WELCOME BACK, STUDENTS!
KNOXVILLE—THE TOWN THAT WOULDN'T GO AWAY...
SEE INSIDE FOR WHAT YOU MISSED THIS SUMMER...
INTERVIEW WITH DWIGHT KESSEL
THE DISH FROM KNOXVILLE'S TRUE QUEEN
A DIFFERENT VIEW
Greetings! Welcome to AWARE, and a new year at U.T.! For those of you who are new to Knoxville and surroundings, there is plenty of information here for you. Check out the Community Calendar and the Organizations listings herein. For those of you who left for the summer, boy has a lot happened while you’ve been gone! Throughout the issue we cover most of what has transpired, from the very successful '92 Knoxville Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Pride Week and Parade to the latest dish on who’s doing whom, er, what, from our own True Queen.

One of the bright spots nationally for our community has been the Democratic National Convention. Not only were gays and lesbians invited to participate, but it looks as if, for the first time in over a decade, there is a contender for president who agrees with us that we ARE a positive force in America, and that by INCLUDING us instead of HATING us, the world can be a better place. Therefore, AWARE is now officially endorsing Bill Clinton for President. If you are gay, lesbian, or bisexual, and live in the U.S., it is your DUTY to investigate what each of the candidates thinks about our lifestyles, and how they are going to act with any legislation that can affect our lives and legalities. I don’t know about you, but I’m tired of my sexual preferences being not just suspect but ILLEGAL! Unseat the fascist “moral minority” that rests in the oval office!

Nationally, statistics have shown that the leadership of this country is elected by around 15% of the populace. Statistics also show that our nation is about 10% QUEER. Think about it. If QUEER AMERICA got off it’s collective ASS, quit whining about how one vote won’t change anything, and VOTED, we could put anyone into office we choose to! Folks, this is a REALLY good year to put this plan into effect! Your vote does count. If you won’t vote about your own future, trust me, someone else will. And people like Jesse Helms and Pat Buchanan would just love to round us up and shoot us.

I cannot say this enough. Voting is not just a right, it’s a privilege, and in most states of this union, the only legal voice we have as gays or lesbians. REGISTER AND VOTE. Two words that can really change America. REGISTER! VOTE! REGISTER! VOTE! REGISTER! VOTE! DON’T WAIT UNTIL IT’S OVER. DO IT NOW. TODAY. VOTE THIS YEAR. (Just keep thinking to yourself “President Quayle” over and over again. Scary ain’t it?)

Peace.

Julian

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Cover photograph by Brenna
Betzold taken on Market
Square Mall at the start of

GLBSU/AWARE
P.O. Box 16119
Knoxville, TN 37996

Community
Integrity
Commitment
To the editor:

It was thrilling for me to attend the Pride march in Knoxville this year. It meant so much to be able to march down the street in the town I grew up in holding my lover's hand while surrounded by hundreds of other lesbians and gays. It was great to see the trunkload of readymade signs also.

I'm 42 and spent my first eighteen years growing up in South Knoxville. At twenty I left the South and have lived in the San Francisco Bay Area most of the time since then. It took a number of years to reclaim my pride in being Southern—our beautiful land, accents, friendliness, fighting spirit, and progressive history (yes, we do have that too). I had to leave my home to regain my appreciation of it.

Last year a straight friend sent me a clipping from the Sentinel about the first march so I hoped to make it this year. Having no gay contacts there I was unable to find out about planned activities. So on our way to Knoxville from Atlanta my lover and I heard about the Gay Day in Asheville and routed ourselves there. By the time we got word of the planned march for Knoxville, we were on our way to Bloomington, Indiana. But four days later we turned around and came back just for the march.

I want to send a giant THANK YOU to everyone who made the parade and other Pride Week events happen. It was very impressive. The signs and balloons were spectacular, the speakers, entertainment, and folks attending were all inspiring. I'm excited to hear about the new PFLAG chapter and to see what good work folks in Knoxville are doing.

It was thrilling to be at the march and rally. At one point I turned to my lover with tears in my eyes and said "I wonder how my life would have been different, if when I was growing up there had been something like this?" I wanted to march because I know some people are afraid to come out and I had nothing to lose. I hope to make it back next year. Hurrah for Knoxville. Thanks for making my visit home especially meaningful.

Yours proudly,
Kris Yates

Open Letter to Mayor Victor Ashe:

In this issue you will find an example of the kind of openness and accessibility all Americans expect as a matter of course from our publicly elected officials. During the weeks of dialogue between Aware and County Executive Dwight Kissel, all of our attempts to open similar dialogue with your offices have been met with indifference, promises from your public relations offices to "check on it," unreturned phone calls, and in the end, a simple "he declines" with no further elaboration.

We understand that relations have been less than civil in the past between yourself and the GLB community. We also admit that much of the bad feeling has been our collective fault. Much of the past rhetoric has been provocative and ugly from our side. But it wouldn't be if everyone involved could replace the rhetoric with genuine dialogue. We urge you to consider it less in terms of a political move and more in terms of your duty to your constituents as full-fledged Americans no different than yourself. - Unless you think some Americans are more American than others, as the far right implies. Without communication we are left to imagine for ourselves just who you are. Our door is open.

The Editors
Yes, They’re Educable!

BY CAROLYN GRAY

Yes, it was a great trip. We went to Honolulu. We went to Maui. We assessed beach boys in thongs, drank cocktails garnished with orchids, basked in the sun, played in the sea. Just me, mom, Akbar and Jeff.

You guessed it: those aren’t their real names. Unfortunately — like some of the organizers of Pride Week and contributors to Aware — these two men don’t feel free to come out publicly. Akbar is rising fast in a large, conservative company; Jeff works in state government. There’s the fear of firing (or at least ostracism by coworkers), not to mention the ongoing annoyance of relative strangers passing judgement on their lives. Jeff’s conservative-Catholic, career-military parents have managed to not figure out that he’s gay (even though he shares a one-bedroom, one-bed apartment with Akbar). One expects they might not be paragons of understanding.

So how did I spend my summer vacation with these dear friends? Awash with pride for my parents, who accept Akbar and Jeff as their “other two children” and honestly don’t give a shit what they do in the privacy of their own homes.

Take mom, for instance — perhaps the most nurturing mammal on the planet. She grew up in a large, conservative family in rural Indiana. An early clan scandal centered around her sister’s shocking conversion to Catholicism; the Church of the Nazarene and Jehovah’s Witnesses were more acceptable. Now, at age 57, she stands by her boys.

Or look at pop, age 75, who once upon a time joked that homosexuals’ usurpation of the name “gay” had “ruined a perfectly good word.” He’d known the boys for a couple of years when he idly remarked that Akbar would “make some woman a fine husband one day.” “No, he won’t,” said mom. And instead of her only misgiving was that “Baptists in gas masks” might shout rude things at me.

A noted feminist (noted, but I managed to forget her name) once said that women would only be treated as equals when the current generation of middle-aged men died off. Bullshit. Assuming that someone’s generation, or background, or even politics makes them uneducable isn’t only fatalistic, it’s an insult. My parents may be smarter than many, and nicer by far than most, but they are homo sapiens, not superhuman. They just took the trouble to pay attention, and realized their gay friends were a lot like themselves. And if more folks their age realize how many of their friends and relatives are gay, they may just put aside prejudice, fear, and the mental illness we call homophobia. Some folks deserve a chance.
The following is a transcript of a speech given by Pat Husseim, the Grand Marshall of Knoxville Pride's 1992 Parade, and the Keynote Speaker at the Rally. It was an incredibly bright, sunny Saturday, June 26, 1992, on the steps of the City-County Courthouse Building in downtown Knoxville. Unlike the year before, there was little in the way of counter-demonstration—there was one religious zealot on a corner in Market Square Mall, but even he didn’t stick around long. The event had a relaxed, festival feeling. It was nice to see so many people “out” together being themselves, with no concern for who might see them. There were gays, lesbians, bi’s, cross-dressers, het’s,—who could really imagine such diversity? Beyond a certain point, no one could fail to see that we were all alike, all across the spectrum. It was a wonderful opportunity for everyone to step out of all the segregated boxes we exist in and just get together “just because.”

Pat Husseim hails from Atlanta, where she works for the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), and produces a television show in Decatur, Georgia entitled “In God’s Image.” On the national level, Ms. Husseim is among organizers of the gay and lesbian “March on Washington” planned for 1993, serving on the Executive Committee for the National Steering Committee. Pat also attends the First Metropolitan Community Church (MCU) of Atlanta where she serves on the Social Issues Committee.

Aware has spoken to many people in the community who felt that Pat Husseim’s address this summer made a difference in the way they look at GLB, race and feminist issues. For those of you who missed hearing it, and for those of you who were there, we offer you the text of the speech, as nearly as it could be transcribed from tape. Photography by Brownie Harris. Pat will speak at the GLBSU on September 13, 8PM, at the UC.

-June Cleaver

I CAN'T TELL Y'ALL HOW HAPPY I AM TO BE HERE in Knoxville again with all my friends, my family here, because I consider all of you my family. I went out last night and talked to some people and had dinner and had a good time. I had decided that I was going to give a very middle-of-the-road talk. I wore
the latest of middle of the road drag and, you know, that moderate approach. (thinking about) the March on Washington. I got here and I started talking—and it went right out the window. It's still in the hotel room!

I decided since I'm here in Knoxville, among my people, that I have to take the steps that are necessary to speak to you from my heart, to tell you what I'm thinking, where I'm coming from and where we're going, all together. Not the safe way. The way that speaks from where I stand right now. So instead (of the original speech), what you have are the notes from last night, as Cherry was trying to sleep, and I said, "Hey, babe. What do you think?" You know? Among other things! (And for a small price I won't talk about that.)

The thing I wanted to start off talking to you about though, was the name of the march. "The 1993 March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation." Now, the first time I heard the word "bisexual" mentioned, I went, "Aww, please. Do we have to talk about this? This is a Lesbian and Gay march. What is going on? What is the news here with 'bi,' you know?" I thought of all the traditional things that have been said—and then something happened: Bisexuality became not a cause. It became Anna. It became Bob. It became John, it became Ed, it became people I knew. And I talked to them about where they were and what they were doing. And what I found out I had done was to try to make people occupy a space that was comfortable for me. It wasn't their space.

I heard things that had been said about me, like "confused." How many times did ya'll hear, when you were about 15, "you're confused! Get married, have a couple of kids and get over it!"

[Cheers from the crowd and someone shouts "It don't work!"]

Don't we know, it don't work! The second thing I heard was, "certain-people-spread-disease." Now, some of you may not be aware, but this is something that was said about black people for a long time: that we were immoral and spread disease. It's been said about gay people for a long time. You know, we're "responsible" for the HIV epidemic that has hit this country,--not a virus, it's us. I would like to find out, though, who is responsible for the epidemic of heart attacks that hits A-type white male executives? I mean, have you ever heard of anybody going to a cardiac unit and someone say "it's your own fault. You ate that meat, you didn't exercise"? If we're going to talk about causing your own problems...

I've also heard "heterosexual privileges," that people who are Bi can go back and forth in either world... Well, the difference that I see is that if we're closeted, we got the same life, when we invent a girlfriend, a boyfriend, that kind of thing; that we all have that privilege to stay in a heterosexual world and not come out. So I looked at these two things and I thought, well I really can't look at people and decide how they should be. I've come to believe that there's a scale, from super-het to super-homo. And that people fall all along that scale. I know where my niche is. I don't know where yours is. And I'm really not going to get involved with where it is, as long as it's not with Cherry, It'll be alright. We watched that movement change from from the "Gay Movement" to the "Gay and Lesbian Movement." Our society is set up so that everything that is male covers everything. Like History: we don't have Herstory. Like Mankind: we don't have Womankind...

So what we're having to do within our system is to relearn ways to use words, which is sometimes kind of difficult. If I don't understand Bisexuality, that's alright! If it's the only thing I don't understand, I'll be doing real good.

Another issue that came up was trans-gender. It was actually less of a struggle to me than bisexuality. And within the March [on Washington] document itself you'll see it mentioned. The straight community thought we were all trans-gender at one time! We've all heard "Who's the man," right? "Who's the woman? Which one of you..." You know, it's none
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of your business! A "fem-top," a "butch-bottom," none of this really has a place in it.

And I thought... I could be a "dyke," a "lesbian," I could be a "gay woman," I could be "bitch," I could be "fem." If someone says to me that they're uncomfortable in their body, I will no longer claim the right to tell them how they feel about their own body. It's their. Let them tell me.

And that means simply I'm not a member of the Sex Police anymore. I resigned during the March process.

The platform for "The March" is broad. We could use (the phrases from the first march) - we didn't get anything, right? So we can go back for the same reasons. That habit of using language that isolates and divides us is one that is hard to break. But I think we made a good start. I'd like to read to you just the preamble, which was actually created by the People of Color Caucus. Everyone loved it and the People of Colored Caucus said, "Hey, take it and use it."

[Reading] "The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual Movement recognizes that our quest for social justice fundamentally links us to the struggle against racism and sexism, class violence, economic injustice and religious intolerance. We must realize that if one of us is oppressed we are all oppressed. The diversity of our movement requires and compels us to stay in opposition to all forms of oppression and exploitation, so that all of us can develop to our full human potential without regard to race, religion, sexual orientation, identification, identity, gender or gender expression, ability, age or class."

Now to me, that's a real good start on where we want to go because what we're beginning to accept is that we are not as much a sexual minority as a group that has had our sexuality to try to create a minority status for us. It's a completely different concept.

We did agree on a list of items, what should be on there. Some people said a March for Equal Rights and Liberation and other people said, well you can't leave out AIDS, and other people said, well what about breast cancer, well, it's not a gay issue, well neither is AIDS, it's not a gay issue; or what about reproductive rights or what about this? And so we have this document that takes a real stab at that. And looking at the real issue as not being sexuality is a new tack for us. We're not leaving that as something that we're certainly not interested in. We want our girlfriends and boyfriends as we choose them, not someone else's selection.

When you look at the way people define who and what they are and how groups are addressed, if you look at black people and you see Amos and Andy, or Step-'N-Fetch-It, you look at women and you see "Leave it to Beaver," or "Make Room for Daddy," and then you look at our people and you see a swish hair dresser, an interior decorator: now all of these were fun, all of these were funny images, and people laughed at those kinds of things. Or a lot of people laughed at them. Some of us never laughed at them. We said, "What is this?" from the very beginning.

If it were just the image that was the problem, if it were the sexuality that were a problem, there would never have been anything funny about it. Have you ever heard a joke about a child molester? Ever heard one about a rapist? Because there isn't nothing funny about it. So what happened with us was that when we stopped being the cute, little swishes that they wanted us to be, and fit into that niche and said "We're Americans. We want our rights. We know who we are. We know what we are. And that hasn't changed the fact that we're Americans. That stands for equal rights and justice for all, not for some." And
they say, “Wait a minute, wait a minute…” That is the difference. When you stand up and do what Nancy Reagan said and just say “NO,” then everyone gets upset and says, “but you don’t understand; this is not what we had planned…”

When you look at Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness, it’s a guarantee of the Constitution. Every time a group has come forward and said “we call on the guarantee of the Constitution,” the Congress has said, “NO.” We had to have the Civil Rights Movement of the sixties, the E.R.A. is still not been passed, and here we are. Again. Working on our freedom. Making our movement happen.

Inalienable rights. That’s what they are. Inalienable. And we’re going to see that they’re made that way.

The last thing that came to mind for me was “The Closet.” How we come in or stick a toe out, or whatever, as we think about it. And sometimes we plan to peep out of the closet door, look through the key hole. A lot of you already know, that does not work. You can plan how far you’re coming out of the closet and you look around and all the walls are falling down! It’s gone! [At this point the crowd roared and it was several moments before the speech continued.]

I had decided to share something with you, because I do understand being closeted or having to work at what you’re doing to come out. It’s an intensely personal experience which I have never shared before except for maybe one person at a time.

I was born in Atlanta. I was young and it was the early sixties, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. lived there, and I wanted to get involved. And I went to a sit-in. It was on [Leah’s/Lee’s/Leek?] Street. It was a Krispy Kreme doughnut shop. And I sat down at that counter and the police were there, and the people who didn’t want us to be there were there... and everyone was there. And this guy came in and bought a cup of coffee and he poured it down a girl’s back. And everyone sat there. And the only person who was having a problem, as far as I could tell, was me. I was shaking, I was so mad. And he looked like a real good candidate to have somebody bite a hole through his throat. And I was going to volunteer!

I got up, walked out, would not turn back, the police were waiting for one of us to do something so that they could arrest all of us. And I was the one. I was the one who didn’t have that non-violence down-pat. I don’t think I’ve ever been more shamed in my life.

I went home and I thought about it, and I kept thinking “you can get better. You can get over it.” And it was about four days later, when I saw Dr. King again, and I told him that I was sorry that I was too weak to be non-violent. And that I had tried and that I didn’t know what I could do. And he told me. He said, “Pat, it’s alright.” He said, “We all do what we can. And you’ll do what you can.” Not one word of condemnation came out of that man’s mouth.

And I remember watching the Freedom Riders go off. I remember watching Selma on television and feeling shame and guilt because I wasn’t there. I’ve had 20-plus years to work on that, how I felt. And when I realized I belonged to another minority, that was Queer America, and I embraced “queer,” “dyke,” “lesbian,” “gay” – they’re all a part of me. I came out with a vengeance! I had 20-something years to think about it. And when I watched people struggle with that desire to come out, that want to come out, and that fear, and to feel that shame of “there are people out there doing it; I’m not in there and I should be with them” – that’s when I know I will speak for them as King and the others spoke for me and I will stand up and I will [...]... drowned by the rear of the crowd...]

There is nothing that will close my mouth as long as there is breath in my body and there is nothing that will make me bawl my sisters and brothers because they are doing what they can in the way they can, how they can for them. It’s their space. They support us, we support them. We stand together.
Some of us march in the street. Others write checks. Others write letters. And others say, "We need to change the policy of our company to include sexual orientation." And altogether, we make a community.

I think it's time that we all stood together for what we believe in. And to make my personal vision a reality. I don't believe that our estimate for the March of a million is correct. I think it's too low! We're going to have in excess of 2 million people! I want too many people to march!

If we think about moving it out to Arlington maybe and lining up... and we're going to let Congress know: we're your constituents. We're your people. No, we didn't all come from some other state. We want to talk to you, and you'll give us our rights or we'll vote you out and get somebody who will.

The time has come, as we are re-writing the history of how people come together. Everything we have been taught divides us. We are in uncharted territory. And one of the things that scares the hell out of them is that they know we're going to get it right! We're going to figure out how to become one community, of women, of men, of different colors, all types of ethnicities. And we're all united. We're not trying to beat each other up, but to come together kind of like a jigsaw puzzle where the edges fit. You don't have to fit a mold. You can be who you are. And that is the thing that is going to happen. The time has come for us to stand beside each other, and to love each other, and to give ourselves permission to love ourselves. It's just too late to look back at the models of what we've had. We have to keep going into uncharted territory.

I ask those of you that are here today to work with those who are not, to get our community united across this country. There's going to be something happening in Washington next year that ain't nobody ever seen before. And I want all of you to be there, a part of it, with us, our whole community united. Banned together! Stand up for Knoxville! Stand up for Chattanooga, for Atlanta, for the whole nation! Right on! Keep going! Don't lose the dream! *
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The biggest, most pleasant surprise during Pride week this year had to be Dwight Kessel's stand in support of Knoxville's GLB community. As Executive of Knox County, Kessel agreed to do what our city's mayor flatly refused, authoring and signing a document proclaiming June 27 "Knoxville Pride Day." (A complete copy of this document was printed in the June 1992 AWARE and distributed at the parade.)

Weeks later, on a whim, Fred Duncan was asked to seek an interview with Kessel in order to discuss GLB issues. Having been vitiated by many for his proclamation, you would think the typical politician would have given us a cool reception, at least until the issue cooled a bit. But Kessel consented, and what's more, even granted a second, follow-up interview.

All told, AWARE now has about 100 minutes of conversation with the Knox County Executive. It's not the embarrassment of riches that it sounds like - Kessel is a very informal, talkative man, and the tapes ramble all over the place. But what was usable from what we got still gave us huge difficulties in how to present the interviews.

Besides the enormity of the task, another problem was how to set up the excerpts. Often, Kessel speaks the language of one addressing the unconverted or those outright hostile to GLB causes. For instance, he tends to overemphasize the very things he down-plays, such as hate-mail from religious zealots or the stereotype that gays are prone to molesting children. At the same time, he shows an odd affinity for certain dynamics of being gay such as "coming out," only he uses the term "getting out of the box," which seems to be a more inclusive term for what all minorities go through on some level in overcoming a repressive society.

If anything, Kessel's peculiar language and misplaced emphasis demonstrates a very constructive point: his insensitivities are due more to cultural isolation from our community that from any kind of willful ignorance or sublimated intolerance. And such a weakness can be overcome. What it takes is exactly what Kessel is doing: communicating. It just proves that we can't allow anger to dominate our actions, political or otherwise, because it precludes dialogue, without which all sides are diminished.

Once again, we applaud Dwight Kessel and the example he set this summer. Everyone is encouraged to respond to Mr. Kessel by phoning or writing to him, or by writing to AWARE to let us know what you think.

CONCERNING THE PROCLAMATION

I guess my main concern is that we try to treat everybody alike and that's essentially what I tried to do for the Gay/Lesbian thing. There are people who have had a rough time at times, and I think that people ought to recognize anybody for what they are whether you're gay or lesbian or anything else.

What I'm saying in this particular proclamation is, you are entitled to your views. If people have a problem with their views then they should deal with you, not stand somewhere and throw rocks over the fence. They ought to walk through the gate and see what they can do.

In the wording you sent me, I felt that that was too aggressive for what I'd do for anybody. It's back to the preacher (who) got mad at me because I
would not declare Jesus Christ his Lord and Saviour for everybody. Religion is a preference. The same thing would apply. If I had taken (your original proclamation), it’s pretty much in the same vein. It would appear much harsher than what we did. In my proclamation, I’m saying that people need to be recognized for themselves. And that’s my concern, is that you be accepted.

HATE MAIL RESPONSE TO PROCLAMATION

Generally I don’t pay much attention to (hate mail). If I got them from your side I’d probably chuck them in the waste-basket. I mean, from the hate mail side.

I think this preacher gets (people) all stirred up. They’ll write a letter because they think that that’s a Christian thing to do. They have a little different view of Christianity than I do. I think I’m as Christian or more so than many I got letters from because they are totally intolerant of anybody else’s ideas. I’ve never been that presumptuous to decide whether you’re going to hell or whether I’m going. Or whether I’m going to heaven or you’re going. That’s not mine to discern.

I think most of (the hate-filled letters) were generated off of the same “idea-page” someplace. Some people picked and chose maybe different paragraphs, but the gist was there no matter what. You read one and you’ve read probably 90% of them. There might have been a few, scattered individuals. I got one from a friend of mine who’s an attorney that I thought was rather curt, so I just wrote on it “I always thought of you as a more tolerant person” and sent it back to him. But I didn’t answer most of them.

The general community I think is very tolerant, otherwise we’d have just had a deluge.

A CERTAIN STEREOTYPE

There is a tendency for the public to view gays and lesbians as people who are going to prey upon the children. That is the attitude I get from the preacher. It’s pure ignorance.

I think from the standpoint of people feeling
good about themselves, that you don't want to butt heads immediately with what I consider the really raw problems. That will come in time and you'll be able to show in time that a gay person or a lesbian person that is normal in their attitudes would not do that anyway.

ADVICE TO KNOXVILLE PRIDE

I think in all honesty, my concern would be that you try to prove yourselves worthy of recognition rather than to tell people you need to be recognized. The gist of it is that you don't push yourselves. I've got some department heads that don't agree on some things, not the country's business but personal. And when we have a disagreement we both have our say, and we walk off and go ahead and do our business. And that's hard to get to when you've been pushed down, and shot at, and thrown at, and cursed and whatever. It's very hard to turn the other cheek, but when you do you usually get more.

Now, people believe as they perceive, as they say, and so you need to change that perception by being active, and doing your job.

The general public has tried to push their lifestyle on you. Once you start to get out of the box I don't think it's a good idea to try to push your lifestyle on them. Because you can damage yourself probably as much as you can help. I'd say it'd probably be on the lopsided toward damage.

One of the things that I feel like that minorities quite often do is once they get to feel that "I'm getting out of the box" that they overdo it. They over-run the field, so to speak, and find themselves out of the game again. You know what I mean? And that is probably the worst thing that you can do.

Use what you did as an attitudinal change to somebody else who is maybe a fence-sitter, who really has never given you any thought one way or the other as to whether they're for you or against you.

As a group you've got to be careful, I'm sure there are militant people in every group. So you've got to be careful that the militants don't begin to operate the system. When the militants begin to operate the system they make everybody else be more careful. If they operate the system, then you begin to lose the people. The Don't-Care's become Care's. They say, well I'm not going to "take the gut" for you going out and confronting the mayor on the front steps of the courthouse and saying "are you going to do this" and challenging him to a duel, you know? You don't do things like that. It's not in your best interests. But my concern is that people should be treated as people until they prove otherwise.

A FINAL CONVERSATION: EXCERPT
FROM THE SECOND INTERVIEW ON AUGUST 3, 1992

Aware: What do you say to somebody who in the papers or in an interview or something, argues against accepting and recognizing homosexuals because of the sodomy law in the state of Tennessee?

Kessel: Those are just opinions...

Aware: No, it's a legality.

Kessel: Yeah... I think though that you've got more of a problem with the law when somebody suddenly breaks into your apartment and says, "well here you are, you're doing exactly what we thought." I have a real problem with that.

When you have a sodomy law, I don't know that it's worth a whole lot except in child molestation, and that's not necessarily homosexuals who do that. If they could show me that that's what it was doing, then I might be prone to say that, yeah, it's alright to have the law, but if you don't show it, - I think consenting adult laws make more sense to me.

I'm sure a lot of sexual conduct is entirely different in the bedroom than anybody ever discusses outside, regardless whether man-woman, two women, two men, whatever. There will be people who'll be turned off by some sexual acts between men and women. Totally turned off.
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Heritage Now

The formative years for
Knoxville's Gay and Lesbian
Community

This article is based on research done for Knoxville Pride's
1992 Heritage Night, presented June 23, in the Candy
Factory on the World's Fair Site. This is merely the first
in a series of articles we hope to bring you on Knoxville
Heritage. Please contact Ronnie Anderson at 334-6790 if
you have any historical information to contribute, either
personal perspectives or factual data.

The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Student Union, though
barely three years in existence, has a local heritage
that dates back to the early seventies. In the winter
of 1971, over two-thousand signs were placed
around the UT and Fort Sanders area to publicize
the group's first organizational meeting. As expected,
many signs were torn down, but they were replaced
as quickly as they were removed.

The meeting convened in the Shiloh Room at
the University Center where about 35 people
attended. Because the group was not recognized by
the University, only two organizational meetings
were allowed on campus. Kyle MacDaniel and Norris
Dryer formulated a constitution for the Gay
Student Union and focused its weekly meetings
toward getting the University's recognition.

Upon application, recognition and appeal were
denied the group on campus for two reasons: the
University of Tennessee cited the Crimes Against
Nature Statute as one, and conspiracy to violate the
same statute as the second.

Off campus, the group continued as the Gay
Liberation Front with the stated purpose "to end
repression against homosexuality." The GLF busied
itself with activities such as talks to philosophy and
sociology classes, discussion sessions at the St. John
XXIII Center, and the organization of a short-lived
coffee house. The group twice appealed UT's refusal
to recognize a GSA, and were twice denied that
same year of 1971.

One very supportive and recognized group dur-
ing this time was the UT Religious Liberals. This
organization sponsored at least one and perhaps more
open discussions on various aspects of homosexuality
which were attended by both gays and straights.

Even without official university recognition, many of
the more liberal faculty members were very supportive
and several classes in the psychology, sociology
and philosophy departments invited gays to address
the classes. There was also one or more open forums
held at the Pope John the 23rd Catholic center.

During this time, it was decided by the leaders of the
organization that an easily identified logo was needed.
They choose a logo that was being accepted by
many of the new gay and lesbian organizations
nationwide: the Lambda.

After the Stonewall Riots, the symbol of Lambda
was chosen by activists for its "scientific kinetic
potential", a symbol for change, and as a subtle sign
of recognition that associated itself with ancient
Greek sexuality. Lambda was placed on flyers and
signs in all the activities the group participated in
thereafter, including the South-East Regional Gay
Conference and the 1973 All-Ohio Gay Conference
in Columbus, Ohio.

In 1972 and '73, social functions of the group
included a hike to Charles' Bunyon in The Great
Smoky Mountains National Park, and a raft trip
down the Chattahoosie River.

At about this time, two young men from New
York City moved to Knoxville. One of these two
had been a UT student and was returning here. To
use an old cliche, all Hell soon broke out. These
guys and their local supporters soon gained control
of the troubled organization and what resulted was,
you guessed it, more trouble. These men became
members of the UT Socialists Alliance and felt very
strongly that the Gay Liberation Front should add a
strong socialist agenda to its political philosophy.

The meetings often disintegrated into heated and
emotional confrontations concerning various aspects of raising both gay consciousness and overall political consciousness. In other words there was an enormous amount of yelling and screaming at one another and after one especially nasty meeting one member of the group attempted to run over another member with his car in the parking lot next to the Epworth Church, which is now the Laurel Theatre. Fortunately, no one was physically injured but mentally and emotionally, the organization was in serious trouble.

Within this period, however, several very important actions occurred. A bar and restaurant called “Ireland’s” was located on Cumberland Avenue in a building since torn down, which was located where Wendy’s is now located. “Ireland’s” fired several allegedly gay people for supposedly no other reason than that they were gay. The GLF picketed the restaurant in what was certainly the first activist stance by gays and lesbians in Knoxville history. This action was given considerable attention in the media but as far as anyone knows, the action didn’t result in the re-hiring of anyone. The RPTC building on the UT campus was fire-bombed and the University Center was damaged by vandals. The overall atmosphere on the UT campus and in the Fort Sanders area was tense and unlike any previous period in the city’s history, at least since the Civil War.

The anti-Vietnam-War movement was soon to hit Knoxville, as well as one of Knoxville’s largest marches against the war. The GLF debated over combining gay politics with other social agendas. On the day of the march, a contingent of approximately 100 gays and lesbians joined the thousands in a walk from Circle Park up Cumberland to Market Square Mall. After anti-war speeches were made, the lines of the march were re-assembled, this time with the Gay Liberation Front in the lead. Leading those protesting the war were signs proclaiming “Gay is Good” and the symbolic lambda. News coverage the following day gave the appearance that the entire march was made up of thousands of proud gays and lesbians.

For a brief time, the energy from the march stayed with the GLF before internal strife and dictatorial leadership tactics pulled at the group’s sense of unity. A gay coffee house was started on the weekends at the Epworth Church, now the Laurel Theatre. The coffee house was intended as a clear alternative to the bar scene. It lasted only a few months as a result of a lack of interest and also probably because of the overall problems in the organization. Lesbians, dissatisfied, broke away to form the Lesbian Collective, because the former organization no longer seemed to fulfill their needs. The Gay Liberation Front disbanded soon after.

A last attempt was made for a student group on the UT campus by the Gay Peoples’ Alliance in 1973. Although appeals ran all the way to the Board of Trustees, sodomy laws again were cited for rejection. The Gay Peoples’ Alliance soon fell victim to the changing times. The Vietnam War was over and the age of activism was dead. In its place evolved several discussion groups, co-called consciousness raising groups called “rap sessions” which met in people’s apartments. There were also potluck dinners and gay information referral service similar to our present gay hotline. Twelve years elapsed before the community would again be politicized by way of an organization for gay and lesbian people, The Knoxville Ten Percent, which involved itself in a number of community programs such as “Adopt-a-Spot” for city beautification.

Much of the existing movement toward the formation of a “community” is owed to the contributions of these early civil rights organizations. Learning from their successes and mistakes has made for a more diversified political consciousness, which current organizations have tried to embrace. If it weren’t for these ground-breaking groups with their consciousness raising and network building we would now be going over the same ground instead of trying to converge and seek compromises on the issues we deal with in our community today.
A Different View

adventures as a gay audience

BY JULIAN MARR

I HAD WRITTEN A CROONING ARTICLE about all of the wonderful gay positive things that have been cropping up from the Democratic Convention to Melrose Place, and I was all set to let it run when something crept up to overshadow my conscience. As any decent media reviewer should do, upon hearing of the much touted campaign against Ice-T’s band, Body Count, and their song “Cop Killer,” I went down to the local Turtles to check it out for myself. I had seen way too many ignorant reviews, attacks, and just plain offensive articles in magazines and newspapers by people who don’t know enough about music to tell the difference between rap and speed metal.

Here’s where the problem lay. Turtles didn’t have it. They weren’t going to get it back in. The sales girl apologized. I was stunned. “Company policy,” she said. I was appalled. This is AMERICA, folks! To refuse to carry something because it MIGHT offend someone is CENSORSHIP. Freedom of speech is a right that a lot of people are arguing about. Should there be limits? Who sets them? Historically, individuals set their own, and by extension, their children’s. But this was a major corporation pulling product from their shelves because a national group of police officers and parents threatened boycott of the product, manufacturer, and any associated retailers.

As a corporation, they have a right to consider the protest, and react on it by how it would affect their sales. This is not the case. The groups who were and are protesting are demographically not people who spend money on music. This particular incident has recently been sidestepped by Ice-T, who has pulled the song from the album to end the entire argument. The album and song, however, are not the issue here, they merely helped to uncover it.

I asked the Turtles employee for a number I could call to complain about the decision, received it and called. The person I spoke to was very friendly, but the content of the conversation haunted me. The corporation name is Super Club Music Corp. and it is the parent company for hundreds of Turtles, Record Bars, and other shops. I was informed that the album would not be sold until they had had time to take people’s views into account (oddly enough, I was told by the Turtles employee that if I hadn’t asked for the number, they weren’t supposed to tell me about it. That doesn’t sound like a corporation that wants to hear from it’s customers, does it?).

Having done my personal duty of boycotting Turtles and any other Super Club store, I felt better. I encouraged (and encourage) others to do the same. And then, about a week ago, I ran across an article in the August 20th issue of Rolling Stone (pg 18) titled Record Chain Blacklist. Now I’m not appalled anymore. I’m ANGRY. Kim Neely goes into much more detail on the matter than I have room for, so I recommend tracking that issue of RS down, but basically it boils down to this: Any record with or WITHOUT a warning label will be reviewed (supposedly) by Super Club’s purchasing department and may or may not be offered for sale at their discretion. In other words, if someone finds something offensive, we don’t even get the chance to hear it for ourselves, because they have put so many roadblocks between the record and your ears it’s almost not worth the bother.

All I have to say is that it is worth the bother. I have bothered to change record shops. We here in Knoxville have the ability to find other record shops that aren’t Super Club affiliates, unlike hundreds of smaller towns across the country, so we are very fortunate. If you, like myself, are a conscientious consumer, you might be interested in fighting this
corporate censorship. I don't care how convenient Turtles is, I won't give them any of my money until they give me all the music I want. Shop at Disc Exchange, Raven Records, Lost and Found, Cats, or Lynn's Disc and Dat. Don't shop at Turtles, Record Bar, Camelot or Tracks. After all, if they will pull Body Count for being offensive, what's to stop them from pulling Erasure or Army of Lovers or some other openly gay band for being offensive as well? Just because they've attacked something you might not want to hear doesn't mean they won't in the future. Remember Nazi Germany? It can happen here, and just might BE happening, right under our noses.

Ciao.

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A True Queen's View

By Kelly Rafaiidolatobadii

IT'S SO GOOD TO GET BACK SO I can catch up with all the gossip! Like: K.K. having her own Bette Midler warm in Nashville on sultry summer nights. And why does Jackee Renee always look so put out when we know she doesn't? Cluck-cluck Julian? Anything I should know? And what's this about Sears Westtown remodeling their men's room and having to remove their oldest fixture and asking him not to return?

Kudos always going out to Malery Bishop for winning Ms. Gay Pride 1992. Apparently she's gotten herself hitched and has been a good girl lately. NOT Shane, call me and we'll talk. I must give our ex-president Tom Jackson 2 stars. One for each meeting he attended. His performance was redundant. Again. Good luck to Brandi Davis when she competes in the Ms. Continental Georgia Contest. Everyone knows she already has the title of Ms. Continental Breakfast. Richard and Tommy now have matching marbles. Sierra Dezera got her hair done right this time and it looks great. But girlfriend, try using more superglue next time. Good luck to Shannon, hope you get S.C.'s Entertainer of the Year!

It has come to my attention that Spotlight J. is going to be a woman. You'll have to shave for foreplay. Why did Denny of the infamous swirls have to leave town? Did he have a bun in momma's little oven? Carissa Rejaii, how did the Campus Inn go? There is a reward to anyone who finds my tits. I was always told that if I didn't keep better track of myself I was going to lose something. Well I did. Christy, we all love you. Well Robert now you know. Will you still respect me in the morning? Simply Red, what's this about a lover in North Carolina who proposed to you? I hear you were doing the humpty dance while everyone else was marching in the parade. John we all know you're going out to buy Hess's Bags. John says Robby is too hot to handle and to little to hold. If anyone sees Fred on the Block he owes me $150 and a Meat Lovers. Dale, why was your nipple ring leaking? Was it Sierra purring or the extra cherries? Frank I think you need to get married and move to Thailand.

Texas, you a ho! But we all knew that. Your looking good with that little novel showing Jenna Jones, you've come a long way baby. I still remember 1470 West in Dayton and Nikkie's T-Bird. I still apologize for hanging up on that obscene caller. Are you allowed back there yet? Charlie Brown was fabulous but isn't the bitch of the south always?

To those of you who have read me (I mean my article) as always I intend to probe your mind. Make you respond and react in whatever manner you deem apropos. Speaking of reacting and reactions it seems that one of my past articles actually got some of you all's attention. I'm always glad to hear from you and I hope to hear more from you.

Love,

Kelly

P.S. If anyone knows the whereabouts of our genuine faux treasurer, call us at 524-0748.
The following is a list of organizations that have connections with or exist in support of the gay and lesbian community locally.

**METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH (MCC)** Corner of Weisgarber and Lomax. Worship service: Sundays at 6 p.m. Call 521-6546 for more information.

**GLBSU (The Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual Student Union of the University of Tennessee at Knoxville)** Meets Tuesdays at 8:00 p.m. at the University Center on the UTK campus. Call 524-0748 for more information.

**POLITICAL ACTION ALLIANCE** A branch of the GLBSU, the political Action Alliance meets on the first Saturday of every month at 1 p.m. Call 524-0748

**GALA (The Gay and Lesbian Alumni Association)** call Kurt Haas at 595-7949 for more information.

**LAMBDA Literacy Circle** A literary and philosophical discussion group. Meets every month at the Printer's Mark Bookshop. For more information, call 595-7949.

**GAY AND LESBIAN HELPLINE** Listening information and referral available to any person experiencing difficulties due to their sexual orientation, or other people's perceptions of them. Operates 7-11 p.m. nightly, staff permitting. Call 521-6546.

**GAY GRATITUDE GROUP** An open, non-smoking Alcoholics Anonymous open to Gays and Lesbians, held at the Tennessee Valley Unitarian Church, 3219 Kingston Pike, Mondays and Fridays at 7 p.m.

**NAPWA** (National Association of People with AIDS Knoxville Chapter) of an organization that provides crisis intervention, social activities and direct emergency support for people with AIDS. For more information, call 537-3139.

**P-FLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)** Knoxville chapter of an organization that runs support groups for anyone associated with a gay or lesbian person. For more information, write to P-FLAG, Box 20153, Knoxville, TN, 37940-0153.

**KNOXVILLE PRIDE, INC** A Gay and Lesbian organization dedicated to promoting National Pride Week and celebrating the culture that is uniquely ours.

**AWARE** A publication of the GLBSU at UT Knoxville. Printed on a six-week schedule, AWARE provides an open forum for the local gay, lesbian and bisexual community. Regular features over the past year have included: A Different View, covering music, art, film and writing; AIDS Aware, covering the political and philosophical impact of the AIDS pandemic; A True Queen's View, covering gossip, travel and humor; and occasional salvos fired by the ever-erotic June Cleaver.

**QUERY** Tennessee's only Gay Newsweekly, providing our community with much needed information to keep us up to date with the world at large and how it affects us.

**aRK (aids Response Knoxville)** 2928 Magnolia Ave., call 525-AIDS for more information.
AUGUST
25. GLESU Organizational meeting and social time. 8 pm U.C.
GLESU WELCOME BACK PARTY. Tipton Park. Date and time TBA. Call 524-0748 for information.

SEPTEMBER
1. GLESU MEETING. Topic: Intimacy: Romantic or Otherwise. 8 pm U.C.
7. BOOMSGAY! An evening of quiet visibility. Join the GLESU, Knoxville Pride, and MCC as we invade Boomsday! Interested parties should meet at the U.C. at 7:30 pm. We will go from there to Neyland Drive for the largest fireworks display this year. Be sure to wear your Pride shirts or any "out" shirt you may have. Let's let Knoxville know we're here and queer!
8. GLESU MEETING. Topic: Substance Abuse. Speaker tba. 8 pm U.C.
15. GLESU MEETING. Topic: Pat Hussain Speaks! In Person! 8 pm U.C.
22. GLESU MEETING. Topic: Safe Sex. Dan Headrick from dRK speaks. 8 pm U.C.
23. KNOXVILLE PRIDE MEETING. 7:30 pm. Call 558-0175 for more information.
29. GLESU MOVIE NIGHT. New Showing: The Times Of Harvey Milk. Library Auditorium. 8 pm.

OCTOBER
6. GLESU BOWLING. Come bowl Down Under at the U.C. 8 pm.
9-11. NAMES PROJECT AIDS MEMORIAL QUILT. The Quilt goes to Washington D.C. one last time. For more information call aids Response Knoxville, 523-2437, or the NAMES Project 415-863-5511.
30. COMMUNITY HALLOWEEN DANCE. Cosponsored by MCC, Knoxville Pride, and GLESU. Tentatively scheduled at the Holiday Inn World's Fair site. 7 pm. Call 524-0748 for more information.

If you have an event you would like listed on Community Calendar, please drop us a line at our P.O. box at least 1 month in advance.
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