

Middle Age Gay Guy 03

By: Tom O. McCulley

My own belief is that there is hardly anyone whose sexual life, if it were broadcast, would not fill the world at large with surprise and horror.

~W. Somerset Maugham

By the time you read this, we'll be well into 2006. So, let's chat about sex! What a way to start the New Year!! Before you bury your heads in the sand, I promise I'll be discreet.

I know; some of you don't even believe middle aged gay guys still have sex, especially an old married couple like Ron and me that have been together for more than two decades. Well dearies, I can assure you that although the frequency might decline, the quality starts to go off the charts!

Are you embarrassed yet?

Anyway, I got to thinking today—well okay, I was probably hallucinating in some sort of post holiday pig-out stupor—about those pesky “new year's resolutions” so many of us make and then miserably fail at. With the advent in my own generation of the HIV virus, one of those resolutions has been to practice safer sex throughout the New Year. Let me state here and now that safer sex is a resolution that we should KEEP!!

Let me also state, that we are all human, I hope, unless you're letting your gay cat read this—and then we should have a private talk. As humans, we cannot do every “good and right thing” we hope to do every day of our lives. First of all, how boring. Second, it is just not possible to be perfect all the time.

Even when it comes to safe sex.

When I came out to my parents and myself and a certain fundamentalist Baptist minister (long story!) in 1975, promiscuity was a political statement. Along with others, I truly believed that the more people I slept with the more I was making the statement that “Hey! Gay is okay!”

A part of me still believes this—that by challenging the sexual taboos our repressive regime in Washington wants to impose on me, I am making a statement against those that believe love can be defined and restricted to one heterosexual man and one heterosexual woman and all other forms are somehow perverted. And the part of me that sees sex as a political statement doesn't always want to wear a condom, even though HIV is a constant presence in my life and the life of other gay couples I know.

The dicey part is—HIV infection is not a political statement, at least that is what I argue when I speak to my gay and non-gay friends who still confuse a disease with a punishment from the gods or the justly due result of those men and women who cannot “control their passions.”

Sort of a “catch-22” huh?

So, for 2006 my “sexual resolution” is this—I will continue to enjoy passion where I can find it, but I will also seek—every single time—to be sober, smart and safe when I indulge in that passion. Note that I did not promise to be “perfect” in matters of safe sex. Instead, I promised to TRY to be sober, smart and safe.

For those of you that need “lists,” here's mine for the New Year.

- 1) Seek to practice safer sex 100% of the time.
- 2) Seek to engage in sex—especially if it is sex with someone you don't know—only when you are sober. You'll like yourself more in the morning. You won't be “surprised” by what you brought home to bed. And most important—the actual sexual encounter will feel a lot better. Trust me, I know.
- 3) Seek to be smart about sex—which means having a sense of humor. If it looks like it is about the be “the best night of your life” but neither of you happens to have a condom, laugh about it, find ways that don't involve penetration to enjoy each other, laugh about it again—and make a date for later.
- 4) Seek to have compassion for yourself when your passions overrule your judgment. Swearing to “never have sex again” just doesn't cut the mustard. We are all sexual beings—even those of us who are middle aged and have been married to the same partner forever. Gay sex is fun, it is good, and yes, Virginia, it continues to make a strong political statement that we will not be relegated to second class status in ANY part of our lives. Clean yourself off, get a check up if necessary and work toward a safer encounter next time.
- 5) Seek help from others if your passions overrule your judgment more times than not. I don't know about you, but I love my life. The fact is, however, if your passions overrule your desire to practice safer sex most of the time, chances are you won't be around for as long as you might wish. This newsletter is chock-full of contact numbers for those of you that need to seek help so you can practice sober, smarter and safer sex. Give someone a call.

Want to contact “Middle Aged Gay Guy” directly? Feel free to email me at tom57mac@hotmail.com. I'm a busy guy so I won't always respond right away, but I will answer. Promise. Until next time—I'll be counting the new gray hairs.

the RAINBOW CONNECTION

The Advocacy Council for Human Rights

January 2006

The Forest Park dilemma

By: Peggy Burton

Complaint from local family

A local family that lives close to Forrest Park in Bloomington took their young children to play on the recently installed play equipment in the park. They were concerned about the men who appeared to be picking each other up and going into the bushes to have sex.

The mother came to talk to the ACHR Board about her perception of male prostitution in the park. She had gone to

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the Mayor of Bloomington to discuss this and he told her that this has been going on for many years and no violence has been associated with the male to male interactions. Because of limited resources patrols are infrequent and are sent to higher priority areas of town.

The mother told the ACHR Board her concerns are not about homosexuality but are prostitution in the park, whether heterosexual or homosexual.

What are the issues?

One man from the park thought it was men who are afraid to come out, especially older men from the surrounding small communities who frequent Forest Park. Many of these local men are established in their communities and want some place to go to meet others without fear of exposure. These men, it was felt, may or may not want to have sex but do not feel they can pick up someone and “take them home.” One gay man who is familiar with Forrest Park said most of what is going on in the park is talking.

Heterosexuals have more freedom to meet people and show affection towards each other in public. It is easier for heterosexuals to take someone home or go to a hotel/motel. Our society tends to ignore this behavior or at least not harass heterosexual individuals about it. Gays and lesbians tend to be more cautious and feel they have fewer options because discovery may increase the chance of ridicule. It is less acceptable in our society for gays and lesbians to meet in public and show any display of affection than for heterosexuals to do so (thus the desire to go to an out of the way park to meet).

What can be done?

It seems important to reach out to this segment of the gay and lesbian community and work to create a “safe place” for them to meet outside the park. One gay man who went to the park decided to establish a web site for communication for these individuals. He says the web site has been quite successful.

Perhaps the Adult GLBT community center could provide a specific time for male socializing with the hours posted on the gay man's web site. It may be that some expansion of hours or change of open hours would help. In addition, advertising the Adult community center in surrounding small towns would help advertise to a group that might not be aware of the community center. This Adult community center could be a place to create a dialogue around this topic.

Bistro Introduces Rewind Wednesdays

The Bistro, 316 N. Main St. in downtown Bloomington, kicks off 2006 with “I Love Rewind Wednesdays” beginning at 10 p.m.

Each Wednesday DJ Thom Rakestraw will spin all the best discs from the trashy disco of the 70s, the retro of the 80s, and the best from the gay 90s.

Rewind Wednesdays will also include free pool, \$2 well drinks and \$1 pucker shots.

Bloomington Woman Sues Buffalo Wild Wings

A Bloomington woman has filed a civil lawsuit against Buffalo Wild Wings alleging that she was discriminated against because of her sexual orientation.

The suit focuses on the events of March 31, when the woman joined a group of friends at the Buffalo Wild Wings restaurant in Bloomington. One of the waiters who served the group allegedly knew the woman and according to the woman's lawsuit bore animosity toward her because of her sexual orientation.

According to the lawsuit, after the woman left the restaurant the waiter informed his manager that the woman refused to pay her bill and had left the establishment. The manager then contacted local law enforcement officials who arrested the woman at her Bloomington residence.

The states attorney's office filed charges against the woman but in July the office voluntarily dismissed all charges. An order to expunge all records of the arrest and criminal case was granted in August.

The woman is suing the establishment because her false imprisonment and malicious prosecution were based on faulty information submitted by the restaurant's management. She is asking for compensatory damages of no less than \$50,000, punitive damages of \$200,000, and court costs.

Ford reverses, will advertise in Gay pubs

Ford Motor Co. said it will run advertisements in gay publications, reversing a decision last week to pull all advertising of its Jaguar and Land Rover luxury brands from those special interest publications. In a letter to some gay, lesbian and human rights groups, Ford said it has decided to run corporate ads for all its eight brands, including its Jaguar and Land Rover luxury brands, in the targeted publications. Previously, Ford did not advertise Ford, Lincoln, or Mercury in gay publications.

“It is my hope that this will remove any ambiguity about Ford’s desire to advertise to all important audiences and put this particular issue behind us,” Joe Laymon, Ford’s group vice president for corporate human resources, wrote in the letter, which was posted on Ford’s Web site.

The American Family Association last week gave up an eight-month boycott of Ford after it learned that Jaguar and Land Rover had dropped ads and sponsorships from gay publications. The AFA had singled out Ford for promoting organizations that seek to put gay relationships and marriages on the same social footing as heterosexual marriages. Ford dealers had asked Ford to intervene. Ford denied that the dropping of ads and sponsorships by Jaguar and Land Rover was in response to the AFA. But the AFA spun it that way. Gay advocacy groups pressured Ford to clarify its position. And it did.

AIDS Task Force Board election results

An election for the McLean County AIDS Task Force’s Board of Directors was held Tuesday, December 13th, 2005.

Those elected as directors-at-large include Edward Bruner, Preston Frazier, Denise Goff, and

...continued next page top

Searching for a gay-friendly gym

Making New Year’s resolutions to take better care of your body and your health? If joining a gym or work out club is part of your plan, consider supporting gay- and lesbian-friendly establishments.

After checking with exercise businesses in the Bloomington/Normal/Champaign area, we found two whose family membership plan includes households headed by same sex couples, another we are uncertain of, and three not offering gay-inclusive family memberships.

The Workout Company, 419 Kays Drive in Normal, and **Golds Gym**, 11 Currency Drive in Bloomington, both offer family memberships to gay and lesbian couples. These gyms may require memberships be paid from a joint account and the couple present proof they reside at the same residence.

Less clear is the family membership policy at the YMCA, 602 S. Main Street in Bloomington. A local lesbian couple was recently granted a family membership at the gym, yet when we contacted the YMCA and questioned a staff member, he said the gym does not offer family memberships to same-sex couples.

The remaining three gyms contacted do not score well. Four Seasons, 904 Four Seasons Road, does not offer a family membership to either same-sex or opposite sex couples, although they admitted the issue was brought to the attention of their board of directors. They base their policy on the state law which does not recognize domestic partnerships.

Curves, a gym for women only with various locations in Bloomington/Normal, does not offer a family membership package. They do, however, provide a discount to a daughter if the mother is already a member. Employees contacted at Curves said no one has ever inquired about family memberships for lesbian couples.

Ladies Workout Express, also a gym for women only, does not offer a family membership for lesbian couples.

Our research on these facilities is not exhaustive. When looking for a gay-friendly gym, we encourage you to ask friends, family and coworkers for advice. If the gym offers a trial membership, we highly recommend you visit the gym to gauge how gay-friendly it is. The bottom line is a gym’s level of gay-friendliness depends almost entirely on the staff and the clientele.

I am curious George

By: George Spelvin

Yes I am (probably in more than one sense of the word)! I’m not nosey or intrusive; I just like to know what’s going on around me. I have lived in the high-rise canyons of both Chicago and New York and never even owned binoculars, although most of my neighbors did. (Why is it that so many people forget than when they’re watching someone, they’re probably being watched too?) If I ever spotted an interesting activity in a nearby building, I usually just grabbed my camera and used the telephoto lens to magnify the object of my interest!

What I’m really concerned about is the possibility that I may be too curious. There are certain catch-phrases that enter the culture that are very funny, then quickly become hackneyed with over-use. Such a phrase, in my opinion, is: “Too much information!” All too often I find myself with a group of friends or family and a topic of great interest to me comes up...usually relating to embarrassing bodily functions or dysfunction, possibly an amorous misadventure, or the revelation of a strong affinity for wearing the underwear of the opposite sex; you get my drift. Just when the story begins to get really interesting, I’ll invariably hear a chorus of “Too much information!” This disgust comes not from just one or two people in the group, but from everyone... except me! I want to hear more! I want to hear all the details! And I want the opportunity to cross-examine, but I’m cut off by that chorus.

What’s wrong with me? Is it wrong to take an interest in the unusual, the marginally disgusting, or the bizarre? I want to hear the rest of the story; curious people want to find out, so If you’re harboring a little secret about yourself or anyone else that you find just a little too odd to share with your other friends, please, come, sit by me!

Domestic Partner Benefits more common among B/N employers

While many of our political leaders seem to have their panties in a wad over the issue of equal marriage rights for glbt people, major employers are quietly forging ahead by offering domestic partner benefits to their glbt employees.

Major employers in Bloomington/Normal including Illinois State University, Heartland Community College, Illinois Wesleyan University, Verizon, and Mitsubishi Motors of America have all introduced domestic partner benefits as part of the incentives packages available to their employees.

In addition, a number of national corporations with offices or stores in Bloomington/Normal have jumped on the bandwagon to offer domestic partner benefits. These businesses include:

- ✓ **Sears**
- ✓ **Walgreens**
- ✓ **Home Depot**
- ✓ **Target**
- ✓ **Circuit City**
- ✓ **Best Buy**
- ✓ **Hewlett Packard**
- ✓ **Blockbuster**
- ✓ **Borders**
- ✓ **Barnes and Noble**
- ✓ **BP Amoco**
- ✓ **Chase**
- ✓ **Countrywide**
- ✓ **JC Penney**
- ✓ **Men’s Wearhouse**
- ✓ **Applebees**
- ✓ **Chili’s**
- ✓ **TGIFridays**
- ✓ **Olive Garden**
- ✓ **Red Lobster**
- ✓ **Starbucks**

While not an exhaustive list, it is apparent that glbt employees in Bloomington/Normal do have some opportunities to gain benefits for their same-sex partners.

Not interested in a job with one of these employers? Then consider these gay-inclusive companies when you make your purchasing decisions. Let them know you approve of their gay-friendly policies.

If you know of a local employer that offers domestic partner benefits that we’ve not included above, please e-mail us at info@achr-il.com and we’ll publish an updated list in a future issue of the Rainbow Connection.

Please note that many factors should be considered when going to work for an employer. We encourage you to carefully research company policies in a variety of areas before deciding whether to work for an employer.

continued from left ...

Rhonda Smith. Alternate directors-at-large elected were Josh King, Donny Bounds, and Dick Fasig.

These elected board members join Dora Doyle, Bruce Lang and Mark Robertson, directors-at-large whose terms expire in 2007.

Executive Board positions (Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary & Treasurer) will be elected at the first Board of Directors Meeting in January 2006.

Youth Center facilitator training announced

Training for persons 21+ who would like to volunteer at the Open Door Youth Center, a support group and youth center for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered & questioning youth and their friends, as an HIV peer educator (Facilitator), can now sign-up for our latest training, which will be held January 21st from 9am - 4pm at Illinois Wesleyan University. A continental breakfast and lunch will be provided. Facilitators are provided with a \$25 stipend for each youth night they facilitate. Open Door meets Fridays from 7:30pm - 10:30pm at the Connections Community Center, 313 N Main St, Bloomington. For more information, contact Josh King, Open Door Youth Center Coordinator: JoshKing@mcdf.org | www.opendooryouthcenter.org

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Happy New Year!