



Photo Hugh Coyle

Middlebury's g/l/b alumni meet informally with college officials and students.

President McCardell described his view of the role of alumni in Middlebury's future by envisioning "everybody in the same tent, belonging to the same group, working for a common purpose." He also invited the alumni to "come back to Middlebury often" and, in a moment of unintended humor, "to come out...to see us when we're on the road in your area."

After an informal brunch and picture-taking session, the second panel convened in the School's Dana Auditorium. Here, six alumni shared with the crowd their personal stories of life at Middlebury and beyond.

Recollections of coming out of the closet linked the tales and reinforced the underlying assertion that each person's emergence as a gay or lesbian person was different, that there was and is no single gay or lesbian "lifestyle" but a wonderfully diverse range of possibilities within each identity. The group also settled the fears of those who might still be experiencing problems with their sexual identities while at Middlebury, claiming that no matter how dark or depressing it might seem while in school, "there is life as a gay person after Middlebury."

In a symbolic moment, one of the students in

the audience rose during the question and answer period to tell of his friendship with one of the panelists and how it had troubled him to learn that she was a lesbian. (He admitted to having had a crush on her while they were students together.) He explained that he too had to take time to understand his friend's sexuality, echoing a previous statement that the "coming out" process can be difficult and long-lasting for friends of gay and lesbian people as well. Finally, he reaffirmed his friendship with her and hoped that she might understand his previous difficulties so that they might once more enjoy the close relationship they had shared.

The weekend was full of such personal moments, reinforcing the notion that for many this was indeed a time of reconciliation and reconnection with Middlebury and a healthy step forward for the College community as it continues to address issues of diversity on campus. It also afforded those like Sandra Levine to revisit their pasts here and to discover that, as Levine once wrote as a student, "I had not found myself; my self had found me."

Those alumni returning to Middlebury for this event have now had a chance to find one another. With that comes renewed hopes for the future of gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals not only as students on campus, but as welcome members of the entire Middlebury



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