

VOICES SWELL

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

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September 2009

Join Us for the GLBAA "Homecoming" October 23rd-24th

[see schedule on page 2]

WE LIED

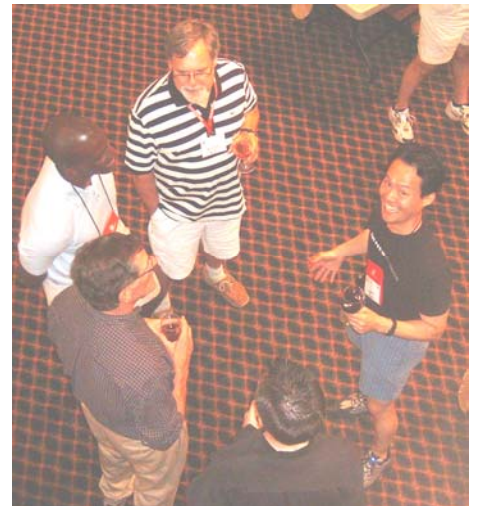
Well, okay, maybe we just changed our mind. A couple of issues ago we informed you that we were going to save trees (and the editor's sanity) by making VOICES SWELL an e-newsletter. But to do this we need your e-mail addresses, so we requested that you send them to us. The overwhelming lack of response revealed that either: 1) most of you don't have an e-mail address; 2) you have an e-mail address but you don't trust to give it to us; 3) you didn't even read the newsletter; 4) you don't want to be bothered; or 5) some combination of the preceding. As a result, we stayed the course and snail-mailed hard copies of the September 2008 newsletter.

Since then, word has come to us that the college funds which help underwrite the printing and postage costs of the newsletter have been cut and we have been encouraged to save scarce dollars by going electronic. Working from the e-mail addresses already in our possession and securing others from Denison's alumni e-mail listings, we've obtained about 3/4 of our members' addresses; we'll print a small quantity for those we can't reach by e-mail. As usual, a PDF of the newsletter will be posted on the GLBAA link on Denison's Alumni Relations page along with previous issues. If you would prefer that we send this to you at an e-mail address other than the one we used, please so notify us (at voicesswell@aol.com).

Many of you likely obtain most of your "news" online so not having a hard copy in your hand won't be a big deal. But if you prefer the feel of real paper when you're reading something like this, you can always print it out. Either way, we hope our efforts to keep you informed about the GLBT side of our ever-changing alma mater enhances your connection to our "fair college on the hill."

Although we won't be returning to Denison for Homecoming in the traditional sense we as students (and now alums) remember "Homecoming," we're going to still use that word for our annual GLBAA gathering in October because it is still a "coming home" for us GLBT alums.

As you probably know by now, the college has replaced its traditional Homecoming with what it calls Big Red Weekend for parents, alums and friends (this year it's October 2nd-4th). The GLBAA has decided to not plan our weekend at that time as the time demands on college administration leaders and faculty then make it very difficult for us to have our important Saturday morning "campus climate" dialogue. In addition, it may make it impossible for some students to attend our events if their parents are visiting. So we have come up



Bird's eye view of Reunion Weekend socializer (see page 3)

with a weekend of our own, without these potential conflicts.

Our weekend will kick off on Friday evening, October 23rd, with a special GLBAA reception at the newly-dedicated Bryant Arts Center housed in the transformed Cleveland Hall. Artist Jack Balas, whose work was featured in a recent edition of *Out* magazine, will be on hand with a display and discussion of prints he is creating as the Queer Studies/Studio Arts artist-in-residence. There also will be an opportunity to tour the state-of-the-art facilities, talk to the artist, interact with GLB faculty and staff (and Outlook students) and pig out on delectable treats and drinks, including wine. Check the Denison website Alumni page (Special Interest groups) for the GLBAA page and TBA times for this event.

Saturday morning will feature the informal and highly-regarded discussion of the campus climate on diversity with members from the administration, faculty and student body. During the afternoon there will be another chance to enjoy a guided tour of the Arts Center. The weekend will conclude with the Outlook-hosted dinner in the GLBAA's honor which is followed by the student gala in Slayer.

We're encouraging alums nearby – in the Columbus and Cleveland areas and places a short drive away -- who can't make a whole weekend of it to plan on arriving in the afternoon for the Arts Center tour and staying for dinner before heading home after the Outlook dinner (which would be concluding by 8pm or so).

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Jack Balas and example of his work (below)

So there are two extra special reasons for coming to our GLBAA Homecoming this weekend: Jack Balas and the Bryant Arts Center. Jack Balas is an artist working in painting and photography, cross-referenced at times with writing and other media. A recipient in 1995 of an individual fellow-

ship in painting from the National Endowment for the Arts, he is represented in the permanent collections of the Brooklyn Museum of Art (New York), the Tucson Museum of Art and the Kent & Vicki Logan Collection at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. A portfolio of his paintings "Today I Drove Along the Rio Grande" was published in issue #120 of The Paris Review (New York). His most recent museum solo was his 2008 project "We'll Be Seeing You" at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver. You can check out examples of his work and learn more about him at www.jackbalas.com.



The large brick turn-of-the-19th-century Cleveland Hall – which for years was home to the school's studio arts classes -- has undergone extensive renovation and an extension on its east side (atop the former steam plant) creating a light-filled, multifunctional space. Anything having to do with studio art and art history can be found in this transformed space which is now known as the Bryant Arts Center. The complete modernization incorporates the latest technological wizardry and energy efficiency.

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We thank Ron Abram, Associate Professor and Program Chair for Studio Arts, for extending this invitation to the GLBAA to experience this beautiful facility and enjoy the artistry of Jack Balas.

GLBAA Homecoming Schedule

Friday, October 23rd

6-9pm – *Art, Conversation and Comfort Cuisine*; All self-identified members of the larger Denison GLBT community are invited to meet artist-in-residence Jack Balas, tour the new arts center and enjoy refreshments; Bryant Arts Center (former Cleveland Hall)

Saturday, October 24th

9:30am – *Discussion of Campus Climate on GLBT Issues/Activities*; College Town House, 334 E. Broadway (next to the Granville Inn) (coffee, juice, pastries served)
2-4pm – *Tour of Bryant Arts Center* (please call to make reservation: 330/704-4729)
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.

Reunion Reflections

by Rick Carson '65

When the literature about Reunion Weekend starting arriving ("Come Home to Denison" it read), I gave some thought to attending. I had been to a class reunion only once, back in the mid '90s, and although I didn't meet up with a whole lot of former classmates with whom I'd been particularly close, it was a generally positive experience. I allowed myself to "come out" pretty matter-of-factly in conversations, and no one fled in horror.

But this year I didn't feel very motivated to attend, and classmates I would have enjoyed seeing weren't registering. But then came a series of telephone calls from our senior class president, whose assignment was



John Hong '88, Tom King '69 and Rick Carson '65 under the Reunion "big top"

to get me to sign up and/or give a nice contribution toward the class gift. The fact I didn't know Pete while we were students – we may have exchanged a few "Hellos" passing on the Quad during our four years – made our reconnection over the phone all the

more interesting because I brought up the "gay" issue and we had a good talk about it. I appreciated his genuine curiosity and openness in discussing being gay at Denison in the early '60s compared with today. So he did his job well: I decided to attend -- plus mailing a nice check.

He also had encouraged me to add "my story" to a series of reflections and reminiscences our classmates were posting on our class website as part of a campaign to interest classmates to return for the reunion. So I wrote a piece about what it was like being a sexually naïve and questioning man on campus over 45 years ago. Although I didn't consider any of the couple dozen classmates from '65 who attended Reunion to be close friends, a number came up to me to say they appreciated what I had written.

One person I did know a bit more than others was a fraternity Brother a couple of years my senior. During our reconnection I injected being gay into our conversation, which led to a discussion about that in relation to our fraternity experience together. After I returned home, I sent him a copy of what I had written about being a gay-man-in-progress in the early '60s, about which he wrote back: "It was a real pleasure to hear your story and see how comfortable you are with who you are. Thank you so much for sharing the article from the class web page...I can't imagine dealing with the social aspects of Denison as a gay person, but as

you said you were really only beginning to understand your sexuality at that point. Denison had its emotional ups and downs for many of us and it was a growing process that we all went through. So glad to see that you survived it." And he signed it, "Proud to be your brother."

Denison is such a different place now than it was when I was a student that they are almost like two parallel universes. I very much prefer the universe it has become and the opportunities I have had over the past 20 years to experience its transformation first-hand through the GLBAA and my yearly visits to campus. Those of us who have been active on the GLBAA Steering Committee often lament: If only more of us whose student experiences were less than glowing because of our sexual identity then were to return to campus to experience Denison today, more of us could take pride in what the college has become. It's not going to make up for what we may have missed by not being openly out and comfortable in our sexuality during our student years, but it opens up an entirely new canvas upon which we can appreciate this welcome reality.

Gaydar picked up more than a dozen or so GLBT alums at Reunion (at least four of whom brought their partners). Most were able to join in a gathering the GLBAA sponsored on that Saturday afternoon in a room off the sanctuary at the First Baptist Church downtown. The socializer also attracted a number of members of the faculty and administration. The Reunion calendar doesn't allow for much free time so it was good fun having this brief chance to come together and mix informally.

We asked the GLBT alums who returned for Reunion to share their reactions about being back, and this is what we heard.

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Jonathan Dudley '59

In direct answer to your questions, I believe I can honestly say I noticed no signs of homophobia during my brief stay in Granville -- and having been born there, having attended school there and then three years at Denison, I think you can understand that I was fully expecting to find a lot! No, I was not out at Denison (was there such a thing as "out" in 1955-58?), but I did notice that, in discussing my life with former classmates, I never used ambiguous language. No big coming-out drama, but I freely talked about my



Jonathan chatting with Dr. Julie Mulroy

partner and our life together...

For me, the fascinating moments came with the meeting of the GLBT Alumni Association at the First Baptist Church. During my years in Granville, it was an unrelentingly dry town – no alcohol anywhere. And the First Baptist Church, where my family spent Sunday mornings, was totally Republican, conservative, formal. Granville, as well as Denison, was quietly but insistently homophobic -- the negative reinforcements were all around. So to stand in the former Rhodes Chapel (now a meeting room) with one foot in the sanctuary of the First Baptist Church, at a meeting of the Denison GLBT Assn., drinking a glass of wine, was improbability piled upon improbability. I will probably always remember it!

Bob Kabel '69

I brought my partner to the reunion. And it was the first time I had ever brought anyone to Denison. I was not "out" to my classmates (no surprise there given the late '60s), but it was clear he was with me as my partner. My classmates were very nice to him, including insisting he be in our class picture and Dale and Tina Knobel, along with Lyn Boone and others, were very welcoming to him. They all know I am gay but had never seen me with anyone before. All in all, it was a good experience and having him there -- plus the way we both were treated -- made the weekend more special.

Don Wenzel '84

I attended the reunion with my partner so as not to mask my status from my classmates. I was not "out" while at Denison -- either to myself or to them! My overall impression was very positive. I never felt any sense of homophobia or isolation based on my sexual identity. In fact, I had a few experiences where classmates took me aside to express their support and share with me their knowledge of other GLBT classmates. I didn't really have the opportunity to interact with any professors or any current students during this reunion so I don't really have an impression of the current state of GLBT affairs at the college. What I did feel confident about, however, is that my classmates harbored no ill will toward me now knowing that I am gay.

Tom King '69

Thought I'd share this mini-essay with my adopted Denison family because we have talked about some alums who have very negative feelings about their experience at Denison. I am used to returning from a weekend at DU brimming-over with positive experiences, but after this weekend I have been experiencing a lot of conflicting emotions! I spent today weeding, which for me is a very thought-provoking exercise, and I was able to pinpoint my negative vibes as a reaction to most of the people who returned from my class. It was a mixture of jocks, frat boys and former Wingless Angels who attended to support one of their own (John Kimpel) who was awarded an alumni citation. Their indifference to people outside their own experience at Denison (like me) was still very much in

evidence. I had the same feelings of rejection that I experienced going through rush as an incoming freshman and of the marginalization and outright indifference from men in the more prestigious fraternities. When I did talk to them about the GLBAA, etc., and my former position on the Alum Council as rep for the GLBAA, I was met with silence and blank looks. The crowning touch was when John Kimpel was awarded his citation and one of them yelled "Go Wingless Angels!" As far as I'm concerned, membership in the Wingless Angels should disqualify one from an alumni citation, but I know my thoughts on the matter aren't prevalent because other former WAs have been so honored.

The fact that there were GLBAA alums to hang with at the Reunion saved me from avoiding most of the Reunion events, but I probably will never attend a Reunion again. And thank God Denison has changed for the better.

Tim Ewing '89

The weekend was a glorious experience. I have been processing and making sense of the events of the weekend for the past two days. One thought that continues to resonate was how I found myself really connecting with people that I was not necessarily close to while on campus. In fact, it was they who asked, "Why didn't we hang out on campus?" One person made me vow to stay in touch. Another experience involved my former fraternity brothers who, after the "Oh, so where are you and what are you doing?" question was, "So, wife and kids?" The looks when I said, "Well, divorced, no kids, openly gay and your



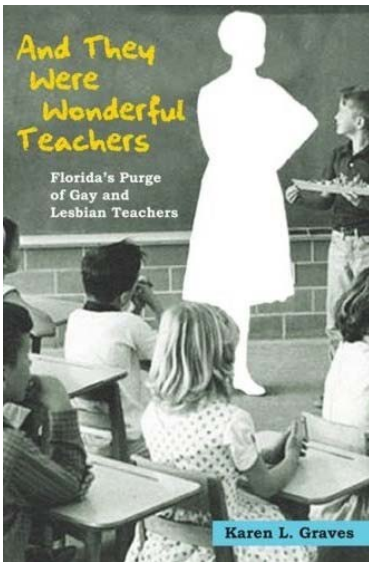
Tim catching up with Sam Thios, VP for Student Affairs

GLBAA Co-Chair and Alumni Council rep." LOL. The looks were priceless! One "Brother" told me that I totally caught him off guard and he didn't know what to say. What ensued touched me. He asked, "Are you happy?" I replied, "Quite," explaining that I hope to adopt children in the near future, single or partnered. He replied, "I am happy for you!" in a very caring tone. I felt as if I was being seen in my entirety in ways that I did not 20-24 years ago, not to mention that I was showing up in

ways that I had not in the past.

The conversations I had this weekend really stressed my need to remember the role that allies play in our GLB journeys. There are some really "switched on" straight folks who get it.

In Case You Missed It



☞ Associate Professor of Education Karen Graves has written an important book on the notorious Johns Committee, a Florida legislative body which carried out a witch hunt within the state's public schools from 1956-65. Titled *And They Were Wonderful Teachers: Florida's Purge of Gay and Lesbian Teachers*, it's available now in paperback. Check it out on amazon.com or other such sources.

Congratulations, Karen!

☞ While you're checking out books, there's **Ali Stine's '00** (right) *Ohio Violence: Poems by Alison Stine*, which is her first book and the winner of the 2008 Vassar Miller Prize in Poetry.



☞ The Spring 2009 issue of DENISON Magazine reports on the career of **Bestor Cram '67** (not a GLBAA member) who, since 1982, has produced over 100 documentaries and is currently the founder and head of Northern Light Productions in Boston. One of the five "closest to his heart" is "You Don't Know Dick," produced in 1996. As he writes:

"Simply put, this is a thought-provoking documentary on gender identity. It provides honest portraits of six men who once were women. Each has lived within a body he didn't accept, and each has tried to adapt to social expectations he couldn't fulfill. All have embarked upon an enormous and transfiguring struggle to recover their dignity and an identity once denied to them. It is not just a film about sex and surgical procedures; it's about knowing who we are, and what we must go through to become that person."

☞ In that same issue of DENISON Magazine is a letter in the "Talk of the Walk" section from Rev. **William Taber '68**, who wrote about being a gay man, not out at the time, who was chosen during his sophomore year to be an exchange student to Morehouse College, an historically all-male, black college in Atlanta. As he shares:

"Before leaving for Morehouse, I had packed a trunk with some of my belongings that would not fit in my flight luggage, and I left that trunk in the lobby of my dormitory at Denison to be shipped. After my arrival in Atlanta, I was unpacking the trunk, and found that someone had carefully

tucked a hastily scribbled note inside. It read simply and bluntly, 'Don't come back, faggot. Stay down there with the niggers where you belong.'

"Whoever wrote that note has been an inspiration to me for years without their knowing it. Year after year, I have used this story in my church congregations to call people from their bigotry to God's love, and it has never failed to move at least some. We have indeed come a long way on the journey, but we have a long way to go.

"At present, I preside over an older, straight, rural congregation of American Baptists who are engaged in the mission of bringing our world together – black and white, women and men, gay and straight – that we might indeed 'overcome' as Dr. King taught us. I am proud that Denison is a part of that mission as well."

☞ And this e-mail, received from **Bill Cox '50**:

Greetings fellow alums,

Just finished reading the latest edition of *Voices Swell*, and I need to thank **Rick Carson** for another wonderful issue, give my endorsement to the changes in our structure and gathering times, and congratulate **Tim Ewing** and **Chris Collette** on becoming Co-Chairs of our Steering Committee! GLBAA and Denison can, indeed, be proud of our success in transforming the Denison community into a welcoming place for GLBT&Q people.

I fondly remember that momentous biology lab meeting and my expectant enthusiasm upon discovering what was to become GLBAA: the opportunity to join with others to support students and alums was a joyous happening, and I've continued that participation until I moved to Florida four years ago.

I join with **Kim Cromwell** and others in expressing gratitude for the leadership provided in the past 20 years (it can't be that long ago....) and look forward to equally momentous years ahead. Though I'm retired, my duties as treasurer of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Ft. Lauderdale have limited my traveling; my term ends in the Spring of 2010, and then I can visit with my GLBAA friends again.



Another example of Jack Balas' work; meet him at the GLBAA Homecoming October 23rd-24th

Denison Today: Two Views

DOver the past couple months we became aware of two interesting Denisonians who have refreshing takes on what it's like on campus these days.

One is from a recent graduate who was very active in the fraternity system and the other is from a professor relatively new to bucolic Denison from the fast-paced life of New York City.

We hope you enjoy reading what they have to share about their Denison experiences.

Beta...and Gay

by Nick Geitner '09



I have been invited to briefly share a bit of my story at Denison University in an attempt to illuminate what is a changing culture and attitude toward the GLBT community on The Hill. I graduated from Denison in May 2009 where I had spent my time earning a BS in Physics as well as staying highly involved in both the music department as a saxophone player

and was, for my latter three years, a dedicated fraternity man.

I attended a public, suburban high school not too different in size from Denison. All four years at that school were enjoyable and successful but also very much closeted. Never once did I actually consider coming out in high school -- it was entirely too unfriendly and I did little exploring of my own sexuality. I left it alone, so to speak, largely because I'd never known a single out gay person at that school.

During my first two years on The Hill I had no intentions or desire to come out. I was afraid, and this only worsened when I joined a fraternity. My chapter of Beta Theta Pi was about as far as you could get from a stereotypical "frat"; the house has, for the last several years since returning to Denison's campus, been completely hazing-free, highly socially responsible and focused on brotherhood and contributing to the community. Even so, I still had a fear that these men who had come to mean so much to me would reject me. I mean, what is more "macho" than a fraternity?

Not long after I was initiated the fall of my sophomore year, I was elected onto the fraternity's executive board. While serving as secretary and treasurer, our fraternity preached honesty, brotherhood, unsullied friendship and unfaltering fidelity. For a year hiding my sexuality from my Brothers -- the men I knew would sing at my wedding and carry my casket -- ate away at me.

Coming Out Week came and went in October 2007 and I was miserable. Just a few weeks later was the first anniversary of my initiation, and I could not hide any longer, could no longer bear to lie to my Brothers. And so at a regular fraternity meeting in early November, I anxiously awaited our round-table with which we ended every meeting. I waited my turn, second to last in a room of roughly 30 and teary-eyed, I bared my soul to men I'd met just a year earlier but who had come to mean the world to me.

Though I was terrified, I can honestly say I've made few better decisions in my life. I was immediately greeted with a flurry of snaps (fraternal applause), a warm hug and the words "Nick, you know nothing is going to change." From that day forward, those men were my greatest source of support.

Being a gay man became an important part of my identity, particularly among my fraternity Brothers, but did nothing to change it. A few months after coming out, I was elected chapter president. From there I went on to chair the committee of all Denison Greek presidents. Never from any member of the Greek community did I receive any trouble, ridicule or hate speech. There is one conversation I overheard while walking past an open window late at night that I won't soon forget. One of my fraternity brothers was at a small party, and I heard my name mentioned by a voice I did not recognize: "So Nick Geitner is gay? And you guys are all ok with that?" to which my friend responded, "Of course we are. Nick is a great guy and we don't think anything different of him." As far as I know, that was the end of the conversation.

With Denison being as small as it is, word that I am gay spread without me having to come out to every single person I met. During my senior year, my RA -- at the time an executive member of Outlook -- asked if I would be willing to participate on the Coming Out Week panel. Though I didn't really know what to expect, I eagerly agreed because I'd heard how much fun it was. On this panel, roughly a dozen Denison men and women, whose sexuality ideally is not well-known on campus, are asked questions by the audience. These questions are based on common GLBT stereotypes and the end goal is for the audience to correctly identify the sexuality of each panel member. They were also instructed to try, to the extent possible, to dismiss any previously known knowledge of the participants and decide based only on the interviews. Most of the people there were younger, largely freshmen and sophomores, and did not really know me, a senior at the time. Roughly 80% of the audience guessed that I was straight, and they were similarly inaccurate for a large portion of the panel. The audience reported using largely visual cues, such as how a panel member dressed, spoke or crossed their legs.

Among the greatest experiences of my Denison career was the Beta formal dance my senior year. I had for a couple of months been dating a man from Cleveland, and a few of my fraternity Brothers had met him on his weekend visits. I proudly brought him as my date, us in matching suits, and we had the time of our lives. My

Brothers who knew I was gay and their dates, many of whom I had never met before, took us in as one of the crowd and we had the time of our lives.

This story is, I hope, encouraging, but I do not wish to mislead any readers. I am not the first out gay man in Denison's Greek system; there are at all times several Greek men who never come out during their tenure at Denison and still others who do come out to some but go to great lengths to hide their sexuality from their fraternity. Coming out, Greek or not, is still difficult, even scary. If you are lucky enough, though, to find the right group of friends on The Hill, of which there are many to choose, an out life is both possible and highly fulfilling at Denison.

An Interview with Christopher Bruhn

Christopher Bruhn is Assistant Professor of Music History. He holds the PhD in musicology from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), where he also received a certificate in American Studies. He has a MA in piano performance from Hunter College, CUNY and a BA in English literature from the University of Wisconsin/Madison. Prior to coming to Denison, Christopher taught at Hunter, City and Baruch Colleges of CUNY, served as a Fellow of the Bernard Schwartz Communication Institute at Baruch and was an assistant editor at RILM Abstracts of Music Literature. His research interests include the music of Charles Ives, 19th-century American music and the intersections between music, literature and philosophy. He currently is beginning research into the musical life of the city of Morelia, Michoacan, in Mexico.



Voices Swell: First, how about a bit about you and how you ended up at Denison.

Christopher Bruhn: I came on a one-year visiting appointment in the fall of 2007 and managed to make it through the national search process to start on the tenure track in the fall of 2008. Before coming to Granville I had been living in New York City, where I got my doctorate in 2006, and was working about four part-time academic jobs. I had never heard of Denison until one of my professors -- who had been approached by one of her former students, [then-chair of the music department] Andy Carlson, for recommendations -- e-mailed me about the position. At first I was like, "No way am I packing up and moving to the middle of Ohio for a year," but I sent my CV to Andy, was flown out here for

an interview and was really impressed with the college and the recent growth in the music department.

VS: In terms of things LGBT, what were your preconceptions about Denison—from what you may have heard and read—and how might these have gibed with what you discovered when you arrived?

CB: When I checked out the website before my interview, I was comforted to see that there was a Queer Studies program here. And right when I got to town, I had dinner with Andy and Ching-chu [Hu, the current music department chair], and Ching-chu was very open about talking about his partner and their adopted son. So I was pleasantly surprised right away. During the first semester I was here, I had lunch with Ching-chu, who was on sabbatical at the time, to talk about the GLBT climate here at Denison, and that was right before all the excitement during the first week of November 2007.

VS: Have you observed the campus climate regarding GLBTs at Denison change since you began teaching, and, if so, in what way(s)?

CB: Well, I guess everything kind of changed that first week of November. I wondered what it was like for gay students here, and suddenly everything was out in the open. The first couple months I was here I was just kind of adjusting to a new environment in all kinds of ways. My initial impression of Denison students, especially after coming from CUNY [the City University of New York], where everyone had an opinion about everything, was that they were quiet and shy and earnest but not really very passionate about anything.

After that day at the Mitchell Center, I had all kinds of new respect for the students. It was pretty amazing what people were stating publicly, whether they had been victims of some kind of discrimination or whether they felt a need to confess disappointment in their own personal behavior toward others. There was a lot of raw emotion expressed that day, but I thought much of it was surprisingly eloquent. I also learned about Outlook after that and got more socially plugged in to the gay and lesbian faculty.

VS: Are you an "out" member of the faculty and, if so, does this come into play in your teaching?

CB: I guess I am now that we're doing this interview! No, I would have said so anyway. Not like I deliberately broadcast my sexuality, but I don't hide it, either. All my friends and, I think, most of my colleagues here know I'm gay. I just taught an honors seminar on Music and Sexuality and came out to my students the first day. I felt like it was important for me to identify myself to that group, given the subject matter of the course, although it's not something I would do for any music history course.

While I am a gay scholar, I'm not a queer theorist -- sexuality does not play an overt role in my research interests. Most of the courses I teach are music history courses in which sexuality would not naturally figure into the curriculum. But I'm comfortable identifying myself if the subject comes up, and I think the Music and Sexuality course was a real learning experience for the students, as it was for me.

VS: What has been your most pleasant “good” surprise as a member of the Denison community? Any disappointments or places where you hope for improvement?

CB: I’ve been very pleasantly surprised by the number of friendly gay and gay-friendly folks on campus. I’ve been really impressed by [Provost] Brad [Bateman]’s recently-articulated commitment to reviving the Queer Studies program. I’ve also heard that the new student leader of Outlook is interested in strengthening the faculty connection to that organization, which I think could make Outlook a more powerful and dynamic presence on campus. As far as disappointments, I can’t really think of any. I arrived expecting so little, and even if everything isn’t perfect, there’s so much going on here, and we seem to be moving toward more visibility on campus, which I think is great.

VS: Any suggestions as to how the college could become a more welcoming place for diversity, especially for LGBTs?



Christopher (center) with Tim Ewing '89 and Julie Houpt '75, Denison's VP for University Resources & Public Affairs, at the GLBAA Reunion socializer

CB: I think in a place like Denison that’s always going to be the \$64 million question. When I lived in New York, diversity was a given. You get on the subway in the morning and you’re sitting in a small space with people reading news-papers in Arabic, Spanish, Hebrew, Greek, Italian, Russian -- men and women,

gay and straight, all different shades of skin tone -- it was just the environment in which we all lived. Denison is a little community in a village in the middle of central Ohio with a very particular demographic where diversity is always going to have to be imposed from the outside. When I first arrived I was really struck by the homogeneity of Granville. I’d been in New York for almost 15 years, and I remember going to my first farmers’ market here and just seeing all these white people in pastel-colored clothing, and I knew I wasn’t in New York anymore!

So it’s been interesting for me to be in a place where we have to talk about acceptance of diversity, worry about it, to make sure it helps to shape this community, to recognize the importance that the community here somehow reflects something of the outside world into which many of our students will venture once they graduate. It’s part of the learning experience. I think that will be an ongoing challenge for Denison, but it’s one that I definitely feel is actively on lots of people’s minds,

the people who study here and the people who work here, and that’s a step in the right direction.

Enjoy Entertaining?

As much as we would like to see more of our GLBT alums returning to campus for our Homecoming or Reunion Weekend events, we realize it can be a luxury many can’t afford or squeeze into their hectic schedules. And lingering memories of a less-than-pleasant undergrad experience keep others away. So we’d like to invite you to a Denison GLBAA party just a few miles from your home.

What we have in mind is inviting alums to offer to host a small party in their homes for other GLBAA alums who live in the area. In places like Columbus and Cleveland we have more than a dozen GLBAA alums, and in Chicago, New York, Boston, San Francisco and LA we have more than six. In other metro areas there may be two or three. However many there are, we’d hope there are alums who’d be willing to invite others over for drinks or maybe just meet at a coffee house or bar. No program or speeches, just a chance to meet one another informally, perhaps for the first time.

If you’d like to volunteer to do this (sorry, but this has to be out of the generosity of your heart and wallet), contact us (voicesswell@aol.com) and we’ll provide you with the contact info so that you can plan something at your convenience.

Denison has a great record of networking among its alums, especially helpful for those who are seeking employment. How about we take this one step further and network among those of us in Denison’s GLBT alum community near where we live and work?

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: Co-chairs Tim Ewing '89 and Chris Collette '91, Rick Carson '65, Tom King '69 and Audrey Miller '94. Advisory members to the Steering Committee are: Kim Cromwell '81, Peggy Knapp '66, Jeff Masten '86, Val Mockus '94 and Dan Ryan '84. ▶ Check out our web site at the link provided at www.denison.edu; click "Alumni" and "Interest Groups" on the left margin and then "GLBAA." The GLBAA may be contacted via this site.