

LGBT History Project of the LGBT Center of Central PA

**Located at Dickinson College
Archives & Special Collections**

<http://archives.dickinson.edu/>

Documents Online

Title: *Dignity, Central PA Keystone*

Date: December 1977

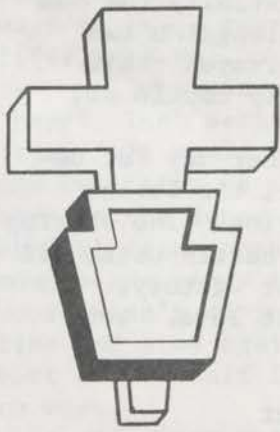
Location: LGBT-001 Joseph W. Burns Collection

Contact:

LGBT History Project
Archives & Special Collections
Waidner-Spahr Library
Dickinson College
P.O. Box 1773
Carlisle, PA 17013

717-245-1399

archives@dickinson.edu



Vol 2 No 7
December 1977

Keystone

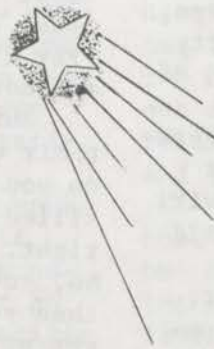
"The Stone Rejected by the Builders Has Become the KEYSTONE." (Acts 4:11)

The newsletter of DIGNITY/Central Pennsylvania

God

so loved

the world



We, the members of Dignity, are not Wise Men or Kings from the East, but we do have something in common with them. We too have seen His star and are trying to follow it. We follow His star when we live up to the message that He left us when He was here on earth. The message that Jesus left us was to love and care for one another.

The Christmas season is sometimes a difficult period of the year for some gay people. We grew up associating this season with our family and our church. Some of us now feel alienated from our family and the institutional church. For many of us, Dignity has filled the void caused by this alienation. Our community does have the family feeling. When we worship as a community, we do feel a bond with our Catholic faith.

Let's not confine this feeling of love and caring to our Christmas Eve Mass. Let's be concerned about each other during the whole Christmas season and beyond. In our hectic pursuit of shopping and partying during December, let's stop for a few minutes and call someone who might be depressed and lonely. Let's drop a few lines to someone we may have been ignoring for a while and tell him or her that we care.

Let's follow His star by following His message. His message is very clear. We are to love and care for one another.

HAVE A LOVING AND CARING CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR!

from Al Kalian, President
The Gay Catholic
Dignity/ L.A.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

RELATIONSHIPS: The Impressionistic Ideal

It's Friday. Warm rain. The downtown streets begin to flood as you wait in the lobby. Fellow workers grumble as they incessantly fumble with uncooperative umbrellas. All await that one break in the clouds to permit a hasty trek to parked cars and home for the weekend.

You try not to appear anxious as you search through the sheeting water on the plate glass in search of rescue. Suddenly. There it is. Salvation. Your ride arrives.

The hastily-taking remaining steps, the flight out the door to the sanctity of your private life and the presence of the one you love.

In the car. With your lover. Heading home. And all that bullshit that comprised the work day can just go twirl on itself. There's laughter now. Amid that certain smell emitted only by clothes that happen to be soaking wet.

At home. The soaking rags are replaced by mutual jeans and sweatshirts. Then a relaxed drink, perhaps. A take or two. Lying side by side on the shag carpet, over a hastily prepared dinner.

A shared shower. A mock battle with towels. Back to the jeans with clean flannel shirts added and off to the rock concert at the Arena. Talking all the way.

The event. Managing to make it home ripped. Another change. To more dressy wear this time. Off for a quick midnight brunch with the boring posh.

Another ordeal survived through the proximity of your lover. Acting trashy on the way home. And then to bed.

The rain stops. With windows open to engulf the absolutely terrifying freshness of the world, two hold naked as one. For hours. And hours. The sunrise seems to await a totally physical merger corresponding to the emotional transfiguration. It's impossible. But you "get together" as much as the law of physics will permit and the remainder of the burden is carried by emotional togetherness.

Sleep. Time. Eventually the sun streaks bittersweetly alongside two spirits whole bodies betrayed their effort toward consciously continual, emotional communion.

Another day. Another day for determined battle with all the forces that interrupt the sharing. The sharing of life...and love. A battle using all your guts as weapons for victory. The victory is your greatest love. Your lover

RELATIONSHIPS: The Fact

It sounds great, doesn't it? Somewhere in that cliched passage above is a thread of shared hope. Even the most cynical of lovers occasionally seek a life of days as described above. For the majority of gays such thoughts are not occasional, they're persistent.

But such thoughts never seem to work their way into reality. How many people do you know who actually lead such fulfilled lives? Few, you say? You're right. Is such a life within your grasp? No, you say? You're wrong. It's easier than you could imagine. You only have to get off your ass and make it happen. I'm not going to pull any punches. I'm sick of gays, self included, who deny themselves the true enjoyment of life because they can't or because they refuse to "get it together."

I come to you as a gay who has been through it, screwed it up, been through it again, screwed it, and now am beginning to look at the realities of life and am discovering the truisms of gay relationships. Why they work and fail. Only you can discover them for yourself. You can make excuses why it can't be done. You can also die with only stubbornness recorded as your guiding virtue.

In dignity,
Jerry B.

FIFTY WAYS TO KEEP YOUR LOVER

I always thought that I didn't catch the whole song. Then it would come on again and I would start counting one, two, three...but never past five. Is that all there is? Was Paul Simon

cheating me out of the other forty-five ways to leave your lover? There must be fifty ways to...oh well!

But why count the ways to leave your lover? That seems so unnecessarily cruel. It would make more sense to figure out fifty ways to keep your lover--keep in the sense of staying with your special relationship that maybe took months and years to build. After all, yours wasn't an instant relationship. Time and time again you invested the best of yourself in that struggle for it to work.

Simon never gave us fifty ways, and I'm not going to pretend to bore you with a long discourse, so I'll tell you right away that you'll never have to pass your fingers as counters. Staying in love and in relationship need only find a few manageable and meaningful ways for each one of you. I hope to share some common ways which make sense to us all. They come from my experiences and from the experiences of people just like you.

Being present and attentive to your partner is perhaps the most realistic piece of advice. But that's all the advice-givers seem to say. They never go into details. Although the most specific details are for each one of you to fill in, let me share some of what "being present and attentive" means to me. When I turn my attention to the thoughts and feelings of my partner, trying to hear his words and explore his feelings, I find myself becoming more aware of how special he is in my life. I can deepen my understanding of him and strengthen my love for him just by spending time, by turning my sole attention on him when he calls for it. I try to find out, often times by asking him directly, what he is feeling and where he is taking himself as a result of that feeling. I do not want to deny him the right to his feelings, so I stay away from asking him "why" he feels the way he does. The "why" implies that he needs a legitimate reason for his feelings and also leads to rational talking. Being present to my partner means knowing where he is at in the gut, not only in the head.

Being present to my partner also means only that. Some people want to extend presence to supply and demand. Sure, my partner has needs, and I only

hope that I can continue to answer some of those needs, but when I am attentive to his feelings, I am not caught up in trying to fulfill his needs. I'm listening to him and I'm not obligating myself to solve some problems or answer any other needs than to just be with him where he is. Though many times I long to rescue my partner from the pains of depression or sadness, being present means leaving my superman suit in the closet once again. What a thrill it is to keep your lover this way!

I must recommend trust as another way of keeping a lover. Trusting is a funny experience. It's a little voice inside you that sometimes is the wisest thing you hear all day. And yet at other times it's the hardest thing to hear because it comes with uncertainty and it demands risk-taking. But trusting oneself is a virtue which calls each one of us to explore our actions and feelings because it can bring resolution and firm dedication.

Trusting my partner is important, too. As we spend time learning to know one another we are bound by our love to let go of our personal limitations in favor of putting ourselves in the care of others. When I can open myself to be healed by my partner in most vulnerable place in my heart I give myself over to trust. As my trust increases so does my willingness to open myself. It's nice to be able to fall back into my sadness and weakness, knowing that, because of our trust, he will help me through. I'm not saying that I lay my troubles out for my partner to solve, but if love is our claim, then he must be ready to see me and accept me with my problems. With his support I can hopefully find solutions myself where we can both enjoy peace.

Confidence is like trust, but I'd like to distinguish it as another way of keeping your lover. There is a special need for confidence in gay relationships. When society (and even some gays) decides to give up the myth that all gay relationships can't last, then perhaps we can speak less of confidence. But for now, it remains a sure fire way to sustain a gay relationship. Confidence gives one a chance to stand up and shout "it's working" when you and

your lover experience a togetherness meant for no one else. It's a way of saying thanks when he doesn't walk out of your life like society says he is supposed to.

Confidence is really an effective way of keeping your lover. When my partner and I made our first commitment to each other--one that needs to be periodically reviewed and hopefully renewed--it was to confide in each other especially in times of stress or trouble. So after our experience of negative feelings we must talk about what happened and if, in that sometimes irrational moment of emotion, we wish to make decisions that effect our life together, we just wait to see how those decisions look later on in more rational moments.

Any relationship must have with it a sense of giving as a way of love. The gift of self becomes an important way to keep your relationship going strong. It is not necessary to shower your partner with the best merchandise from the best of fine shops--an overconcern for temporal richness is often cumbersome and competitive for most of us! When I give of myself, my time and my special creative talents--from the most prosaic verse to the needed practical skills of hanging draperies--then do I show my willingness to give in all ways. My partner and I seek to discover that which is within so that we can give of that to each other. Gifting becomes our special way of packaging our love. And the money we save!!

Lastly, and perhaps most important to beginning relationships, is the patience and comfort needed to keep love growing. They say Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither is the everlasting love of any relationship. Patience means giving your partner the time and space to grow, without interference from your need to be concerned for him. Your help will be called for and better appreciated when your partner assumes the responsibility to ask for it when he is ready.

Comfort fits in here perfectly, for in the time that we all need for ourselves we can offer our partner the comforting power of being close by or offering that sometimes needed shoulder to cry upon. If my partner is sad about some recent experience in his life, I can comfort him by just being next to him by stroking him

with a gentle touch--the type of touch that is not centered on my needs, but on the message that I care about him and that I will be with him through his time of sadness. Once again my superman suit, which I would have donned to rescue him from his sadness, stays in the closet. There are few intense experiences like allowing negative feelings to take their course in our lives. But comforting my partner when they do occur (and he comforting me in my sad times) is one of the special loving ways of keeping our relationship in health.

Keeping your lover means a lot of work. Every opportunity for good communications is an occasion to cement your special relationship with the significant person in your life. We all have our own styles and our particular ways of growing, but there is much we can learn from each other to keep our love from getting stale. People always tell me that it's a full time job to communicate effectively, and I can't agree more fully. But it's also a full time job to love and live happily. And you can deny those full time benefits in discovering fifty ways to keep your lover.

from Dignity/International
September 1976

How is it that two people who sling
together and dream together...

Sometimes end up all alone

And how is it that two people who plan
together, make a life together...

Sometimes end up out on their
own?

Lyrics by Randy Edelman
From LaBelle's "Isn't It a Shame"

© 1971, 1976 Hastings Music Corporation

PERSPECTIVE

It's true. I am in a most wonderful relationship. I suppose that is why I was asked to write an article on relationships. Yet in thinking of how to approach the subject, I am so aware that it is the individuals who make a relationship what it is, either good or bad.

According to Webster, a relationship is "the state of being connected with or having a necessary dependence upon another thing" (person). From my perspective, in a healthy relationship the dependence upon the other is a controlled dependence. You bring to your lover all the parts of you that make you what you are. You are a whole independent person capable of all the sensual arts of feeling, loving, giving, receiving, and sharing. You know yourself and what you are--your strengths, weaknesses, fantasies, and dreams. You are in command of your personhood. You present yourself to this chosen lover and say openly and honestly "This is me." The dependences occur within a relationship of independent people.

Feeling good is contagious. Have you ever had the experience of feeling mediocre until someone else smiled at you and passed their sunshine to you? Feeling good about yourself makes other people feel good about you too. It makes you attractive to other people. And it helps to make a relationship work.

I once accepted the patriarchal definition of love as needing and being needed. Now I believe love is wanting and being wanted. I am in a life relationship with my lover because I want to be, not because I need to be. I am a totally whole, happy, functioning complete person without her, and with her I am part of a union of love.

A relationship for me means living with the person I love and sharing parts of my life with her. It means a warm hug in the morning, a "have a good day" as I leave for work, and tender pillow talk at night. It means both of having a cold (that she brought home), having a kitten (that she brought home), and having bills (most of which I bring home).

My relationship is an island of peace, support, and strength in a day of crisis and turmoil. My lover is my mother, child, confessor, teacher, healer, all in one beautiful person. She makes the good, better; the beautiful, more beautiful; the fun, funnier; and living, livelier. Without her, my life would be good; with her it's great.

Like any good thing, a relationship is work. Sometimes, very hard work, and all the time, worth it. A good relationship is work, energy, and commitment.

For me, it's right, right now. Yet though I have a rosy picture to paint of this love/life I share, I am not so taken that I don't realize that not everyone is at the right time in their heads or hearts to be in a meaningful life relationship.

It's okay to say that you don't want that kind of commitment in your life. It's okay to not be in a relationship such as I describe. In all of our individual growth cycles, there are times when life must be a single ownership, not a partnership. We must remove from all people the pressure to couple and in doing so free those of us who choose to make meaningful relationships.

A Sister/Member

when you love someone
you love them as they are.

not as you wish them to be
not as you hope to help them become
but as they are.

when you love someone,
you love them because they are they,
not loving in order to change them
not loving as a way of remaking them
but loving because you love.

when you love someone,
you love them warts and all,
not blinding yourself to their faults,
not denying the other's imperfections,
but loving in spite of. (God did.)

--David W. Augsburg
from Cherishable, copyright 1971
Herald Press

SPLINTERS FROM THE BOARD MEETING

The monthly meeting of DIGNITY/Central Pennsylvania was held at Jerry B.'s house on November 29, 1977. In attendance were Jerry B., Barb, John B., John O., Bob, and Bernie. Barb read the minutes of the previous meeting and John B. reported a balance of \$244.08 in the treasury. A

recommendation to have Bernie appointed as the Chapter's secretary was approved.

The Communication Committee has been active and is in the midst of developing several ideas. A letter has been drafted to be sent to radio stations for use as a public service announcement. Posters announcing liturgical celebrations were prepared and are being placed in local establishments dispensing liquid libations. A flyer prepared by the committee was presented to the board for its approval. The flyer is designed to be a quick introduction to Dignity. The committee is also developing a brochure with detailed information about Dignity, including its origin and purposes.

Bob reported for the Social Committee. The Chapter's Christmas party is scheduled for Sunday, December 18, 1977, at 7:00 pm at Friends' Meeting House. The menu, which was discussed and debated, should prove to be an epicurean delight. A guest list for special friends of Dignity was drawn up.

The By-Laws Committee entered a motion to have the Constitution eliminated in its entirety; the motion was approved and carried with no objections.

Sister Kathleen was appointed as our Chapter's coordinator for the Women's Caucus.

It was recommended that the Chapter not adopt a budget but use instead the proposed budget as a guide.

A letter announcing the special meeting set for December 11, 1977, was read. A copy was sent to all members.

The next scheduled Board meeting is to be January 3, 1978.

Til next time,
Bernie
Secretary

ELECTION RESULTS

On Sunday, October 23, 1977 Dignity/Central Pennsylvania held its annual General Membership meeting and the election of new officers. The election committee had met in early August and proposed a slate of candidates. Ballots were mailed to all chapter members. Prior to the election

two nominees asked that their name be removed from the ballot. It was agreed that the secretary be appointed later by the new board.

The new officers of Dignity/Central Pennsylvania are Jerry B, President; Barb, Vice President; John B., Treasurer, Jan and Bob, Members at Large.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

December 18 (Sunday)

Christmas celebration at Friends' Meeting House, 6th and Herr Streets, Harrisburg. Liturgy at 7pm. Punch and hors d'ouvres at 8 pm. Sit-down ham dinner at 8:30. \$3 per person. RSVP to Jerry B. at 232-2027 by December 16. Join us in sharing the joy of the Christmas Season.

January 3 (Tuesday)

Executive Board Meeting at 7pm at John B's.

January 7 (Saturday)

Workshop on Public Health by Walter Lear, M.D. from 2pm to 5pm at Friends' Meeting House. Potluck supper at 5 pm. Mass at 7 pm.

January 22 (Sunday)

Mass/Social at 7pm at Friends' Meeting House.

February 4 (Saturday)

Workshop to be announced.

February 19 (Sunday)

Mass/Social at 7 pm at Friends' Meeting House.

The KEYSTONE is an educational and communication feature of DIGNITY/Central Pennsylvania, Inc. All opinions expressed are those of the individual author and not necessarily those of DIGNITY. Your letters, remarks, and suggestions are welcomed. The KEYSTONE is available free to members and friends of DIGNITY, and to others at a nominal charge of \$3.00 per year. Write: DIGNITY/Central Pennsylvania, P.O. Box 297, Harrisburg, PA 17108.