

COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

Name: Jess Driskell
 Age: 37
 Hometown: Wauchula, Florida
 Favorite book last read: *The Child Garden*, by Jeff Ryman
 Favorite Music: Classical or New Age
 Favorite Sport: Walking on treadmill
 Favorite Color: Grey (because I can't commit to a favorite color)
 A food I can't resist: Red meat
 Occupation: Lapidary
 Person that greatly influenced my life: My grandfather
 As a kid I was: an old man.
 Pet: A dog named Lady
 I'm really good at: procrastination.
 An aspect of myself I'd like to improve: Patience
 For me, the best thing about being involved in WNC's gay/lesbian community is: meeting members of the community.
 My idea of a good time is: dinner with friends.



Photo by Betty Sharpless

Jess is outgoing Co-Chair of Mountain-GLO (Mountain Gay/Lesbian Organization), and was on the '91 WNC Lesbian/Gay Pride Committee.

by Earl Willis

Peeking over the ridges, Mountain-GLO is the last glimmer of organized gay and lesbian life in North Carolina before Tennessee. The organization is ending its fourth year, and has been co-chaired this past year by Jess Driskell of Sylva. Asked what motivated him to accept a leadership position in a gay/lesbian group, Jess said "I felt that it was in a way payment, my responsibility, to do what I could for the community at large."

Jess commented that Mountain-GLO dimmed a little over the last year, but continues to flicker, and hopes to get a fresh start in the coming year. According to Jess, the organization has had problems, first, in finding a permanent home in which to hold its meetings.

"Toward the end of last year we were reduced to meeting in my home twice a month," he said. "Next year we will

float, that is, we will hold the meetings at various members' homes."

Mountain-GLO began meeting at the Catholic Student Center at Western Carolina University, but were "made to feel uncomfortable," Jess said, so they moved to a church where they met as unofficial guests and were soon put out. They next met at St. David's Episcopal Church, but the cost there became prohibitive, so they began to meet at Jess' home.

The homophobia of officials at Western Carolina University made meeting there impossible.

Another problem of the young group is the area itself. "A lot of people who live in this area are closeted," Jess said. "This is understandable, considering the amount of homophobia existing in this small area--people's private business quickly becomes public knowledge."

Jess is a mixture of pessimism and optimism concerning Mountain-GLO's future in the far western mountains. "If we can just get the women and men together in this area, it will make us a lot stronger. In the past we have been organized around specific programs for each meeting, but if we become more social in nature, this might encourage more people to attend. You know how we dearly love pot-luck suppers," he added.

Jess names his grandfather as the person who most influenced his life, since his grandfather "provided a good framework for life." Because Jess' father died when Jess was nine, and his grandparents lived next door, Jess' grandfather became Jess' male role-model. "My grandfather stressed honesty and fair play, equality, and justice." Although his grandfather died before Jess reached adulthood, Jess thinks that he would have had no problem with Jess' being gay. "I think he was primarily concerned about the love among members of a family, not about someone's sexual orientation."

Jess settled in the mountains six years ago after 32 years of Florida life. "I found myself, in Florida, going out almost every night and getting very little accomplished, especially those things which were becoming important to me," he said.

A self-confessed hermit, Jess is a lapidary or gem cutter, a profession he was attracted to by his interest in crystals. Jess says that the advantage of custom gem cutting is that a lot of stones that are commercially cut are cut simply for retention of the stone's maximum weight, with no consideration for the amount of brilliance coming from the cut stone.

Jess also possesses a knitting machine. "My life is very peaceful," he said. "I do what I want to, and I do it when I want to do it, and don't have to account to anybody else."

The lady in his life is a dog by the same name.

Jess belongs to a number of book clubs, and reading is a passion in which he indulges himself liberally.

Jess holds a B.S. degree from the University of South Florida at Tampa, and has done graduate work at both that university and the University of Florida at Gainesville.

Beginning this fall, Jess passes the torch of Mountain-GLO on to new leadership, although he intends to help out with the group as much as possible. ▼

Relatives and Royalty

Dances with Wolves cinematographer Dean Semier's account of his conversation with Queen Elizabeth during her recent U.S. visit:

"I said I was director of photography, to which she replied, 'Oh, how terribly interesting. Actually, I have a brother-in-law who is a photographer.'

"I replied, 'Oh, how terribly coincidental. I have a brother-in-law who's a queen.' She moved on without saying another word."--*Post-Courier Wire Reports*; thanks to Warren Tonn ▼

Introducing: Clemson UULGC

reported by Roger Bell

Clemson Unitarian Universalists for Lesbian and Gay Concerns (UULGC) is a group which meets the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month at 7:30 PM. The second Wednesday meeting is a program of some sort, and the fourth Wednesday meeting is a social. For the social meeting, people are encouraged to bring a snack or a beverage to share. If the second or fourth Wednesday falls on a holiday, the group does not meet.

UULGC is open to everyone: students, faculty, staff, and people who live in the community. It is open to people of all faiths or of no faith. It is not really a religious organization, and does not have a religious theme. The programs include guest speakers; videos, both for entertainment and for discussion; rap sessions; etc.

Meeting attendance varies quite a bit. Average attendance is about 10-15 people, although there have been as many as 35. The group has met for about a year and a quarter now.

For more information, call Roger Bell at (803)843-1070. ▼

TN Bars Torched

Two Tennessee gay bars, the Five Points Depot in Nashville, and Alan Gold's in Chattanooga, were damaged by fire in June. Investigators believe that arson was the cause in both cases. An arrest has been made in the Nashville case.--*Washington Blade*, 6/28/91 ▼

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