

CONNECTIONS

COMMUNITY LIAISON ORGANIZATION FOR SUPPORT, EDUCATION AND REFORM

Asheville, NC

Summer, 1989

Looking Back

Last August I could not have imagined what this year as CLOSER's first woman president would be like. Carlos advised, "Think about what you can do to improve the lives of Asheville gay men and lesbians, and the programs will follow." In the beginning I envisioned the hard work ahead in planning meetings, making sure that all aspects of the meetings ran smoothly, writing the newsletter, and generally trying to do all I could to see that CLOSER maintained the kind of high-quality service to Asheville's gay community that had become CLOSER's tradition. And yes, hard work was involved. But what I could not have envisioned is the depth of joy that would emerge and carry me through any rough spot that would be encountered.

The joy developed because of all of you. We could not have had a successful year without a dedicated Executive Committee. Bill A, Angela, Carlos, David B., Philip, and Charlotte were steadfast in their task of planning good programs throughout the year. Bill was my left hand (I'm left-handed) in actually putting on the program week after week. Until March, he and Tom A. did all the physical arrangements for meetings. Warren, Richard P., Rich P., Pete and Henry have all served CLOSER in leadership capacities and were very knowledgeable and supportive. Pete took time from a busy work schedule to see that CLOSER's newsletter got printed on time. And then there were the mentors, people to whom I turned time and time again for their input: Carlos, Doug, Ben, David S., Joan, and Dan made their wisdom available and provided strength when it was needed. Doug had a changing job situation and was finishing his house, but lent a hand and an ear whenever he could. Carlos worked full-time and took difficult advanced accounting courses, but still managed to be there when I called for help or advice, which was often. Ben and David provided continuity in what can only be described as the CLOSER spirit. And Joan and Dan were always there, always willing to lend a hand whenever called upon, without hesitation. What do all of these people have in common? Surely many wonderful characteristics, one of which is that CLOSER's welfare is a very high priority for them. To the extent that we are willing to give of ourselves to CLOSER, CLOSER can offer more and better resources to the community.

We tried a couple of new things this year--the Monday evening rap group, headed on a rotating basis by Jim H., Henry, Dan, and me. The hiking group was the brainchild of Jean-Claude, with two hikes per month this spring and continuing into summer. Jim R. volunteered at our "Open Forum" to become volunteer coordinator. Jim very ably recruited volunteers to set up, handle refreshments, and clean up, from March on.

CLOSER works for us because core people are willing to work for CLOSER, and do so in a loving way. Even if the program is not of great interest to them personally, they will make it to the meeting and will help make things work. We average 50-60 people a week because people sense that something is happening, and want to be a part of it. What CLOSER communicates is a sense of love and fellowship that is felt by those who visit. People who visit or hear about all we do constantly ask "What is CLOSER's secret?" Look in the mirror. It's just folks like you thinking about how we can improve the lives of gay men and lesbians in Asheville.

Thanks, everyone for a wonderful year, and for all the warmth and support you have shown me. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to experience the deep joy and satisfaction derived from working for the wonderful family we call "CLOSER."