

..Homosexuality

Copyright (C) 1971 by Harry W. Smith II. Reprinted by permission of the author. All rights reserved.

(Continued from Page 5)

have a strong emotional tie. It's the optimal situation. . . .

"I know of several relationships which have lasted more than ten years and are still going."

"There are as many different opinions on gay life by gay people as you could find on straight life by straight people. This is something most straight people just don't understand."

"We are as different and have as much variety among ourselves as they do."

"Their conception of a gay person is the Emory of 'Boys in the Band', the limp-wristed, lispng interior decorator, who can, as we say, be recognized a mile away."

"Approximately 90 per cent of gay people, I would guess, don't fit that stereotype at all."

"And if people don't think of the lispng interior decorator, they think of the dirty old man in the black trenchcoat who hangs around bus stations and seduces little boys."

"Both conceptions are very erroneous."

"I have the feeling," another commented, "many people think all homosexuals want to be girls, want to dress in women's clothing and run around acting fruity and silly. This is ridiculous. Most gay people are somewhat more effeminate than regular type guys, but they just don't want to run around in dresses and high heels."

"From what I hear, most of the drag queens aren't that interested in sex; they're just interested in wearing the pretty clothes, being elegant, having the beautiful furniture and the nice home. . . ."

"Another misconception which needs to be cleared away is the idea homosexuals are out 'to put the make' on anything wearing pants."

"We have as much of a discriminating taste as any straight person. Most of us have our own types; we joke a lot that it's great there is such variety among us else we'd all be pursuing the same people."

"Some people are very specific about what they want; they don't just want a male for a male. They appreciate beauty, good looks, personality, sensitivity--the individual person--just like other people."

"And the idea that homosexuals like young boys is a misconception too. There are some people--called 'chicken queens'--who like younger boys; but I certainly don't know of people who could be called child molesters."

"I've yet to meet a person 16 or older who didn't go (to a known homosexual area) with an express purpose in mind and who didn't know what he was getting in."

"People over 16 or 17 know what side of the fence they're on or what side of the fence they want to be on. . . ."

"When you stop and think about it," one student reflected, "gay people represent the antithesis of so many things straight people regard as holy."

"Obviously the way we make love isn't exactly what you would call the typical husband-on-top, wife-on-bottom, for procreation's sake."

"And we generally don't fit the American stereotype of masculinity. Most of us think it is hysterical that the epitome of masculinity in America is the broad-shouldered, athletic, dumb but good looking tough guy whose wife runs the home. And of course he knows when to put her in her place. But so few people in reality match that."

"Also, many of us are anti-organized religion. Christian love, which in my opinion says 'Love knoweth no gender,' that love if just love and it can be as holy and sanctified between man and man or woman and woman as between man and woman. I don't feel that I left the church or left organized religion, I feel that it left me."

"All religions--Protestant, Catholic, whatever--view homosexuality as a sin. Where does this put me? Out in the cold, because I'm living in sin."

Several persons labeled organized religion "hypocritical." "Most denominations are changing very much these days," one commented, "but I'm not sure they're ready to say homosexuality is okay."

One person is less condemning. "I came through a Catholic family background where sex of any description is taboo," he said. "There's a great deal that's admirable in the church. It's the only logical system that was ever worked out that ever took care of everything. Unfortunately, like most logical systems, it doesn't correspond to the real world."

"I think the Episcopal Church shows the most enlightenment toward homosexuals. Religion is a big thing. It offers the ability to repress things better than anything else. . . ."

But religion isn't the only situation where homosexuals want changes.

"There are several things I as a homosexual would like to see changed," one student commented.

"First, get rid of the laws against it. They're archaic and absolutely absurd. It's nobody's business but my own and the person I'm with."

Some homosexuals are disturbed by the notion that all homosexuals are promiscuous. "There are some homosexuals who rarely go to bed; others are what we call real whores."

"I don't care if it's men and women, women and women, or men and men, as long as both people consent to what they are doing then it is their own business."

"If you're going to keep us out of the Armed Forces, then make no stigma attached. I would have 'checked the little box' (Are you a homosexual?) but I knew what the stigma would have been once it got back to my local draft board. And in a small town, word does get out."

"We are kept out of civil service 'supposedly' because we are subject to blackmail. That's not our fault; it's the fault of society. If it wasn't a taboo, nobody would try to blackmail us."

"If we could walk into their door and say 'I want a job with Civil Service and I happen to be a homosexual and I don't care who knows it', then what is anybody going to blackmail us for?"

"Beyond the draft, civil service, and an elimination of job discrimination, I'd like to see the legalization of homosexual marriages, tax breaks for married homosexuals, and a general tolerance of us."

"Basically, that's all we're asking for; just 'Let us do our own thing.'"

"We're not going to hurt you; we're not out to destroy the institution of marriage. For those who want to get married in the straight way, that's fine--that's your own personal choice."

"But that's all we're asking for. We want the ability to be ourselves, to carry on and live our lifestyle the way we choose without being harassed."


"I don't think that's really asking too much."

RED LION TAVERN

Located at 5100 N. Tryon St.

"the Loft"

"So you missed the 49er party at 'the Loft' last week? Don't cry! There's always a good time to be had at the Red Lion Tavern."



(Advertisement)

Gay Bar: A social place

The local gay bar is an important aspect in the life of many Chapel Hill homosexuals.

"We wanted a place where people feel comfortable," the owner of the bar explained. "A place that was sort of out of the way and run in a business-like fashion, but for the benefit of the crowd."

"People come here to drink, socialize and meet people. It functions a great deal more like a social club than a bar. Serving and selling beer is quite incidental; we are providing a social club and a meeting place...a place where they can meet their friends, be comfortable and at ease. If they want to meet someone and go home with the, this is also available."

He explained the community is probably unaware of the bar. "The police have not hassled us at all. They occasionally come in and check an ID, but they have gone out of their way to be cooperative. They tend to ignore us as do the ABC people. The relationship is very friendly."

Chapel Hill Police Chief William D. Blake said the police problem with homosexuality is less than it's ever been.

"A few years ago homosexuals would hang out at night at eating places and try to make their pick ups from there. This brought on quite a few problems," he explained. "Many were assaulted and robbed."

"Since there has been at least one bar they can call their own, I don't recall but one reported robbery or assault. "As far as complaints from the public," the chief noted, "we just don't have any."

"I don't think many people in Chapel Hill are aware of the bar."

Blake said the situation with another bar -- The Tempo Room (which burned a few years ago) -- wasn't too good. It was a mixed crowd and had quite a bit of narcotics being passed.

"As far as complaints, the present bar is better than the previous one."

"Before, we had people coming from all over the area trying to prey on them. We had the motorcycle gangs and everything else. We didn't have too many complaints, but every once in a while one would get hit."

"But (the present bar) is an out of the way place. They just don't seem to be having any problems."

The owner explained that "the people from all walks of life come here. On weekends we have up to 300 people in here sometimes, many from out of town, even places like Washington and Atlanta; on a week night we'll usually have about 50 people."

"This is the bar in Chapel

Hill to be almost totally gay. It's similar to a gay bar in a large town, but very different too. Everybody feels like they have a part in it, which we have tried to encourage. The whole philosophy of the bar is 'This is your other home. Please be comfortable.'"

The bar is a very important social institution to many homosexuals. "It is the only way you can meet people that are gay without walking the streets or going to the tearooms. After being at school or work all day where you can't be totally relaxed, the bar is a place where you can relax with friends, say whatever you want without having to be on guard. The bar is a place where you can be at home...."

"It's one of the greatest, nicest, friendliest bars I've ever been to," one student commented. "At the same time, you get to know so many people that if you go there looking for a potential bedmate, you sometimes get a little frustrated. Everyone knows what you're trying to do or who you're trying to meet...."

Some people don't care for gay bars. "Some people feel like it's a meat auction-everybody just standing around waiting to be picked up."

"I don't agree with that idea. I go to the bar in Chapel Hill frequently with no intentions of ever meeting anyone to pick up and take home. I just go to see people I never see any other place...."

Most of the people who frequent the bar here don't fit the typical heterosexual's image of a homosexual. "Over 80 per cent of our customers," the bar owner related, "if you saw them on the street or even if you saw them here would never be recognized as gay."

"There is no stereotyped gay person; they're as ordinary as anyone else. Most are happy being what they are. They're as well adjusted -- perhaps in some cases

better adjusted -- as a comparable group of straight people."

"We've had no trouble with the people at the bar," the owner said. "We've occasionally had to stop someone from drinking too much. I don't stop anybody from kissing or throwing their arm around someone else, but sometimes somebody will go a little bit further. We just tell them to knock it off. It's all good natured. We've never had a fight."

The owner mentioned straight people do occasionally come to the bar, not knowing it had become a gay bar. "Some of them never seem to catch what's going on. Some of them are amused. But some of them are grossed out. We have a regular group of straight people who come here and mix in the crowd."

Several students who frequent the bar admitted it is "cliquish." Most agreed "once you get to know a few people, it's friendly."

The bar's owner is aware of the situation. "We try to help the situation," he said. "When we recognize somebody new to the bar, we try to introduce them around."

"And although Chapel Hill has a large gay population, everybody still knows everybody else. When a stranger first comes on the scene, everyone wonders, 'Is he really gay?' Once that is established, the question is 'How are we going to react to him?'"

"If he is an attractive person, everyone is eager to meet him, but everybody is afraid of being refused. So a person can be left standing in the corner."

The bar isn't accepted by everyone. "Some people think it is perfectly all right to go to restrooms in some classroom buildings wouldn't be caught dead here. They feel like going to one of the tearooms is just for (having sex); they don't think this makes them gay. Coming to the bar, some people feel is a commitment to being gay...."