

Reflections on Faerie Land

by Bo Young

PUTNEY — About forty men gathered at a beautiful Vermont farmhouse owned by an even more beautiful man named London (and yes...there is a Big Ben!) on a Friday night in Putney. My friends and I arrived from New York City by dinner time, and a big pot of vegetarian gumbo bubbled on the stove while a full flight of faeries bubbled away in the kitchen.

Ahhh...home!

In case you are unfamiliar with Faerie ways, let me say that being a Faerie is a project in queer spirituality. Harry Hay's *subject-Subject consciousness* is integral. We have developed, fostered, and adopted ways of interaction to create that kind of community. These include the Consensus Process, the Gathering, and the Heart Circle, but it is also the way that we name ourselves and each other; our appreciation of spontaneity; the way we cook, clean, work, and play; and the way we perform our communal rituals. Many of these ways have been adopted from Wiccan and Native American cultures. Our community is, we believe, very much a tribe.

We had a Circle after dinner, with new men arriving all through the night from Maine, New Hampshire, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and all points in Vermont.

The farmhouse is approximately 200 years old in parts. A back staircase "secret passage" leads through the pantry up to the second floor, where we all settled in for the evening. A large room above the kitchen warmth served as a dormitory in one wing, with other bedrooms housing collections of two, three, or four men.

Ahhh...men!

Endora and Tim, Bambi, Agnes and Gabriel, Moon, Matt, and Sam... We Circled in this lovely sitting room that also housed Thoreau's writing desk. We turned out the lights and set out plates on a table in the center of the room with four votive candles for the four directions.

At the end of the Heart Circle, we stood and put our hands out in front of us and made the circle of fingers flutter (a difficult task for faeries, as you might imagine). The candles cast flickering shadows in a circle on the ceiling.

Everyone settled in to their respective sleeping quarters, and the general nesting quieted about 3 a.m. ... not that I could hear anything with Moon's thigh pressed warmly against my ear, you understand.

Moon and I woke to clouded morning sunlight as it reflected off the snow drift outside our window into the pink-flowered wallpapered room. I went to the kitchen and started cooking biscuits and scrambled eggs for the household.

Sleepy-eyed men arrived in dribbles around the table, sucking up coffee and teas and peeling bananas and tangerines from a large pile of fresh fruit. Breakfast segued into lunch, and at about 1:00, everyone who hadn't yet seen "the Land" piled into four-wheel drive vehicles and headed off to see the 160+ acres that this Circle is intent on buying.

It has been difficult since the last site was stolen from us by a double-dealing real estate agent who didn't want to sell to queers and found a last-minute buyer to filch the land away from us. We had called our land "Destiny Lodge." The resolve to lay claim to land somewhere for "Faerie Destiny Lodge" has reached a fervid pitch.

Ahhh...land!

We have about \$15,000 in the bank. The land is priced at about \$69,000. There are no structures; it is completely undeveloped. The price is steep, but then what land wouldn't be in Vermont? It has sufficient plateaus for structures, and sugar maples for syrup as a possible cottage industry. Can you imagine the label?

President Bambi and Endora and Gabriel have done research and determined that we will have to do a water percolation study, pave a 50-foot easement to the

property, drill a well, and bring in a telephone line and basic power. It's a lot of work, but we can plan and do the work in a way that honors the land. That's the Faerie way.

Some thirty of us tromped around in knots of five and six, up and down the hillside through two feet of snow, yoo-hooing to those who had taken other routes for exploration.

At 5:00 we headed out through the muck and mire of the darkened Vermont woods to the local white-clapboard Grange Hall. About 25 of us cooked up New England Yankee Bean Casserole and corn pudding in the huge kitchen. Salad and good breads were also included.

We Circled later to talk about the land. The time has come for this Circle to make the commitment to the land and its purchase. It was decided that we would put up \$1,000 to hold the property for a limited time while we put together the rest of the money. We would either put up or shut up, basically, and lose the earnest money if we were unable to close the deal.

Like Faeries everywhere, the New England Faeries desperately need a place to Gather. It is important to create a network of safe havens for gay people to Gather and explore their spiritual, creative, and erotic beings. It is untenable that in all of the northeastern states there is no secure place to Gather! No bank is going to loan or mortgage on undeveloped property, and certainly not to Faeries. Developed property in the area is beyond our means. We don't think the money for this property is beyond our means, however...and we are asking for our brothers' and sisters' help.

Ahhh...money!

If you believe in Faeries, clap your hands all you want, but send money, honey. All it will take is for 112 people to decide to buy an acre — \$458 — and the land is ours, all of ours. If you can help out, send your checks (made out to "Destiny") to:

Destiny Lodge

PO Box 8175

Burlington Vermont 05402-8175

Donations are kharmically deductible to the fullest extent of the universe.

College Leaders Gather to "Walk the Talk"

by Hugh Coyle

WINOOSKI — The Vermont College Student Personnel Association recently held its Spring meeting at St. Michael's College. The day's presentations, collectively entitled "Walk the Talk," focused on how college staff members could better meet the needs of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered students.

Following a morning business meeting, the group listened to a panel of g/l/b/t students discussing their own experiences. Mike Gorman, a Residence Director at Castleton State College, moderated the presentation, which included representatives from Castleton, Champlain, Saint Michael's, Middlebury, and UVM. Gorman stressed that college staff members needed to take action on these issues, saying "just attending a workshop, wearing a pin, or putting a book on the bookshelf is not enough."

The students addressed a number of ongoing concerns, most notably the incredible pressures and responsibilities that each bears on his or her campus. In addition to managing their own heavy academic workloads, the students are often saddled with leading and coordinating the school's g/l/b/t group and responding to crises and incidents when they occur. Quite often, the college administration relies heavily on these students to handle the work around g/l/b/t issues.

One student noted the irony that comes from such a role, stating that a large number of students are only just coming out, and many are still not out to their friends and families back home. "We're being thrust into a community and immediately being asked to serve as representatives of that community," he said of his role on campus. "I'm not fully done with my own homophobia."

While panelists acknowledged that recent trends toward "political correctness" on college campuses had played a role in quieting homophobic attacks and hate speech, they also warned that "even though we may not be able to hear it, it's still being said. It's just been modified to make it more pretty or PC or socially acceptable."

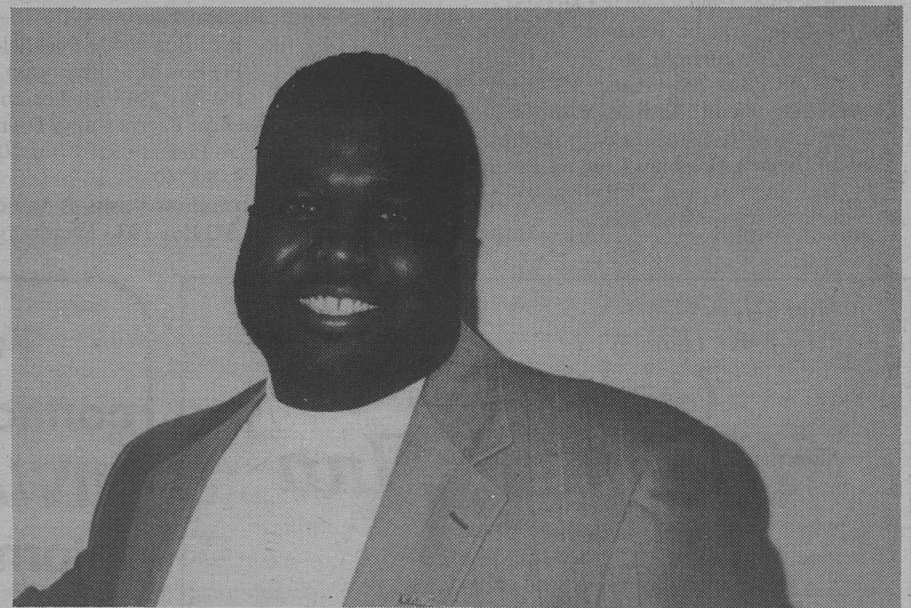
The same student recounted an experience he had while addressing a classroom on g/l/b/t issues recently.

"Their faces were blank," he said, likening their mental state to a "crippling coma." Rather than responding with curiosity, questions, or simple respect, students at schools have not been responding at all when such issues are raised. Their indifference was linked to a passive form of tolerance often dictated by the politically correct. Students and staff alike saw this as a trap of sorts, often preventing students from understanding the logic behind the acceptance of g/l/b/t people.

In the afternoon session, guest speaker Dr. Jamie Washington spoke further about the need for knowledge, understanding, and skills before students or staff members can take serious action on g/l/b/t issues. Washington serves as the Vice President for Student Affairs and the Coordinator of Multicultural Affairs at the University of Maryland in Baltimore County.

In a dynamic personal style, Washington led the group through a series of concepts relating to g/l/b/t people and their issues on college campuses. He also spoke strongly about the role of allies at colleges and universities and invited those in attendance to seriously consider their own motives and expectations for serving in that capacity. He explained that if a white staff member stands up for black students, no one assumes that he or she is black, and that if a man stands up for women's rights, no one assumes that he is a woman. But if a staff or faculty member stands up for g/l/b/t people, assumptions are quickly made about the sexual orientation of the ally.

By the end of the day, those in attendance had received a powerful and effective crash course on issues affecting g/l/b/t students in their college years. Representa-



Dr. Jamie Washington presented a breath-taking overview of gay, lesbian, and transgendered issues at the spring meeting of the Vermont College Student Personnel Association. (photo by Hugh Coyle)

tives from various statewide groups such as the Vermont Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights, Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, *Out in the Mountains*, the Vermont Bisexual Network, Vermont CARES, and the Transgender Radical Action, Network, and Support group were also on hand to meet with the educators.

In his introduction, Washington asked attendants to witness the words he lives by: "We as individuals did not create oppression; it's not our fault. However, we as individuals must accept responsibility for creating change." His inspiring presentation served as an urgent step forward toward fulfilling that goal. ▼