

The Love You Take, Equals The Love You Make

By M. Kent Drum
Special to Q-Notes

I spent a week with an old friend in Boston recently. We were hippies together in the sixties. Something of that era rubbed off on both of us. I sensed it in his reactions to daily life. An essence of free spiritedness on one hand and yet deeply connected to his surroundings and relationships on the other.

I tried for a week to put my finger on what sets Bob aside from casual acquaintances. We were friends for years before coming out to one another. Was it our gayness that drew us to each other for friendship? In the sixties it was such a taboo topic that no one spoke of it. We didn't see it on the evening news. It wasn't discussed in sex education class at school. Mom and Dad certainly didn't acknowledge its existence. Even to their own gay little boy. I was just a sissy.

There was no one else like me. It's a frightening world out there when you are all alone. It does little good for one's self esteem to feel that you are the *only one*. Yet, my best friend was gay and I didn't know it. How did we let our society get so out of balance that we simply chose to ignore a large percentage of our population?

The imbalance cause by either ignoring or actively ostracizing any minority causes incalculable damage, not only to personal lives, but to us as a people. We are weakened by it and our humanity is less for it.

As I flew over the city of Boston on the evening I returned home, I was struck by the dazzling pattern of lights spread out below me. Like a jewelled blanket, the cars made an endless stream of beads on the highways. They were like droplets trickling down a spider's web. And I saw such a similarity of purpose. Each bead of light found its place on the strings between cities. And like all human conditions, the string would still be intact if one bead were missing.

But it would be weakened by that one missing piece. It would be lessened by its absence.

The holidays bring all of us into a close relationship with our feelings. Every building block of our experience brings with it, like the ghost of Christmas Past, the foundation of who we are. It guides us, but need not control us.

So often I hear that someone hates the holidays. Too frequently it is because they expect to be depressed. And they are. As surely as the holidays come and go.

Hospitals know that more persons will attempt suicide during the holiday season than at any other time of the year. Psychiatrists and psychologists will hear from the lonely ones of how they miss an old lover, a friend or a parent. They will hear of lives overwhelmed with the past.

I felt that way. I know.

But it doesn't have to be that way. As simplistic as it sounds. You can choose happiness. You can choose to be overwhelmed with the present. You can rejoice in the hope for Christmas Future.

It begins with an understanding that, although you are merely one bead in the chain, each link is as important as the next. The first is not better than the last. You are of equal value to all others. We lose sight of what is important.

Let's all take a moment to do something special this season. Our financial support of charities is urgent, but I would like to see our community do something even more important for itself. Let us, each one, take the responsibility of helping one other person realize his or her importance. With true sincerity pay someone a compliment (I know this will be hard on *some* of you. But it gets easier.)

Make a telephone call to someone who likes you. Tell them you wanted to hear their voice and know they were doing well...that they were on your mind. What kinder gift can we give?

Send Christmas cards...even if just a few.

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Count Your Blessings

THE SOFT SPOT

By Ann Michele

This is the season for stuffed turkeys - the one that you bought at the store, and the one you become after you've eaten the one you bought at the store!

From Thanksgiving through Christmas, this time of year stirs emotions like none other. I recently watched the movie "Planes, Trains and Automobiles." The ending saw a much-softened Steve Martin bring a very lonely John Candy home to share Thanksgiving dinner. I started to cry when I realized how lucky I am. I've got a nice home, a great job, I live in a beautiful city with an energetic gay community, I've got parents who love me very much, and above all, the most wonderful friends in the world. I've been very blessed and I'm not sure why. I often wonder what my role in life is and how to best repay, or maybe I should say, "spread" the blessings I've received. The answer isn't straightforward and it hasn't popped out like I wish it would. I do know that somehow, in my life, I WILL make a difference.

ARE YOU THANKFUL FOR YOUR BLESSINGS? WILL YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

In the area surrounding Charlotte, there are numerous opportunities for us to get involved. Our gay community, struggling to build a firm foundation in the Piedmont Carolinas, has a great need for people willing to donate their sharp minds and energy. We'd love to have a "community center," a bookstore, a coffeehouse, support groups for those dealing with the all-too-familiar issues of coming out... I can even picture a volunteer clearing house where you call one number and they put you in touch with the organization that needs your help at that time. For some of you, direct involvement in the gay community may be too threatening. If that's the case, look outside that circle, because there are scores who need help, gay or straight - the family who needs help caring for an Alzheimer's victim, the elderly couple who

need assistance with housework, the United Way organizations, non-affiliated social service groups ... Somebody out there needs you, and you can make a difference in their life. The best part is, you'll feel better about yourself too!

It's real easy for me to go from upbeat and committed to down and anxious when I think about the Christmas rush. That's really not fair though - the Christmas holidays don't force me to rush around, it's the pressure I put on myself to get the presents, wrap them, deliver them, send cards, decorate, bake, etc. All that stuff is nice to do, but it really overshadows the true meaning of the season - that of giving the gift of ourselves. All the money we spend on presents can't replace that which is most valuable - our presence in another person's life. To take the time to really be with a person, to hear what they're saying, and to trust them so much that you can be yourself is the most wonderful gift of all.

Yet, I, for one, often find it easier to hide behind the glitter of a wrapped package, hoping that will satisfy what I'm too afraid to give. Ironically, I'm just like that package, because I've got layers of defenses hiding the real contents inside. But unlike the package, I'm the only one who can remove the wrapping.

Giving the gift of ourselves shouldn't be boxed and saved for one special day of the year, but maybe it's a good day to start!

On a very personal note, I want to publicly acknowledge my close friends for the love and support they've given to me throughout the year. " You've all contributed significantly to my life, each in your own unique way. You stood by me when my emotions were carrying me up and down so fast I could only see you as a blur, but I knew you were there. You're all different in so many ways, but you have one important trait in common - you're real!"

To all my friends in the community, I wish to thank you for letting me share "The Soft Spot" with you this year and I wish you a warm and loving holiday season. Take care and I'll see you in 1989.



12 - 2 Tradesmen Night Out • Cheap Trade Show



12 - 3 NTE • Male Strippers



12 - 9 Martina Desiree • Sophie Ritz



12 - 10 Ashley Jordan • Martina Desiree

12 - 16 Brittany Gwen • Kasey King

12 - 17 Sasha Tate • Kasey King • Brittany Gwen

12 - 18 Linda Locklear • Shea Lateece

12 - 24 Boom Boom Latour • Tina Terrell

12 - 25 Kasey King's Bargain Basement

12 - 30 Gypsy Star • Brittany Gwen

12 - 31 New Years Eve Show

NO TWO NIGHTS ALIKE...

O L E N S

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