

Come out, come out wherever you are!

by Dan Mahoney

Being gay and being *out* are two very different stages of existence. The first entailed, at least for me, a realization that I was very different from what seemed at the time *everybody* else. The second stage meant the "ya, sure I'm different from others, but I'm going to *celebrate* that difference and not hide it in shame."

I look back on my years of coming out with mixed emotions. In my early years — 6 to 13 — I recall feeling strange sensations when seeing boys of the same age or older (yes, children *do* have sexual feelings). It was like that old cliché of "butterflies in the stomach." I soon learned to suppress these emotions through the wonderful institution of Catholicism. I diverted my energies to preserving my survival in the next life and explained away all the taunts and physical beatings from my peers as "my crosses to bear."

It was not until my late high school years (16 to 18) that I realized I was no longer able to transcend my oppression through a "leap of faith." Instead, lucky for me, I met two women who I learned were also coming out themselves, and they provided me with the much-needed

support I was certainly not receiving at my high school.

I learned that I was called a "homosexual" and that I was part of a despised and misunderstood group of people who experienced such phenomena as high suicide rates, gay bashing, and an insidious experience known as homophobia.

These were also the years I refer to as my "immersing years" where I discovered what I thought was the *Mecca* of bisexual, lesbian and gay culture — the bars. Once or twice a week I would descend upon the Church and Wellesley area and engage in the various rituals of bar hopping and cruising. In between these times I would resolve myself to a nice suburban home where I would engage in another ritual known as "passing" (pretending I was heterosexual).

Although these years were fun and carefree, they were also lonely and unfulfilled. Sure, I had my community downtown once or twice a week, but what about the rest of my life?

This is where I began my monumental years at York University where I *really* came out. My first and second years entailed a cautious step into the pool of student culture. Intellectualizing about this theory, discussing the

strategy of writing that essay. But that didn't seem to be enough. What about topics that were also personally relevant to me?

It was not until my third year at York that I was able to discuss those topics — mainly with other homosexual students through the Bisexual, Lesbian and Gay Alliance at York. This was the year I reached the pinnacle of my self-awareness and proudly displayed it (directly and indirectly) for all the world to see! I wrote articles in the *Bethune College Lexicon* (when it was the *Lexicon*), went to rallies, worked extensively with BLGAY, and felt, for the first time in my life, that I could *be myself!*

The came fourth year, when I entered the Faculty of Education. From the beginning it was a year of conformity and stringent readjustment. A year of living in fear of being discovered based on an academic program and career goal that did not address homophobia. After months of absolute fear and frustration which attributed to a lack of self-confidence, I withdrew from the program. This was a big step for me which took three months of soul-searching and sheer hell.

But my story doesn't end on an entirely unhappy note. After my withdrawal, two of my professors ap-

proached me and asked why I withdrew. It was at this point that I came out to them — I told them I was gay — and they responded by giving me a great deal of support. In addition, one of my professors helped me come up with a plan that would keep me in my program and enable me to feel comfortable and be out.

I guess you could say the moral of my story is one of hope and courage for all my bisexual, lesbian and gay brothers and sisters. Be proud of who you are and what you are, but most important, stand up for your right to express yourself without shame or fear. Trust me, you'll love yourself for it!

Some of my best friends are straight... A questionnaire on heterosexuality

by Dr. Alan K. Malyon thanks to Queer Nation

1. What do you think caused your heterosexuality?
2. When and how did you first decide you were a heterosexual?
3. Is it possible that your heterosexuality is just a phase that you will grow out of?
4. Is it possible that your heterosexuality stems from a neurotic fear of people of the same sex?
5. Heterosexuals have histories of failure in gay relationships. Do you think you may have turned heterosexual out of fear of rejection?
6. If you have never slept with a person of the same sex, how do you know you wouldn't prefer that?
7. If heterosexuality is normal, why are disproportionate numbers of mental patients heterosexual?
8. To whom have you disclosed your heterosexuality? How did they react?
9. Your heterosexuality doesn't offend me as long as you leave me alone, but why do so many heterosexuals try to seduce others into that orientation?
10. Most child molesters are heterosexual. Do you consider it safe to expose your children to heterosexuals? Heterosexual teachers, particularly?
11. Why must heterosexuals be so blatant, making a public spectacle of your heterosexuality? Can't you just be what you are and keep it quiet?
12. Heterosexual marriage has total societal support, yet the divorce rate continues to spiral. Why are there so few stable heterosexual relationships?
13. Since there are so few happy heterosexuals, techniques have been developed to help people change. Have you considered trying aversion therapy?
14. Could you trust a heterosexual therapist/counselor not to try to influence you to his/her own sexual leanings?
15. Do heterosexuals hate and/or distrust others of their own sex? Is that what makes them heterosexual?
16. A disproportionate number of criminals and other irresponsible types are heterosexual. So why would someone hire a heterosexual in a responsible position?
17. Why are heterosexuals so promiscuous? Why are they always having affairs?
18. How can you have a fully satisfying, deeply emotional or sexual experience with an opposite-sex person, when the obvious physical, biological, and temperamental differences are so vast? How can a man possibly understand what pleases a woman and vice versa?

