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For information and help call 625-1130

Gays In The Military

by Jayr Ellis



Investigations of military personnel for homosexual conduct appear to be on the increase. During the past three months the Military Counselling Committee of the Gay Information Line has experienced a 400% increase in the number of inquiries and referrals and a 600% increase in active caseload. (Active cases consist of those individuals who have been informed that they are under investigation.)

Local military officials for the most part deny the existence of current investigations or refuse to discuss the issue. Only one spokesperson, Lt. Cmdr. Peace of the Naval Amphibious Base acknowledged that homosexual conduct investigations exist. However, when questioned about the scope of the investigations and the number of personnel involved, Lt. Cmdr. Peace said: "That information is not for release locally. You will have to contact the Chief of Naval Personnel in Washington, D.C. who might be able to provide you with a breakdown for this area."

Eight of the current active cases are Navy, three are Air Force, two are Army, and one is Marines.

No consistent pattern has been emerging from the information that the counsellors have gathered from clients. Both the impetus for the investigations and the action taken on the investigative findings are varied. Some of the investigations have come about through informers, a check of cars with military decals at local bars, information learned through arrests by civilian authorities and information found during drug searches. Approximately 45% of local investigations that counsellors are aware of end in expulsions and 10% are court martialed.

For a year there has been a hiatus in the investigations and the increase in the number of cases seeking assistance from the Gay Information Line began shortly after the conclusion of the Matlovich and Berg cases.

Most of the clients are surprised to find they are under investigation and are unaware of their rights under the UCMJ and how to protect themselves from incrimination during the investigation.

Tactics used during the investigation process include: threatening to inform an individual's family, taking suspects to find contacts they can question, opening mail, use of undercover agents who approach the person under investigation with a revelation that they are gay hoping they will confide in them. Even privileged communication between chaplains and the person under investigation have been violated.

The counselling services of the Gay Information Line seeks to assist military personnel in obtaining the desired outcome of their case whether it be separation from the service without repercussions or retention in the service. To date most of the work has been crisis intervention.

Group workshops on "Gays in the Military" and individual counselling sessions are available through the Gay Information Line, 625-1130. The next group workshop is scheduled for May 22 at 8:00pm at the Unitarian Church, 739 Yarmouth St., Norfolk, Va.

According to a recent article in Gaze (Vol 2 No 4, Mar 81) the military spends approximately $5,000 for the investigative process and during 1979 spent 12 million dollars to discharge lesbians and gay men from the service. The 12 million spent was the cost of discharge hearings and did not include the cost of investigative services. The article notes that $500,000 each or a total of $1 million was spent to discharge two women from the Norton Sound.



Photo by Chris Church - courtesy Gazette, Atlanta

300 Protest Falwell's Georgia Visit

Atlanta (Gayzette News Service)- Jerry Fallwell, president of Moral Majority, Inc., addressed a 100% white audience at the Eastside Baptist Church March 13 in Marietta, Georgia.

Originally planned to be held at the Holiday Inn at I-75, the meeting was hastily switched when Majority members learned of the planned protest by gays in Gazette *(the local gay newspaper of Atlanta)*. The meeting was hosted by Congressman Larry McDonald for his 'congressional advisory committee.' Tickets were $3.00, but the church was partially empty, nonetheless.

Undaunted, and not tricked by the sudden change of locale, 300 protestors representing a variety of views (though mostly gay) paraded and chanted slogans ranging from gay pride affirmations to "Bring Back the Goddess."

The protests began as Falwell, McDonald and their guests entered the church. A nearly endless line of protestors single-filed their way along the sidewalk in front. Church-goers paused, mouths agape, and silently watched. Sources from within the Falwell organization indicated to Gazette that many in the audience were stunned by the fact that the marchers were dressed mostly in red, white, and blue and were carrying lighted candles and American flags. "Hey," said one bystander, "I thought we had dibs on the patriotic angle!"

Upon arriving at the church, the protestors found a wedding in progress. While awaiting the arrival of Falwell, McDonald and others, the protestors sang selections from "Jesus Loves Me" to "We Shall Overcome."

March organizers, which included Ray Kluka and Bob Sturdivant of the L.G.T. Pride Committee, had worked hard through the week to ensure the march would be orderly and effective. Hundreds of gays, lesbians, those who support abortion rights, socialists, the ACLU, "We the People", and other individuals and groups turned out for the trip to Marietta. Every sign was to the point and tasteful, and the picketers chose to dress "normally" with no extremes in evidence. It was impressive.

Bob Sturdivant commented to Gazette that a greater victory than just the liberating experience of effectively protesting a bigot was achieved: while the marchers were chanting "Human Rights, Not Falwell-rights!", a well-dressed gentleman of about sixty stepped from the churchbound audience and joined the chant.

Freemason Street Revisited

by Jim Early



A Norfolk man who was arrested and charged with "soliciting" near downtown Norfolk in March, was convicted of the less serious offense of "disorderly conduct" as a result of plea bargaining between attorneys. The Norfolk man was fined the maximum of $200 but did not receive any jail sentence.

According to the accused, during early morning hours he had been driving his car in the Freemason Street area and was waiting for a stoplight to change, when he was approached by a young man who later turned out to be a police officer. The accused said he invited the officer to have a seat inside the car, and the officer accepted. The driver said that the other man asked questions such as "Are you gay?" and "What do you like to do?" The accused told Our Own that the officer said he had been disappointed earlier when he was with a man who had not wanted to do "what he liked." Because of that, the officer explained that he wanted to know beforehand what to expect, the accused man said.

The defendant told Our Own that because of the insistent questioning, he became suspicious. At one point the officer asked, "How about a blow job?", the defendant said. At this point the accused said he told the other man, "I'm tired and I'd better be getting home. Why don't we just call it a night?" According to the arrested

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Conference & Controversy

by J. D.

The sixth Southeastern Conference of Lesbians and Gay Men was held April 10-12 in the student union of Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. The conference was sponsored by the LSU Students for Gay Awareness (SFGA), an official student group of the university established in April, 1977.

The conference featured approximately 25 workshops dealing with diverse elements of the gay culture and movement. Representative topics included gay health issues, gay crisis phone lines, homosexuality and Christianity, lesbian culture, gay politics and organizing, and sexism and racism within gay life.

Keynoters spoke during three general assemblies over the weekend. Larry Bagneris of Houston spoke at the Friday evening assembly. Bagneris has been active in the gay and Hispanic movements for many years, has served as president of both the Houston and Texas Gay Task Force, and was the first openly gay delegate from Texas at the 1980 Democratic National Convention. His talk stressed that our future lies in sharing our experiences.

"We must become an organized body of vastly different people in order to survive," Bagneris said. He added that, "the most important part of this conference is communication" and that we must learn from our rich experiences. He also stressed the need for gay people to be more "out". "You've got to remove those stereotypes by challenging their (straight society's) beliefs and by being more visible. If we're going to design their clothes, run their computers, mop their floors, serve their meals and teach their children, then by golly we're going to be ourselves."

Ann Toups, a psychotherapist from New Orleans, spoke at the first general assembly on Saturday. She is chairperson of the New Orleans Gay Community Center and appeared in the 1979 documentary, "ABC Closeup: Homosexuality." She spoke about the gifts and challenges of being gay. Speaking on the differences between lesbians and gay men, she commented that "our differences can work for us or against us" and that "both lesbians and gay men have a right to and a need for their own space." Like Bagneris, she spoke of the need to be ourselves and stressed that, "we cannot continue to constantly defend ourselves to the heterosexual society."

The LSU Students for Gay Awareness (SFGA) found themselves in a controversy before the conference began. At the April 1 meeting of the Student Government Association, $400 was voted toward the conference 15-7. During the following week, nine student organizations urged SGA President Peter Roy

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