

emphasis on lifestyle

Jim and Joe's love story: Tales of mixed reactions

"Of all the new friends I have now — and whenever I meet new friends — I don't simply say, 'Hi. I'm Joe and I'm gay,' but it's important to me to say that I'm gay," Joe Metzinger said.

"If I don't tell them at all, I feel that I've been deceiving them."

His gay lover, Jim Heuer, disagreed. "It's a great thing for some people to sit around and talk about it," Jim said.

"That's not a real big deal for me. The reactions to my being gay have been very positive. Very positive.

"I've had some hard times telling certain people I was gay. It all depends on what the emotional involvement was."

Heuer and Metzinger were contacted through the Gay Rap Line (332-3535, operating from 7 p.m. to 1 a.m. Thursday through Sunday) and both agreed to talk about the fact both of them are gay. That's because, as Heuer said, "this type of thing for gays is very important to the movement right now — to talk to people who want to listen."

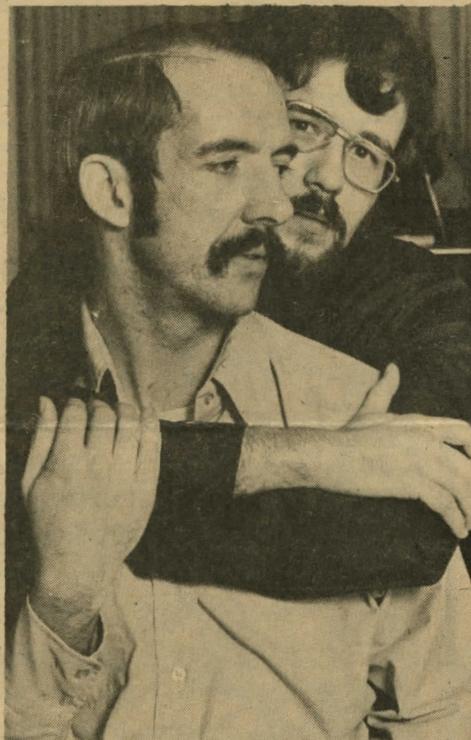
Neither Heuer nor Metzinger made apologies or explanations for the gay world in general; they both stressed their viewpoints were probably exclusively their own.

"The most important thing for straights (a term used by mutual agreement to identify non-gays for this interview) to do is to quit making generalizations," Metzinger said. "It's impossible to lump any group as diverse as the various gay groups under any one 'type'.

"There's just no cohesion at all in the gay groups around Bloomington," Metzinger said.

"My God, sometimes we go to the meetings (of gay liberation oriented groups) and find the radical socialists — you know the proletarians rise up and all that — right next to the hard party line politicians," Heuer said.

"You have Jesus freaks rubbing elbows with the violent anti-religion activists; you have work/goal/success people mixed with the non-workers; you have the ones who want a unified gay front mixed with the separatists like the lesbian-only groups. If there was one thing that would disprove the gay molds or stereotypes it would be the problems with the organizational issues," Heuer said.



Joe Metzinger and Jim Heuer... lovers

"That's why, if you go to a gay bar, there's always such a cross-section," Heuer said.

"The only thing people can agree on is a need for a strong national movement," Metzinger said, "but that's complicated because a national movement implies strong base movements on local levels and that doesn't exist."

And both Metzinger and Heuer had reactions to the different stereotypes most frequently applied to gays by straights.

"We've been that sin trip, y'know," Heuer said. "But sin isn't 'in' anymore.

"When you have a fairly high percentage of America which doesn't go to church anymore, you can't apply sin to it because you have to redefine sin."

"And you can't look at it in a psychological way," Heuer said. "The first reaction to sickness is to 'put them away', but gays get no compassion of any of the other feelings usually associated with sick people.

"Homosexuality is a phenomena — it's a part of society."

"If you're going to call it a sickness, you'd have to define sickness," Metzinger said. "That is just one recasting of a stereotype."

"Somewhere around the neighborhood of 95 per cent of the males in this country who are homosexual are brought up in the same environment as the other (straight) men," Heuer said. "That's one reason so many homosexuals repress their natural (gay) instincts," Heuer said, "they've been brought up in an environment that totally is against homosexuality."

"Society has an easier time with lumping gays into unhealthy molds — like saying all gays are effeminate," Metzinger said.

"People who don't fit into the mold are generally more threatening," Heuer said. "'Coming out' with their friends is usually better for a gay person."

"Just accept me as a person," Metzinger said. "I really get upset when people have preconceived notions because I'm gay."

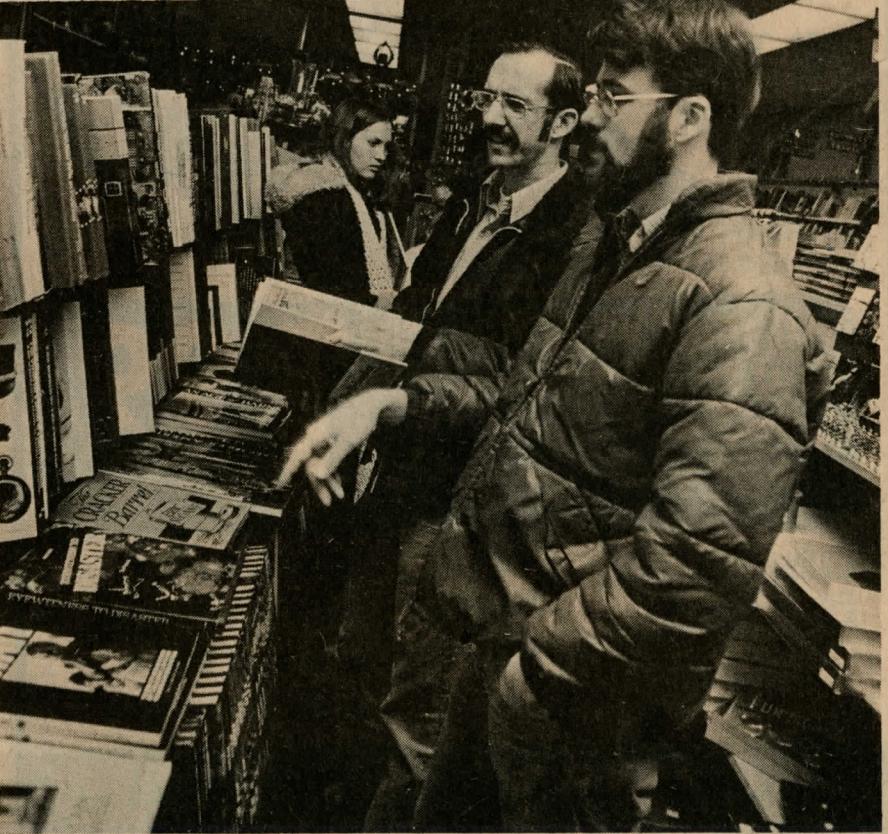
"Assume we have more in common with you than you think," Heuer said. "And then don't assume anything else."



The love life of Joe Metzinger and Jim Heuer takes on a varied dimension. In the photo above, Heuer (left) cooks beef stew while Metzinger prepares a place setting for some dinner guests. One of Metzinger's friends, in the photo at left, is Kathy Klatte, an I.U. student, who used to be Metzinger's girlfriend. But he broke up with her to become Heuer's lover. In the photo below they browse at a book-store in doing some Christmas shopping. And in the photo at lower left it's time for recreation, at the Kirkwood Bar, 212 W. Kirkwood Ave. One of their buddies is Tony Toliver (center).



photos/Bob Cohn
words/Mike Siroky



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—Jim Heuer