



VOICES SWELL

The Newsletter of the Denison University Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Alumni Association

Volume 16.2

September 2008

GLBAA to Meet on Campus in October

As you probably have noticed from mailings sent by the college, Denison will not be celebrating Homecoming in the traditional manner in mid-October. Instead, it is holding a new Big Red Weekend at the end of September which will bring together students, alums and parents into one weekend. Because students wanting to participate in our events might have time conflicts if their parents were on campus, we decided to return to campus on Homecoming weekend, which will now be more student- and less alum-oriented. By gathering on Friday and Saturday, October 17th and 18th, we hope our visit during Homecoming will afford us an enhanced opportunity to meet with students, faculty and the administration.

GLBAA Homecoming Schedule

Friday, October 17th

7-9pm – *Conversation and Comfort Cuisine*; All self-identified members of the larger Denison GLBT community are invited for cider, seasonal sweets and finger foods; College Town House, 334 E. Broadway (next to the Granville Inn)

Saturday, October 18th

9:30am – *Discussion of Campus Climate on GLBT Issues/Activities*; College Town House (coffee, juice, pastries served)

6pm – *Annual Dinner**; All interested members of the Denison community are invited; College Town House

*Reservations are not required but are appreciated; e-mail voicesswell@aol.com. To contact us this weekend, phone 330/704-4729.

During our time together, we plan to discuss the GLBAA and brainstorm ideas for the future – for instance, what might be a better time of year for us to have our annual gathering, how can our alum members share career insights with students, what are ways we

as a group and individuals can be a resource to faculty members.

If you can't come for the two days we'll be gathering, please make an effort – especially if you're an easy drive away – to join us for either or both the Saturday events. These are exciting times to reconnect with, and be part of, an ever-changing Denison.

Spring Reunion Weekend Fun

The GLBAA threw an informal gathering at the Spring Reunion Weekend on May 31st. Coming together at the College Town House that Saturday afternoon, some 20 or so alums and friends of the GLBAA dropped by to reconnect with one another and discover new friends. Thanks to **Tom King '69** who coordinated the event and served as both caterer and host.



Jim Lundy (Boston) and Thom Wyatt (San Francisco), both '83, catch up at the Reunion

Remembrances of Gay Things Past

Several years ago at a GLBAA Homecoming gathering we had the pleasure of meeting Bob Feindt '47, the "winner" – by only a few years – of being the oldest GLBT alum to become a part of our group. Bob, who lives in West Hollywood, has had a career as an educator, actor, producer and director and still keeps

busy editing film scripts. Those present that weekend heard Bob share what it was like to be gay on campus back in the 1940s. VOICES SWELL asked him then, and in subsequent years, if he'd be willing to "put on paper" some of that experience.



He finally has. After he submitted his reflections, he was prodded to expand on what he had written, and in reply he said, "The point is that there is nothing more to say; there was no such thing as 'gay life.' I could name names, but almost all are dead now so to what point? I might add that all sex was strictly oral, but that is a minor detail; I was truly

shocked about a kiss, so you must realize that nothing very exciting was going on."

While it may not have seemed "very exciting" to Bob, the fact that anything at all of a "gay" nature was going on at Denison 60 years ago might come as a surprise to many of us. Thanks, Bob, for sharing these insights into an overlooked aspect of campus life decades past.

"He Kissed Me!" by Bob Feindt '47

The average high school student of today knows more about being "gay" than any of us did in college in my youth. It was expected in the late '30s and '40s that boys would experiment sexually with each other since girls were strictly off-limits. (A fellow female alum has said that the vast majority of women graduates were virgin.) In high school, sleepovers -- common in those days -- often included sexual experimentation, with no thought of anything more than anticipation of later heterosexual experience.

When I entered Denison in the fall of 1943 (mid-World War II), I lived in a small dorm (21 guys in what was then the ACC House) with a group of 16 and 17 year olds who were there to get as much education as possible before being drafted into the Armed Services. Since most freshman women were 18 or so, we were indeed thrown together a great deal.

The American Psychiatric Association considered such experimentation as a "normal" phase which would later be transferred to the opposite sex. There was no word for homosexual activity that was not pejorative ("fairy," "queer," "faggot," etc.; the use of the word "gay" did not enter the lexicon until the '60s) and we certainly did not consider ourselves to be described in so demeaning a way.

My freshman year I had various liaisons with fellow students in the dorm, including one guy whom I met for sex at various times. At the beginning of my sophomore year, all civilian upperclassmen lived in town, and one

night when I had slept over I was quite shocked -- he kissed me! I had been having sexual experiences with boys for six years, but I had never been kissed by one of them. I rationalized the kiss was just a part of foreplay and not part of a relationship. Although we continued to meet for sex throughout the four years at Denison, we were never friends; I cannot recall even having a single meal with him. We went separate ways, meeting only for sex, and my romantic life at Denison was exclusively with the fairer sex. It was not until several years after graduate school (Northwestern) that I had my first gay affair (with a married man) and came out -- to myself.

LOSE A CAP?

Someone left a baseball cap embroidered with the name "The Men of Maple Corner" at Professor Julie Mulroy's home at a Homecoming or Reunion event several years ago. It has only now surfaced. If it's yours - or you know to whom it belongs - contact Julie at 740/587-2814.



"A wonderful and uplifting day"

Dan Ryan '84 (left) and partner Dan getting married on August 22nd at the San Francisco City Hall. They are standing alongside the bust of Harvey Milk at the top of the grand staircase.

“School’s Out”: New Queer Studies Course by Karen Graves Professor, Department of Communication

“We must continue the education that began in this campaign. We must destroy the myths once and for all, shatter them.”

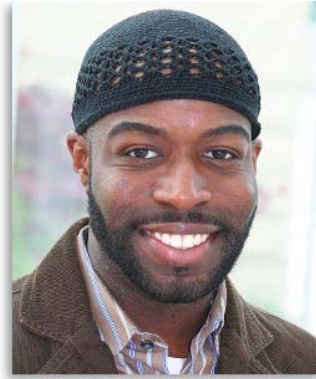
Populist Harvey Milk, the first out gay man elected to political office in the United States, addressed California citizens on the night of the defeat of the Briggs Initiative in November 1978. The statewide ballot measure would have prohibited gay and lesbian educators from teaching in public schools and barred any teacher from addressing issues relating to homosexuality in a positive manner. It was a double-barreled threat, attacking teachers’ identities and freedom of speech. Days after the critical -- and remarkable -- victory, Harvey Milk and San Francisco Mayor George Moscone lay dead at the hands of assassin Dan White. As this tragic history illustrates, education is fundamental to the gay and lesbian civil rights movement. Teachers stood in the center of late 20th-century political battles and, as Milk knew, education was the key to advancing human rights.

Karen Graves is teaching a Queer Studies course, cross listed with the Education Department and the Honors Program this fall, entitled “School’s Out: Gay and Lesbian Issues in Education.” In this seminar students will examine gay and lesbian issues in what is, arguably, the most central social institution in contemporary American culture. The class will begin with an introduction to sexuality, drawing upon scientific and historical scholarship and collectively delineate critical issues regarding sexuality in U.S. schools. In the second part of the course students will study Queer Theory as a foundation for the work to follow and read central texts in the queer history of education. In part three readings focus on three significant legal documents and secondary literature relating to them: The Equal Access Act passed by the United States Congress in 1984; *Nabozny v. Podlesny* (1996); *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003). In this section the emphasis will be on students’ rights regarding gay/straight alliances, safety and educators’ employment rights. In part four the class will discuss gay and lesbian issues in a multicultural education framework in terms of issues identified earlier in the semester.

A most important aspect of the class will be taught by Denison Trustee and GLBAA co-founder **Kim Cromwell ’81**. Kim will work with the students -- in the class and across campus -- for three days in September. As GLBAA members know, Kim has established an outstanding reputation for her work guiding economic and social institutions toward sound diversity policies and practices. Students will apply the information and approaches Kim will share to school settings and educational policy formation. This is particularly relevant following the October/November events on campus last fall. Kim plans to engage students in dialogue on how they can demonstrate leadership in moving Denison forward with regard to its commitment to diversity.”

New Head of Multicultural Office

Erik Farley '03 has joined the Denison staff as Director of Multicultural Student Affairs and Assistant Dean of Students. He comes to Denison after having served in a similar role at Lawrence University in Appleton, WI. He holds a MA in Educational Leadership from Eastern Michigan University, was an administrative intern in the Office of Multicultural Affairs at Ursuline



College (OH) and also worked in the Office of Multi-Ethnic Student Affairs at the College of Wooster.

While a student at Denison, Erik was president of the Black Student Union, class senator in DCGA, served on the Campus Environment Team, was a member of the Residential Life student staff and earned Denison’s Distinguished Leadership Award.

“I am eager to assist with weaving multiculturalism into every aspect of the Denison experience,” Erik says. Denison’s VP for Student Affairs, Sam Thios, commented, “I couldn’t be more pleased that Erik is returning to Denison. He brings excellent experience along with a deep understanding of the Denison culture, which will serve him — and the college — very well.”

Residence Life and Orientation Staff Focus on Inclusivity, Otherness and the Need to Respond in Our Community

by Laurie Neff ’81
Dean of Students



Two significant programs that help shape and influence campus culture at Denison have intentionally incorporated features into their August staff training initiatives to better prepare the Residence Life Student Staff (HRs and RAs) and the New Student Orientation Staff (OAs) for their community development responsibilities. This is in response to the fall of 2007 incidents that culminated in the President convening a Denison community-wide open forum on “Connecting the Dots: Community, Symbolism and Inclusiveness” that was covered in the April 2008 *VOICES SWELL*. Highlights of these staff training initiatives are outlined below. Also, the Student Affairs Division intentionally focused the annual August retreat on better understanding our campus milieu for individuals and as a community through a workshop to better hone our abilities to “view our campus culture through a student

lens" and develop tools for understanding the campus climate at Denison.

The Office of Residential Life sponsored a comprehensive two-week training and leadership development program in August for all student staff members (HRs and RAs); 79 students were selected to serve on the Residential Life staff this year. This group is an amazing team and collectively they look forward to building community within the 37 residential complexes on campus that house over 2,000 students. In response to the events and discussions of last year, the professional staff within Residential Life wanted to structure training sessions that would promote reflection, discussion and action.

Some highlights from the training program follow. This year, a student leader facilitated a Safe Zone training session for staff members and was present at an informational resource fair for the staff. A new session was added to educate staff members about effective strategies to respond to hate and bias incidents on college campuses in which staff practiced responding to a variety of scenarios. The staff also attended a two day camp where they participated in team building activities and additional workshops.

Residential Life is proud of its student staff members and the unique backgrounds that they bring to our team. These students fully engaged in the training program and are energized for the year ahead.

New Students Orientation is a place where we must extend a warm welcome to our newest members of the campus community. Certainly the community events of November 2007, especially the open forum in Mitchell Fieldhouse, have helped shape and guide New Student Orientation (Aug-O). New goals have been added to Aug-O as a result of our discussions last year and the deliberations that have been on-going since. However, we must keep in mind that members of the Class of '12 did not share that experience with us last year and it is unfair for us to assume they have. They will misspeak and act ways that seem inappropriate in the context of last November, and we should use these as learning opportunities to help construct the type of community in which we wish to live, holding every member of the campus to the same high standard of behavior.

Our Aug-O mantra is the following: we seek to iterate and reinforce a simple message in multiple places and from different constituents. The message has two parts; the first speaks of "the concept of otherness" while the second part calls us to a greater "notion of responsibility." We have asked new students to approach different situations in campus thinking about the other people involved in that situation. We will ask students to begin to develop this skill of viewing situations from the perspective of other people.

The concept of responsibility posits that we all have a proactive role in forming the type of community that we seek on campus. Importantly, we must move beyond the notion that it is sufficient to merely be a non-perpetrator of negative behavior. The idea that "I am not the one using that epithet or vomiting in the living space and thus I am being a good Denison citizen" falls short

of the standard by which we need to live. Instead, we must proactively interject ourselves in ways to create the type of community that we strive to have.

The Division of Student Affairs focused the August division-wide workshop on seeking greater self and community awareness, along with skill development to better enable us to use a campus "cultural lens" on working with diverse populations. An interactive day-long retreat focusing on the theme "Making the Familiar Strange" was facilitated for the 13 departments in the Student Affairs Division. We took a look with a "new lens" at the images, traditions and environments at Denison in an effort to better understand the Denison culture from a "student lens" given our roles as co-curricular educators and learners. To learn more about this retreat and theme, you can contact Laurie Neff, Dean of Students, neffl@denison.edu.

SAVING TREES...AND MORE

Beginning with the next issue of *VOICES SWELL*, we will cease mailing a hard copy issue to those on our mailing list. Instead, the Spring 2009 and subsequent issues will be available on the GLBAA site located via the university's Alumni Relations page. We'll either notify you that a new issue is available for viewing or we may simply send you a PDF of the newsletter itself.... but in either case **we'll need to have your e-mail address** so please send it to voicesswell@aol.com. If you absolutely, positively need us to send you a hard copy in the mail, we'll need to know that, too.

By cutting back on snail-mailed copies we will save trees, postage and the editor's sanity. Thanks!

PLEASE SEND US YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS

About VOICES SWELL

VOICES SWELL, the newsletter of the Denison University Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Alumni/ae Association, is circulated to members of the association and its friends. Contributions of text, and donations toward the costs of publication and postage, are always welcome. The newsletter takes its name from lines of the Denison *Alma Mater*: "To Denison . . . In praise our voices swell" Subjects and contributors to VOICES SWELL are gay, lesbian, bisexual and straight; in the absence of a specific statement, mention in these pages should not be taken to imply that a subject or contributor is either gay, lesbian, bisexual or straight. Mail for VOICES SWELL should be addressed to: Rick Carson, 1035 Cherry Street NE, St. Petersburg, FL 33701 (voicesswell@aol.com). Anonymous submissions will be printed but should be accompanied by the name, address and telephone number of the contributor. Fred Porcheddu '87 founded this publication; Fred, Jeff Masten '86 and Rick Carson '65 have edited previous issues, and this one was edited by Rick. GLBAA Steering Committee members are: Rick Carson '65, Kim Cromwell '81, Tim Ewing '89, Tom King '69, Peggy Knapp '66, Jeff Masten '86, Valerie Mockus '94 and Dan Ryan '84 Check out our website at www.denison.edu/alumni/gay_lesbian_bisexual_alumni_a.html. Past issues of VOICES SWELL are archived at this site as well.