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Have you moved? Are You moving soon? Call (303) 771-7169 or e-mail: AlaninDen@aol.com

Teleology: a belief that natural phenomena are determined not only by mechanical causes but by an overall design or purpose in nature. By Anne-Marie Jackson, MD, OB-GYN

It is human nature to ask "Why?" We are curious creatures, and we like to have things make logical sense. If we understand the logic, we can affect the flow of events, intervene and change the course, usually to lead to an improved outcome. Every day new technology is being developed to diagnose conditions that may affect a baby's future. What parents would not jump at the chance, if it were possible, to change their unborn child's genetic material so that the child would lead a socially more acceptable life? If homosexuality is genetic or somehow biological influenced, this possibility is not so far-fetched.

What makes one person gay and another straight? Why are there people born one gender who feel they should be the other? How does gender identity relate to sexual orientation, if at all? Scientists continue to search for differences between gays and lesbians and heterosexual men and women. Studies have been done on brain autopsy specimens, prenatal hormonal influences, family dynamics and the like, and no conclusive evidence has come forth on what causes sexual orientation to be homosexual or heterosexual. It has been reported that there are various structural differences between the brains of homosexual and heterosexual men. A study is currently being done to determine if the brain anatomy of transsexuals more closely resembles their original anatomical gender or their gender identity. Answering such questions may help us understand the mechanism by which these different types of people develop—but will it necessarily lead to greater acceptance of those differences, or just lead us to find ways to change it? And it still doesn't address the human need to understand why the differences exist, the need to know the "purpose in nature."

The statistics supporting a biological basis for sexual orientation can be compelling. For instance, several studies have shown the incidence of identical twins both being homosexual is roughly 50%, whereas only 15% of fraternal twins are both gay. Environment must play some role, however; otherwise, the rate would be 100%, as identical twins share exactly the same genetic material. It is also observed that there is a higher than expected number of gay siblings in families where one other child is gay. Is this genes, or rearing influences? It is the classic "nature vs. nurture" argument.

See **HEALTH** on page 6

LETTER TO OUR READERS

(The Adventures of Two Lesbian Mothers-to-be continued from February's issue of *Affinity*)

Jacki's perspective on the whole issue...

Tere and I have been together eight wonderful years last August. Two years ago we began actually trying to become pregnant through alternative insemination. This was after much soul searching, reading, talking, etc. Luckily, here in the southern California area we began to attend a new group at the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center called "Maybe Baby." That helped us in deciding to actually become parents. It seemed like such an "easy" thing to do when we began this journey.

We decided to go with an unknown donor, and began to use the services of a small bank referred to us by friends that were pregnant at the time. After three unsuccessful tries (within about 6 months) I went to the doctor. His reply was that I was young (29 at the time) and to come back in a year. I was honest with him from the beginning about my sexuality, the donor, etc. Little did I know that that type of honesty would come back to haunt me. That was February of 1994.

A little less than a year later I was back in his office. My cycles were still irregular and I still wasn't pregnant. So in November of last year I had a hysterosalpinogram (excuse the poor spelling, but it's late), where they shoot dye into your fallopian tubes to make sure they aren't blocked. I was okay. So the doctor prescribed chlomid to make me ovulate. The first month the hormonal levels still weren't high enough, so the doctor doubled the dose. After other attempts I went back to the doctor because I still wasn't pregnant. Then all hell broke loose. We began to live an

incredibly strange nightmare. The doctor proceeded to tell me that he couldn't treat me for infertility anymore because I wasn't married. The medical group said that the insurance wouldn't pay their 50% of the co-pay because I was using alternative insemination, and I had to be having "natural, normal sexual intercourse." Anyway, it's a very long story. I'm still in the process of appeals to the insurance, even though they continue to pay 50% and their portion of my chlomid prescriptions. I am at the point that I believe the medical group is the one refusing to treat me.

In the meantime, I have finally



found a doctor within the medical group who will treat me and whom we both like. He prescribed chlomid for three months and then said we would do a re-evaluation of the situation. The next time we tried (this last June), I became pregnant. We found out the good news while we were in Utah visiting relatives. So, we began to tell a select group of friends and relatives. A week later, which is a week ago today, I miscarried while we were still in Utah. I have an appointment with the doctor tomorrow, it was originally supposed to be the first time we saw him as future parents. Now we are going to talk to him about how long he thinks we should wait before we try again. We are hoping within the next month or so, since I had no complications from the miscarriage. We take comfort in the fact that I can become pregnant.

Tere and I have no idea how much longer we can put up with this emotional roller coaster. In the past two weeks, we have experienced the highest of highs and the lowest of lows. In reality, it seems like it all happened to someone else a very long time ago. We are beginning to wonder how many more obstacles we will have to overcome in our quest to be parents.

This is not the end of the saga... Today we are happy to say Jacki is pregnant and due May 30, 1996. We can hardly stand it! All of this perseverance has paid off—finally!! Many of our friends already know, including both sets of our parents. A couple of co-workers also know—telling the big-wigs is our next step.

We would like to thank all of you have been interested in our story and how the journey was going for us. We are still a bit dumbfounded, but are very happy to say we are going to be parents.

—Tere and Jacki

Editor's Note: Just a reminder that Election of the Executive Director is approaching. Candidates must formally declare their candidacy in writing to the editor of *Affinity* no later than 1 September, limiting to a maximum of 250 words. Letters will be printed in the October's issue that will be available at National's conference.

Send Candidacy letter to:

Editor of *Affinity*
P.O. Box 46022
Los Angeles, CA 90046

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

"Friends" — has such a nice ring to it, doesn't it? The mention of the word conjures up all types of different feelings and emotions. Remember your "first" best friend in elementary school? Remember the petty ups and downs of junior high friendships? The long-last and meaningful friendships of college and the mission field?

Perhaps the thought of the immensely popular television series by the same name come to mind—men and women who face the challenges of life together as friends. And is it not interesting that when we feel the passion of a developing romance, the worst possible thing we can imagine hearing is the phrase, "Well, maybe it's best we just be 'friends'."

Recently, I've had the opportunity to be on the receiving end of a number of good friendships and the blessing of having such great friends has caused me to reflect on the value of friendships in our lives. One friend in Phoenix has consistently mailed me the entire classified section of the major Phoenix paper each week and went the extra mile to line up a telephone interview with the company he works for. Another friend in California faxed me 88 pages of critical material which was immensely helpful in preparing for an interview with a law firm in Las Vegas. A friend in Vegas has been tremendously helpful in building my morale and self-esteem during my unexpected career crisis. Yet another friend in California recently won a valuable video dating service package (complete with concert tickets, make-over, video recording, etc.) and because he is already in a serious relationship, he gave his lucky winnings to me! These and many other thoughtful gestures make me grateful for such wonderful people to share life's journey with—my dear friends.

Wouldn't it be a kinder, greater place to live if there were more people like our friends? What about those who don't have friends—the lonely, the shy, the less fortunate; what about those who suffer emotionally, physically, financially? Affirmation can and does make a real difference in the world when we accept the challenge to reach out in friendship to those who need us: those in the closet, those newly out, those somewhere in between.

We can share ourselves, our time, our love and compassion in ways which everyone benefits. As one song so aptly states, "That's what friends are for!"

Let's each love and appreciate our friends and make commitments to find new friends on a regular basis. Whether we practice random acts of kindness or support something we feel passionately about to further a good cause, we are then cementing bonds of friendship.

For me, of all the titles the Savior bestowed upon his followers—prophet, apostle, disciple—the most incredible and meaningful was simply, His "friends."

Rod Foster

GAMOFITE Historian

Can you believe that the GAMOFITES (Gay Mormon Fathers) are already FOUR years old? That's old enough to begin branching out into smaller geographic areas, focusing on groups on the East Coast, and in Utah. And, that's old enough for us to see the need for a "GAMOLORIST" (Scott M.'s latest effort in attaching clever labels to members of our group—this one means "historian.") Since I accepted this calling, I have begun to collect whatever Gamofite relics I can, among which are already counted some pretty unusual items. (I understand that even Quinn M.'s "Dame Edna" costume will be included, and made available to any Gamofite who might be searching for something to do for one of our talent shows.) If you have any photos, writings, or other "gamolore" you think should be included in our records, please send them to me. They will be part of our Retreat Binders. There will be one for each retreat, and will be available to all members at the retreats, or as "between-retreat treats." Thanks in advance! You can contact me at (818) 548-4945 or send your contributions to: Ken Taylor, 1875 Oakwood Avenue, Glendale, California, 91208.

April Missionary Reunion

As all of the locals know, the spring season means LDS General Conference. To add some "gayety" to the season, Wasatch Affirmation announces it's fourth annual mission reunion. So brothers and sisters, dust off that name tag, pull out that white dress shirt, your Swedish double knit, polyester suite or that conservative, below the knees dress and join in the fun. We have a guest speaker planned, entertainment and refreshments.

See REUNION on page 6

SPIRITUALITY

How many of us have felt the pangs of envy when we see those among us who are rich, young, beautiful, successful, brilliantly intelligent, talented, popular, lucky, or loved more than us? We might ask, "Why couldn't it have been me? Why can't I have the same gifts?" How many of us once wished we were heterosexual instead of the blessings and challenges of being homosexual?

Some of us resent the good fortune of others by pointing out flaws and shortcomings. If he is rich, he must be lonely. If she is young, she must be naive. If he is beautiful, he must have an attitude. If she is successful, she must have cheated. And the list goes on . . .

The Great English Poet John Donne wrote a poem called

No Man Is An Island

No man is an island, entire of it's self;
Every man is a piece of the Continent—
A part of the main;
If a clod be washed away by the Sea,
Europe is the lesser;
As well as if a Promontory were.
Any man's death diminishes me,
Because I am involved in mankind.
And therefore never send to know
for whom the bell tolls;
It tolls for thee.

This poem points out that we are all apart of each other. We should share each other's joys as well as each other's sorrows. Within our Affirmation family, there is an incredible diversity of gifts and talents . . . some worked hard for them and some were given freely.

I recently enjoyed a vacation to California, which allowed me to escape the winter weather of Pennsylvania for a couple of weeks. As I was telling an East Coast friend how beautiful the weather in California, his

response was, "Why are you torturing me like this? You know how cold it is out here?" I was so disappointed that I could not share my happiness and good fortune with a friend. Were he the one in California and I in Pennsylvania, I would have been genuinely happy for him.

I have watched a co-worker in my peer group receive promotion after promotion, while I have stayed in the same position over the past five years. Although I'm not satisfied with what I see as a stagnating career, I am genuinely happy for my friend who has done so well.

Everyone has something if not many things to be grateful for.

In the mid-West flood of 1993, there was a man who lost everything. His house, his farm; all of his earthly possessions. Yet with tears of gratitude in his eyes with his arms around his wife and two children who survived the flood, he said, "I have lost everything, but I am the richest man in the world with my family."

When ever I am having a bad day, I remember that on Martin Luther King Day in 1993, I was almost killed by a semi-truck that slid out of control on Highway 95 during a snow storm. I celebrate that day each year as a gift of life.

When a friend is happy, we should be able to share in that happiness. And when a friend is sad, we should embrace them in their sorrow. It is my sincere hope that no one in Affirmation feels like an island, shutting themselves off from one another instead of sharing their lives with each other.

—James Kent

"The Heart's Infinity - Living and Loving Courageously"

To be held at the Capitol Hill Guest House in Washington D.C., the Eastern Gamofite Retreat is scheduled for Friday, the 26th of April, Saturday, the 27th, and Sunday the 28th. A beautiful time of year in Washington, springtime will affirm the inspirations of a very sensitive and positive agenda.

Located near the Library of Congress, the guest house has room for about 20 people. The cost of \$130 per person includes lodging and all meals except for an inexpensive lunch (\$5 - \$8) planned for Saturday at the Historic Eastern Market on Capitol Hill.

Among the workshop facilitators will be Mormon psychologist Dr. Roy Musick, specialist in marriage and family counseling, who will lead a group session on communicating about life's most difficult issues. From experience we know this workshop will be a blend of challenge and good humor.

In addition to activities that build brotherhood and friendship, (a formal dinner, a talent show, an entirely different and much funner way to play musical chairs where no one loses, a little singing, and some caring experiences) free time excursions include a walking tour of nearby national monuments, and jogging on the Washington Mall.

For a detailed agenda, or to register, call Bob Olson in Baltimore, Maryland at 410-732-3497, FAX 410-732-3499. Or write Bob Olson at 2809 Boston Street #131, Baltimore, MD 21224.

FAMILY ISSUES

Op-ed: an opinion/commentary written by Dr. John D'Emilio, Director of the Policy Institute of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Dr. D'Emilio is a leading historian on sexuality and the gay and lesbian movement in the United States. He is the author of *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities* (1983); *Intimate Matters: A history of Sexuality in America* (1988), and *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University* (1992).

What is a family? According to opinion polls, a majority of Americans understand family as a group of people who love one another and take care of each other in good times and bad.

What is a family? In the hands of the radical Christian right, it has become a symbol and a weapon. A symbol of an imagined past when everything was just fine. A weapon that divides people into categories of good or bad, moral or immoral, productive citizen or irresponsible parasite. The allegedly "pro-family" rhetoric of the radical right is deeply homophobic and antifeminist, and exploits historically powerful racist stereotypes.

What is a family? For lesbians and gay men, family has become the frontier issue in our struggle for freedom, justice, and respect. Everywhere we look, family issues are surfacing—in the courts, in state legislatures, in workplaces, in the schools, in communities of faith, in the activities of our community centers and other organizations. Sometimes, picking up a copy of a gay newspaper, nothing but family issues of one sort or another seem to fill its pages.

It wasn't always so. When I was first coming out in the late sixties, as a college student influenced by the hippie counterculture and the first wave of radical feminist theory, "family" was something I could do without. It seemed that my only choices were to have a family, which meant my family of origin, or to be gay, which meant exile and escape from the constrictions of a heterosexist institution.

So why does family seem so important to us

in the 1990s? Is the concern for family simply a defensive, reactive move on our part, a knee-jerk response to the "traditional family values" rhetoric of the Radical Christian Right? Or does the rise of family issues tell us something about how we have changed and what we want?

I think it's the latter. There are good reasons growing out of the history of our movement and communities that have pushed family issues to the front burner.

One has to do with the growing diversity of the public face of our movement and our community organizations. Lesbians, for instance, have often taken the lead in campaigns involving custody, adoption, and our right to be parents. Lesbians and gays of color have spoken and written passionately of the importance of strong, extended family ties for the survival of their home communities in the face of racism, and of their unwillingness to have to choose between family ties or their sexual identity. As gays and lesbians in smaller communities come out of the closet and organize for change, family is something just around the corner, not something to escape from.

Family issues challenge homophobia in new and important ways. One of the most destructive and persistent stereotypes used to perpetuate hatred against us and keep us isolated and separate is the claim that we are a danger to children. The gay man who molests children, or the lesbian teacher who corrupts her students, have been common cultural myths. As more and more parents come out of the closet and assert their right to keep their children,

as more and more of us choose to have children even after coming out, we force the issue of queers and children in proactive ways.

Parents are becoming front-line activists in institutions that reach into the lives of most Americans. Take the public schools, for instance. As the children of openly gay or lesbian parents make their way through the public schools, these parents have to confront the insidious effects of homophobia in compelling ways. Will the schools, through their curriculum, be teaching these children to hate their parents? Will these children be the targets of ridicule, ostracism, and harassment? What must parents do to protect the integrity of their family relationships and to keep their children from harm? The actions they take, whether at parent-teacher conferences, at PTA meetings, or in one-on-one conversations with the parents of their children's friends, is the stuff of permanent grassroots social change.

Family issues matter. Whether it be the public rituals we create to celebrate our committed relationships or our decisions to have children in our lives, the articulation of a lesbian and gay "family politics" has the power to move our freedom struggle forward.

HEALTH

Teleology from page 1

Sexual orientation seems to be an innate quality. Many gay people say they felt from an early age that there was something "different" about themselves, or even recognized physical attraction to people of the same sex, but most feel their physical gender matches their gender identity. In other words, lesbians are not women who wish they were men, nor are gay men wanting to be women. That is the definition of a transsexual, a person who changes their anatomical gender to match the gender with which they identify. Most transsexuals say that they, too, from an early age knew there was some discordance between the gender they felt they were and the gender they appeared to be. And transsexuals can be homosexual or heterosexual in their orientation. In other words, a man can feel identified as a woman, have his physical appearance altered, yet be attracted to other women and thus be identified as a lesbian.

To confuse the issue further, let's introduce the concept of people who have male or female *chromosomes*, but are physically of the opposite gender. There are several unusual medical conditions where this is the case. For instance, there is a disorder known as "androgen insensitivity syndrome" or "testicular feminization," in which an individual is genetically male, but has no ability to respond to testosterone, the male hormone. Therefore, they appear female, but have no internal female genital organs. Famous representatives of this condition are the actors Jamie Lee Curtis and Kim Novak. As far as I know, both

these women are sexually attracted to men. Is this because they were raised as women, or because the same hormonal influences that shaped their appearance affected brain development in some way? Or are they really homosexual; men who look like women?

Babies can be born with "ambiguous" genitals—an abnormally large clitoris that resembles a penis, a scrotum that is separated like labia, and many other variations. Female babies can be exposed to high levels of male hormones produced by their mother while she is pregnant, and are born with these ambiguous genitals. There is some evidence that these females have a higher likelihood of being lesbian. I raise the question, why is their sexual orientation affected, but not their sexual identity?

Also interesting is the case of a group of individuals from the Dominican Republic who were born with ambiguous genitals that appeared to be female. They were raised as females, but when they reached puberty their voices deepened and their bodies changed drastically. In short, they became male. It was later determined that their condition was due to a deficiency of the enzyme that converts testosterone to its more potent form, the one that affects the eternal appearance of the genitals. Before puberty, there wasn't enough testosterone being converted to make the genitals look male; but the surge of testosterone at puberty, enough hormone was made to cause the transformation. Now that the condition is recognized, these children are raised as males. But the original group provided an intriguing study of gender identity and sexual orientation. 16 of 18 had no problem adapting, and went on to have sexual interest in

women and sexual intercourse at the same age as the other boys in their village. The other two maintained a female gender identity, but it was not stated as to whether their sexual interest was in males or females. How ironic that one of these individuals would be called a lesbian if he were attracted to females, or heterosexual if he were attracted to males.

When one starts to get caught up in this cause-and-effect mentality, terminology and lines of classification become fuzzy. Ultimately, we still have no idea why and how it is that homosexual, bisexual, transsexual (or transgendered), or heterosexual individuals and behavior exists. Research provides interesting food for thought, but something gets lost in the process. Accepting that oneself or one's loved one is gay is not easy. But I doubt that trying to find the "mechanical causes" will lead to a greater understanding of the "overall design or purpose in nature." Teleologic thinking must give way to loving and celebrating the mystery and diversity of human experience.

REUNION from page 3

We'll be continuing the tradition of the Jell-o competition, so bring your favorite Jell-o-Belt recipe (review your copy of No Man Knows My Pastries - if you don't own a copy, you can pick one up at most area bookstores, and they may even have one at the Library. Of course your mom's old Relief Society Cookbook can offer ideas)

The reunion will be held April 5th, 7:30 p.m. at the Utah Stonewall Center - 770 South 300 West in downtown Salt Lake City. For more information, or to volunteer to set up chairs, bake cookies, etc., call 534-8693 and leave a message. A \$3.00 donation is requested.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Palm Springs '96
International Conference
October 11 - 13



AFFIRMATION - Gay and Lesbian Mormons
P.O. Box 46022 • Los Angeles • CA • 90046 • USA
(213) 255-7251



East Coast Affirmation Retreat

The Chapter-at-Large, with assistance from the New York City and Washington DC Chapters, will be hosting an East Coast Affirmation Retreat in the latter part of April 1996.

Please stay tuned as plans are developed and a location is selected.

For information, call anyone of the above mentioned chapters. (See Directory on the last page *Affinity*)

Parents Conference May 3 - 4 1996

Family Fellowship is planning a Parents Conference which will be held on May 3-4 in Salt Lake City, scheduled tentatively at the Doubletree Inn. It will be Friday evening and Saturday. This meeting will provide an opportunity to bring other new parents into our group and will be a time where we can have some open discussion. It will end with a brunch and an open mic opportunity on Saturday morning. For more information call (801) 272-3806.

National Women's Retreat

Scheduled For June 28 - 30

The first national women's retreat for lesbian Mormons and lesbians of Mormon heritage has been set for June 28-30 in San Francisco.

The retreat will coincide with San Francisco's Gay Pride weekend so there will be much to see and do as we share experiences, insights and fun in the city by the bay!! This is a unique opportunity to build a community of support with women who share similar experiences and heritage.

So, don't miss this experience!!! There is a nominal charge of \$20 for food. Housing and transportation details will be provided in further announcements. For additional information, or to RSVP, please contact Jennifer or Suzie below:

Jennifer Hatch	Suzie Ripperton
P.O. Box 86469	e-mail: Suzrip@aol.com
San Diego, CA 92138	
e-mail: Kymeral@aol.com	

GAMOFITE Retreats

If you're interested in joining Gamofites, please know that you are welcome to join us. You'll find we offer an opportunity to associate with Gay Mormon Fathers in an environment of unconditional Love and Acceptance. For information about our next Utah retreat, please contact Duane Jennings at (801) 534-8693 (or email :Wasatch@aol.com). For information about our next East Coast retreat, please contact Rob Killian at (716) 232-3149 (or Email: RobKillian@aol.com). For information about our next California retreat, please contact Mark Ziegler at (415) 334-4576 (or Email: mzieg91912@aol.com). For general information about Gamofites, please contact Scott Mackay at (714) 998-2052 (or Email: smackay@dhvx20.csudh.edu).

April 26 - 28 in Washington, DC.
July 19 - 21 in San Francisco, CA

AFFIRMATION NEWS

Affirmation Los Angeles— A Year in Review

The general purpose of Affirmation is well-stated in the National and Los Angeles Chapter Constitutions. The Los Angeles Affirmation Constitution states in article four, section two that Affirmation is organized to: (1) Encourage spirituality, prayer and the practice of all Christ-like and charitable behavior in the recognition of members as whole and complete children of God; (2) Provide support for people experiencing difficulty reconciling their sexual orientation with traditional Mormon beliefs and other belief systems about homosexuality; (3) Provide a forum for communication and education for the members and leaders of the Church and our peers concerning homosexuality; and (4) Provide support and opportunity for social interaction, intellectual development, emotional stability and cultural exposure with those of similar heritage and background. With these specific purposes in mind, I would like to take a few minutes to help us all reflect on what has been accomplished in Affirmation in 1995.

The encouragement of spirituality, prayer and the practice of all Christ-like and charitable behavior can be seen in a variety of our activities. In January, Affirmation sponsored a service project. "Aunt Bee's Thrift Store and Laundry Service For People Living With AIDS" was happy to see us arrive early one Saturday morning, ready to get to work. It was very interesting to see the workings of such an establishment. Items were donated throughout the day. We participated in keeping the store organized and sorting, sizing, and pricing items to be

sold in the store. After getting those items ready, we were even let into the "secret room" where a backlog of clothing was waiting to be sorted and sold. It was a long day of work, but that afternoon we all left feeling better for having given of ourselves.

Also in January, we had the opportunity to be spiritually fed when Laren's bishop, from the Inglewood Ward, came to speak to Affirmation. Throughout the meeting the room was filled with his loving spirit and recognition that we are all complete children of God.

Los Angeles Affirmation also saw the beginning of Family Home Evening in January 1995. Sue and Debbie saw the need to offer a more spiritual meeting, so they got together and started this meeting. This meeting continues on a bi-monthly basis at the home of the Atkinson's.

In February, another member of Affirmation had the opportunity to serve. With the resignation of our newsletter editor, one of our members, Jim, stepped up to take on the challenge. Because of his abilities and willingness to serve, we were able to continue the monthly distribution of *Reflections*, the official newsletter for Los Angeles Affirmation, without skipping a beat.

In March, a guest therapist was invited to speak to us at our Fireside. Her talk, "Blessings and Burdens" touched us all. She truly spoke from the heart about how to integrate our spirituality and our sexuality.

Another opportunity to serve

in Affirmation was issued to all members of the Chapter and the results were the election of a new Board of Directors. We thanked Paul and Sue for their excellent service and welcomed Jim and Ben on board. Jim and a continuing member of the Board, Dan, were elected for two-year terms, while Ben and two other continuing members of the Board, Tere and Jacki, will serve one-year terms. Elections will be coming up again soon, so if you are interested in serving on the Board of Directors for Los Angeles Affirmation please speak to Jacki, as she is the chapter secretary and will be running the election.

Affirmation Los Angeles provided support for people experiencing difficulty reconciling their sexual orientation with traditional Mormon beliefs and other belief systems about homosexuality by having "Open Discussion" and "Coming Out" meetings throughout the year. This gives those in attendance the opportunity to talk with others who are going or have gone through the process of reconciliation. Sharing life experiences always helps us to grow individually and become more cohesive as a group. Finding out that what you are going through is exactly what many others have gone through is not only a relief but consoling—there is someone to talk to who understands.

Just last October we saw the beginning of yet another meeting. The "GLDS Rap" meeting was formed to give people a chance to share experiences and concerns in an open, understanding environment. Since many of our monthly meetings are more formal with speakers and invited guests, the GLDS Rap is another chance, like open discussion meetings, to talk about what's on your mind.

See LA on page 11

POLITICAL

Anti-Family Candidate

From: Marty Beaudet. Here's a good one that's been floating around the Net:

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Jesus Christ formally declared himself a contender for the 1996 Republican presidential nomination today, amid growing controversy over his purported "anti-family" views.

Senators Robert Dole and Phil Gramm, Mr. Christ's principal rivals for the GOP nomination, were quick to point out previous positions taken by Mr. Christ that pro-family Republicans were likely to find objectionable. Sen. Dole cited an occasion reported in Luke 9:60, where Mr. Christ refused to allow one of his campaign volunteers time off to bury his father. Sen. Gramm added that the next two verses of that same chapter show that Mr. Christ does not even permit his volunteers to so much as say good-bye to their families when they join his campaign. "That's just plumb shameful," deplored Sen. Gramm.

Leaders of the religious right were even more critical of Mr. Christ's stand on family issues. Pat Robertson of the Christian Coalition quoted Matthew 10:35-36—verses, he insisted, that revealed Mr. Christ's "secret plan" to destroy the traditional family: "For I am come to set a man at variance with his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household."

"What further proof do we need," demanded Mr. Robertson, "that Mr. Christ is the enemy of all that is good and wholesome in American family life? Even the most extreme elements of the homosexual lobby

haven't proposed anything as subversive as this!"

Mr. Christ's own sexual orientation has been called into question as well.

Responding to rumors that Mr. Christ had sought to address a mass meeting of the Promise Keepers and had been turned away, Bill McCartney, the organization's founder, said that Mr. Christ's appearance at a Promise Keepers rally would be "inappropriate," given the organization's avowed purpose of helping men become better husbands and fathers.

Mr. McCartney said it is common knowledge that Mr. Christ is over 30 years of age, still unmarried and leads a rootless, itinerant lifestyle. Furthermore, he noted, Mr. Christ encourages his married followers to leave their families behind when they come to work for him. Most unsettling of all, said Mr. McCartney, are the disturbing references in the gospels to Mr. Christ "loving" members of his male entourage—specifically John, Lazarus, and the scion of a wealthy family identified only as "the rich young ruler."

Mr. Christ's partiality for anonymous young men has also been commented on by Gary Bauer, head of the Family Research Council. Mr. Bauer reports that his organization is currently investigating Mr. Christ's widely-publicized arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane on charges of disturbing the peace. In particular, said Mr. Bauer, his organization is attempting to discover the identity of the young man who, according to the account given in Mark 14:51-52, was observed fleeing the scene stark naked.

A press release just issued by Mr. Christ's campaign promised that the candidate would convene a press

conference early next week to answer these and other charges that have been leveled against him. At that same press conference, the release continued, Mr. Christ would make what were termed "some damning accusations" of his own. >>Hal Gordon is a freelance writer based in Bethesda, Md.



Frequently Asked Questions about Affirmation

Q. Does Affirmation support leaders of the LDS Church?

A. Affirmation has no religious agenda. Many members stay loyal to the LDS Church and its leaders. However, Affirmation will call attention to misinformation about gay and lesbian people whether it comes from leaders of the LDS Church or others.

Detail: Members of Affirmation have many different religious philosophies and affiliations including many who stay loyal to the LDS Church and its leaders. They gain strength from the fact that at one time, gay and lesbian people were supported in the Church. The early leaders of the Church's organization for children (the Primary) were lesbians and there were also male leaders that were likely gay.

CULTURAL HALL

Gay Mormon Fathers

Friendly
On the weekend of January 12-14th over 40 Gay Mormon Fathers—Gamofites—joined together in a spectacular home nestled in the "Family Hills" of Whittier, California, for the ninth consecutive California Gamofite retreat. A group of fathers united through the challenges inherent in being gay and of Mormon heritage, Gamofites exists to the end of assisting, supporting, encouraging, and uplifting its members. But four years in the making, there are now over 100 Gamofites across the country—and the number keeps growing. Just last year the first Gamofite East (Fire Island, N.Y.) and Gamofite Utah (Heber) retreats were held.

As with all retreats, a Gamofite weekend is a two and a half day experience providing a place where joys, sorrows, struggles, and triumphs can be shared in an environment of acceptance and trust. It is a weekend of emotional, intellectual and spiritual uplift—not to mention just plain fun. Under the leadership of Mark Parker, Mark Ziegler, and Ernie Horstmanshoff, Gamofite IX—"Reflections"—proved no exception.

Of course, no Gamofite retreat can succeed, let alone get off the ground, without the expertise of one assigned to the life-sustaining task of feeding 40 plus Gamofites. Chuck Cover of Long Beach, California, and his able assistants did a spectacular job of keeping everyone well fed throughout the weekend.

On Friday evening Gamofites began arriving from as far as Texas and spent the time eating, visiting, and getting settled. At the appointed hour of 9:00 p.m. (or so, Mormon time) everyone gathered together as they were formally welcomed, apprised of the weekend agenda, and asked to each take a few minutes and introduce themselves. Some interesting things were learned: twelve were attending their first Gamofite retreat; one had a son born but seven days earlier; another had recently come out to his Stake President—who happens to be his father.

After a hearty Saturday morning breakfast, the group split in two and engaged in their first ses-

sion, "Reflection on our Children." Gamofites shared the struggles and successes of their relationships with their children. Coming out to your children, the Church's teachings on homosexuality, ways to succeed in a long distance relationship—these were some of the diverse topics dealt with.

The second session "Reflection Outward," gave Gamofites a choice between two topics: "Being Gay and Single" or "Relationships." Mark Ziegler facilitated the first group which explored issues such as where and how to meet and find someone, dating, and challenges of being a single Gay Mormon Father. Mark and Ernie led the relationship session as Gamofites considered keys to beginning and maintaining a successful gay relationship. Emphasis focused on the "Four C's: Chemistry, Communication, Compromise, and Commitment."

Following a tasty lunch and a pleasant break that afternoon session, "Reflection Inward," commenced. Gamofites reflected on the most important of all human relationships: one's self. Where were they at—spiritually, emotionally, intellectually—with themselves? And how do they successfully manage the inner conflicts they face? Some intense feelings emerged as the group discussed these vital subjects.

Having undergone a full agenda, a couple of hours of free time enjoyed, Gamofites either visited, napped, walked, wrote notes, etc. After a great dinner everyone gathered for announcements which included plans for the next California Gamofite to be held the third weekend of July—in San Francisco! There was also an impromptu discussion concerning the future of Gamofites, with diverse opinions expressed on issues of organization, handling growth, etc.

Of course a Gamofite retreat could never be classified as such without a Saturday evening of fun. This retreat proved no exception as the group was skillfully guided by Master of Ceremonies Gary Mitchell through an exhilarating entertainment program. Mormons and Music must go hand in hand. Karaoke ruled the evening as incredible talented people treated the assembled to a host of musical performances.

Sunday started with a help-yourself-breakfast followed by a thorough cleaning of the house, and the packing of all personnel belongings. Thereafter, all gathered and Ernie took a moment and drew attention to two important points: (1) the Spirit of God is no less accessible to gay people than it is to straights—to believe otherwise is plain error, (2) we must not become complacent: the AIDS crisis continues; each of us has a moral obligation and ethical duty to act responsibly when it comes to sexual conduct.

The culminating session, "Sharing Our Reflections," consisted of Gamofites freely sharing their thoughts and feelings. Sometimes sad, often uplifting, emotional, and spiritual—the sharing reflected the camaraderie and bonding typical of a Gamofite weekend.

In 1995 Affirmation provided a forum for communication and education for the members and leaders of the Church and our peers concerning homosexuality in many ways. This year many members have continued to attend a monthly outreach meeting held by the Los Angeles Stake. In it's second year, this meeting has given those who attend the opportunity to share their lives, concerns and experiences with members of the Los Angeles Stake Presidency and High Council. These meetings are still being held, thus continuing to provide Affirmation members and others the opportunity to communicate and educate members and leaders of the Church concerning homosexuality.

Family Fellowship, a support "group" for parents who have gay and lesbian children, held a conference in conjunction with the University of Utah in April. Some members of Affirmation Los Angeles attended the various workshops and found them very informative. Educating each other helps us to open our eyes.

Affirmation members, in April, had the opportunity to be educated themselves when a representative from PRIDE Foster Family Agency (a program of GLASS—Gay and Lesbian Adolescent Social Services) spoke to the group about being trained and certified to be foster parents for children who have been taken from their homes because of abuse or abandonment. This meeting educated us on how we can get involved and possibly become foster parents to these children.

Affirmation Orange County and Los Angeles had the opportunity in April to be part of a film-in-progress tentatively titled "The Out Tapes." Focusing on what it was like growing up gay, some of our members were invited to share their stories and were taped for

possible inclusion in the film.

Our Mother's Day Panel in May was surely a treat. Three mothers shared their experiences of playing a positive role in the lives of their gay and lesbian children.

Charly Lang, the creator of "Live to Tell," a documentary on the first Gay and Lesbian Prom, visited Affirmation in September. It was exciting to hear about his experience filming this event and to hear the reactions of those who attended the Prom.

Los Angeles Affirmation was very proud to make available a World Wide Web Page. We are virtually accessible to ANYONE in the world.

Providing support and opportunity for social interaction, intellectual development, emotional stability and cultural exposure with those of similar heritage and background was also part of our 1995. This year's events included: movies, our annual Academy Awards Party, the IMAX Theatre, our annual Jell-O Extravaganza, marching in the Los Angeles Gay Pride Parade, the Hollywood Bowl, our annual Pool Party in Reseda Heights, viewing the AIDS Quilt at the Rose Bowl, and our annual Halloween Party, Thanksgiving Potluck and Christmas Party in San Dimas. Other unofficial activities were going to Knott's Berry Farm's Gay Night in September, Disney's Gay Night in December, Affirmation being invited to a game night put on by a couple of our members viewing Carol Lynn Pearson's one-woman play, "Mother Wove the Morning" and seeing one of our members, Mark, in a production in Palmdale. One annual event which fits into all of these categories is Affirmation's Annual Conference. Seattle was the site for the 1995 conference. National conference is one of the most affirming, loving, compassionate environments. It gives gay and lesbian Mormons the

chance to come together from far and wide. This conference is so important that we are sponsoring this year's conference. Many individuals have volunteered to help with the planning and preparing, but there are many more jobs to be filled. Everyone needs to get involved with planning the best conference ever. There is a job that fits your liking and time commitment, so come on board!

So, as we can all see, Affirmation has provided many individuals with many opportunities to serve, learn and teach. 1996 promises to be just as exciting, but it is only with your ideas, help and involvement that this can happen. Let's all get involved or continue serving in our local chapters.

Sermon's We See

I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day; I'd rather one should walk with me than merely tell the way.

The eye's a better pupil and more willing than the ear, Fine counsel is confusing, but example's always clear; And the best of all the preachers are the men who live their creeds, For to see good put in action is what everybody needs.

I soon can learn to do it if you'll let me see it done; I can watch your hands in action, but your tongue too fast may run.

And the lecture you deliver may be very wise and true, But I'd rather get my lesson by observing what you do; For I might misunderstand you and the high advice you give, But there's no misunderstanding how you act and how you live.

Written by Edgar A. Guest

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