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Title: Letter, Sam Deetz to Susquehanna Valley Gays United (SVGU)

Date: November 11, 1975

Location: LGBT-001 Joseph W. Burns Collection

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November 27, 1975

To Members of the Susquehanna Valley Gay Organization
and other Concerned Parties

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I've just returned from another exciting meeting of the Governor's Gay Task Force. I feel that I must share with you all the most recent developments concerning gay people in our state, and inform you of the activities of our sisters and brothers from other areas of the state. As you are all aware, we have quite an unusual situation here. Our governor has committed himself to the cause of equal rights for gay people and has already done much in that direction. On the other hand, our state legislature, led by Representative Wilt of Blair County, seems to have determined to oppose us and our governor in every manner possible, to the extent that at least four pieces of legislation have been introduced, which, if passed, would greatly restrict our basic civil rights. Aside from the fact that these bills are considered unconstitutional by many knowledgeable persons across the country, they are poorly written, and perhaps would fail a court test due to their vagueness. Nevertheless, it is important that all concerned parties should take action by writing or calling their legislators. Tell them you are opposed to Senate bills 196 and 743, both which would discriminate against gays working in certain state positions. Number 196 has already passed and has been vetoed by Governor Shapp, but stands a chance of passing over his veto. These gentlemen in our legislature seem to have set themselves up as "Gods" to dictate what actions private adult citizens may or may not engage in in the privacy of their own homes.

The Harrisburg "stage" is set. The attention of gays all over our nation has turned from California, where our sisters and brothers recently gained a major legislative victory, to our own Pennsylvania, where the Executive and Legislative branches of the State Government are battling one another in an historical civil rights drama. Meanwhile, new gay organizations are forming across our state every month. It is thrilling to hear the news each month at the Task Force meetings in Harrisburg; a group has organized in Altoona, in Johnstown, in Edinboro, in Lebanon, in the Susquehanna Valley, and in other non-urban areas of the state! Gay people all across our state are beginning to awaken. One important development of the State Conference, held in Harrisburg in October, was the emergence of a Rural Caucus. A few months ago the gays in rural areas were almost totally unheard from. Now our sisters and brothers in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh are hearing us, beckoning us to join with them for the benefit of us all. We are telling them that we do exist and are concerned, even though we are not, for personal reasons, always able to exercise the freedoms which they so often take for granted in their faster-paced city life style. Regardless of our differences in living, there is a strong feeling of unity and an attempt on all sides for greater understanding.

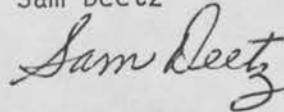
We, on the Governor's Task Force are currently meeting with representatives of several state agencies, such as the State Police, the Dept. of Education, the Affirmative Action Council, the Liquor Control Board, the Commission on Women, the State Employment Office, the Dept. of Corrections, and the Welfare Dept, in order to improve our conditions wherever applicable, pertaining to those particular agencies. We have made considerable headway in some areas, but there remains much to be accomplished, especially where the homophobic State Police Dept. is concerned. The Governor's office is arranging a session for us, in which three gay people from dif-

ferent parts of our state (namely, Jerry Brennan from Harrisburg, Debbie Boyle from Pittsburgh, and myself), are to meet with Col. Barger of the State Police, in order to establish the legitimacy of our concerns.

Realizing that our organization here in the Susquehanna Valley has decided not to stress political activism at this point, I've decided that it would be best for me to report these developments in this letter, rather than to broach these matters at a meeting which might cause some distress and hinder the purposes of our gathering, which are to educate, and to provide for planned social activities. In this way, at least I am doing what I feel is my duty, as a member of the Task Force from this locality; that to inform of what is going on statewide, and allow each individual to decide for themselves whether or not they wish to become involved. I would be very happy to talk to any interested persons on an individual basis concerning these matters. If you want to know how you can be helpful without endangering your privacy, or harming your business or family associations, I would be happy to discuss it with you or direct to some other source of information. Please contact me by phone (473-9923), or by writing me at the address on this letter.

Yours, In Gay Struggle

Sam Deetz

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sam Deetz". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name "Sam Deetz".