

# STONEHENGE TO STONEWALL

Or Gay History In A Nutshell

## Don't Come Knockin' If The Temple Starts Rockin'

BY CHARLES EMOND

Last month, I promised a discussion of sex in a cave. Then I checked out what Neanderthal people actually looked like in my encyclopedia; I'm not so sure we want to go there. No matter who was involved, sex can't have been a pretty sight and I consider it a miracle that our species survived!

What we actually know about same-sex activity in the prehistoric era corresponds with what we know about any sexual activity during that period. Zilch. The only reason we even know they had sex is because we are here and that's about it. To their credit, prehistoric people did leave some cultural clues around, but even professionals take comfort in knowing that Joe Neanderthal won't come back and laugh at them.

One of the most interesting clues that I've come across is a description of a prehistoric cave painting showing a group of male dancers in a state of sexual arousal. The absence of women suggests that, unless they knew something we don't, this was probably not about procreation. More than likely, it was spiritual.

In *Blossom of Bone*, Randy Conner links the mystical realm with homoeroticism and gender variance — a whole new idea for those of us brought up Catholic. Conner shows this connection enduring through the ages in Egyptian rituals, Greek and Roman temples, even into the Christian church.

Androgyny is a strong element in early legends and is probably connected to the creation story developed in prehistoric cultures. Even the Jewish Bible says in Genesis 1:27 that "God created man (humans) in His own image...male and female he created them." But it isn't until Genesis 2:22 that He makes the first woman out of Adam's rib?

So for a while there, androgyny reigned.

### By the Rivers of Babylon

From the earliest societies for which we have records, there are reports of men having sex with men and women having sex with women — often with ritualistic or religious significance attached. Some cultures regarded semen as the essence of male energy and blood the essence of female energy. Both fluids were considered magical substances.

In ancient Babylon, the goddess Inanna or Ishtar was a sacred prostitute served by gender-variant women, probably lesbians. She was also served by men who let their hair grow long, wore colorful necklaces, sang, danced and performed magic (Sounds to me like a typical night at a gay bar!). The Babylonians believed that these priests and priestesses carried magical power in their bodies. Male worshippers came into intimate contact with the goddess by having anal intercourse with her priests.

Similarly, the main goddess of the Canaanites — neighbors of the Israelites — was Athirat, an aquatic goddess linked to erotic pleasure. She was the consort of Baal, who was often depicted as a golden calf. He was served in turn by a "gracious lad who sang to him in a sweet voice." And you thought Hollywood invented the "straight woman with a gay best friend" scenario...

The "qedishim" were gender-variant priests who served Athirat and Baal. They dressed in long sleeved multicolored caftans (stylish!) and may have worn veils. They maintained the temple grounds, created pottery, wove cloth, and made it rain. They were also charged with participating in same-sex rituals with male worshippers. Priestesses called "qedeshtu" used dildoes to do the same with with female worshippers.

The deities' obvious approval

of same-sex activity probably meant a rather free expression of it in ordinary life up to this point in time.

### Then Along Came Charlton Heston

You can well imagine how the Israelites felt! In their temple, they had some commandments and dreary hymns, while in the temple right next door, worshippers were going at it and having a gay old time! Guess which congregation didn't have to run bingo games to survive? So the Israelites, pardon the expression, mounted a lengthy, difficult campaign against neighbouring priests and temples and finally prevailed in eliminating or converting them.

Looking at these earliest cultures offers a glimpse into that cave somewhere in southern France where sex between members of the same sex, while obviously not procreative, was religious or spiritual in some way. It was perhaps a part of initiation rites, ritual drama, or an act of connection to gods and goddesses of a particular pantheon. It was actually a higher path, if you will, and that is a positive note to end on. Hey, life in a cave had a plus side after all!

### Homework

This month's suggested reading: *Blossom of Bone*: Randy Conner, Harper San Francisco 1993. I heartily recommend this book if you have any interest at all in "reclaiming the connections between homoeroticism and the sacred." It is both well written and fascinating.▼

Charlie Emond has a bachelor's degree from Queens College and master's degrees from Dartmouth and Keene State. He teaches college history courses in Springfield, VT, including one he developed: *Hidden From History: Homosexuality in Western Civilization*.

## Stay Healthy Naturally AT THE ONION RIVER CO-OP.

The Onion River Co-op has a wide variety of vitamin supplements, herbal extracts and homeopathic remedies to help you stay healthy this cold & flu season. If you already have a cold or the flu, natural remedies along with bed rest and plenty of fluids will help alleviate symptoms. Here's a sample of what we carry:

	<b>Source Naturals</b>
	<b>St. John's Wort</b>
	300 mg. 60 ct.
	SALE \$6.75 30% off!
	<b>Zand Zinc Lozenges</b>
	SALE \$1.25 25% off!
	<b>Olympian Labs Ginkgo</b>
	SALE \$6.99 Over 40% off!

Over 1,500 supplements to choose from!  
Feeling better doesn't have to cost a lot.

**ONION RIVER FOOD CO-OP**

A community-owned natural market  
CELEBRATING 27 YEARS

274 North Winooski Avenue, Burlington 863-3659  
New Hours! Mon-Sat. 9-9 • Sun. 11-8  
Visa/Mastercard/ATM/EBT Accepted

★ phoenix rising ★  
- spirited jewelry & gifts - ★

★ When your heart speaks, take good notes. ★

★ 104 main street, one flight up ★ montpelier 802.229.0522

*The Spa*  
A WOMEN'S PLACE

Indoor pool, exercise room, whirlpool, massage, beautiful accommodations for wholistic health & spiritual healings.

Book your workshop here!

RICHMOND, VERMONT  
(802) 434-2037, 434-5224  
EMAIL: THESPAVT@AOL.COM



Quite Simply...  
The finest collection of Furniture, Carpeting & Accessories in Vermont

**Rutland House Ltd.**


162 south main street rutland, vermont 05701 (802) 775-2911

rtes 11/30 ½ in the heart of manchester center, vermont (802) 362-2001


from all over vermont: (800) 649-2911



Whether You're Looking For A Home In The Country Or A Townhouse In The City, Give Bill A Call.



*Above the Crowd!*



Bill Desautels  
RE/MAX North Professionals  
802-655-3333 X17  
800-639-4520 X17



JACQUELINE MARINO  
Senior Associate REALTOR®

(802) 878-0095 EXT 23 BUS., (802) 878-6288 FAX  
(800) 488-5609 TOLL FREE  
jackie@together.net E-MAIL

**COLDWELL BANKER**

REALTY MART  
288 WILLISTON RD  
WILLISTON, VT 05495

Each Office Is Independently Owned And Operated.