

## foreign perspectives

### So That's Why They Call It "Shangri-La"

Nepal, the foothills of the Himalayas, Everest, the land of yak and yeti...and the men: copper skin, white teeth, strong, and smiling. The culture: taboos against public display of affection with the opposite sex. The norm: sleeping together with friends or relatives for lack of space and need of warmth; usually of same gender.

The whole concept of homosexuality is different. In the U.S.A. two men holding hands in public is looked on as awkward; arm-in-arm strolling is demasculinizing from the start. On the Indian Subcontinent, friends walk down the street relaxedly, unselfconsciously holding hands or arm in arm. Certainly this does not mean that these men, of all ages, engage in sexual arousal together; as in most western cultures, the majority of the population are "straight," but for those that might have the potential for expressing, more intimately, their love for each other, the circumstances are much more accommodating.

It was a great learning experience to have lived in so different an atmosphere for two years of my life. After some months of uncertainty, it became easier to let go--let go of those reservations and hang-ups I instilled upon myself during those difficult teens. So, if I really wanted to spend the night with a friend then I'd say so. He wouldn't be thrown by such a suggestion, and would either answer yes or no. A yes does not mean certain glory, but at least there's that inbred comfort in just being close and warm with a friend. The stage is set for further enlightenment, but it doesn't have to be pushed; it either happens or it doesn't.

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Now that I'm back in America, I realize how much I've grown in the years spent in Nepal. The word "grown" might be misleading in that I almost feel two year's younger! I find it easier to approach people--all people, men and women. There has been a great weight lifted off my back. There's a bit less anxiety and frustration about taking that step to meet someone new or broadening an existing relationship. I don't mean to say that a couple of years in Nepal has fully metamorpho-sized me into a frictionless go-getter, but it's helped put me on the right track.

I like to view this track as being unrestricted, limitless, free to go where it might with as little of my control as possible. The control of gender preference is one of these limits I've created in years gone by. First, it was denying my attraction to the male, and believing--or emanating belief--that I yearned for the female and then, after making the decision to "come out," going 180° and saying the opposite.

It's best not to do either but instead to go with the spontaneity of situations as they arise without limiting oneself to any certain category.

It has been my good fortune to live amongst the friendly people of this small kingdom. They are poor and live simply with few amenities, and they have shown me that there is more to life and happiness than those life-styles and ideals that we are brought up with in this, the U.S.A.

-Mark Dorfman

### Who's Behind the Gay

#### Rights Movement?

The National Gay Task Force has published a new booklet which documents wide-spread non-gay support for gay civil rights. "Who's Behind the Gay Rights Movement? A Gay Civil Rights Packet" offers a remarkable array of evidence of the depth of support gay people enjoy in the non-gay community. Included are resolutions from professional and scientific organizations, non-discrimination statements from major corporations, statements from religious leaders, public opinion polls, and quotes from other major shapers of public opinion in America.

Statements are included from such diverse sources as the Lutheran Church in America, the Jos. Schlitz Brewing Co., the American Association for the Advancement of Science, *Newsday*, the National YWCA, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and more than 200 others.

This booklet is one in a series of educational publications distributed by the NGTF and funded in part by the NGTF Fund for Human Dignity.

One copy is available for reading in the CGA office. Additional copies are available for \$3.00 (discounts available for quantity orders) from:

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