

CGA Anniversary Tales (continued from page 1)

important things about what was happening with CGA during this time. Karen P. was chairperson and brought a vital energy. Many lesbians became involved and demonstrated that there was room for lesbians in CGA, too. There were conflicts. There was love. We all worked hard. The early CGA men, the constant supporters, and these lesbians made the CGA visible and vital.

We tried to keep CGA growing. Sometimes it was a struggle just to keep it alive. The budget hearings before the CGC were an annual battle. The minority representative would not speak for us, and there were openly hostile CGC members. There was a certain amount of politicking and lobbying. We prepared budgets and sat up all night awaiting our turn to speak. Every year we rallied our support, and we kept alive financially--if only barely. But at least the CGC could no longer ignore us.

The Southeastern Conference was founded in 1976 by CGA members and others in the Triangle and Triad areas. In 1976, 300 gay men and lesbians met in a weekend of workshops and celebration in the Carolina Union. In 1979, over 600 folks came from all across the Southeast. We felt our own strength during these conferences and carried it on for the CGA.

A brilliant idea first took shape in 1978. A week of discussion groups, workshops, lectures, and films--Gay Awareness Week was born. The "cube" announcement for the Week was defaced nightly that first year, and we quietly repainted it daily. The second Gay Awareness Week found us sleeping en masse next to the

cube as a guard. It also found a group of fraternity boys wielding bats confronting two lesbians and a gay man at the cube. Lengthy student honor court hearings ensued and later found one young man not guilty, citing his role as water boy for the football team as evidence in his behalf. Gay Awareness Week provided a relatively safe space for folks to meet. For those of us beginning to explore our own identity, it was a wonderful discovery. For others, it was a joyous confirmation. Gay Awareness Week seemed to reflect the essence of the CGA and its function at UNC.

Gay men and lesbians at Carolina were no longer invisible. Many found friends and support through the Southeastern Conference and Gay Awareness Week. But, there were also the dances at the Newman Center. Fr. Tom Palko helped us use that space for needed socializing away from business. It was at places such as this that we found a vibrant lesbian and gay community at Carolina.

There were times during this period that I felt like precious few of us kept CGA alive. There were other times when I felt like I was a part of a big family. I'm sure it is much the same today. But the bonds I developed through my work with CGA are still strong.

During the years from 1976 to 1979, I felt a resistance to the positive changes CGA stands for. It was a light-weight opposition compared to the one growing in North Carolina today. CGA is people, and we must help it continue to help the lesbians and gay men at Carolina.

-Patty & Ann
in Seattle

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