

It's Time

Newsletter of the National Gay Task Force

Vol. 6, No. 5

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June-July 1979

VALESKA IS NAMED NGTF CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ALBUQUERQUE MOVEMENT LEADER TO REPLACE JEAN O'LEARY

Lucia Valeska, 39, a sociologist and a leader of the lesbian-feminist and gay movements in Albuquerque, New Mexico, is named to the position of co-executive director of the National Gay Task Force by the NGTF board of directors, meeting in New York last week. She joins Charles Brydon in the top administrative position of the nation's largest and most influential gay-rights organization.

According to Richard Cash and Kay Whitlock, NGTF board co-chairs, Valeska was selected after an extensive search and a review of 34 applicants for the position from all over the country. She assumes her post on July 9, replacing Jean O'Leary, who resigned, effective June 22, for personal reasons.

Upon being notified of her appointment, Valeska said, "I am honored to join in the work of the National Gay Task Force. It has long been my belief that women and men should travel a common road to liberation. NGTF will continue to play a vital role in this effort, and I am very glad to be a part of it."

In announcing the appointment, Mr. Cash and Ms. Whitlock said, "It is a distinct pleasure to welcome Lucia Valeska to the Task Force. As our movement enters its second decade, we are confident that NGTF will be well-served by her outstanding leadership qualities, her many years of experience in the movement and her respect for the diversity of the lesbian and gay community."

Prior to her selection to the NGTF position, Valeska, a doctoral candidate in American Studies at the University of New Mexico, recently became Co-Coordinator of the New Mexico Coalition of Lesbian and Gay Rights Organizations. She has served as administrator of a non-profit organization working on the educational needs of Native American children; and



LUCIA VALESKA. Photo by Donna Gray.

for five years was an instructor in Women's Studies at the U. of New Mexico. She was a founder and organizer of the University's Women's Center, Women's Studies Program and Gay Student Union, as well as the Albuquerque Women's Center, and the Albuquerque/Santa Fe chapter of the National Lesbian Feminist Organization.

A native of Chicago, Valeska received her B.A. in psychology from the University of the Americas, Puebla, Mexico, continuing with graduate studies in Sociology at the U. of New Mexico. She is presently completing her doctoral dissertation on the history of lesbian feminism. Ms. Valeska was active in the 1960's in the civil rights and anti-war movements. She is a member of the American Sociological Assn., American Assn. of University Women, the Business and Professional Women's Assn., the American Studies Association and the National Women's Studies Assn. She is the mother of three children, ages 11 to 16.

NGTF is seeking applicants for the position of Media Director, to replace Ginny Vida, who is resigning effective October 15, 1979. The Media Director is responsible for public relations for NGTF; lobbying national media for fair and accurate news coverage and positive portrayals of lesbians and gay men; editing *It's Time*, NGTF's newsletter, and other NGTF publications; and acting as a general resource to the national media on gay issues.

Candidates must have a strong background in gay and feminist issues and have proven skills in writing, communications, and public speaking. The position requires great tact, exceptional judgement, and the ability to relate comfortably to the broad diversity of personalities found in television, radio, news, and film industry management.

Starting salary is \$18190 with a liberal benefits package. Interested candidates are asked to submit resumes to the Co-Executive Directors, NGTF, by August 17, 1979. No funds are available for travel reimbursement. The position would begin October 1, 1979.

NGTF JUNE BOARD MEETING ACTIONS

- Re-opened discussion on whether to endorse the October 14 March on Washington. Established 4-member committee to send as observers to Houston planning conference for the March
- Established a committee to examine the subject of children's rights
- Reviewed the proposed budget for the fiscal year 1980

NEWS BRIEFS

Time Cover Story

NGTF played a prominent role in assisting *Time* magazine editors in preparation for the April cover story, "How Gay Is Gay?" NGTF staff members Jean O'Leary, Robert Herrick and Ginny Vida, joined by Vito Russo of New York, were invited to a two-hour luncheon meeting at the *Time* corporate dining room to discuss the progress of the gay movement, to educate *Time* editors about problems with past media coverage of the gay issue, and to speak personally and informally about the lesbian and gay experience. Twelve editors from the National Department attended, including those responsible for writing and researching the article.

The published article presented a much fairer and more positive view of the gay movement than previous articles in *Time*. We are particularly grateful to Barbara Dolan of *Time* for enlisting the cooperation of the magazine's editors in extending an invitation to NGTF to participate in this extremely productive awareness session. We will continue our media lobbying efforts with the national media with renewed vigor!

The cover story was occasioned by *Time's* report on the book, *Homosexuality in Perspective*, by Masters and Johnson.

Gays at the Prom

NGTF's Rhode Island office was called upon recently to assist a high school student, Paul Guilbert, in his effort to attend the high school junior prom in Cumberland, R.I., with another young man.

When the school's principal denied the request, Guilbert consulted with Chuck Noice at the NGTF office in Providence and with attorneys from the American Civil Liberties Union about the prospect of a legal challenge. Because of parental pressure, Guilbert decided not to pursue the case. However, the story received widespread coverage in the national press.

A few weeks later in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, two young men did attend the high school prom with the approval of the principal (see "Gay's in Rural America," page 2). NGTF salutes the courage of both gay couples in raising so symbolic an issue.

International Gay Conference

NGTF was represented by media director Ginny Vida at the First Annual Conference of the International Gay Association held in Bergen, North Holland, over Easter weekend. Sixty-five representatives from 17 countries discussed the status of lesbians and gay men around the world with respect to immigration and citizenship, child custody, persecution for engaging in homosexual acts, prison conditions, children's rights, education, and possible sources of support such as Amnesty International, the U.N. and the World Council of Churches.

Several research projects on the status of gays are now being conducted by representatives of member groups.

The conference was highlighted by an address by Vincenzo Francone of Italy who reported on his one-man street demonstration in Teheran protesting the execution of at least 15 men for consensual acts which the Iranian government has characterized as "homosexual rape." Mr. Francone demonstrated outside the prison in Teheran until he was taken into custody by Iranian authorities, interrogated and ridiculed for several hours, and eventually ordered to return to Italy.

This year's IGA conference was hosted by the Dutch gay liberation group, C.O.C., in Amsterdam. Next year's conference will be held over Easter weekend in Barcelona. The conference organizers are making a special effort to enlist the participation of women and non-European groups in the international organization. Look for further details on next year's conference in future issues of *It's Time*.

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YOU Can Help NGTF

Can you make a three-month commitment to NGTF? We are seeking volunteers from our New York City area members and friends to commit four hours a week (more if you can) to help out weekdays in our office. We need dependable, friendly people to receive visitors, answer phones and perform various clerical tasks. We'd like you to commit yourself to a regular weekly time slot for a three-month period (renewable, of course!); hours are 10-2 and 2-6, Monday-Friday. If you're interested, contact Larry or Judy at 741-5800 and we'll set up an interview.

NEWSLETTER VOLUNTEER

Associate Editor, 30 hrs./month under supervision of Media Director NYC area only. Submit resumes to Ginny Vida, NGTF, 80 Fifth Avenue NY NY 10011.

for Gay Women:

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RICHARD CASH, *Board Co-Chairperson*
 KAY WHITLOCK, *Board Co-Chairperson*
 LUCIA VALESKA, *Co-Executive Director*
 CHARLES F. BRYDON, *Co-Executive Director*
 GINNY VIDA, *Media Director*
 ROBERT HERRICK, *Administrator and Director of Resources*

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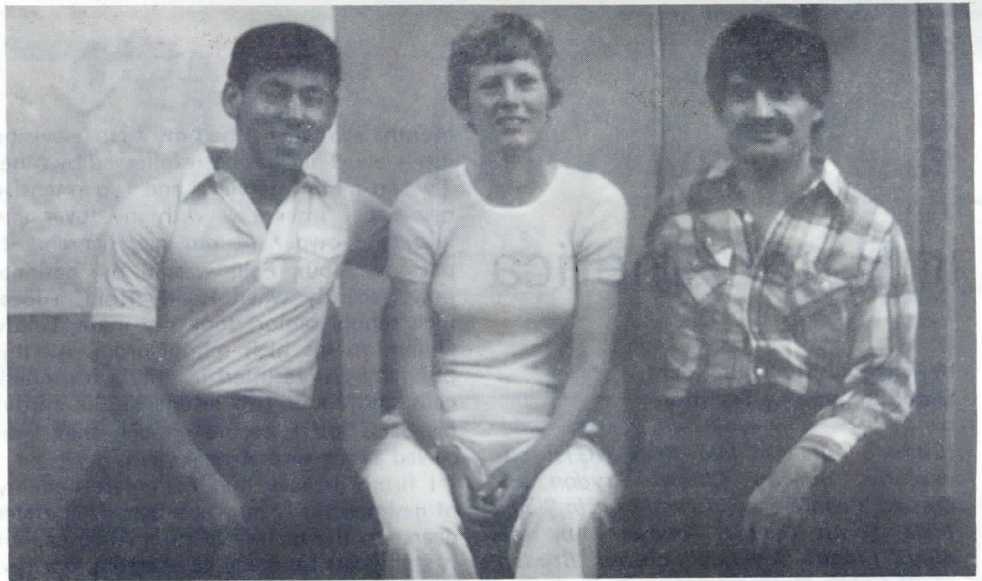
BOARD ELECTIONS

RICHARD CASH AND KAY WHITLOCK ARE NGTF BOARD CO-CHAIRS

Richard Cash of New York City and Kay Whitlock of Philadelphia were elected co-chairs of the National Gay Task Force board of directors at the NGTF June board meeting. Cash is active with the gay caucus of the United Methodist Church, and Whitlock is former national co-chair of the Lesbian Rights Committee of the National Organization for Women. She will serve a second term as NGTF board co-chair.

Other board officers are Scott Norman of Seattle, secretary; and Meryl Friedman of New York City, re-elected as treasurer. Named to the board's executive committee, in addition to the officers, were Barbara Love of Westport, Conn., Kerry Woodward of Minneapolis, and Larry Bagneris, a new board member from Houston, Texas.

In addition to Bagneris, who is vice-president of the Houston Gay Political Caucus, former regional coordinator of the Texas Gay Task Force and former vice-president of the National Students Assn., other newly-elected board members are Jose Gomez of Narragansett, Rhode Island, and Betsy Hess of Missoula, Montana. Gomez, a director of Boston's Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, is a student at Harvard Law School and former Executive Assistant to Cesar Chavez of the United Farm Workers Union. Hess, a Ph.D.



NEW BOARD MEMBERS. Recently elected to the 30-member NGTF board of directors were (l-r) Larry Bagneris, Jr., of Houston; Betsy Hess of Missoula, Mt., and Jose Gomez of Narragansett, R.I. Photo by Robert Herrick.

candidate in clinical psychology and a member of the Association of Gay Psychologists, has participated in gay organizing efforts in Montana for the past five years.

Re-elected to the board for another term were Jeffrey Carples of New York City, Barbara Gittings of Philadelphia, Carolyn Handy of Alexandria, Va., A. Billy S. Jones of Columbia, Md., Franklin Kameny of Washington, D.C., Pat Norman of San Francisco, and Barbara Love.

NGTF board members who continue to serve but did not stand for re-election this year are Bobbi Bennett of Reseda, Ca., Jack Campbell of Miami, Fla., Steve Endean of Washington, D.C., Kathy McCabe of Champaign, Ill., Peter Scott of Los Angeles, Barbara Weinstock of Richmond, Va., Gerald Gerash and Jackie St. Joan of Denver; William Kelley and Sean Reynolds of Chicago, and Charlotte Bunch, Roan Conrad and Frances Doughty of New York City. Ms. Doughty was re-elected as chair of the NGTF women's caucus.

NEWS BRIEFS

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Masters and Johnson

Shortly after the publication of their new book, *Homosexuality in Perspective* (Little, Brown), noted sex researchers William Masters and Virginia Johnson met for over an hour with NGTF co-executive directors Charles Brydon and Jean O'Leary in New York to review the findings of their study on gay couples and to establish avenues of communication with NGTF. Brydon and O'Leary said that the research team expressed eagerness to work with NGTF and to continue a dialogue on problems of mutual concern.

One issue discussed at the meeting was the media's inaccurate representation of M & J's new study as evidence of a "cure" for homosexuality. However, the study's conclusion that gay couples are more successful in communicating with each other on a sexual level than heterosexual couples has also received a fair amount of attention. The study indicated that "inter-gender empathy" enabled same-sex couples to be more sensitive to each other's needs.



O'LEARY and VOELLER HONORED. Former co-executive directors Jean O'Leary and Bruce Voeller were honored at a benefit dinner on May 22 for their years of distinguished service to NGTF. The gala event, held at the Fifth Avenue Hotel in New York, was attended by more than 100 persons. Shown above are (l-r) current NGTF co-executive director Charles Brydon, Jean O'Leary, Bruce Voeller, and NGTF board co-chair Kay Whitlock. Photo by Laurie Drummond.

Gay in Rural America

by Forrest J. Rode, President
Sioux Empire Gay Coalition

(Editor's note: In late April NGTF co-executive director Charles Brydon addressed a conference of rural gays in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, sponsored by the Sioux Empire Gay Coalition. Mr. Brydon invited that organization's president, Forrest Rode, to submit an article to It's Time, which we are pleased to include in this issue.)

Being gay in rural America is, in many ways, no different from being anything else in rural America. There are so few people for the land area that, while the perceived fears of being gay are greater (there are no large ghettos of gay persons in which to hide), so are the opportunities of making a positive impact on straight America.

To give urban readers some conception of the difference, there are 120,000 people in the Sioux Falls metropolitan area, and somewhat less than 700,000 people in the entire state, over half of whom live in the eastern one-third. The vast majority of our gay population is heterosexually married. For many years, rural gay persons could easily believe that they were the only ones in America who felt more strongly attracted to members of their own sex. One of our lesbian members was shocked to learn less than three years ago that there might be gay support groups in this area. The societal pressures to marry and raise a family are still strong in rural America.

At the same time, because there are fewer people, the desire to make a difference can open doors. I count among my friends the National Democratic Committeeman from South Dakota, the presidents of ACLU and NOW in Sioux Falls, and the coordinator of South Dakota Coalition for Freedom of Choice, a group advocating a pro-choice position on abortion. The members of Vermillion (S.D.) Gays and Friends also largely comprise the membership of their local chapters of ACLU and NOW. In 1976 I was the Sioux Falls coordinator for the Carter/Mondale campaign. The owner of our local gay bar, the Hitch'N Post, is a friend of our county sheriff. I have friends in Senator McGovern's office and worked with U.S. Rep. Tom Daschle when he was Sen. Abourezk's administrative aide.

I can only speak from the perspective of being openly gay in Sioux Falls, S.D. This city seems to be uniquely tolerant. I, in essence, burned my closet some two

months ago when I had my first television interview. That has been followed by other TV and radio interviews and two extensive newspaper interviews with my lover and with the owner of our gay bar and its patrons. Sioux Falls was in the national news recently when Randy Rohl, a local high school senior, took my mate, Grady Quinn, to his high school prom. All this publicity has resulted in only a few crank calls and about two letters to the editor. My sales job is secure enough that I received a raise several weeks ago.

I firmly believe that the greatest enemy of gay persons is our own fear. It is a fear nearer to the surface in rural America, but it still exists for many gay persons in urban areas. I have talked to many gay persons who have no trouble being gay in their urban areas, and yet they fear to tell parents and former classmates about their sexuality. Coming out to my parents and family has drawn us closer together, and my parents are conservative Lutheran farmers. Their love for me has outweighed the old myths and "shoulds" and "oughts".

Perhaps because there are fewer of us, gays in this area are friends. We have a strong sense of community and our bar is our community center. There has been a significant increase, in recent months, in the numbers of gay couples who are visible and available to serve as role models for others. People of all ages mix freely, and it is not unusual for our straight friends to join us at our bar.

The Minnehaha County Commissioners (Sioux Falls) adopted an affirmative action hiring plan, including protection for gays, just five days after the newspaper articles appeared. Our newly re-elected mayor told us two years ago that there would be no discrimination against gays as long as he was mayor.

If we have a shortcoming, it is in inadequately reaching the lesbian community. We have always had some lesbian members of our coalition, but their numbers have not increased as rapidly as have our numbers of gay men. It is impossible to reach gay persons unless they know you exist. We have a good working relationship with our local media, but such a relationship cannot effectively exist unless someone is willing to be visible. It is relatively easy to get media coverage in rural areas because the popular misconception says that they only exist in large cities.

If we have one great task ahead of us, it is educating the general populace about being gay. Too many of us are ignorant about this significant part of our lives, our history, and the facts behind the popular fallacies. We have to work harder, in rural America, to find the gay and lesbian leaders and workers who will make possible our full equality. Homophobia can only be educated away.

In Memoriam: Robert Livingston

Bob Livingston, a former member of the NGTF board of directors and former chairperson of the NGTF Fund for Human Dignity, died of cancer in late May at the age of 47.

Mr. Livingston, a founder of the New York Political Action Council, was appointed by Mayor Beame in 1977 to serve as the first openly gay person on the New York City Human Rights Commission. Last March, he was honored at a ceremony at City Hall by Mayor Ed Koch and Manhattan Borough President Andrew Stein. Mr. Koch cited him for "outstanding leadership in the cause of human rights for all citizens, preeminently his courageous and persuasive advocacy of full civil rights for lesbians and gay men" and for "innovative programs for neighborhood beautification."

Mr. Livingston produced and invested in theatrical productions in New York and London. He also served as publisher of *More* magazine, the journalism review.

In the few short years that Bob Livingston devoted to the gay movement, he emerged as a major leader of the gay constituency in New York City. Those of us who worked with Bob will never forget his warmth, his wit, and his tireless efforts of behalf of all gay people. We mourn his death, and we cherish his memory.

ROBERT LIVINGSTON (r) being congratulated by NYC Mayor Ed Koch last March at a ceremony honoring Mr. Livingston at City Hall. Photo by Bettye Lane.

