

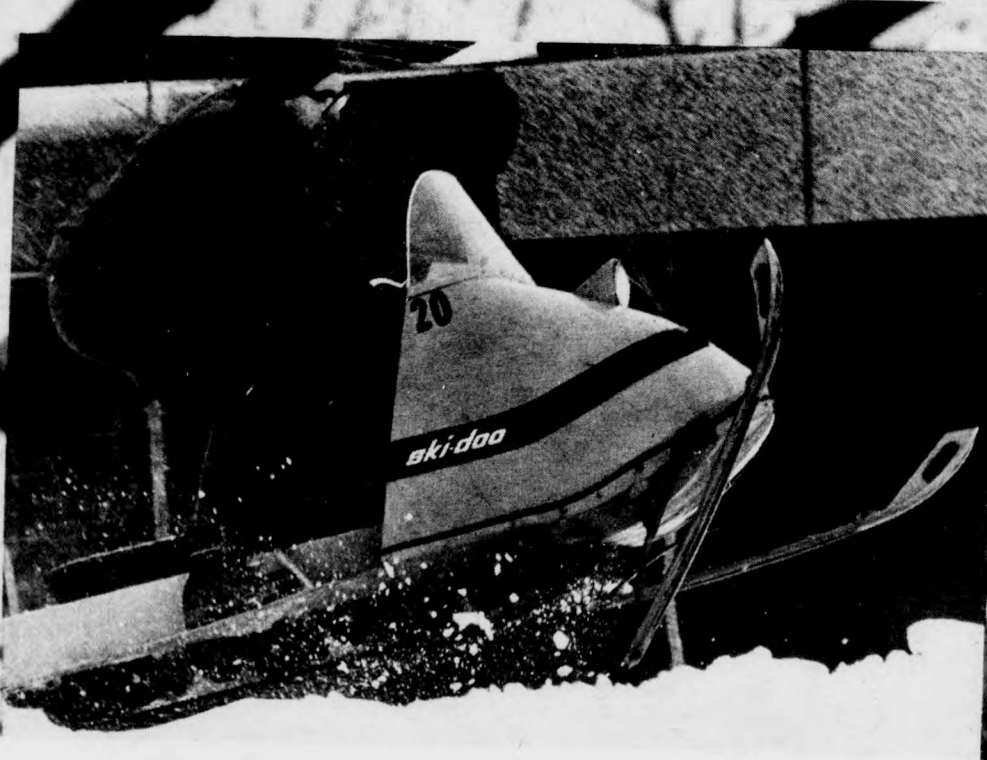


WINTER



AT

YORK



The homosexual as student: NO GUILT FOR THE GAY

Sheila Moore is City Editor of The Manitoban, the student newspaper of the University of Manitoba.

Why?

If the present legislation making homosexuality legal between consenting adults is passed, will it alter substantially the way you live?

A) Not immediately. Dangers of blackmail and social stigma will gradually lessen, I should think. Eventually we may be able to openly and honestly admit our homosexuality and not be forced to live covered lives.

B) Not at all. I don't think the social conditions will change during my lifetime anyway. Society will continue to regard the homosexual as a deviate, and I still won't be able to function honestly in society.

What is society's attitude to the homosexual?

A) I think it's in a process of change and is largely dependent on class. The upper class and the intellectual-social circles tend to be more tolerant. The working classes tend to be very intolerant, not only of homosexuality, but of any people or ideas which are unconventional.

B) The attitude of society is certainly a negative one, based on ignorance of what homosexuality really is. People regard it as a horrible disease, like leprosy. I don't think the attitude is changing. . .

You mentioned that most people don't understand what homosexuality really is. Would you like to give me your definition?

A) The initial thing, of course, is that the male homosexual is attracted to men. This doesn't mean simply carnal experience, which often doesn't enter into it.

More important is the homosexual's need for an emotional relationship with a man. The degree to which sex is important to a homosexual is as variable as the degree to which sex is important to a heterosexual. The one extreme, of course, is platonic love.

B) I agree. You know, I think homophilia is a better word than homosexuality. It means the love of one man for another man.

Are you saying homosexual relationships follow essentially the same pattern as heterosexual relationships?

A) Potentially they do. However, there is no legal state, such as marriage, for homosexuals. So relationships can be terminated very quickly, and usually are. There is nothing but the will of the two people involved to make the relationship work under obstacles.

Are you indifferent to women?

B) No, not at all. I'm not insensitive to beautiful women although the attraction I feel toward them is purely an aesthetic thing. I have one or two meaningful relationships with women who know I'm homosexual.

A) No. Some homosexuals feel a repugnance towards women and try to live in an exclusively male environment, but personally I think it would be ridiculous to ignore 50 percent of humanity.

How did you discover you were homosexual?

B) In my teens, I found I lacked the usual attraction to girls. It began to bother me when I would be with a group of guys who would be playing the 'standing on a street corner watching all the girls' game and I was completely disinterested. But I was noticing boys.

From that to my becoming aware that I was a homosexual was an arduous process of rationalization.

A) My experience was similar but less traumatic.

Which came first, the homosexual experience or the awareness that you were homosexual?

B) The awareness. There's all this thing about childhood experiences but I don't think they are as relevant as all that.

A) The awareness, by several years. I based that awareness on a simple analysis of whom I was attracted to. I never had any clear-cut fantasies about making love to a man (or to a woman either, for that matter). But I think I was an exception in this. Those intervening years I mentioned were very lonely ones.

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A) I felt I was the only boy who felt that way. If there were any homosexuals my age around, I didn't know where to look for them. So I kept my secret to myself.

B) Loneliness is something every homophile feels quite intensely. It comes from the frustration of not being able to express or manifest publicly what he really feels.

Do you experience any guilt feelings about being a homosexual?

A) Fortunately not, because I had the good luck to be raised by extremely tolerant parents who had few biases. What I mean is, there were no predetermined patterns for my life nor strong religious taboos. As a result, my first homosexual encounter was a very joyous and guiltless experience.

B) Not any more. I did initially, because of my strict religious upbringing. However, it soon became obvious to me that if there was any sin involved, it was exactly the fact of having guilt feelings.

The one commandment in the gospels is the commandment of love. It is illogical that any feelings of love should be sinful. This was one of the main reasons behind my leaving any established form of religion.

Is there such a thing as a homosexual underground?

B) There is such a thing. Generally, I think it is a refuge for misfits.

In Winnipeg homosexual circles, for instance, you keep on meeting the same people. And most of them I'd rather not be seen with.

But such groups are on the fringe. Most homosexuals don't belong because they just don't like the people they meet under those circumstances.

A) A lot of homosexuals do all their socializing with other homosexuals, mostly through private parties. And in any medium-sized city, (or larger) there are coffee-shops or bars where homosexuals can find others with their orientation. I don't belong because I don't care for most of the people who frequent such places.

I do have a number of homosexual friends, and we usually meet as an exclusive group, because we can be more

This is an interview with two homosexuals who are students. The goal: to find out how and why.

relaxed and open with one another. But it is our work and other interests which make us friends. We aren't there to seduce one another.

If you don't belong to the homosexual underground, how do you meet other homosexuals?

A) I gamble and I trust my intuition. If I'm attracted to a boy, I try to arrange to meet him. Then I try to lead the conversation in a direction which will tell me if he is gay. If he is, and he wants to let me know it, he will slip in ambiguous statements or else use words from the 'gay' jargon. If he doesn't respond, I try to forget him.

B) I usually rely on introductions from 'gay' friends.

What about your relationships with 'straight' people?

B) When I feel a friendship is developing with someone who is 'straight', I will generally make my tendencies known to him, particularly when someone has trusted me and confided in me. It makes the relationship less inhibited. There is no room for hypocrisy in friendship.

A) I don't think any individual can have more than a few deep friendships at one time. If my relationship with a girl or a 'straight' boy has the potential to be meaningful, I feel an obligation to let the person know I'm a homosexual since it explains so many of my attitudes and so much of my behavior.

What do you think caused your homosexuality?

B) Environment, parental relations in the pre-school years.

A) I can see various events in my early years which could have intensified my inclinations, but I feel that the roots were already there.

Have you ever considered going to a psychiatrist about your homosexuality?

A) No, because I have a stable personality. I've always been able to cope with my problems. If I did go to a psychiatrist it would not be for a 'cure', but only for a more complete adjustment to a basic factor in my psychology.

B) No. Why should I? I honestly don't think I'm abnormal, perverted, or sick. Going to a psychiatrist would imply that there's something wrong with me. If there is, it doesn't really bother me.



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