

# Co-Editors' Corner



my coming-out story

By Craig Ledford

Coming out, many people would say, is a difficult thing to do. I can remember the time of my coming-out as if it were yesterday. I believe that it was one of the scariest moments of my life, but one that I am altogether happy to have experienced.

It all began on one crisp summer evening as me and a group of my close friends were driving back to Asheboro (my hometown) from a long day in the hot summer sun at Carowinds in Charlotte. We were all so worn-out, and yet somehow I ended-up with the responsibility of driving us home. I was driving my friend's little burgundy Ford escort... EEK! It was a stickshift.

Everyone in the car, excepting me and my best friend Lee, was asleep. In a groggy-of-mind, I can remember commenting to my friend, "I like this stickshift." He turned from his ill-attempt at slumber (mainly because I was blasting club music) and looked at me and said, "I bet you do."

From that moment forward, I knew that I had to get this whole "gay thing" off my chest. After he made that comment in the car, I told him that I had to tell him something, but said that I'd do it later. I had suspected for a while that my friend was gay- you know, it's the gaydar- but with my underdeveloped gaydar, I wasn't sure. It was a most uncomfortable time for me.

One week later, after being continuously asked what was on my mind, I gave-in. "Lee," I said, "Do you remember hearing a radio commercial on 106.5 The End for a personal ad company... the one that said 'we have the person for you, whether you're straight, or a little bent...'"

After a couple of seconds he said that he did remember the ad, mostly because he found it SO incredibly annoying.

Nervously, I said, "Well, if I were to call that company, I'd have to press the #2 button for the 'bent' section."

Immediately, he knew what I was talking about and began to tell me that he

too was questioning his sexuality. He started by telling me that he was bisexual, but I was like, "Oh, puh-lease!" I mean, really... picturing him with a girl was like picturing Janet Reno with a guy!

During the next few weeks, we became even closer friends, and developed a friendship that has lasted to this day. Lee has now been my best friend since the ninth grade... that's why it was so difficult to see him struggle with whether or not he should tell his parents of his new affirmation.

One day, in passing, he flagged me over on the side of the highway. He told me that he had to tell his mom, and that that night was going to be the night.

The next couple of months would be very traumatic for the both of us. His mom flipped, and told my family about my sexuality. The immense pressure that his mom was placing on him to be "normal" eventually led to him moving into my house.

Now that I reflect on that period of my life, I see it as one of the best. We had a blast, and my family was totally cool with the both of us. I can remember telling my mom that I was gay... I was like, "Mom, I'm gay." She just looked at me with a half-smile on her face and said, "Duh, we were just waiting on you to tell us!" It was then that I knew that I was "normal" and that I had to make my mark on the world.

I became SO comfortable with my sexuality that I eventually came-out to the majority of my friends at my high school. To my surprise, no one really cared that much about it. They were like, "ok." An issue that I had long thought would separate me from my friends and make me different, in a negative light, was really nothing more than another part of me that others seemed to have already