Vote
NorthView

Identity NorthView is a monthly publication of Identity, Inc., a non-profit, Alaskan corporation concerned with issues of sexual identity. NorthView is published as a community service and the views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the directors, officers or members of Identity, Inc. The publication of an individual's or organization's name or photo in NorthView is not to be construed as any indication of the sexual orientation of such person's or organization's membership.


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Contributions: We welcome articles and letters from community individuals and organizations. Please submit, if at all possible, on 3.5 or 5.24 diskette (IBM Microsoft Word for Windows compatible). All media will be returned. All contributions must be signed, but names will not be used upon request. NorthView reserves the right to edit as necessary and to refuse to print any article submitted.

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Mail: Editor, Identity NorthView, P.O. Box 200070, Anchorage, AK 99520-0070.

Phone: Anchorage Gay & Lesbian Helpline 907-258-4777. Messages will be returned as soon as possible.
Editorial:

Vote

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." Margaret Mead

Just what is the gay community? Are we a collection of individuals who choose to define ourselves by our sexuality, a category composed of everyone who's ever sung in the choir, a culture with common values and aspirations, or a group with nothing in common except repression? Even as we pursue such concrete goals as military reform, spousal rights, and the election of gay and lesbian officials, we will continue to be haunted by the root question: What are we?

The first wave was about visibility. The second was about community. The third is about identity. [from The Advocate, Editorial, Issue 594, 1/14/92]

Those quotes embody the core of the mission statement of Identity, Inc. They represent Identity's commitment to the Alaska Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Communities. Voting is one way we can raise our voices and be heard, and thus affect our daily lives. If we identify ourselves by our words and deeds, then our commitment to the quality of life we share in the social context is defined by the energy we put into the political process.

F. Kenneth Freedman, Editor

Gay Republican

by Herman Coen

Gay Republican. I have used those words to describe myself, and sometimes it has caused both confusion and controversy. I have been asked how I could support a party that doesn't support me, especially standing for what it does.

I believe that for the good of the nation, we must have change. But what kind of change are we talking about here? We must determine whether we want social or economic change, because one party offers one, and the other offers the other. We cannot, in this election, choose both because "both" is not being offered. What this country needs is complete reform and we are not going to get it, no matter how badly we need it. Therefore, we must make a choice. To say that the issue that is most important to me is of greater worth than the one that concerns most Americans is not only unrealistic, but also selfish. The issue of Gay and Lesbian Civil Rights burns deep in my soul, but the soul of this country needs economic help, help that will not come from Bill Clinton.

The Republican Party has definite plans and capable people who can implement an economic strategy to get this country back on its feet. I have been defending the policies of Republicans since 1980 and it was not until after eight years ago. As an eighteen year old I saw a choice between Ronald Reagan, a leader who had proven his strengths, and Walter Mondale, the former Vice-President who served under a little-known southern democratic governor, who promised great things and left his office with the country in worse shape than it had perhaps ever been.

I have lived in Arkansas and perhaps that has tarnished the way I look at Bill Clinton. The democratic party and Bill Clinton have promised to work to insure that Gays and Lesbians are given equal rights, and Bill Clinton has seemed to say that this is a very important issue to him, but he has not taken action in Arkansas to insure equal rights for gays and lesbians in any respect. I have trouble supporting a candidate who is inconsistent in actions. In the end, it is up to each of us to vote our conscience, and decide which issue is most important.

Herman Coen is a gay activist living in Anchorage.
1992 Pro-Choice Voting Guide

ENDORSEMENT POLICY: To qualify for ARP endorsement, candidates must clearly affirm their support of the right of all women to have a legal abortion and their commitment to confidentiality in abortion services and oppose all laws, regulations and policies that hinder, delay or impede access to abortion services. Incumbents who have taken a leadership role or have otherwise earned the pro-choice issue forward may be endorsed over pro-choice challengers (who will have their names printed in capital letters). Legislative candidates who do not return ARP's questionnaire or reveal their full position on abortion in an interview will not be considered for endorsement.

REPUBLICAN PRIMARY BALLOT

OPEN PRIMARY BALLOT

Candidates endorsed by the Abortion Rights Project are listed in BOLD ITALIC CAPITALS. Help keep abortion legal and safe. VOTE FOR ENDBORDED CANDIDATES ONLY.

You may take this Voting Guide into the voting booth.
Coming Out of a Walk-In Closet
by Lynne Sangster

More than a year ago I wrote my coming out story. It was written in my journal as I tried to gain perspective on the changes in my life. In the last year there have been many changes with a variety of feelings to accompany their entrance. The woman that I came out with is no longer an intimate part of my life but I still celebrate what we experienced together.

October is a special month for me. I want to celebrate coming out with others and I will also celebrate a one year anniversary with my lover and partner. The changes in my life are cause for celebration. I continue to learn about myself and about honesty in all of the feelings that come with these life experiences.

Written June 23, 1991, 8:30am

Coming Out was and is a gradual process for me. Some of my friends in the womyns community expect me to go back into the closet. I don't think so. There are many times when I've wanted to run but 'wherever I go, there I am.' At this moment I can hear the womyn I'm in love with in the bedroom. Her steady breathing tells me that she is peacefully sleeping. It was several years before I was able to open the closet doors and stick my head out.

As a group counselor I remember being enraged when several youths were making crass remarks about a lesbian co-worker of mine. To my knowledge, that was my first contact with my feelings about homosexuality. However, I had a sexually intimate relationship from age 18-20 with a college friend. We were both quiet about it and sure that we were the only people in the world that had experienced this. She left college after our sophomore year and almost immediately met a man and got married.

Two years ago I began to acknowledge to a few safe friends that I thought of myself as a lesbian. In July 1990, I went to a convention with over 50,000 people present. I met a woman and we spent several days together seeing Seattle and preparing for her to travel back to Alaska with me for a visit. Although I loved her I could not acknowledge to myself, her or anyone else that I was in love with a woman. In the fall she moved to Alaska and my fear and homophobia caused me to isolate her from my life. I told her that I could not be alone with her and did not want to be intimate.

In November and December of 1990, I was hospitalized for testing and surgery in a mid-western city. During the hospital stay I became enraged with another woman patient who made disparaging remarks about lesbians and their ability to parent. I had three regular visitors while hospitalized in this city that I was a stranger to. Two of the three were lesbians and although they did not announce it, they were definite dykes.

When I returned home from surgery there were many supportive people around me. I felt loved but above all else I had a love relationship with myself. This love for self enabled me to be more open to receiving, and giving love to others.

On February 27, 1991, the woman I had been running away from asked me to go for a drive with her. I said 'yes' and within hours we were holding each other. The next day I wrote a poem for her describing my feelings in the relationship. She was able to put it to music and two months later sang it for more than 600 people.

Several weeks ago I was able to confirm to myself that even if the relationship ended I would still be a lesbian. It feels good to be on the 'road less travelled by'.

On this road I meet people who have had similar experiences spiritually, emotionally and physically. When I reach out in the community I find support, nurturing and love.

I am writing this while sitting in a garden owned by a lesbian family. These womyn have taught me through their example that my sexuality can be a pillar of strength rather than a cloak of shame.

I want to be strong in my new belief system. I want to be an activist and advocate for positive social change for all minorities. I want to take pride in our culture. Above all else, I want to have an honest, loving, relationship with myself and the significant others that enrich my existence.

Lynne Sangster is a case manager at the Brother Francis Shelter but her most loved profession is being Rainbow the Clown.

Gabriel 272-9045
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1310 East 8th Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska 99501
The Alaska Organizing Committee meets every other Wednesday, 7:00pm at 603 W. 20th Ave., Anchorage, AK 99503. Next meeting: Oct. 20th.

Information: 907-258-5131.

The future has never looked better for achieving our equal rights.

We have the potential to see more positive change in the next 24 months than we’ve seen in the last 24 years.

We will lose that potential unless we act and act now!

Look for more announcements and get in contact with your local organizers now, so you can be part of our great future.

Your energy can enrich the process! Join now!

EQUAL
Equality Under Alaskan Law
The Alaskan Gay and Lesbian Task Force
He Went South:

or so I heard

Who was responsible for and made the first presentation to the Anchorage Equal Rights Commission of the 1 in 10: a Profile of Alaska's Lesbian and Gay Community (1986)? Who originally designed the training for the Gay & Lesbian Helpline, won the 1992 Wayne Hussey Award presented by the Imperial Court? was on the Governor's Arts Council, the Anchorage City Arts Council and sat on the Boards of the Opera and the Symphony?

Hint: his first name is the same as 2 kings of England and a famous U.S. outlaw who lent his name to a now popular complex (1847-1882), his middle name is the same as the 21st President of the U.S., and his last name is Cajun.

Give up?

We will all miss Jim Boudreaux, who has decided to pull up stakes and settle in Seattle. His contributions to all Alaskans shall not go unnoticed by this editor, though we in no way profess to know all there is about this wonderful, supportive and very Community minded person.

Yes, Jim was responsible for the 1 in 10 report as well shepherding its sequel Identity Reports, Sexual Orientation Bias in Alaska (Green & Brause, 1989). into existence. He helped get Identity back on its feet after some bad faltering. He was co-chair of the Names Project Quilt Committee, a supporter of the 4As, a major player in Alaska Real Estate (started, owned and developed Arctic Realty, now Dynamic Realty), and managed Fortune Properties. Jim was a major contributor to the Arts in Anchorage, to the Opera, the Symphony and the Museum. He also did fundraising for the Zoo, getting Fred Machtanz to do the now famous "Binky" print - a black & white litho, signed!

He is known as a congenial host. His favorite city is Paris.

He will be missed.

March on Washington

Plans for the largest civil rights gathering in the history of the U.S. gained momentum in Denver, CO. The meeting of the National Steering Committee began on an emotional high with declarations of support from the mayor of Denver, two Colorado state legislators and a letter from a Colorado federal representative. Support also came from as far away as Australia: a march in Sydney in solidarity with their American Brothers and Sisters will coincide with the Washington one.

The Civil Disobedience/Direct Action work group announced plans for a massive demonstration focussing on health care issues. Additionally, the Steering Committee approved the platform, elected two new executive committee members and dealt with fundraising and outreach training.

In case the march itself doesn't pique your desire to dip into your wallet, here are a few "hooks:" Madonna's brother, Michael Ciccone, is designing the stage; the first national advertising appears in the newly released 25th Anniversary edition of The Advocate; the portable toilets alone will cost over $80,000; the total cost of the March will be over $750,000.

Send donations to The Alaska March on Washington Organizing Committee, 603 W. 20th Ave., Anchorage, AK 99503. Local meetings are held at the above address every other Wednesday; the next meeting will be Oct. 14th at 7pm.
It's a pleasure to serve the Community!

CITY MORTGAGE CORPORATION

Talk with Lynn LaPerriere about all your financing & refinancing needs. Call 277-0700 for an appointment or for more information
The Eye
(not to be confused with The Nose)

Seen at the Sitka Summer Music Festival: we were pleased to be in the audience the evening of September 18, at the Sitka Summer Music Festival in Grant Hall at the APU campus. As is the habit at such events, seats were sold on the stage behind the performers. During the second act, however, we were a bit shocked to see a sort of punk looking kid on stage (you know the kind), with the hat turned around backwards. After the show we were shocked to realize that it was in fact none other than the Editor of this publication itself. With some serious sleuthing, we discovered that a certain wager had been placed: if The Editor would wear this (NBA) hat backwards, the owner of a certain All Classical Radio Station would donate $25 to Identity. We've always known what he is, but now we know his price.

Winter's here but that doesn't mean the fun has to end!

Treat yourself and your significant other to a getaway unsurpassed in Anchorage. Come experience nearby cross country & down hill skiing, or simply enjoy the large hot tub under the Northern Lights. For the Business or Recreational traveler we offer a comfortable private atmosphere to unwind and relax at the end of a long day. Whether for business or pleasure James and Bill are here to make your stay memorable.

Amenities include: 8 Person Hot Tub, 3 Fireplaces, Pool Table, Exercise Room, 3 Large Suites with Private Bathrooms and over 5200 square feet of comfortable elegance.

The Aurora Winds Bed & Breakfast

Catering to the needs of the Gay Community with rates as low as $65/night, including full breakfast.

Ask for James or Bill 346-2533
Gay Male Incest Survivors, Safer Sex and AIDS

"I believed that AIDS was going to get me no matter what. I didn't think there was anything I could do to stop it. Just like the abuse."

from an interview by Liz Galst for The Gay Community News

It is summer, 1990 when I interview Robert about his experiences as an incest survivor. The air is hot, the noise of the busy street rises with the bus fumes to the window of his third floor studio apartment.

We sit on the floor, Robert cross-legged, and behind him, on the edge of a circular table in the corner of this small room, a burnt-orange bottle of AZT sits also. If this article were a movie, you would see this in one shot, held long, the medicine bottle in deepest focus. It would be a frame through which to view Robert's story and the stories of men like him. You would not be able to keep your eyes off of it.

Unlike others I interview, Robert does not speak of his past easily. This is the first time he's talked about the abuse with anyone. His answers are short, frequently euphemistic, and he stutters often into a point in space I'm never quite able to locate. Though he tells me he has a disability that has kept him out of work a lot this past spring, we do not speak of the large bottle of two-tone capsules that sits perched on his round formica table. Even in this most confidential of situations, Robert does not admit his seropositivity to me, much as in the past he has not spoken of his sexual abuse. One silence mirrors the other.

But this isn't the time to push him. He's a fluttering, skittish bird relating the story of how the man he had always been told was his uncle forced him to have sex when Robert was 11 and things were particularly bad at home. A survivor myself, I know full well the pain this kind of questioning can elicit, and it seems clear that pushing him on the AZT will mean he'll draw back from me.

Besides, there are lots of other things for us to talk about: I've come with a list of questions five pages long: "What were you like as a child?" "How do you feel about your body, and has that changed over time?" "If you were abused by someone from the same race/class/culture, how has that affected your relationship to that race/class/culture?"

We discuss Robert's volunteer work in AIDS organizations, his struggles with compulsive eating, his isolation from nearly everyone. In fact, the interview's been going for almost an hour before we get to the questions about the impact incest has had on his sexuality. I ask Robert if he feels sex is something he can negotiate.

"I like sex to be spontaneous," is his answer, but it's something of a dodge. What I want to know is does Robert feel in charge of his own sexuality? Can he get what he wants sexually? Or, perhaps more importantly since we're living in an age of lethal diseases, can he say no to sex he doesn't want to have? And, is he able to set limits when someone wants to do something he thinks is unsafe?

"Usually I do whatever the other person wants the first time," he explains as he picks at the tattered Persian rug. "After about the fourth or fifth time with someone, I'm able to say what I do and don't want to happen." I ask him if that means he's done things he thinks are unsafe. "I have, because I haven't been able to talk to people about sex. The little kid in me is frightened that the person I'm with won't accept what I want to do."

Robert's fear isn't unusual; everybody wants to be accepted. But there's more punch to it than there is to most people's fear. You see, incest survivors don't need to be reminded that not everyone can be trusted to take no for an answer. It's better not to ask.

Of course, Robert isn't the only gay man around whose safer sex record isn't exactly as safe as it could be. In fact, the gay press often reports about "relapse" these days, with items on studies about the difficulty of being safe every time. But there's a difference between "slipping" and what Robert is talking about, because to have "slipped" implies that you've established a pattern of safer sex in the first place.

The things Robert tells me aren't much different than what I've heard from lots of gay male survivors. Several of the nine Boston-area men I interviewed have tried very hard to practice safer sex, especially those who are in some kind of
therapy. But almost all of the men I interviewed reported having had lots of sex that was unsafe, lots of getting fucked without a condom, and every one of them has talked of feeling little or no ownership of his sexuality. Two of these men are HIV-positive, another two have full-blown AIDS, and two more—whomever described themselves as sexually compulsive—said they intentionally hadn't been tested because they didn’t feel they could trust themselves with the results. This is in a metropolitan area where the incidence of HIV infection amongst gay men is estimated at 20 percent.

Of course nine men¹ isn’t a very large sample, and the information I’ve collected is anecdotal. But don’t get me wrong. I’m very big on anecdotal information. Since I’ve been working on this article, friends, friends, friends, and people I don’t even know call up and tell me about so-and-so’s boyfriend who was raped as a kid and has been having unsafe sex, tested positive, been diagnosed. Therapists I’ve interviewed tell similar stories. “I used to run a group for the AIDS Action Committee (AAC) for people with AIDS and ARC.” Mike Lew, a Newton, Mass.-based therapist who specializes in treating male survivors and the author of Victims No Longer: Men Recovering from Incest and Other Sexual Child Abuse, tells me. “And I used to come to that group right after a group I led for male incest survivors. One day, someone from the AAC group asked me where I had come from, and I told him that I was coming from the survivors group. Out of the eight people who were at the AAC group that evening, five came out as incest survivors and the other two didn’t say anything.”

I’d like to have some statistical information to back me up. But unfortunately, nobody’s bothered to study the impact of child sexual abuse (or adult sexual abuse) on the high-risk and health behavior of gay men.² Still, it’s clear somebody ought to.

There’s a myth that incest survivors are an extremely small percentage of the gay male community. But that belief is something that needs to be rethought. One in six men (gay and straight) polled in a 1985 Los Angeles Times survey reported being sexually abused before the age of 18. Of course, this statistic is probably an underestimate as many survivors block out the traumatic memories of abuse. Left with only the symptoms, many survivors are unable to identify themselves as such.

While there’s no reason to believe the 15 percent figure is any lower in the gay male community than it was in the L.A. Times survey group, there are reasons to believe it may be higher. According to Lew, ”Any little boy who departs from the way we expect little boys to be is more likely to be abused. People feel they have more license to behave more violently to a child who is different. By different I mean a child who is gay, or appears to be gay, effeminate, creative, artistic, academic, emotional.”

[Next month, Part II: "child sexual abuse results in tremendous psychic (and sometimes physical) pain, and, because in childhood there is no opportunity to express this pain in a way that help a survivor heal, s/he learns to numb out by necessity.... Survivors can and do recover from this, with tons of hard work.]

Subsequent Risk of HIV Infection,” American Journal of Public Health, 1991; 81: 572-575. This study is the result of a larger longitudinal survey amongst heterosexuals with non-zero risk. The results were based on responses to the question “Have you ever been raped or forced to have sex?” and thus may result in significant under-reporting as survivors of child sexual abuse often don’t remember their abuse, may not describe it in these blunt terms, and because sexual abuse does not always include the penetration implied in the question. The second study is: Anthony H., Dekker, D.O., et al., "The Incidence of Sexual Abuse in HIV infected Adolescents and Young Adults," Journal of Adolescent Health Care, 1990; 11:263.

¹ Eight of the men are white, one Latino. They come from a variety of class backgrounds, and have differing educational levels, from high school to graduate degrees.

² As of this writing, I have been able to locate two studies that included any information about the impact of child sexual abuse on high-risk behavior and HIV-infection. The first is: Sally Zierler, et al., "Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse and
Hoppy Hopkins:
Sky Is Blue/Make Me Bark
An Interview

We chatted over coffee with P.A. Hopkins, aka "Hoppy" Hopkins about her musical group(s) and what rings her personal musical chimes. It was not a surprise to discover that she has been playing guitar since the age of 13, or that it enabled her to "stay sane" while she was growing up.

With 6 years under her belt in the Anchorage area as a sometime-performer, she has spent the last 3 actively engaged in playing folk rock with her best-known group, "Sky Is Blue". Much of their material is original, and harkens to college coffee-house days when many of us were hungry students listening to soulful songs and ballads.

The rock 'n roll side of this group, named "Make Me Bark" has been in embryo for about 2 years, and made their community debut at the annual Women's Music Festival in Fairbanks last July. It was there that they were "discovered" by Identity and hired for the N.C.O.D. dance this October.

The performance for this event was a huge success for several reasons: 1) timing (flawless), 2) variety (expansive), 3) tonality (balanced & rich), 4) vocals (faithfully executed, and 5) audience contact (full and humorous).

Band members include Marie Jamison, Linda Kellen, Lori Stroup, Kippy Lanz, Stephanie LaFleur, Goodwin Trent and of course Hoppy Hopkins.

You may wish to catch the "Sky is Blue" side at the Java Joint in November and at the Underground in December. They have also been booked for the Juneau Folk Festival next summer. You will be glad you did.

Hoppy's mission is to produce "music that helps people feel something." The feeling is truly fine.
Equity Fights AIDS:
A Wedding

The invitation read: "To remember and honor their friends and family members who have died of AIDS - and to show support for all people living with AIDS - Julie and Ralph are making their wedding reception a benefit party for BC/EFA. In lieu of wedding presents (we have enough toasters already!), the newlyweds ask that a $15 donation (or larger, if you like), be made ..."

And in this way, Julie Halston and Ralph Howard began a new BC/EFA tradition - "the benefit wedding" - and raised over $12,500 for those living with AIDS. The ceremony was private, but the reception at New York's Algonquin Hotel was an extravaganza, or as The New York Times described "a cabaret show, fundraiser and campy celebration of matrimony all in one." The Wiscguys, Timothy Jerome & Susan Bigelow, Baby Jane Dexter, Jeff Harner, K.T. Sullivan, B.D. Wong, Charles Busch and Julie Wilson were only a few of the cabaret artists who entertained a crowd of over 400. The bride was lovely. The groom ... a mensch. The cake had frosted red ribbons and the bride's bouquet was caught by Charlie Kelly. What a wedding! Such a fundraiser! It's a match.

from Equity News, Sep. 1992

Black Lace, BLACKfire

If you haven't seen Black Lace, you're in for a thrill. Black Lace is the only erotic magazine featuring the images and experiences of African-American lesbians. Now in its second year, this beautifully turned out quarterly is published by the BLK Publishing Company. This 44-page slick and classy journal includes photography, short stories, poetry, drawings and a centerfold!

BLACKfire is an erotic magazine for gay men. Kaumba is a poetry journal for lesbians and gay men, and BLK is the company's flagship lesbian and gay newsmagazine.

Box 83912, Los Angeles, CA 90083-0912. Phone 310-410-0808, fax 310-410-9250.
Get a Life
from the Alaskan AIDS Assistance Association (4As)

We all know the importance of early care in managing HIV disease. That is why the 4As is instituting a new program to help people learn more about early intervention. Yes, there is life after HIV! The 4As is beginning an "HIV University" of regular workshops on early care starting the first Wednesday in November. If you are HIV Positive, plan to attend and bring a friend.

One of the most important aspects of good early care is knowing your HIV status. The 4As is now offering HIV testing every Wednesday afternoon starting at 2:00pm. Call Ross at 276-SAFE (7233) for more details.

(Raymond Jorgensen is the new 4As outreach counsellor. He will be in the bars and bookstores five hours every week to answer questions people have about safe sex and HIV transmission and to encourage people at risk to get tested and come to the 4As to see what we can do for you.)

75% Of The People Asked Said They Would Lie About Their HIV Status!

For many Alaskans, getting tested for HIV status is now a commonplace matter. For others it holds dread and negative feelings. Says Gwen Perry-Crawford, the Director for the S.T.O.P. (AIDS) Project at the Center for Drug Problems, "maybe some people believe there's a sudden responsibility you have once you find out you are [HIV] positive or negative. Maybe they see it as a burden to carry if they turn up positive, for example - now you can't do this, can't do that." When asked what that meant she said, "This is about commitment to their own lives, a promise to themselves to care for themselves, not a matter of failure or judgement. It's a promise that each day they'll look out for Number 1, and if they 'stumble,' they'll simply renew their effort, keep trying."

Many people see it as an all or nothing proposition. Perry-Crawford noted that many think that if they do something unsafe it's all over - may as well stop being safe - it doesn't matter any more. Not so, she adds emphatically. "One slip can be dangerous," she said. "But you simply have to renew your commitment to yourself, and start again, without the judgement, without the slip-once-it's-all-over philosophy. You've got to renew your effort to care for yourself, minute by minute sometimes."

The S.T.O.P. project offers free anonymous testing (walk-in at 520 E. 4th Ave., Ste. 101, Tues. & Thurs. between 1 and 4, or call 278-5019 for an appointment at other times), and pre- and post-test counselling. Their emphasis is on prevention and education. The agency offers free and frank advice about sexual and needle transmission of HIV, the suspected AIDS virus.

Perry-Crawford said "it's important to get tested and know your status. And it's important to know your partner's status. Our statistics show that 75% of people asked said they would lie about their HIV status. Would you want to be on the receiving end of that?"
Tickets go on sale Friday, Oct. 16 at 10am at CARRS TIX outlets in Anchorage, Eagle River, Wasilla, Palmer, Kenai, Homer, and Fairbanks.

POMO AFRO HOMOS

FIERCE LOVE: Stories from Black Gay Life

"Brilliant bundle of comic sketches, including a steamy back-room encounter, a drag chorus line, an a revealingly detailed coming-out saga."

– Village Voice (New York)

Fri Nov 20 & Sat Nov 21

"Fierce Love is so good that it's nearly impossible to pick out any one segment as a highlight. Each piece sheds a new and different light on another aspect of black gay life. Men on Mens' starts off as a send-up of Blaine and Antoine, the flaming black snap queens of In Living Color, [who meet] Mr. ACT/BLACK, an African American p.c. (politically correct) terrorist from hell."

– Bay Area Reporter (San Francisco)

8PM WILLIAMSON AUDITORIUM Lake Otis end of UAA

"A word of advice: make arrangements to see it before tickets sell out."

– San Francisco Bay Times

Tickets at all CARRS TIX locations  263-ARTS or 1-800 GRT-SEAT
The Day I Kissed Carla Christian
by J. Romig

WOMEN. Ahh! What sweet promises of hidden secret warm places and the encompassing love of the feminine soft persona. WOMEN. It is often said they cannot be lived with and they cannot be lived without. WOMEN. They hypnotize me. They hold me captive. I love women. It wasn't always that way.

I will never forget my first kiss. I was in the fifth grade. I kissed Carla Christian, clumsily as an ape, in the hallway of her parents' house. We held each other, scrumpy chest rubbing scrumpy chest, our heads twitching back and forth as we sought a comfortable position for the enormous skulls getting in the way of our lips. My nose felt as large as a canned ham. We pressed our lips together, our bodies stiff as boards, not quite knowing what to do with our arms, and I knew I wanted to feel exactly like that for the rest of my life.

I felt ashamed and embarrassed the next day. It was not so much the physical act of the kiss but the way I felt inside. I wanted more and more and more of those kisses and clumsy embraces and I thought that anything that felt so good must be wrong. Years later, when I began to explore sexuality in depth, I turned to men and their hard, unyielding bodies as though to punish myself for the delight I felt at that first sinful kiss. I threw myself at men. I was a slave to men. I began to hate women in my desperation to make my male encounters more palatable. But always when I closed my eyes it was the soft fullness of a woman that filled my thoughts. I became an alcoholic and a drug addict. I could not cope with my feelings of disgust and shame at sharing my bed and my life with men.

I have been clean and sober for more than a year. With the love and support of family and friends and most of all God, I was able to shrug off my unnatural past. I am healthier, calmer and more at peace than ever in my life. I smile when I think of that first bumbling kiss with Carla. I wonder is she is a lesbian, too.

Janet Romig is an enlightened single mother of three, who lives in Anchorage and is on the management team of a major (non-discriminating) hotel.
Heart, Mind & Soul:
What You Feel, You Can Heal
by Doran Vaughan

Editor's note: Long, long ago, before you or I were born, events such as multimedia, Madonna videos, CompuServe and CNN were but a glimpse in the eye of a collective consciousness. Choices were more manageable due mostly to the limited scope of our physical reality. Today, we have many more stimuli and the choices seem harder if only because there are so many choices about ourselves, our bodies, our spirituality and our mental well being often become casualties of our hectic pace and demanding money earning requirements.

This new column takes a look at our mental health from various angles and offers different points of view, different approaches to healing. Please write with your questions and comments to: Identity NorthView, P.O. Box 200070, Anchorage, AK 99520-0070. Answers and advice will appear in the following issue of this newsletter.

Throughout all aspects of American society today, we are inundated with information about health related issues. The media advises us daily regarding foods and substances that promote physical health or incur illness. We are encouraged, even pressured, to maintain aesthetically pleasing bodies, through exercise and sometimes through surgical alteration. Longevity is appealing to most people and, certainly caring for one's physical health is both desirable and necessary.

Wellness is not only contingent on the foods we ingest, the air we breath, or the amount of exercise we pursue, but it is also dependent on psychological and emotional health and well being. In the last twenty years, mental health has acquired a new, more positive image. Individuals who seek help from mental health professionals no longer have to hide their pursuit. Professionals have various specializations and offer counseling or therapy for a broad range of personal and self-growth issues.

Mental health and wellness include self-exploration and personal growth as well as in-depth therapy for long-standing personal issues. Chronic depression, alcohol/chemical dependency, eating disorders, incest and abuse, grief and loss, and relationship problems are psychological issues which may require long-term therapy with one or more professionals. On the other hand, dealing with the stresses of day-to-day life, making life and career decisions, or pursuit of self-exploration and personal growth may require short-term counseling and guidance.

As with physical wellness, mental health is an individual responsibility. When the individual has other people of significance in their life, counseling and therapy may be a relevant issue to all concerned. Hence, counseling and therapy may occur in varied formats. Individuals may prefer one-to-one contacts or support groups, whereas couples and families may explore relationship issues in joint session. Professionals can offer responsible advice regarding the most effective approach for dealing with mental health issues.

Gays, lesbians and bi-sexuals have the same need for physical and mental wellness as the "non-gay" population. The mental health issues are similar, if not the same, but are often influenced by social intolerance and self-perception. Ever important is the need to select a professional who is sensitive to the special issues of sexuality. When "shopping" for a sensitive professional, key factors to consider are the training and education, experience, and communication style of the individual. A good counselor/therapist is non-judgmental, a good listener, able to put people at ease, explores alternative solutions to perceived problems, and promotes self-empowerment and decision-making.

Mental wellness is critical to the overall health of all people. The mind and the body are integrated, hence, their mutual functioning is dependent on the health of each. Whether one experiences stresses on the job, relationship problems, issues of self-confidence, addiction to drugs or food, or issues of abuse, mental health professional can provide guidance and support which ultimately promote mental health and wellness.

Doran Vaughan, M.A., is a private therapist in Anchorage with twenty years experience in the mental health field.

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Lucian Childs
How Come the Women---?
by Linda K. Imle

I was at a bus stop the other night talking to a friend. He asked me if I thought the Women's Community was "separatist." I asked what he meant and he said that he was wondering why the lesbian community was so hard to understand. I then asked why he was asking the question. His reply was "he had noticed at community functions in which the gay men and lesbians could become involved together there seemed to be little or no lesbian support." For example, the community center for lesbians and gay men could benefit both gay men and lesbians. It seems that the lesbian community has not responded to this suggestion with too much enthusiasm.

I shared with him a few observations that may shed some light on the hesitation of many of the women to become involved with ANY project that includes men. Many of the lesbians in question have been abused. This abuse has taken many forms: sexual abuse, rape, incest, emotional abuse, and physical abuse just to name a few. Most of the abuse that these women have suffered has been at the hands of men. Gay men may have some of the same problems as lesbians surrounding the discrimination issue, violence against them, some have been abused, but the basic fact remains, gay men are MEN, and the fear, hurt and pain that has been endured by women, most generally has been caused by MEN.

Not all abuse is perpetrated by men, but even non-lesbian women are considered by the general male population as second, or third class citizens. Historically, women were considered chattel, property, for use, and mis-use, by fathers, brothers, other male family members, or husbands to do with what as they wanted. Since the 1960's women have made great strides in gaining more freedom and status in our society but we are still a long way from being considered equals.

On October 8, 1992 the ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS ran an article entitled "IN ALASKA, THE YEAR OF THE WOMEN HAS YET TO ARRIVE." This article gave an account of why there are so few women running for political office in Alaska. The women who were interviewed were asked why they were not considering running for office. Those who had children said they were worried about child-care arrangements and the time away from the family. In other words the family and home came first. The article went on to say that the interviewer did not hear this reason from any of the men she talked to.

As I see it, a woman and man decide to get married and decide to have children, it is a partnership that means BOTH members will take care of family and home. Unfortunately, that is not how it works. I know it didn't for me, when I was married. My husband did everything in his power to keep me at home and isolated from other people. He did not like me to be with the other wives in the neighborhood. I guess it threatened his sense of power or something. Women have a very strong instinct to protect their family, even if there are no children involved. This basic instinct is necessary but it works against us because it makes it easier for a man to "encourage" a woman to stay home, "where she belongs."

Money is another area that is sensitive to women. We work hard, we do jobs that men do, we do jobs that men don't want to do. We also don't get paid the same wages for the work that is done. Even nurses, who are traditionally women, don't get paid the same as male nurses. The male nurses often start at a salary slightly higher than a female, for the same job description and educational level. Women make less than males. One study I read said 59 cents on the dollar. That's pretty rotten. Couple the abuse issue with this and you might get a sense of where a lot of women are coming from.

I don't know what the solution to the problem is, except to encourage those of us who are not afraid to deal with men, especially gay men, to get as involved as much as we can. Care must be taken to keep from reaching the burn-out level, that means sharing all the responsibilities and duties. It also means that the gay men are going to have to have a little extra understanding of where the women are coming from, so no one feels like they are being "abused" by anyone. I don't know if this approach will work, but it might be a beginning, a place to start on common ground.

This is how I see part of the problem. If the gay men's community can "see" where we come from, understand our fears and reluctance to get involved, then maybe we can get the idea of a community center for the lesbian and gay men's communities off the ground and make it a reality. It will take a lot of work, on both sides, and a lot of understanding and compassion. The big question is "Is it worth the effort?" I think it is, how about you?

Linda K. Imle is a full time student at U.A.A. and very active in the Women's Community.
Opinion:
Whoopi on Gay Rights -
("Colorado"="Alaska")
by Herman Coen

Presently Colorado is considering the following question on the Nov. 3rd ballot: Shall there be an amendment to Article 2 of the Colorado Constitution to Prohibit the State of Colorado and any of its political subdivisions from adopting or enforcing any law or policy which provides that homosexual, lesbian or bisexual orientation, conduct, or relationships constitute or entitles a person to claim any minority or protected status, quota preferences, or claim of discrimination?

There were prominent citizens and officials supporting the Gay & Lesbian rights agenda. Mayor Willington Webb of Denver spoke against the amendment and following are excerpts from the letter from Whoopi Goldberg:

Dear Friend,

I've never heard of such a thing! Trying to constitutionally deny rights rather than protect rights. And in Colorado... beautiful Colorado.

I take it back. I have heard of such a thing. But from another era, 50 years ago in another part of the world. (Or was it closer to home and more recent than we wish?)

Okay. This is America, and it's almost the 21st Century, right? It's 1992, but there are still right wing zealots with nothing better to do than attack gays and lesbians and their civil rights allies like me. Some of these zealots are shrewd, southern California businessmen who know how to make a buck for their cause. They get on television and sound the financial alarm: "The homosexuals are coming, the homosexuals are coming! Send money to Rev. Lou Sheldon and he'll make them go away."

What is America coming to?

A resurgence of the Far Right and the Religious Right, that's what! They're on the Nov. 3rd ballot in Colorado with a proposal to amend the state constitution with a proposal that says: "Okay, folks, it is now officially legal to discriminate against people because they are gay!"

I can't believe this! But the danger is a lot of voters will believe it. We all have to pool our resources to help defeat Colorado's amendment #2.

Every American who cherishes individual liberty is threatened by this blatant attack on equal protection.

Recently there have been more and more incidents of racism, anti-Semitism and gay-bashing in our country. Consider:

* David Duke uses the "no special rights" theme and says he's not a racist...
* Hitler's birthday is celebrated by the Ku Klux Klan in Denver...
* The United States military says that gays are a security risk (except please stay in uniform long enough to fight in Desert Storm)...
* We must not foster an atmosphere for more hate crimes in our towns and cities. We must not let innocent people be used as shields for the extremists' intolerance.

The mean-spirited power base in Orange County, California - known as the Traditional Values Coalition - has spawned chapters around the country to ignite hatred of homosexuals, pro-choice advocates, and the arts and textbooks deemed "too liberal."

In Colorado, a group called (what else?) "Colorado for Family Values" has been organized. They must be stopped, or the far right will move like an army to other states. As long as it makes money for the Far Right, gaybashing will be their war chant....

Sincerely,

Whoopi Goldberg

P.S. Don't lay this aside. Read it again if you need to, and please write a check.

Alaskan Gay and Lesbian politics might attract such support from Mayors and film stars sooner or later, but in the interim, we might dig around in our address books and call one or two people - people who are prominent in some way (or have some power), people who may make a difference. If they express an opinion against discrimination, weight can be added to our goals. Take this opportunity to talk with them. We, too, have only "precious weeks" to spread our message.

Herman Coen is a gay activist living in Anchorage.

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[Ad for Leslie Pemberton Listed Below]
EEqual Update, or
It's All In The Name

The group formerly known as "the political meeting at Doug's house," now has a name, and much more. We are now EEqual (EQuality Under Alaska Law), The Alaska Gay and Lesbian Task Force. A mission statement is in the polishing stages, a structure and decision-making policy are in the works, and the group is becoming a cooperating organization with NGTLF (the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force).

While birthing this new group, we have been actively planning strategy and support for the Municipal Assembly public hearings in December (to include sexual orientation in the anti-discrimination ordinance.) This group is open to all lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans-genders and allies. We have been meeting every other Thursday. We are looking for another location, as we are rapidly outgrowing Doug's living room.

An exciting aspect of this group is that it is comprised of a cross-section of our community as well as non-gay allies. Following the lead of national queer organizations, we are committed to gender and racial parity at all levels, and we are using modified-consensus for decision making. Recent meetings have been lively, informative and fruitful. It is not too late to get involved. Festivities are being planned to lead up to the assembly vote, and the group plans to continue working for the civil rights of queer Alaskans beyond December.

At the present time meetings are held every other Thursday at 7pm (finished promptly at 9!), with the next regular meeting on October 22nd at 211 W. Cook. Doug - 277-3862, Herman - 258-5131.

Identity Fourth Friday
Potluck Social

Hallowe'en Time and Fall Welcome party: Come to Identity's Fourth Friday Potluck Social. The tradition is to bring a dish, anything from soup to nuts, i.e., main dish, salad, bread, rolls, desert, chips, dip, pizza, etc. Identity provides the drinks (tea, coffee, punch). Admission is free. Donations are urgently appreciated.

Date: Friday, October 23rd.

Time: 6:30pm doors open, 7pm dinner, 7:30pm announcements & program

Place: Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Church.
3201 Turnagain STREET, Anchorage.

Program: Mary Minor is a Naturopathic practitioner and presents a fascinating and compelling view of alternative health care. Over the years she has dealt with many health problems and brings a unique vision to our perceptions of ourselves, our bodies, minds and spirits, and the proper care and feeding of same. She shares offices with Hope Wing, ND and Rick Abbott, DC on 34th Ave.

You Are Invited...

to two community-wide events sponsored by EEqual, The Alaska Gay and Lesbian Task Force. These gatherings are intended to be fun, spirited conclaves for queers and our allies to prepare ourselves for the Assembly hearings in December. The first, a potluck/social, will be held at the AUUF (same location as the Identity Potlucks) on Thursday, October 29th, at 6:00pm. The second is still in the planning stages, but is tentatively planned for the evening of Friday, November 20th, location TBA. This event will include music, food and other serendipities. ALL QUEERS AND ALLIES ARE INVITED! Please come, and bring your friends of all persuasions. Please call Lisa Jamieson at 278-2198 or Scott Turner at 258-5131 for more information, or to volunteer to help.
Calendar

Oct 18, Sun:
* Metropolitan Community Church, 7:15 (see 'ad')
* Bowling Team "Northern Exposure", 5pm, Park Lanes

Oct 20, Tues:
* Anchorage Garden Buddies, 7:30, 248-2339

Oct 21, Wed:
* Blue Moon Boy-Ree-Alice Review, 10:30pm

Oct 22, Thu:
* EQual Political Meeting, 7-9pm, 277-3862 (see 'ad')

Oct 23, Fri:
* Identity Potluck, 6:30pm, UUF, 3201 Turnagain St. (see article)
* PLWA lunch, 12-1pm, 4As, 730 T St.

Oct 24, Sat:
* Identity Board Meeting, 10am, UUF, members welcome

Oct 25, Sun:
* Metropolitan Community Church, 7:15 (see 'ad')
* Bowling Team "Northern Exposure", 5pm, Park Lanes

Oct 26-27, Mon-Tue:
* Buddy Training, 4As, 276-1400

Oct 28, Wed:
* Blue Moon Boy-Ree-Alice Review, 10:30pm

Oct 29, Thu:
* EQual Potluck, 278-2198 (see article)

Oct 30, Fri:
* PLWA lunch, 12-1pm, 4As, 730 T St.

Oct 31, Sat:
* OPAL Hallowe'en Dance, 8pm, Spenard Rec Ctr., $8/adv, $10 at door

Nov 1, Sun:
* Metropolitan Community Church, 7:15 (see 'ad')
* Bowling Team "Northern Exposure", 5pm, Park Lanes

Nov 4, Wed:
* Blue Moon Boy-Ree-Alice Review, 10:30pm

Nov 5, Thu:
* EQual Political Meeting, 7-9pm, 277-3862 (see 'ad')

Nov 6, Fri:
* PLWA lunch, 12-1pm, 4As, 730 T St.

Nov 7, Sat:
* Identity Helpline Training, UUF, Jaime: 338-0762
* Women's 2-Step, 7:30-lessons, 8:30 dancing, Pioneer School House

Nov 8, Sun:
* Metropolitan Community Church, 7:15 (see 'ad')
* Bowling Team "Northern Exposure", 5pm, Park Lanes

Nov 9, Mon:
* Gay Bar: free legal advice, 279-5001 (see 'ad')

Nov 10, Tues:
* NorthView deadline; 248-7722

Nov 11, Wed:
* Blue Moon Boy-Ree-Alice Review, 10:30pm

Nov 13, Fri:
* PLWA lunch, 12-1pm, 4As, 730 T St.
* Personal Care Attendant Nurse Aide training, Humana, info: 276-1400

Nov 15, Sun:
* Metropolitan Community Church, 7:15 (see 'ad')
* Bowling Team "Northern Exposure", 5pm, Park Lanes
Emotions before logic

What is the value of publishing muddle-headed columns like Frank Gerjovic’s “Homosexuality doesn’t warrant legal protection”? (We Alaskans, Oct. 4) If Mr. Gerjovic’s landlord was offended by his commentary, why be justified in evicting his tenant? Or if the publisher of the Anchorage Daily News were outraged that Gerjovic advogated that his personal religious convictions should be the basis of municipal legislation, would his termination of the man be morally defensible? According to Gerjovic’s own emotional logic, we believe it wouldn’t.

It is our understanding that American citizens are entitled to stay in apartments they pay the rent on and occupy according to the terms of their leases and in jobs they perform adequately unless their landlords or employers have specific grounds for evicting or firing them. The personal lives of their tenants or employers are none of their business. Because our society sometimes fails to honor its own principles, we need human rights ordinances to reinforce them. Mr. Gerjovic’s expression of prejudice constitutes good evidence that in Anchorage that protection ought to be extended to gays and lesbians.

— Ted Herlinger
Judith Moore

Finally, the other side

Thank you for the column by Frank Gerjovic concerning legal protection for homosexuals. I totally agree. Sexual preference should not be included as a minority group. I wonder, however, why the pro-homosexual articles are placed on the front page of major sections, and this editorial was buried in the We Alaskans section.

I hope this is a beginning of a new commitment by the News to bring a balanced approach to reporting.

— Kathy Lyday

Closet homophobia

Frank Gerjovic’s article is one glaring example of why I oppose all citizens from discrimination are necessary, contrary to his beliefs. I admire Gerjovic’s strength in exposing his closet homosexuality and replacing it with something he rather hesitantly calls “tolerance.” But his prejudice glares through like a neon sign, and the casual gay or straight, does not dive that causes gays to lose jobs, get kicked out of rental housing, or get mugged in the streets for it.

The morals, the fundamentalists, the skinheads, the KKK — they are all the same. They need someone to hate and demand the legal license to practice their hatred, bigotry and prejudice on someone to whom they feel superior.

— Nathan P. Silveira, Soldotna

Gay man says ‘queens’ hurt image

Dear Ann Landers: I’m a 34-year-old gay male professional, in the closet and tired of it.

I watched the press coverage of the parade for Gay Pride Week, and as usual, the men representing the gay community were sashaying around in wigs, dresses, chaps and harnesses.

Like most gays, I’m thoroughly disgusted with the way we are portrayed by Hollywood and the media. To be fair, however, a large part of the blame must be placed on the shoulders of people in the homosexual community. I refer to the effeminate, limb-wristed, nasal-voiced queens who jump in front of cameras and make a spectacle of themselves.

Those weirdos do not represent me or any of my gay friends. Moreover, they are the reason homosexuals are considered freaks and should hide their sexuality and must hide their sex. Small wonder average people are reluctant to give gays equal rights. They don’t want near-behind the wigs, dresses and high heels teaching their kids and fighting in their country’s armies. And who can blame them?

— George Bryson

Dear George Bryson: What I think happens is that people, gay and straight, do not flaunt their sexuality and private lives. So please, “girls,” keep it in the bedroom and let the rest of us be judged for who we are and not by the distorted image you portray. You defy all of us the opportunity to be accepted as decent, constructive members of the community. — Sabotaged in Calgary

Dear Calgary: Most gay males are indistinguishable from straights. They must cringe when they see the bizarre antics you describe. Every minority has its lunatic fringe, extremists and outcasts who impede progress, block acceptance and make life hard for everybody.

— Ann Landers

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