PrideFest 2001

Under the Midnight Sun
Anchorage, Alaska

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The NorthView continues to seek volunteers to write articles, columns, reviews, and stories, and to help with layout, editing, and distribution. We hope to serve the community by focusing more on community news, increasing circulation and ad revenue, and continue helping to serve as a community-wide resource.

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Cover: PrideFest 2001 at the parkstrip in June.

Cover Photos: T.L.F.M.C. Web Site,
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Identity
THE FIRST WORD
by Pete Gregson, Editor

The most successful event in the history of GLBT Alaska is now over, and as GLBT persons in Anchorage there are a lot of reasons we should be proud. 550 people marched in this year's Gay Pride parade. Over 3,000 people were spectators. Over 3,000 attended the PrideFest Festival. Over 2,000 people attended the other PrideFest activities (there were twelve PrideFest events in five days). The actions of the mayor helped us get front-page news coverage in the weeks leading up to Pride. The parade was front-page news. All-in-all it was a great event.

However, many of the reasons we should be proud of this year's Pride has little to do with the larger community support or the sheer numbers of people who attended events. What I believe is most impressive is that our GLBT community truly worked together to make this happen. The largest GLBT organizations in town and some of the most visible community leaders joined together to create something wonderful for our community. Thousands of GLBT Alaskans came out in support of themselves and their community. As a community, we showed our larger community that we were active and were not afraid to be visible, that we would not hide.

I've been in Anchorage for a short amount of time. During that time, I have heard stories about infighting and past history, about old rivalries and past injustices. I've heard people try to define this community based on perceptions formed over the years. I've been told that many things would not work. I've been told that this a community often divided by its past and still divided in many ways along certain lines corresponding to peer groups, sex, age, and social status. That is always part of any community.

However, with PrideFest, I believe that we have proved to ourselves what can happen when we unite as a community, when we set aside our differences and our history, and we work towards the common good. I'm not so naive to believe that we can or should always do this. After all, GLBT persons are a large and diverse population with many different interests. We need different groups and different activities. Yet, when it matters, when it is important that we show our strength, then I hope we can continue to join together to create change or to create positive public events like PrideFest.

Our community has made great strides this year. The Anchorage Daily News has come out in support of GLBT rights. The Anchorage School Board voted unanimously to add sexual orientation to its anti-discrimination policy. Our Governor issued the first-ever proclamation in support of Gay Pride Month. Librarians, community groups, and churches marched alongside us in our parade. Our community rallied to write our state legislators about anti-gay bills introduced in the last legislative session and the bills died. Even the Reverend Jerry Prevo has been mostly silent, afraid of being labeled a homophobe if he attacks us openly. Like other communities across America, the Anchorage GLBT community is gaining community support and is using that support to effect real change.

We still have much work to do. It will take a community to help affect changes that will lead to greater freedoms-long-time leaders and new community activists, GLBT businesses and social groups, men and women, young and old, transsexuals and bisexuals. It will take all of us. But we know now what happens when we work together as a community. We see the results. We feel the pride. Hopefully, very hopefully, we will continue our march towards true equality united, strong, and proud. For when we do so, we are formidable indeed.

I believe that one of the great strengths of volunteer projects is the circulation of volunteers. This constant influx of new blood allows for tremendous freshness and vibrancy in a project such as the NorthView. It allows for new voices and new ideas, new concepts and new visions. I think it is an exciting and vital part of keeping volunteers active in the community and keeping a community publication new and exciting.

I know I speak for the three of us when I say it has been a great privilege to serve this community in this capacity. It is often scary putting one's creative and artistic vision out in public each month. It is even more scary thinking that one's opinions and artistic endeavors are worthy of being read and seen by others. But it is also rewarding knowing that one can offer his community an influx of voices and ideas that they might have never considered.

I am very proud of the voices in the NorthView this past year and of our commitment to being a forum for Alaskan writers. I'm also proud of the great diversity in our voices; a single, newly-out gay dad; a popular transsexual entertainer; the new pastor of our GLBT church; a Vietnamese-American activist; the wife of a transsexual man; a young college student; a sexually-explicit poet; and many others who have added their voices to the diversity of our contributors. Hopefully, the NorthView reflects the stunning diversity that is our GLBT community.

I will continue to write for the NorthView. I still want to add my voice to our community. I look forward to seeing the imprint of a new staff as they make the NorthView their own creation. My thanks to Identity, Inc for continuing their support of this important community project. My thanks and gratitude to Kim and to Chris and to the many volunteers who make the NorthView happen. And my heartfelt thanks to the Anchorage GLBT community for your support and encouragement this past year and for listening to my voice. It has been wicked fun!
MY VIEW FROM THE PARADE
by Mark Trick

When I first heard that TLFMCM was to march in the Pride Parade, I felt a bit of panic. I recalled reading an article from many years ago about a gay pride march in Anchorage that drew only a handful of marchers. There was a photo on the front page. I would never have had the courage to expose myself to the public eye in that way. I tend to be non-confrontational. I'm out of the closet to my family and friends, but I make a point to not flaunt the fact that I am gay. It was always more comfortable for me that way.

I searched for a way to get out of marching. I reasoned that I could volunteer for other activities. I would be setting up our club booth and might not have time. I quickly volunteered for that activity, freeing myself from marching.

During the week, I watched a PBS special "Scout's Honor" about a young boy working to end the Boy Scout's gay ban. I was moved by his courage. Here was a young teen getting national media attention, and I was worried about walking in the streets of my home. I instantly felt very small, but found that I grew just as quickly when I found the courage to march. Of course, there was still my obligation to the club booth.

I ended up helping my partner set up the booth spaces early, freeing me to walk in the parade. While I was waiting for the parade marchers to assemble, I talked to others on the street. One person was worried about marching because he would walk past his workplace. Another was concerned about homophobic clients he worked with that didn't know he was gay. Another man was unsure of marching because he lived with a homophobic relative. In the end, all of us had something in common. We set aside our fears and walked in the streets of our home.

As I walked, people were cheering as they watched, offering words of encouragement. Many groups marched ahead. I really couldn't see the lead group for the distance. Behind me walked more groups, and I could not see the end. Collectively we marched, winding in a line several blocks in length. I scanned the faces of the parade watchers as I passed. There were smiles and clapping hands.

Today I watched something wonderful and all too rare. I witnessed my friends and neighbors weave a brilliant tapestry. Like a rainbow, varied and rich, it was displayed for all to see. How dull a fabric we would be without our diversity, our patches of color and patterns joined together in a common bond.

Today, I stood and walked.
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

More Thoughts On Anchorage Pride 2001

I was really looking forward to Gay Pride, being that I am new to Anchorage. I did not know what to expect. I was overwhelmed by the spectacular turnout...it was inspiring to get a chance to be a part of the gay family here. What made Gay Pride more special to me was that my sister and nine-year old niece attended the parade and PrideFest with me. I have a sense of belonging to something now, and have met many new friends. It was obvious to me that many people had put a lot of hours into the planning and coordination of Gay Pride, and I can tell those people "thank-you--your effort really made a difference to me!" I look forward to a happy relationship with Anchorage and the gay community. Thanks for giving me some memories to remember.

Geoffrey N. Guzicki
Anchorage, Alaska

Congratulations Anchorage GLBT Community

I'm a native New Yorker who's followed the general goings on in Anchorage since I was a mere 14 years old. My first visit was in 1977, and I fell in love with this spectacular American Outpost (all puns intended!). Congratulations to the Anchorage Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Community on your arrival and on your successful parade and festival. This is only the beginning.

Sincerely,
Baron Dakota, N.Y.C. 6.30.2001

FOURTH OF ALASKA
By Mark Schubauer

365 times a year I celebrate Independence Day, even more some years.
Guided by wisdams- amma'a, thich's, jesus'---- well everyone's wisdom I guess.
I become hole when merging into oneness.
Channeling nothing is everything and nothing but deliberate choice.
Joined in flag waving and merriment celebrating joy and sorrow, parading with permitted abundance to be whatever-- saving the fireworks for New Years when it'll be dark again.
THANK YOU

PrideFest 2001 is over, and what an incredible, incredible week. 12 events in 5 days, a parade with 35 entries and over 500 people, a festival attended by thousands, and the list goes on. What an incredible message our community gave to all of Anchorage.

Thanks to the six organizing groups of PrideFest 2001 and their Boards and members: Identity, The Imperial Court of All Alaska, The Last Frontier Men's Club, Metropolitan Community Church, Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, and the Young Gay Men's Association. These groups gave support and money from the get-go. It is very impressive that PrideFest was a collective effort of these groups since seldom does this type of major cooperative effort happen.

Thanks to the Major Sponsors. PrideFest 2001 was a $20,000 event. Thanks to The Anchorage Press, Mad Myrnas, Mendel and Associates, Gay.com, Bud Light, PlanetOut, and ID Lube.

A Special Thanks go out to the two Title Sponsors:
Identity, Incorporated who always sponsors PrideFest did so again this year. PrideFest remains an Identity event and many thanks to their organization and their wonderful Board: Co-Chairs Jim Mohr and Victoria Shaver, Victor Carlson, Steve Kendall, Diana Wolf, Scott Turner, Chuck Hart, Kristara, and Brain Ridder. Thank You.

The Imperial Court of All Alaska immediately stepped forward as a major sponsor upon being asked and underwrote the parade. Again, ICOAA continues to lead our community with their dedication to GLBT Anchorage. A special thanks to current Monarchs Kent and Eve and to their Board: President Bob Comeau, VP Michael Deal, Sabrina Perez, Joanie Carver, Lynn Howard, Eldon Kirby, Cass Miller, Misty Dawn, Rusty, and Dennis and Silva. Thank You.

A Special Thank You to our GLBT businesses who helped promote this great week and especially to three: Jack Darnell and Chris Pearson at Stonewall’d - Thank You so much for everything and for continuing to do so much. Larry Kaiser at The Raven - you guys were great. The patio kick-off party was awesome, all the publicity was wonderful, and 1st place as best marching unit in the parade was a final nice touch. Thanks to you and Rick Wright for all you did. To Jeff Wood (aka Mad Myrna) and Bear Garrison and the crew at Myrnas - Thank You. Major sponsor, major publicity, and host of four Pride events. You continue to give so much to our community. Thank You.

Next, Thanks to the many volunteers who made PrideFest happen before and during the event. There were so many of you and your hard work is greatly appreciated. Special thanks to several super-volunteers:
Kirt Beck and Roger Crandy who did the Anchorage pride web site, thank you. You guys spent so many hours making us look so professional. Thanks for being the only people to be at all 12 events and for working so hard during PrideFest to get the pics on the web. Your dedication to this community is fantastic.
Doug Frank, Jan Richardson, & Fken Freedman the co-creators of the banned library display, thanks for your great work on creating this display and for all your time spent defending it afterwards. Again, each of you came through for the Anchorage community.
Kim Acuna, who worked over 100 hours on the PrideFest program, Thank You. You continue to use your talents to make our community look good. The program was fantastic.
To the groups and businesses who sponsored PrideFest events, thanks. All of you spent much time and money making this week special and creating great events. MCC, PFLAG, The Raven, Mr Alaska Leather 2001 Frank Mabry and TLFMC, The Family at UAA, Breakeven Productions, Mad Myrnas, YGMA and Jass Alley, and The Imperial Court of All Alaska and Mr and Ms Gay Alaska Bill Skitt and Sabrina Perez. Thank You.

To the 34 parade entries, gosh what an awesome thing the parade was. All the volunteers who built floats and made banners and signs and who showed up to march, thank you. It was huge! Thank you.

To the over 40 vendors, many thanks. What an incredible festival marketplace. Thanks for taking a chance and to all those community groups who took the time and energy to create a table and to staff it. Thank you.

To the over 20 entertainers and emcees on the Main Stage, thanks. What a great six-hour show. Thank you so much for sharing your talent.

To the many businesses who were donors, who gave items for the raffle, and who are advertisers in the program, thank you! Your donation to our community was very significant this year. Many of you continue to give every time anyone asks because you believe in this community. Thank you and thank you for your support of PrideFest.

To Arliss Sturgewlewski and Katie Hurley, BRAVO. You were not afraid to step forward and to lead our parade when so many others would not even be seen near it. Thanks for honoring diversity and for honoring us.

To the entire Anchorage and Alaska GLBT community, how incredible you were all week. Boy, did you turn out. Who says we won’t support a major PrideFest in Anchorage? Who says we can’t have a parade? Not anyone, anymore. Awesome, awesome, awesome. Thank you for your great support.

Finally, if you know any of the members of the PrideFest Steering committee please personally email them or call them and say thanks. They worked hundreds of hours over seven months to make this happen. This was the most high-profile and largest GLBT event to ever happen in Anchorage. Jim Mohr (Chair of PrideFest), Pete Gregson, Dan Carter, Michael French, Jan Richardson, Frank Mabry, Victoria Shaver, Tom Rachel, and Jane and Norm Schlittler - the thanks of this community is definitely yours. Take a bow. Take many. You deserve it!
SPIRITUAL OUTINGS
Rev. Jan Richardson

In last month’s Northview column I spoke of my personal decision to continue expressing my spirituality within the context of my Christian faith and that by doing this I am put in the role of “catalytic transformer” within the structure of an organized religion. I explained this role as an agent of change, helping to bring about reform, inciting social movements, and supporting the advancement of humanity. As Jesus of my Christian tradition exemplified, the role of spiritual teacher sometimes involves bringing down the “sword of truth” and smashing ignorance, lies, injustice, and social conditioning. Little did I know that this would play itself out in co-creating and setting up a carefully designed “innocuous” display for the Loussac Library in Anchorage! This may well be the gift I give to Northview readers and the Anchor-
age GLBT community about our spiritual place in society and the importance of developing or reconnecting with our own sense of spirituality.

In addressing the process of Coming IN and Coming OUT spiritually, I operate out of a basic understanding that spirituality is not a separate and compartmentalized aspect of who we are. Rather, it is the glue that holds us together and is inclusive of everything we are and do. In fact, the word “integrity” stems from the Latin integer, as in whole number. As we become “integrated”—that is, whole-beings—spirituality will be reflected in all of our relationships, interpersonal as well as our relationship to our work, environment, money, leisure and other “things” of our life. When we reach that level of integrity and wholeness, our separate life components are no longer fragmented, disjointed, or at odds with each other. Ultimately, I believe, everything that we do is an expression of our spirituality. If this is the case, then it stands to reason that it is important to identify and nurture our individual spirituality.

For me, considering that Christianity is rooted in patriarchy and has some expressions that are less than affirming of GLBTs, it is important to work for change from the inside of organized religion. “If religion”, according to Toby Johnson, editor of the White Crane Journal, “is one of the biggest problems the gay community faces, then we’d do well to encourage and support the transformation of religion.” We need go no further than Anchorage and the library display to substantiate that religion is a problem. To say that my title as Reverend and the name of Lamb of God Metropolitan Community Church were “used” in the dismantling of the library display is an understatement.

Finding our own connection with the divine, developing our own sense of spirituality, requires a commitment to inner work. In this Coming IN we launch onto a journey of self-discovery that ultimately makes the connection to that which is beyond ourselves. Whether we journey through more traditional religion or venture off paths yet untrodden, we need to make that connection with the divine. For some it might be psychotherapy, spiritual direction, meditation, dance and other forms of movement, breathwork, bodywork, gardening, or being alone in nature. Regardless of the path chosen for this journey of integration and wholeness, it is crucial to remember that in spirituality — as with everything else — without conscious effort, little progress will be made.

Coming OUT is being visible. Coming OUT means freeing ourselves from the hang-ups and neuroses inherited from our families and culture. It means releasing and rejecting unhealthy patterns of behavior that no longer serve us. If we desire to be whole — integrated — fully human and fully ourselves we have to come out sooner or later. In this context of a journey to being who we really are, coming OUT is a universal imperative, not just an exclusively GLBT experience. So, in this ultimate sense, coming OUT — from whichever closet — is about healing ourselves. It means shedding the skins of our old identities of woundedness and victimization, and emerging transformed as the beings that we really are: empowered, compassionate, loving, ready.

See OUTINGS, page 15

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MR. ALASKA LEATHER 2000 RANKS 16 AT INTERNATIONAL MR. LEATHER CONTEST
By Chris Pearson

The Alaskan GLBT community has a lot to be proud of. On May 27th in Chicago at the International Mr. Leather 2001 Contest, Jack Darnell, Mr. Alaska Leather 2000, placed 16th out of 63 contestans.

This is no small feat. Winning a local contest is the first step. Jack is the first Alaskan to make the top twenty cut and has really put Alaska on the leather world map.

This was a culmination of fifteen months of hard work by Jack representing the Alaskan Leather Community and The Last Frontier Men's Club at various national events. These events gave Jack the opportunity to meet former and current title holders, judges, contest producers, and other key figures in the Leather Community, and the opportunity for them to see Jack in various settings.

This is a critical part of the process. This is not just a body beautiful or popularity contest. They want to get to know how you interact with all types of people, what you have done for your local community, how much you know and understand about the history and codes of conduct within the Leather community, what your interests are, your background, your relationships, and your sexual practices and experiences. But most of all they want to know you and your heart.

It is a very intense process.

The Top 20 are selected after the preliminary portions of the contest which include Pecs and Personality, Judges Interviews, and Jockstrap or Physique pre-judging. After the Top 20 are announced, they are then required to give a speech and to appear one last time in a jock for comparative physique judging. Jack looked and represented Alaska great throughout the entire contest.

Joining Jack at the competition was his partner Chris, Mr. Alaska Leather 2001 Frank Mabry, Ms Alaska Leather 2000 Cass and her partner Maggie. Cass will represent Alaska at IMSL (International Ms. Leather 2001) next month in Dallas Texas. Cass attended many events at IML and was very well received and liked by all that had a chance to meet her.

So look out Alaska, you have another star in the wings waiting to bring great recognition to our local community.
IN THE BOOK STORE
A BOOK REVIEW COLUMN
by Geoffrey Stewart

This column is generally written a month in advance of when it appears, so it seemed ironic that I had already chosen the book The Rights of Lesbians and Gay Men for this month's column when "His Honor" the Mayor decided to take down the Gay Pride display at the Loussac Library. I had planned with this column to start reviewing two books a month, but I hope you will indulge me, dear readers, in a little commentary.

As many of you already know, last month Mayor Weurch ordered a gay pride display taken down at the Loussac Library, even though the Library had approved the display. As I write this, it is still uncertain whether the ACLU will pursue a lawsuit against the Mayor or the City. What has me worked up is that on one of the news stories about Mayor Weurch's apparent violation of the gay community's Freedom of Speech, he referred to the display as promoting the "gay lifestyle." His use of the term "gay lifestyle" made me curious to find out what's giving an elderly ex-Marine such a hissy fit about it. Let's see...

I get up in the morning, shit, shower, shave. Go to work for usually seven or eight hours. After work I will sometimes get together with friends, or I will go home and read something. On my days off, I am usually to be found working on my writing or hanging out with friends. I pray and am active in the local Wiccan community. I sometimes get to pursue my hobbies and interests including camping, costuming, watching old-movies, and reading a wide variety of fiction and non-fiction. Sometimes I meet someone nice and go out on a date. At night I go to bed, frequently alone.

It's really not the stuff of lurid fantasy or criminal misbehavior. Which makes me wonder, again, what is the Mayor's problem? Is he afraid that someone is going to see the pride display and go home to their husband and kids and say "Honey! I've decided to become a homosexual! Now I know this is a shock, but I want to become a second class citizen, and invite a lot of bigotry and petty bull shit and cruelty into my life."

I am gay. I certainly didn't "choose" it. If anything God chose it for me. What I am choosing is to not allow someone else's ignorance or fear to deny me any of my rights and freedoms under the law. But what are my legal rights as a gay man? I have occasionally been in the situation of wanting to have a better understanding of my rights under the law and this month's book has helped a lot.

THE RIGHTS OF LESBIANS AND GAY MEN
by Nan D. Hunter
Sherryl E. Michaelson
Thomas B. Stoddard
ISBN# 0-8093-16434-x

This handy little reference book is an "American Civil Liberties Union Handbook." I called the Anchorage office (PO Box 201844 Anchorage, AK, 907/276-2258) and apparently the ACLU puts out all sorts of legal rights handbooks. It was actually kind of nice to learn that they are up to constructive educational work as well as their more visible work of chanting "sue the bastards" and filing court cases.

The handbook is written in a clear and jargon free style, and is the type of book I have been wanting to add to my library for years. I particularly liked the Question and Answer format and I was able to jump quickly through the book to find answers to specific legal rights questions. I also liked how the Appendices listed such things as different state laws pertaining to homosexuality and sources of legal assistance. Also listed in this book is the contact information for the various national and state offices of the ACLU.

In Chapter 1 Freedom of Speech and Association, I found the following entry under Coming Out and Positive Images particularly interesting in light of recent events.

"Can public transit and other state entities that accept advertising deals with social or political issues refuse to accept advertising from gay rights organizations?"

No. When a public transportation authority accepts other advertisements espousing political and social concerns, it creates a public forum, and access to such a public forum could be limited only by precise, clear regulations concerning time, place, and manner of speech. Access to such a forum may not be barred because gay rights views may be unpopular."

On the whole I found this to be a useful and interesting legal handbook. If you would like to get a copy, your best bet is to look for it at your local bookseller by the ISBN#. It will probably be the quickest way to find this book. ▼

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Identity
THE OTHER EPIDEMIC
By Brian Ridder

Have you heard that the rate of HIV infection is on the rise among men in The United States? Probably not. I don’t know who’s paying attention, if anyone. AIDS, it seems, is not worthy of the notice it once was. Perhaps this is a sign that it has become commonplace. More likely, however, there is a darker force at work here.

I understand that most new cases of HIV transmission are among young members of minorities, and young intravenous drug users. If this is so, it means three things: we are not educating our youth, racism continues to be a problem in our culture, and drug use is increasingly popular.

Every person I know with HIV either has addiction issues or contracted the virus while intoxicated. I wonder if there’s a connection? Drugs not only break down a person’s self-esteem, but also their better judgment. This is a deadly combination, no doubt.

Now, don’t misunderstand me, I am no stranger to the night life. In fact, I’ve done enough chemicals to qualify for stock options with Dupont. But I was lucky. My drug use caused sexual dysfunction, and so when I was young and more likely to take unnecessary risks, I was most often too embarrassed to even get naked. Who knows what kind of decisions I would have made if it had been different.

Should we be surprised what happens to a community whose physical center is a bar? Maybe not, but that doesn’t mean things can’t change. One more reason

See EPIDEMIC, page 15

Gratitude
n: 1 the state of being grateful: 2 a feeling of thankfulness and appreciation

To all my clients & friends, with gratitude, I thank all of you for entrusting me with the buying and selling of your home. I appreciate the opportunity to serve you.

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A wonderful therapist once gave my partner Danny and me some very good advice. He told us to develop a thick skin because he said we'd need it. He was right.

Danny began gender transition shortly after we became partners. At the time, I thought this simply meant he'd one day get his chest surgically reconfigured and maybe do those injections we'd read about. Of course, it's the things we never think about that present hurdles, not the ones we anticipate and plan for.

One of the hardest things for me about my partner's transition is that it's so public. I once said to Danny, "Why can't we just do this quietly? Why does the world have to know?" I now see how ridiculous my question was, but at the time I was mourning our loss of privacy as a couple.

Until people actually see indications of maleness, they continue to regard a female-to-male transsexual as female. When they start to see physical signs of transition—a flat male chest, stubble on his chin or a furry upper lip, a deepening voice—then the transsexual person begins to realize his goal of living in the correct gender. Which is why Danny couldn't do this quietly.

I'm something of an introvert, but I've gradually learned to be more open about this topic. Being partnered with an extrovert in the throes of gender transition has done a lot to thicken my skin. But I'm still caught off guard now and then.

Last winter we went to a small cafe to listen to music and ran into a straight friend Danny knew years ago. She called him by his former name and knew nothing about the more recent events in his life. So Danny briefly explained he had changed his name and was changing gender to make his exterior consistent with his interior. Her reaction was positive, but she began asking very personal questions about surgical options. Hearing someone I've never met ask my partner about his genitals definitely made my skin a little thicker.

Danny's had lots of experience at developing a thick skin over the last two years. He's transitioning on the job, which means he's done a lot of educating to help co-workers understand his situation. Still, it takes a pretty thick skin to return to work after gender surgery and find the rumor mill working overtime. Sensitive co-workers showed genuine concern while others generated colorful rumors, some of which were pretty ambitious, though Danny didn't seem to mind.

When we meet new people in the community who know of Danny's transition, it's usually a positive experience. And if someone stares for a moment, it simply means they're putting the face with the name and then they smile. But being stared at outside our community feels different.

We rarely attend work functions outside the office, but we went to an annual awards banquet a few months ago. Danny put on a coat and tie, and I wore a dress, and we looked much like any other couple at this stuffy event. The dinner was excellent, and I enjoyed chatting with Danny's co-workers at our table.

But there was one difficult moment in the evening when I noticed a man at another table whispering to his wife and pointing at us. His wife stared at Danny and then because I was sitting next to him, she looked at me. I met her gaze for a long moment to let them know I knew they were discussing us. They both looked away, and I smiled to myself.

Danny once said when someone stares, he tries to walk a little taller, a little prouder, and he looks them straight in the eye. And if they stare really hard as he walks by, he "peacocks" (his word for strutting).

It's been a bumpy two years and our skins are definitely thicker today, but so are our friendships. Because for every rude person who stares or gawks or gossips, there are three wonderful people who smile, give us a hug, a compliment, or words of encouragement and affirmation. And that makes living in a gender fish bowl a little easier.
A JOURNEY IN LEATHER: INTERNATIONAL MR. LEATHER 2001 - MY IML EXPERIENCE

Jack Darnell, Mr. Alaska Leather 2000 IML Top Twenty Finalist

It was an unlikely choir: sixty-three men from seven countries and twenty-seven states sat bunched on the worn red carpet staircase of the Congress Theater. Everyone's eyes glistened, some from tears, many from exhaustion, all from adrenaline. Four days had passed since we sat on the floor of the Wabash Room at the Palmer House Hilton in Chicago and heard for the first time the details of the International Mr. Leather 2001 contest; four days since we lifted each other-literally and figuratively-and announced that we, as a body, were International Mr. Leather 2001. The days had passed too quickly, and now we sat, catching our breath before the final run, waiting for Guy Baldwin, a well known and respected leather icon, former IML, and author, to come say a few words before our numbers would be reduced to the top twenty who would compete for the honor of being the singular IML 2001.

It started somewhere in the middle of the anxious group, a lone voice singing “Amazing Grace.” Then sixty-two other voices joined and the lobby of the Congress Theater was filled: “How sweet the sound.” As had been the case all weekend, we became more than the sum of our parts. We were not sixty-three men, but one man, one voice, one spirit that transformed the rococo remnants of a once-grand theater into a beautiful, spiritual space.

As the final strains of the hymn drifted back down to the lobby floor we heard the unmistakable sound of boot-steps coming around the side of the staircase, then Guy stood before us, a stock whip in hand. As he waited there, silently gathering his thoughts, the clouds that had hung over Chicago for four days broke and the windows over the theater doors behind Guy were filled with white light. The brilliance surrounded him and washed over us as he began to speak.

He started by guiding us into a state of meditation, of listening. He whirled the stock whip above his head to create a great wind that we followed into peace. He spoke of the task that lay before us—not for just that night, but for every night and day to come. He reminded us that the bronze medals we each wore around our necks are, in their own way, as important as the gold that the winner would receive that night. When he was through, there were sixty-three seconds of silence, one second for each contestant, broken only by the sound of his boots disappearing back around the curve of the stairway. The night was underway: the final act of the contest had begun.

The beginning of the contest, however, also marked an end. It marked the culmination of the weekend, the culmination of a year for IML 2000 Mike Taylor, and the culmination of the quests of 63 men to become IML 2001. In some ways the beginning came at many different points. I was one of the first to become an IML 2001 contestant since my qualifying contest took place in January of 2000. There was one among us who had won his local title just two weeks before IML. For all of us, the beginning came when we first embraced our love for leather. For our purpose that weekend, though, the beginning was Thursday night at 7:00 in The Wabash Room at the Palmer House Hotel.

We started out all standing, milling about the room. Already I had met several of the other contestants—some at events earlier in the year, some in the two days I had already been in Chicago. I spent the time, until orientation was called to order, meeting others and trying to recall the names of those I’d already met. The room was a sea of names and titles and former titles and judges and contestant hosts (our “handlers” for the weekend). Over the sea stirred a breeze of conversation, a light fog of cigarette smoke, and a palpable sense of anticipation.

Finally the orientation was called to order and sixty-three men seated themselves on the floor and prepared to get the show on the road. The first hour and a half was taken by introductions—judges, the contesting hosts, and some winners from years past. Then the chief judge, Thom Dombkowski spoke to us of the magic we were about to create. He likened us to knights of the Round Table vying to become first among equals; the twenty who would make the cut (Top Twenty) he compared to those chosen to try to pull the sword from the stone.

The next hour was filled with minutiae—where to go, when to be there, who to call upon if we needed anything at all. Then we were arranged alphabetically and each of us was given a bronze medal emblazoned with the IML logo and inscribed with the year, 2001. We then counted off in groups of ten or eleven; those groups were composed of the men we would become closest to, the ones who would shore us up as we waited for our interviews with the judges and then support us, and, if need be, comfort us—when our time before the panel was over. Then each group stood in closed circles and one by one we moved to the center.

Standing there, my classmates’ hands on my shoulders, I said, “My

See MR. LEATHER, continued page 15

NorthView
ALASKA’S BGLTA HISTORY

By Chuck Hart

Due to writer’s block in the busiest June I have ever known, I am sharing this dream of a project with you a little bit early.

My contribution to the display at the Loussac Public Library was to “research” GLBT history, select several events, and put these dates and events into a time line. What saddened me most was the lack of information that I could quickly access. The only Alaskan history that I could put my hands on was the first coronation of the Emperor and Empress of All Alaska. This was a good piece of social history, but the timeline needed a lot more Alaskan information. My timeline was not used, and I was not disappointed. The plans for next year’s library display will include a timeline peopled liberally with the history of BGLTA Alaskans.

I had agreed with Jan Richardson on the day that the display was put up to do this project in the fall. I was strongly about it then, but since then Mr. Wuerch has insisted on singling out the BGLTA display by reneging on a three-month-old agreement that spelled out the content of the display. If my dad were here he would say, “That George Wuerch is the kind of man that would shove little puppies off a cliff.” Dad would be right. We are not dealing with a mayor who can be compassionate, kind, understanding, fair, or democratic— at least not to Anchorage’s BGLTA residents & taxpayers.

My volunteer project for the coming year is to find out as much history of BGLTA Alaskans as possible. I have only vague memories of my childhood and not much else until I came out in 1998.

People in the closet right now will come out every year. If they had a local history to show that they have never been alone, it would make the transition from closet out to freedom so much easier. Wouldn’t it be awesome to have a history to read to learn about all the groups in our gay communities and the contributions of each. A reference book that we could draw on to show that yes, we have had horrendous things done to us (1998) and how we have fought back, and continue to do so.

I would like to begin work in August or September, sharing the glory with anyone who could help enhance the product of this research. Anyone who witnessed something that was reported in the paper(s), and anyone who has old newspaper clippings about social events, legal battles, openings and closings of offices and bars, political events, hate crimes, concerts, and any BGLTA related events (happy or tragic), PLEASE CONTACT ME at chuck838792hart@yahoo.com or leave me a message at 562-7161. If you know someone who knows anything about BGLTA Alaskan history please give him or her my name, e-mail address, and telephone number.

This history project, when finished, will be a gift to our new community center, all who assisted in the project, and everyone in the community. I am not requesting money, until time to print. I am volunteering my time on this project to make all of us a little richer. Contributions of stories from many sources will keep a balance to this project. I encourage the Identity crowd to share as much history as they can (I am on the Board, so I know who will be delegated this task). I would like to hear from the lesbian groups, MCC, TLFMC, Mt. McKinley Non-Assent Club, PFLAG, IMRJU, GSAs, GLSEN, Allies, the Raven staff & patrons, Mad Myrna’s staff & patrons, and anyone with knowledge of the Transgendered community history. I have only been in Anchorage since August 2000. I am sure I am leaving many groups out, but it is just ignorance on my part. I mean no malice. Since this is a statewide project, I would love to have contacts in Fairbanks, Juneau, Bethel, Barrow, Seldovna, the Aleutians, and as many other communities as we can find. If any other groups would like to contribute the history that they know please contact me.

We have a rich history of positive events and tragic times. I would like to collect as much of our history as possible and put it in easily understood formats. When this project is done, it will be easy to add to in the future. Our history of BGLTA Alaskans must be published to show that we have a history and culture, that we are oppressed, that we do make a positive impact in our community at large, and within our own community. It will make us all the more proud if we can show that we have a history in this state, a history of caring, of sharing, of overcoming hatred peacefully, and of being productive citizens.

Please help our Alaskan BGLTA communities put together our history!

Chuck Hart is a single full-time student at UAA, an Identity Board Member, and father of two daughters 18 & 13, and a son 9. He lives OUT AND PROUD with his daughter, Becca. Please contact Chuck with your comments at chuck838792hart@yahoo.com

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The NorthView Needs You

The NorthView is seeking artists to submit drawings and origial cover art as well as submissions of illustrations and comic strips. Writers are asked to submit original fiction or poetry or to write for the May issue’s theme of “Equality”.

Submit!
(by the 10th of each month for the next month’s issue)

Please submit work electronically to: Identity@alaska.net

Identity
OUTINGS, Continued from page 8

to make a difference in the world, and fully able to embrace all of life.

Coming OUT - and coming OUT spiritually - requires courage. In the words of Nancy Nangeroni, the transgendered host of Gender Talk, a radio show airing in Boston and on the Internet, courage is “honesty backed by integrity, the honesty to recognize the truth and the integrity to act on it.”

By reclaiming our spiritual heritage (Coming IN), and consciously enacting the roles and functions which we have always played (Coming OUT), we become empowered and develop a deep sense of self. We discover the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. The library display incident calls us to our pot of gold! The effect that we have on Anchorage, Alaska and the world is unimaginable. With all our diverse spiritual energies, we are empowered to make an incredible difference. The community needs us now. Discover your spirit and unleash it in the name of honesty and integrity, and for the sake of justice and peace. ▼

EPIDEMIC, Continued from page 11
to establish healthy social organizations, as well as a community center. Sure, you can get condoms at the club, but it is going to be the social organizations and community center that will get the message out.

And the message is: let’s take better care of our young, let’s reach out to our brothers and sisters of color, and let’s not have any illusions about the destructive nature of drugs.

When you see me on the sidewalk, struggling with my oxygen tank, and the Marlboro logo tattooed on my forehead, don’t feel the need to pity me. I promise not to mention the lesions on your face. After all, being a hypocrite doesn’t make me wrong, it just makes me a hypocrite.

I can’t help but feel that the increase in HIV infection has a more sinister origin than ignorance. I’m surprised by the sexual behavior of a lot of the men in Anchorage. Maybe you think the virus can’t survive this far north? Wrong. Maybe you think we have a closed community, and as long as you stay away from the tourists, you’ll be fine? Wrong. Maybe you think the medications are basically the same thing as a cure? Wrong. But if you think that next line of cocaine is going to take you to heaven, you may very well be right. ▼

MR. LEATHER, Continued from page 13

name is Jack Darnell. I am Mr. Alaska Leather 2000, and I am...” My voice cracked for a moment under the weight of joyful tears, but I took a deep breath and yelled, “AND I AM INTERNATIONAL MR. LEATHER 2001!!!” As the words left my lips, the men surrounding me lifted me high upon their outstretched hands and shouted, “You are International Mr. Leather 2001 and we support you!!”

The same scene was then repeated sixty-two times. Every man there truly was IML 2001. The rest of the weekend went by in a blur, the opening ceremonies, the Pecs and Personality portion of the contest, the interview early in the day on Saturday, and, of course, the thrill of being one of those remaining on stage chosen as one of the Top Twenty. Hundreds of other moments from those five days will stand out in my mind for as long as I live – talking with Guy Baldwin Sunday night after the contest, the quiet moments spent hanging out with the other contestants, having my boots done by Paksen, International Bootblack 2001 – but of everything that happened in those 120 hours three events will never fade.

The first was the moment when I looked around the Wabash room at the sixty-two other contestants and realized that I was there: I had made it to IML to represent Alaska, The Last Frontier Men’s Club, and myself to the best of my ability.

The second was that moment when I was lifted up by strong hands and strong voices that told me that, no matter who won the gold, I AM International Mr. Leather 2001, as was every other man in that room.

The third, and most moving, was in my hotel room, when after my interview with the judges, my partner gave me a card with the most powerful and meaningful hand written message anyone has ever given me which I will keep forever.

Guy Baldwin’s final comment will also stay with me for a long time. “It is noble deeds that have brought you here. Let no one ever tell you any differently. As you return home to live and work in your leather community remember that it is a noble work that you do.” ▼

Elizabeth Maria McNeill, Ph.D., P.C.
Licensed Clinical Psychologist
By Appointment

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&
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Please join Kent & Eve for
CORONATION XXIX
" Fulfilling Your Fantasies in Kent and Eve's XXIX" 

THURSDAY, AUGUST 30, 2001
In State Show & Awards Ceremony
Doors open 7 p.m., Show 8 p.m.
at Mad Myrna's ■ Admission $10.00

FRIDAY, AUGUST 31, 2001
Hospitality
Friday, Saturday, & Sunday 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Sheraton Anchorage Hotel
Texas Party
Hosted by the Monarchs of Texas
at Mad Myrna's ■ Admission Free

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2001
Brown Bear Saloon Bus Run
Bar opens 10 a.m.
12 p.m. buses leave from The Raven
CROWNING OF EMPEROR AND EMPRESS BEAR!
Admission $15.00

Out of Town Show
VISITING PERFORMERS
Doors Open 7 p.m., Show at 8 p.m.
Sheraton Anchorage Hotel Ballroom
Admission $15.00

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2001
Monarch's Brunch
12 p.m.
Sea Galley
Admission $20.00
Minions Brunch
12 p.m.
Peppermill
Admission $17.00

CORONATION XXIX
Doors Open 5 p.m., Show begins promptly at 6 p.m.
Sheraton Anchorage Hotel ■ Howard Rock Ballroom
Admission $35.00

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2001
Victory Brunch
11 a.m.
Sheraton Anchorage Hotel - Josephine's Restaurant
Admission $20.00
San Francisco Party
The Raven
Admission Free

Guest Accommodations Available at
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Anchorage, AK 99508
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The Last Frontier Men’s Club Announces New Officers:
Chris Pearson, President
Mark Trick, Vice President
Kirt Beck, Secretary
Michael French, Treasurer
Scott Turner, Road Captain

Help Plan Unity in our Community:
GLBTA community members wanted to make up the Unity In Our Community (UIOC) planning committee. This event is for all of our community and is designed to introduce people to planning and organizing an event. Meetings will be fun, interactive, and a chance to learn about community organizing while making friends. We are, of course, also looking for singers, dancers, and performance artists for this second annual community wide show. Unity In Our Community will be on Sat, Nov 10th. Details TBA. For more information, please e-mail victoriainalaska@hotmail.com or call the Helpline and leave a message 258-4777.

Living Out Loud Youth Retreat
A retreat will be held for Alaska GLBTQA youth ages sixteen-to-twenty-four, August 10-12. Any interested participants or volunteers should contact Victoria Shaver at victoriainalaska@hotmail.com.

Alaska AIDS Ride Seeks Volunteers
Volunteers needed for the closing ceremonies of the Alaska AIDS Vaccine Ride to be held on the Park Strip in Anchorage on Saturday, August 25th. They will need approximately 200 volunteers to help with all aspects of the ceremony. All questions regarding this event should be directed to:
Becky Roberts
Volunteer Coordinator
AIDS Vaccine Rides
broberts@pallottaleaomworks.com
(323) 857-7222 x142 work
(310) 780-2312 mobile

Camp Ten Trees
Camp announced for GLBTQA youth and children with GLBT parents. Session I is for children of the LGBT community (ages 8-15) and runs August 19-25. Session II is for LGBTQ youth ages 13-18 and runs August 26-September 1. Cost is $325 per week and scholarships are available. The camp is located in a beautiful facility on Lake Wennathee in Washington State. For more information, log onto www.camptentrees.org.

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PrideFest 2001
Celebrating Diversity Parade

Photos: T.L.F.M.C. Web Site, Kirt Beck & Roger Crandy
PrideFest 2001

Festival

Photos: T.L.F.M.C. Web Site, Kirt Beck & Roger Crandy

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NorthView
PrideFest 2001

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Kick-off Party at The Raven

Rocky Horror Picture Show

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Photos: T.L.F.M.C. Web Site, Kirt Beck & Roger Crandy