

by Robin Metcalfe

The position of the couple in modern gay life is a curious paradox. Pairs of famous lesbian and gay lives are among our most cherished institutions. David and Jonathan, Ruth and Naomi, the Ladies of Llangollen, Edward Carpenter and George Merrill, Oscar and Bosie, Gertrude and Alice, Don Bachardy and Christopher Isherwood: all are emblems of the possibility of love between women and between men.

There is something special about the ideal of the gay couple that sets it apart from its heterosexual counterpart. If married women have too often been seen as appendages to their husbands, the lesbian or gay couple is a partnership between two people who are, at least in terms of gender, socially equal. Indeed, Walt Whitman, the great American poet

weight on the relationship than it can bear. At the same time, we need the affirmation of a broader community. Who among us has not at some time felt excluded from a conversation in school or the workplace about girlfriends and boyfriends, about "wife and kids"; the kind of casual exchange of personal information that humanizes social relations?

Even the display of simple affection in public — the touch on the shoulder, the held hand that heterosexual couples practice without thinking about it — becomes for lesbians and gays an act fraught with extreme anxiety and potential physical danger. Every time we refrain from touching, or remain silent about, someone we care for, we deny that person any place in the shared world of work, leisure or family, and kill a part of ourselves.



and long-time lover of streetcar driver Peter Doyle, saw in "the dear love of comrades" a model for broader democratic virtues.

The visible gay world in North America, however, is overwhelmingly one of (apparently) single men. This does not demonstrate the non-existence of gay male couples (or of lesbians) so much as their invisibility. Our most public institutions are areas of sexual pursuit. Gay men tend to retire from "public life" while in a couple relationship.

There is a belief widely held, even among gay men themselves, that we are deficient in the qualities that make long-term relationships possible. Ironically, those who most loudly accuse us of being incapable of forming "stable" relationships do their utmost to destabilize the relationships we have. Adapting to social pressures, gay men and lesbians tend to live with a profound split between their private and public lives. This double existence is corrosive to one's sense of self-worth, and can be devastating to a relationship.

No matter how personal and private we may feel our love relationships to be, they need to have a public dimension if they are not to suffocate. Partners who turn inward and create a separate world for their love can begin to lose their individual identities, and to put more

It is during times of crisis that denial cuts most deeply. During illness, separation and death we need the support and understanding of those around us. How often are gays denied access to their lovers' hospital rooms because they are not "immediate family"? How many have been excluded from their lovers' funerals? In death as well as in life, straight society conspires to cut apart the gay couple.

When we celebrate and affirm the lesbian or gay couple, however, let's not buy into straight society's view that long-term coupledom is the guarantee of emotional maturity. The veneration of holy matrimony covers a multitude of sins, as the statistics on wife battering and child abuse attest. Those who hope that the AIDS crisis will result in more and longer "marriages" among gays tend to ignore the question of whether or not two people should be together in the first place.

It is true that relationships require hard work and commitment, and that a "disposable" mentality in this as in other areas robs us of life's riches.

However, people often make inappropriate choices of partners. The lack of social bonds holding the lesbian or gay couple together also makes it mercifully easier to dissolve when the problems are too great to overcome.

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Once having conquered the fear represented by day We leave the night-shadowed womb and cannot turn back to face the fear that we will be reborn to once again conquer ourselves in the light.

It is a measure of our corruption that we cannot face ourselves in the light. I have relegated that corruption to the night.

Shadows are soul-deep troubles peering into day. We all must hide shadows to experience truth and day.

Ignorance becomes fear and then destroys itself. Change is the root of all fear it kills that which came before it So that once again we can stand in the light.

Nathan Elling (written at age 14)

# Pink Junior — 'So ein Wunder'

by George

And there I was in Germany, without a German to talk to. Sound strange? It was frustrating to see them everywhere and not be able to guess what went on inside their teutonic skulls. The city itself was just the right size, with about the same population as Halifax. There should have been ample opportunity, yet I couldn't muster the confidence to turn to my neighbour on the strassenbahn and offer to be their Canadian friend.

I finally happened upon an announcement urging any interested persons to attend a young gay and lesbian group, not far from where I was staying. 'Eureka' I thought (or 'so ein Wunder' as my professor would have preferred). I knew there had to be gay Germans somewhere. With a limited grasp of the language and a vague sense of fraternity, I made my way to the Goethestrasse.

Pink Jr., as the group was called, was one of a number of groups to participate in the city's 'gay days' last fall. Along with serving young gays and lesbians as a genuine support group, Pink Jr. has also managed to keep in touch with a number of other gay organizations in the Federal Republic. During the sixteen day celebration, participants attended various discussion

groups and seminars on topics ranging from AIDS and safer sex to fascism's abuse of homosexuals. A special film series included such titles as "The Times of Harvey Milk."

It is appropriate that the group makes use of the Pink Triangle as its symbol, a designation used by Hitler's Germany to identify camp prisoners as homosexual. According to Heinz Heger's account in *The Men with the Pink Triangle*, the badges were sometimes twice as large to single out gays for abuse.

In light of the bad old days, the gay community in Germany appears to have come a long way, and the pink triangle has become

an internationally recognized symbol. Despite our impression of a liberal European attitude towards sexuality, however, I was surprised to find that the problems faced by gays and lesbians in Germany, as well as the stereotypes and misconceptions, are strikingly parallel to our own. In this way was I able to identify with the young people I met at Pink Jr., and yes... even made a German friend or two.

# LET US NOW PRAISE FAGS AND DYKES, or how many metaphors to climb

by Dan Hart

Oi yea. Oi yea! Take heed all ye breeders who procreate in the slime of the earth! A Molotov cocktail of AIDS, anger and surging self-confidence (as well as a few ingredients only we understand) is now popular among dykes and fags everywhere. This potent brew causes a strange euphoria which insists that (Draw a big breath now!) there is nothing wrong with us. Sounds like paranoid self-delusion, I concede, but there you have it. Furthermore, this same potent brew makes the celebrant testy, yea, cocky even, I say. Ever aware of how little pictures make the Big Picture, I'm claiming this space to profile this fermented frenzy through glimpses of the latter-day dyke/fag ethos, with an eye on what it bodes for the future. For the myope, I prescribe a change of attitude about "HOMOSEXUALITY!" now, while time and property values are on your side.

On this property value/public sector theme, you should perhaps know that plans are being laid to invade your shade-filled parks, as soon as weather permits. You see, the practising (sic) "HOMO!" insists on explicit strolls through parks and public places, flagrantly arm-in-arm with lover or friend in the broad light of day! And you thought we had a nighttime obsession. Get hip. Indeed, beware all ye bouncers. Even now, your sacred dance-floors are being crowded with same-sex disco bunnies and

hares, who must bop, don't you know. And, retailers! A "FRUIT!" is presently irradiating your store, the sexuality of which is guaranteed to flake and bubble the preservative of your thin "HETRO!" veneer.

Truth be known, we are leaving the subcultural ghetto (all that in-breeding gets a little messy) and we're heading downtown. For the bartender's sake, spare us the joke about the "PANSY!" and the Pink Lady: it's stale and the drink of choice is scotch. By the by, perhaps this is the juncture where I might perform yet another public service, by using my modest existence to contest a few endearing, but nevertheless antique, myths. Personally, I have mixed feelings about all servicemen, whether of the utility or the armed forces variety. I don't hate womyn. Indeed, my mother was a womyn... and she never fancied me the daughter she never had. I don't own a pink anything and my wrists are hearty, though your concern is touching, thank you. I have no burning desire to tease hair. Judy Garland doesn't make me orgasm. (Opinions expressed are those of the author only.)

If my scatter-shot approach can claim to make a real point, it is that more dykes and fags than you can shake a Louisville slugger at are the constituents of a kind of New Jerusalem of gay and lesbian sensibility. If it is true that New York's "Stonewall Riots", in the late Sixties, mark the beginning of current gay pride and militance, then we are the next generation.

Like post-modernists everywhere, we agree with, dissent from and critique all over, the past. Truth be known (and this is exclusive, inside dope, I'm sharing now), there is little real "HOMO-GENEITY!" among lesbians and gays. (Yet another cloning myth bites the big one. Will this merciless outpouring of fact and not fiction never end?) Beyond the basic same-sex configuration and a little codified, in-house behaviour, the same factions exist in our clubhouse as exist in your own. Among other things, some of us do sleep with placards and ideas. Some of us just want to get laid. You show me your spectrum, I'll show you mine.

A great tribute to human resilience rests in just how "normal" so many "QUEERS!" have survived to be. You tried, as best you might, to segregate and disavow, but you failed. Breeder dear, unbeknownst to you, a "FAG!" lurks within a condoms-throw of wherever you presently read, at once menacing and nonchalant, patiently waiting. We are insidious, slowly filling the rational vacuum of your exclusionary ways, always more assertive, a protean blob absorbing the energy of every violence and wrong, only to become stronger. Keep a watchful eye Mr and Ms Hetero. At least ten per cent of all you're guys is us guys, altogether. And we're here to stay. Hell, we're bound to proliferate. Somehow.



# Her mother's daughter

by Tina

The following is an excerpt from my journal which I was asked to keep for a class last term. I found it much easier to express myself after having disclosed my sexual orientation. Here, I was to talk about my mother and those qualities in her I admire:

There is something I would like to share. It will make writing in this journal much easier and will help to explain the special relationship my mother and I have. What I want to share is the fact of my sexual preference: I am a lesbian.

Coming out can often be a scary thing, a nagging thing you've got to get over with but keep putting off for that perfect moment. Until, of course, you find yourself in a bind and "trying to get out of this one!" Anyhow, it's a time when you find out who your real friends are and, in this case, it tests relations with parents.

I told my mother. Her initial

reaction was to cry and to ask where she went wrong. I quickly got that "straightened" out by making her realize that it was no one's "fault". After an emotional marathon, the ordeal was, for the moment, over. My mother was more than understanding and accepting. My happiness is her main concern: she has come to realize that this is where it's at for me. Deep inside, she still has that slight hope that I will change, but admits that this belongs to her natural, maternal instinct.

My mother and I have always had a very close relationship. Coming out to her was a big accomplishment for me — it took a lot off my mind. Today, we joke about it. It means the world to me that she's proud of me, that I have her full support and love. Despite the difficulties in the beginning, the initial pain and fear, it was all worthwhile. Having an understanding parent, who accepts me for what I am (normal, after all), makes me fortunate. I hope that others are equally fortunate.

# Absolute Differences

by Nathan Elling

I've spoken at a number of conferences about the difficulty of being gay. Most of the time it's a straight audience trying to come to terms with our "lifestyle". The questions centre around subculture, AIDS and the recent political action in the province. People are trying to understand why we're gay and how we "fit" in the scheme of things. The problem is that most straight people are unwilling to admit that they are incapable of understanding our perspective, that "understanding" is in fact not what we're looking for. We want straight people to come to an acceptance.

An acceptance of gays and lesbians is not an adoption of "our ways", neither is it an attempt to view the world in the same way that we do. Acceptance occurs when a per-

son is respectful enough of another to allow her or him the opportunity to express himself as they choose. Just as men can never fully understand womyn, straights can never understand lesbians and gays. The difference is that men must learn to live with womyn and allow them their expression, whereas straights do not believe that they need to learn to live with us. For many straights respecting us in any way is done out of charity more than acceptance.

Harvey Milk, a gay hero, once said, "If we are not free to express ourselves in that greatest human expression, love, then we are not truly free." If straights do not learn to live with gays and lesbians better than they have they will be restricting themselves as well in the full expression of love. Lesbians and gays make up 10 per cent of

the population. Many are the friends, family and even heroes of the straights who read this article. It bewilders me that people can be so blind and know the people around them so little that they miss out on such an important trait. It saddens me that when they do learn of someone's homosexuality that it's the stereotypes and not the real person that instantly takes over the relationship.

Perhaps we do compromise our integrity by being cautious with our sexuality. Then again we won't be discriminated against if there's nothing to bring it upon us. Womyn, Blacks, and Natives can't hide their "deviance" from the norm. Religious groupings can usually be identified with the symbols of their faith. Any visible minority can be singled out and be discriminated against either subtly or

directly. Most of the minorities have legal protection and someone to complain to if there is just cause. Lesbians and gays don't have options. There are no social, legal or political barriers to discrimination against us. Thus, many of us hide.

While it's true that straights do not have to accept anyone, they have benefited from the introduction of new ideas and culture before. There is no reason that gays and lesbians have to interact with straights either. We maintain our own forms of sub-cultural outlets. We remain the same people that we were before others know that we were gay. We remain your friends, family and heroes. We still offer the same things we did when the relationships were strong. It only follows that we should want the privileges afforded us before the stereotypes take over.