

VISIONARY

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THE JOURNAL OF GAY SPIRIT VISIONS

Spring 2002

NATURE

For many of us, nature draws us to Spirit through an intimate connection.

Five of our GSV brothers offer their thoughts on nature as a key in spiritual practice and as a gift that enriches our lives.

Begins on
page 4



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Gay Spirit Visions

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**The 2001 Gay Spirit Visions
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ELDERS' SPECIAL

Spirit has sent many new men to the GSV Planning Committee over the last year or so. These men are stretching their love muscles by volunteering time and talents for this organization. My tenure as presiding elder is approaching its final months. And these men are fine stewards of our organization. I'm comforted by their passion for

BY TREEWALKER



this sacred space and the respect they show each other. In November the Council of Trusted Elders will propose a new slate of officers and I will step back. I have every confidence in these

men. They have grasped our single, basic belief that their own vision of Spirit is a facet of the whole which is truly greater than the sum of their individual visions. None of us is alone. And GSV exists as a beacon for all men who love men who seek Spirit, who burn with desire for connection.

I plan to continue to be part of the organization in some way. I await Spirit's guidance. Meanwhile, I want you, dear reader, dear man who loves men, to know how grateful I am for this opportunity to serve you these past 10 years as a planner, elder and presiding elder. Nearly 13 years ago, on a whim, I went to the first GSV Conference. Since then my life has been changed in ways I still can barely comprehend. I can say with certainty, however, that the man I am today is the direct result of my association with you. Whether you're a man I've yet to meet or a man I've spent countless hours with, you have been a friend, a guide and mentor, a lover.

Thank you.

Thank you for letting me contribute to GSV. Thank you for trusting me with your confidences. Thank you for teaching me to honor my gifts and thank you for your gifts. When my life gets really hard, I think of you - your smiles, your

tears, your hugs, your laughter, your questions, your answers, your listening, your prayers, your support, your struggles, your joys, your open hearts. I think of you and I realize that I'm not alone, that life is good.

There's a special place in my heart for those of you who I've yet to meet. We have always kept you in mind. You who can't attend a conference, heart circle or pot luck supper. You who may live far from another man who loves men, who for whatever reason can't make your way to our circle. I always think most of you when I sit at our sacred fire on the mountain or when I light my candles at home in meditation. Much of what we do at GSV has been for you. I look forward to the day when you can sit beside me and tell me your journey. Until then, *Blessed Be.*

Martin "TreeWalker" Isganitis is currently presiding elder of GSV. He has been a member of the Planning Committee since 1992. He is single and lives in Decatur, GA.

Congratulations to:

•Phillip Rush, who was selected by Atlanta's Mayor Shirley Franklin to serve on the "Citizen Selection Committee" for the Commissioner of Planning.



•Bruce Parrish, who recently received The Mountain's "Volunteer of the Year" award given to a Mountain supporter for continuing contributions on and off site.

A GIFT OF SPIRIT

Every summer when I was a boy, my mother and I spend most days at my Aunt Isabelle's and Uncle Cliff's. They had a little house on several acres - the closest I ever got to working on a farm. Isabelle, at 4'11", dipped snuff and Cliff at 6'6" and 300

BY JENNINGS FORT



pounds, drank iced tea from a quart coffee jar. At one time or another, they raised game chickens (for illegal cock fights), guinea fowl, peacocks, hogs, pheasants and bees. Isabelle pampered her "Georgy Belle" and "Elberter" peach trees for canning, pies and ice cream in the summer. She followed the *Farmer's Almanac* - planting on days when the moon drifted in the watery, fruitful zodiac sign of Cancer or Taurus and avoiding the fiery, barren days of Leo and Virgo.

Cliff raised 30-foot metal poles and frames topped with gourd bird houses to attract purple martins. They soared in from South America in the spring and, they say, consumed their weight each day in destructive bugs. This didn't stop Isabelle, though, from using insecticides liberally on any vegetable plant that looked like it could be bitten.

Isabelle made a bee bonnet for me from screen wire and scrap cloth to help Cliff rob the hives. After stunning the angry swarm with a smoker, he took the "soopers" of honey to the house. Isabelle cut oozing honeycomb out of wooden frames with a butcher knife and canned it by the quart.

We grew beans, peas, corn, okra, tomatoes - enough to keep a bored and cranky 12-year-old busy until frost.

Once, I remember, when we ran out of

chemical fertilizer, we scraped damp manure out of the chicken house and dropped it around potato plants with our bare hands. "This is the best fertilizer," Isabelle proclaimed. "Like dynamite."

After working hard one hot, sweaty morning, we dug little white potatoes, washed and boiled them with freshly picked green beans for lunch. Isabelle picked ripe peaches and made a cobbler. Isabelle, my mother and I sat around the table in a ritual, I see now, enjoying the results of our hard work. It was a gift of Spirit, perfectly fresh, simple, delicious and sacred. This I hold in my heart as the best meal I'll ever eat.

Somewhere on those humid summer days, a little seed was planted and fertilized in me too. I've always loved gardening and felt deep satisfaction plunging my hands into the dirt and watching things grow. It's a strong connection. It's probably a huge overstatement to say that all gay men feel this way. But I think many of us have a deep reverence for nature. Some people say that, long ago, gay men guarded the trees. I believe it. We still have strong feelings about the earth.

For many of us, these feelings have taken root in our spiritual practices.

In this issue of *Visionary*, we include a section called "Spiritual Reflections on Nature," thoughts on our passionate relationship with the earth and our desire to nurture and protect it.

Maybe our gay sensitivities help us appreciate nature as a manifestation of Spirit and respect its healing power. Nature has so much to give us if we take care of it. And maybe those of us who love Spirit have a responsibility to protect nature in all its splendor.

In their own way, Isabelle, Cliff and my mother believed this too. Isabelle and Cliff are gone now and I never became much of a vegetable farmer. But this year, I'm growing tomatoes and



GSV potlucks in Atlanta, are held the fourth Saturday of the month at 7:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted.

GSV yoga in Atlanta, meets Tuesdays at 6:45 p.m. For more information, contact Jim Braden 404-627-2438 or buffalonimbus@yahoo.com.

GSV Heart Circles in Atlanta are held the second Sunday of every month, hosted by Ben Linton at 7:30 p.m. For location contact Ben Linton at 404-373-9869, benlinton4@aol.com.

July 27 - GSV Potluck Hosted by Thom Gresham, 1931 Farmer Road, Conyers, GA, 770-483-6487, thomzilla@yahoo.com

August 24 - GSV Potluck Hosted by King Thackston, 370 Loomis Avenue SE, Atlanta, GA, 404-688-8234, wingofmen@mindspring.com

September 28 - GSV Potluck (the weekend after the Fall conference) Hosted by Steven Band, 2943 Appling Way, Atlanta, GA, 770-936-0045, sbmasseur@aol.com

basil in plastic pots in our front yard in Atlanta, the closest thing we have to a farm. I'm watching them closely, fretting over blooms nipped away by insects, leaves broken in a wind storm. If I can get one tomato to ripen on the vine, I'll be satisfied. My partner, John, and I will put it into some pasta sauce, sit down at our table and toast Isabelle, Cliff and my mother who gave me a love for the beauty and generosity of nature.

Jennings Fort lives in Atlanta and can be reached at Jenman@mindspring.com.

Gay Spirit Visions

A Mission Statement for Our Second Decade and A New Millennium

We are committed to creating safe, sacred space that is open to all spiritual paths, wherein loving gay men may explore and strengthen spiritual identity.

We are committed to creating a spiritual community with the intent to heal, nurture our gifts and potential, and live with integrity in the world.

We are committed to supporting others in their spiritual growth by sharing experiences and insights.

To fulfill these goals we facilitate annual retreats and conferences, sponsor social events, publish a newsletter, and maintain web-based communications for men who love men.

Spiritual Reflections on NATURE

IN HIS ARMS

My family moved from the city to the suburbs when I was 5. He was waiting for me in the far corner of our yard the first time I went out there, tall and dark. He was called The Indian Tree. Hundreds of years earlier the Merrick Indians had braided two oak saplings together and trained the two limbs to point down the forked paths of a long vanished trail. His trunk was short and hollow, like a potbelly stove, and above it his two strong arms spread out, thick and close to the ground. I longed to climb up and rest in the crook of his dark arms, but bees lived in his open belly, and they scared me.

Sometime an unfulfilled love diminishes us, but longing for him taught me to love all trees, and that love deepened me into tribal memory. Once, at the end of the last Ice Age, we men who love men were the guardians of the trees. Tall, proud, androgynous as they are, when anyone wanted to cut down a tree they came to us to ask the trees' permission, and we spoke to the trees to discover their will. To this day, anywhere in the world, when two of our people want to find each other, all we have to do is look for a park, a grove, a shelter of trees. We have forgotten our ancient powers. We think we are only looking for sex. But no,

we are also there because of the trees and our innate connection to them.

I spoke of this at the first GSV conference, and I've written about it in *Two Flutes Playing*. Over the years countless men have told me their own tree-love stories. What is yours? Pine or palm, birch or redwood, who was your first tree lover? Can you hear him calling to you now? For now is the time for us to reclaim our power. Now is the time for us to connect with the trees again, to guard and tend and plant them. Every clan, tribe, nation, people, has its own gifts and powers. The trees are the lungs of the world, and we are their guardians. Take a deep breath. Breathe with the trees. Remember our power. And use it. Now. The trees need us. They are dying. Now. The world needs us. We are killing it. Now. For the power to restore, to save, and to heal, is within us as well. ▼

Andrew Ramer, frequent speaker at GSV, is the author of Two Flutes Playing. One of his essays appears in the newly released Found Tribe: Jewish Coming Out Stories.

BY ANDREW RAMER



"... this notion of the purpose of our love

coupled with the idea of Mother Earth and Father Sky makes a lot of sense to me personally. Gardening is my passion and I feel that I'm channeling my 'reproductive' love toward stewardship of plants on this earth (i.e. my yard). Every day after work, especially at this time of year (spring) I check to see how much my garden plants have grown since the previous day, as if they were my 'children.' As long as I can remember, I have loved working in the yard. I've heard it said that gardening is the closest thing to God's heart, and I really do feel that way. I try to embellish my garden with color so that there's some interest every month of the year. Gardening is quite therapeutic for me as well. I've also heard it expressed by a fellow gardener that 'one can solve all of his/her problems in life in the garden.' To a good extent, I think that this is true. Spirit is working through me as I keep watch over Mother Earth and tend to her 'children' lovingly. I guess, for me, that's where a lot of my personal love and giving is channeled in this world. Hopefully, it's of benefit to it."

Kevin Shawn O'Donnell, Chapel Hill, NC
From the GSV Reflector, April 17, 2002

REFLECTIONS ON THE PATH OF NATURE

Since I was a little boy, I adored nature. (This is not the same, I quickly learned, as adoring camping). I just knew that I felt different when I was alone with nature: happy, unhurried, at peace, in harmony. I could remember at age 8 the vivid yellow flowers in full bloom on Easter Sunday outside my family's church, but I couldn't remember a word of the sermon. This was my first clue. It was only recently, however, that I began to see nature as a conscious spiritual path in itself. The implications, I learned are, well, earth-shattering.

After years of avoiding contact with all religion, I realized that what I felt in nature was religion, in the truest sense of the word — reconnection. And, it was calling me. I soon discovered the path of Wicca, modern witchcraft. Not exactly what was expected of a good Catholic boy, but paths are rarely, um, straight. Like Native American spirituality, Wicca is a nature-centered religion, reconstructed out of the ancient vestiges of indigenous European and Middle-Eastern spiritual traditions and Western mysticism. Witches (the word comes from Old English for "wise one" or "seer") honor the primacy of nature as the ultimate manifestation of the supreme Life Force. We see the ultimate Initiator as made manifest in nature in masculine (God) and feminine (Goddess) spiritual forces. We celebrate the equinoxes, solstices, harvest and fertility festivals, just as our ancestors did all over the globe, thousands of years ago. Wiccans practice "magick" — the use of natural energies to further one's spiritual progression.

For me, the Wiccan tenet "as above so below" encapsulates what it really means to follow a nature-centered path. By celebrating (not performing, mind you, but celebrating) rituals that honor the turning of the Wheel of the Year, we reconnect our innermost psyche with the rhythms of

nature around us. This lets us use natural forces as an aid and vehicle for our spiritual growth. Put simply, ritual helps us see the seasons dance around us and within us. We are a microcosm of that which we are a part.

But, after being initiated as a witch, I soon discovered that you don't need to be one to develop this spiritual harmony with nature. You have only to look within and without. A simple bouquet of flowers displayed on May Day can help you appreciate the spring's fertility and remind you of the bounty in your own life. A carved pumpkin on Halloween when the earth is going to sleep can help us to remember the mysterious spirit realms and honor those who have left us. All can be rituals of connection to the earth if they are done with intention, *consciously*.

By celebrating these rituals, you begin to see all things as they are in nature—connected. This causes your worldview to shift. For one thing, you don't think in terms of "saving the planet." You lose the motivation to save anything out of mere



pity. Instead you want to save them out of recognition that our actions—good or bad—have consequences that affect our very existence.

Further, you learn to appreciate diversity in its fullest sense. Just as nature needs predator and prey, rain and sun, flower and thorn, to stay in balance, so too does each individual need to experience light and dark, joy and sadness, peace and worry, despair and hope. And it's all beautiful, because it represents the spectrum of the human experience. Moreover, you see how individuals offer their unique spiritual gifts to the human spiritual journey.

Perhaps most importantly, this sense of limitless connectedness also implies that Spirit is no longer perceived as "out there" and beyond our reach or behind some veil of mystery guarded by an arcane priesthood. Spirit is, quite literally, under our noses. If nature is divine, and we are part of nature, then we are also divine. Spirit is in us and of us and through us. We are Spirit. Spirit is human and animal, male and female, gay and straight, immensely old and eternally young—all of which are found in nature. Our challenge, as divine beings is to fulfill our unique purpose in the spiritual ecosystem that strives for both balance and evolution. We each have a spirit-role to play that is uniquely ours, and upon which others depend.

Integrating nature as part of our path—whatever that may be—lets us see ourselves as unimaginably powerful, yet tremendously fragile, as God and as Goddess, as part of everything, yet unique and individual. This isn't easy, because it requires embracing our foibles and weaknesses while honoring our Godly power. But, with practice, we learn by attuning ourselves to nature, that we are beautiful and divine and lovable simply because we're part of life. This is the truest magick. No camping required. ▼

Michael Chavez attended his first GSV Fall Conference in 2000 and is an initiated Wiccan priest in an Atlanta coven. His spiritual interests include Reiki, the tarot, ritual design, herbalism and incense making. A nature lover, Michael also enjoys the gifts of plumbing and central air conditioning.

BY MICHAEL CHAVEZ



Green Man, Eco-Shaman
Submitted by King "Wing of Man" Thackston

OUR PLACE

One reason I write is to answer questions. "Who are we? Why are we here? What are we here to do?"

BY JOHN STOWE



Writing for other men-loving men – in *Visionary and Gay Spirit Warrior* — has given me the conviction that our healing journeys reach full fruition only when we share our glorious light with the rest of the world. Instead of

being a final answer, though, that insight just brought more questions: "How does one person make a difference in a world so large? How do we find meaning in our lives when the challenges facing humanity are so serious? What's our place within this community of life we call 'Earth'? These new questions led to a second book, just released, called *Earth Spirit Warrior*.

Earth Spirit Warrior isn't only for men. It's for anyone who loves the planet and wants to make a difference. In fact, though, the book grew directly from my explorations as a gay man, much of which took place right here in GSV. I know that every person has a role to play in planetary healing. Yet somehow my intuition tells me that the gay connection is especially vital. Why is that? What place do men-loving men hold within the planetary body? How does the Earth depend on us for healing? What do our journeys teach us that we can share with others?

Part of it must have to do with the path we've walked. We know what it's like to be outsiders, to feel alone in the world. We know, too, what it's like to come inside, to reject rejection and claim connection — in pairs and trios and great loving circles. We're learning to find our own way. Can we not also teach humanity to bridge the chasm we've been taught to see between ourselves and other living beings? Could we, who know it so intimately, teach others that isolation kills, that connection is life and that our family of choice can expand until it includes not only people, but every other species as well?

We've learned to trust our bodies, to honor our desires, to respect the wisdom of our own beating hearts. We've learned to defy prohibitions on how we "should" love and to break the molds of "acceptable" behavior. Can we extend these lessons until we also honor the Earth and treat this body we all share with reverence and respect? Can we, for whom coming out is so vitally empowering, also step out of other cultural traps – like the Earth-killing hyper-consumerism our society seems hell-bent to impose on the entire planet? I think we can.

Traditionally, we're bridge-makers — between male and female, Earth and Spirit, humanity and the natural world. This is our birthright and a shamanic calling of the highest order. Every traditional healer on the planet knows that health depends upon proper relationship. Our society is sick, and with it the planet. In our role as healers, isn't it time to ask what we can do to restore right relationship? We've already got parts of the answer.

Just for fun, let's start with the erotic. It's part of us, built into our bones. As a tribe, we've served gods and goddesses in every culture. From time untold, we've cared for the sacred groves dedicated to making love. When those are taken away – by witch-burning mobs or election-year vice squads – we consecrate new ones. It's part of our job. Even now, which of us hasn't loved – or felt the desire to love – in a secluded clearing, on sky-filled mountaintop, or at a moonlit beach? Whether solo or shared, the experience is rich – and inherently linked with the place itself.

What about the other side of the relationship? Self-centered, we tend to speak in terms of "I" and "my," but let's open to a deeper connection. When we know the Earth as a living being, can we consider that it, too, might feel the pleasure we share? These bodies are cells within the planetary body. Who could say that Earth is not aware of what we feel or doesn't delight as we do in loving touch? Who could say that the mountains themselves don't tremble with passion beneath stroking winds or the beach reach out to meet tender, caressing waves.

Relationship works both ways. For centuries, mankind has acted as an abusive

spouse toward the Earth. We know this abuse firsthand. It's the same energy that for so long sought to condemn the way we love, the same that raped and degraded women. We've stood up to this force, claimed our right to live and love and thrive. We are among those who can lead the way toward recreating a healthy relationship with the planet itself.

All the world loves a lover, they say. Perhaps that's because the lover in turn loves all the world. Our job now is to open our hearts – to ourselves, to each other, to the living Earth. Our job is to live and love consciously, to remember the lessons we've learned and to take steps that benefit ourselves and the whole of life as well. There is spirit in all being. Our job is to listen, *really* listen, to the plants and animals and sacred places that live here with us. Our job is to access the wisdom of the living planet and use it to answer the questions we face together. We can do that. In the end, what other choice do we have? ▼

John R. Stowe, author of Gay Spirit Warrior and Earth Spirit Warrior, has a practice in massage and body-centered therapy in Decatur, GA. Contact him at www.goodweeds.com.



A DEEPER STEP INTO NATURE

A few years ago I read a book about shamanism. I remember two things about this book. The first is that it had a yellow cover. The second is much more profound (though yellow is a very effective color for a book). The author introduced the idea that shamanism

BY TONY TALLENT



reminds us that the great forces of nature that have long been our friends and our foes have shifted. The focus has moved from the outer landscape to the inner. Heroes, mythic and historic, once had to conquer

great mountain ranges and driving storms in their personal quests for greatness and proof of self-mastery. It was the often treacherous outer landscape that provided the challenge and the key to life.

Though fighting dragons and scaling mountains are not as important now, we're still doing vital work. We are taking part in our own adventures and fighting unknown beasts within the inner landscape. Exploring this inner terrain often makes the work of Odysseus look easy. It can be a shadowy place filled with maze-like passages as well as clear sun-filled meadows and breathtaking vistas. As we navigate, we often realize that there is no map. There are only fragments of landmarks. Perhaps most difficult of all—it is a solitary journey. So how is this inner world connected to the outer, more tangible world of nature?

They are the same.

Inner and outer, mirrors of one another.

Imagine the typical image that comes to mind upon hearing the word *nature*—trees, green spaces, wild animals, and colored horizons. The shaman takes a deeper step by understanding that this image is only one aspect of nature. Still a deeper step is to see that the intricacies of our own experiences—individually and collectively—are also 'of nature.'

Loving a tree is easy. The great silent tree that has stood in the backyard for decades is of nature, Goddess-born, a gift

from God, blessed by Mother Earth, weathered by Father Time, and even provides good shade during August. The tree allows us to see nature and experience the joy of the natural world directly and obviously. This same tree that easily represents the natural world is also vulnerable to nature's harsher forces. The limbs of our beloved tree could break and fall across our house during a summer storm, a very natural reaction to natural forces. The deeper step of a shaman reminds us that this is a direct reflection of our own nature, our own vulnerabilities. We don't blame the tree for falling during a storm. Do we blame ourselves when we break and fall? Do we fiercely try to mask our own vulnerabilities, forgetting that bowing and breaking are also natural reactions? We see this in the trees. Can we see this in ourselves?

Ralph Waldo Emerson, having one foot behind the pulpit and the other dancing around a pagan fire, wrote: "Nature, in its ministry to man, is not only the material, but is also the process and the result." These words remind me that everything—birds, flowers, roadside construction, family reunions, inner turmoil and peace—is nature. Though the green-leaved world outside our windows reflects nature more purely and accessibly, we also live in a world of wires and relationships, pain and pavement. All these, too, are nature. We can honor all the elements of our lives as the "process and result" of a spiritual journey. Judgment and dissatisfaction can be replaced by love and acceptance—casting more light on the inner landscape.

We're never removed from nature. We carry it inside us. We are nature. ▼

Tony Tallent lives in Charlotte, NC. He was raised in the mountains of North Carolina and enjoys good stories, the smell of fresh herbs and creating a loving landscape in his new home and partnership.

FINDING OUR PAN NATURE

Pan was the Greek God of nature and the woods, laughter, passion, music and personal abandon.

BY MIKE GOETTEE



Some believe that gods were created to represent complexities of our human nature, to objectify various aspects of what we are by creating an archetype for each aspect. The Greek god Pan (as well as other horned forest gods common in many other ancient cultures) represents nature, instinct and enlightenment through physical experiences rather than intellect. In our modern culture, we've buried our true natural instincts and we've been taught to fear our "dark side," that part of us that is spontaneous, free-loving and ecstatic. (PANic on recognition of it.) We would do well to remind

ourselves of our Pan nature.

With healthy respect for our bodies, we can enjoy a guiltless and joyful expression or our sensuality, in a completely natural way.

We've been taught to deny our true nature. The figure of Pan has even been appropriated by our modern religions to represent the devil. The myth of Pan revolves partly around his "ugliness" with horns and cloven hooves. Yet with all this, he was shameless about "his difference." That shamelessness is his gift to us.

Pan is the earthy way of spirituality. He is the man-beast-god. Our coming out as gay men is part of the recognition that we are all of these things and they are good. Remembering that allows us to reach a deeper level of spirituality as men who love men. ▼

Mike Goettee has been involved with GSV 1995 and is the designer of both Visionary and our Fall Conference brochures. maxglitz@mindspring.com

**GSV
SPRING
RETREAT**
April 26-28, 2002



Photography
by
Ramón Noya

**GAY SPIRIT VISIONS
2002 CONFERENCE**

September 19-22
The Mountain
Highlands, NC

**PORTAL TO SPIRIT:
TRANSFORMING OUR MANHOOD**

Each GSV gathering is a portal, a doorway through dimensions and across worlds: the dimensions of Spirit and Flesh, Masculine and Feminine, the worlds of each man who participates.

Join us as we explore this mystical place, this Portal to Spirit we call Gay Spirit Visions XIII.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:



Christian de la Huerta,
Author of
Coming Out Spiritually

A brochure will be mailed soon or you may download a brochure from the GSV Web site at www.gayspiritvisions.org.

SUBMISSION OF WORKSHOP IDEAS FOR THE CONFERENCE

Brothers, if you feel so moved to present a workshop at the GSV Fall Conference September 19-22, 2002, we welcome you and ask that you send us your ideas. Please write a brief description of your workshop idea (200 words or less) as it relates to our theme of Portal to Spirit: Transforming Our Manhood. Describe your workshop and what you hope it to accomplish. Workshops should last about 90 minutes.

Send your proposals with your name, address, phone number and e-mail to:

Fall Conference 2001 Workshops
GSV
P.O. Box 339
Decatur, GA 3003-0339

You may also e-mail the information to: gayspirit@mindspring.com with "workshops" in the subject line.

Our deadline for workshop submissions: August 1, 2002.

The GSV Planning Committee will contact you after August 15 about your ideas.

A LIFE LIVED PASSIONATELY

One of the great legacies a person can leave is the example of a life lived with passion. Ramón Noya gives us this example.

Ramón, 61, GSV Elder at Large and dear friend, left this life on June 5, 2002 in San Francisco while attending a lighting convention. Ramón had many passions – music, language, photography, food, art, poetry, among many others. His passion with light made him a world-class, award-winning lighting designer. Anyone in Atlanta can see his work: the Georgia World Congress Center, Atlanta Hartsfield Airport atrium, the street lamps in Midtown, Woodruff Arts Center, the Centennial Olympic Park light towers and much more. His left us at the pinnacle of his career, having recently had work published on the cover of *Global Architecture* magazine. He was director for Grupo Artístico Latino de Atlanta, the Spanish-speaking theater company his mother founded.

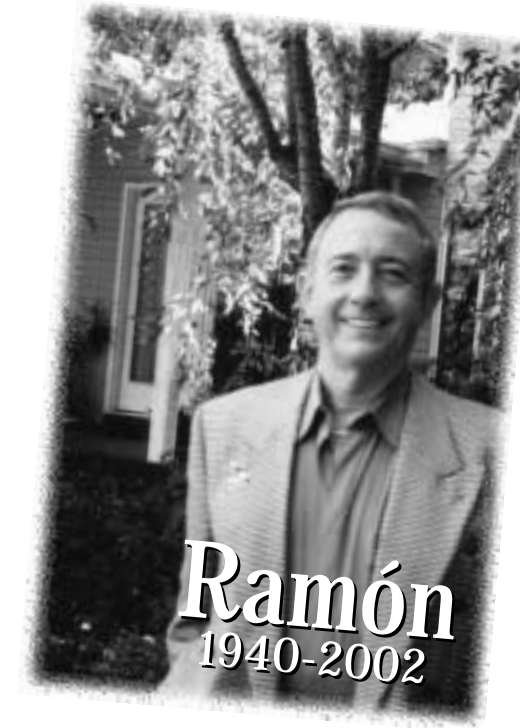
Another of his passions was Gay Spirit Visions. Ramón served this group for years, coordinating rides for Fall Conferences, contributing as a Conference small group leader and offering sound advice to help guide us. He introduced many people to GSV and to Body Electric, another of his passions. Ramón had the ability to look straight into your heart and gently tell you the truth. He touched many people with his love and warm spirit. Though his career and interests kept him extremely busy all over the U.S. and internationally, Ramón nearly always found time to help label and prepare issues of *Visionary* for mailing. This was one of Ramón's greatest examples – to engage life to the fullest but still help with even the smallest task, with a modest, joyful attitude. Ramón continued giving even after his death. As an organ donor, Ramón helped more than a dozen people. We will miss him dearly.

RAMÓN

Ramón Noya memorial at The Mountain

GSV has established a fund to create a memorial to Ramón Noya at The Mountain. Ramón was a Mountain Lifetime Member and advised the organization about lighting design. The memorial will involve light - an elaborate light fixture or some other lighting design project. To contribute to this fund, makes checks out to "Gay Spirit Visions" and send to:

Ramón Noya Memorial Fund
P.O. Box 339
Decatur, GA 30031-0339
Please write "For Ramón" on your check.



At the June GSV Planner's Meeting a few days after Ramón died, Michael Chavez read a poem. Michael said he wrote it after hearing about Ramón's death, but felt that Ramón, through him, could be the real author.

LUMINANCE

For Ramón

It is the luminance of daylight that shines
Long after we've closed the blinds.

It is the memory of the clear dance of dawn,
That lingers after the sunlight has gone.

The twinkling colors of a carnival night,
Twirl in our minds when we turn out the light.

The Sunrises and Sunsets that foretold the Truth,
Glimmer and flicker in the ponds of our youth.

And for all of its shimmer and for all of its shine,
The Moon's gentle rhythms, still mark out the time.

And we are all fools, to think that it should last,
And yet more foolhardy to think it has passed.

As the Wheel turns anew and life ebbs and it flows,
The light is unyielding in our laughter and woes.

And gentle spirits will come, and gentle ones go,
And we will be lucky for the ones we will know,

But at morning, or noon, or under the velvet of night,
These spirits, these stars, do shine ever bright.

—Michael Chávez



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