naive of the whole gay scene when I first came to Bloomington. But in an atmosphere that is fairly accepting of the culture, you cannot deny its existence. That's exactly what a lot of people try to do.

"No faggots live in this dorm," or "I don't know any gay guys." Well, my answer to that is either you don't know many men in Bloomington or you're completely blind to everything going on around you. I've been blind to the facts more than once. I've dated men, only to find out later they were gay. Also many of my close friends in my life have decided they were gay. But what's

the difference? They're still the same people. Let's just keep our noses out of their bedrooms.

I've often heard straight men say they don't want to be around gay men because they don't want to be beating them off. Come on, guys, don't flatter yourselves. Gay men aren't going to make passes at you. Be secure enough in your own sexuality. And even if they did make a pass, take it as a compliment.

Open up your mind . . . the world isn't all black and white. Homosexuals are just the same as everyone else. They may even be a little bit stronger because they made a decision to stand against the norm. And if you've ever done that yourself, you know how much courage that takes.

Write for your rights!

H.R. 709 and S. 464: "A bill to prohibit discrimination on the basis of affectional or sexual orientation, and for other purposes. . . ."

From Washington comes good news—with a proviso—about the so-called Gay and Lesbian Civil Rights Bill, introduced this year in the House as H.R. 709 and in the Senate as S. 464. The Human Rights Campaign Fund, the national political action and education committee of the gay and lesbian community, reports that with a record fifty members of the House and six members of the Senate co-sponsoring the bills this year, the climate appears to be favorable for actual committee hearings on them during the 100th Congress. Hearings are an important and necessary step towards passage of legislation.

The Fund emphasizes the political value of having hearings on the bill, whether or not it actually ends up passing. They further predict that a record number of members of Congress will sign onto both bills as the year progresses. But that will

not happen unless members of the gay and lesbian community, as well as those who are supportive of our rights, write their congressional representatives and senators in Washington and urge them to support these bills.

The House bill was introduced on January 21 by Rep. Ted Weiss (D-NY). It was co-sponsored by representatives from six states, with a good showing from Illinois. Senator Alan Cranston (D-CA) introduced the Senate version on February 4.

No Indiana legislators are among the co-sponsors, so we have an important task ahead of us. Senators Richard Lugar and Dan Quayle can be reached by writing them at the U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510. Representatives Lee Hamilton, Frank McCloskey and others can be reached at the U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515. Be sure to write "The Honorable" before their names and mention the bill numbers.

For more information about either the bill, officially called the "Civil Rights Amendment Act of 1987," or about writing letters to Congresspeople, call Marc at 339-3901.

Women's Wheels

Women's Wheels is a crime prevention service whose purpose is to help eliminate assault and rape on the IU campus. The program is designed to provide a safe means of transportation for women students, faculty and staff who would otherwise be walking alone. The service operates Sunday through Thursday, 8 P.M. to midnight, and will provide service between academic buildings and residences.

The IU Motor Pool provides Women's Wheels with their nightly vehicles. This free service is operated by volunteer drivers, navigators and dispatchers. Although only women can take advantage of the service, both women and men are invited to volunteer. For more information, call 335-IUSA. The number to call for a free ride is 335-1241.

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Alone again, naturally

by John Tighe

—the following article is reprinted by permission of the Indiana Daily Student. It first appeared on the IDS Opinion Page March 13, 1986. The article won 2nd place in the 1986 Best Feature Story Category from the Hoosier Press Association.

"Look at me now . . . why would anyone like me?"

The question is from Richard, a 32-year-old who, up until a year ago, had it all—a successful and promising career, a secure love life and GQ looks that could have graced any magazine cover.

Today, the man remains but his spirit and his future have changed. Now afflicted with AIDS, he is wished away by many and wished dead by some. In the supermarket, a stranger's harsh remark uttered a year ago still haunts him. "I hope you die soon," the person said.

In his home, his father's past remark spoken a year ago continues to devastate. "I don't want to see you anymore," his father said. "Not like this."

AIDS is destroying Richard's mind and body. Doctors have told him for months that death is imminent. He is slowly giving in to the battle. The war was lost a long time ago.

He has battled nervous disorders, infections, and pneumonia. Almost as destructive to his esteem and his fight to

live has been rejection by strangers, his family, his lover and all but three of his friends.

Being a friend of Richard has meant watching him suffer through more than disease. It's also meant watching him ricochet off the hatred of others who don't understand his disease. The feelings of anger and disgust also have been felt by the three of us. We are hated by many because we have stayed with him.

Richard says he lived the best life he ever dreamed of until he became ill. He was a top men's clothing buyer and for two years running was the YMCA's champion racquetball player. He and his lover, Danny, were together for seven years. The two owned a house "with a white picket fence," had plenty of friends and visited each other's families on holidays.

Then his world collapsed. He learned he had the disease. When he needed support, people ignored him. When ignoring didn't work, they then turned away. Danny left when he found out. Since then, he has gone through prolonged self-persecution and hasn't spoken with Richard.

"He always took things on himself," Richard said. Danny was the accommodating one who at 27 looked to Richard as more of a role model than a lover. Once, when he called to ask about Richard, Danny admitted that he too probably has the disease. He refuses, however, to see a doctor.

"It would be my implication for murdering Richard," he said, his voice quiet and flat. "I already know I killed him."

Richard's father, who was widowed ten years ago, has never been willing to discuss Richard's homosexuality. Since learning of his youngest son's disease, he has emphatically stated there is nothing he can do. He said he wants his son to stay away.

Fleeing from the familiar is no release. Richard also faces contempt from strangers.

"That's the sponge of death," the stranger in the supermarket said to Richard months ago when he saw us looking at a LIFE Magazine cover story on AIDS and discussing the disease. She asked us to leave him at home the next time we shopped. Such treatment has been common for Richard and thousands of victims who suffer because of the ignorance of others.

Most often, the old friends who still call but seldom visit seem surprised when they learn he's alive. Maybe they'd prefer knowing that he had died. Maybe that day when there is no more scorn and no more pain will be the best.

When he was in better spirits, Richard would tell us that this process of pain and hatred directed at him had a reason. He wasn't afraid of death then.

"I'll die," he said, "when it's the right time. I have to keep strong and keep my faith."

Religion has come into his life. Security, though, has exited. Life before AIDS was filled with memories about those who had lived with him. Life with it means thinking about those who had left.

"I think of all these people who I thought loved me," he said. "And now they won't even be with me. But I don't like me anymore either. I'm poison."

Tolerating his irritability makes being around him more difficult. Last summer, it meant answering the phone in the middle of the night to learn that he was going to the hospital and that "this time I'm going to die."

And on a day when we thought he was feeling well, it meant letting him crawl to the refrigerator to get a glass of water on his own, so as not to take away his pride. It then meant letting him vomit on my blue jeans because he didn't have energy to go anywhere else and wouldn't let go of my hand so I could go get a paper bag. Seconds later, he fell into my lap and cried.

"I don't think I'm so bad," he said hollowly. "Everybody else seems to have forgotten that, though."

Illness as metaphor

—the following is excerpted from a sermon given by the Reverend Laurel Hallman on February 1, 1987, at Bloomington's Unitarian-Universalist Church.

Metaphors. I am very fond of metaphors. Religion couldn't exist without them. Poetry couldn't either. I think it is the only way we can manage in life. Because the reality—the deep reality—of which we want to speak is usually just beyond our grasp. Just beyond the capacity of our language. And so humans have, through time, found ways to use the language they have, to use the words they know, to speak about what they can't say, what they don't know.

Today I want to speak about illness as metaphor, and take back all I have just said. Or almost all of it. Because the danger of metaphors is that because they are so powerful they are easily misused. For metaphors, misused, can be powerful tools of falsehood, misunderstanding and wrong thinking.

The title of this sermon comes from a tiny volume of the same name by social critic Susan Sontag. In her book, she criticizes our tendency—it is a human one—to turn serious illnesses into metaphors of judgment and/or psychology.

Illness is often used as a metaphor of judgment. It is not new. Leprosy, in biblical times, was not just a lousy disease that ate at you. It was a symbol of the deprivation of the soul. In our time sexually transmitted diseases, because they are linked with sex (over which there is much dis-ease [discomfort] in society anyway), have been synonymous with deprivation and, above all, with the judgment of God.

One of the reasons I speak of illness as metaphor today is because the wrongful metaphors given to certain illnesses are so often religious. Presumptive metaphors. Religious in content, malicious in intent. Illness as God's punishment. Illness as God's way of teaching us lessons. Illness as failure.

I preach about it today because illness is none of that. There are many causes of illnesses. But God is not one of them. There has never been a time when it was more necessary to say it. Because it seems that our time, our generation, is being called to face a disease of epidemic proportion which will lend itself to many powerful, but wrongful, metaphors. Of course, I speak of AIDS.

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For a while it was easy to think of AIDS as a homosexual disease. But it is not a selective virus. It goes its own unthinking way, propelled, ironically, tragically by the very forces of life which usually sustain and nourish us.

The simple truth is this. At least what we know of it. AIDS is a virus which enters the blood stream and suppresses the immune system, so that the person becomes vulnerable to all kind of diseases which normally would not affect him or her. In time, the diseases overcome the person and he or she dies. It is most usually transmitted sexually. It is also transmitted on needles which are passed around among drug addicts. For a time it was unknowingly transmitted in blood given in transfusions. In recent months, tests have been developed to detect the virus and screen the blood used in transfusions, and so transfusions have ceased to become a source of the disease.

The virus cannot live outside the body for long. In that way it is a very weak virus. All the evidence gathered seems to say that you cannot get AIDS even from people who have it unless you inject the virus into your blood stream with their hypodermic needle, or have sex with them.

That is the simple truth of it. But because of the fear; because it took hold in our country within the homosexual community; because it breaks down the immune system and manifests itself in many, many different ways; because it is truly a dread disease, a modern-day plague; because doctors have no cure for the disease; because it is, in the main, sexually transmitted—for all these reasons—AIDS is and will be subject to metaphors of the

most powerful and destructive kind. Metaphors which will be as death-dealing as the disease itself.

Many have taken refuge in misguided metaphors: "If AIDS is God's punishment, then it is possible for God to spare me." "If AIDS has to do with immunity, then I can make myself strong, physically and mentally, and stave off the disease." "If AIDS is a homosexual disease, and I am heterosexual, then I am safe."

Ironically, metaphors, which can enlarge life, which give us ways to speak of the unspeakable, can also be used, because they are so powerful, as agents of untruth, as ways to cut us off from the unspeakable and avoid the fact that we are vulnerable: that our children are at great risk. That we are called to examine our actions, face our fear, and act responsibly in the days to come.

It means that a person with AIDS is just that—a person with AIDS. As a church, as a community we must prepare ourselves to care for those who, inevitably, will come down with the disease. There are six people, I am told, now in Bloomington, who have it. There will be many more.

The larger community must be prepared with as much love and caring as the homosexual community has shown in the face of the disease. Not take refuge in wrongful metaphors, in words which divide and separate and isolate, but rather we must become living metaphors of reasoned response, living metaphors of love and practical help to those in need.

Illness is not God's judgment. Illness is not psychological failure. When we find ourselves falling into simplistic metaphors which seem to protect us, we are practicing bad religion. Authentic religion requires that we continue to struggle to make sense out of illness and death as part of life. That we continue to respond courageously to the demands of life, even in the midst of illness and death. And that we love one another along the way. Amen.

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ON THE FRINGE

by Marc Eisdorfer

To Be or Not to be... a feminist

The topic for this month's column was inspired by two current considerations. One is the celebration of Women's History Month, and the other is the realization by those who are responsible for *THE OPEN DOOR* of the importance to the whole community of the women's businesses that have opened in Bloomington in the last year. Not only have they helped us develop as a community, but they have nourished our own growth as individuals. It is thus that I have taken a critical look at my own attitudes, feelings and actions.

It is difficult to be a committed feminist and a male at the same time. I should know because I am both. I think.

Part of the problem is that it is not clear whether or not we males are allowed to be feminists. I remember once being involved in a long discussion with some *bona fide* feminists as to whether a man could be considered such. The argument they put forth went something like this: How can a man be a feminist? A man cannot possibly know anything about what it is like to be a woman. A man doesn't grow up being taught to be submissive and afraid to use his strength and intellect. A man doesn't grow up having to put up with being largely left out of the English language (among many others) because he only finds himself pronominally referred to in cookbooks and etiquette manuals, because his gender is invariably mentioned after the other one (Bloomington Lesbian/Gay Alliance?), and when he gets married, it will all be over anyway because he will lose his surname to boot. Besides, he will never know what it is like to contend with the legacy of thousands of years of exclusion and domination by the other gender. And that is not to mention some of the physical attributes that he will never have to deal with.

A man cannot possibly know what it is like to be a woman. Only a woman can know. Thus only a woman can be a true feminist.

At that point, as I remember, the metaphysics of the debate got way out of hand—or at least over my head—and I sat there dejected and mute. It was obvious that I was not about to be able to convince those tough womyn that I should be allowed to call myself a feminist because I felt like a feminist, although that was what I was thinking.

In a discussion that I had more recently, I was sharing some feelings with my husband about having been excluded from an all-women's group in which I would have liked to have participated. His response was to put things in a cross-cultural perspective, based on a book he was reading. From *The Triple Struggle*, a book by Audrey Bronstein about Latin American peasant women (available at Dreams and Swords bookstore), we read the following by a Bolivian woman about a women's cooperative: "I think that we have to carry on having meetings with just women until they all become less timid. Otherwise, they will just sit there, and let the men talk." This was not meant to bring to mind a typical group of Bloomington feminists, to be sure, but it was nevertheless a valuable lesson.

Nowadays, I have a different perspective on how to define the word "feminist." It seems to me that it is not enough to feel like a feminist, or even to think like a feminist. To be a feminist, one must speak for feminist ideals, work for feminist ideals, and if necessary, fight for feminist ideals.

So, can a male be a feminist? I hope you agree that the question is one of the definition of the word. Put another way, I'll admit that I can never know the experience of a woman (although I can try), if you'll allow me to consider myself a feminist. But don't let me just sit around and feel like a feminist. Make me be one.

The Role of the press?

by Cheryl E. Compton

It all started last year when Rock Hudson died of AIDS. The first public figure succumbed to this disease that a lot of people at the time didn't even know existed. Hudson's death brought the controversy to the front pages of the papers. Every month brings new statistics and predictions. Every network and magazine has run a major story on the subject. But how far can it go?

When is the media going to act, rather than just report the casualties and foresee a ghastly future? The European media have taken a very responsible position. Condoms as a safety precaution from disease have been suggested for months. The commercials are graphic, but the message is clear. If the American public is not informed of the hard, cold facts, and soon, AIDS will only spread in astonishing numbers.

Instead, the press is more interested in uncovering a scandal. Did Liberace die of AIDS? In my opinion, that's a private affair. The press should not have meddled in the circumstances surrounding his death. If Liberace and his family did not want him to be some kind of martyr symbol for the campaign against AIDS, then their wishes should have been honored. They put his name through the wringer and upset many life-long fans, all for the sake of a sleazy story.

The press has only hindered the public's knowledge of AIDS. Give us the facts. Tell us how to prevent it. Tell us the truth. Don't give us a story worthy only to be in a checkout-counter tabloid.

Law Students Meet

The Gay and Lesbian Law Student Union meets every other Thursday night, with March meetings on the 5th and the 19th. The group formed at the end of last semester as a social and support group for gay law students and lawyers. Among the issues dealt with are: being gay in the legal profession, serving the legal needs of the gay/lesbian community, and addressing our particular civil rights and political problems. For information on meetings and events, contact the Gay/Lesbian Switchboard at 336-4299.

FOR THE RECORD

by Fran Record

Dyke games

Well, Lesbians, politicals, townies, purists, and rabble rousers, I'd like to have a chat about our most beloved friends and lovers, the macho women. I mean that group of women whom even we, amongst ourselves, call dykes. Possibly the term "dyke" offends you. I'm sorry, a little bit, but not very much, I guess. Come on, you know what I mean, the lesbian version of Archie Bunker, with a pinch of Clint Eastwood thrown in for piquance. We can't live without them, but there are times... boy, are there times!

Remember occasions when you and a group of your friends get together as couples. Sooner or later the dykes begin to vie with one another. All of a sudden it becomes a sort of verbal prize fight to prove who among them is the toughest, meanest (least sensitive), whose woman is the most obedient (passive). Jokes fly about sex: too little, too much.

Of course, if your circle is politically correct, the content will be different, but the effect the same. The conversation will then be designed to decide who's the most

aloof; hates myn the most; loves all women with an idealized romantic love, the best; eats the most wheat germ and only organically grown vegetarian gourmet cuisine; Oh no! not a hamburger from McD's.

Your dyke friend is the one who always delivers the big brother speech, and creates a strain in every new relationship by implying that, while she no longer sleeps with you (whether she ever did or not), she still loves you and no one else will ever be good enough.

It has been rumored that dykes don't wash dishes, do housework or eat artichokes, but I have to tell you a secret about that. It is my duty, in spite of the fact that I have been threatened by the I.N.B.T.B.A.A. (I'll Never Be Too Butch Again Association). I owe it to the Gay World at large to disclose the truth.

I went to visit a butch friend of mine, and caught her dishpan-handed. She told me then that it was true. They all, at some time or another, more or less frequently, wash dishes. However, any femme who discloses this fact may find herself in difficulty.

Dyke games can be played by any lesbian. Sometimes, I do it myself. It is a posture, a body-image thing, a mind set. It's

what the big boys do when the umpire calls an out! Actually, it is fun, as long as you know it's only a game, a night out, a costume party. "Come over here, Woman, and give me a kiss."

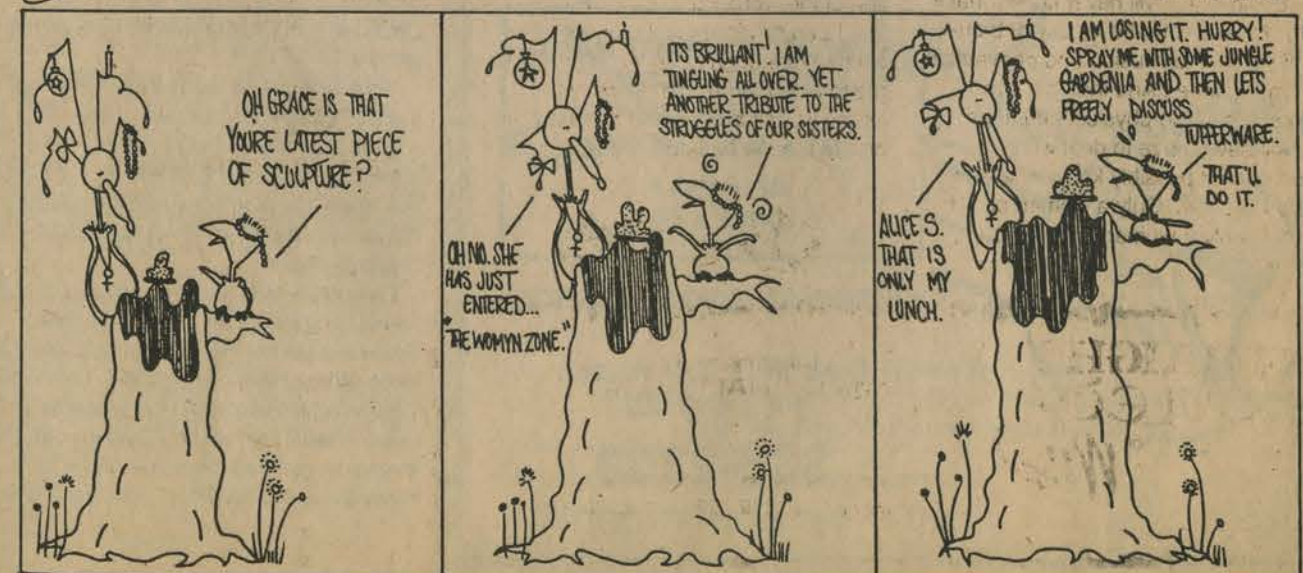
Like I said, fun. Sometimes they do. Give you a kiss, I mean. That's fun!

But (there is always a but) when you go home, take off the suspenders, hair-lined jock strap, and let the tense muscles relax, we are still women who love one another. We do love you all: Baby Butches, Super Dykes, plain Dykes, big, little and in-between ones. Still, the Dyke Games we like best of all are the ones you never tell anyone about: the quiet times, the kindnesses you show, the care and concern, and the love you give us, your lovers and friends.



the continuing saga of *Birds of a Feather* drawn by Sara Studer. This community of gay birds have migrated north to Bloomington for they found the climate more suitable to their lifestyle. Get a bird's eye view as they confront life's joys, sorrows, foibles, and "fowl" weather nestled in the trees of Bloomington.)

BIRDS OF A FEATHER



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All in the Family

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Staying together— the give and the take

by Ted A.

The society of the eighties holds many opportunities which have never before been available to us. We can do many things which twenty years ago were inconceivable, and despite the conservative wave sweeping the country, alternative lifestyles are being accepted by more people than ever. A gay or lesbian couple, however, faces unique challenges. The whole concept of marriage is designed for heterosexuals, and this makes it extremely difficult to succeed in a long-term homosexual relationship. However, the few who can adapt and remain a cohesive pair have achieved something which many only dream of.

I am writing this article as a member of a stable gay couple. My lover (I prefer "husband") and I have been together for almost three years. I know that doesn't sound like a long time, but I'm sure you'll agree that we are in a minority. We met because I fell in love with him at first sight. He, however, had to be persuaded that he wanted me. I saw him in the doorway of his apartment, burst in, and asked him if he was gay. Guess what he said. (I'll give you a hint: I didn't end up in the hospital.) We took it from there.

We have lived together for about two



years, and it is as nice as you can imagine. We aren't a Gordon Merrick novel—more like Erma Bombeck—but it sure is fun. We have a home, savings and a car. But we still have our own friends, bank accounts, jobs and interests. We take great vacations together, . . . and we have whizz-banging arguments every once in a while.

Our best friends, straight or gay, know the scoop, but our families only guess. I'm sure many of you can relate. Our co-workers are still in the dark, but they invite us, as a couple, to office parties. Maybe we are the ones in the dark.

The big threat facing our society today has made monogamy the "in" thing, yet this is no less difficult than before AIDS came along. Being gay is accompanied by a sense of freedom which can easily foul up a partnership. So the first essential element in our relationship was understanding. The most successful couples invariably have a few stories about the early days when the foundation wasn't so firm. When one of us went out on a spree, the first thing we did was question our commitment. WE decided we still wanted to be together, and a little understanding on both parts was necessary.

The next step was to learn to trust each other. Trust is a great cement to bond two people together. If the two of us can be apart and still maintain our closeness, we are on the way. I never trust blindly, though, and I keep a sharp eye out for predators. It is a well-known fact that even your own friends will be tempted to sample your dinner.

Finally, we set goals for ourselves. We have the next six months planned out at any given time, and although things never go as intended, it really gives us a sense of cooperation and strengthens our bond. Discussing our future makes us both feel secure.

Throughout it all, we maintain our own identities and keep our own space. This is a great cushion for the bad times, which inevitably come along. We keep our families close, too, and convince them to like, if not accept, the other. It certainly makes the holidays easier!

Of course, everybody is different, and different things work for different people. Some people believe in open relationships, while others insist on rings and a reverend. Whatever you want out of a relationship, I hope that it is fulfilling and healthy for everyone involved, because we need to show some permanence, especially now.

On being gay & Jewish

by Barry Leiber

When I first started coming to terms with being gay, I felt alienated from my Jewish background and was convinced that I could never go back to it. At that time Judaism was to me a culture whose religious teachings and cultural practices all spelled family, self-perpetuation, tradition and cultural isolation. One could either be Jewish or gay, but not both. Since I chose to assert myself as a gay person, I tried to alienate myself from Judaism. I began to think of the religious teachings as being mired in meticulous, ritualistic anachronisms.

James Baldwin said that to be black and conscious was to be in a constant state of rage. I feel the same way about being gay and conscious, and in the past I directed much of my rage at the culture that I thought had abandoned me.

Of the four branches of Judaism in the U.S.—Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist and Reform—the last two have opened or are beginning to open their doors to lesbian and gay Jews. There are today four gay and lesbian synagogues in this country. Many prominent Jewish organizations such as the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, have made conscious efforts to deal with gay Jews and gay issues. In addition, Jews are generally liberal on social and political issues and are much more tolerant towards gay people than the average American.

Yet, many Jews who are tolerant of gays are still unwilling to accept them as Jews. Some are hostile towards gay people because they feel that our five thousand-year-old, sacred religious practices will be sullied by gay people's participating in them. Others feel that a Jew's foremost obligation is to perpetuate Judaism; thus gays and lesbians are often deemed useless as Jews since we do not fulfill our duty to produce children. This duty has become an obsession in the wake of the Holocaust, in which the Nazis and their cohorts killed six million of us out of a world total of sixteen million, as well as the high intermarriage rate, which makes many Jews fear for our continued existence.

So, like many other gay Jews, I believed that once I affirmed my gayness I was gay and gay only, no longer Jewish.

I no longer think this way. I have again become proud to be a Jew; I am proud of the religion although I am still relatively

non-observant, and I am proud of the culture and achievements of my fellow Jews.

I am positive about my future as a gay Jew. Gay people have a lot to offer to Judaism and should not let it alienate them. There should be no reason to feel uncomfortable lighting Shabbat candles with a group of gay friends or having a gay Jewish wedding ceremony—breaking the glass and everything! Luckily I have a supportive family who feel positive about my being gay and Jewish. I sympathize with those gay Jews who have to cut themselves off from their religion in order to be gay, or have to repress their sexuality in order to be Jewish.

As my grandfather said, Judaism is not just a religion, it is a way of life. It is a way of life that only Jews can understand and partake of, but in a way it has a lot in common with the gay way of life. Members of both were, and still are, persecuted in both subtle and violent ways. They are both wary of outsiders and band together to protect themselves from the hostile hordes. Outsiders are wary of them because they are both peculiar. And gays and Jews both tend not to assert their culture to outsiders. Yet both cultures are colorful and charismatic, inundated with bravery and achievements. Trying to combine these two out-of-the-mainstream cultures is a tough challenge. But challenges make us strong people. That is why, with all the persecution we face, Jews and gay people have been among the world's greatest achievers.

As a Talmudic saying goes, "Belong ever to the persecuted rather than to the persecutors. God loves the persecuted and hates the persecutors." Beneath the petty cultural contradictions of being gay and

Jewish, the basic tenets of the religion and culture stand for justice and tolerance and despise persecution. Judaism also teaches that sexuality is a vehicle for religious experience and friendship. It has always been a sexually positive religion. This makes me more confident that I can return to Judaism and still retain my gay identity.

The constant state of rage that James Baldwin spoke of is still with me, but I no longer feel that way towards Judaism; now I direct it at the systems that persecute both my cultures.

Short lines about lesbian life and loves

by Fran Record

Wary places where our widowed mothers
sleep
Lie unrumpled and lonely in the morning.

When I said, if I remembered to tell you, that I
cared,
If I worked it out in my mind:
The angular planes of your face meant more
to me
Than I told you.

Time moves us.
Love is reduced at times to who will wash the
dishes.

Some days I am so angry with you
I would like to make you disappear.
You probably have those days, too.

Sometimes I wish you had no past
No old loves or straight histories
Nor mother or father who hate
The gay realities of our lives.

You push, pull, and prod me into your slot
Then scream at me for fitting there.

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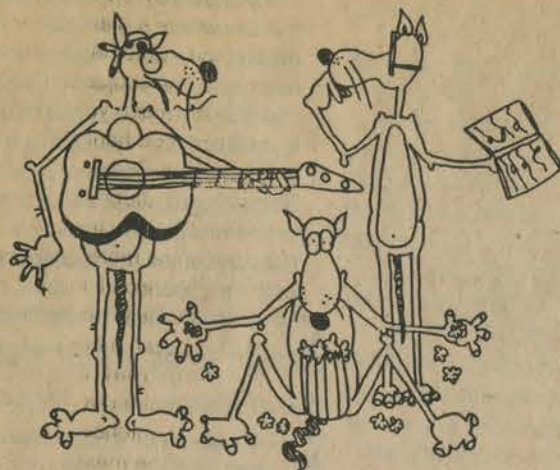
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Arts & Entertainment



Video Vault

by Jeff Dean

Blue Velvet Direction and Screenplay by David Lynch

Months after its initial release, David Lynch's instant cult classic, *Blue Velvet*, finally made it to Bloomington, controversy intact. Set in an archetypal small town, it involves a conservative teenage boy, Jeffrey, played by Kyle MacLachlan, who finds a severed human ear in a field, launching him into a personal investigation with the assistance of the local police chief's daughter, Sandy, played by Laura Dern. He runs head on into a disturbing world antithetical to his own, awakening in him the need to explore the dark side of his own nature.

At first, *Velvet's* gloriously trimmed credits sequence, set to the melancholy strains of its title song, is at once reminiscent of some '50's Troy Donahue-Sandra Dee flick that dealt sensitively with hot virgin groins. The film retains some of that spirit, but couples is with a style from the early '60's which thrived on sensationalism. Most representative of this ilk might be Samuel Fuller's laugh-a-line *The Naked Kiss*, about a prostitute trying to go straight, but finding

society won't accept her.

But director Lynch doesn't so much parody the style of *The Naked Kiss* as he transports it bodily, bad dialogue and all, from the '60's to the '80's, injecting it with a shot of '80's daring, and subjecting it to an '80's audience. The humor is still there, only this time it's intentional, and therefore regarded as sick.

The film has a tacky, outdated look, and in a way, resembles a John Waters movie, though more ambitious. At one point, it even conjures up memories of *Halloween*. Jeffrey and Sandy walk the night while the camera lingers over trees and bushes rustling in the breeze. It's an eerie, anything-can-happen atmosphere; you halfway expect the masked Michael to appear wielding a knife.

That's what is so good about *Blue Velvet*—you never know what to expect, especially after Dennis Hopper's first scene. His Frank, a maniacally hopped-up psychotic, is so dangerous you wait for his next scene with a mixture of glee and terror. It's a one-note performance that works, and is destined for movie-villain lore.

Jeffrey is our hero, and we see the action through his eyes, watching as he

unravels two mysteries—the external, drug-oriented one, and the internal sexual one. MacLachlan is excellent. He'd better be; he's never off the screen. He plays Jeffrey with such square-jawed uprightness that you understand his uneasiness with his own morbidity. It's as if the genital exploration phase had passed him by, and has now come back to get him.

Isabella Rossellini, as Dorothy, may suffer from lack of character motivation, but she has a commanding presence on-screen. This could be due to her striking similarity to her mother, Ingrid Bergman. Playing a tortured, unhinged lounge singer, she parades around in a fulsomely large black wig that makes her look like an old-fashioned doll, and at one point, she appears on Jeffrey's porch nude, somewhat battered, and in a state of shock looking like a leftover from *Night of the Living Dead*. Knowing what Dorothy's been through with Frank makes you pity her, and when you hear how lousy she sings, you pity her even more. But we're never sure if Frank is the cause of her mental state, or if she was that way before. The only truly disturbing note in this film is in the conclusion when goodness prevails, and Dorothy is reunited with her son. This woman is going to raise a child?

Where Lynch, the screenwriter, doesn't wholly succeed by skimping around the edges (Sandy's father's questionable corruption is never settled), Lynch, the director, has fashioned a personal triumph, and his recent Oscar nomination for *Velvet* is the most satisfying this year. Familiar imagery from *Eraserhead* and *The Elephant Man* (I have a mental block with *Dune*) comes to a head here. Lynch's preoccupation with pipes and steam and flames shows up as an integral part of his bizarre vision, even the downright curious bits of business like the tracking shot through the grass, and the melodramatic shot of a street sign bearing the name "Lincoln." He's proven himself a master of filming the seamy underbelly of society, and if that's what we're to expect from him, then we have a new *auteur* on our hands.

Blue Velvet is due back at Bear's Place for a special run April 1-5. Go. It's no more "shocking" than anything you saw in *Taxi Driver* or a dozen other films. And until you've seen Pasolini's *Salò: 120 Days of Sodom*, for which the term "devastating" is solely reserved, quite frankly you ain't seen nothin'.

Heartbeat on women's music

by Anne Haines

Nancy Day is a classically-influenced pianist who also happens to be a prolific composer. Her concert on Feb. 7th at the Monroe County Public Library auditorium gave her ample opportunity to display her songwriting skills and strong, polished stage presence. At nearly three hours, the performance was a little long, and some of the songs after a while did seem to blend into one another, but the audience was enthusiastic to the end. Two songs that stood out were "How Do You Numb the Pain?" (about overcoming addiction) and "We're All in This Together," which she dedicated to Middle Way House. The addition of Karen Young's cello on some songs provided a nice contrast to Day's sometimes corny, lex piano melodies and added a real emotional depth. I also have to mention the "Lemon Sisters"—Jane Winslow, Nancy Brooks, and Jeanne-Michelle Charbonnet—who stole the show in a sequence of songs written for preschoolers. This bunch of hams reappeared near the show's end, in cheap sunglasses, for an energetic "rock number," and then there was the operatic ode to PMS, sung by Jeanne-Michelle. Sound engineer Donna Jones (who did a great job in a difficult room) also had a cameo in a crowd-pleasing bluesy number, "If You Ain't Good Enough for Me on Saturday Night, Don't Bother to Call Me on Sunday." Nancy Day is to be commended for her range of material and for her use of Bloomington's great local talent. Thanks to Womynspace Productions for bringing another evening of women's music to Bloomington.

Friday the 13th... full moon... folk music and cool people... it must be Bloomington. From the Helaine Victoria open house I bopped over to the Daily Grind to catch Nadene Steinhoff's set. Steinhoff bills herself as a "New Age Folk" musician, to which I would add blues and just a touch of New Wave. Her material is eclectic—original songs, favorites like "Wild Women Don't Get the Blues" and Sweet Honey's "More Than a Paycheck," and just plain weird things like the werewolf song (I told you it was a full moon). Actually, the werewolf song is one of her strongest numbers, kind of twisted in a vaguely psychedelic way. It also gives her a chance to do neat things with her voice. What Steinhoff creates, almost more than melodies, is textures—layers of music,

which you can just chomp into or savor the intricacies of. Her originals, like the lovely "In the Diamond Night," give you lyrics that are worth listening to as well. Her vocals sometimes have a certain intensity of understatement—just when you're losing yourself in mellow textures, she reaches out with a vocal twist or a change of key and suddenly you're riveted. Unfortunately, this kind of subtlety—as well as some of the lyrics—can get lost in the background noise of an environment like the Grind on a Friday night. You can catch Nadene Steinhoff at the next ER Night at Second Story, at an Athena coffeehouse in March, at the "Culture Shock" festival in April, or at the Bloomington Songwriter Series in May.

COMING UP: May 29-31, the National Women's Music Festival! This year's mainstage performers include Tracy Chapman, Kate Clinton, Ferron, Sweet Honey in the Rock, Heather Bishop, and Tret Fure. If you haven't been to Festival, it's an experience... we need to support this thing happening in our very own community. For a brochure write to: NWMF, P.O. Box 5217, Bloomington, IN 47402. Some work-exchange is available for low-income women. Also, women are needed to provide community housing for out-of-town women who could not otherwise afford to attend. If you are interested, contact Jane Reeves at the above P.O. Box.

NEXT MONTH: More Festival updates... the new Theresa Trull album, *A Step Away*... and more surprises. Until then, keep the heartbeat strong!

Between the lines

by Duncan Mitchel

Joseph and the Old Man

by Christopher Davis. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986. 195pp. \$13.95 hardcover.

Christopher Davis has done a lot of things right: he has written a story about gay men, healthy and strong but credibly imperfect, who live their lives for the long

haul of love and work. It's a pleasure to get out of the fast lane of New York gay life.

Unfortunately, Davis has ventured into territory where a giant already has trod, and he is not yet writer enough to fill that titan's footsteps. The subject of an older man who survives his much younger lover has been given its classic handling, with depth, grace and humor, in Christopher Isherwood's *A Single Man*. I suppose Davis deserves credit for daring to try, but his book's thinness becomes more annoying in the light of the comparison it invites.

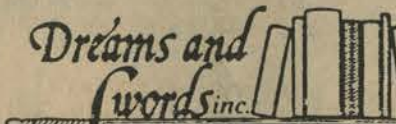
Worse, Davis is under the stylistic influence of an even more dangerous giant: Ernest Hemingway. Except for dialogue, almost the entire novel is written in simple declarative sentences linked by "and". Davis is not the master of simplicity that Hemingway was; he lacks an eye, ear and nose for concrete details, and so is prone to lapse into abstraction and even travelogue-talk.

Davis's characters are nice enough people, but they aren't terribly interesting. Since they are, respectively, a rising young historian and a famous and respected older novelist, their credibility is undermined by the dullness of the conversations which make up a lot of the first half of the book. How to make the prosaic interesting is the dilemma of the unsensational writer, of course, but the real problem is that Joseph and the Old Man don't really exist as characters: they are still basically May and December archetypes, not people.

Davis knows gay literature, classic and contemporary, and I appreciate his awareness of gay heritage, but he has not succeeded in weaving it subtly enough into his own work. It is frustrating to have to criticize a book with so much intelligence and effort behind it. I applaud what Christopher Davis has tried to do, and the effort he clearly put into his writing. I hope that Davis finds his own voice, because he is the kind of writer we need. This is not a bad first novel, and I certainly prefer it to much recent fiction about gay men. Despite its flaws, if you care about gay male fiction, you should give *Joseph and the Old Man* a try.



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Arts & Entertainment

B.P.M.'s

by Wayne Shepherd, Bullwinkle's DJ

In this column, I will attempt to examine the music business, both locally and nationwide. This is no small affair.

I will be covering different trends in music of all styles, record companies, video music, artists and recordings that may be of specific interest to you, the reader.

To kick off the column, I would like to give you a profile of Bloomington's record stores.

Disc Jockey (College Mall) Basically a Top 40 store, Disc Jockey does not carry much alternative music. However, if you desire something radio/current, you can find it here at a reasonable price on CD, 45's, LP's, 12-inch singles and cassettes.

Discount Den (520 E. Kirkwood)
Located on scenic Kirkwood Avenue,

Discount Den offers more progressive music than most stores and is known for its lower-than-average prices. While you are there, you can pick up your magazines, snacks and toiletries to make that evening (and morning after) at home complete.

Karma (116 S. Indiana) Karma's 12-inch section contains most popular dance singles, but their mainstay seems to be funk or rap. There is a large cut-out section here, and the LP selection is excellent. Most prices are competitive, and the location is very accessible for most students.

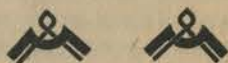
Musicland (College Mall) This store is much larger than its competition in the Mall, thus leaving you room to wander with ease. The two best areas of the store are the very interesting 12-inch section, which includes not so much Top 40 as fun dance music, and an oldies-but-goodies section that will definitely take you down memory lane.

Ozarka Exchange (212 S. Indiana)
Ozarka specializes in resell records at wonderful prices. They also have extensive

sections for new alternative and women's music. If you wish, you can trade your old records for new ones. If what you want is out of the ordinary, or just out of stock, check here.

Wooden Nickel (1797 E. 10th St.)
Collect your "nickels" and turn them in for (almost) free music. Great deal! The prices at Wooden Nickel are usually lower than at other stores—which makes them very enticing. Their 12-inch selection ranges from funk to pop to new wave. They carry the top one hundred 45's whenever possible, the LP selection is nicely varied, and their sales are special. If by chance they do not have what you desire, they also have one of the fastest ordering services in town.

Stay tuned for my next column, dealing with definition of musical anagrams and terms . . . and keep your ears open.



Mr. Gay Indiana



On Friday, April 17, at the 21 Club in Indy, Great Lakes Productions will present the Second Annual Official Mr. Gay Indiana Contest, which is an official preliminary to the Mr. Gay All-American Contest. Contestants from all over the state will compete in formal wear, swim wear, interviews and talent. A wide range of talent is acceptable, including: singing live, pantomime, dancing, self-expression, poetry, art, dramatic reading, acting, method portrayal, impersonation, twirling, gymnastics, comedy, or any combination of these or other as has been approved.

The winner will receive \$400 and a trophy. The first runner-up will receive \$200 and a trophy. The winner and first runner-up have the exclusive right to represent Indiana in the national competition. The second runner-up receives \$100 and a trophy. There will be additional trophies awarded for formal wear, swim wear, talent and Mr. Personality.

For entry forms and further information call or write: Great Lakes Productions, P.O. Box 11592, Indianapolis, IN 46201. Telephone: (317) 357-6631. Entry forms are also available at the 21 Club.

A SECOND OPINION

THE OPEN DOOR offers its readers a chance to write in and ask advice and questions about problems that you might have in your everyday life. Opinion" will be a regular column much in the same format as a "Dear Abby" advice column.

The writer of this column has experience in counseling and has access to a number of experts in different fields. You may be gay and need advice about "coming out," or you may be straight and can't deal with a friend that "came out" to you. Relationships, the AIDS scare, and school or job pressures could be some of the other things you need help with. If you can't go first to your friends or parents, write and get "A Second Opinion." You must sign your letter, but names will be withheld upon request and kept strictly confidential. Write to "A Second Opinion," c/o THE OPEN DOOR, P.O. Box 1627, Bloomington, IN 47402.

Dear Second Opinion,
My son told me he is "gay." I am worried about what will happen to him now. Will he be lonely? Will he have to die of AIDS? I guess what I am asking is can he still have a full life?

I am still struggling with the idea of my son being "gay." Is there a support group for parents or something I can read?

STILL HIS MOTHER

Dear Still,

Yes, your son can still have a full life. But it may be harder for him because he will have to overcome the prejudice of some people. He does not have to be lonely or die of AIDS because he is gay (no quotes). He can make friends and find someone special to live his life with, and if he is careful to follow safe-sex guidelines he can stay healthy.

I am sorry there is no PFLAG chapter in this area. As for something to read try *Understanding Gay Relatives and Friends* by Clinton R. Jones or *Loving Someone Gay* by Don Clark. You should be able to get these through the Public Library.

The most important thing is to let your son know that you love him.

Dear Second Opinion,

I heard that you can get AIDS just by breathing the same air as a person with it. Just like you get a cold. I think gays should stay at home so the rest of us don't get AIDS.

HOLDING MY BREATH

Dear Holding,

Besides turning you blue, holding your breath will not do anything for you. AIDS is passed by contact with an infected person's blood and/or semen. By avoiding sexual contact or by following safe-sex guidelines you will reduce your chances of contracting AIDS.



Dear Second Opinion,
I have just moved to Bloomington and want to know where to meet other women. Are there businesses that would be of special interest to me? Is there a local chapter of NOW?

NEW & LOOKING

Dear New & Looking,

Welcome to Bloomington! You can meet women at any of the regular meetings of groups such as BGLA and Challenge Bigotry Committee. You will probably be interested in The Athena Gallery, Dreams & Swords Bookstore, Helaine Victoria Press and Bullwinkle's Bar. Yes, there is a local NOW chapter. Call the Gay/Lesbian Switchboard, 336-4299, for meeting times, places, and further information.

Elementary

by J. C. M.

I breathe the air.
My thoughts fester.
Like unopen wounds they rot my mind.
I expose them to the sky:
ethereal threads mingling with the atmosphere.
I hold the fire.
My desires ache to burn free,
held only by my conscious chains.
I remove their shackles.
Unfettered, they blaze with incandescent fury.
I am from the earth.
My dormant, clay body is cold.
I fan the flames.
Warmed by fire, it is shaped.
I live in the water.
My form cries out for motion.
I release the anchor.
Long awaited tides surge.
I follow their uncertain course.



On February 23, "Kamp Out," a parody of female impersonation, was presented to a large crowd of Bullwinkles. The show was a benefit for the Bloomington Challenge Bigotry Campaign, an effort working to eliminate bigotry and discrimination against gays. The hilarious cast posed for THE OPEN DOOR before strutting their stuff on stage.

A Perfusion of Books

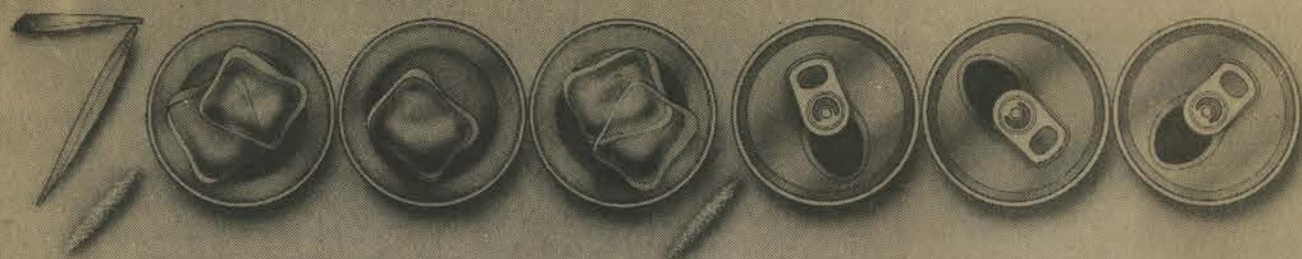
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Help!!!

Folks, let's be honest. . . . Let's talk money.

Now that the dust has settled after the first two issues of this publication, the editors have come to the realization that we have a problem, and we have decided to appeal to our readers for help. The fact is, *THE OPEN DOOR* is expensive. All the writing, editing, lay-out, distribution, accounting and sales are done on a volunteer basis, but professional typesetting and printing cost a lot. Bruce Carpenter of CompuType and the people at the Bedford Times-Mail have extended special help to keep costs down and quality up, and our advertisers have given us plenty of financial—and moral—support, but this venture will be short-lived unless we cut down sharply on quality or find new sources of funds.

One option would be to start charging for copies of the paper. This has been discussed, but was rejected as contrary to the very philosophy behind *THE OPEN DOOR*. We want it to be available to everyone, regardless of financial status.

In that spirit, we are calling upon our readers to help out. If you are broke and unable to contribute, we can understand. But for those with a steady income, how much would you pay for a copy of *THE OPEN DOOR*? And how much would you pay if you knew you were helping to provide those who cannot pay with the option of reading the paper? A quarter per copy? Fifty cents? Perhaps even a dollar or more?

Think about that and then multiply by twelve, the number of issues we intend to publish this year. That would come to three dollars at the rate of twenty-five cents per issue, six dollars at the fifty cents rate, and so on. Think it over and send a check in to *THE OPEN DOOR*, P.O. Box 1627, Bloomington, IN 47402. With your check, why not include your comments on the paper?



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All classifieds are sold on a monthly basis. Categories include: Personals (no sexually explicit language), For Sale, For Rent, Roommates, Wanting To Buy/Trade, Public Announcements, and Misc. Cost is 30¢ per word (\$4.00 minimum). Send ad copy, name, and address (kept confidential) with your check or money order made payable to *THE OPEN DOOR*, PO Box 1627, Bloomington, IN 47402. Deadline is 10 days before the 1st of each month.

ROOMMATES

Looking for gay guy to room with in dorm when I start college here in fall. For more info, call Michael at 331-7789.

PERSONALS

Stud Muffin—Valentine's was a wonderful treat! Incidentally, H.

Jacinto—
Tu cuerpo me encanta,
Tu espíritu me anima,
Tu amor me sostiene.
—El caballo de amor.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The BGLA Youth Group is back! Call the Gay/Lesbian Switchboard (336-4299) for more information.

INTEGRITY meets every Thursday, 7:30 pm, Parish Hall of Trinity Episcopal Church. Help yourself grow in faith.

March 21—"Making a Splash from the Closet to the Mainstream"; statewide gay/lesbian conference; Ball State U.; plan to attend!!; Call 336-4299 for more info.

Say what you think! Write a *Letter to the Editor*.

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SOURCE: WOMEN WRITERS

by Anne Haines

Source: Women Writers presented "Dinner at Eight," a feast of poetry, fiction and song, on Saturday, March 7 at 8 P.M. in the Unitarian Universalist Church.

Source consists of seven women: Edith Millikan, Jane Winslow, Shana Ritter, Kate Roberts, Garbo, Miriam Haber-Payne, and Anne Haines. The group was founded nearly two years ago as a support group and weekly critique session; it has since branched out into a publication and a performance group and, along the way, has developed into a kind of family.

Source has performed at the Athena/Dreams & Swords grand opening, the Moratorium on Violence Against Women, and a recent NOW coffeehouse. The group presented a two-hour performance last September at the Old Library and was praised for the diversity and high quality of work represented. Each woman in the group definitely has her own voice, though common themes run through much of the work—family relationships, political commitment, love, humor. The combination of fiction, poetry and songs makes a Source performance a lively event even for those who can't stand the usual stuffy academic readings, and the strength of women working together makes it truly empowering.

Future plans for Source include a chapbook (a small book, about 50 pages, to be regionally distributed) of poetry and fiction, more readings, and possibly a workshop at the National Women's Music Festival Writers' Conference. Profits from the March 7 performance will be used to help produce the chapbook.



ZORA NEALE HURSTON

Novelist, Folklorist, Anthropologist & Adventurer

She once claimed she was arrested for crossing against a red light, but escaped punishment by exclaiming that "I had seen white folks pass on green & therefore assumed the red light was for me."

☞ In this way she personalized traditional stories. ☞

Zora Neale Hurston (1901?-1960) grew up in Eatonville, FL, surrounded by the Afro-American culture of that self-governing, all-black town. She spent much of her life seeking a literary form that could blend her experience in the rural black south, her anthropological studies at Barnard and the artistic revolt of the Harlem Renaissance. One of her novels, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, brought to perfection the creative artist and the folklorist. Hurston's adventurous spirit led her to Haiti to study hoodoo, to Honduras to seek a lost civilization and from Florida to New York on a 1,500-mile houseboat voyage, and it made her a central figure in the Harlem Renaissance. Still writing and with her visions unfulfilled, Hurston had to send a manuscript to a publisher unsolicited in 1959 even though she was the most published black woman writer in the U.S. "I shall wrangle me up a future or die trying," she said. Hurston died in poverty and obscurity in a Florida state nursing home. She left a wealth of material on the black folk community, and the recent feminist revival of interest in her life and work has brought many of her writings back into print.

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This photo was taken in 1935 on a collecting trip in Florida with Alan Lomax and Mary E. Barnicle for the music division of the Library of Congress.
Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.