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# Freedom

"For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."  
—Galatians 5:1

The Newsletter of the Metropolitan Community Churches in Lancaster and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Vol 1, No. 6

September, 1982

## REFLECTIONS ON THE BATHROOM WALL

by Arthur C. Runyan, II

Two events involving bathrooms happened to me today, and I would like to share them with you and reflect a bit on what they might mean.

The first event happened right after work when Al and I went to Park City Mall to do some shopping. Since my car is again on the fritz (please remember it and me in your prayers), we took the bus, and when our shopping was done we went to the Park City Bus Depot to wait for the bus back to town.

Well, I had to urinate pretty bad so I stepped into the men's room to relieve myself. As it turns out there was no relief in sight. As I entered the men's room I noticed three or four men just standing about in various corners of the room as if they were waiting for a bus. Now, I'll grant you that this is a bus depot, but busses, as a rule, do not pick up passengers in the bathroom. There were more men in the stalls, doing goodness-knows-what (goodness had nothing to do with it. . .), but I wasn't about to turn around and investigate.

I was too busy feeling like a sirloin, sitting on the butcher's shelf, being eyed by a bunch of hungry customers. While I don't generally suffer from bashful kidneys, under those extreme conditions I found myself unable to produce, and so I re-zipped my fly, flushed the urinal (as if I had used it), and beat a hasty retreat. And I found myself praying, "Please God, please don't let me ever get so desperate that I have to seek out sex partners in public restrooms."

Now I'm about to get myself in trouble. Some friends of mine--good friends--friends who read this very paper, have been known to frequent that very restroom. If I'm not very careful I will offend and alienate even more people than I already have. (There are folks who haven't spoken to me since last March because of an editorial I wrote. . .) And while I don't wish to offend anyone, I

guess I'll just have to take that risk because I was deeply disturbed by all those men hovering around the corners of the men's room like vultures. No Virginia, they were not waiting for a bus. Most seemed to be looking for a trick before they went home to their wife and children. Some others looked more like they were looking for a trick before they went home to their gay lovers. And of course there were those who were looking for a trick because that is all they ever do with their lives.

And I just can't help feeling a little bit angry, wanting to yell, "Dammit, we are better than this."

And we are. We are children of the living God. We share in the creation of the world; we share in the resurrection of the Christ. We are not perverts. So why do we have to act like it?

Al says that in a small town like Lancaster where there are few options for gay expression, men's room activity will flourish. While that appears to be true, let us not overlook the fact that cruising the restrooms is as popular in the big cities as it is in the small towns. The problem is deeper. I think it has something to do with self-hatred.

While I could wax eloquently about this, there is another angle I want to touch on, and that is the image we present to the rest of the world. For a great many straight men, I would wager that the sum and substance of what they know about gay life is what they've learned trying to protect themselves from the vultures cruising public restrooms. Can we doubt for a minute why there is so much anti-gay hostility in this country. A man can't even take a piss in peace without the queers eyeballing him up and down. Jesus.

Which brings me to the second event. A friend of mine whom I'll call Danny called tonight. He is one of the few, if not the only, openly gay people in the

continued on p. 4

My best friend is a Methodist minister. He was never a pushy person -- stepping on people to get praise or status. He was always listening to me. I guess that was the biggest reason that I prized his friendship above all others.

We have been friends for nearly 14 years and in all that time I kept a secret from him. I knew that Doug wasn't gay. And I carefully watched his handling of the gay-issue.

Before he had ever thought about pastoring, he worked at a grocery store. From it, he shared the news of working with a gay fellow. This teen-ager was very feminine and bold. He would proposition straight men with "favors" if they would do some of his work for him. Needless to say, he was the brunt of many jokes and a target for abuse. I was apprehensive about defending him, fearing my own sexuality might be questioned, but I couldn't ignore the situation.

I told Doug that this teen-ager did not select his sexuality--it was just that ... his sexuality. Doug never questioned my sexuality or motivation for defending him. He just listened. And then he went to his Bible and sought help for this fellow.

The verses he selected are those famous put-downs for homosexuality, but both of us were guilty of mis-interpretation of the scriptures and how did I contradict what those verses were saying without coming out? Well, I couldn't. I was just impressed that my friend cared about this man's soul.

Jesus said, "I am the way and the TRUTH!" John 14:6.

He also said, "And the truth will set you free." John 8:32.

But the church kept saying that homosexuality was wrong and it was a truth in my life. And try to change that truth. Oh! I did. But it was like trying to change the color of my eyes. Sure, I could wear green contact lenses and maybe convince the world I was a green-eyed man. But the truth is they are hazel, much as I prefer green eyes. But my sexuality was a big big hassel to everyone but me. I let them make it my problem. And I remained asexual. Confused. Frustrated. And angry.

Soon after his graduation from high school, Doug married. I nearly didn't make that wedding due to complications with my diabetes. But happily I did see my friend married and our friendship continued.

I remained important to Doug and his wife was elated that our friendship was so strong. And through the years I remained in the closet, thing-ing they would be confused or worse believe all those dreadful stereo-types about me! So I was quiet.

Last Spring, Doug called to ask me to counsel at his church's camp in August. I accepted. I debated telling my friend about my sexuality. I debated then decided against it. I did have a book to give him: But Lord, They're Gay by Sylvia Pennington. I decided to just give him the book with reference to that teen-ager he was concerned for long ago.

But the Lord stepped in and gave me a push. I was responsible for teaching the lessons for our small group of campers assigned to myself and two other counselors. One lesson was on sin. Don't commit adultery, steal, lie, etc. ... I asked the youngsters to define each of those sins to their understanding.

I am well aware of the church's silence on the subject of sexuality, being one sad victim now determined not to visit that sin upon others.

I told the children that "...your sexuality is between you and God. God wants a part in all your life. That includes your sexuality. To Him it's not dirty. Share it with Him."

I guess that that was acceptable to the hierarchy of the church, but when I declared that I was not married, nor did I abstain from sexual relations and the sharing of these with God. Bingo! The other counselors blew the whistle.

Doug sat down to lunch with me one day.

"Are you telling these kids that premarital sex is okay?"

I told him what I had said and expressed my concern for the church's silence on sexuality. I tried to bring my gift-book into the conversation and succeed beautifully. My defense of my premarital sex was lousy though. Still I got by.

Then as we prepared to part, he asked.

"Why are you so interested in this?"

"Well, I have some gay friends."

Then he asked, "And you ... you're not ... are you?"

"Well, I'm bi.", I tried to soften the blow. Doug was devastated.

He was so confused he told me he didn't know how to relate to me anymore. Now, I'm not a giant in the prayer department, but I have learned that God answers prayer -- big ones, small ones, all prayers with wise answers. So, I prayed about Doug and this new knowledge about his friend.

We talked more the next day. And I tried to explain a lifetime of trouble in 20-minutes. I told him,

"I'm not promiscuous. Or sick.

Or anything else. I just have never been sexually attracted to women. And now that's okay with me!"

Doug listened.

He could still listen.

He wasn't dying to read the book.

by  
Arthur C. Runyan, II

With this issue of FREEDOM, I am officially turning over full editorial responsibility to Philip Holt who has been listed as editor since the beginning. While I will certainly retain the right to bitch and moan if I don't like what he does, Philip will be the editor of FREEDOM in name and in deed from this point forward.

There are two main reasons for this move: 1) I will be returning to school shortly and will not have the time to give to this paper that I have had this summer, and 2) if we are going to call Philip the editor, then we should let him do it.

There is at this point, no plan in the works to change the production schedule. I will now outline that schedule in detail. Please save this article for future use. Working backwards:

1) FREEDOM is mailed from Harrisburg on the Monday before the first Sunday of the month. In order for this to happen,

2) FREEDOM must be at the printer in Lancaster by noon on the preceding Thursday. (That's the day we get blue ink for no extra charge.) Therefore,

3) FREEDOM is in layout and paste-up on the Tuesday and Wednesday before. Which means,

4) Final editorial decisions are made the Monday before. Which brings us to the bottom line. . .

5) DEADLINE for any article or Calendar entry in FREEDOM is absolutely, positively 6:00pm on the Monday before the last Sunday of the month prior to publication. Got it?

For example, the first Sunday in October is the 3rd. The Monday preceding that is September 27th. On that day the paper will be folded in and mailed from Harrisburg (folding & stuffing committee, take note). Copy for that issue must be in my hands or Philip's hands by 6:00pm on Monday, September 20.

Copy can be mailed to MCC-Lancaster, PO Box 863, Lancaster, PA 17603, but must arrive in Monday's mail to be included. Ideally, copy will be typed, with no errors, in columns that are no longer than 3-1/4 inches. Please type your copy as dark as you can since we will,

in most cases, just paste it down as-is, and the Itak camera does not pick up faded typewriter ribbon very well at all.

Copy that is typed in other formats, or is handwritten is acceptable, but with a schedule as tight as ours, articles that have to be re-typed generally receive bottom priority.

While we will accept copy from anybody, we can not guarantee that everything submitted will be printed. We only have six pages to work with. Final selection of articles remains with the editor.

In general, articles about upcoming events will receive first priority, personal testimony and editorials will be considered next, and accounts of past events will fill the slack. But those are general guidelines, not hard and fast rules.

Articles will not be returned unless a self-addressed, stamped envelope is included.

Any further questions about editorial policy can be directed to the editor, c/o MCC-Lancaster.

THIRD WORLD  
LESBIAN AND GAY  
CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE

We who are Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American are meeting on October 29-31, 1982 in Washington, D.C. to discuss our special needs and the ministry we have as well as our need to be included in the MCC churches in order for us to survive in the Fellowship.

I, as a Third World person, am in a minority in American society as well as in a minority in MCC. But someday this will end and we will fully integrate MCC. We will no longer see just a few Third World gay men and lesbians here and there in our congregations.

If you count yourself among Third World lesbians and gay men, this conference is for you. Please come and share in this Christian undertaking. Call me (in Lancaster) at 392-2729 for more information.

--Al Johnson

cont. from p. 1

office where he works, and has come under no small amount of harassment from some other employees because of it. In the latest episode, someone painted on the men's room wall where he works, in nice, neat letters: "Danny sucks panther peters." This is not a high school. These are allegedly adults. And despite the humor inherent in such a situation, Danny is starting to get bothered by the long line of abuse.

While I certainly cannot condone any kind of harassment, I would like to understand it. I just wonder how many of Danny's opposers had to take a pee while waiting for a bus at Park City and are now taking out their anger on the only queer they know. As far as they know, we are all alike.

We can talk all we want about educating the general populace as to the nature of gay people. But the sad truth is, we are already educating them.

Somewhere, the Gospel has to intersect our lives. And it might as well be here. God loves us. We are God's children. We are not trash. We do not have to screw in the gutters like rats.

Do not misunderstand. I am not putting down sexuality or sexual expression. I am saying that sex is an act of love, engaged in by two loving people. I am also saying that wherever we are--even while sexually occupied--God is there with us.

Scripture says that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Rejoice in your temple. Praise God in your temple, but for the sake of God do not desecrate it.

We are called to higher things. Let us seek to live out our calling. And let us be mindful of the image we present to others. And let us praise God in all that we do.

### "ATTENTION SINGLES"

It has come to our attention that there are a lot of single people dissatisfied with the "bar scene". If this is representative of you, and you are looking for an alternative; we think we can be of assistance.

If you are interested in attending a gay singles get-together contact Bill at (717) 299-3494.

NO BOOZE....

IS GOOD NEWS

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Approximately 30 percent of the members of the Gay community are problem drinkers--a good number of these are alcoholics. The percentage is much greater than in the general population.

Often people have difficulty determining if they have a problem. While only the individual can decide for himself, one of the best ways to get help in making this decision is to attend some open Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and listening to what the "old timers" have to say about their personal situations.

You can check the A.A. schedule for Lancaster County (there are meetings every day at various times in various places) by calling 394-3238.

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The Lesbians and Gay Men in A.A. from the Delaware Valley Area are sponsoring a FREEDOM ROUNDUP.

This will be three days of workshops, meetings, and social events for people in A.A. and their friends. It will be in Philadelphia on October 8-10, 1982.

For further information, call 299-2704.

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cont. from p. 2

He still maintained his teaching about the subject of homosexuality. But he listened.

Quickly time was running out at camp. And it was time to say goodbye to others and now to each other.

He turned to me, "I guess you feel like you've lost a friend?"

I honestly didn't feel like that. God surely crushed any doubts I might have had and I said, "No".

He just smiled with embarrassment and said, "Well, you didn't".

On August 1st a special Congregational Meeting was held in Harrisburg to elect a new Board of Directors. We'd like to take this time to thank the outgoing Board members; T.J., Shari, and Tom, and to welcome the newly elected Board; Diane, Tom, and Ed. Officers were elected as follows: Treasurer-Thomas Prokop; Clerk-Diane B. Riggins; Member-at-Large-Edward Meyers. Your new Board looks forward to serving and, with your loving support, watching MCC Harrisburg grow in Christ.

#### GAY SKATE

Well, our third gay skate was, like the ones preceding it, a big success. While we held the others at the Gold Skate in Middletown, it was decided that since air-conditioning was an important factor to be considered, we would hold this one at a facility offering this comfort...thus the recent skate at the Olympic Center in Enola. I have been asked, however, why the next gay skate, on Nov. 11, will again be held at the Gold Skate. True, the facilities at the Gold Skate are smaller, not as modern, and certainly not air-conditioned (at least not at this point in time). Several things are in their favor, though. It is cheaper to rent the Gold Skate (thus, we can keep the cost of your tickets down); the skate rental is also cheaper (how many of us bring our own?); the people (management) are friendlier and much more accepting (no hassles); it is also more easily accessible to those coming from out of town. I can't speak for all of you, but I'LL choose the Gold Skate every time!

Diane B. Riggins

On Sunday, October 3rd, MCC Harrisburg is once again taking part in the flea market at Harrisburg Drive-In. Our table will again be right in front of the snack bar, so you'll be able to find us quite easily.

If you have any odds & ends, knick-knacks, junkie, or whatever, lying around that you've been meaning to go through and wish to donate it to the church, Dar Rickabaugh has said that she will store any items at her place. We ARE in need of flea market items, and also need a few volunteers to staff the table that day.

So, if you can help in any way at all, please call either 238-3746 or 234-7560.

In any case, I know we'll see you there, ready and eager to browse, barter, & buy.

"You will deny me  
three times before  
the cock crows."

Jesus spoke these words to Peter, and Peter replied, "Not me, master." But indeed Peter did forsake Jesus. We, as children of Christ, have forsaken Christ time and time again and some of us have turned our back on Christ and religion.

As a child of God, I do not care what man submits to you about the Christ. I personally feel that through the Christian experience, Jesus never turns his back on us.

Man, however, will try to deny me the Christ that is given to us all--and I mean us all. Please, children of God, don't deny Christ as Peter did, for Christ is yours.

But if you should deny the Christ, he will forgive you and take you back into his Grace no matter what Man submits against you.

--Al Johnson

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- September 11** — "There's A Rabbit In Your Heart" 8:00pm, Friends Meeting House, 6th & Herr Sts., Harrisburg. Tickets \$2.00 in advance; \$3.00 at the door.
- September 17** — Pot Luck Picnic at Negley Park in Lemoyne. 6:00pm. Bring a friend, utensils, and your favorite dish!
- September 19** — Planning Meeting for the Lancaster congregation at Art & Al's house. We will evaluate our summer goals and decide if we want to apply for Study Group Status in October. This is a very important meeting in the life of our church; please plan to attend. 5:00pm.
- September 20** — Deadline for October issue of FREEDOM.
- September 25** — Spaghetti Dinner at the Friends Meeting House in Harrisburg, 6-9pm. Suggested donation \$3.50. Come join us for fellowship & food and support our delegates to the Third World Conference.
- September 27** — FREEDOM folding and stuffing party in Harrisburg. Call Gary Norton for details, 238-3746.
- October 3** — Flea Market at Harrisburg Drive-In, 8:30am - 4:00pm.
- October 15-17** — District Conference in Pittsburgh. Don't forget to register!
- October 29-31** — International Third World Conference for Lesbians and Gay Men in Washington, D.C. Proceeds from the Sept. 25 spaghetti supper are going to help send our delegates to this conference.
- October 30** — Pot Luck Halloween Party at Darlene Rickabaugh's home, 2224 Walnut Street in Harrisburg at 7:30pm. Go around to the front and up the stairs... apt. #2. Costumes optional (and hoped for) but not necessary.
- November 11** — Gay Skate co-sponsored by MCC-Harrisburg and Dignity/Central Pennsylvania. 7:00-10:00pm at the Gold Skate in Middletown. The tickets are \$2.00 in advance and \$3.00 at the door. Call 238-3746 or 234-7560 for more information.
- December 5** — Christmas/Holiday Dinner/Service at the Friends Meeting House in Harrisburg. More details to be announced.
- July 11-17, 1983** — 1983 UFMCC General Conference in Toronto, Canada



## PRIDE '82

A beautiful Sunday morning service was held amidst the splendor of the Pocono Mts. on August 29th during the weekend-long celebration of Pride '82. As we shared in the joy and pride of our lifestyles, we were able also to share in a union with our God. Hope you had the opportunity to be there sharing with us. And remember next year!

## WORSHIP SCHEDULES

Harrisburg:  
Every Sunday  
Friends Meeting House  
6th & Herr Streets  
Harrisburg, PA  
7:00pm

Lancaster  
September 12 & 26  
Unitarian Center of Lancaster  
538 W. Chestnut Street  
Lancaster, PA  
5:00pm

LANCASTER  
GAY/LESBIAN  
HELP LINE  
397-0691

Tuesday, Wednesday,  
Thursday, and Sunday  
6:30 to 9:30 pm

Have a problem?  
We can help.

## FREEDOM

Vol. 1, No. 6

FREEDOM is the newsletter of MCC-Harrisburg and the Lancaster Parish. It is published monthly and mailed on the Monday prior to the first Sunday of the month from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania (Lord willin' and the crick don't rise. . .).

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(Publication of the name of any person, business, or organization should not be construed as indicative of the sexual orientation or ideological stance of that person, business, or organization.)

The Metropolitan Community Church is an ecumenical, Christian church for all people with a special ministry to the lesbian and gay community.