

## Notes from School

by Guen Gifford

Being a lesbian in high school can be bearable these days, especially compared to the stories of how things were twenty, even ten years ago. I'm fortunate to know people who are gay whom I like and approve of. I try to absorb enough affirmation from them to keep myself whole in my head, since I'm not really a full person in most of my school life.

In a way I feel like I shouldn't find fault in conditions today, since I haven't been beaten up in the locker room or ostracized or harassed for not hiding the fact that I'm gay. But now that I can exist and not fear much for my physical and mental wellbeing, I can begin to see farther, to notice all the small manifestations of prejudice.

Although things have improved a lot in recent years, people still basically avoid dealing with the fact that I'm gay. Even those who know officially - and others who must have guessed by now - don't bring it up, and get very quiet when I do. I don't want to think that people don't care about my experience. But I do think that some are scared to be concerned about what is still a taboo subject to a lot of people. After all, white people can feel strongly and speak out about, say, civil rights in South Africa - no one is going to accuse them of being black. (Some day people will also have to stop letting the guilt-by-association ploy scare them off, but for now it is still a very real threat.)

Also, I think that my straight classmates and teachers have no concept of how it is to be reminded at every turn of the differences between our emotional and intellectual worlds. I feel it every time some kid yells "Aw shut up, you fag" down the hall. Every time my English teacher talks about the proverbial gallant gentleman carrying off his lady love as if there were no other option for either of the two lovers. And he jokes that any female employer insulted by a letter addressed Dear Sir "probably has a full moustache and combat boots and you wouldn't want to work for her anyway." (Yes, that is a direct quote.)

In other words, all feminists are doomed to be bitchy, unlikeable Amazon dikes - certainly an undesirable fate. I resort to writing furious notes in the margin of my notebook.

I feel it when I sit through weeks of birth control discussions in Health class. I think birth control is a very important issue, but I resent the underlying assumption that every one of us is heterosexual. I dream of raising my hand and requesting a pass to the cafeteria. "Seeing as I'm a lesbian, this really doesn't interest or concern me directly," I'd say as they brought out the broom handle for condom demonstration.

I feel it when our soccer coach includes a charming little summary of our high school years in a lecture on being responsible. "First you rode to practice on your bicycles, now you have cars. And with cars come boyfriends, and then parties, and difficult decisions." (I wonder - do girlfriends lead to the same dangers?)

I feel it when people, even friends who know I'm gay and seem accepting, complain about a stupid assignment, "Oh, this is so queer!" Or scorn some particularly obnoxious classmate, "He's such a queer."

Even if I forget how much I censor my comments and jokes, even if I remind myself of what understanding and support has come my way, even if I try to appreciate the perspective I have gained on our society by being part of a minority, I still see a lot to change for the next generation of young gay men and women.

We need to feel comfortable speaking out when we are young, and we need to end this isolation from our peers. Being here now it seems impossible, but when I look back at what today's adults lived through as gay youth, I see that progress does happen. I'll try to remember that in school tomorrow.

## Social Alternatives

There's a new organization for Gay People in Vermont called Vermont Gay Social Alternatives (VGSA). The group was formed "to promote social events that will not only bring together gays from the same or neighboring communities, but also statewide," and to provide more occasions for gay people to gather socially, "thus bringing about a stronger gay community in Vermont."

For additional information, contact Real Masson, Director of VGSA at 893-6935, or write (with SASE) to VGSA, PO Box 277, Winooski, Vermont 05404-0277.

## ▼ Pride Day 1990

Get out your calendars and flip ahead to June, because plans are already underway for Lesbian-Gay Pride Day 1990, which will take place on June 23. Activities will be starting on the State House lawn in Montpelier.

Two planning meetings have already taken place on February 3rd and March 18th. Anyone interested in being part of the Planning Committee, in sharing some ideas, or in sending a donation, call Keith Goslant at 454-8552 or Ronnie Bancroft at 223-8929, or write to VLGC Attn: Ronnie Bancroft, PO Box 1125, Montpelier, Vermont 05602.

## Women's Raffle

Burlington's Women Helping Battered Women are holding a raffle with tickets for sale from March 15 - May 12, 1990 (Mom's Day). The \$40,000 raised will end a three-year, \$200,000 Capital Campaign. 450 tickets are being sold at \$100 each with a one in ten chance of winning some nifty prizes - Le Grande Prize being a new Ford Tempo courtesy of Nordic Ford. Call 658-3131 for more information.

### Workshop:

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