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Editing The Outcrowd

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To honor the number of us who suffered during a devastating time in history, putting the pink triangle on our cover is the least we can do.

Historically, the pink triangle was used to identify and shame male homosexuals during the Holocaust. Since then, it has been taken back by the gay community and embraced as a symbol of pride.

It also reminds us of the hatred that still disturbs our community, and the equality for which we must fight.
Love Sonnet 3
by Kevin Hegedus

I more than anything would fuck my car.
I find it highly sexual in shape
and, texturally, nothing short of art.
Now, oftentimes I wonder if it’s rape
to penetrate an object which I know,
quite plainly, will not penetrate me back
unless, of course, I force it to. This so,
my sensual, consensual attack
is nothing short of robbing innocence!
I lie awake to contemplate my soul.
It’s hard enough to find the means to ends
but even harder still to find a hole
in which to actually have the sex.
Or, as we call it, “routine oil checks.”
African-Americans were electrified by the election of civil rights supporter John F. Kennedy in 1960. But soon, Martin Luther King Jr. was criticizing the president’s lack of action, observing that he and other activists had become “pawns in a white man’s game,” according to a 1964 article he wrote for Look magazine.

We all know how Martin Luther King eventually took charge of the movement: with protests, marches, and a dream.

Several decades later, President Barack H. Obama personifies the progress toward MLK’s dream. But, like JFK, Obama seems to be behind the times on the civil rights issue of the day: Obama’s marked contrast between campaign promises and his action in office is leaving a lot of LGBTQ folks feeling, frankly, milked.

The gay rights movement is molasses, and the situation begs a sticky question: are we just pawns in a straight man’s game?

Nathaniel Frank, author of “Unfriendly Fire: How the Gay Ban Undermines the Military and Weakens America,” told me that despite the frustrations with the administration, he believes “Obama’s heart is in the right place.” The president just made a decision early on to “avoid culture war issues.”

Delays on issues like Don’t Ask Don’t Tell (DADT) frustrate Frank, who realizes it makes them much harder to deal with later while Obama spends precious political capital on other priorities. On Oct. 4, after the Pentagon’s scholarly journal published a piece calling for the repeal of DADT, National Security Advisor Jim Jones told CNN that the President is awfully busy and is just waiting for the right time, mustering, “I don’t think it’s going to be—it’s not years, but I think—I think it will be teed up appropriately.”

It doesn’t feel empowering to be the buried golf ball in the president’s game bag. If this is the strategy on the publicly popular idea of repealing DADT, action on marriage issues seems lost in the rough.

I asked Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) if we were right to be upset. “No! It’s ridiculous,” he replied, noting progress on issues like hate crimes and the Employment Non-Discrimination Act. He argued that the sausage-making factory that is Congress is incremental, and that marching on the Mall will pressure nothing but the grass.

“Patience, patience,” they say, echoing Dwight D. Eisenhower, who favored a slow, gradual, non-disruptive approach to civil rights. Just wait your turn.

There is an idea, perhaps out of David Geffen’s surprise endorsement, or out of a long wait for equality, that President Obama owes us something, and that good things will come if we behave. This is a dangerous expectation.

In the play “Angels in America,” Tony Kushner’s landmark “gay fantasia on national themes,” dying, uber-conservative lawyer Roy Cohn explains to his doctor why, though he has sex with men, he does not identify with the label homosexual. “Homosexuals are men who have sex with men, he does not identify as a who’s who of the gay rights movement, from Judy Shepard to Dustin Lance Black. Actress Cynthia Nixon declared, “This movement is not just about our ability to get married, or even to stand up publicly and declare our love. It is about demanding equal rights, equal responsibilities, equal opportunities, equal treatment and equal protection under the law.”

Later, Lady Gaga took the mic and screamed at the president: “ARE YOU LISTENING?” Chills surged through the crowd—and the movement was electrified once more.

In the end, Obama is more likely to sign a law when the public is unequivocally behind it. And when it comes to anything involving gay rights, as a 2009 Gallup poll shows, a member of the public is far more likely to support equal rights when they have a friend or family member who is openly gay. This is our unique advantage—we’re everywhere. But it is our inconvenient responsibility to acknowledge this, by coming out and living openly.

Harvey Milk protégé Cleve Jones kicked off this new era of action at D.C.’s National Equality March on Oct. 11. The event drew tens of thousands of young gay rights supporters, and it signaled that this computer-caged generation can still pull off a live political show. Speakers included a who’s who of the gay rights movement, from Judy Shepard to Dustin Lance Black. Actress Cynthia Nixon declared, “This movement is not just about our ability to get married, or even to stand up publicly and declare our love. It is about demanding equal rights, equal responsibilities, equal opportunities, equal treatment and equal protection under the law.”

Later, Lady Gaga took the mic and screamed at the president: “ARE YOU LISTENING?” Chills surged through the crowd—and the movement was electrified once more.

Oct. 11 was only the new beginning—this march is a long one. King knew. Refuse to be a pawn—march to the end of the board and fucking demand: “Queen me!”
YO, LESBRO!

by Rae Rozman

illustration by Pat Davis

Picture this: one Ken doll lounges on the couch of the living room of Barbie’s dream house, sprawled out, holding the remote. Surrounding him is a handful of flannel-clad Barbies fixated on the TV screen. Weird image, right? When I heard the term “lesbro,” which I understand to be a man who prefers the company of lesbians to straight women, my mind made that funky connection and imagined this scene. But the actuality of the lesbro label is just as ridiculous as my Barbie and Ken analogy. I mean really, lesbian Barbies?

I was confused as to why this phenomenon of lesbros would exist (and really just wanted to see if anyone had actually heard of a lesbro, since I certainly hadn’t) so I went to a dear lesbian friend of mine and vented my bafflement. Together, we came up with a list of reasons why guys would actually want to hang out with us—besides the fact that we’re fabulous. Our main conclusion: because the male softball team just isn’t as good. But somehow, that didn’t seem exactly on target. Are lesbros hoping to learn our secrets on how to satisfy a woman? Perhaps they think that we’re really exotic creatures and they enter our domain to study the “wild lesbian in her native habitat?”

Maybe I need to put myself in the mindset of a lesbro. How nice would it be to have a female friend that wouldn’t fawn all over you… no matter how blue your eyes or how perfect your hair? That could be the appeal for these guys. Hot women, no worries about what would happen to your relationship if you accidentally sleep with one; that’s the perfect friendship. But I still think the entire concept of a lesbro is silly. Classification is for biology projects, not for people. Do we really need labels to be who we are? Ken hanging out with a group of lesbian Barbies is still just plain old Ken; he isn’t changed by his company. Now I’m not saying that labels are bad. Sometimes they’re actually quite useful. But maybe we should listen to that French philosopher dude Foucault when he writes about the unnecessary labels we make when we try to fit others and ourselves into categories, rather than use his essays as coasters. Then, and only then, we can all go back to the dream house and have a cup of tea. After all, dolls just wannabe dolls.
"Student athlete”—an identity I have held since the sixth grade when I picked up my first hockey stick. I was a female ice hockey player, playing 80 games between two teams—one male and one female—every winter for all four years of high school. My teammates were my family; hockey was my life.

At the end of my senior year season, I started to think about playing in college. Coincidentally, my top choice school, Syracuse University, was starting up a Division 1 women’s hockey team. There was just one problem: I had been accepted into SU’s architecture program and due its time commitment, I wasn’t allowed to play. However, Syracuse had a women’s club team which I joined without hesitation.

During my second semester of college, I started to dwell on an issue that I had been repressing since I was about seven years old. After 19 years of constantly ignoring my body dysphoria, my physical and social transition could not be put off any longer. As I started living full time as a male, I had to leave some things behind, including hockey. As much as it pained me to quit, I could no longer play the sport that was the structure of my life for so long.

I have been asked why I quit a number of times. I haven’t had surgery so I’m still biologically female. However, I am taking hormones. I hold fair play in high regard, and being a testosterone-driven body on a sheet of ice full of estrogen-bodied peers gives me an unfair advantage. My muscles are expanding rapidly, making me stronger and faster. Not to mention, I would be coming out of a female locker room with a beard.

So I’ve joined the testosterone side of the hormone binary. And that begs the question, “Well, why don’t you just play for the boy’s team?” I played for my high school boy’s team and was captain for two years; I know how the boy’s locker room works. I dressed in a separate locker room, sometimes even under the stands because of the potential ramifications of stripping down in front of the guys. That is the same issue I face with joining the men’s team here on campus. I have not had any kind of surgery yet and the prospect of stripping down in a room full of biological men brings me a strong sense of unease.

There are all kinds of decisions in life. Choices must be made and priorities must be set. Now I address this question: “Where do I belong? In the women’s locker room because of what’s between my legs or in the men’s room because of how I identify?” Placing my gender identity over my athletic identity has left me to wonder, are those of us who blur the boundaries of the gender binary destined to deny our human instinct for competition and physical activity?

Will our only teammates be our iPods and headphones?

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For My Bird

by Danielle Peck

Bring me there when thoughts are tired
Pull me in with funny things
Melt them down and squeeze and tug
Tic toc the pulley
To lower them still warm and molding
Round my arms not quite in place
There before they have been sculpted
Bold and old with hints of herbs
Sprinkled in the soil with nature magic
Paul Simon says oos behind us
His breeze shares spaces with our hips
Poof I push me in the tingles
Rose red comforter does its name
Swirl around my legs on a psychedelic poster
Pin it up and pull me down
Throw the red out of the river
Without the worms that leak with logic
Glasses useless on the table
No search for their eyes too true for judgment
Or showing teeth content in believing
The listeners of the bellows
That inch and inch your movement mind.
Do you recognize this image? You may have passed by it before, but it was perhaps too dark to see. It’s less than 200 feet from where the Erie Canal used to transport people and cargo. The canal fueled the economy of burgeoning Syracuse for over 70 years.

This is a picture of the street adjacent to X-Bar—if you haven’t heard, it’s a popular gay/lesbian bar frequented by both Syracuse “townies” and college students. Remember that time you slipped on the ice on the way back to your car? Shouldn’t have worn heels… Well, it was on this street.

“The back part of the building, where the dance floor is, used to be a fodder barn for the horses and mules that pulled the barges along the Erie Canal,” says X-Bar’s owner, Hal Liberatore.

The Erie Canal was one of the first things to leave the city. In 1918, the state re-routed the canal outside the city, filling-in the former part that flowed from Syracuse to Rome, NY. By the 1970s, many businesses began to close and wealthy citizens fled to the suburbs, causing Syracuse prosperity to decline. Since then, the city has initiated several major efforts in target regions of the old “Salt City” to boost business and housing. However, according to Liberatore, “the west side has not received the emphasis that other parts of Syracuse have received.”

The 2000 census reported that 50 percent of residents were below the poverty line, with a median household income of $8,600. The U.S. General Accounting Office concluded that the Near West Side had the second-highest poverty rate in America. Many of the health, crime, poverty, and education problems continue to worsen, according to the Near West Side website.

The Near West Side Initiative began in 2007 as an outlet for Syracuse University to pay off a $13.8 million dollar debt to the state, according to Syracuse.com. The university partnered with the city, Home HeadQuarters, Inc., and a few supplementary organizations to revitalize the Near West Side neighborhood. The organizations are striving for progress with a philosophy that creative people are necessary for urban growth, according to the NWSI website. Specific projects aim to foster an arts community, attract businesses focused on environmental technology, and create new social spaces for the neighborhood while still maintaining the cultural diversity and preventing gentrification.

Liberatore, who graduated from SU in 1971 with a major in International Relations and a minor in Developmental Economics, worked with Syracuse housing groups for over 15 years as a mortgage banker. He is hopeful about the project and says that in the past, “there have been some projects and some efforts, but not a concentrated effort.”

According to WCNY TV, there is $56 million going into this project, but Liberatore will be the first to tell you that progress can’t happen without human involvement. From the perspective of his position at X-Bar, Liberatore says that the generation of “activist gays” are getting older and settling down, while the younger LGBT community is much more detached from the neighborhood. “A lot of the cohesion that existed in the community six or eight years ago is gone. I see less of a participatory interest,” he says.

I know there are some creative brains that could use a break from Lady Gaga lyrics and sloshing back Cosmos. So next time you hop off that wild Warehouse bus, look around, take a walk (not at night!) or have a chat with the guy stamping your hands. Hal may not let you drink, but he’s a very nice guy.

Artists, I suggest exploring the Gear Factory. Engineers, try the Syracuse Center of Excellence in Environmental and Energy Systems (Syracuse CoE). Just remember as you’re grinding on the dance floor that those beats reverb off of empty buildings and failing homes. So consider stepping outside the oasis that has added fun and awkwardness to your college experience and look for a way to contribute.

*Liberatore retired on Oct. 30, but the bar may re-open under new management.
BARNEY FRANK

by Kevin Eggleston

BARNEY FRANK, 69, has been a Massachusetts representative since 1981, and has been re-elected as an openly gay congressman since 1987. During the “nutter” festivals that were the August health care town halls, he earned his praise by comparing a dialogue with an unruly Glenn Beck-ish constituent to “arguing with a dining room table.” He has been a witty and energetic supporter of gay rights, and in 2007 he rose to the top of current gay rights issues and the financial crisis. He was chosen to be the chairman of the House Financial Services Committee just in time to confront the financial crisis.

We had our own back and forth with Barney in order to discuss the status of current gay rights issues and the recent D.C. Equality March on the Mall.

Are gay rights groups right to be upset over the lack of progress with issues like the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) and Don’t Ask Don’t Tell?

No! It’s ridiculous. In the first place, the house just passed the first bill in American history that offers some affirmative protection to LGBT people against discrimination. The Senate will pass it next week, and the president will sign it so within [Obama’s] first year we will have made history.

Secondly, and this has been our schedule from the beginning, we will be having soon a vote in committee on the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) that will be, I believe, fully gender inclusive, because we’ve done the work over three years to get there.

Now, I know you asked me about DADT and DOMA. Does that mean Hate Crimes and ENDA aren’t important? Or did they drop out because we’ve made progress?

I think they’re all important.

All right, well, you didn’t ask me about the ones we’ve made progress on, but our schedule always was Hate Crimes first, ENDA second, then Don’t Ask Don’t Tell. I did think it was important that the President, taking over in the middle of two wars, was able to get his war strategy fixed. Now I am disappointed that they haven’t moderated the enforcement of DADT, but we are on track. I, believe, to have votes to repeal Don’t Ask Don’t Tell early next year. Now the problem is we’ll need 60 votes in the Senate. The problem’s not Obama. He’s said from the beginning that he was for repealing it. Part of the problem is with the LGBT community who thinks the president has a magic wand that he waves and things happen. In fact, we need to get those senators to vote.

So just to recap, Hate Crimes is about to become law, fully inclusive. ENDA we will be working on soon, and we’ll pick up Don’t Ask Don’t Tell next year. As for repealing DOMA, that was never realistic, we don’t have the votes, I wish we did. The only way we’re going to be able to deal with DOMA is by a federal lawsuit that says the federal government cannot discriminate and not recognize marriages in some areas and not others—but DOMA has never been on the list because we don’t have the votes. The approach with DOMA has been to protect the right of each state to do it so we get enough experience at the state level.

What about media attention? Is it not important to focus media pressure on Congress?

No! Well, if they want a nice week off, fine, but it won’t help a lot politically. I don’t understand how people think it will. The way to deal with this is to lobby members of Congress. Call them and write them. Let me put it this way: anybody who comes to Washington who has not already called his or her representative has their priorities backwards. Members of Congress do not care what happens on the mall. What they care about are hearing from their constituents who say “this is important to me—do something about it.”

What encourages people to write in about it? Do you think everybody coming on the march has lobbied his or her member of congress? Yes or no?

No, probably not. And that’s good advice. Switching gears, what do you think of young people who may be LGBT and want to run openly for public office? Are we at a point where they can do that?

I think that in more and more parts of the country that’s possible. Obviously when I first ran 37 years ago I didn’t think I could win if I was honest.
years later I announced that I was gay and now we have more and more people doing this. That's very helpful.

Still, you're fairly lonely on the hill. Don't you think it's important for more members of Congress to come out while in office?

Yes, look, this is a prejudice based on ignorance, and the single biggest influence in the progress we've made—and we do have a ways to go—is the process of being honest about who we are. It is the single biggest thing that advances our rights. Because prejudice exists because of ignorance, and once people know the realities the prejudice diminishes.

Don't you think coming out on the Mall also makes a similar statement?

No! Because who are they coming out to? Coming out means individuals! What do you mean coming out on the Mall, to whom?

Doesn't still make a statement though? A "here we are!" sort of thing!

You've got to differentiate. Knowing that there is X number of gay people doesn't do anything. Knowing who they are, coming out saying, "Hey, I'm gay, I'm your friend, I'm your customer, I'm your student, I'm your coach," that's what coming out means. A bunch of people standing out on the Mall saying "we're gay"—what good does that do? Nobody knows who they are!

Intense partisanship in Congress—do you often find yourself arguing to dining room tables?

Partisanship is very important to democracy and people with different views need to stand by them. Now, partisanship can be carried too far if people get so bitter about the differences that they can't cooperate in areas where there aren't differences. I do think that beginning about 15 years ago, the Republicans under Newt Gingrich used partisanship excessively. The problem we now have, frankly, and I know the President has tried very hard to be bipartisan, is that the Republican party in America has moved so far to the right that it's hard to cooperate.

How far in the future, do you think, is legalized gay marriage across the nation?

Well, we have it many states, as you know. I think within five years, it will be legal for about half the population, and by then I think we'll get federal recognition. Probably 20 years before it's generally legal. But maybe, maybe that's pessimistic depending how things go. I think in five or six years we'll get it in New York and California and some other states.

I would imagine that there's campus interest in your bill to legalize small amounts of marijuana. Where do you see this going?

Well, we're not quite there yet. I think this is a case where the politicians are behind the public. And I think within four or five years we will have gotten it.

Finally, what would you say are the most important challenges to face the next generation?

The economy. I think developing an economy that not only creates wealth but also distributes it somewhat fairly. And then also the climate and the environment.

D avid Marshall has been making documentaries that largely focus on social injustice for almost 30 years. His most recent film, "Swimming With Lesbians," stresses the importance of recording western NY's regional LBGT history. A large part of the film documents the work of Madeline Davis, creator of the queer community archives in Buffalo, NY. The film is currently being shown at festivals across the country.

What inspired you to make "Swimming With Lesbians?"

I was interested in making a film that looked at gay history and the significance of regional history. There's been a lot of work done on the significant cultural icons in gay society, but not necessarily films that look at regional history and some of the phenomenal people that can be found right in your backyard. So I wanted to make a film about a few of those people.

Was there something specific that got you interested in doing a film on gay history?

That's an interesting question. I had initially wanted to do a film about two elderly gay men that I had met. They were both in their 90s and living in an old age home and I was looking to do a film about how they adapted to such a heterosexual environment. Just as I was getting ready to start shooting, one of them passed away. That kind of triggered me to the importance of collecting history, because it was just slipping through your fingers. So I was looking for a story to fill that void, and I had read a book years ago by a woman named Madeline Davis. In her book, she was looking at the history of gay Buffalo
MADELINE DAVIS

by Danielle Peck

Madeline Davis is a character in David Marshall’s 2009 documentary, “Swimming With Lesbians”—but that’s hardly the half of it.

In 1970, Davis joined the Mattachine Society of the Niagara Frontier, Buffalo’s first viable gay rights organization. She promptly committed to activism and a year later, spoke on a podium at a statewide march in Albany. She later co-authored, with Professor Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy, “Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community,” a nationally acclaimed book that remains a staple in LGBT literature.

Davis opened the GLBT Archives in 2001 and has devoted the past eight years of her life to preserving the symbols, sounds, and words of our past.

This is kind of a deep question to start with, but what meaning do words, spoken, sung, or written, have in your life?

Oh my god, you’re right—it’s a very deep question. I’ve been writing music all of my life. I was a singer; I worked my way through college and sang for gay rights issues to raise money. And so the spoken word and music have been central to my life for just about all of it.

What did you think of the film “Swimming With Lesbians”?

That’s something I’m really interested in talking about—how it feels to be a major player in a movie. That is one of the weirdest experiences of my life. When you’re in front of a camera and people want to talk about you, it’s a completely different world.

through the blue-collar women’s gay movement from the 1930s and 1940s until the 1970s. And what Madeline was doing now was creating archives. She too had seen this history disappearing around her. And I thought, this is a really worthy endeavor, so I decided I would feature Madeline as my thread for my story and then look into the archive to find story lines that tell a regional story in a compelling way, and also individuals that have been significant in their own right in forwarding gay civil rights.

Who were some of the people that you focused on?

Madeline gave me this big box that had come out of her friend’s basement. It was the box that started the archives. It was filled with letters from a woman named Peggy Ames. She was born David Detrich, and at the age of 53 she decided it was time to be true to herself and she went to have a sex change operation. When she finally approached her family with the truth of what she needed to do to feel like a whole person, they decided she was dead to them. And not only was she trans, but she was also a lesbian. She’d found a woman to fall in love with and she wrote these incredible letters in which she documented her feelings and what the transition process was like, as well as what was happening socially to her.

Buffalo, like many places, can be pretty backward. The community treated her horribly, to the point where she became kind of a rite of passage for the teenage boys who tormented her and tortured her emotionally. Adolescent boys can be one thing, but then the adult community decided to shun her, too, and allowed Peggy to be stoned by a bunch of kids. She was an extraordinary human being, and whether or not we know it, there were people in that community who, by seeing Peggy, were able to understand that there are other ways of living outside of the accepted norm.

I also followed the life of a drag queen whose name is Tanguera. I interviewed Tanguera when he was 94 and was in his nursing home. Here was this man who was the oldest drag queen in Buffalo, who had traveled all over the country making his living as a female impersonator, and he had some really interesting insights about what life was like for a man living an alternative life in Buffalo in the 1930s, ’40s, and ’50s. And I weave Madeline in and out of it to give the story some focus.

How did you come up with the title, “Swimming With Lesbians?”

Madeline and Vicky Vogue, or Danny, a drag queen in his 70s, were going to visit Tanguera in the nursing home. And Madeline said, “I’ve told Danny a bunch of times that he should just come over and go swimming with lesbians because we don’t give a shit what you look like.” And I just loved that comment on a number of levels. One, she was saying, ‘I will take you as you are and there is no image you have to worry about.’ I think for gay men there are a lot of issues with image. But also the idea of swimming kind of implies diving into someone else’s world, and so for me it was sort of diving into Madeline’s world. So “Swimming With Lesbians” became my story.

What do you hope this film will do for the community?

There are histories where we can find them and we need to start collecting them. There are some great collections of gay history, but we need to do it on a much larger scale and regionally. We have to save our history, and as gay society emerges, that will be the bedrock on which people build their lives. Or at least look back and get context to where you are as a group. And that’s important.
When you said, “It’s a beautiful day for a revolution,” what do you want it to inspire in people?

That was said at the end of the speech I gave in Albany at the first statewide march. That was just an off-the-cuff speech. But there was something so wondrous about being at a gathering of my own people and the assertion of our right to be and to live free. And the sun was shining. And people’s faces were turned up to the podium; and they were excited and earnest and angry and hopeful. I think that every day that we work towards equality is a beautiful day for a revolution.

What do you think of the present gay generation—politically?

I wish that there were more young people involved in gay rights work. People who are young and grow up with those rights already gained make the assumption that life has always been this way. And it hasn’t. And those rights could be taken away at any time.

What drew you to the dynamic of butch-femme relationships?

When I came out there was no choice! I came out in a community that was absolutely rigidly butch-femme. You walked into a bar and people said, “What are you?” That’s the way gay life was organized at the time. You really have to read “Boots of Leather” because it deals in great part with how butch-femme carved a place for us in the world and was not simply replicating straight life. And the focus of being butch in that world was to please your femme and the focus of being femme was to be pleased, so I made my choice right away! I chose pleasure.

Do you see this as a political endeavor or a culinary move?

I am eager to get back to my bassoon. It’s pretty shocking, working the grueling aspects of a real job with a totally different group of people than I’m used to. In the truck, I’m working with a lot of guys who are street-educated and it’s a whole different scene there. It’s exhilarating and exhausting. But, you know, as a chamber musician you have to network and schmooze and to be social or you don’t get anywhere.

I don’t know! I just, I’ve always wanted a summer job, you know? And I’d just finished working on my doctorate, and passed my comps, and it just happened that this was the summer to do a weird summer job.

Have your more recent relationships been butch-femme?

All of my relationships have been butch-femme relationships, including the one I’m in now. And they, over time, have changed. I am no longer a 1957 femme, but I’m still femme.

Is there anything that you wish gay publications would focus more on today?

I wish there were more publications that would deal with our history. There are wonderful gay history books out there and I wish younger people would read them. Of course, that is what archival work is about—saving that history—and that’s what we do here in Buffalo on a very local scale. People can go back and look and say, “I can’t believe we did all that. It’s just amazing.”

How have you seen the impact of your work at the archives?

I think that it has raised the consciousness of this community significantly to know that there is value in their everyday lives—that you don’t have to do something spectacular to be important, that simply the living of your life as a gay, lesbian, or trans person is not only inherent in your body and your spirit, but is in itself a political act and is important.

What do you think of documentary as an archive of history?

I am hopeful that documentary will bring people to want to know more... And perhaps, even inspire them to activism—that would be the best outcome, if it energizes people to move.

Can you include our magazine in your archives?

Oh yeah! Sure!

Does this make the Big Gay Ice Cream Truck Man your gay superhero alter ego?

I don’t know! I just, I’ve always wanted a summer job, you know? And I’d just finished working on my doctorate, and passed my comps, and it just happened that this was the summer to do a weird summer job.

I’ve heard you’re a professional bassoonist. Does this make the Big Gay Ice Cream Truck Man your gay superhero alter ego?

I am eager to get back to my bassoon. It’s pretty shocking, working the grueling aspects of a real job with a totally different group of people than I’m used to. In the truck, I’m working with a lot of guys who are street-educated and it’s a whole different scene there. It’s exhilarating and exhausting. But, you know, as a chamber musician you have to be social or you don’t get anywhere. You have to network and schmooze and that did prepare me for working in the Big Gay Ice Cream Truck, so they do have that in common.

Do you see this as a political endeavor or a culinary move?

Well, we knew it would be slightly
humorous and slightly provocative, and then we had these strange ice cream toppings. We didn’t know if any of those facets would be taken seriously, but turns out, all three were. The prime focus was just to give people a good time. Kill people with kindness. If anyone tried to insult me, I was going to be such a model businessman and never flinch, just keep smiling and see how people reacted. And I think that’s my proudest accomplishment, because I figure if people are eating ice cream, they should be happy while they do it. That’s the mission. If people buy ice cream, get a smile on their face...you just want them to have a better day, at least for the duration of the cone.

So what makes it gay?

Well, I figure if I’m going to be a held as representative of a minority anyway, I might as well be a model for that minority. You know—sometimes you go into a Chelsea clothing store and everyone is such an asshole! I thought maybe I’d start my own stereotype, this ridiculously happy ice cream queer. And even as a model for street vendors: Stop moping inside the truck and start dancing, damn it!

It seems like New Yorkers love Big Gay Ice Cream. Has the Big Gay Ice Cream Truck met any sort of resistance or turmoil?

Oh sure, I’ll get a bunch of kids pointing and laughing at the banner, and then eventually one of them will get goaded into coming over and ask if I’m gay. So I say, “Yeah, I am. Are you?”

At the beginning of the summer, a lot of tourist kids would ask their parents, “Do you see what that says?!” and the parents would dismiss it. Whether they knew it or not, they were actually stripping the word of its negative power. The parents didn’t react, and so the kids learned not to react. And then, some parents make a point of bringing their kids and showing them what the banner says, proving that they can have a business transaction with a real, live homosexual!

Who is your target consumer?

At the beginning, I figured gay events and gay communities, but really, it’s just been the people who have eaten it who have been our biggest supporters—people who just come down for the novelty of higher-end toppings on old-fashioned soft serve. It evolved into something for the foodies. I’m still going to Chelsea—but the guys over in Chelsea don’t really eat anything. They come up and ask me, “What do you have that’s low fat?” I don’t have anything! It’s much better at Union Square where people actually enjoy eating more.

Any plans for the big gay ice cream truck to take to the open road?

Yeah, I know a woman who does documentaries who would really love to shoot a story about the Big Gay Ice Cream Truck, and I love the idea. It’s a fancy of mine, going to places where I know I’d be a hit, and then going to places where it would terrify the locals. Trouble is, the truck is a slow moving creature. I’d need a lot of planning and mapping. But just think about it, to show up at a Little League game in the Ozarks? It would be so interesting to see people’s reaction.

Dare I ask if the BGICT will one day make it up to Syracuse?

That would really be fun! Like I said, though, it doesn’t travel well. It’s basically a converted UPS van, and it’s a little bit terrifying. I’m going to work on getting a better truck for next year, and we’ll just have to see.

Love Sonnet 2

by Kevin Hegedus

At odds with my disorder, I resume
the making of my muck and rubble home.
A skeleton, a webbed and shaky tomb;
stretched tarp around the meter of a poem.
I doubt that it will be an easy feat,
the sticks and stones and grinding of a fire.
I’ll pick around for something water-polished to admire.
You’ll join me, won’t you? Here I introduce
a second character, put on the spot,
so that he’d think it horrid to refuse
to insignificantly, slowly rot
amid my pile of dirty ricks and lies.
I sure as hell can fucking advertise.
You’ve decided that tonight is the night. You strategically plan your outfit and make your hair just messy enough to woo your partner of choice. This is only half the battle. How are you going to get your vagina ready for this long-awaited visitor to the region?

Women often go out of their way to ensure that sex is exactly to their liking, taking time to do things they believe make their vaginas look, smell, taste or feel better. But do some of these practices do more harm than good?

Many women’s first vag priority involves getting control of unruly pubic hair. Some women don’t find this necessary, as they think what nature has given them is already coiffed to perfection. Others may trim, shave, wax, use depilatory cream or even get laser treatments to remove hair from “down there.” According to Jenna Weintraub, Outreach and Education Specialist for Planned Parenthood of the Rochester/Syracuse region, removing pubic hair can be harmful. Those straggly strands are present to keep bacteria from entering your vagina or urethra, similar to the way eyelashes guard your eyes from dust. Weintraub believes that pornography makes a lot of women believe that their love spot is sexier when it’s bare. “A lot of girls do it and that’s really unfortunate,” Weintraub said. “If you’re shaving and you cut yourself, you could be increasing the possibility for germs and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, to get in through the skin.”

Keeping your vagina smelling good is as high on the priority list as maintaining its appearance. We all know that the area below the belt can sometimes be rather, ahem—fragrant. Because the dangers of douching have long been touted by women’s health care providers for their negative effects on the vagina’s natural chemical balance, many women have turned to other means to make their vaginas smell less aromatic. Weintraub cautions that products like harshly scented soaps or cheap body washes can up the PH of the vagina, increasing the chance of a yeast infection. “People have this idea that [vaginas] should smell and taste good. But some things, such as scented tampons or pads, can cause infection.”

Often women on the receiving end of cunnilingus seek ways to make their love juice taste a little bit sweeter.
They may use flavored lubricants or dental dams, which are usually harmless tools-of-the-trade for women seeking to change the taste of their vajay. Yet, some flavored lubricants contain chemicals women may be sensitive to, or sweeteners that can cause a big-bad yeast infection. Though most dental dams are just ‘scented,’ some can throw off the vagina’s PH and cause problems, says Weintraub.

Some women believe that eating certain foods is a more natural means of altering the taste of their lady business. Weintraub, however, hasn’t heard of any medical evidence that supports the idea that specific foods can alter the smell or taste of the vagina, although there is no doubt that some may affect the region. Often what we put into our body comes out one way or another, she says.

After engaging in sexual activity for an extended period of time, some women stress over the belief that their vagina has lost some of its elasticity. Weintraub agrees that doing kegel (pronounced key-guhl) exercises daily will strengthen your vaginal muscles and may improve sensation for both you and your partner during sex. Doing these exercises engages the same muscles that you use to start and stop the flow of urine. In fact, the next time you aren’t in a mad dash to get out of your restroom stall, learn to use your vaginal muscles by starting peeing and then stopping it—start and stop. Voilà! You’re doing kegel exercises! You shouldn’t only do these exercises in the restroom (bacteria, duh), you can do them anytime: while in class, while you’re stopped at a red light, while you’re waiting in line, etc.

So what other advice does Weintraub have? Go commando from time to time and make sure your underwear is 100 percent cotton so that your vagina can breathe. That’s right ladies, your sparkly nylon G-string might be creating some bacterial buildup and shouldn’t be worn regularly. Weintraub also highly recommends that women get in the mirror and look at their vaginas as it brings a clearer understanding of what your vagina looks like when all systems are go. “Some women think of [their vaginas] as this mysterious land and it shouldn’t be that way,” she says. “You may not know what it looks like when something is wrong.”

Whether you have a daily vagina care regimen or you only dress up the area when you’re seeing someone special, it may be worth keeping in mind that not making your love junk as bare as 8-years-old’s and throwing out those spandex panties might prevent you from having to do some “vagina remedying” in the future.♥
home. “When we got there, it was obvious that he was very ill, and also that there was no one taking care of him. So, I looked at Nick, and then I asked this guy if he wanted to come home with us. And he did, that day.”

Because the program receives no government funding, DeSalvo and Orth keep it personal. They don’t have a staff, though they encourage those interested in volunteering to build real relationships with the guests instead of stopping in haphazardly, or coming once and never again. “Friends, yes! Volunteers, ah, no.” DeSalvo explains, “We want it to be about dignity and privacy for the guests.”

As Friends of Dorothy has remained small, DeSalvo and Orth practice a unique care model that emphasizes devoted care and restorative support. Their philosophy remains grounded in what the guest wants and they have devoted their lives to maintaining it. DeSalvo refers to this as “the total freedom to see the human being first.” “It is not just about filling the bed,” he says. “This is not an ‘agency,’ this is our home. They live with us, they become our friends and our family, and they stay with us until they die.”

The response has been remarkable. The idea of two men bringing AIDS-positive people into their home seems like it might ruffle some neighborhood feathers, but DeSalvo feels that they have had absolutely no backlash. “We’ve never had any negativity! It’s been nothing but support. I find that if you give people the opportunity to grow and learn—they seize it.” Indeed, DeSalvo has a knack for raising public awareness about AIDS and the work they do because he realizes education is important for people. “AIDS is not over,” he reminds them.

He has spoken to groups at universities and in the medical field, but he has also spoken to groups of older men and even to Catholic confirmation classes. “I talk to them about the works of mercy and respect, and about what love really means.” As a man who lived through one of the generations hit hardest by AIDS, DeSalvo has reason to be thorough. “I lost some of my best friends. And yet, it shocks me that we still have this problem. There is no reason for those numbers to be on the rise!”

Soon, the story of the Friends of Dorothy will be available to a much wider audience. Dr. Sandy Lang, a friend of the two, is finishing up her book on the couple and their service-driven lives. “She’s framing it as a love story,” DeSalvo says, smiling. The book is meant to appeal to a wide audience, from teenagers learning about community service to medical students learning to care for people with AIDS.

DeSalvo emphasizes that the work he does is not only about AIDS. Specifically, he is distressed by the failure of the LGBT community to be socially engaged. “We’re brought into this system where value is placed on money, and that’s not always true.” Orth, for example, stays home to take care of their guests all day. He doesn’t make a profit, or often get recognition, but as DeSalvo says, “The worth is still there!”

DeSalvo is not a man of steel and he is not faster than a speeding bullet. Perhaps we should learn that his superhuman compassion isn’t so superhuman either, but rather, a necessary responsibility for the community.

by Michelle Khudak
love in their space

a collaborative concept developed
and photographed
by Mackenzie Studebaker / Ashley Owen

models:

Alex Kantor
Mary Kate Morrissey

Timothy Huff
Calvin Iverson

Galeb Sheldon
Josh Slocum

Honora Sullivan-Chin
Danielle Peck
The typical LUG enters college as a straight girl. But, when thrust into a scene full of hot women, her sexual curiosity flares up. As if overnight, she becomes a lesbian. She gets herself a nice, unsuspecting lesbian girlfriend. But, as soon as she receives her college degree, she checks her homosexuality at the door, dumps her girlfriend, and enters the “real world” straight-as-a-ruler.

Chloe Kanas is a 21-year-old senior at Mount Holyoke College, an all-girls school in South Hadley, MA. She had two boyfriends during high school. But, when she went away to college, Kanas encountered an environment full of unique, intelligent, and attractive women. Spring semester of her first year of college, she took the plunge into her first relationship with a woman. Several years and lesbian relationships later, Kanas now intends to further explore her sexuality. She may end up with a man in the future; she just be playing around. “Imagine the poor lesbian who was pursued for their college years only to graduate, marry men and forget about their time there. I’m sure that decision was not an easy one to come by,” she says.

In an October 2009 opinion article from The Smith College Sophian, the all-girls school’s student newspaper, an anonymous author writes, “SLUGS [Smith Lesbian Until Graduation], wanting to fit into the Smith norm, screw around with girls for their college years only to graduate, marry men and forget about their time at Smith.” It’s one thing to be curious, but it’s another to be a lesbian temporarily out of convenience. “Imagine how the poor lesbian who was pursued by the SLUG will feel when the SLUG finally finds a boy,” the author says. Those who want to explore their sexuality should do so, but in a respectful manner. The bottom line is to be conscious of the other person involved.

Lisa Spencer, 22, a 2008 graduate of Mount Holyoke, disagrees that LUGs hurt the gay community. “Being gay isn’t for everyone, some of us just weren’t made that way. But some of us were. And then, some of us are able to recognize that our sexuality is fluid,” she says. It shows that people are willing to explore rather than repress their sexual instincts, she says. College, in a sense, offers a safety net for some girls to experiment sexually, Spencer adds. “We may think the world is a great and accepting place, but the reality is far from that.” The post-college world is full of bigotry and prejudice against sexualities that deviate from the norm. So, if a woman who identified as a lesbian in college chooses to be straight later on in order to protect herself, “no one has any right to judge that, and I’m sure that decision was not an easy one to come by,” she says.

Kanas remembers making the decision to tell her family and friends back home about her newly discovered sexual freedom. Her parents gradually came to terms with her “alternative lifestyle,” but it took a lot of work. After that, “I didn’t really tell a lot of people until I was pushed to
tell people, and that was because I was afraid of the reaction," she says.

This experimentation in college is not only easy, but natural, says Margaret Jang, an international relations senior at SU. "It’s a sexualized experience," she says. "If it was at an all-boys school, the same level of experimentation would occur," she says. "You're away from home in a setting where people don't know you. You can establish a whole new identity without judgment. Also, many people question their sexuality at one point in life. College simply provides an environment for people to act upon those urges." The fact that experimentation in college is so common may also explain the need for the term LUG. Labels such as LUG and BUG, or "bisexual until graduation," are invented as a way to identify those who might have disingenuous intentions. "It's a way of protecting the community," Jang says. You don't want to be the lesbian that falls for a straight girl. Lieberman experienced similar forms of hesitation from the lesbian community when she came out her junior year. "People were very wary of me and my intentions because I look really girly," she says. "I had to work my way in."

In the end, the term may not mean much at all. The concept of a LUG stems from a societal need to categorize, says Adrea Jaehnig, the director of SU's LGBT Resource Center. You’re expected to be straight, gay, or bisexual. But, people don’t always fit perfectly into one box. "The better route would be to remove the barrier and the stigmas," Jaehnig says. "Making normal a broader category is a goal that everyone can work toward."

Kanas will graduate this May and enter the real world. She may end up dating a man again. It's not her intention, but if it happens, it happens. She doesn't describe her relationships at Mount Holyoke as some elaborate, social experiment with a time limit. "Not knowing who I’ll be attracted to next, and not being afraid of that...that's very important," she says. These four years taught her to be comfortable with the instability of her sexuality.

It's another Saturday night in Denver. Matt Kailey, an openly transsexual man, has decided to join his gay friend Drew to a bar they frequent. It's the day before Mother's day, but it hasn't stopped anyone from going out; the space is packed and boisterous. After maneuvering through the crowd, the two make their way to the bar. Drew recognizes one of his gay friends, Dan. They chat for a bit before Matt decides to step outside for a cigarette.

Returning from his smoke break, Matt searches the room for Drew. He spots his drunk friend chatting with someone off to his side. Suddenly, Matt feels someone lean toward him. "Tomorrow's Mother's Day, so you must be ovulating."

"What?" Matt says. "You should have some flowers for Mother's Day," Dan says. "I'll get you some flowers."

The comments didn’t make any sense, but Matt knew what they meant. "It was just transphobia," he says. "He hated me when he found out I was trans."

LGBT. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender. The acronym, when taken at face value, reflects the unity of a community stigmatized by the hetero-world. Even though gay rights organizations like the National Gay and Lesbian Taskforce and the Human Rights Campaign openly support transgender people, evidence suggests that relationship between the “T” and the "LGB" aren’t as agreeable as they seem on the surface.

In a 2008 document, the National Gay and Lesbian Taskforce outlines nine steps that lesbian and gay organizations can make to become fully trans-inclusive. Suggestions include using correct pronouns, providing gender-neutral bathrooms and dealing with transphobia among gay, lesbian and bisexual people.

The question surrounding transphobia is not that it exists, but really, why it exists. And maybe, is it possible that all of us, gay and straight, are a little transgender?
umbrella term for people whose gender identity, expression or behavior is different from those typically associated with their sex, don’t have it so easy. Drag queens, who dress as the opposite gender for the purpose of entertainment, intersex people born with ambiguous genitalia, and transsexuals, who feel that their assigned sex differentiates from sense of gender, all fall under this category.

In addition, transgender people may or may not be sexually attracted to individuals of the same sex. A male-to-female transsexual may feel attracted to women both pre and post-transitioning. So when it comes to fitting into the traditional, two-fold notion of sex and gender, or the binary, “T” people just don’t.

In her sociological study, Celia Kitzinger defines heteronormativity as “practices that derive from and reinforce a set of taken-for-granted pre-suppositions relating to sex and gender.” These assumptions include the belief that people feel attracted to those of the opposite sex and that there are only two sexes. This social theory may explain the difficulty people have in force a set of taken-for-granted pre-suppositions relating to sex and gender.

Another decade later, “T” inclusion still provokes controversy. In a 2009 blog post written for Mother Jones, a UK-based gay dating website, David Abrehart argues that 1) most transgender people aren’t gay, 2) cross-dressers perpetuate gay stereotypes and 3) transgender inclusion muddles LGB identity.

Abrehart’s argument coincides with a sociological study by Joshua Gamson that discusses the issues surrounding bisexual and transgender inclusion in the gay community. “If identities are indeed much more unstable, fluid and constructed than movements have tended to assume… what happens to identity-based social movements such as gay and lesbian rights?” In other words, if identities like gay and lesbian deconstruct so powerfully that they become unrecognizable the gay liberation movement may eventually undermine itself.

This grey area of gender and sexual orientation has lead to issues for “T” people, especially when it comes to politics.

**THE GOVERNMENT**

In April 2007, openly gay Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) introduced a bill known as ENDA, or the Employment Non-Discrimination Act. The bill, if passed by Congress, would have been the first federal protection for employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. In October 2007, Frank slashed the gender identity clause from the bill, claiming that the old version would not carry enough votes to pass through the Senate, according to a press release by the Human Rights Campaign, a LGBT civil rights organization.

Seventy percent of LGBT Americans preferred this version of the bill, too, over not passing it at all, according to Advocate.com. The HRC, which commissioned the poll, backed this non-inclusive version, saying it was a step forward for Americans in a press release when the bill passed through the House on Nov. 7, 2007. Yet, the organization admitted disappointment that it did not include protections for transgender people.

Matt Kailey, managing editor of Out Front Colorado, a GLBT magazine based in Denver, says the HRC’s notion of coming back later to help trans people “was crap.” “Bush would have vetoed it,” Kailey says. “They completely alienated a whole portion of their community for no reason at all.” Ironically, the non-inclusive version of ENDA died on the Senate room floor.

The exclusion of a gender identity clause for political reasons outlines another argument against transgender inclusion in the gay community: that “gender identity” protections will never pass. Zach Hall, a gay senior at George Washington University, sees why LGB people have hesitations with adding transgender protections to bills. “If you’re trying to convince your average, John Doe, conservative asshole that gayness is at least okay to tolerate, if you throw in a drag queen or a person who wants to change their
sex, that's probably a little bit more out there—even though it's very normal in other cultures,” he says.

In an op-ed written for Salon.com prior to the rejection of ENDA, gay political writer John Aravosis argues that gay people need to unify in support of trans issues if they want to make progress. “If there are still lingering questions in the gay community about gender identity 10 years after our leaders embraced the T—and there are—then imagine how conflicted straight members of Congress are when asked to pass a civil rights bill for a woman who used to be a man.”

This omission of gender identity protection continues to isolate transgender people in LGBT activism. “That's sort of like you're willing to say 'Ah, I'm not gonna waste my time with you because you'll just make it harder for me,'” says Pusch.

In June 2009, Barney Frank reintroduced a fully-inclusive version of ENDA, and on Sept. 23, the House of Representatives held its first full committee hearing on it. But, some supporters of the exclusive version of ENDA might question why transgender people are associated with the LGB community. They may believe that non-heteronormative gender identity and sexual identity are completely different things.

“This is simply not p.c. in the gay community to question how and why the T got added on to the LGB, let alone ask what I as a gay man have in common with a man who wants to cut off his penis, surgically construct a vagina, and become a woman” says Aravosis in his op-ed.

No, most gay men don’t cut off their dicks. And they may not cross-dress. But the stereotype that gay men are effeminate? Well, that's something not too uncommon.

THE LINK

“The bottom line is that gender is in all the discrimination that we're facing,” says Kailey.

Imagine this scenario: A boy walks down a street. A car pulls up to his left. He looks over his shoulder and sees one of the windows lower. Voices inside the car scream “FAG!” before the car shoots off, peeling away around the corner.

The boy’s not waving a rainbow flag. He's not having sex on the street. He's just wearing a tight T-shirt. “What made them yell 'fag?'” Kailey says. “They yell 'fag' because something he's doing is not considered manly in our culture.”

The Link

In the National Gay and Lesbian Taskforce's document, “Opening the Door to the Inclusion of Transgender People,” the authors point out that homophobia is driven by a rigid gender code: “Bias against gender non-conformity threatens access to employment and other key societal institutions for all of us and exposes us to violence and prejudice.”

“I feel like ‘T’ kind of puts the bubble around the other three, in terms of presentation,” says Bryan McKinney, a sophomore architecture student at SU. McKinney came out as trans in February 2009 and started taking hormones last July. He believes people inside and outside the LGBT community push gender bounds. A mannish straight woman who asserts herself in the business world may come off as “bitch,” while a male daycare worker may be looked at with hesitation from other parents. Both subscribe to behavior considered outside of gender norms, he says.

Deborah Rudacille, author of “The Riddle of Gender,” also touches upon the difficulties of sticking to a gender binary. Women may have more freedom than men to cross-dress with masculine clothes, but their cultural power relies heavily on youth and beauty. Straight boys, on the other hand, may have the privilege to spend 20 minutes in the bathroom and be called a “metrosexual,” but “a male-bodied person who expresses his femininity by wearing dresses quickly discovers the limits of social tolerance,” she says in her book.

Deviations from gender norms, no matter who you are, aren’t easily tolerated. The roots of transphobia in the LGBT community may be as simple as not understanding what it is to be something other than a boy or girl, to be something in-between, to be something not easily definable. “If everyone let themselves loose and didn’t try to too hard to be one thing, everyone would have feminine and masculine characteristics,” says Hall, the GWU student.

Maybe there really is a little “T” in all of us. That’s something to which everyone, not just LGB people, can relate.
Playing by the Rules

Is there a place for out lesbian and bisexual athletes in college sports?

by Honora Sullivan-Chin
photography by Devan Miles

In 2006, former Penn State basketball player Jennifer Harris sought legal action against Rene Portland, her former coach. The reason for the lawsuit that brought an end to Portland’s 27-year career at Penn State? Her team rules, which stated “No drinking, no drugs, and no lesbians.”

The lawsuit, filed on Harris’ behalf by the National Center for Lesbian Rights, also named athletic director Tim Curley and the university itself. It alleged that all three contributed to discrimination based on perceived sexual orientation, racism, and gender stereotyping. The lawsuit was eventually settled, and a subsequent internal review conducted by the university found that Portland had behaved in an “intimidating, hostile, and offensive manner” toward players she suspected to be lesbians, including Jennifer Harris. Portland was fined $10,000 by the university and required to attend diversity training sessions. She resigned soon after.

The 2009 documentary “Training Rules” examines and further explores Rene Portland’s homophobic tenure as head coach of the Penn State women’s basketball team, as well as broader concepts of homophobia, gender conformity, and intolerance within women’s collegiate athletics. In a recent interview with Alternative Film Guide, director Dee Mosbacher notes, “Although [“Training Rules”] discusses the Penn State case, this form of discrimination based on sexual orientation goes on every day in colleges, universities, high schools, and in professional sports. And it happens to both women and men, albeit in very different ways.”

In a recent article, Robin S. Vealey, a professor of kinesiology and health at Miami University of Ohio, asks the question, “Why does the intersection of ‘lesbians’ and ‘sports’ matter so much? Yes, there are lesbians who participate in sport, but not all female sports participants, not even the majority, are lesbians.” Indeed, in an ironic twist, Harris has always insisted that she is in fact heterosexual and was singled out because of her masculine gender presentation, according to the documentary.

Still, issues of sexual orientation and gender identity have always hounded female athletes at every level—recreational, collegiate, and professional. In fact, Portland insisted in a 1991 interview with the Philadelphia Inquirer that her persecution and dismissal of players she perceived to be homosexual was intended to take the stigma of lesbianism out of women’s sports, according to “Training Rules” website.

Chelsea Jones, a senior history major, was on the SU women’s tennis team for two years. She identifies as a lesbian, and once wanted to get a faux-hawk—but the response wasn’t as supportive as she’d hoped. “Sporting a faux hawk was highly discouraged because it was believed that it would decrease my chances of making it to the pros,” she says.
Jones says that she believes sponsorship, media coverage, and success should be based solely on the athlete’s talent and hard work. Unfortunately, it is clear that this is not always the case. Today, there are numerous instances in which homophobia and gender discrimination persist in women’s sports.

During the summer, South African track-runner Caster Semenya’s record-breaking gold medal victory at the World Track and Field Championships was subject to intense scrutiny because of her short hair and muscular frame, according to an article in the New York Times. In response to demands that she undergo testing to determine her biological sex, Caster Semenya’s sporting career was subject to intense scrutiny. Semenya’s case is now a matter of dispute.

In an article in Lesbian News, Rankin says that she was present as someone who supported athletes coming out and called for more support for athletes coming out. Jones believes that there is a relationship between gender conformity and perceived heterosexuality in women’s sports—a relationship that affects the way athletes dress on campus. She says, “A lot of female athletes here wear their athletic gear on campus, but others go to class in jeans and tight shirts, with their hair done and makeup on. Maybe that’s just how they like to dress. Or, maybe it’s because they’re athletes and they know athletes are perceived a certain way.”

Coming out as lesbian or bisexual in the often heteronormative world of women’s sports can be difficult for some and is not an option for others who might fear dismissal from the team or rejection by their teammates. This wasn’t the case for Lucy Schoedel, a senior psychology major, who transferred to Syracuse in 2008 from the University of New Hampshire following SU’s addition of a Division I women’s ice hockey program. She initially identified as heterosexual but at the end of her freshman year at UNH, Schoedel came out as bisexual. When she arrived at SU, she found the team to be very accepting and supportive. Many of her teammates identified as lesbian or bisexual. “When you’re on a team like ours, where we spend almost every waking moment together—eating, sleeping, training, you name it—something like sexual preference really can’t be a big issue.”

While Schoedel and Jones’ acceptance as openly lesbian and bisexual athletes at S.U. is encouraging, women’s sports and the sports world in general are not progressive in their treatment of LGBT athletes and issues of gender and sexuality.

As the documentary “Training Rules” shows, institutionalized homophobia and heteronormativity in collegiate and professional athletics can ruin careers, relationships, and lives. In addition to exploring Portland’s dismissal of Harris and subsequent lawsuit, “Training Rules” tells the stories of six other former Penn State basketball players who alleged homophobic treatment by Portland during her lengthy career.

Dr. Sue Rankin is the former head coach of Penn State’s women’s softball team. Rankin says that she was pressured to resign from her position after openly identifying as a lesbian, but remains affiliated with the university as its senior diversity planning analyst. In an article in Lesbian News, Rankin remarks, “Fear is one of the greatest obstacles in overcoming discrimination. Education is one of the greatest weapons in fighting discrimination.”

In the summer of 2009, Jones and Africa Jaehnig, the director of SU’s LGBT Resource Center, gave a presentation on homophobia to a group of freshman student athletes. “It was amazing because it was the first time these two very important aspects of my life had intersected in such a meaningful way,” says Jones. “It was an incredible experience, and there needs to be more of that.” She wants Dr. Daryl Gross, the university’s athletic director, to align with S.U.’s LGBT community and LGBT Resource Center. “Otherwise,” she says, “there is absolutely no emphasis on a safe space for athletes.”

Jones says that one of the biggest tragedies regarding homophobia in women’s sports occurs when lesbian or bisexual athletes feel as if they cannot come out to their teammates, women with whom they have built close relationships based on early morning practices, lengthy training sessions, and long hours on the road. “It’s really hard knowing that your sexuality has nothing to do with your athletic performance but also knowing that your teammates won’t accept you for who you are. My heart goes out to athletes who can’t tell their teammates that they’re gay,” she says.

And it is only when homophobia, heteronormativity, and gender discrimination are no longer institutions in women’s sports—and in the sports world in general—that athletes may feel free to come out. When this happens, athletes will be able to openly identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender without fear that they will jeopardize the strong camaraderie they experience with their teammates. After all, this incredibly important bond is based not on shared sexual orientation or gender identity, but a mutual love for the game.
When all the kids on the playground planned on becoming fire chiefs, policemen, and doctors, imaginative Matthew Lax planned on becoming a filmmaker. The now 20-year-old film major in VPA says that he felt drawn toward this creative outlet from a very young age. Little did he know that his dreams for the future would lead him to create blunt, bedridden, and HIV-positive Madame Tenacious.

Lax's latest video project, "Dragging My Feet," strings together episodic "anti-fables" about a fictional, fading drag queen, Madame Tenacious, and her embittered letters to a former lover. Writing from her hospital bed, Madame Tenacious narrates each three to five minute episode with a voice that resembles a long, desperate drag on a cigarette. Her dialogue is littered with nostalgia, dying hopes, and sobering, honest humor that only those close to death seem to possess.

Lax developed Madame Tenacious' character this past August after watching Jennie Livingston's 1990 documentary, "Paris is Burning," which chronicles the drag queen culture among New York City's poor immigrant and minority communities. "I'm fascinated by taboos and the subcultures and I just ran with it," Lax says. "I have a very limited understanding of drag, but I understand it as taking on another identity to achieve some sort of liberation. It's really a strange version of the American dream...but it's complicated."

Lax says he created Madame Tenacious to subvert this idea. "[She] is no longer tenacious, which is the biggest irony. Just alone and angry at everyone."

Due to his characters' highly critical narratives, Lax's work has been called both mean-spirited and arrogant. But Lax says this adds a more realistic element to his characters. "No matter whether you buy into this story or not, you can't help but feel the human element in it."

Lax maintains that he's not trying to make any particular statement with this story or character. Believing that life does not have defining, "Act I" finale moments, Lax says that he sought to create a piece that the viewer can interpret in any way he wishes. "I'm not getting on a soap box with this. My position is purely observational," he says.

Lax admits that his characters are highly critical, but he says that this adds a more realistic element to his characters. "The piece is deliberately low-fi. Everyone has used markers and crayons, so it's relatable on a naive level because it's so friendly. It also juxtaposes nicely with the darker subject material."

Lax cannot definitively say what lies in store for Madame Tenacious, but plans on eventually fusing all of the episodes together to create a full-length film. His ultimate goal is to have "Dragging My Feet" run the festival circuit, or to get discovered by someone with financial clout. "I've tried before and I'll try again," Lax says. "The ultimate goal is for exposure and for [filmmaking] to be my job. The real dream is stumble upon a wealthy benefactor to finance all my work. It's highly unrealistic, I know."

Whether or not Lax finds this benefactor, his charming yet repelling characters will surely continue intriguing viewers with their dualistic natures. They are confusing subjects, but perhaps that's why we are so drawn to them in the first place.

TENACIOUS NO LONGER

by Araba Sapara-Grant

art provided by Matthew Lax

Always and fondly,

Madame Tenacious
The Moth Radio Hour  
Prx.org/the-moth  
The Moth started off as just a storytelling night in the founder’s living room in NYC. The conversation later turned into a podcast and then a bunch of public radio nerds got into it, too, and were like, “Hey, we need to listen to this on a weekly basis and be able to listen for more than 15 minutes.” And so the hour-long, weekly program began. On each show, participants prepare personal stories that range from the concept of destiny to their “firsts.” A gay high school student from an intolerant neighborhood in Brooklyn recently told his story on the show. He told his frustration living in a place where he didn’t feel he was able to be himself. It’s the stuff that breaks your heart but creates real, real change. Too bad the only people listening are like-minded liberals. CHANGE THAT!

OutLoud Radio  
PRX.org/group/outloudradio  
Awesome pieces produced by college-age students in where else? Berkeley, California. Episodes deal with the shit LGBTQ students talk about every week at pride meetings, like the “myth” of bisexuality and coping in a college environment—but unlike at the meetings, most of the time you’re actually listening. The show sounds like it was done by a teen and tape recorder as most speakers give queer-guided narratives over some obligatory background music. One 18 year-old dude on an episode called “Riot Boy” talks about listening to feminist-y, empowering riot girl music. On another episode, “Glasnost,” a girl discusses coming out to her immigrant parents who are still pissed off she’s a lesbian. Everything on there is endearing—especially because they could all easily be students here, minus their general, cheery attitude as a result of beautiful bay area weather and atmosphere.

Radiolab  
Radiolab.org  
Every episode, hosts Jad and Robert fuse together science and everyday life, forcing listeners to think closely about the widely overlooked things in the world that surrounds them. Topics range from mortality, morality, space, and even pop music. In an episode called, “Yellow Fluff and Other Curious Encounters,” a man discusses his journey into a rainforest in which he returned from his journey with a fly egg growing in his forehead. The egg eventually hatched. BAD. ASS. Although it has never discussed LGBT issues, I’m including this show here because one day, one day, I’m telling you they’ll choose homosexuality as a topic and when that day comes, I won’t be around to tell you it’s there. So start listening now.

by Mariel Fiedler

by Miranda Miller
On Friday night in early October, I found my eyes fixated onstage, watching two men grind and make out beneath a blinding strobe light, the bass blasting. Several intertwined lives, two trips to the AIDS clinic and one coming out scene later, my night of theatrical fun faded into a reality shock.

Syracuse University acting major Kristian Rodriguez’s first self-written and directed drama, “Birthday Night,” made an emotional debut on Oct. 9 at Spark Contemporary Art Space.

Rodriguez refers to his play as the capstone of his playwriting career and one in which he wore many hats. One minute he was changing dialogue as he and his cast saw fit; the next, he found himself acting in the show when one of his actors dropped out. “Part of writing it happens in rehearsal,” says Rodriguez. “I think writing is more powerful when it comes from an impulse that an actor had spur of the moment.”

Although “Birthday Night” takes place in the present, the overriding theme is timeless: labels like “gay” and “AIDS” lead to misleading stereotypes. While the play focuses on the intricate relationships between six gay men, it disproves widely held misconceptions. It challenges the stereotype that gays are effeminate and illuminates the grey areas that lie within gender and sexuality. “I’ve never identified with the stereotypical image of what a gay guy is, so really, I’m exploring the gay world I’ve been a part of—the gay world of intimacy and physicality—where...we don’t have to feel this necessity to label,” Rodriguez says.

The show starts off with a complex relationship between 21-year-old Kevin (played by Jorge Torres), who fears AIDS and his homosexual identity, and Ace (Rodriguez), a bisexual drug dealer who lacks the right words and affection. Kevin threatens to leave in order to find the affection he craves unless Ace can give him a reason to stay. Their verbal communication fails, Kevin leaves, and Ace later turns to the advances of another.

“I think there are a lot of things that go unsaid among guys,” Rodriguez explains. “Women are very expressive, but men are just as complicated and emotional. It’s just that we go about it in a different way. There are less words and more physical ways of communicating.”

Felix (Walter Tucker), another character in the ensemble, exhibits the struggle men have with self-expression when he says he is “full of emotion” with “no place to put it.” His partner, Kenneth (Troy Dangerfield), can’t afford him the time of day between trips to the AIDS clinic and business struggles. When Felix brings Kenneth flowers on his birthday, Kenneth accepts. The only time these characters smile is when they finally devote their time and affection to each other.

Sophomore Erik Sords’ character, Mr. Foster, demonstrates how men sometimes overcompensate with masculinity to avoid being discovered as gay. Mr. Foster is a homophobic antagonist whose obsession with gay men indicates that he may suppress homosexual tendencies beneath his “pussy”-crazed exterior. The other characters grow stronger and more dominant when they react to him. Kenneth, for example, gives Foster a piece of his mind after learning that he cut him from a business deal for being a fag. “It’s pretty enlightening,” Sords says. “The stereotypes of gay men are that they’re feminine and weak, but all the gay men in this play are pretty strong, physically and emotionally.”

Audience member Lindsey Leonard says she felt that leaving female characters out of the play helps show the different variations of masculinity that exist in the world of both gay and straight men. “There has been considerable exploration of femininity and what it means to be a woman,” she says. “But rarely is this level of analysis applied to manhood and understanding masculinity.”

Mackenzie Studebaker, who led a discussion after the performance, hopes students learn from Rodriguez’s play. “It’s nice to be in a room with a bunch of males our own age who have to break those stereotypes of what a gay man looks like, how a gay man should act,” Studebaker says. “I think it’s good for people our age to see that.”

Agreed. “Birthday Night” holds nothing back when it comes to dispelling stereotypes and revealing the complicated relationships between men.
ArtRage Gallery
505 Hawley Ave., Syracuse
If you are socially aware and care about things—which you probably do, because you’re reading this magazine—then ArtRage will always be satisfying. All of its art exhibitions relate to some sort of political, social or just general issue. ArtRage also has an attached poster shop which sells posters and banned books galore like “And Tango Makes Three,” a children’s book about two male penguins at the Central Park Zoo who hatch and raise an egg together. Yessssss!

ArtRage is a real hub for the Hawley Green area, which in a few years, I think will turn into the artistic community’s central station.

Rarely Done Productions
Jazz Central
441 E. Washington St., Syracuse
Rarely Done Productions hosts its shows downtown at Jazz Central. Most of the time, its local writers, directors, producers, actors, etc., putting on, as the name suggests, obscure shows. Don’t let their really nice Web site fool you, though! Not all Rarely Done shows are that good…or good at all. I recently saw their production of “Werewolf,” which was hard to take seriously since it was about a student werewolf who confides in his teacher. Sprinkle in some mommy issues and post-traumatic stress and there you have one of the most boring shows I have ever seen. On Oct. 14 and 15, Rarey Done showed “Color Me Streisand,” a musical tribute to the icon. It won a bunch of local theater awards and stars two dudes, one of whom plays Barbara. I don’t think theater gets gayer than that.

Clinton Street Spa
321 N. Clinton St., Syracuse
Gay gym! For students who already have full access to the on-campus gyms, it may seem stupid to pay for a membership. But, for an experience you can’t get anywhere else in Syracuse, you might want to consider it. The place has rooms you can rent out for a good time with a friend…or “friends.” After your relaxing time, you can work out with a personal trainer and sit in the sauna. Social, relaxing, and student discount-friendly!

Equal=Grounds
750 South Ave., Rochester
This coffee place is on the edge of downtown Rochester in the South Wedge district and has the feel of a really great Funk N’ Waffles—except a little gayer, classier and above-groundier. It has an open-mic night every third Wednesday of the month, often featuring poetry readings. Everything good in a coffee shop is here: baked goods, hot drinks, gays and, if you’re lucky, sexual tension. It’s an all-ages environment and one of those places where the décor and ambience force you to come up with elaborate excuses to stay.

The Bachelor Forum
670 University Ave., Rochester
BEARS, BEARS, BEARS. Bear culture is the best! Don’t believe me? Then head to The Bachelor Forum, Rochester’s oldest gay bar where you’ll find the most masculine of men embracing leather, rugged manliness and, of course, other men. No worries, though—not everyone at the club is a bear, or even a cub. Whether or not you identify as bear, go to the forum’s Friday night events and experience what it means to participate in a Best Chest Contest or Leather Vest Night. Go now, bearded men, women, and children! Enjoy what Rochester has to offer you!

Nasty D’s Bar & Grill
140 Alexander St., Rochester
From the outside, this place looks pretty dive-y, with its deep burgundy and forest green paint and its ’50s-style white and red overhang. Inside you’ll find your standard bar and restaurant with an attached game area. At Nasty D’s Bar & Grill, you can enjoy everything a satisfying Friday night has to offer: eating, drinking and dart playing. Ignore the sketchiness, because the burgers are absolutely delicious.
GENDER BENDER BANDS

by Kelley Reece
illustration by Kat Mills

artist The Cliks
album Dirty King

The Cliks and its transgender frontman, Lucas Silveira, have been rocking out since 2007 with the release of their debut album, “Snakehouse.” While on tour promoting it, Silveria faced emotional turmoil which inspired their newest album, “Dirty King.” Lucas and the girls paint an emotionally complex rock soundscape while confronting issues like gender-identity politics and relationships, according to the band’s Myspace page.

artist Jeffree Star
album Beauty Killer

‘A Barbie doll on an acid trip’ perfectly describes Jeffree Star’s club kid persona. Dawning hot pink hair and surreal candy-color eye make-up, Star has been dropping singles since March 2007. Recently Ms. Star released her very own album entitled “Beauty Killer.” It features tracks dripping with auto-tuned throwbacks and ‘80’s club sounds. Ms. Star definitely makes bands like New Order and Depeche Mode proud.

artist Dead or Alive
song “You Spin Me Round”

Due to Flo Rida’s summer single, “Right Round,” everyone has been re-familiarized with this ‘80’s staple by Dead or Alive. For the past decade the frontman Pete Byrnes has taken on a feminine persona and reissue albums with his now 29-year-old band, but to no avail. Sadly, it seems the band will permanently reside in the one-hit-wonder category but their single will infinitely be burned in our auditory memories.

artist M.E.N.
album Limited Edition Demo EP

Riot Girls rejoice! Gender-bender and lesbian-identified JD Samson of Le Tigre and former bandmate Johanna Fateman are making a comeback with their new band, M.E.N. The band’s music addresses social issues like women’s rights and wartime economies, according to the band’s Myspace page. M.E.N. combines deep lyrical content with fresh interpretations of dance music—it may seem contradictory, but they make it work. You can hear M.E.N.’s singles, “Simultaneously” and “Credit Card Barbie$” on Myspace or catch them playing with Peaches.

artist All the Pretty Horses
album Creature

Coming out of Minnesota like a bat out of hell, All the Pretty Horses is a Midwest rock band that includes transgender members. Its brand of punk-glam riot is influenced by David Bowie and The Sex Pistols, according to an article in City Pages.
I in early July 2009, someone wrote the words, “There is no such thing as a proud queer” on the window of Syracuse’s ArtRage Gallery. The graffiti, it is assumed, was in response to supportive LGBTQ posters that were visible though the gallery’s window. It didn’t take long for the Syracuse community to react—creating the Faces of Pride exhibit.

Amit Taneja, creator of the exhibit and associate director of the SU LGBT Resource Center, asked a friend to take his picture as he held a sign that said, “Proud Queer.” With that simple action, the idea for Faces of Pride was born. Within a matter of minutes, Taneja and his friends had taken over 20 pictures of different people holding signs, and by the end of the night, close to 50 photos proclaiming LGBTQ pride had been gathered. “We took something that was painful and hurtful and turned that into something that was affirming,” says Taneja.

This grass-roots style protest hung in Syracuse University’s Panasci Lounge in the Schine Student Center from Sept. 28 to Nov. 1, but the entire exhibit can be viewed on proudincny.blogspot.com. The faces in the photographs do not hide behind writing on a window. Their messages are visible and empowering. Held together by paper clips, the photos capture a sense of community.

Anyone who wants join the group of proud faces can submit his or her photo. There is no central organization; people participate based on their own willingness to say, “We are proud.”

“It would have been easy to be hurt,” says Lauren Hannahs, who helped create the exhibit. “Our response, the way we did it, was much more productive as far as representing the LGBT community.”

Faces of Pride is a protest unlike others. After looking at the hundreds of faces, all declaring their pride, I left the exhibit not angry, but with a sense of contentment and support. I have been reaffirmed. I can be queer without compromising my pride.

I went to hang out with the Mixed Pride Bowling League on opening day of the season in September. When I heard about the league, I was suspect of the name “mixed pride.” I expected a bunch of white people and then a few people of color trying to get gays of all races to come together in unity over love of the 10-pound ball. But no dice. Mixed pride just means, “Hey, you may be straight or you’re probably queer, but none-the-less you love to bowl and you love being open minded; or not—but then, shit, you’re in the wrong place.”

The teams play every Sunday around noon at Bowl Mor Lanes in East Syracuse. It is missing an “e” in the title (do they know?). The people who run the league own the place: friends Mark MacBain and Bob Lazzaro. Mark was psyched to have me drop by. I was psyched to find so many fun people to hang out with.

When I walked in, the place was full and I asked the woman at the front desk if everyone was part of the league. Affirmative. She pointed me toward Mark, and he suggested I make an announcement to everyone there that I was from the OutProud magazine and to be ready for me to come spend time with them. Oh boy. Done and done.

One thing I must say before I go any further is that if you are into competitive bowling, Mixed Pride is the wrong place. All people I spoke to said Mixed Pride is the most fun they have had in any league. And most average in the low hundreds. Apparently that’s not that great in bowling—most good bowlers average in the mid-200s.

The first team I sat with was the Pink Squirrels. A close-knit group of pals, the team is made up of three or four ‘biting’ boys and one woman, Jane, who can play and throw back quick remarks like the rest. I mean, they don’t do too well, but they are fun and fun is what matters in sports. Treasurer of the league, Rick Bunce was sitting and collecting money from all of the teams. I asked how their record was. “Have you been watching how bad we bowl?” said Bunce.

A Pink Squirrel bowled. No pins down. Suddenly I heard a quip from one of the Pink Squirrels: “Doesn’t it make you nervous if someone is watching you gutterball?”

I realized this comment applied to me watching their failure. Little did they know about my own bowling record.

After laughing way too hard for way too long, I decided it was time to hang out with the straights. The Tasty Treats, the first place team, is made up of Mark’s sister Kathy Campany, her boyfriend, and friends. Way to maintain stereotypes gays! Can’t even get first place!

To be honest, I didn’t watch much bowling, and neither did anyone else. Most of the time when I was talking to people, and they would be like, “Oh, it’s my turn? OK, one minute, I’ll be back.” In the mean time the rest of us would eat delicious baked goods, drink booze and talk about anything and everything, like how to make really great pumpkin soup.

The Mixed Pride Bowling League brings all people of all ages together in one room. It is seriously the only all-ages gay community event I’ve been to where people are laughing and mingling and making ball/hole puns AND they’re not drunk, or drugged or paid to do it.

A+ Syracuse. A+. I left with a bunch of contacts and a bunch of promises that I will be back. And don’t you worry Bowl Mor, the time will come. And that time is every Sunday.
Mind Gaymes: A Narrative
by Carly Schleider

It used to be that being gay meant that you didn’t have a safe space to go where you could get your mind read. You didn’t have a space to go where you could consult a crystal ball. You didn’t even have a space to go where you could practice ESP out in the open.

Well good news, my friends—practicing ESP(N) in the open is no longer a heteronormative privilege afforded only to Mean Girls like Karen. Thanks to Bob Lawson, creator and host of “Mind Gaymes,” those of us who are “too gay to function” now too have a place to go and whet our appetites for the paranormal. Yes, Mind Gaymes, “America’s Only Gay Mindreading Show.” Intrigued? Shocked? So was I.

And that’s why when I found out that the show was coming to Syracuse, I immediately coughed up $30 and reserved my ticket online … I didn’t want to risk it selling out faster than a Kathy Griffin show in Greenwich Village.

Boy (or girl—gender isn’t important at Mind Gaymes) I was lucky I did that! When I got to the church hosting the event, the pews were packed so tight that one woman had to be resuscitated back to life before the show even started!

OK, that part’s a lie—I think she was just abnormally sweaty and asthmatic.

But what I found out once the show started did actually suck the air dry from my lungs.

First, master and commander Bob Lawson asked everyone in the audience to look at a series of five “ESP symbols”—a square, a circle, a plus sign, a set of squiggly lines, and a star—and select which of the five was our favorite. Ever drawn to squiggliness, I selected the set of squiggly lines. Significance? I’m “probably manic depressive,” says Bob. Don’t let anyone fool you; being diagnosed as manic depressive by a man who frequents the netherworld is serious business.

But the biggest surprise really came after I had to leave the room for a good ten minutes of uncontrollable laughter followed by crying. That’s when Bob pulled out his black Sharpie and poster board. Were we going to play Pictionary?

Not quite, but close. Posed like a sorcerer about to cast a spell, the formidable Bob dared someone in the audience to shout out a number between one and 100.

“33!”

And just like that, he wrote out a table of numbers that, no matter how you looked at it, added up to 33. Column one? 33! Row four? 33! Column two? MOTHER FUCKING 33!

Now it wasn’t the number 33 itself, but rather the man’s picemceral deconstruction of 33 that really blew my mind; his deft manipulation of numbers once and for all proved my theory that math is a homosexual conspiracy!

So where does this leave us? I’ll tell you. We’re not just here and queer. Love us or hate us, we’re here, we’re queer, we read minds, and we’re good at math. Take that, Karen!

At Peace With The Mystics
by Lindsey Leonard

After several sweaty, frantic, and ultimately unsuccessful hours spent dancing under the sputtering black lights and disco balls at Trexx night club on N. Clinton Street, I decided to step outside for a quick Aquafina and rethink my game. Ugh. If I couldn’t land at least one baby, the whole night would be a total bust. It was time to get ruthless.

I downed the water, popped some Orbit and re-entered the pulsating armpit, making my way back to the bar and scouring the crowd with my good eye. Then, just as I was about to sit down, I saw her. Perfect tan and toned with tits like duffle bags and a lustrous apple bottom coated in red like latex candy. I took a breath and placed my order.

“Could I get a Labbatt Blue Lite, please?”

“They’re two-for-one.”

“Oh! Okay, uh, hold on a minute…”

As I fumbled in my jeans for the extra dollar, the candy apple pivoted and our eyes met. She smiled and I handed her the beer. She let it roll down her throat and made a face. It was everything I’d imagined.

She ordered a pack of Twizzlers and let Justin Timberlake insist from his jukebox that we, as always, didn’t know how to act while a cluster of trans-folks clung to one end of the bar and drank blue nectar from fishbowls. Twinks twinkled, pool balls kissed, and perpetual hold.

And there I was, At peace with The Mystics. ▼
My family and I were making our dreaded annual trip to Lake Charles, LA to visit my grandmother. Once we arrived, I started killing time by playing basketball with my cousin Lance. After a few hours, my grandmother peeked her head out of the carport and said, “Honey, can I talk to you for a second?”

My stomach tightened. I already knew what the conversation would be about. I just wish my dad had prepared me that he was going to tell her. Grammy kept curling her finger at me, beckoning me to come over.

Once the shock dissipated and I regained control of my limbs, I staggered over to her. She put her arm around me and escorted me into the musty wood-paneled living room. We sat down on the old worn-out couch.

“So I understand you have something to tell me,” she said.

“Uh… I am… I am uh” I kept stammering. “My dad told you didn’t he?”

My grandmother fluffed her mousy puff of hair smugly. “Yeah… but I already knew.”

“What? How’d you know?”

“It was your body language... I mean you walk like a lumberjack.”

I sat there stunned and frustrated by her response. I thought I had masked my sexuality pretty well over those couple of years.

“Baby, I love you. You know that. I don’t care what you are or who you love.”

I was so relieved by her response. I had been afraid of this confrontation for years and could not even fathom that it would play out like this. I gave her an exceptionally long hug and stood up to go back outside relieved that it was over. She grabbed me by the wrist to stop me.

“All I want is some great grandbabies.”

I laughed and said, “Okay Grammy,” but I didn’t have the heart to tell her those weren’t happening either.

Kelley Reece

by Yun-Pei Hsiung