

VISIONARY



Volume 5, Number 1

The Newsletter of Gay Spirit Visions

March, 1999

OUTRAGE

BY DAVID SALYER

Outrage. Remember how outraged so many gay and lesbian leaders were a few years back when there was so much resistance and opposition to President Clinton's proposal that the Department of Defense lift the ban on gays in the military? A few years later gay and lesbian leaders took to the airwaves and wrote books and articles demanding that every citizen, regardless of sexual orientation, be allowed to marry. Congressional dullards countered with the Defense of Marriage Act, providing that a marriage constitutes one man and one woman. Period. And again our leaders were outraged.



Leaders of the activist group ACT UP have done the outrage thing with unprecedented flair in the past 10 years by vehemently protesting drug company profiteering with AIDS drugs, disrupting presidential speeches, and demanding accelerated research and approval of HIV drugs.

More recently our so-called queer leaders and out-of-the-closet celebrities expressed public outrage over the heinous, homophobic motivated murder of Matthew Shephard, a 21 year old college student beaten to death and tied to a fence in the bleak Wyoming hinterland. The outrage over this hate crime was palpable and nationwide, with perhaps only the deafening silence of America's most vocal religious leaders being more striking. (Note to Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell and such ilk: Check those Ten Commandments again; murder's a bad thing! Being gay didn't even make the top ten!)

Yep, lots of gay men and lesbians seem to have mastered outrage and the art of judicious animosity and contention. For instance, you don't want to mess with Elizabeth Birch from the Human Rights Campaign. Finding herself on a PBS panel dis-

ussion sitting next to the insufferable, homo-hating Gary Bauer, President of the Family Research Council, Ms. Birch had the testicular fortitude to remind him that it took remarkable self-discipline for her to even sit next to him. You also don't want to mess with Larry Kramer, the terminally angry ACT UP'er and AIDS activist who has called both President Clinton and Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala irredeemable pigs.

I'm not good at outrage. Oh, sure, I can make you laugh. I've always felt that was my gift. Getting angry, on the other hand, has always made me feel out of control, unbalanced and spiritually insolvent. I prefer my anger and outrage on the big screen, larger than life, performed by the likes of Meryl Streep and Jack Nicholson. Scripted. Succinct. Just keep repeating to yourself: It's only a movie.

An examination of my life might lead any reasonable person to conclude that I'm entitled to some anger and a couple of episodes of outrage. At six I was taunted by my male peers for jumping rope with the girls at recess. At 11 I was routinely dubbed the worst player on my YMCA football team. As a high school teenager I was inevitably picked last or next to last for every team sport we ever played in gym class. And I would not have been at all surprised to receive a yearbook with a twisted list of achievements and predictions by my photo: Biggest Pansy; Most Likely to Implode From an Inability to Express Genuine Emotion; President, Low Self-Esteem Club.

I have spent most of my life emotionally unequipped to express anger or outrage. One of the most important milestones on my own personal spiritual path has been to embrace my anger, name it, and learn to express it appropriately. Sometimes it sounds like this: "If you can't be more respectful of me, this conversation is over." Other times it sounds more like, "Don't fuck with me." I have finally come to understand that anger can be a rational response and that it doesn't make me less spiritual or auspicious.

Continued on page 8

IN THIS ISSUE

GSV News and Information

- 9th Annual Fall Conference
Vol 2. 2
- Spring Retreat 3
- Calendar. 6
- Planner's Perch. 6
- The Future of Visionary . . . 7
- Your 99 Planners 7

Columns

- David Salyer 1

Departments

- Books, etc.
Review: Jill Dearman *Queer Astrology for Men*. 10
- Poetry
Bob Strain 10
- Events: GSV Fundraisers by
John Stowe and by John
Ballew and Don Clark. . . . 9

VISIONARY

Visionary is the newsletter of Gay Spirit Visions, and a publication of The Council of Trusted Elders of Gay Spirit Visions, Inc., a Georgia not-for-profit corporation recognized under Section 501(c)(3) of Internal Revenue Code of the United States. Copyright, 1999.

Gay Spirit Visions

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 339, Decatur, GA 30031-0339

Phone: 404/292-1965

E-mail: gayspirit@mindspring.com

website:

<http://gayspirit.home.mindspring.com>

Council of Trusted Elders

Bruce "Dandelion" Tidwell, Presiding Elder;
David Salyer, Recording Elder;
David Brodeur, Bursar

Elders at Large

Martin "Treewalker" Isganitis,
Gerry "Dancing Dolphin" Mitchell

The 1999 GSV Planning Committee

consists of The Council of Trusted Elders, plus Steven Band, John Brock, Matt Huff, Tony James, Ramon Noya and Kim Pittman

Advisory Committee: Andrew Ramer

Newsletter Committee: Editor, Al Cotton;
Production: Mike Goettee, Jeff Ford, David Salyer

Committee Chairs/Contact Persons

Program Chair: Dandelion

Editorial Committee: Al Cotton, Dandelion, Steven Band

Volunteer Chair: Dancing Dolphin

1999 Conference Co-Chairs: Dandelion, Steven Band

Finance: David Brodeur

GSV Administrator: All Cotton

Please send your submissions to :

Visionary

P.O. Box 339

Decatur, GA 30031-0339.



AT THE 9TH ANNUAL GAY SPIRIT VISIONS

The following are more excerpts from the Fall Conference, specifically from the Saturday morning Healing Panel. The excerpts in this issue include my introduction, and panel contributions from Franklin Abbott and John Ballew. There will be more from the Fall Conference in our Spring issue, as well.

Al Cotton

I'm excited for the opportunity to moderate our panel on healers, because I think that healing is either an underlying or an overarching theme of all of the Gay Spirit Visions gatherings. Basically, the idea that gay men are wounded by the ways we are raised in this society, and that we have to find some place to heal those wounds so that we can do the work that we're intended to do here in this world is the bedrock of what we do at GSV. I think that this is a place where some people can glimpse ways that they might be able to start healing.

It occurs to me that there's a basic question about healing, one that's almost too basic to come to mind — "Why should we heal?"... The spiritual answer as to why we choose to heal is so that we can be available to help others.... Healing itself is not an inherently spiritual act; it's the intention that you have behind the healing that might actually give healing a spiritual context. An easy way to express that is "When you have a wound and you learn how to heal it, you end up with a gift, and from that follows a spiritual obligation to take that gift and use it to help others heal." Sometimes that gift is just a story you can tell someone to prevent a child from not being wounded in the same way you were. Sometimes it's a technique that you use to heal that you might be able to tell others. It can be something very simple, but the key is being willing to take it, and use it....

"What prevents us from healing?" is another question that occurred to me while preparing for this talk. To the

extent that I am a devotee of anyone, it would be Caroline Myss, who is one of the most amazing teachers to come out of the New Age movement. She suggests [in her medical intuitive work] that lots of us are stuck in "woundology" — that our wounds are so central to our lives that they become essential to our lives, that to give them up would be even more painful than the wound itself. Even though much of the New Age movement is based around the idea that "We can create our own reality," if you are not willing to let go of the thing that is causing you to be sick, then you're not going to heal. That's a profound teaching for me, in the way that you think about how things happen — I want to heal this thing, but I don't want to give up smoking or drinking or get out of this bad relationship I'm in. I want to create my own reality, but I'm not gonna go *there*.... What component of healing is contained in the concept of letting go? That's a really useful one for me, and it's obvious if you look at addictions: clearly, if you let go of your desire to drink, then your alcoholism would be gone....

One really useful practice I learned at the Atlanta Shambhala Center in my Buddhist studies is "tonglin" practice, which is an amazingly simple example of how to practice letting go. It starts with basic human nature, the idea that we tend to draw toward us the things that we like, and push away from us the things that we don't like. We need to let go of both of those habits, detach completely from the idea that we can pull good things toward us and push bad things away. Tonglin practice begins with about 10 minutes of meditation to clear the mind of discursive thought, and then when you start, you breathe in anger and aggression and anxiety and stress, and then as you breathe out, you breathe out compassion and love to the world. So that you are consciously

CONFERENCE VOL. 2



bringing into you the thing that you push away, and send out into the world the thing you would grasp and hold onto. I can think of no simpler practice that might have the possibility of truly transforming the world. Imagine how the world might be if just one person stopped creating aggressive energy. Two people are driving in traffic, and one of them passes the other, and that makes him mad so he passes her back, and then they have a wreck, and go on into work and they each make life miserable for 50 more people each when they get there. 102 people are stressed out, and if only one of those two at the beginning had been able to take that aggressive energy in and send love out, that day would have been very different....It occurred to me during Pride last year that the gay version of tonglin would be where you breathe in shame, and you breathe out pride.

I wanted the opportunity also to actually articulate the theme that we thought we were setting up for this conference this year. If you look on the brochure, in gray letters that don't stand out very well, you'll see the words, "Invoking Vital Spirit: Envision your Path to Wholeness."... I think that's a really profound idea, because wholeness is a concept that needs exploring. We left this conference last year thinking we were going to talk about healing, but the idea

of wholeness is a step beyond healing. The vision that I hold about the difference between healing and wholeness is this: you're climbing a hill (that represents healing), and then you get to the top of the hill and there's a bluff, and if you're willing to let go and take that leap, that may be the last step on the path to wholeness. It's the difference between, when someone asks you how you're doing, you say, "Oh, I'm getting better," or you say, "I'm doing fine."

Let me leave you with a question we considered putting in our brochure, but it didn't make it in, so I'm glad to have the opportunity to ask you to consider, "How would your life change if you lived it as though you were already healed?"

Al can be reached at bearsekr@aol.com.

Franklin Abbott

When Al asked me what I wanted to talk about, several things went through my head. I'm not going to talk about psychotherapy because most folks here are intimately acquainted with it. And basically psychotherapy, not to dissuade potential customers, is limited in terms of what it can do.... One of the things that psychotherapy ignores is anything that happens outside the family relationships. It's all about Mom and Dad, it's all about the first three years of life. And when I did the research for the "Boyhood" anthology and started talking with men about the period of time in life between four years old and puberty, what I found is that there is a tremendous amount of pain about that period of time. In my profession, that period of time is basically ignored, it's called the latency

SPRING RETREAT UPDATE

Last year thirty brothers gathered on *the mountain* the last weekend in May for a Spring Retreat. We had a weekend of Heart Circles, rituals, several workshops, a bonfire, and an afternoon hike for those of us too energized to curl up in a cozy rocker and while away the afternoon. Every one had such a fabulous time that we've decided to make it an annual event.

The Second Annual Spring Retreat will be April 16-18. Things will get started after dinner on Friday so most men won't need to take more than half a day off, unless they want to. I'm sure *the mountain* won't mind if you arrive a little bit early, though you should call ahead to arrange for lunch if you want it. We will be done by lunch on Sunday, allowing for a nice relaxed ride home again. This year we will share the space with a Unitarian Universalist Gay Men's group — lots of opportunity for networking and sharing, though encouraging them to play hooky from their own schedule of events is not officially approved of. The rhododendrons will be in bloom, the trees budding out, and the perfect setting for a refreshing new start after the short not so cold days of our unusually mild winter (here in Atlanta, at least). Hope you can join us! Flyers were sent only to the greater Southeast. If you live further away but are still interested, let us know and we send you one.

If you want more info., or are interested in putting on a workshop, contact Dandelion at 770/972-8028, or DadsBadBoy@aol.com.



Bernie Morin, Franklin Abbott and John Ballew at 1998 GSV Healing Panel

Cassandra

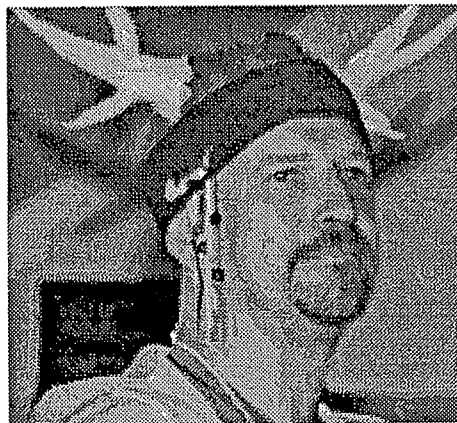
FALL CONFERENCE

period when not much is supposed to happen. But it's also the period when we learn our gender role. For those of us who are different, that can be an excruciatingly difficult period of time. What the research says now is that our peer relations during adolescence are more important in terms of our personal development, our outlook on the world, than our early relationships in our family. I'm not sure about "more," but I think there's an equivalent importance there, and that it's time for us to begin to look at that....

The process for me in terms of healing that part of my life has been important, because I think that as gay men we get a kind of triple hex. First of all we feel like a space alien in our family, that we are definitely the odd one most of the time. Secondly, we don't fit into peer life, we have to camouflage ourselves if we are able to do that, or take the torment that's dished out, at least we live in fear of that pretty constantly until we are able to reach Gay World, and then we are faced with some of the most frightening people that we could ever encounter, where instead of fear and trembling (and it's hard to walk around in the world shaking in your boots) we develop an attitude. There are two kinds of attitudes that afflict us as gay men — there's the attitude that all of life is full of those people who seem to think they are prettier and better connected than we are, what Armistead Maupin termed the "A-Gays." And then there's a negative attitude that many of us carry around, where we think that we're in fear because we don't look like the men in *Torso* magazine, or because we have passed our 30th birthday, or because our skin is not as white as the driven snow, that there is something the matter with us. All attitude is covering up our fear, whether it's that grandiose attitude, or that negative attitude, all it is is a wall that we create around ourselves because we are so terrified of being hurt and rejected again. The wall keeps out none of the pain, there's no pain we can avoid by staying behind the wall, the pain is already in there with us.

And one of the terrible things that happens, I think is that that little boy part of us that took it on the chin, who had to deal

with very limited resources in a very creative way, with a terribly hostile environment — that part of our psyche is not available to us, it's not part of our everyday functioning. One of the systems that I've studied that makes a lot of sense to me in terms of the psychology of it is Wicca. And in Wicca, which is the old European religion, also called witchcraft, our personal psychology is talked about this way. That there are three selves: a talking self, a



Treewalker at GSV 1998

Cassandra

younger self, and a deeper self. The way that that works is that in order for the talking self to communicate with the deeper self, it must go through the younger self. We must have access to that boy inside of us in order to get to our depth, our wisdom, all the deeper things that make life rich and worth living and give us the strength to go through very difficult times, as we all have. So when the boy is absent, as he is in many gay men, what we have is a tremendous amount of superficiality, that it is all surface....

What we have done in creating this kind of community is begin to heal that part of us, that boy part of us in a way that I believe psychotherapy can't touch. I think that therapy can be a very helpful adjunct to our healing process but I think that it's essential we come back together in a community of men where there is safety and all of a sudden, this figure, the boy, begins to emerge, the boy begins to come out, the playfulness in us begins to reemerge and reunite with the rest of us, and then I think we get to that deep stuff, that's so rich and so important in understanding who we are.

When we had the first gathering at Running Water a number of years ago, all of us

were virgins — none of us had ever been to anything like that before. In fact, as far as we knew, nothing like that had ever happened before. And I remember driving up there in the middle of the night, and it's a long and winding road, I went with Raven Wolfdancer and Terry Barfield, both brothers now on the other side, and so we arrived in the dark, the place is slanted, so we sort of slipped down it sideways, not knowing where in the hell we were going, and woke up the next morning, and my goodness, watching these beautiful brothers energy from their tents as our ritual of being together came together, was one of the most amazing experiences I've ever had. It started a really deep healing process in me that I find myself wanting to return and return to and to share in whatever ways that I can.

Now we have this wonderful conference that's been happening for nine years, and there are other places and times where gay men come together, there's a wonderful gay men's sanctuary called Short Mountain Sanctuary in Liberty, Tennessee, where 20 brothers live on the land and there's like 200 or 300 acres, a Faerie sanctuary, where you can go and be yourself. I had never known what that was like, to be able to be completely myself, and even though I had fear and trembling at times, and I would kind of have to pull back and get all worried or judgmental about myself or what was going on, I could still go back into that glow, and I could still feel that child inside of me waking up, coming to life. There's a profound healing there, my life is so much richer, and I really attribute the fact that I am alive to that process, that I learned how to take care of myself in a way that I had no idea about.

Let me read you one more poem before the bell tolls. This is a poem that I wrote when I came back from that first Running Water gathering, and I call it...

"Ascent, Lament and Admonition."
waking up the next morning
the dirt of Roan Mountain still on my feet
I let go of one long sigh
not of relief
but resignation to the fact
I am back

I lay in my bed
 allowing the city to soften
 and fade away beneath my closing eyes
 hastening my return
 up the moonlit mother mountain
 up through honeysuckle-scented, star-silvered
 hems of clouds
 to a morning of running water, birdsong
 and a bright sun climbing to its solstice

there will my brothers hold me
 turn me loose, set me free
 there will I be heard, listen
 and in concert sing
 to the opening of hearts
 and the laying down of burdens

the telephone rings
 I have no charm to stop it
 and so I am dispatched
 to walk the city streets
 expected to be the same
 but I am now a better lover
 my gentleness refined, aligned
 and dangerous

Franklin is the author of "Mortal Love," a poetry collection that can be ordered from R.F.D. Press, and the editor of "Boyhood: An Anthology," 2nd edition, that can be found or ordered from bookstores. He can be reached at LokiShango@aol.com.

John Ballew

In my better moments, I think of myself as a love warrior... I think of love warriors as people who honor Eros as the place that cultivates respect for all bodies, for sexuality, for the earth and for community, for all of us. For me, one of the wonderful things about sexuality is that it's the place where body, mind and soul come together, where that divine spark lives inside of us....

To me, all healers are wounded healers. I certainly am acutely aware of my own wounds. I tend not to trust healers who are not wounded. Other people's wounds help me to feel safe, and other people's wounds help me to become aware of my own and to feel more safe with other people. To me, this is foundational — if we had to heal ourselves completely before we dared to reach out to

one another, we would all starve to death in isolation. I think we need to recognize that we are already healers in the world.

There's a sign down in the dining hall here on *the mountain* that says "We drink from wells we did not dig." Well, one of the things about gay men is that we carry wounds that are not our wounds. We carry wounds that are our individual ones, and we carry wounds that we share like internalized homophobia, with other people. But there are also ways in which we carry wounds that are not our own, that society projects onto us. We're sexualized people, in the eyes of the world, and that's not necessarily a bad thing, but sometimes we learn to see ourselves as sexualized people rather than loving people.

So we tend to carry the burden of sex shame for all of society. After the *Bowers v. Hardwick* decision that upheld the Georgia sodomy law a few years ago, there was an attempt on the part of some Georgia legislators to try and change the law to legalize heterosexual sodomy, but they didn't bring it to a vote because a number of south Georgia legislators felt like they couldn't explain the concept of heterosexuality to their constituents. Still, we are the sodomites and carry these kinds of sexual wounds. When people look at us — at Nathan Lane on the screen or someone who's being flamboyant or stereotypically or identifiably gay — if they react with disdain, it is because they imagine seeing men doing things with other men's buttocks. So we carry this reminder for society as a whole that we are a sexual people, and that's part of what they project onto us. We sometimes allow ourselves to be identified by our sex, rather than by our love.

Lots of times we're seen as men who have sex with men, instead of men who love men. There are lots of men who have sex with men who are not men who love men. I invite you to be aware of how you identify yourself....

I have to say I am a little ambivalent about the whole concept of healing. I think sometimes everything gets labeled as healing and it focuses too much on our wounds. And some of what we call healing, I think is really growing. Sometimes I think healing implies getting back to normal, and I'm not that much interested in *normal*, to tell you the truth. As someone who's dedicated his life to cultivating abnormality... I think part of what we're doing is about growing, and part of what we're about is a rather old-fashioned term called gay liberation. I think part of what we're about is liberating ourselves, liberating our own beings, liberating our community, liberating the world.

I do think gay men have special talents about healing. We tend to be over-represented in certain occupations. One of those is the healing professions — physicians, massage therapists, psychotherapists. If you earn your living by healing, would you raise your hand, please? Probably a lot higher percentage than if we just pulled a whole bunch of people off the street. Another thing we do is we are creators, we are over-represented in creative occupations, from styling hair to writing poetry to music. If you earn your living primarily, or a significant part of your avocation is through the arts, would you raise your hands please? Very interesting. ...

I'd like to talk about sexuality in the context of wholeness. There's a wonderful article by Doug Sadownick called "Liberation of the Gay Heart." He starts out with a critique of books published over the last couple of years by Eric Rofes and Michelangelo Signorile and Gabriel Rotello, and notes that all these books talk about what's going on sexually on the outside. It's important to look at what's going on outside, but also at what's going on inside. Sadownick's point is that what really needs to be healed is not just our interaction with other people, but

Continued on page 10

MORTAL LOVE
 Selected Poems, 1973-1998
 by Franklin Abbott

*to order please send \$14 plus \$2 domestic
 \$6 international air mail to:*

RFD Press
 P.O. Box 68
 Liberty, TN 37095

FROM THE NEW PRESIDING ELDER

BY DANDELION

Each time I join hands in a circle of Sacred Brothers I am taken back to that time in my life before GSV, before the Radical Faeries, before I ever heard the names Raven Wolfdancer, Harry Hay, or Mark Thompson. My own spiritual intuition was leading me toward Gay Spir-



it but only in the form of dreams and fantasies, and seemingly bizarre notions that flitted through my mind like moths in the darkness. It was almost too much to hope that one day I would have one kindred hand to hold. Even my wildest dreams never envisioned a hundred. I say it often, but I can't say it enough, how proud I am of who we are and what we have done. I'm deeply honored and excited to have been chosen as Presiding Elder this year.

GSV is ten years old. Many organizations, however well intentioned or well run, do not survive this long. Our success is a testament to the high levels of integrity and commitment of all those who have given their time and energy over the years, as well as the deep hunger that exists in the hearts of Gay men around the world for the experiences that we are privileged to offer. As individuals, and as an organization, we are growing and maturing. We are reaching out further to explore the fullest potentials of what GSV can be and taking a more realistic look at the responsibilities that our visions demand. There will be changes taking place: the hiring of an office administrator, a movement toward launching *Visionary* as a full scale small press magazine, and a more responsible attitude toward our finances, among others. The Council of Trusted Elders, as well as the larger Planning Committee wants to encourage all of our Sacred Brothers to share their thoughts and feelings on the future of GSV. We hope that we can continue to earn and deserve your trust and that you will look upon the future of GSV with courage and dare to dream big dreams.

Many men have joined and left the Planning Committee over the years. In the past year, though, most of the remaining original members decided it was time to step back from the table. Their seats did not remain empty but the arrival of new members with new ideas and opinions also brought doubts and uncertainties. In November most of those who intended to serve on the Planning Committee spent a weekend in retreat on *the mountain*. There was no question in any one's mind that GSV would continue but its form and content were left open for discussion. We shared our hopes and fears, ideas and dreams. The consensus that we reached was a large vision. For the first time in my memory, a few men even dared to hope that one day we will have a building to call our own, a dream that I personally support wholeheartedly. For now, though, it is enough to focus on balancing our checkbook, pulling together a presence for Gay Pride that we can truly be proud of, and producing this year's Fall Conference and our other smaller programs.

However, none of our accomplishments, large or small, happens without men to step up and make it happen. I encourage all of you to consider how you can help make Gay Spirit Visions a reality. Of course there is a greater need and opportunity for volunteers in the Atlanta area, but similar groups like ours in Charlotte and Asheville are wonderful examples of how Gay Spirit can thrive anywhere that Brothers have the courage and will to plant a seed and make it grow. The best thing about this new generation of men on the Planning Committee is the affirmation that the Gay Spirit Vision of Raven and his circle of friends was not simply a unique dream of theirs, but has a life of its own and the strength to carry on for many years into the future. Don't wait until you are "wise enough" or have "more time" or for the "right time." There is only "now." Dream now and act now and in the dreaming and the acting the wisdom will come and the time will come and the dream will become life.

We are looking for volunteers to help with our Pride festivities. Contact Jeff Ford at 404/244-3555 or jeff.ford@usa.net if you can help with staffing our booth and more.

*Dandelion can be reached at
DadsBadBoy@aol.com.*

CALENDAR



March 24—Franklin Abbott signs copies of *Mortal Love*, Outwrite bookstore, 8PM.

April 10—GSV Planning Meeting, 10AM, Atlanta Friends Meeting House

—GSV Potluck, 7PM, David Salyer & Kim Pittman's house, 50 Lakeland Drive, E-4, 404/237-4497, cubscout@mindspring.com

April 16-18—GSV Spring Retreat @ the mountain: *Highlands Retreat & Conference Center*. Call 770/972-8028 for details; 828/526-5838 to register. (See article elsewhere in this issue.)

May 8—GSV Planning Meeting, 10AM, Atlanta Friends Meeting House

—GSV Potluck, 7PM, Mike Goettee & Roy Smoot's house, 1333 S. Ponce de Leon Ave. 404/378-8195, MaxGlitz@aol.com

May 22—**Living with Power: the Path of the Dancing Shaman**, a workshop by John Stowe. A fundraiser for GSV. Call 404/292-1965 for details, or to register. (See article elsewhere in this issue.)

June 5 —GSV Planning Meeting, 10AM, Atlanta Friends Meeting House

—GSV Potluck, 7PM, Dandelion's house, 683 Crespan Court, Lawrenceville, 770/972-8028, DadsBadBoy@aol.com

Note that the June meeting and potluck have been moved to the first Saturday in June, so as not to conflict with the Clark/Ballew fundraiser

June 11-13—**Truth and Desire: Intimacy, Communication and Eros**, a workshop by Don Clark & John Ballew. A fundraiser for GSV. Call 404/292-1965 for details, or to register. (See article elsewhere in this issue.)

June 27—Atlanta Pride Celebration

THE FUTURE OF VISIONARY

Hi, guys, I wanted to take this opportunity to let you know that GSV has hired me as its new, part-time administrator. The Planning Committee has decided that we need a single person whose job it is to handle our interactions with the world, whether that involves dealing with you and your new mailing address, or making sure our relations with governmental agencies are handled promptly and efficiently. I am honored to be the first GSV Administrator, and hope you'll see an improvement in our ability to communicate with you; if not, we expect you to let us know!

The biggest part of my job right now is the task of editing and administering *Visionary*. It has been my honor to perform as its editor over the last four years. Not many people get the chance to create an interface with the world for an organization like GSV. I have been able to grow both as a writer and editor, to coax and nurture some of my friends into doing more writing, and to create and shape the way this amazing spiritual group is seen in the world. I look back at the four pages of Vol. 1, No. 1 (containing excerpts from James Broughton's keynote, "The Holiness of Sexuality") and I am enormously gratified at what *Visionary* has evolved into. Thank you for all your feedback and support, especially to our contributors out there. And a special thanks to founding layout and design editor Joe Chancey, who carried the burden of this ever-expanding publication for 3-1/2 years. Without his selfless service to this very demanding project, *Visionary* might have remained a dream instead of becoming a reality.

I hope you agree with me that *Visionary* has grown into quite a substantial publication — not quite a magazine, but certainly beyond the typical newsletter that might come from comparable organizations. It is an expensive undertaking. Each issue costs about \$1,200 to print and mail. We have never asked for any money (though many of you have spontaneously sent in checks to help support it, for which we are always amazed and

thankful), but instead have published it from the proceeds of the Fall Conference. Late last year, we decided that it's time for *Visionary* to figure out how to carry more of its weight in the world.

And had we not made that decision, Great Spirit was about to make it for us. As one of our steps toward being more professional, we prepared our first comprehensive budget, using last year's figures projected into 1999. We discovered that with the addition of a part-time administrator, the continuation of *Visionary* as it exists now (a 14-page publication that comes out quarterly), and the Conference and other operating expenses, we will approach a \$5,000 deficit this year. (For an itemization of those amounts, see our first published budget, which will be an insert in the next issue of *Visionary*.) Fittingly, \$5,000 is almost exactly the cost of publishing *Visionary* in 1999.

Some of you may have heard me talk last year about going out on my own with *Visionary*. Seeing it as something of a burden on GSV and not sensing a consensus in the Planning Committee to focus on its financial demands, I was willing to try to make it a magazine on my own, and had the blessing of the Planning Committee to do that. But in the end, that did not seem to be the right choice. At this point, the heart of *Visionary* is its connection to GSV.

So, instead of scaling *Visionary* down to a four-page mailout with calendar announcements, we are hoping to maintain, and even increase the size of the publication, and are planning the implementation of a subscription process for *Visionary* to make that possible. Our timetable is dependent on funds. If we could make it to the end of the year without starting subscriptions, we would like to do that. More likely, either the May or August issue will contain an announcement in it that this is the last free issue of *Visionary*.

Since people have been so generous in sending us money without our even asking for it, we would be remiss if we did not give you the opportunity to show your support for *Visionary*. Any contribu-

tion you would make before we implement the subscription procedures would be tax-deductible. In addition, we're considering the addition of paid advertising, and are looking around for foundations and agencies where we might be able to apply for grants. Our ad rates will be printed in the next issue.

There are lots of issues here for us to process — how much to charge for subscriptions and ads, what type of ads are appropriate, at what point do we start paying a small stipend to contributors and to Mike Goettee for his wonderful new layout and design efforts, and most important, whether you enjoy *Visionary* enough to pay for it. We think it is a unique publication that has a profound function in the world — to communicate with gay men about their spiritual fabulousness. We hope you will agree, and will find some way to support us, whether that is through your writing, your photos, your funds, your goodwill or your energy.

Please send me your feedback on this issue to our new *Visionary* e-mail address — VisionaryZ@aol.com. You can mail tax-deductible contributions to *Visionary*, P.O. Box 339, Decatur, GA 30031-0339, or if you have questions, call me at 404/292-1965. More specifics about the subscription proposal will be in our May/June newsletter. Thanks for your support, take care, be well...

Al Cotton
GSV Administrator

YOUR 1999 PLANNERS...

- David Salyer
- Martin (Treewalker) Isganitis
- Gerry (Dancing Dolphin) Mitchell
- David Brodeur
- Bruce (Dandelion) Tidwell
- Ramon Noya
- Tony James
- Kim Pittman
- Steven Band
- John Brock
- Matt Huff

OUTRAGE DAVID SALYER

Continued from page 1

And yet, there are still times when I am caught off guard by my own outrage over something and I return to a state of suppression. I shut down. I avoid. I retreat.

In the summer of 1993 I was raped by two men and tested positive for HIV as a result. I have never really allowed myself to get angry over this, an event that has changed my body, my relationships, my goals, my entire life. In fact, I spent almost five years blaming myself for the rape. I heard the same little voice over and over again in my head: *You must have done something to make this happen... you should have known this could happen... you should have been more careful... you deserve what you got....*

I don't deserve HIV. No one does. Nor did I deserve to be raped. I didn't ask for it. It was not my fantasy. I was simply unlucky enough to encounter two men whose idea of a good time is to restrain someone and infect him with HIV. I could be angry at them, of course. Who could blame me? I even know where they live. I could set fire to their home. I could seek revenge. I could kill them. I could even pray they die lingering, horrible deaths. But I'd still be HIV-positive.

From the time I became sexually active I knew about HIV. I am not now, nor have I ever been sexually irresponsible. The idea that I could accidentally infect someone with HIV horrifies me. And the idea that someone could infect another human being with HIV deliberately through their own indifference and callousness is unfathomable to me. I was raped. I was not given a choice. But every day gay men are infecting other gay men with HIV. And their motives? *I hate condoms. He didn't ask if I was positive. I was drunk. I was high. I didn't really know the guy. If he doesn't get it from me, he'll get it anyway.*

Where is the integrity in any of this? Where is the respect for our gay brothers? Where is the morality? Where is the love? And where the hell are our so-called gay leaders when it comes to this subject? How in the name of God can they get so worked up over the U.S. military not wanting us to bunk with straights and kill foreigners, but have

nothing whatsoever to say about HIV-positive gay men knowingly spreading an infectious, killer virus? Why aren't we outraged over men who infect other men with HIV through sheer indifference?

So just in case you missed it: I'm officially outraged. See, I'm a volunteer peer counselor and safer sex educator and I've been trained to listen passively and educate without judgment, so for five years now I've been listening to every conceivable HIV infection story and trying to provide men with safer sexual options. I don't use words like *moral* or *ethical* or *decent* in my counseling or safer sex presentations. I refrain from judging behaviors out loud. I have never bellowed *What the hell were you thinking?* at a client or workshop participant. But I've shuddered and cringed silently and hoped my face didn't betray me by registering shock, dismay or disgust.

Last year I met another man with HIV. I held him one night while he cried quietly and whispered that he felt like HIV had made him lose his soul. He seemed to need a place to share and be safe with someone. I was touched by his willingness to trust me and moved by his vulnerability. I listened to him describe the night he received his HIV results. He talked about finding an infectious disease specialist. He dreaded a breach in his confidentiality. He talked about the drugs and their side effects. He feared his coworkers finding out. He was scared of getting sick. He wondered how to tell his parents. He worried about his future. And he seemed acutely aware that his life had been forever changed by HIV.

In the course of getting to know one another he also revealed that he'd continued to have unsafe sex with other men after he tested positive. I detected an inkling of guilt, but his loathing of condoms seemed more evident. Suddenly a man I liked and respected and had shared intimacy with became someone whose character I questioned. I slipped into counselor mode, offering to discuss safer sex options with him and even giving him condoms to try. I regret that now. I regret not telling him what I really think. *Your behavior is reprehensible. It is unacceptable to me that you would risk infecting another human being with HIV because you hate con-*

doms. It sickens me to think you may continue to do this and that you will find more compliant partners. How can you weep about what HIV has done to your life while simultaneously spreading that same virus to other men? Does your conscience shut off at the bedroom door? Do you have any principles whatsoever, or is everything driven by the equipment between your legs?

I feel compassion and affection toward this man. I know he's only human and I've seen lots of evidence that other people think he's a nice guy. But sometimes in the darkest recesses of my heart I feel he's a sexually irresponsible creep with a disturbing inability to distinguish right from wrong. And I think I'm a coward for not telling him so.

We gay men can sure get worked up about sodomy laws, hate crimes, military bans, domestic partnership, non-discrimination workplace clauses, lesbian sitcom characters, boycotts and gay marriage, but where's our outrage about the ongoing HIV infection of our gay brothers? Why do so many of us act like it's just a sad but inevitable fact of gay life? Why are so many of us afraid even to talk openly about this issue? We seem resigned to the notion that AIDS service organizations are responsible for prevention messages, when the reality is that each and every one of us could open his mouth and say, "it's time we stopped killing one another with this virus, because twenty years into this epidemic we really have no one else us to blame but ourselves."

I don't care anymore how many gay and lesbian characters inhabit TV's melodramas and sitcoms. I don't care if we're never legally allowed to marry one another (because frankly I wouldn't expect us to be any more successful at it than our heterosexual counterparts). I don't care if Jesse Helms accepts us or not. I don't care if Tom Cruise is gay. I care about how real gay men treat one another. I'm no longer interested in overlooking or absolving our community's Typhoid Marys. And you better believe the next time someone tells me he's positive and still having unprotected sex, I'm going to have something to say about it. ▼

*David can be reached at
cubscout@mindspring.com.*

The Skinny on Fundraisers

Two fundraisers for GSV have been offered for Spring and Summer of 1999. GSV is immensely appreciative of the offer these men have made—thanks, John, Don and John! Check out the descriptions below, and please consider attending one of them if you feel

called to do so. Also the Spring Retreat has been scheduled for the weekend of April 16-18, and the Fall Conference is Thursday, September 23 through Sunday, September 26.

Hope to see you at one or more of these events.

LIVING WITH POWER: THE PATH OF THE DANCING SHAMAN

BY JOHN R. STOWE



Men who love men carry tremendous amounts of healing, vitality, creativity, and passion—qualities rarely mentioned in discussions on “sexuality” and “lifestyle.” Claiming the full measure of your own Gay being can be a life-long adventure that touches every aspect of life, as you learn for example, to support yourself with meaningful employment or discover ways of relating that are exciting and satisfying.

Are you taking full advantage of your inner gifts? Ask yourself: “What dreams and goals really excite me?” “Do I have all the passion and vitality I desire?” “Are my relationships truly satisfying?” “Do I give myself the power to create the life I want?”

On Saturday, May 22, I invite you to a day-long workshop that explores practical tools in conscious life-creation. In

community with other men-loving men, you'll focus on easy, effective ways to make sure that what you're creating in life actually satisfies your deepest dreams. You'll leave with tools that empower you day-to-day on your own spiritual journey. This work is a specific application of the techniques I've outlined in *Two-Spirit Warrior, An Empowerment Journey for Gay Men*—combining movement awareness, inner journeying, and practical action. Come help us create an experience that is powerful and enjoyable.

We'll gather Saturday, May 22, from 9:30 to 5:00 in the Atlanta area. Cost is \$100, including lunch. We'll donate a portion of the proceeds to support Gay Spirit Visions.

For registration and logistics, contact Al Cotton (404) 292-1965, alc70809@aol.com. For questions about workshop content, contact John Stowe (404) 373-0111, jrstowe@mindspring.com.

TRUTH AND DESIRE: INTIMACY, COMMUNICATION AND EROS

DON CLARK, PH.D. AND JOHN R. BALLEW, M.S.
ATLANTA, GEORGIA - JUNE 11-13, 1999

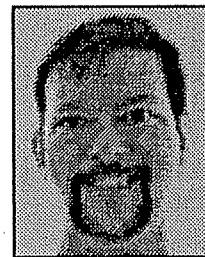


Don Clark

Intimacy requires an ability to speak one's truth and to listen with an open mind. For too many of us, knowledge and communication of desires and other true feelings are clouded by shame and fear of rejection. In a safe, nurturing environment, we will join together as a community of gay men exploring the ways in which truth-telling can illuminate our individual and collective natures. This workshop will use guided exercises and rituals to quiet the fears of shame and rejection. Through talk and touch, we will open both the emotional heart and the physical body. Participants will practice clarity of communication as a pathway to understanding the heart's desire, increasing self-knowing, developing

greater spiritual freedom and enhancing self-esteem. Participants will gain greater ability to speak and hear truth with an open and grateful heart.

This work builds on the issues raised by Don Clark in his 1998 keynote address at the GSV conference, as well as Don and John's on-going collaboration regarding spirituality, gay culture and human sexuality. This is an experiential workshop which will combine talking exercises with touch. Part of the workshop will be done undressed. The cost for three full days is \$345 with a portion of the proceeds of the workshop going to support the work of GSV.



John Ballew

For information, please contact Al Cotton at 404/292-1965 or via email at alc70809@aol.com.

QUEER ASTROLOGY

QUEER ASTROLOGY FOR MEN
 BY JILL DEARMAN
 (PAPER, ST. MARTIN'S, 1999)

Astrology is, I believe, a true science, and thus truth can be revealed in explication of the science, its method and mysteries. In this book, however, the author, who writes a popular astrology column for New York's trendy *HX* magazine, comes off as being far less a scientist with a firm grasp on her science than as an ego-driven little girl who gets off on telling others the locus of what she perceives as their problems.

Part One explores each sun sign: "In Life," "In Bed," "How to Seduce Him," "Doing Him" and "Dating Him," "How to Last over the Long Haul," "How to Get Rid of Him," and explanation of each sign's three decanates. In the second half,

Dearman interprets sign compatibility. Throughout, Dearman speaks in a disconcertingly removed voice - in the Aries section, for example, she addresses not Aries men but their (potential) partners.

Granted that writing an astrology book is a slippery slope, making generalizations so specific as to make the reader believe that the book is written only for him or her. Yet even the author's broad characterizations are sometimes so off-target as to make myself, as well as several friends reading their pertinent material, feel as if our horoscopes were not written for us at all.

Underlying this sort of general misinformation is a tone which the author calls "irreverent," but which I felt was disparaging, often offensive. For example, at various points the author asks pointless trivia questions, then denigrates the reader for not knowing the answer, call-

ing the reader "idiot," "dumb," and other insults. Perhaps I grew up in a different era of astrology (my first reading was in 1979), but it's always been my understanding that astrology is a compassionate art, not means for the astrologer to demonstrate her/his presumed intellectual superiority.

Far more authoritative is Michael Jay's *Gay Love Signs* (rev. ed., Penguin, 1990). Although not as witty as Dearman, at least Jay regards his subject and readers with genuine understanding without constant flippancy. Jay's book has none of the acrid cattiness of Dearman's to distract the aspirant from learning about the way of astrology, and from learning how the ways of the Sun and planets is a way of knowing oneself and others. ▼

*Ron can be reached at
 rsuresha@spdcc.com.*

FALL CONFERENCE, VOL.2

Continued from page 5

our ability to truly be with ourselves, and be with our own shadows. So I invite you to take a journey in your own erotic healing, and to begin to really notice yourself. There's a now fairly old song by Romanovski and Phillips called "Don't use your penis for a brain." I would like to encourage you to use your penis as a brain, to access the wisdom of your cock. Our bodies have much to tell us, and while I don't think all decisions should be based in that way, I think it's also important to pay attention — what arouses you? What gets your juices flowing? What makes you feel really vital and alive? And correspondingly, what makes your cock soft? When do you find yourself moving into a really soft place. And that's not a bad thing....

Finally, I don't think we can heal our souls without healing our bodies. And healing our bodies doesn't necessarily mean that we become buffed and that we become the most muscular people possible. For some of us, I think healing our bodies is about learning to notice

and to love the aging of our bodies, to notice the lines that appear on our faces over time, and to honor the grayness of our whiskers. If we can't envision ourselves being whole, vital, juicy people and being up in years, I think we're not very likely to live to that age. Can you envision yourself being old and juicy? ▼

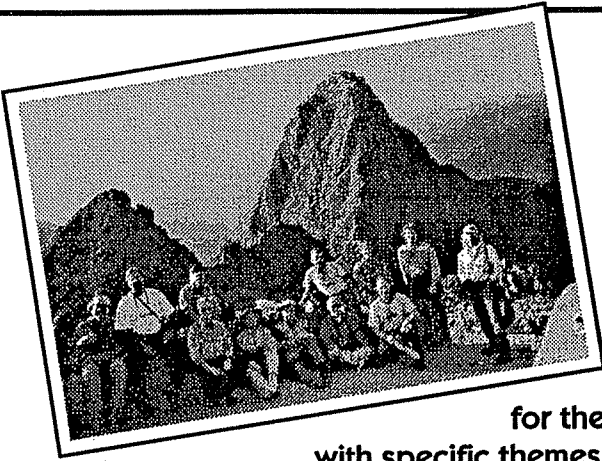
*John Ballew can be reached at
 jballew@bodymindsoul.org.*



Singing God

I serve the little singing god
 who birdlike hums
 at uncertain margins of hearing.
 Usually felt through sirens,
 mad dogs, trains, mind-rattle,
 he murmurs unfazed
 the lubdub rhythm of a heart.
 Shh! I can just discern his voice,
 a breeze of scandal quivering the
 leaves.
 Urgent as a hungry cataract, he
 moans low the sorrow of creation
 and rumbles its joy
 as unhurried music.
 Listen.

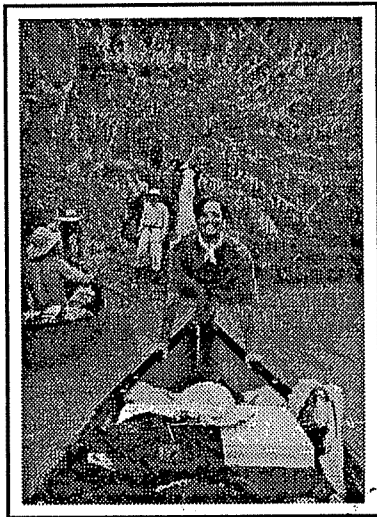
—Bob Strain 11/17/98



SPIRIT JOURNEYS

Adventure Trips • Workshops • Retreats

Since 1993 we have been offering a variety of journeys for the gay community. Our programs include weekend workshops with specific themes, longer retreats that provide rejuvenation and self discovery, and a myriad of tours to sacred sites worldwide and outdoor wilderness experiences.



- April 10-17 Rafting & Canoeing on the Rio Grande - Texas
- April 23-25 Journey Into Ourselves - Asheville, NC
- May 14-16 Awakening Your Spiritual Heart - Santa Fe
- May 29- June 4 Dolphin Dance in Bimini - Florida/Bahamas
- July 1-15 Pilgrimage to the Sacred Andes of Peru
- August 10-15 R&R Summer Retreat - New Mexico
- September 3-11 Vision Quest & Mountaineering - Colorado
- October 2-17 Journey to Nepal & Tibet
- November 5-7 Awakening Your Spiritual Heart - Santa Fe
- November 12-14 Journey Into Ourselves - Dahlenega, Georgia

**FOR A COMPLETE BROCHURE ON UPCOMING JOURNEYS
call 800-490-3684
or visit our web site at www.spiritjourneys.com**



"The experience was indescribable. I felt closer to the group of men than anyone ever before - a connection - supportive, nurturing spiritual bond that I will long remember. It was one of the most memorable & important things I've ever done."
- David, Orlando FL

"Many thanks for facilitating what was an enriching retreat experience for me. And what a wonderful group of men were gathered there! I carry with me some profound moments of intimate sharing I had with several of the participants, each in his own way a mentor to me. I return here with better tools to deal with the day-to-day realities of my work and relationships - especially my relationship to myself. I feel empowered, trusting, confident of a safer and rich journey."
- Robert, Seattle WA

Spirit Journeys ▼ P.O. Box 3046 ▼ Asheville, NC 28802

FORD WEB CONSULTING

Get yourself, your business, or your portfolio on the web. I can show you how to do it yourself, or do it all for you from concept to finished website. Affordable rates, barter and currency. Call or write for a free consultation.

Jeff Ford 404-212-9897

Email: Jeff.Ford@usa.net

<http://members.aol.com/JeffFord65/webdevelopment.html>

INTRODUCTORY OFFER

Mention this ad for
Two Massages
for the price of one.

Good for new clients for one professional, therapeutic, non-sexual massage from
Joe Chancey,
Certified Massage Therapist

404.523.3624

email: JoeChancey@aol.com

ENERGY FIELD THERAPIST

Gerry Mitchell
A.K.A. Dancing Dolphin

Healing in Vitality

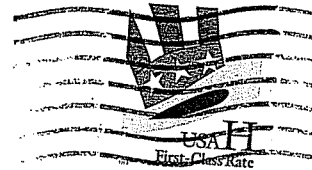
- Massage • Energy Work • Personal Health Training

311 Lakemoore Drive NE
Suite D
Atlanta, GA USA 30342

Home and Business Phone:
404-303-8978
FAX 404-705-9634
Healtouch@aol.com

VISIONARY

GSV
P.O.Box 339
Decatur, GA 30031-0339



FIRST CLASS MAIL

Jim D. Jones
45 Tanglewood Rd
Newnan, GA 30263