

The Soft Spot

A lesbian viewpoint on ourselves

A Big Thanks To Dan & Tonda; Healing From Broken Relationships

By Ann Michele

Hello Again! I want to start out by saying a giant-sized "Thank you" to Dan Kirsch and Tonda Taylor for putting together "Our Family Celebration." That event was a dream come true for many of us. When I think back ten years ago to what Charlotte's community was like — afraid even among ourselves, meeting in smoky dark bars — to Dana Auditorium, October 12, 1991 — house lights turned up, 800 people linking arms, singing and swaying to United We Stand. God, what a feeling!

To have the kind of vision that Tonda and Dan had, to put together a program of that magnitude, was a herculean effort. I think the whole community owes them a real debt because this was an important breakthrough for us. We had an event at a major auditorium, the whole town knew about it, yet we didn't get picketed, nobody came out to call us queer, the media didn't cover it, and, best of all, the world didn't fall down around us because we gathered together. I think it's time for us to realize that in the Gay 90's, the only thing stopping us is us.

Cutting The Emotional Bonds

Seems like in the past four or five months, a lot of relationships have broken up, especially in the women's community. So there's a lot of single women running around right now — it's great if you're looking for someone to go to dinner with, or to go see a movie. But there's also a lot of people who are hurting right now and some are probably having trouble letting go emotionally.

One of the things that's difficult for us is that we become close friends with our lovers. When relationships break up, we're often reluctant to lose the friendship in addition to the loss of a love. So we cling to it, however painful it may be.

Some years ago, a therapist told me that when a relationship ends, backing off from the friendship also would speed the healing process. Well, I had my own ideas. I said, "Phooey, it may take longer to heal, but in the end I'll be richer for having kept the friendship." Looking back on that period now, I don't regret what I did, but my experience helped me to understand the wisdom of his advice.

My feeling is that when two people date and become intimate, they form an emotional bond that's different from the bonds between people who have always just been friends. The emotional bond is a very strong one, yet

it's very sensitive. Feelings play on those bonds like a little mouse running up and down the keyboard.

In order to heal and get on with your life, somehow the emotional bond has to be severed. There's lots of ways to do that; some are healthier than others: you can distance yourself completely, you can maintain a casual friendship, you can run to another lover immediately, or you can do nothing and just let a long period of time elapse (commonly called an eternity) while the bonds slowly wither.

I think the important thing to recognize is that cutting the emotional bonds is something you're doing for yourself, but it's NOT against anyone else. It's not a revenge type action — "If I can't have you as a lover, I don't want you at all"; it's not even an angry gesture — "Go away, I don't want you in my life." It's just a part of the breaking up process and sometimes it's the hardest to do because to sever the emotional bond means you're really willing to let go of this person. It means you're ready to let go of them in your thoughts, in your dreams and as the first person you called with some exciting bit of news, or some crisis.

There is a happy ending to all this: breaking the emotional bond will cause a change in the friendship. But it doesn't mean you've lost it forever. You're just moving it to a healthier place for both of you — a friendship devoid of unnecessary emotional attachments but one filled with acceptance, forgiveness and unconditional love.

With the holidays coming, the feelings of hurt and being alone can really magnify themselves. It's necessary not to let those feelings completely overwhelm you. Take the opportunity of being single to do some things you might not do if you were still in a relationship. Go do some stuff with other singles. Don't go out with other couples all the time — it can make you feel all the more lonesome when everyone else has a partner to go home with and you go home by yourself. Don't forget, no matter where you go or what you do, if you become uncomfortable for some reason, you can always do a Yogi Bear — "Exit stage left, Boo Boo." In other words, leave.

Despite periods of sadness or loss, we all have a lot to be thankful for this year. Personally, I'm thankful for the evolution of our community and the appearance of individuals who are leading us to more acceptance of ourselves. I'm also thankful for family and friends, especially a close friend who had a serious encounter with cancer this year.

Take care. See you soon.

Carter charts course

Continued from page 1

She covered the presently announced candidates for the state Senate and House races, the presidential election, and the party conventions slated for Houston (Republican) and New York City (Democratic).

Carter inquired about the Charlotte-area community's interest in possibly hosting Gay Pride in '94 (referring to the idea that the annual event will be held outside the triangle area on "even" years, with '92 to be held in Asheville).

She then extended an invitation to Charlotte-area people to advise and attend the 1st Annual Lesbian and Gay Political Convention in Raleigh in October 1992.

On the subject of education, Mandy presented the opportunity to take "NC General Assembly 101" by attending the "short session" of the General Assembly as a way to learn how to monitor our legislators in preparation for the "long session" in '93; to meet our legislators; and to make ourselves known as a viable and visible gay and lesbian contingent.

Prime statewide events on the 1993 calendar include the aforementioned "long session" of the NC General Assembly; the 2nd Annual Lesbian and Gay Political Convention; and the Pride '93 March in Raleigh.

April 25 marks the date for the 1993 National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. Carter is hoping the state can send a contingent of five thousand.

In 1994 New York City plays host to both Gay Games IV, June 25-July 4; and Stonewall 25 March and Rally, June 25 & 26. For these events Carter talked about forming "Team North Carolina" for various sports competition in Gay Games IV, and a state contingent for the Stonewall anniversary celebration.

1995 brings the 10th Annual Pride March in Raleigh, and 1996 sees House, Senate, and Presidential elections.


Mandy Carter's overview presentation of these activities was comprehensive and enlightening. She distributed a flyer outlining these events which also included a form to fill out and pledge one's funds, time and energy.

Carter took questions, offered possible solutions, and shared a dialogue with those in attendance, clarifying purpose, strategies and objectives of the various organizations.

Thanks to Mandy's great "stand-up" style, the evening was not without its share of laughs. Carter reminded us of Jesse Helm's political agenda and eluded to an increasing erosion of his Capital Hill clout. Mandy brought her talk to a close, but stayed to listen to current First Tuesday business. Afterwards, she spoke individually with people, continuing to rally support for the work ahead.

Mandy Carter is a most articulate and winning activist, a fine leader and very rich resource for the state gay and lesbian community.

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