

VISIONARY



ELDERS PERCH

As I write this spring is at its peak. Outside my window clouds of white dogwoods float over mounds of azaleas in full bloom. I suppose spring is usually thought of as a feminine season because of all the frilly flowers but it seems very much a male time of the year to me. A dozen different plants are thrusting their phallic shoots up out of the earth in my garden. The breeze blows the scent of Bradford pear and Privet hedge blossoms through my open window (a very "manly" smell, I think) along with the inevitable golden pollen that coats everything, including my lungs and contact lenses. That seems a small price to pay though for this virile explosive pageant of life as Father Earth reawakens from his winter sleep. Guys do wake up feeling frisky in the morning.

GSV is certainly thriving this spring, too. In March about eight people showed up to represent GSV as we helped Trees Atlanta plant saplings around a park in East Point. We had a good time and, while it was work, it wasn't too difficult. I handled it, even with a bad back.

We're doing a lot of programs this year. Our annual spring event — The Spring Thing, as we call it — was on May 3. Over 50 men attended, with John Stowe's interactive movement piece based

GSV HAS BIG PLANS FOR PRIDE '97, June 27 – 29.

Our booth will be four times as big as big as last year's and will be bustling with activities. *Your* help is needed for the booth and the float for Sunday's March. See article on page 5

on his new book *Two Spirit Warrior* providing the morning's program. John is doing workshops based on this book around the country — the next is near Denver around the Summer Solstice. (Keep an eye out — he may be coming to your area soon.)

Another GSV event occurred on May 29, when Tobias Schneebaum spoke in Atlanta. About 60 men showed up to hear the openly gay anthropologist discuss his experiences with the Asmat of New Guinea. GSV co-sponsored his trip with the Atlanta International Museum of Art and Design, a great opportunity for us to work with a prestigious local organization. Two days later 6 men went with Tobias and Franklin Abbott on a field trip to Pasaquan, near Buena Vista Georgia, to see the artistic gardens of Eddie O. Martin (St. EOM); check it out next time you're in the Columbus area. And special thanks to Tom Comstock, who very graciously loaned us his townhouse for Tobias's stay.

Also, the Planning Committee had an opportunity in April to meet with Omi Gonzalez, a Yoruba priest from Tampa. Omi will be back sometime during the summer to do a workshop on beliefs and traditions of this complex African/Hispanic religion. We will send you information when we have firm plans.

Our conference has inspired *the mountain* to consider producing a mixed Gay/Lesbian Spirituality weekend. They are interested in what we think. I told them that I thought interest would be strong. If you are in contact with them, let them know what you think about it. Mention it to your Lesbian friends as well. No date has been set. We are considering an expansion of

our time on *the mountain* as well. We have tentatively reserved space for the third weekend in May of next year for a weekend Spring Retreat. It will be much more informal and unstructured than the Fall Conference and *the mountain* will offer work scholarships for those who want to earn their keep. We would appreciate your thoughts on this as well. FYI, *the mountain* has changed its name and adjusted and refined its mission — we'll have an update about that in our next newsletter.

That's what is happening now, but new things pop up every day. GSV is growing like kudzu. Growing things do appreciate being fed now and then though. Last year we received a grant from the Lifebridge Foundation, which has helped us sponsor Tobias, as well as the upcoming event with Omi. More money may be available from them in the future but we should be exploring other resources as well. If you have experience with grant writing and time to devote to it, please let us know. Now that we are an official non-profit organization we can accept contributions and bequests. Remember that contributions to GSV are tax de-

In This Issue

Lighten Up, Mary!.....	2
GSV's Arbor Day.....	2
Synchronicity.....	3
GSV History.....	3
Books Reviews.....	3
Meditation.....	4
Pride '97.....	5
New Group in Charlotte.....	5
Cyberspace.....	5
Salon.....	5
Gay Spirituality.....	6
Fall Conference.....	7

DATES TO REMEMBER

- June 14: Monthly GSV Meeting*
- June 27-29: Atlanta's Pride Celebration
- July 4: target for mailing Fall Conference brochures
- July 12: Monthly GSV Meeting*
- July or August: Omi Gonzales [date TBA]
- August 9: Monthly GSV Meeting*
- September: 13: Monthly GSV Meeting*
- September 19 -21: the Eighth Annual Celebrating Gay Spirit Visions Conference
- *At Atlanta Friends Meetinghouse, 701 W. Howard St., Decatur, GA

ductible and guaranteed to be well spent. Enough begging — at least I didn't go on as long as Public TV!

We hope your Spring has been pleasant and your Summer will be, as well. Mark your calendars with all of the exciting events we have planned and we welcome your suggestions and assistance in planning even more.

Namaste,
Dandelion

LIGHTEN UP, MARY (OR THEY'LL CALL YOU AN OLD FART)

by John R. Stowe

At Gay Spirit Visions, we use the word "elder" with great familiarity. Almost always, there's a sort of hush to our tones, as if to verbally capitalize the word and surround it in the same aura we might use for terms like "God", or "Stonewall", or "Brad Pitt's chest". You can hear it as well in the adjectives — wise elders, trusted elders, responsible elders.

I have a confession. To me, all this p.c. reverence has always had a shadowy, hollow ring to it, the sort of whistle-in-the-dark lip-service men might use when they're trying hard to believe something but really aren't sure. "Oh yeah ... elders ... great stuff. We really need to honor them ... Why, some of my best friends are old ... Me? Elder? Dude! You jest! ... Not yet, not even close ... but you know, when I get there, I'm sure I'll embrace it." We like elders in theory, but let's not let the concept get too close to home.

Don't take me wrong. I really do believe in honoring the men who carry our Tribal wisdom, those of us who really are trusted, responsible elders. I'm grateful for all they've done and for the perspectives and stories they continue to share. I hope to grow into a truly trusted elder myself. It's just so much more comfortable to keep it all in terms of "They" and "Them" instead of "I" and "Me." I'd much rather be figuring out what to do when I grow up than have to come up with answers and wisdom on my own, now. Yet I wonder how much of that is just clinging to comfortable illusion.

Illusions can crack when you least expect. The other night, leafing through my National Geographic Atlas in search of some town in Madagascar, I fell into the "Vital Statistics" section. Life expectancies in India, it said are about 54 years. In Iran, it's 52. Cameroon, 46. Egypt, 44. Afghanistan, 42. Ethiopia, 39. Extrapolating, I wonder if the tribal peoples we respect so much at GSV might have had life expectancies very similar to these. In fact,

those wizened, wisdom-sharing Elders we imagine sitting in their sacred Councils may very well have been younger in years than many of us. (All right, "younger than me" — there, I've said it.)

I'm not sure where all the resistance comes from. On the surface, being an Elder seems positive and straightforward, a good thing. When I look inside, though, I detect the rebellious mutterings of an adolescent boy, struggling with something ... more than struggling ... in fact, he's really pissed. "What's up?" I ask. "Responsibility" he spits out. "It's all I hear! Shut up with your damn adult responsibility."

Responsibility — it is a heavy term. Just saying it, I feel my shoulders sag. Images come without bidding — time sheets, stacks of bills, mortgage payments, car payments, insurance payments, VISA bills, phone bills, taxes. I hear echoes of long-gone voices — "Take out the trash. It's your job." "You've got to work hard to make something of yourself." And finally, that death knell of the Magic Boy, "Grow up! You're too old to play games." To the adolescent, responsibility is anathema. He fights it like death, for in it he sees himself made a butterfly on a board, pierced through the heart with a stake made of obligations and seriousness.

That's where the hollowness comes from, and the resistance. Yet how to avoid it? Surely, the calendar keeps turning — faster each day. There must be something, some trick to help. I think of the Gay Shaman with his transforming magic. He's the one who goes into fearful, dark places, goes all the way to the core, where he claims the power and returns to the world as its master. He does it — each of us does it — when we come out, when we conquer fear and claim an inevitable part of ourselves. Growing old is just as inevitable. Can the same magic help here? How do I claim these concepts of aging and responsibility? How do I transform this grizzled pin through the heart of freedom?

What comes to mind are faces — lined and smiling faces belonging to men I really do respect as Elders in our Tribe. I think of James Broughton whose poetry exalts the ecstasies of male love. I think of Ram Dass whose gentle laughter has inspired a generation of spiritual seekers. I think of Malcolm Boyd who speaks — and listens — from the heart. I think of Sister Missionary Delight whose holy drag gladdens my soul each year at Pride. (These

are the safe ones. I think of others, too, men like Andrew Ramer and Franklin Abbott, but these men are younger, closer to my own age, so let's not go there yet!) I admire these men. Not that I'd want to put any one of them on a pedestal; they'd be the first to admit their full measure of humanity. I look up to them, though, and let them teach me by example.

One of the things I notice is their sense of responsibility. Each one is committed to making a positive difference in the world. At the same time, though, the commitment is tempered by a remarkable ability to take themselves lightly. In the face of vital, serious issues, these men seem ready to laugh — at the world, at life's absurdity, and most of all, at themselves. I think of a poem my mother has on her wall that goes "When I am an old woman, I shall wear purple." In fact, when I look at these men, I can imagine any one of them wearing purple, a big purple hat, even — at least long enough to make a splashy entrance. This lightness, coupled as it is with deep responsibility, shakes my adolescent to the core. It forces him to ask, "Is there something to this Elder business I don't see?"

What if we look at responsibility as part of freedom? What if we see it as taking care of business so we can enjoy the activities that truly give us pleasure? What if it means being responsible for our own lives, and for helping each other move beyond fear and homophobia to act in the world with integrity? What if it means expressing all our glorious man-loving queerness every chance we get? What if it means being a bit more colorful, claiming our gifts, pushing envelopes, strutting our stuff? What if it means learning to take ourselves lightly as the best antidote to the seriousness of the world? What if responsibility, instead of killing them, in fact allows the butterflies inside us to frolic in the sunshine of springtime? "Whoa, dude, slow down. That's too radical."

I don't have all the answers. Surely, I'm not old enough. What about you? Maybe by the time we get around to being Elders, we'll know more. In the meantime, though, I think I'm gonna try on a few purple hats, just so I know what size to order for ... uh ... you know, later, when it's time.

TREE PLANTING SUCCESSFUL

On March 15, men from Gay Spirit Visions joined other volunteers with Trees Atlanta. We helped plant nearly fifty trees at three locations in East Point. Both our backs and the new trees were doing well

at the time of publication.

We will probably organize another official GSV tree planting in the future. In the meanwhile, give Trees Atlanta a call; they go out planting every Saturday morning and always welcome some help. Just wear work clothes and take along some gloves and a few friends. It feels good to know that a few hours of effort can leave a legacy that may be there for generations.

A MEDITATION ON SYNCHRONICITY

by Bruce Parrish

How have I always known the concept of "old" and "new" souls? How have I been able to appreciate my uniqueness as a gift? How have I understood that the Earth is something more significant than a walking path? Is it because of my belief in the Divine Order of the Universe? When I sometimes wonder why I am no further along in my development or why a barrier was created, I console myself with the clarity of knowing that events of my life have and will come to me at the appropriate time.

I recall a time when I needed to release a friend whose energy drained me — he moved to another city. I recall a time when I was a substance abuse dependent — a support friend came to my rescue. I recall a time when I needed a kind word — an affectionate dog appeared on my afternoon walk. Just like those "things that go bump in the night" that stir haunting thoughts, the events of life have a distinct purpose and meaning. The gift gets even better when in addition to experiencing the mysteries of life, a person will stop and think and be attuned to the events of each day and the patterns that are created — why did a particular person come into our lives and why at the particular time. Why did a certain event happen? What was its purpose? What is the lesson that is to be learned by the events of life? When another person's words have a bite to them and a nerve is touched, ask why — What belief do I have that is impacted?

When an event or person brings immense joy and happiness, enhance the beauty of the experience by recognizing how it fits the need of the moment. When a challenging time occurs, search the depths of the soul to clarify how growth is to be gained. In Ecclesiastes we hear that to every thing there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heavens. It is by design that we are "men who love men" so that we can be the bridge through which love of all mankind can be enhanced. It is significant that each of us has found Gay Spirit Visions — that we par-

ticipate in rituals — that we are experiencing tribal unity — that we are given an opportunity through expressing our spiritual ways to bring Peace on this magnificent planet. It is not by accident but by Divine Force that we are here on Earth at this time.

A HISTORY OF GSV

by Al Cotton

[I wrote this to a person on the GSV e-mail reflector when asked what it was GSV was about. A few people asked that it be reprinted in the newsletter, because they thought it did a good job of very succinctly summing up GSV's history and mission.]

Gay Spirit Visions started as an outgrowth from a series of Radical Faerie gatherings (which was the first hint of a movement among gay men to consider what masculinity means to us) that happened at Running Water farm near Asheville, North Carolina in the late '70s and 80s. The farm ended its life as a sanctuary in 1988, and three men who had attended gatherings there — Ron Lambe (managed Running Water, now lives in Asheville), Peter Kendrick (lives in Mars Hill NC with his lover Rocco Patt), and Raven Wolf-dancer (lived in Atlanta til his death in 1993) — wanted to keep the energy going, but refocus it, make it less anarchic, more structured than the average faerie gathering. So we have lots of typical faerie things — men in dresses and leather, heart circles, an egalitarian talent show — and yet we also have keynotes, facilitated small groups, workshops, etc. It has turned out to be a very effective way to introduce mainstream gay men to alternative spiritualities.

The focus that I (my opinion, as one of a dozen or so "Planners", and so I speak for myself) see in what we do is that many gay men are so wounded by their rejection of mainstream spirituality that they need a place to heal those wounds and re-discover their innate sacred spiritual gifts and mission. That process starts for gay men when they are in our space, and being witness to that beginning is one of the truly great gifts I have received from my involvement here.

Several different paths interweave in our space, and we try to be non-judgmental of them all — "We love you and support you on your journey" is a phrase we've chanted before. The main threads I see are:

(1) rediscovering to our unique gifts and roles as gay people, by looking

at societies in which we previously had valued roles (very much a Faerie focus, though Greece, Native American, South Pacific, Yoruba and Celtic influences can also be seen here);

(2) reconnecting sexuality and spirituality in our lives, and thereby helping society to see the importance of that connection (Leather, Body Electric, other types of massage workshops and such are examples of this); and

(3) learning how to heal our selves (from AIDS, homophobia, etc.), and extending that healing wisdom to our society and planet (branching out to activism, environmental stuff, Native American again, etc.).

The upcoming conference, our 8th, is held at a Unitarian/Universalist retreat center called *the mountain*, near Highlands, NC, about 2½ hrs. from Atlanta. People who have spoken at our conference include the founder of the gay rights and Radical Faerie movements Harry Hay, poet James Broughton, novelist Tom Spanbauer (*The Man Who Fell in Love with the Moon*), Mark Thompson (*Gay Spirit: Myth and Meaning, Leather Folk*), Malcolm Boyd (the first major religious figure to come out publicly), Andrew Ramer, Franklin Abbott, and others. Mark Thompson's book *Gay Soul* has interviews with many of these people in it, and is an excellent source of information.

In 1992, the conference planning was assumed by a collective of men in Atlanta who wanted to ensure that the conference continue. We started a newsletter in 1995; incorporated and got tax-exempt non-profit status in 1996 and received our first grant from The Lifebridge Foundation; and our new office, as of March 1997, represents our next progressive step toward corporate existence and roots. This e-mail reflector represents our first venture into cyber-community. A website will probably be next. We had over 150 subscribers to this reflector as of May, 1997.

BOOK CORNER

by Al Cotton

I can't seem to get rid of the book-reviewing bug. Since ending my column with *Southern Voice* in January, it's especially frustrating to see great new books that I want to tell people about, and not have a venue for doing that. So let me scratch that itch here — two more new books to let you know about this time.

Andrew Ramer's newest "angel" book is *Revelations for a New Millennium* (\$13.00, Harper San Francisco). Andrew is the co-author of *Ask Your Angels* and author of *Angel Answers*; this book brings together much of the rest of the material

Andrew has accumulated over the years from his "primary" angel, Sargolais, and others. As a book designed to take Andrew's wisdom into a mainstream context, there is a minimal amount of gay content. (For Andrew's gay stories, check out the just-released new edition of *Two Flutes Playing* published by Alamo Square Press.)

I found *Revelations* to have a lot of good information in it. The first few chapters give us our planetary and species history and contain a fascinating alternative cosmology. The text fails to capture the wry sense of humor that Andrew has when he speaks in person; the "Earth University" sections worked much better when I superimposed Andrew's speaking presence on them. I especially liked the chapter entitled "The First Covenant," which provides wisdom from people who attained enlightenment, but didn't quite have the press agents that Jesus or the Buddha had. The idea that enlightenment is available to each human who truly seeks it is a valuable reminder indeed. Chapter 10, "Guidance for Daily Living," is an excellent catch-all chapter (a selection about the idea of "Meditating" is reprinted elsewhere in this newsletter); Chapter 11's interview with Lucifer/Luciferanda is an enlightening look at the dark side of things.

I found myself less interested in the chapter that suggests that bones are as yet another bodily system that stores our energy, history and future, and I skimmed the section on the newly awakening chakras I now have to keep up with. But I can recommend *Revelations* without hesitation, both for the wisdom it contains, and for the glimpse it provides us Gay Spireteers (who've heard Andrew speak many times) of what sorts of information he has to offer to society as a whole.

If anyone reads it, Gabriel Rotello's *Sexual Ecology: AIDS and the Destiny of Gay Men* will be the 1990s version of ... *And the Band Played On*, Randy Shilts' groundbreaking compilation of ignorance of and manipulation of the politics at the beginning of the AIDS epidemic. It was the book that defined AIDS for gay people in the decade of the 1980s. *Sexual Ecology* is equally provocative.

Rotello's book challenges the gay community to acknowledge and accept responsibility for how our behavior contributed to the AIDS crisis. His evidence for critique-ing our community and its behavior comes from the application of the sciences of epidemiology and ecology to our AIDS experience. He begins articulating his ecological perspective by proposing that no epidemic occurs without a corresponding ecological change that enables

a bacteria or virus to spread rapidly. To take one example, the recent hantavirus scare in the American Southwest came to light because of a heavy pinon nut crop that caused virus-carrying rats to multiply greatly, followed by heavy rains that forced them into houses to look for shelter. The hantavirus had probably been mysteriously killing a person here, a person there, for centuries; it took these events for it to rise to a level high enough to discover it.

That epidemic never reached the "tipping point," though — the point at which it started infecting more people than it was killing — because ecological conditions didn't change enormously. Rotello argues that the combination of the sexual revolution in the 1960s (changing the environment), amplified by the gay bathhouse culture of the 1970s (creating the tipping point) changed our "sexual ecology" and enabled the AIDS epidemic to reach devastating heights. He argues persuasively that gay bathhouses created the perfect environment for HIV transmission to push itself to the tipping point, and way beyond. And the evidence we have now about infection rates among twenty-something gay shows that we cannot expect faultlessly perfect and accident-free condom use to succeed, proving Safer Sex to be nothing more than a Band-Aid solution to the problem.

Most intriguing for me were Rotello's suggestions about how to deal with AIDS ecologically. He likens the attempt to change only the minimal amount of gay culture necessary to save lives (i.e., use condoms, but don't worry about promiscuous behavior) to "shallow" ecology, similar to the logging industry's talk about the need to cut old growth forests to preserve "logging culture," or the Japanese tradition of killing whales. Condoms represent the classic "technological fix," a characteristic of shallow ecological thinking, attempting to keep people from having to change their behavior to correct ecological imbalances. Deep ecology, on the other hand, involves changing behaviors and lifestyles, making truly sustainable differences in environments. That's why Rotello asks as his central question whether gay men can "create a sustainable gay culture, one in which people are free to be homosexual, but one that does not destroy the very souls it liberates?"

This book is enormously courageous (Rotello has already been booed and screamed at in speeches he's given to gay groups), and it has more credibil-

ity in my eyes because it is written by a gay man — I would not have accepted these conclusion from a straight person. To me, Rotello's knowledge of epidemiological science is thorough and irrefutable; and his ecological parallels provocative and challenging. Applied to sex, "think globally, act locally" would remind gay people that, just as we recycle a single can in the belief that we are making a difference, change in the world might occur in our environment if we didn't engage in that one-night stand, and especially if we stayed away from that bathhouse or sex club.

This is an important book — scientifically substantial, understanding of the specific difficulties and challenges of gay people and gay culture, and willing to ask us to shoulder our proper responsibility for the tragedies that befell us in the 1980s. I highly encourage you to read it and grapple with its implications.

FROM ANDREW

[The following excerpt is from Revelations for a New Millennium: Voices of Saints, Angels and God, by Andrew Ramer (\$13.00, HarperSan Francisco)]

Meditation

Do you think that meditation is a technique? Something you must learn? Something difficult that will take time, practice, and attention? Do you think that meditation is something that will benefit your spiritual life if only you can master it, if only you can find the right technique, the right teacher?

Think again. Meditation is not something outside of you, separate and difficult to master. It does not require special postures, although you may use them if you like. It does not require special words or chants, although you may use them if you feel so inclined. Meditation is not something to be learned, like swimming or typing or driving a vehicle. Meditation is something you already know how to do. All you have to do is realize that.

It is morning. As you look outside your window, you see your neighbor's cat get up, stretch, find a patch of sunlight, and lie down in it. It was chasing after birds a moment ago, but it is still now. It will stay still for a while, for it is meditating.

On a tree limb, in the hot sun of afternoon, a squirrel pauses in its wild adventures. It composes itself and rests, facing the sun. As you watch it, as you feel it, know that it, in its most natural way, is stopping and slowing and meditating.

Night falls. On the roof of your house a single bird calls. Once, and again. It calls, trilling out notes. Then it repeats them. And something in you stills as you

listen to its song. For it is meditating, and you are meditating with it.

Washing dishes, you can meditate. Dancing, whole body turning with music, you can meditate. Sitting in a chair in front of the window, turning your eyes from houses to trees to steeples to the tops of craggy office buildings, taking it all in, as if that landscape were inside you, as if you were big enough to hold it. Being one with all you see, and breathing. That is meditation. A part of nature. A regular part of life. Not something you have to learn, but something we angels invite you to notice that you can do all the time — to heal, to balance, to center, to refresh. Like a dog stretched out in front of a fire. Like yourself, gazing into it.

GENERATIONS OF PRIDE

Atlanta Pride Festival,
June 27-29

Brothers, HO! It's Magikboy here again with a "good news, bad news" update on our participation in the Atlanta Gay Pride Festival.

The bad news is that due to a county ordinance passed on May 5th, the Ritual Fire we had planned to tend in Piedmont Park all weekend will not occur. The good news is that Gay Spirit Visions will again sponsor a float in the parade on Sunday, as well as create a safe space with a booth on the festival grounds. This gives you two opportunities to weave your Gay Spirit into the Southeast's largest gay pride celebration.

With the Pride Festival only a few weeks away, I encourage all of you to participate in and be a part of GSV's Pride festivities. The theme this year is "Generations of Pride." We are in the process of finalizing plans for the float and have also decided to enlarge our booth space to accommodate more social opportunities. We need volunteers to staff the booth, as well as all kinds of Magic-Weaving brothers to ride and be with the float.

Our booth will be about four times as large as last year's. However, we are not listed in the Pride program. We will be in the tent next to *Southern Voice*, to the left of the stage (as you face the stage). We will have an altar — complete with prayer candles like last fall at *the mountain*, displays about GSV and *the mountain*, space for socializing, and a space for massage and/or any type of healing work — complete with a massage table.

Like last year we will also be giving away ice water, so our booth should be very popular for a number of reasons. We

need volunteers to staff the booth on Friday evening from 6 – 9pm and on Saturday and Sunday from 11am – 9pm. Call Joe Chancey to sign up for the booth at 404/688-6163. Body workers also call Joe to volunteer (and bring your business cards!).

Call me at 404/248-9218 to sign up to be on the float or to walk along beside it or for other information. There is nothing more rewarding than weaving your special energy with the members of our community. So think about it, but not too long, as time is of the essence.

Mischief, Mayhem, &
Magik in Abundance,
Todd Kinney, Magikboy

GAY SPIRIT VISIONS GROUP FORMS IN CHARLOTTE

January 19, 1997 marked the beginning of a Gay Spirit Visions group in Charlotte, North Carolina. The group began with seven individuals meeting at the home of David Witt to discuss the possibility of forming a Charlotte extension of Gay Spirit Visions. Five of the seven have experienced the Fall Conference on *the mountain*.

It was decided that there was a need for such a group in the Charlotte area and the group decided to meet on the third Sunday of every month from 5PM til 7PM. As of mid-March the group has since met twice more, in the home of Jennings Fort of Gastonia and Phil Richardson of Charlotte, growing to 13 individuals.

It is hoped that the group will continue to grow and be an extension of Gay Spirit Visions. We would welcome other Brothers from the surrounding area to join in this effort. It is also hoped that Brothers from across the South would join us and assist in providing programs and guidance. Interested brothers can contact David Witt at 704/537-2945. Say HO! Brother.... And HO! Again!!

CYBER UPDATE

I have taken on the chair of the Cyber-Communications Committee; the other members are Al Cotton (bearsekr@aol.com), Gary Kaupman (gkaupman@aol.com), Todd Fibus (tffat1@mindspring.com) and Harry Rezzamini (hrezz@cc.gatech.edu). We are working on implementing the website that Harry created for us as a pro-

ject for his graduate studies in Georgia Tech's computer science program. We hope to have it up and running some time this summer. Our main goal with it will be to smooth out the flow of information, giving you a place to go to see what events are upcoming, what previous keynotes have said, and a cyberplace to send friends to find out more about GSV. Please send any of us your suggestions, feedback, comments, etc. Our reflector currently has more than 150 subscribers — more than can attend any other GSV event. Recent discussions have included Dancing Dolphin's hosting of the Healing Touch International Tour, A meditation on St. Michael, a moving account of a sweat lodge, updates on various people's spiritual journeys, and chat about books. Some people are posting their own poetry as well. If you're online, send me a message, and I'll send you the e-mail that describes how to subscribe.

David Brodeur
(dbrodeur@mindspring.com)

SALON UPDATE

by Al Cotton

Hi, guys — we had our organizational meeting for the new GSV Salon on Sunday, March 16, and our first full-fledged discussion on Sunday, April 6. We wanted to pass on the information about how our prototype works, in case any of you might be interested in starting one. The goal behind it is to develop a new way for us GSV-ers to interact with each other, where we can talk from the heart about gay spirit.

Here's our ever-evolving structure as it stands right now. We meet on the first Sunday of every month. We plan to limit ourselves to no more than 10 full members, because that seems like a number that will generate an average attendance of about 6 to 8 people. We are willing to have as many as 2 guests per meeting (maybe more if lots of people plan to be absent), so that we won't stagnate from lack of new blood. At our last meeting we decided to try out a membership process that let members formally join after attending three meetings — once we have ten members, the membership is set until someone misses three meetings in a row. Then they drop off the roster, and the first person on the waiting list moves up. That gives us an orderly process for determining who is, in fact, a "salonista."

We are meeting in people's homes so that it can feel more intimate and informal. The host provides his home for the meeting, prepares dessert, and keeps the RSVP list so that he can know when to cut

off the guest list (i.e., when he's likely to run out of chairs). The guests should prepare for the meeting just like any other Salon member, by reading the book, attending the performance, etc. This is not a spectator sport.

The topic is not limited to literature — any issue that has something gay about it, or is spirit-oriented, may be chosen if the person who wants to discuss it can convince the rest of us to choose it. We were nervous enough about people bringing their own written work that we've asked that people not do it. We also ask that we not be given something experiential to do, and that you not bring something that you make a living doing or would be hurt if we spoke frankly about. Don't use the space to proselytize — it would be appropriate for a Shambhala meditator to ask us to read a book about Shambhala, but not ask us to sit for 30 minutes.

An actual meeting goes like this. Arrival time is 7:30PM; everyone should be seated and ready to start at 8PM. The first part is a heart-circle type check-in; part two consists our discussion of the main topic; then dessert; and the last section will be devoted to reading short-ish passages of something that have spiritual significance to one of us, or that we find "spiritually provocative," or that is otherwise deemed wonderful enough to share with the others; and to recommend authors, books or essays that we want others to be aware of.

We currently have 7 full members, and several other people who have attended one meeting. I'll be glad to serve as Cyber-Gatekeeper if anyone local is interested in attending, or if any of you out-of-towners are passing through Atlanta on the first Sunday of a month and would like to drop in. Topics we've discussed so far include the "Faerieland" poems of W.B. Yeats, Mark Matousek's wonderful spiritual memoir, *Sex Death Enlightenment*, Terrence McNally's play *Love, Valour, Compassion!* (both the local Atlanta production and the movie), and Tobias Schneebaum's GSV lecture on bisexuality in tribal New Guinea.

Next month, we're reading Richard Isay's *Becoming Gay*, a book by one of the foremost gay Freudian psychotherapists. Other topics we're considering include Gabriel Rotello's *Sexual Ecology*, Matthew Fox's *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, and the poetry of the late Allen Ginsburg.

We tried pretty hard to come up with something that reflects GSV values and practices and are proud of what we came up with. Send along any feedback, suggestions, etc., you might have about working

with similar groups, or how this sounds.

GAY SPIRITUALITY

[The following is an edited excerpt from Tobias Schneebaum's lecture, delivered to GSV at the Atlanta Friends Meeting House on May 29, 1997.]

It is no wonder that male American Indians who preferred marriage to men over marriage to women, lived as women, dressed as women and did all the chores associated with women; it is no wonder that they were considered to be spiritual beings, transmuted from humans to a higher state because they believed their sexuality allowed them insights into another world. It was a world of magic and mystery, one of clairvoyance and intelligence, as well as one with an instinct for life connected to both the heavens and the earth itself. It was (is) a way of seeing that ordinary men cannot approach....

These few examples [from Burma, India, New Guinea, etc.] give some idea of what many tribal people felt in the past about same-sex love and sexual intercourse. Some groups forbade it, others extolled it; still others felt it necessary to apologize for its existence and came to it through the back door (if you will forgive the allusion), excusing the lewdness and licentiousness of the spirits. Yet, it was tribal people who allowed me to come to the freedom I now feel about relationships with lovers and friends. I have passed the three-quarters of a century mark and am an old man. Even so, I continue to love the taste of cock as much now as I did fifty years ago.

I suppose I started out life as an ordinary queer, a fairy, a nancy-boy, whatever you want to call me. I lived in terror of being discovered in a compromising position, although I never believed there was anything immoral or sinful about what I was doing. Still, I knew enough not to declare myself to anyone except for the rare man with whom I found myself coupled. I thought that whatever my feelings might be at the moment, they would eventually go away so that I would naturally grow to a feeling of sexual love for women instead of for men. Of course, I would want to get married and would want children. Didn't everyone want these things? Isn't that what life is all about? Didn't I want to rid myself of loneliness, of finding my bed empty every night? Who ached more than I did when waking in the middle of a nightmare of the great void between me and

the rest of the world? I was separated by an emptiness so deep, a chasm so wide it could not be bridged. I was wanting someone close to me, someone to touch and be touched by.

Those wasted years! Oh! those terrible times when I yearned for a man to come to me! Why was that peace and acceptance not permitted to me? If only I had known of tribal peoples who for centuries, for thousands of years, lived the life I needed. Why did no one ever tell me of an existence elsewhere where it was possible to fuck and be fucked, to hold and be loved? Why was it all hidden? Why was homosexuality considered an affliction, a disease, a cancer to be despised, rooted, out and punished?

I know that I was not alone in facing the world. There must be thousands right now who are slowly coming to the realization that we must accept ourselves for who and what we are. Those primitive people, those people, who were looked down upon, were my saving grace. It was they who lived the simple life, who encouraged my need for men, who took me out of the closet, gave me the world, saved me life and love. They gave me their whole body, their whole spirit and their spirituality in ways that still startle me when I think of it. I am no longer afraid of the world; I am no longer afraid of myself. I am free. They made me free, not necessarily by what they said but by their attitudes towards sex in all its varieties....

It was only among the Asmat that I was able to fulfill my expectations. The kind of love that I sought was right there to be had if only I had the courage to accept it. It was not the same love, compassion and passion that someone of the western world might offer. It was a whole other thinking process between two partners in an alliance, who shared lives, whether it was among the Navaho, those who practice Tantra, among the Asmat, or between two New Yorkers. In one sense it was the formal coming together of a pair of men committed to one another. In another sense, it was a spiritual affair, as well as one that is a down to earth affinity that is natural between them. I was enthralled, exalted by the discovery, spiritualized, if you will. The teacher's house or men's house in which I stayed turned into the altar of a great Renaissance cathedral right before my eyes. It was heart-breaking. There was then a special bond that Aipit offered me, bringing tears to my eyes at night as I lay thinking of how all this came to pass. It happened because I was in a society that gave me spiritual guidance and spiritual love.

Early on in my friendship with Aipit, a ritual took place that I see in retrospect

as the beginning of my encounters with spirituality. I was in the men's house, asking questions of the carvers who were secretly working on seven huge ancestor poles for a feast soon to come to climax. Suddenly, I was surrounded by a group of what turned out to be fourteen men, all naked. I was wearing shorts at the time. The men came to me and lifted me up horizontally. They had begun to chant and yelp and grunt in unison, "Uh! Uh! Uh!" They carried me to one end of the men's house, turned, carried me to the other end, then carried me to the central fireplace, where they stopped, still grunting "Uh! Uh! Uh!" The man at my right bent down and began to suck my nose, moved to suck my earlobes, sucked my fingers one by one, sucked my nipples, opened my shorts and sucked my penis, sucked my toes one after the other. No sooner had that first man sucked my nipples when the second bent over me to suck my nose and proceeded down my body to suck the other extensions. I wasn't aware of the details of what was happening. I could see the basic structure of the men's house as I looked up. I was chilled; I was hot. There was darkness, with shafts of doorway light streaking through. Maybe I was in that cathedral with the elders naked before me, carrying me, sucking me. I envisioned the future and the past, all passing before me like a drowning man's life passing before him. In time, all fourteen men sucked upon my body parts. One after another, they were absorbing the essence of myself

into their bodies and blood, licking the sweat, too, to fill themselves with my strength, smelling my body odors, wiping more sweat from my chest and rubbing it onto their own faces and chests. They were taking in my spirit and, in the taking, I found my own spirituality.

Tobias Schneebaum

"MENTORING" THEME FOR FALL CONFERENCE

We have enough clarity for our plans for the fall conference to give you a preview of what's coming. Our keynote will be Will Roscoe, author of Lambda-award winning *The Zuni Man Woman*, a pathbreaking book in helping gay men learn about the berdache role that two-spirit men played in Native American tribes, *Queer Spirits*, a gay men's myth book, and editor of *Radically Gay*, the collected writings of Harry Hay.

Part of the magic we share at Gay Spirit Visions is the way we teach and nurture each other. One form this sharing takes is through workshops at our annual Conference. This September, our Conference theme is Mentoring. Aspects of mentoring include intergenerational teaching of elder to younger man, peer mentoring as we share with each other, spiritual mentoring related to supporting ourselves on a spiritual

path, and societal mentoring as we share with the world.

If you would like to present a workshop at this year's Conference we invite you to submit a short proposal as soon as possible. Workshops will run 1 to 1½ hours, depending on scheduling and availability of facilities. Let us know who you are, what you propose to share, what facilities you would need, and how your workshop supports our exploration of mentoring. Send your proposal to the Conference Planning Committee, PO Box 339, Decatur, GA 30030 or call Al Cotton at 404/292-8567, e-mail bearsekr@aol.com

VISIONARY

Volume 3, Number 2
June, 1997

©The Council of Trusted Elders of Gay Spirit Visions, Inc.
P.O. Box 339
Decatur, Georgia 30031-0339

Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the individual writers and not necessarily those of The Council of Trusted Elders of Gay Spirit Visions, Inc.

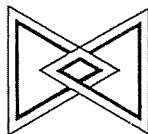
Please send all correspondence to the above address. Readers are invited to submit articles and letters for publication.

Summer Solstice Retreat for Men Who Love Men

John R. Stowe will facilitate a **Summer Solstice Retreat for Men Who Love Men**, June 20 -22, in Colorado. Twenty men will come together on the Earth to access, explore, and celebrate our own vision of Gay spirituality. During our three days together, we'll create a community of ongoing support and trust in which to discover practical ways to live with power and heart, to take our place as conscious healers of self, society, and planet.

Cost of the retreat is \$345, which includes meals. We'll be camping in a beautiful area at 7000 ft, on the plains east of the Rockies. Travel is via Denver or Colorado Springs. For more information, contact:

John Stowe	(404) 373-0111	jrstowe@mindspring.com
Joel May	(303) 321-2203	jmayarch@aol.com
John Reardon	(303) 648-9866	cntryhrt2@aol.com



Two-Spirit Warrior

An Empowerment Journey for Gay Men
by John R. Stowe

This 300-pg workbook guides you on a personalized inner journey of self-discovery and transformation. Explore the full range of your gifts as a man-loving man. Move beyond wounding and self-limitation to claim health, passion, creativity, and vitality.

To order, send \$23 (includes postage) to

EARTHFRIENDS, P.O.Box 8468, Atlanta, GA 31106

**INTRODUCTORY
OFFER**

Mention this add for a

**50% Discount
on your first massage.**

Good for new clients
for one professional,
therapeutic, nonsexual
massage from

**Joe Chancey
Certified Massage Therapist**

404/523-3624

**ENERGY FIELD
THERAPY**

GERRY MITCHELL

Healing In Vitality

**Therapeutic Massage &
Energy Field Work**

404 303-8978

FAX 404 705-9634

email: HEALTOUCH@AOL.COM

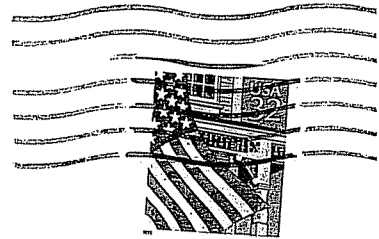
HEALING TOUCH

Energy Field Work, Chakra
Balancing, Therapeutic
Touch, Polarity,
Accupressure, and
Massage Therapy

Bernhard Zinkgraf, CMT

404 866-1201

**Vo. 3, # 2, June, 1997
VISIONARY
GSV
P.O. BOX 339
DECATUR, GA 30031-0339**



ATL GA 303 18:03 06/14/97 #5

FIRST CLASS MAIL

Jim D. Jones
45 Tanglewood Rd.
Newnan, GA 30263

3026374110

