

# VISIONARY



Volume 3, Number 4

The Newsletter of Gay Spirit Visions

December, 1997

## ELDER'S PERCH

Although I'm a "floating" elder on The Council of Trusted Elders for GSV, I rarely feel, well...*elderly*. When I look at my fellow elders, Dandelion, Bernhard, Treewalker and Joe, I sometimes feel inadequate and misplaced amongst them. I feel a little phony.

Why? Well, as my friend Al Cotton is always saying, "trust Spirit." I've heard John Stowe say that many times, too. And so as I listen to Al and John and the other elders I realize I haven't quite developed a knack for trusting Spirit. These guys seem to know Spirit... hear Spirit... embrace Spirit. Me? I'm Spirit-challenged. That's my problem. I want to be a member of the tribe, but I feel sorta like the mascot.

I don't know exactly how I got so spiritually mucked up and confused. I do know that Spirit was curiously absent for me in organized religion. I was raised Southern Baptist in Alabama and then converted to Catholicism at the age of 19. The Baptists made sure I understood all about eternal damnation. As a child I used to imagine that I saw Satan peering through my bedroom window at night. I guess he just wanted to know if I was being naughty or nice. The Catholics, on the other hand, taught me about grace, the Virgin Mary, and transubstantiation. The priests even get to change costumes for Easter and Christmas. Interesting rituals. The incense is a nice touch. But don't forget about mortal sin, venial sin and purgatory. *Where was Spirit in all of this?*

I certainly don't mean to deride organized religion. I know it is a source of joy for many folks. But for me, David "The Wanton Cub" Salyer, it has been a source of great distress and guilt. You see, for a very long time I believed those churches when they said gay men were bound for hell. I lost faith, and worse, I abandoned my own spiritual needs. Because these churches seemingly had nothing positive to say to me I essentially be-

came an agnostic. *Is Spirit repulsed by my homosexuality?*

In early 1992 I met and dated a man who was very active in the Episcopal church. He was, in fact, the verger of a large downtown Atlanta parish. In five months of dating he never once asked me to go to his church. He never asked about my religious training and he never asked about my spiritual life. I found this a little odd at the time, but I convinced myself he was only being careful not to force his own faith on me. After five months of emotional and physical abuse, lies, and reckless sex, I left him. I left him because he was morally repugnant. I left him because I feared for my own safety. I left him because a small, persistent voice told me to. *Spirit? Was I listening to Spirit?*

Four years later I attended this man's funeral at his own church. It was a packed house. I sat in a pew and listened to glowing eulogies. A few people wept. I saw our mutual friends and I even noticed three other Gay Spirit Vision brothers. I wondered if anyone else in that church knew this man the way I had known him. No, I decided; I alone had the rare privilege of seeing this man at his worst. And I realized that he could not have forced his faith on me when we were together because he had no faith. He didn't believe in himself. He didn't believe in Spirit. And he never got over the fact that the his church had repeatedly refused to ordain him, a homosexual man, to the priesthood. He embraced AIDS and he died. *If you ignore Spirit long enough, does it abandon you?*

Ironically, 1992 is also the year I found out about Gay Spirit Visions. I was given the brochure by an ex-boyfriend, the same ex-boyfriend who'd supported me the night I broke up with the verger. I think Tom (the ex) is a man who listens to Spirit and trusts Spirit. He handed me the GSV brochure and said "you should go."

## Dates to Remember

**December 13, 10.00am:** Monthly GSV Planning Meeting\*

**7.00pm:** GSV Potluck at the home of Jim Fason and Roger Weinstein. 404.869.6891

**December 22:** Happy Birtyday, Counsel of Trusted Elders of Gay Spirit Visions!! (our incorporation anniversary)

**January 10, 10.00am:** Monthly GSV Planning Meeting\*

Time for election of new Elders and submission of Statements of Intentions to join the Planning Committee

**7.00pm:** GSV Potluck

**February 7, 10.00am:** Monthly GSV Planning Meeting\*

**March 7, 10.00am:** Monthly GSV Planning Meeting\*

**March 14:** Bernie Morin Reiki fundraiser

**March 20-22:** John Ballew Body Electric Fundraiser

\*@Atlanta Friends Meeting House, 701 W. Howard Ave., Decatur

*Does spirit speak through the people you trust?*

Five conferences later here I am still trying to get the Spirit thing. Why can't Spirit just walk up to me and introduce itself? "Hello, I'm Spirit. I'll be your source of enlightenment for the rest of your life." Maybe you've guessed my problem. On some level I sort of expect Spirit to show up like Glenda the Good Witch...Willy Wonka...or that celestial messenger from "Angels in America." Intellectually I know Spirit probably isn't so flashy or obvious. Perhaps I spend so much time looking for grand entrances that I miss Spirit's quiet little appearances. *Knock, knock. Who's there? Spirit. Spirit who?*

Some of you know that I was very sick during the summer. My HIV, previously a passive resident of my body, de-

cided to run amok and demand attention. Fever, cough, difficulty breathing, weight loss, night sweats and fatigue. Pneumocystis pneumonia. My partner Kim drove me to the emergency room, where a doctor bearing no resemblance whatsoever to George Clooney huffily chastised me for having the nerve to get sick when there are so many miracle cocktail drugs available to me. I should mention that I wasn't taking any of the miracle cocktail drugs at the time. I had been taking an holistic approach to my health for some time, so I told the doctor I'd made choices outside conventional, mainstream medicine. I might as well have told him I worshipped Satan, drank the blood of newborns and regularly submitted to anal probe exams administered by aliens. In other words, this guy thought I was the dumbest faggot on the planet. *Spirit, where are you now?*

Eventually I was taken from emergency and given a room in the hospital. The hospital assigned an infectious disease specialist to my case and the first thing he did was sit down, place his hand on my leg, look me in the eyes and say, "This is serious and I know you're scared, but we can get you through this." The simple act of touching me and acknowledging that I might be scared made me feel like a whole person again instead of just another sick queer with HIV. After the doctor left, a nurse entered my room and began chatting and pattering at my bedside. It dawned on me suddenly that I knew this nurse. "I think we know each other," I said. "Midtown? Emory University?" he quizzed. "No," I replied. "The Mountain. Gay Spirit Visions." We'd met briefly at the 1995 GSV conference. He

sat for a while and helped me relax. *Co-incidence or Spirit? Can they be one in the same?*

Later that day Kim returned to the hospital and I told him about my nurse, Ken. Kim got this big goofy smile on his face and triumphantly declared, "it worked." What had "worked," he explained, was a little ritual he'd performed back home after leaving me at the hospital. Some candles, ashes from last year's fire at *the mountain* and a prayer. *Is it possible to invoke Spirit?*

At the GSV conference in September I was still feeling kinda puny. My usual energy was missing. I felt wobbly and insecure. I was participating at half mast. By Sunday night I was exhausted. I usually stay Sunday night at The Mountain because the group wanes to thirty or so men and we gather in the Great Room of the Lodge to relax, cut up or philosophize; a potent slumber party. I was tempted to go to bed this time. But a small, persistent voice said, "you don't need to be alone right now." So I went to the Great Room. I felt needy and perhaps it showed. Scurry, a quiet, resilient man who spoke of "burning down his house" in the heart circle, invited me to join him on the big sofa where he lay. I ended up lying between his legs with my head on his chest. I felt his heartbeat and I drifted off to sleep. I awoke later and realized I was holding his hand. *What part does Spirit play in arranging such moments?*

Months have passed now and I'm much better. I'm taking a "cocktail" (I loathe that word). I still take herbs and supplements. I've regained all the weight I lost. I'm trying to resolve my anxiety about the future. I like and respect my new doctor. I make proactive healthcare decisions within the context of mainstream medicine. I'm conscious of my breathing. I'm taking time off from work. I'm exercising. I'm writing. I'm reading. I'm volunteering. I'm avoiding stress (as dangerous as HIV, if you ask me). I'm listening to music. And I'm listening to my body. *What part of the body does Spirit inhabit?*

Way back up there in the first paragraph I said I feel a little phony in the presence of some of my GSV brothers and other elders, those men who seem to have intimate relationships with Spirit. How can I be an elder if I haven't learned to trust Spirit? How can I be a *Trusted Elder*? Then Al called and asked me to write something for the newsletter. At first I claimed I had nothing to say. But then a small, persistent voice reminded me that I have been

to 5 conferences... I am more spiritually aware than I have ever been... I have embraced my gayness... I have rejected most of the heterosexist crap pounded into my head as a child... and I've spent 3 years on the planning committee trying to create safe, sacred spaces where gay men can gather to see the other faces of our tribe. I guess being an elder isn't just about trusting Spirit after all.

I may not be able to say "trust Spirit" with heartfelt conviction yet, but I am feeling a little less phony now.

David Salyer  
cubscout@mindspring.com

## MOUNTAIN REFLECTIONS

by Gerry Mitchell  
AKA Dancing Dolphin

The gathering at *the mountain* for our annual conference, on one hand, seems like only yesterday and on the other hand, feels like *the mountain* itself, obscured by the clouds, fading into the distance. This year the theme of Spiritual Mentoring seemed to create itself. Though many people worked very diligently to pull it all together; it was truly created by Spirit. Many deserve our sincere appreciation for their efforts and grateful thanks for their contributions, but more realistically, each participant made a contribution and also deserves the same praise. Thanks to all for the energy you brought to *the mountain* that made for such a dynamic experience for all of us to remember.

Much of this year's conference was structured in the same way as past conferences, with many of the 120 plus participants arriving on Thursday and most staying until after the closing on Sunday. During those four days, the topic of mentoring was viewed from many perspectives, perhaps creating more questions than answers. Yet most were able to explore their own personal possibilities with respect to mentoring. For some, this was of an inter-generational nature, working with gay youth or with children in general.

Each year we learn from prior experience and strive to incorporate new ideas. This year, incorporating panel discussions gave people the opportunity to explore what it means to be a good role model to our gay brothers, and how a spiritual path can help them mentor themselves. Many men also found the opportunity to explore the boundaries of these relationships. Since they were so well received, panel discussions will likely hold a regular spot at future conferences.

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P.O. Box 339  
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Please send all correspondence to the above address. Readers are invited to submit articles and letters for publication.

To submit articles by e-mail contact Al Cotton:

Bearsekr@aol.com

Another growing new trend with the conference is staying over an additional night. Those who do stay seem to enjoy a quiet, relaxed evening before returning to the other reality. The extra night eases the pressure of closure and allows for a more gentle transition to life down *the mountain*. To paraphrase a parable, "To come down from the mountain and live with your vision takes as much effort as climbing the mountain in pursuit of your vision."

The most important accomplishment of the conference is the community that we create that continues to support us on our journeys upon our return home. In the sharing of experience: in ritual, in breaking bread, in singing song, in story telling, in fire keeping, in drumming and dancing, in sharing our talents and our weaknesses, we weave a web that supports not just the men fortunate enough to attend, but even those absent participants. Through this community the energy spreads, touching our loved ones and sharing with them and the planet our healing grace.

## CONFERENCE SUMMARY AND OTHER INTERESTING STUFF

by Al Cotton

This year's conference was by all yardsticks a rousing success. At 128 men it was our second best attended conference, with only 1995 gathering (Mark Thompson and Malcolm Boyd) having more people. Monetarily it was our most successful — we cleared slightly over \$10,000, which will be the money we use to fund next year's activities, both in Atlanta and for next year's fall conference. We continued our tradition of turning no one away for lack of funds, and had over \$700 contributed to our Scholarship and Office funds. Such generosity is truly wonderful — and remember guys, those contributions ARE tax-deductible.

Thanks, guys, for all your support and interest in our work.

The dates for next year's fall conference have been set — block off on your calendar the weekend directly preceding the Equinox, September 18-20. Also, *the mountain* has tentatively scheduled a shorter elderhostel of 50 years + gay men for the week before our conference, which opens the door of opportunity for us to begin the conference on Thursday night instead of Friday afternoon. That would make it harder for some men to attend (requiring an extra day off and increasing

the price), but would allow a general relaxation of the schedule, something we've been wanting to do for awhile. If you'd like to have input on the decisions we make around this exciting opportunity, send a letter or e-mail, or come to a monthly planning meeting, second Saturday of every month, 10AM, Atlanta Friends Meeting House. The only pre-requisite for claiming your place at the table is being there to claim your place at the table.

You should also consider setting aside the weekend of May 22-24, because we've reserved space at *the mountain* for the first unstructured GSV Spring Retreat. There will be no scheduled events other than an opening ritual and heart circle, an event of some sort (to be decided) for Saturday night, and a closing ritual. We've noticed that many men never seem to be able to get enough unstructured interaction at our events, so here's a chance to have time to hike at Chinquapin Mountain or Glen Falls, shop in Highlands, offer an informal workshop and see who shows up, or take advantage of the work option that *the mountain* has offered us, and give back your energy to make *the mountain* a stronger place. Watch your mailbox for a registration form in February or March.

Two GSV regulars will be hosting fund-raisers for GSV in March as well. Bernie Morin will be offering an introductory Reiki workshop, a one day event in Atlanta, on March 14. And thanks to the generosity of Collin Brown of The Body Electric School of Massage, John Ballew will be offering a Body Electric weekend in Atlanta on May 20-22 for men who have done both GSV and The Body Erotic two-day workshop. The proceeds from both events, after expenses, will go to GSV's general office fund. Look for notices in the mailbox soon for both events which will be great opportunities to work with authentic teachers in our community, and to connect or reconnect with energies that have changed the lives of many of the men who've attended our conference.

There's been a wonderful influx of men to the Saturday morning planning meetings — our November meeting had 11 new members in attendance and only one regular planner being able to make it, an amazing signal from Spirit that open places at the table will help to create room for new blood and new energy. The first new initiative from these men was the decision to start ongoing monthly pot lucks to coincide with the

day of the planning meeting each month (each second Saturday), making it easy for out of town men to come to Atlanta for a planning meeting in the morning, and a pot luck/social event that evening. December's meeting will be at Jim Faso' & Roger Weinstein's house; January's at Ramon Noya's. Watch future issues of *VISIONARY* for the location, which changes every month.

Our website is up and running and growing by leaps and bounds, one of our most exciting new projects. Within 48 hours of David Brodeur's putting it out there for people to find we had been found by the Yahoo! search engines — if you go to [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com) and type "gay spirit" into the search engine, we pop up right away! Or just go there directly:

<http://gayspirit.home.mindspring.com> Kudos to my fellow members on the Cyber-Communications Committee, chaired by David, also including Jeff Ford and Reid Moody, for finally getting our own particular flavor of Gay Spirit out on the Web.

An article in *Common Boundary* a few months ago suggested that people all over America were starting small groups to support each other through life changes or for personal development; that if you count 12-step programs, one American in five spends regular, ongoing time with friends playing, discussing, processing, arguing or hugging. GSV'ers are not alone. The GSV Salon is a semi-open group in Atlanta that meets monthly, and alternates between book and non-book topics. Other closed groups have formed as well. If you have an interest in a reading group, a soul group, a morning coffee klatch, a dinner club, even a GSV bridge club, you could send that request out over the GSV e-mail reflector, or send us an announcement to run in the newsletter, and maybe you'll represent the next small group of Americans to start changing their lives one day at a time.

That's it for 1997. Thanks for all of your energy, as GSV just keeps demanding more of our time and attention. Happy Hanukah/Solstice/Christ-mas/New Years, and see you in 1998!

## WILD SOUL

by John R. Stowe

Iona, the green and holy island of Scotland, is a mystical place where the bones of kings now infuse grass that feeds herds of sheep and cattle. It is a land where Earth meets Sea, where wind and myth rule, where spirits a thousand years old are the young ones. Saint Columbo introduced Christianity here 1400 years

ago, yet the land itself still speaks of Druids and pagan warrior chiefs. Every ripple of the landscape is named in Gaelic and English. As you pass, each one whispers its tale just beneath the level of hearing'

Last month I hiked through Iona's dung-covered magic. Though the island is only three miles long I feel as if I've entered a kingdom of fantasy. I half expected to meet a dragon or magician or wild hermit in every nook of the boggy, rock-strewn pastureland. Beneath the pastoral veneer the island reeks of wildness. Turquoise Gulf Stream water slaps the jagged grey basalt, one moment caressing, the next devouring. Atop the island's crest, the wind is so strong I have trouble standing upright. Later, on a protected slope, I watch fluffy white clouds reflected in the sky-blue water of a still lake. Returning to civilization, footsore and soul-filled, I pass the heavy stone walls of Iona's Abbey as the lowering sun turns them golden.

In the evening I return to the Abbey's chilly, candlelit interior for a service of healing. Compared to the raw energy of my hike the service seems flat and uninspired, but afterward people greet each other warmly and gather for cookies and tea. There I meet a man named Pieter. Even before we talk I can tell he's Gay. It's something about the way his grey eyes seek mine and the familiarity with which we greet each other when introduced by a friend. Pieter's here on retreat, leading a group from his church on the mainland. The church and its community are his entire life. Clearly, they mean a lot to him. He's open there about being Gay. He's successfully focalized several churchwide conferences for Gay men and Lesbians and is presently dedicated to the expansion of a ministry for Gay and Lesbian teens.

Later, as our conversation continues in his hotel, I get an increasingly strong feeling that something's not right. This man works hard to nurture the people in his care. He fights against a strong tide of conformity to bring much needed change to the institution he represents. At the same time he's obviously not getting the support he needs as a Gay man. His voice sounds tired to the bone. The speed with which he drinks his first Guinness and his eager clinging to every word about what it means to be Gay betray an underlying sense of near desperation. It turns out that Pieter hasn't had a day off in over twelve weeks. Even when he does get one, he can't take two in a row because the community can't spare him the time. Even as he talks about trying to lower the still-too-

high suicide rate of Gay teens, he tells me that he himself spends a good portion of those rare days off driving at 100 mph just to "blow off steam". Clearly, this is a Warrior headed for burnout.

As I hike the next day Pieter's voice haunts me. I can't stop thinking of the dark rings beneath his eyes, the fatigue beneath his passionate words about bringing open acceptance to the church. I don't know Pieter well enough to speak for his choices, but he reminds me of other Gay men I know. These men exude erotic longing and speak often of freedom, yet live stifled within the confines of church or family. They seem unwilling or unable to move beyond a narrowly defined illusion of normalcy, selling their souls for the elusive promise of acceptance by the powers that be. It's a hard bargain. The promise is rarely fulfilled because most institutions are bastions of conformity. They retain their power by upholding the status quo. They fear at their core the wild freedom of true connection to God and Earth, to Spirit, and to Flesh. These energies are raw and unpredictable — and from the establishment point of view, much too vital to be approached without the hierarchical stepping-down and diminishing of their power. Raw vitality, like the naked elements of Iona's landscape, like the power of our own Gay souls, recognizes that what is old must crumble and die in its time, shedding its form into the dirt like the bones of these ancient kings in order to be born anew.

Like all of us, Pieter has a soul that speaks to him of life-fulfilling transformation. He works to make his vision into reality and his work is paying off. The people he touches benefit greatly. In the process, though, he's shut down the very core that feeds him. Even in the stark, raw wildness of this holy island Pieter is starving for his own wilderness. It makes an unease in him that could be dangerous. Unchecked, it will get him — either quickly on the road at 100 mph or slowly by crushing his spirit beneath the inexorable burden of false acceptability.

Pieter poses a question vital for all of us — "How do we work in the world without losing our Gay selves in the process?" If he'd asked me, I'd have made two suggestions. First, it's necessary to honor the wildness of our own souls. What that means is different for each of us. For me it has to do with exploring exotic natural landscapes like

Iona's. The silver of moonlight on a restless sea or the sound of wild geese in flight feed my soul more surely than any service held inside a building. So does cooking and so does the erotic abandon of dancing for hours with other men. So does the trusting touch of my nephew's hand in mine as we watch the fire trucks that are his passion. It's different for everyone. Take inventory. What feeds your soul? What passion waits inside, calling for you to explore it? You need it as much as you need food, or air, or water. Your survival depends on it.

Secondly, we have to find someone to support our Gay selves without question. Even though Pieter obviously loves the other members of his church community, the support he's getting there is not enough. I suspect that he's the only Gay man in his circle of friends. I'd prescribe that he find at least one other man, or preferably a group, with whom he could be real and unapologetically Gay. The burden of being "other than," even within a community that is fairly accepting, can be heavy.

Pieter's situation isn't an isolated case. The same challenges face anyone who would live with personal integrity. A Gay man who chooses to follow his own spiritual inclinations, yet who surrounds himself with friends that haven't the least interest in such matters sells himself short in exactly the same way. On our spiritual paths, each of us needs the support of fellow journeyers who understand and accept the rough-edged eccentricities that go with following one's heart. Ideally that's what we try to do at Gay Spirit Visions. Paradoxically it was the original intent of the very same churches that have over time become so ossified. Whatever group you belong to, be it family, church, or other, when that group begins to stifle your soul instead of nurturing it, take responsibility to seek elsewhere for the support you need and to keep seeking until you find it.

When we take time to nurture our true vitality we can go back to the original groups with new energy. For Pieter that would mean continuing to make positive contributions within the church he loves without being burnt out personally in the process. For the rest of us it works the same way. We can do our mainstream jobs, live with our families, interface with institutions that still need changing, and yet thrive because we're feeding ourselves at the source. We need to share our gifts. Society needs our contributions. Taking care of our own wildness is the key to living in the world.

Turn your eyes inward. Look inside

yourself until you find the wild, holy island at your own core. Observe it carefully. Note the colors, the elements, the stories it would tell you. Look carefully. Now, go there and live.

## ABOUT WRITING FOR THE NEWSLETTER:

### A Time for Dialog

by John R. Stowe

Gay Spirit Visions is growing more rapidly than many of us would have ever imagined when we started eight years ago. What began as a small family of men desiring to maintain contact over the months between annual mountain Conferences has become a large and extended community. In the beginning, word about GSV spread organically — and relatively slowly — from friend to friend to friend. Our focus stayed on the Conference and our membership remained centered primarily in the southeastern US. Most of us knew each other personally. Things have changed dramatically.

The scope of GSV is becoming much larger than it once was. We've expanded our activities beyond the Conference — adding an annual Spring event, a strong presence at Atlanta's Pride festivities, and numerous ongoing explorations from salons and lectures to workshops and monthly potlucks. As an organization, we're beginning to network with other Gay spiritual groups — some established for years, others inspired more recently by men who joined us at *the mountain*. At our latest Planning Committee meetings at least half the places have been filled by men there for the first time. In terms of numbers we're reaching more men than every before. First through *VISIONARY*, then the email GSV-LIST, and now our impressive new web-site: (<http://gayspirit.home.mindspring.com>), we're touching men in many parts of the world.

As an organization we're entering a new era. For the first time the majority of men coming into touch with GSV may have absolutely no idea of who we are or what we're about. These men listen and learn from our example, finding support and inspiration in the gentle dialog we share. They also bring new questions and viewpoints to our table that may challenge our preconceptions, stimulate new discussion, and make us observe our process from new perspectives. This interaction provides a healthy stimulation to our organization's vitality. At the same time it moves us into territory where the struc-

tures and channels of communication we've used in the past may not work so well as they used to. In many areas we'll need to stretch, expand, or change entirely the way we do things to meet a whole new set of needs.

The challenge of growth is to find structures and procedures that meet our new needs while still maintaining the Vision that supports us as a viable organization. Since our founding Gay Spirit Visions has been a place where Gay men from many different spiritual paths are able to come together for discussion, communion, support, and camaraderie. Over the years we've tried to keep ourselves open to many paths and away from identification with a single path or denomination. Within this relatively loose structure we've explored a broad spectrum of traditional and non-traditional spiritual practices. The breadth of our exploration is one of our major strengths.

One reason we've been successful is that we've maintained a Vision that honors the input of each man. Our planning decisions are based on consensus. We strive to share honestly and from heart whenever we come together — be it one on one, at a meeting of 10, or in a Council of 130 men. This type of communication breaks new ground by making us move beyond the superficial or hierarchical patterns predominant in society. Though it can feel slow and challenging at times its rewards are enormous. In the process we learn to speak with integrity, listen with respect, set aside judgement, sit with patience (sometimes more successfully than others!), and take personal responsibility for our words and actions. We're not there all the time — this is certainly an ongoing process of learning. Still, open and mutually-respectful communication is one of the most valuable foundations of Gay Spirit Visions.

As we step briskly forward, let's remember the importance of maintaining our dialog. Let's remember that each one of us has an important contribution to make. Let's take the time to make those contributions, to check in with each other, reaffirm our vision, speak our truths, voice our concerns, and chart together the course we would follow.

There are many ways to share. Write to us at *VISIONARY* — we'd love to print your comments and letters as part of an ongoing dialog. Take part in the continuing conversations of the GSV-LIST. If you'd like to take a more

active role in planning, join the Planning Committee or send suggestions to someone who is already there. If you don't belong to a group where you live find other men in your area who are interested in Gay spirituality and get together.

Don't know what you'd contribute? Here are some suggestions...

If you've attended our Conferences or been part of Gay Spirit Visions for some time, share your experiences. What has Gay Spirit Visions meant to you? How has it helped you? Where has it challenged you? What have you learned? What is your vision of our purpose and our goals? Where would you like to see us grow? Not only will your comments help familiarize new men with who we are, they'll also help us define and reinforce the vision that sustains us as a group.

If you're new to Gay Spirit Visions share with us what brought you here. Who are you? What questions led you to seek an organization centered around Gay male spirituality? What concerns in your own life do you hope to address here? What would help you as a Gay man on your personal spiritual journey?

Our focus at GSV depends on the input of everyone involved. What are your ideas? What would you like to see us deal with? What are the most important spiritual issues facing Gay men today? What are your own experiences with spiritual practice? What has worked for you? What hasn't? What spiritual concerns do you see that are not addressed by the mainstream Gay community? Where do you draw your own inspiration or nurturing?

In life what we receive often depends on what we're willing to put out. If you want to be sustained by Gay Spirit Visions take the time to share your own wisdom. We're on this road together and we're strong to the degree that we learn to support each other. By sharing your questions, concerns, fears, experiences, and vision, you help not only yourself but many, many others. The effort is small. The rewards are great.

You got something to say? Say it!

(Just to follow up John's wonderful involvement sermon, we will set aside an entire page of *VISIONARY* to print readers' essays and comments, if y'all will send them in. Send to: [bearsekr@aol.com](mailto:bearsekr@aol.com)

Send your comments, etc. in the text of your e-mail, and if possible, as an attachment in document form saved in some version of Microsoft Word or WordPerfect. Help us with this newsletter, and say what you need to say. *Al Cotton*)

## BOOK LIST

by Al Cotton

Here's the annotated book list that I handed out at the Whole Life Expo. Look it over, see what you have or haven't read, buy it quickly in case it's going out of print (as many books are doing nowadays), and see what's there for you to learn.

### Gay Spirit: A Selected Annotated Bibliography and Other Resources

#### Gay Spirit Essentials

For me, all the books in this section would be the essentials. All but Grahn have keynoted at our conference, and all of them speak to our core issues with immediacy and force. Grahn and Thompson wrote the groundbreaking books that first explained how gay men and lesbians could be seen as spiritual beings.

Grahn, Judy. *Another Mother Tongue: Gay Words, Gay Worlds* (1984, rev. 1990).

Hay, Harry. *Radically Gay: Gay Liberation in the Words of its Founder*, ed. Will Roscoe (1996).

Ramer, Andrew. *Two Flutes Playing: A Spiritual Journeybook For Gay Men* (new ed., 1997)

Roscoe, Will. *Queer Spirits: A Gay Men's Myth Book* (1995).

Stowe, John. *Two Spirit Warrior: An Empowerment Journey for Gay Men* (1997).

Thompson, Mark. *Gay Soul: Finding the Heart of Gay Spirit and Nature With Sixteen Writers, Healers, Teachers and Visionaries* (1995).

Thompson, Mark. *Gay Spirit: Myth and Meaning* (1988).

#### Other Gay Spirit Books

Barzan, Robert. *Sex and Spirit*. (1995, Out of Print)

Harvey, Andrew. *The Essential Gay Mystics*. (1997).

Jay, Michael. *Gay Love Signs: The New Astrology Guide for Men Who Love Men* (1980, rev. 1990).

Walker, Mitch. *Visionary Love: a spirit book of gay mythology and transmutational faerie* (1980; hard to find)

#### Poetry, Fiction, Memoir

Maupin, Rice, and Spanbauer are classics, and Matousek and Sadownick deserve to be. Monette's memoir was nominated for a National Book Award

and set the standard for AIDS memoir. Broughton and Doty are very differently brilliant poets. There still is no definitive Whitman collection that brings together all the poems that gay men should know from Walt's poetry.

Broughton, James. *Androgyne Journal* (1991), *Coming Unbuttoned: A Memoir* (1993), *Special Deliveries: New and Selected Poems* (1993).

Cashorali, Peter. *Fairy Tales: Traditional Tales Retold for Gay Men* (1995).

Doty, Mark. *Atlantis: Poems* (1995). *Heaven's Coast: A Memoir* (1996).

Harvey, Andrew. *Hidden Journey: A Spiritual Awakening* (1991).

Johnston, Fenton. *Geography of the Heart*. (1996)

Matousek, Mark. *Sex, Death, Enlightenment: A True Story* (1996).

Maupin, Armistead. *Tales of the City* series.

Monette, Paul. *Borrowed Time: An AIDS Memoir* (1988), *Becoming a Man: Half a Life Story* (1992).

Rice, Ann. *Interview with a Vampire* (1976).

Sadownick, Douglas. *Sacred Lips of the Bronx* (1995).

Spanbauer, Tom. *The Man Who Fell in Love with the Moon* (1991).

Thompson, Mark. *Gay Body: A Journey through Shadow to Self* (1997).

Whitman, Walt. *Leaves of Grass*.

#### Today's Issues

Browning's books are provocative gay culture studies that I enjoyed. Burr's book is readable science about the inheritability of homosexuality. Due indicts gay people for abandoning gay youth. The last four books initiated the current debate among gay men about promiscuity, safer sex, and gay male culture generally, with Rofes and Rotello staking the territory here. Odets' book was the first to concern itself with HIV-negative men.

Browning, Frank. *Culture of Desire: Paradox and Perversity in Gay Lives Today* (1993) and *A Queer Geography: Towards a Sexual Self* (1996).

Burr, Chandler. *A Separate Creation: The Search for the Biological Origins of Sexual Orientation* (1996).

Due, Linnea. *Joining the Tribe: Growing Up Gay and Lesbian in the 1990's* (1996).

Odets, Walter. *In the Shadow of the Epidemic: Being HIV-Negative in*

*the Age of AIDS* (1995).

Rofes, Eric. *Reviving the Tribe: Regenerating Gay Men's Sexuality and Culture in the Ongoing Epidemic* (1996).

Rotello, Gabriel. *Sexual Ecology: AIDS and the Destiny of Gay Men* (1997).

Signorile, Michelangelo. *Life Outside: The Signorile Report on Gay Men* (1997).

#### Sexuality

Joe Kramer needs a book that explains the amazing work he's done for gay men; until then his videos are the best source. Sadownick's history of gay men and sex is chock full of history, insight, and passion.

Kramer, Joseph. Videos from the Erosprit Institute.

Sadownick, Douglas. *Sex between Men: An Intimate History of the Sex Lives of Gay Men Postwar to Present* (1996).

Thompson, Mark. *Leatherfolk: Radical Sex, People, Politics, and Practice* (1992).

Walker, Mitch. *Men Loving Men: A Gay Sex Guide and Consciousness Book* (1995).

#### Anthology

Anthologies are a dime a dozen in gay book stores; these are the priceless ones.

Abbott, Franklin, ed. *New Men, New Minds*. (1987) (Out of Print); *Men and Intimacy: Personal Accounts Exploring the Dilemmas of Modern Male Sexuality* (1990); *Boyhood, Growing Up Male: A Multicultural Anthology* (1993) (hard to find, soon to be reprinted).

Bouldrey, Brian, ed. *Wrestling With the Angel: Faith and Religion in the Lives of Gay Men* (1995).

Merla, Patrick, ed. *Boys Like Us: Gay Writers Tell Their Coming Out Stories* (1996).

Preston, John, ed. *A Member of the Family: Gay Men Write About Their Families* (1994) and *Flesh and the Word* series (last vol. ed. Michael Lowenthal).

#### History/Psychology/Anthropology/Science

Boswell's book was the first to seriously challenge Christianity on its own historical and scholarly terms. Isay and Hopcke are the pre-eminent gay Freudian and Jungian theorists, respectively. Roscoe's groundbreaking study of berdache won Lambda Literary & Margaret Meade awards.

Boswell, John. *Christianity, Homosexuality and Social Tolerance: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the 14th Century*. (1981).

Conner, Randy. *Blossom of Bone: Reclaiming the Connections Between Homoeroticism and the Sacred* (1993). (Hard to find)

Conner, Randy, et al. *Cassell's Encyclopedia of Queer Myth, Symbol, and Spirit: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Lore*. (1997)

Evans, Arthur. *Witchcraft and the Gay Counterculture* (1981).

Hopcke, Robert. *Jung, Jungians and Homosexuality* (1989) (Hard to find) and ed. et al, *Same-Sex Love and the Path to Wholeness* (1993).

Isay, Richard. *Being Homosexual; Gay Men and Their Development* (1990) and *Becoming Gay: The Journey to Self-Acceptance* (1995).

Kaufman, Gershon & Lev Raphael. *Coming Out of Shame: Transforming Gay and Lesbian Lives*. (1996)

Roscoe, Will. *The Zuni Man-Woman* (1992).

Schneebaum, Tobias. *Where the Spirits Dwell: An Odyssey in the Jungle of New Guinea*. (1988).

Timmons, Stuart. *The Trouble with Harry: Founder of the Modern Gay Movement* (1990).

#### Gay and Christian/Jewish

Bawer, Bruce. *Stealing Jesus: How Fundamentalism Betrays Christianity* (1997).

Boyd, Malcolm. *Gay Priest: An Inner Journey* (1987).

Clark, J. Michael. *A Place to Start: Toward an Unapologetic Gay Liberation Theology* (1989).

Glaser, Chris. *Uncommon Calling: A Gay Christian's Struggle to Serve the Church* (1988, rep. 1996)

Hartman, Keith. *Congregations in Conflict: The Battle over Homosexuality*. (1996)

Helminiak, Daniel. *What the Bible Really Says about Homosexuality*. (1994)

Raphael, Lev. *Journeys & Arrival: On Being Gay and Jewish* (1996).

Wilson, Nancy. *Our Tribe: Queer Folks, God, Jesus, and the Bible*

(1995).

#### Periodicals

R.F.D.: *A Rural Journal for Gay Men Everywhere*

*Visionary: The Newsletter of Gay Spirit Visions*

*White Crane Newsletter*.

#### Eastern

Harrison, Gavin. *In the Lap of the Buddha*. (1994)

Schneider, David. *Street Zen: The Life and Work of Issan Dorsey*. (1993)

#### Feminism & Gender Issues

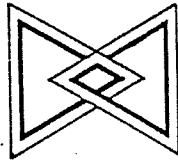
Downing, Christine. *Myths and Mysteries of Same Sex and Love*. (1989)

Feinberg, Leslie. *Transgender Warriors*. (1996)

Harvey, Andrew. *The Return of the Mother*. (1995)

Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*. (1984)

Walker, Barbara. *I Ching of the Goddess* (1986) and *Women's Encyclopedia of Myth and Secret* (1983).



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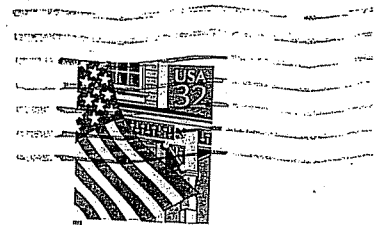
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