

AFFINITY

\$2.50

VOLUME XVIII, NUMBER 9

NOVEMBER 1996

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Affirmation AIDS Quilt

We Dedicate New Names

These words by the character Marius in the Musical "Le Miserable" began the original dedication of the Affirmation AIDS Quilt. The service began early one hot October morning in 1988.

When the Names Project first began, Paul Mortensen asked me to make a panel for a member of Affirmation who was also his dear friend. Paul and Robert attended that first unveiling in Washington D.C. That next year, Conference was to be hosted by LA. Paul came to me and asked for my thoughts on an idea he had had while in DC.

During the following discussions, the concept of an Affirmation AIDS Quilt came into being. Not only that, but he also asked me to put together a special event to unveil the quilt that October.

The original document contained some 21 names. Among those names were Leonard Matlovich, Mark Bluto, Tom Morgan, Jim Berg, Gerald Pearson, Gordon Miller, Randy Long, Don Barbor, Roger Hope, Gary Fife, John McEldowney, John Orr, Lon Macintosh, David Bailey, Michael Buttar, Gordon Gunn, Greg Parkinson, Clair Harwood, Karl Kellar, Joe Hatfield, and Dean Sandmire.

The next time the Quilt was displayed in Phoenix., it was unchanged.

Several years later (1992), in Santa Cruz, the Quilt was shown again with the addition of 6 panels. Those names were Tom Morgan, Ron Kershaw, Ken Robinson, David Sharpton, Lynn Alma Valentine, and David C. Martin.

Today [13 October] we are here to add 19 more memorials to this sadly expanding work. I would like to say Thank You to those who helped me make these new panels you will see today. Thank you, as always to Paul Mortensen for his constant support and help. Thank you to Tere and Jackie for their willingness to step in and help get things done. And a final and tremendous THANK YOU to the members of the Wasatch Chapter who spent a lot of time and effort to create two of the most wonderful new panels. The new names added are: Tom Peterson, Don Bjorseth, Ben Morrison, Alan Rodway, Mitch Thomas, Samuel Tacuban, Quinn McKinnon, Andrew Scott Bates, Ronald M. Moss, Evagene Killian (First woman in Utah to die of AIDS), Charles Copeland, Rev. James Sandmire, Richard Hale, Dale Hardy (Son of Bill and Joan Atkinson), Mark Tracy, Doug Kolling, Paul Farner, Eugene Gardner, and Jeff Williams.

See MARIUS on page 7

CONFERENCE SPOTLIGHTS

Dear Friends,

I just got home from the airport. While sitting in the plane, I had some time to think about the events of this past weekend. I have one thing to say. Thank you L.A. Chapter for hosting a wonderful event!

The session with Carol Lynn Pearson was very refreshing, and helped me to re-center myself. The Session this morning with Rick Pace sharing his experiences as a PWA gave me a better insight to some of my own patients.

The devotional this morning was a wonderful closing. I didn't realize how much I miss some of the old Mormon standby hymns. It really reminded me of a mission conference...REALLY! The spirit was very strong, and I had trouble keeping my eyes dry on quite a few occasions.

Thank you Affirmation and again Thank you L.A. Chapter!

Hugs 'n Love,
Dave

Dear Readers,

Well, it's been over a week since conference ended, and I have finally had a chance to catch my breath. Every time I reflect back on the weekend, the thought comes to my mind "Wow! What a GREAT weekend." So many of you have expressed your appreciation for all the hard work that went into planning this conference and for that I am very grateful.

Some have asked me what I would like to change about the weekend. I can honestly say that for the most part, I would leave everything the same. I would, however, really try to keep the general sessions and the devotional within their one hour limits. The gen-

eral sessions and the devotional were very good; but most ran over time. Many of you felt the same and indicated so on your conference evaluations.

I have also been asked what I thought the best moments of the conference were. This is a hard question as I think there were many. If I had to choose three, they would be the following:

1. Carmen and Jane's Primary program on Friday night. Never have I seen the Godhead explained in such a way!!! They did such a great job as did James, Scott, Debbie, Rod, and Jim as primary children.
2. Ricky Gilbert and James Kent's presentation of the Affirmation AIDS Quilt at the devotional on Sunday morning. What a moving moment for all of us who have lost friends and family members to this awful disease.
3. Last, but certainly not least, Romanovsky and Phillips. This was the highlight of the conference for me.

As we close the final chapter on the Palm Springs conference of 1996, I would like to thank all those who spent countless hours making this come off without a hitch. To all those on the conference committee I say "Fabulous job everyone!" and to those who spoke, sang, presented a workshop, collected meal tickets, worked the registration tables or did any of the many other jobs that made this conference so great, "Thanks from the bottom of my heart."

To Jacki, I would like to say a special thanks. We did not always agree, but we made it through! And even though Kassandra made a surprise appearance half way thought this project, I would not have had it any other way.

—Dan Cash

Co-chair 1996 Conference

DEAR FRIENDS,

The weather was gorgeous, the hotel was fabulous and the company was beyond compare...and so we came to the close of yet another Affirmation National Conference. I would be out-of-line if I did not thank the Committee members for the countless hours they put in to bring us all the best Conference weekend possible. From my point-of-view, those volunteer hours paid off in a Conference that ran smoothly and without a major glitch.

Once a year we in Affirmation have the opportunity to meet together to support one another, make new friendships, touch bases with old friends from all over the nation and remember the common ground and struggles we all share. It is a time to reflect over the past year and make plans to stride confidently into the future until we all come together again. Our Mormon background almost makes such a meeting a necessity, as we have all been taught that we need to meet together on a regular basis to instruct and edify. I believe the Conference at the Indian Wells Resort fulfilled that need. We were offered a variety of workshops, speakers and entertainers that spread over a wide spectrum of ideas.

See SPOTLIGHT on page 9

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Times & Seasons

by Duane E. Jennings

Palm Springs, California, provided a perfect setting for the 18th annual International Affirmation Conference; an oasis in the California desert that also provided relief from the cares of homophobia in The Church and society.

The 18th annual conference, like each conference, provided a place to meet new friends and renew old friendships, to support each other socially and emotionally, and to be spiritually strengthened.

The theme of the conference was *"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven."* The theme of this message is of *hope*, a message that I hope we each take to heart.

All movements and organizations go through stages of change and cycles of growth. Over the past couple of years I have seen the National Organization, as well as Wasatch Chapter in Salt Lake City, where I live and am involved, heal and build, weep and morn, cast away and try new ideas.

I believe that we as an organization are ready for a new season to reach out ever more to Lesbian & Gay Mormons, to the greater Mormon community, and working with other communities of faith and service organizations to make a positive difference where we live and around the world. I believe it is a time to laugh and dance, to embrace, speak out and to love even more.

This month we will have chosen a new Executive Director. However, it isn't what the Executive Board can do for us, but what we can do together that counts. The new leadership will help us move forward in celebration of the 20th year of our organization in 1997. This is a milestone that coincides with the 150 centennial of the Mormon Pioneers entering the Salt Lake Valley in search of a place where they could worship God according to their beliefs without the persecution and self-righteous judgment of others. The 1997 International Affirmation Conference will take place in Salt Lake City, Utah, over the weekend of August 21 - 24 on the beautiful University of Utah Campus.

There is much from our Mormon past to celebrate and honor. Some of the lessons from the past can be used to educate The Church of our common struggle for truth and understanding, and our common humanity. Perhaps as important, is to learn about and bring out of the historical closet, our Gay & Lesbian Mormon progenitors as we remember the past, celebrate the present and forge forward with our future.

On behalf of the National Executive Board, thank you Jacki and Dan for heading the conference, suffering with the headaches, the sleepless nights and all the hard work. And thank you to all the members of the organizing committee. What a tough act to follow for the '97 Conference Committee.

The Primary Program: Friday's Opening by Rob

Sister Carmen and Sister Jane put on our primary/opening ceremonies this past weekend. Many were rolling on the floor with the humor....

Highlights:

Sister Carmen was the multi-talented, many character playing "straight" sister to Jane's perfect rendition of a primary president, from "Sister Leslie VanDyke's" beautiful talk of loving her sister missionary companions to Carmen's wonderful representation of the Godhead using Powerranger and Batman figures to represent the godhead teaching us about Christ being baptized and showing how all three could be in different places at the same time (she juggled them <GRIN>).

We had five children give primary talks... Sister "IMELDA", Scotty Mackay, Debbie Dexter, Robbie (the naughty one), and Jimmy A. all gave us call to remember childhood innocence and "reverance" <GRIN>.

The action on stage was interspersed with singing of primary songs many of us had long thought we had forgotten, only to find that the words came with ease.

Some of my favorite lines:

Child: "Sister Carbenier, Sister Carbenier....Jimmy hit me...." *Carmen:* "Now you boys, will I have to separate you two?" (The two 'naughty' boys then holding on tightly to each other:)

Boys: "NO!!!!!!"

Debbie: "My Aunt Terry met her wife, Aunt Jackie on her mission and they got married and they have a baby now..." *Carmen:* "Gasp...."

Others will have to fill in with other memories...I was laughing so hard that some of the lines have left me...

SPIRITUALITY

The Loss is Temporal, The Love is Eternal

by James Kent

Brothers and Sisters,

It has been my privilege to attend eight of the last nine Affirmation National Conferences. How fortunate we are to have this yearly opportunity to gather as an Affirmation family, to renew friendships and make new friends.

The Sunday morning Devotional provides us with a "Time Out" opportunity to return to our religious and spiritual roots, looking at where we came from, where we currently are, and where we hope our dreams and aspirations will lead us.

From Ecclesiastes Chapter 3, verses 1 -8: *To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; A time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; A time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; A time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to get, and a time to lose; A time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; A time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to live, and a time to hate; A time of war, and a time of peace.*

Ecclesiastes the preacher reminds us that life is balanced between opposite, although not necessarily good or evil forces.

Life is not meant to be all pain, suffering, and loss. We are to learn from our mortal experiences and enjoy the fruits of our

labor. We are to appreciate the beauty in this world that God has given to us.

Ecclesiastes continues in verses 9-13:

What profit hath those worketh in that wherein they laboreth?

I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the children of men to be exercised in it.

God hath made everything beautiful in God's time: Also God hath set the eternal in their heart without which man or woman cannot find out the work that God hath done.

I know that there is no good in them, but for a man or woman to rejoice, and to do good in their life. And also that everyone should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all their labour, it is the gift of God.

The Affirmation AIDS Quilt was started in 1988, the year I came out. It was last shown at our Santa Cruz conference in 1992. It is a bittersweet tapestry of loss and love. The loss is only temporal—but the love is eternal.

I would like to share with you two stories from this Quilt:

In truth that is stranger than fiction, Chris, a straight Mormon friend of mine, in 1988 introduced me to the San Francisco chapter of Affirmation. This group of friends saved my life from self destruction. Thank you Ina Mae and Stella for being the first to introduce yourself to me and making me feel welcome.

That same year, Chris was living in LA when the National Conference was at the Roosevelt hotel in West Hollywood. I invited him

to the Sunday Devotional where the Quilt was first displayed. Chris was hoping to meet his former University of Utah roommate, Brad Schow. Chris had a difficult time when Brad first came out to him. After several years, Chris was hoping to meet Brad at the Devotional and renew a friendship. During the Devotional, the Quilt was displayed and the names were read: There was also a list of names of those whose panels were yet to be made. Brad Schow was the last name on that list. Chris said: "Oh my God!" And then we wept in each others arms.

Since then, I have met Brad's parents, Wayne and Sandra, and Brad's Uncle and Aunt, Ron and Adonna. Last year, a book was published called "Remembering Brad," written by his father.

A very close friend from my BYU days, who once excommunicated me from his life for having the audacity to believe that same sex couples should be able to adopt and raise children, gave me this book as a gift and inscribed in it: "To James, for opening my eyes and helping me to understand." I never met Brad Schow, but through mutual friends and family, I feel that Brad is my friend and a part of me. The loss is temporal, the love is eternal.

July 29, 1993. It was midnight (EST) in Philadelphia, when Shannon called me from the hospital in San Francisco, letting me know that my best friend,

See TEMPORAL on page 6

FAMILY ISSUES

N.C. Gay Dad May Keep Kids

The Associated Press, By DENNIS PATTERSON
—Associated Press Writer, RALEIGH, N.C. (AP)

A father can keep custody of his two sons even though he lives with a homosexual lover, the North Carolina Court of Appeals ruled Tuesday, [Oct 15, 1996.]

The unanimous appeals court ruling overturns a lower court decision that said the children were exposed to "unfit and improper influences" that could damage them emotionally and socially. The boys' mother had sought to regain custody.

The trial court findings "reflect nothing more than the opinions of the trial court that the conduct of the defendant necessarily exposes the children to 'improper influences,'" Appeals Court Judge Edward Greene wrote for the three-judge panel.

"In this case, there is no evidence that the conduct has or likely will have a deleterious effect on the children," Greene wrote.

There was no immediate word on whether the mother, Carol Pulliam, would appeal to the state Supreme Court.

She had sought to change a custody order filed in California after she and Frederick J. Smith divorced in 1991.

Smith and his two sons lived with his grandmother in Henderson County from 1991 to 1994. But in 1994, the grandmother moved out of Smith's home and Tim Tipton, his homosexual lover, moved in.

Pulliam, who now lives in Kansas, said the change in Smith's living arrangements justified giving her exclusive custody of the children, ages 11 and 8.

But Greene said Smith's relationship with Tipton was not a "substantial change in circumstances," which is required to change a custody order.

Greene wrote that the North Carolina case differs from a Virginia case in which a lesbian couple was denied custody because Smith's children appear to be well adjusted, make good grades, attend school regularly and participate in athletic activities.

The child in the Virginia case showed emotional problems not exhibited by Smith's children, Greene wrote.

At the trial, Smith's older son said he did not feel threatened by Tipton and liked his cooking. He testified he had no preference for which parent should have custody.

Meeting with the Bishop

by Jan Watson

Greetings, All:

Since I'm not on Q-Saints anymore, I'm not sure what you all are chatting about, but I thought you might be interested in a meeting I had with my Bishop last night.

My Home Teacher (conveniently, also the Bishop's secretary) let me know that the Bishop wanted to see me. So I went in to see him. I was pretty certain about the topic because I have expressed all my concerns about the church to my Home Teacher and I am sure they are passed along.

Anyway, we engaged in chit-chat for a bit, during which time he showed me a picture on his wall of Christ sitting and talking in the office of a modern day Bishop. He says he imagines Christ asking if the Bishop really listened to the concerns of his ward people, etc. and that it was a reminder to him.

He then asked me how I was, if I was still traveling a lot, if I was happy, how my testimony was, etc. I told him all was well and that my testimony was fine. I still believe in the Gospel as much as ever, but that I had some concerns about the church. I'll try and reconstruct the conversation from there:

B: Would you like to share them with me?

J: I don't feel any driving need to share them, but if 'you' would like me to share them, I'd be happy to.

B: Would you share them with me, then.

J: Sure. As I'm sure you know by now, I'm gay. I know the church's position on it. I also know that a large number of church members do not agree with that position. The fact that many of these people remain silent, I believe, is almost a greater hypocrisy than the position itself. I don't come to church anymore because on days when the topic comes up, I feel more drained than when I arrived. That seems counterproductive so I stay away.

B: Are you practicing?

J: Excuse me?

B: Are you a practicing homosexual?

J: It doesn't require any practice. It is what I am.

B: (very small chuckle) I mean...

J: Oh, you mean am I in a relationship. Yes, I am.

B: I see. Well you know that that is wrong.

J: Quite the contrary. I know that the church believes it is wrong. Because it effects me, I know through personal revelation that I am exactly what Heavenly Father intended me to be.

See BISHOP on page 10

TEMPORAL from page 4

Doug Kolling, had passed away. I called my parents in San Mateo to let them know. They had just visited him within an hour. Then I called another friend in Washington DC. And then I had a good cry. I had my airplane ticket, but it was too late...

In retrospect, Doug had said his goodbyes to me through my parents, and he gave me a last memory of him with a kiss and a hug, before I moved to Philadelphia.

Doug took an instant liking to me when he met me through Affirmation in 1988. He suggested that I move to San Francisco and become his roommate. I was TERRIFIED! The city of Fremont was a big giant closet that I could escape after I got together with my Affirmation friends in San Francisco.

Halloween 1988. I was dressed in all black, symbolic of wanting to be "Invisible." I was not prepared to meet Doug who was fabulously dressed as Mae West and absolutely gorgeous.

In 1989, I was asked by James Morris, then chapter director, to give a membership spotlight. Having served a mission in Japan, I dressed up in my Ceremonial male kimono and told that group that it was as close to dressing in drag that I'd ever get. Doug commented, "We'll see about that, honey."

A year later, when I was visiting Doug's apartment, the subject of drag came up, and he pulled this gorgeous red sequined dress out of the closet and told me I'd be wearing it for Halloween that year. I told him I would think about it.

A month before Halloween, Doug gave me a 'make up' dress rehearsal, not allowing me to look in the mirror until it was done. I was not prepared to see the image of my sister Mary looking back at me, but I knew that I was all set for the next Affirmation Halloween party...of course, I needed a drag name so I choose "Imelda." Imelda and I have had many wonderful journeys together.

From that time onward, Doug and I were best friends. How does one count the times we got together to plan an Affirmation activity, go to the Sizzler restaurant, rent a movie, take turns making dinner, go on a photo expedition to Golden Gate Park, get on the roller coaster at Santa Cruz' Boardwalk (it was actually 6 times in a row), dress up for Halloween, or just for the fun of it, and celebrate our birthdays that were only a week apart.

How does one measure that 6th sense when we knew we were feeling down and we'd call each other up to get together not realizing how much that friendship meant to each other?

When Doug was first admitted to Medical Center for what later would be diagnosed as Phneumocistis, the doctor asked us if we were lovers. My reply was, "No, we're sisters." The doctor wasn't sure what to make of that remark, but both Doug and I had a good laugh.

I once cried out, Dear God, why did you take him from me? I now say, "Thank You God, for bringing Doug into my life." In five short years, Doug and I shared a lifetime of friendship. **The loss is temporal, the love is eternal.**

Each panel of the AIDS Quilt celebrates a life. Their lives continue through us in many ways—they lovingly touch, moved and influenced us. And, when we help others, we continue their legacy.

"To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heaven." In joy and in sorrow, God is always with us.

From the D&C, Section 136:

Veres 28 and 29:

If thou are merry, praise the Lord with singing, with music, with dancing, and with a prayer of thanks giving.

If thou are sorrowful, call on the Lord thy God with supplication, that your souls may be joyful.

I wish to close with lyrics from two songs from the rock opera *RENT*, written by Jonathan Larson, who died of an aneurysm at the age of 34, the night of the final dress rehearsal, on January 25, 1996.

Five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred minutes

Five hundred twenty-five thousand moments so dear

Five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred minutes

How do you measure—measure a year?

In Daylights—In Sunsets

In Midnight's—In Cups of Coffee

In Inches—In Miles

In Laughter—In Strife

In Five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred minutes

How do you measure a year in the life?

How about Love? Measure in Love.

Seasons of Love.

Five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred minutes

Five hundred twenty-five thousand journeys to plan

Five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred minutes

How do you measure the life of a woman or man?

In truth that she learned or in times that he cried

In bridges he burned or the way that she died

It's time now—to sing out. Tho' the story never ends

Let's celebrate, remember a year in the life of friends

Remember the love, measure in love

Measure, measure your life in love

Seasons of love.

There is no future, there is no past

I live this moment as my last

There's only us, there's only this

Forget regret or life is yours to miss

No other road no other way

No day but today.

I can't control my destiny

I trust my soul

My only goal is just—to be

There's only now, there's only here

Give into love or live in fear

No other path, no other way

No day but today.

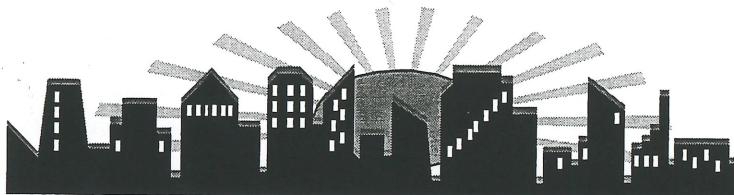
UPCOMING EVENTS

1997 International Affirmation Conference 20 Years of Service August 21 - 24

Salt Lake City will show its true colors by living up to that prophetic statement that "This Is The Place" when it hosts the 1997 National Affirmation conference to celebrate 20 years of service to the Lesbian, Gay, Transgender Mormon, and Ex-Mormon population on the beautiful University of Utah campus.

Many people have already expressed interest in helping organize a celebration of pride and accomplishment in our community.

The Organizing committee is interested in hearing your ideas. Please contact Duane Jennings at 32 East Bryan Ave, Salt Lake City, Utah 84115-1602.



The 1997 Intermountain Conference on Sexuality

The 1997 Intermountain Conference on Sexuality sponsored by Family Fellowship will be May 2, 3, and 4th at the University of Utah School of Social Work.

The conference is still in the planning stages. However, Jean E. Dubofsky, P.C., former Colorado Supreme Court Justice and lead attorney in the Colorado Amendment 2 appeal, will be one of the speakers!!!!

Any of you who have attended this conference in the past know that there is a wealth of information to be found there. Please plan NOW to attend. You are the ones that make the conference great.

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 please contact Michael Farr at (415) 282-1257 home, (415) 284-8703 work, or Email: SanFran007@aol.com

MARIUS

*There's a grief that can't be spoken
There's a pain goes on and on
Empty chairs at empty tables
Now my friends are dead and gone.*

*Here they talked of revolution
Here it was they lit the flame
Here they sang about 'tomorrow'
And tomorrow never came.*

*From the table in the corner
They could see a world reborn
And they rose with voices ringing
I can hear them now
The very words that they had sung
because their last communion
On the lonely barricade at dawn.*

*Oh, my friends, my friends, forgive me
That I live and you are gone.
There's a grief that can't be spoken
There's a pain goes on and on.*

*Phantom faces at the window
Phantom shadows on the floor
Empty chairs at empty tables
Where my friends will meet no more.*

*Oh, my friends, my friends, don't ask me
What your sacrifice was for.
Empty chairs at empty tables
Where my friends will sing no more.*

—Ricky Gilbert



AFFIRMATION NEWS

1996 Mortensen Award

The award committee had a very difficult decision to make this year. We have many wonderful people working hard for Affirmation. The people nominated were all completely worthy of the award. There were a lot of passionate voices heard this year in defense of their particular nominee.

This years recipient of the Mortensen Award for outstanding service and leadership to Affirmation goes to an individual who has personified that title for the past several years. He has been an outstanding chapter director and leader, an outstanding community leader and most importantly he has been there for his gay and lesbian LDS brothers and sisters.

In respect to his national leadership, we want to mention that at the last few national leadership conferences, members of the Mortensen Award committee have been in awe of what he is doing for Affirmation. We were impressed by his knowledge and abilities. But we were mostly impressed by his quiet, unassuming manner at those meetings. What we don't need in Affirmation is another shrill voice. This individual makes and takes his stand with dignity, humility and with a very positive outlook and attitude.

This individual is also an outstanding representative of Affirmation to the community at large. He has courageously spoken out on many issues. He has become involved in essentially all issues of consequences affecting the gay and lesbian community. Recently he was named Utah's Gay Man of the Year. He has worked actively with groups such as the Stonewall Center, Family Fellowship, Restoration, Reconciliation, and Sunstone.

This individual has certainly exhibited leadership in Affirmation. He has been a sucessful director of the Wasatch chapter. Under his leadership, the chapter has probably been the most active in Affirmation in terms of meetings and functions held and in outreach. His service has been without match as he held together this most successful chapter during times that he was the whole show. He is an ardent supporter of Affirmation, its programs and activities. He is definitely an achiever.

He is also dependable. He has willingly accepted several major assignments at both local and national Affirmation levels, and has energetically and professionally carried them out. Such assignments as organizing the 1997 Affirmation Conference; two very successful Utah retreats of GAMOFITS. He arranged for a successful newspaper ad for Affirmation in the *Salt Lake Tribune*. He has been an active participant in National leadership activities and was recently made an assistant to the National Director.

This year's winner has good balance. He recognizes the importance of spirituality in our lives and helps his fellow members find self acceptance and peace within themselves. He welcomes participation by individuals with various and divergent ideas and concepts while encouraging a dialogue to help strengthen Affirmation and its members.

He has touched the lives of many in his sojourn. He is a warm and friendly individual who welcomes and encourages participation. He has indeed offered a warm and helpful hand to many in and out of Affirmation who are in need of friendship and support.

By now many of you know who I am talking about. It is with great honor that Affirmation—Gay and Lesbian Mormons, gives the 1996 Mortensen Award for outstanding leadership and service in Affirmation to **DUANE JENNINGS** of Salt Lake City.

Past Recipients of The Mortensen Award

1987 - Paul Mortensen, Los Angeles

1988 - Clifford Barnes, Los Angeles

1989 - Ina Mae Murri, San Francisco

1990 - Irwin Phelps, Phoenix

1991 - Ron Kershaw, San Francisco

1992 - Larry Gates, Orange County

1993 - Rick Fernandez, San Diego

1994 - Tere La Guisa and Jacki Riedeman, Los Angeles

1995 - James Kent, Philadelphia

SPOTLIGHT from page 2

I hope that everyone who attended took home at least one worthwhile thing to keep their life in perspective in the coming year.

It is hard to believe that the phone has stopped ringing and the last minute details have stopped being planned. After almost two years of planning and praying (literally) the Conference has now entered the "Affirmation history books." For those who were attending for the first time, I hope that they remember it as fondly as I remember the first Conference I ever attended. For those who were there as a "repeat Conference attendee," I hope it met your needs and expectations. We in Los Angeles were pleased and proud to present our Affirmation brothers and sisters with what we felt was the best Conference we could offer. We attacked the planning of Conference by hoping to provide a lot of Mormon insight. From the beginning we wanted Mormon presenters and speakers, thus hoping to find that common ground among us. We feel we were successful, and that the speakers and presenters brought a wide range of opinions and insights into the experience of being Mormon and gay and lesbian. From Friday night's entertainment offered by Carmen and Jane to Carol Lynn Pearson to Rick Pace and finally the devotional, we were entertained, instructed and inspired by our own wealth of experiences. (And who can forget Romanovsky & Phillips' "If There Is A God (He's A Queen)?")

I am glad that I volunteered to co-chair the Conference. I have learned many valuable lessons during the time I have been involved in Affirmation. The time I gave to plan and prepare Conference weekend was no exception. I truly believe that there is no greater work we can be involved with at this time than to be dedicated to helping other gay and lesbian Mormons. I have learned a great deal from the leaders that have gone before me in the Los Angeles chapter, both those that are gone and those that continue to be there after years and years of service. I missed my good friend Tom Peterson at Conference this year, although without a doubt I know that he was there watching and smiling over the work that was being done. I know he would have been proud of the weekend that unfolded. I am proud of the work that goes on in this organization. The Conference is the place where it all gels together.

In reality, it is our yearly showcase to the world of how wonderful it can be to be Mormon and gay and lesbian. It is our chance to celebrate. I believe we celebrated in style this year.

Thank you again to all of those who participated in the planning and the carrying out of the Conference. Thank you to all of those who participated in some way during the weekend, no matter what you did, large task or small, your participation made the weekend a huge success. Be excited about the work you did, and carry that excitement with you throughout the year. Thank you to everyone who attended, without you, there would have been no Conference. If you missed Conference this year, we are sorry, we had a wonderful time! Good luck to Wasatch Affirmation and the planning they have ahead of them. I have no doubt they are up to the task and will plan a marvelous weekend. I'll see you all next year!

—Jacki Riedeman/Co-chair 1996 Conference

1ST Affirmation Conference

Since I first came out 8 months ago, I have had many "first experiences." My experience I had at my first Affirmation conference definitely is one of the most incredible out of many that I have had. I was very fortunate to have found Affirmation almost immediately after coming out, with the help of friends I met through a friend who started my coming out process. I was very active in the Church until a year before I came out. Even though I was not active at the time I came out, I still had many things to deal with regarding the church and my belief system. This is especially true for those of us who finally discover or acknowledge to ourselves we are gay. I look at Affirmation as a "link" to the Church, even though the Church has nothing directly to do with it, and never will. I feel this way because Affirmation is a place where one can deal with his or her Mormon heritage at the same time one deals with being gay or lesbian.

I had no expectations for this conference, since I had never attended one before. I had heard a lot of stories from my friends about prior conferences, so as the time became closer to go the conference I was very excited. When we all met at the social by the pool on Friday night, and I finally had the opportunity to meet a lot of people I had heard about from my friends, I felt that this weekend was going to be great! The sessions and workshops did not alter that first impression. As the weekend progressed, it kept getting better and better. Even when I thought it could not improve, it did. I really enjoyed Carol Lynn Pearson's talk, because I had never heard her speak before and she was wonderful. The entertainment on Saturday night was unbelievable as I had never heard Romanovsky and Phillips before. The Sunday session and the devotional were, of course, highlights of the weekend.

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1ST from page 9

I believe Rick Pace is a very special person who shared his journey and showed great courage. Ernie Horstmanshoff's talk, along with the others, was very inspiring and echoed the conference theme, "To Everything There Is A Season." Throughout the weekend, and especially on Sunday, I felt the "Spirit" as I had not felt it for some time.

I also felt there was so much unconditional love and total acceptance from everyone and I realized that this is what the Gospel is all about. I left the conference with a new feeling of inspiration and focus on what direction and goals I need to work on. I also felt how fortunate we are to have this organization as a means to come together for a common goal. My thanks to the Los Angeles Chapter for making this conference a most memorable experience for me. I am really looking forward to 1997 in Salt Lake City! I am sure it will be just as inspiring. See you all there!

—Craig Kobus

Dear Affirmation,

The Affirmation conference in Palm Springs was my first Affirmation event. At first I was somewhat overwhelmed by the male/female ratio. I enjoyed the first night's activities and the opportunity to meet others. I suffer from severe depression and I was really nervous about attending. I greatly appreciated the small amount of friendship that was offered to me (thanks Cathy Lee), but I was greatly distressed at the cold (more like non-existent) hand of friendship I seemed to feel from most everyone else. I wanted so much for someone to just give me a hug. (Maybe this is a Mormon thing because I feel the same loss of emotional support, friendship, and coldness at Relief Society functions).

The three workshop sessions that I attended seemed to lack a lot; the "discussion" formats were so loose, it seemed that most people really would have preferred more structure. The Speakers and Entertainment on Saturday were excellent. And I especially enjoyed the Speakers on Sunday.

I ended up feeling very lost and left out on Saturday night (again I know that some of this is my problem...), I ended up crying in my room most of the night. I was tempted to leave early Sunday morning but talked myself into staying. I was now at the end of my emotional rope, but I really needed a spiritual uplift and a hug of friendship, my mind was screaming for some kind of human contact but my body was frozen and I was unable to initiate anything. I felt an extreme coldness and lack of emotional comfort or support. My tears were totally out of control—I left immediately after the Devotional.

For me it is a two and a half hour drive home and I cried most all of the way. I prayed that by some miracle God would run me over with a gigantic truck, I even entertained the thought of stopping in the desert and overdosing on my anti-depression and sleep medications! When I got close to home, I called a friend and asked if I could come over for just a HUG. My family is totally non-accepting of my recent lifestyle changes, there would be no sympathy or support from them.

I don't know if I'll be back, it seems like a lot of money and emotional energy to spend for such a let down. Maybe I'll change my mind in a couple of months, I don't know.

(Alert to next years conference committee—we need to be more open to newcomer's/first time attendees. Maybe we can set up a "Fellowship Committee")

—N.H.

BISHOP from page 5

B: The scriptures say it's wrong.

J: Which scriptures?

B: The 'scriptures' say it's wrong.

J: 'Which' scriptures, Bishop.

B: The first presidency says it's wrong.

J: That, I know. I believe...

B: The church says it's wrong.

J: I know that too. And...

B: It's just wrong.

J: (leaning forward in chair across B's desk) Bishop, you keep telling me that it is wrong, but you give me nothing to back it up.

B: So, are you in a relationship?

J: Yes, I just said that.

B: Do you plan on continuing in this relationship?

J: Yes, I certainly hope to. Do you plan on continuing in your relationship?

B: (laughing) Yes, I do, but I'm married. Have you ever been married?

J: Yes. I tried very hard to be straight. (we discussed the marriage—not really relevant to this telling of this story)

B: So, you were straight at the time you were married?

J: No, I've never been straight. I was attempting to 'act' straight.

B: So, you had had relationships before you were married?

Continued on next page

J: Yes.

B: (pulling out his procedural handbook) Hm, let me just find this in here.

(At this point there is a long pause while he searches)

J: (innocently) What are you looking for?

B: (perplexed) I'm trying to find Homosexuality in here. I know I've seen it before, but I can't seem to find it.

(Another pause while he searches)

J: What are you trying to find out?

B: (uncomfortably) Just what it has to say.

J: Whether you should excommunicate me?

B: (self-righteously) Well, there 'are' disciplinary measures. We try to work with the individual and a number of things.

J: I see.

B: Well, I can't seem to find it, so I'll have to get back to you. (as if I'm asking for some response)

J: (brightly) Sure, whatever.

B: So, you have no desire to become straight?

J: No, do you want to become gay?

B: (exasperated chuckle) Of course not, but I don't have that kind of problem.

J: I don't have a problem either. I could no more become straight than you could become gay.

B: Well, homosexuality is wrong.

J: I recognize that you believe that and I know it to be false.

B: The church says that it is wrong.

J: I know that and I'm glad you recognize that it is the Church which says it.

B: God believes it is wrong.

J: That, I know to be false.

B: Let me read you something (pulls out Proclamation to the World). Have you seen this?

J: Yes, I've seen it and I have no need to hear it again.

B: It comes from the prophet, so it has to be true.

(note to readers: If you haven't read Henry's paper O' Say, What is Truth,

please find it ASAP—it's the "By them ye shall know their fruit" argument, again)

J: Just because he is the prophet, does not mean he is infallible or that he always asks for Heavenly Father's opinion. Until we ask the questions, we do not receive the answers. This is a question to which the church believes it 'already' knows the answer. Until they realize they do not already know the answer, they will not ask the question.

B: He is guided by divine inspiration and revelation. Everything he says is true.

J: He has given no indication that any revelation has been received on this topic.

B: It doesn't matter. (pulls out the Temple interview questions and reads the one about sustaining the prophet and other authorities, then looks up with a question mark)

J: Yes, I do, but that doesn't mean I believe them to be infallible. I ask every question for myself and act according to the answers that I get.

B: You are listening to the adversary. (Here of course, there is no further argument. If you do not agree with the prophet and say that you received a different answer from the Holy Ghost, then you are listening to the adversary. Therefore, in Church logic, the only true communication from the Holy Ghost to an individual is one which agrees with the prophet /church)

J: I know that I (am not).

B: You are wrong.

J: I understand that you believe.....

B: The church says it is wrong.

J: Bishop, if you are going to talk over the top of me there is really no reason for me to stay. (I rise and put on my jacket)

B: (sitting back in his chair) I'm sorry. I'll listen.

J: (standing) I will tell you one thing. You will do what you have to do...and

it will be very hard for you.

B: Why?

J: (I hadn't anticipated that question) It just will (pause) But you will do it. (pause) And we will meet again, one day, you and I (pause) and everything will be fine. (I smile at him—or smirk, I can't tell what it looks like when I'm the one doing it—and shake his hand)

B: (during handshake) I still think you are a good person.

J: So do I. (big smile and exit stage left)

So, what should I expect? How many people can I invite to my excommunication? What should I wear? Do I get to make a speech? How long will it take for them to convene the thing? How much notice will I have? (Will I have time for engraved invitations or will I have to make phone calls?)

I know this flippancy is probably offensive to some of you. I hope you will forgive me. I know that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is true. I also know that the Church is 'only' a body of human beings attempting to understand and administer that gospel. When that body of human beings attempts to claim divinity and perfection in purpose and knowledge, it is no longer of any assistance to me in my personal growth. I can be flip because I know that what is done to me by a body of human beings has no impact whatsoever on my spiritual progression and individual growth (except perhaps to give me another experience from which to learn) I believe there are a number of spiritual principles and ideas which are 'not' inconsistent with the Gospel, yet are quite inconsistent with the doctrine of the Church. For my personal growth, I will pursue as many of them as is possible in this lifetime.

Let me know your thoughts.

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