

# VISIONARY



## LIVING IN RADIANCE: THE PASSION CONNECTION

**H**ave you gone into a bookstore lately and noticed how many of the books there are “for Dummies®?” You’ve seen them, the yellow and black guidebooks that set out to teach all us dummies the finer points of living. *Amazon.com* lists 1206 titles covering an amazing array of topics. Lots on computer programs, which I can understand, but what about *Art for Dummies®*? Or *Chihuahuas ... Weather ... Bread Machines ... Philosophy ...* and *GREs—all for Dummies®*. There’s *Baseball for Dummies®* (well, duh!) and even *Sex for Dummies®*—three versions with a fourth on order—followed by, oh dear, *Pregnancy for Dummies®* (abridged and full length).



You know what? They bug me. Not so much what’s in them—their content is actually pretty good. Not so much the impulse of people who want to learn new things either. It’s the word “Dummies”(®, of course). To me, it implies a lowest-common-denominator mentality that’s far too chic these days in America. “Don’t show off,” it goes. “Hide anything you’ve got that sets you apart from the ordinary Joe on the street.” The marketers who coined the term aren’t dummies at all—they’re onto something. George W. Bush is onto the same thing—and both have struck a chord in the public mentality that’s yielding big bucks. What on Earth does that say about us, the public?

To me, dummification is a trend symptomatic of a society losing its vitality. Big business thrives on big, homogeneous markets, on having large groups of people whose thoughts and desires stay within very narrow confines. It makes for a system that’s really uncomfortable with diversity, with the rough edges and shining peaks of individual difference. And so it encourages us to be Dummies—people too hooked into the media-driven trance to think for themselves, too addicted to the bland approval of the mainstream or the lazy comfort of letting others make their decisions. “We’ll keep you entertained,”

they tell us, “with bread and circuses, if that’s what it takes. Just fit in and don’t rock the boat!” Where’s it lead? *Sex for Zombies®*? *Life for Blobs®*?

The whole deal is directly the opposite of what we were born for—to live with vitality, authenticity, passion. In fact, we’re hard-wired to embody these qualities—and to live with the radiance they engender. As surely as your home has wires to carry electricity, your body has its own bioelectrical circuitry. Western medicine tells us about the nerves, which transmit information chemically and electrically. Other, older systems of healing describe energetic anatomies that are more subtle and fundamental. Aryurvedic doctors describe energetic centers called chakras, or “spinning wheels of light,” arranged along the body’s vertical axis. Doctors of traditional Chinese medicine have spent thousands of years mapping and studying the flow of energy (“Chi”) through “meridians” that cover the whole body. Practitioners of these systems know that a person’s health depends on the quality and strength of the vital energy. They’ve developed a variety of sophisticated techniques—including acupuncture, physical manipulation, and herbal treatments—to keep that flow strong and balanced.

To live in radiance, we have to start with the physical, the hardware. If the body’s toxic, injured, or out of balance, its circuits get clogged. Energy can’t flow. There’s no way to experience the passion of life. So take care of basics first. Everyone knows that nutrition is important (especially if they’ve read *Nutrition for Dummies®*). When we eat clean, wholesome food, we feel better. Our circuits are clear and energy flows strongly. The same goes for moderate aerobic exercise, regular stretching, and adequate rest. These are the bottom line—you can’t go anywhere in a vehicle that’s out of gas. *Continued on page 10*

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# A WORLD OF OUR MAKING

BY BOB STRAIN

*What kind of world do we want to live in?*

The question insisted itself throughout the Gay Spirit Visions fall conference Sept. 21-24. Over 140 men gathered at The Mountain retreat center in Highlands, N.C. to explore the theme, "Living in Radiance: Inspiring the Gay Mind, Body and Soul."

It is an urgent question. On Friday night, while we bathed in the love of our brothers during the Trance Dance, a gay man lay shot and dying in a Roanoke, Va. bar. This article honors Danny Overstreet's spirit.



This year marked my tenth trip to the top of Little Scaly. In 1991, my friend Ricky Flippen and I drove down from Washington, D.C., to hear James Broughton read his poetry. We were excited and nervous, not knowing what to expect, but hoping for a happy adventure. What we discovered was a tribe of the most amazing gay men I have ever known.

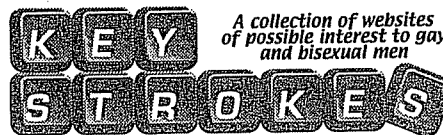
Ricky was never able to ascend The Mountain again in his body, but I feel his spirit with me each year. This year, the spirit of my life partner, Dexter Dreifus, also accompanied me.

I return each year for many reasons: personal healing, the magnificence of the land, the joy of being with my beautiful brothers, the safety of the emotional and spiritual space we create. I love watching us evolve as spirit draws us ever deeper into wonder.

We are a brotherhood of healers who apply our skills with compassion and intent to make a better world. We walk between many worlds, most importantly, I think, between those of pure spirit and of the wider gay community. We are artists, thinkers, body and energy workers, caregivers, lovers, ministers, shamans. Our common bond is that we are gay men who use our gifts lovingly to heal and enrich. Our work is essential.

**What kind of world?** Growing up gay in a little West Texas town, I thought myself unlike anyone else, and I was sure it was unsafe to let that difference be known. Whatever role models I might have found there haunted the bus station. *Not this, surely.* I left as soon as I could manage it, eventually winding up in Washington, D.C.

There I found many other men like myself. It became easier to breathe. *That's better, and yet...* Sometimes I would be swept up by an intense longing to find friends with whom I could discuss spiritual matters easily. Again, I thought I was alone in this need. Then Ricky danced into my life, and an extraordinary dia-



[www.whosoever.org](http://www.whosoever.org) An Online News Journal For Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Christians.

[www.wie.org](http://www.wie.org) Online version of What Is Enlightenment? magazine.

[www.rfdmag.org](http://www.rfdmag.org) Online version of the quarterly magazine

[www.thebody.com](http://www.thebody.com) A comprehensive HIV and AIDS information resource.

[www.mindbodysoul.org](http://www.mindbodysoul.org) The website of John R. Ballew, M.S., licensed professional counselor, sexuality educator, certified massage therapist and workshop facilitator.

[www.rainbowquery.com](http://www.rainbowquery.com) Wide-ranging Internet search engine for the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered community.

<http://earthfriends.home.mindspring.com> Bringing you the gentle, energetic healing power of flower essences and oils.



logue began. Suddenly I was not the only one, and if there was another, there might be more. So our path eventually led us to The Mountain in 1991.

**What a world, what a world:** On the eve of this year's conference, a fantastic thunderstorm crossed the Blue Ridge, ending a long dry spell before giving way to a beautiful late-summer day. It was a precursor to the quenching of our parched spirits.

Because James Broughton was the speaker at my first conference, it was a particular delight to hear his words during the opening ritual this year:

*However, men like us whose love  
abounds in grace  
possess the strength of lions and saints  
for whatever bold endeavors we may  
risk.*

Each of the presenters took the bold risk of aiming deep for the heart in articulating his vision of a radiant world. John Mungo described the nexus of therapy and spirituality, explaining how necessary it is to find inner stillness, experience our fears, and transcend them in order to be effective in the world. Harold Cole presented his insights on how we as a tribe need to work for change and especially to provide safe space for our young. Andrew Ramer reminded us of our unique role in safeguarding the Earth and shared a spiritual practice for healing the planet. Bernie Morin spoke of the need to bring forth beauty in the world and worked with us on preparing our inner energies to do so.

Since this was a record attendance for GSV, the opening heart circle loomed

large. In a departure from previous years, however, each man in turn gave his name, where he was from, and in one word, what had brought him there. (Well, a few of us stretched it). It was an amazing concentration of energy. Similarly, in the closing circle, we each gave our name, where we were going, and one (sometimes Faulknerian) sentence about what we would take away. This change was balanced by increased emphasis on the small groups, which have emerged as spaces for deep heart sharing.

**A luminous world:** As always, gay spirit dazzled in many splendors throughout the weekend. The talent show, complete with fashion revue, was augmented this year by an open mic night. The meals nourished us, and the workshops nurtured us: At the ones I attended, we danced for peace, worked on recovering from fundamentalism, and explored two new chakras. The Trance Dance and the fire circle dancing and drumming were amazing communions.

Perhaps the greatest enchantment for me came in watching the first-time men gradually open to the energy, their defenses melting, postures relaxing, faces softening, eyes beginning to glow.

I came home exhausted, joyful, wistful, and vibrating gently in love—feeling radiant.

*What kind of world?  
Isn't it apparent?*

*Poet and musician, Bob Strain lives in Charles Town, West Virginia and can be reached via e-mail at DamnDawg@ix.netcom.*

## Gay Spirit Visions

### A Mission Statement for Our Second Decade and A New Millennium

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

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

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

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

**GSV potlucks** are held the fourth Saturday of the month at 7:30PM unless otherwise noted.

**GSV Heart Circles**, hosted by Matt Huff, are held the second Sunday of every month, 7:30PM, at Innovox. For information, call Matt at 404/248-9649 or e-mail him at pretzelulu@aol.com

**NOTE:** The November Heart Circle moves to the third Sunday.

### November 10-12, The GSV Planners

**Retreat** The Mountain Retreat And Learning Center, Highlands, NC.

The Planners Retreat is open to any Atlanta area men who have attended at least one GSV conference and can commit to at least 9 of 12 monthly planning meetings a year. We are always looking for enthusiastic men with a passion for creating spiritual community.

**For details:** Jim Fason at jfason@aol.com or call 404/760-1528.

### November 25—GSV Post-Thanksgiving

**Potluck**, 7:30PM Hosted by King Thackston  
370 Loomis Avenue, SE, Atlanta, GA, 30312  
404/688-8234 e-mail: wingofmen@mindspring.com

### December 9—GSV Planning Committee

**Meeting** 10AM, Atlanta Friends Meeting House,  
701 Howard Street, Decatur, GA.

### December 9—GSV Potluck and Holiday

**Concert** (**Note:** second Saturday instead of fourth) Hosted by Jim Fason, 41B Plantation Drive, NE, Atlanta, GA 30324, 404/760-1528  
e-mail: jfason@aol.com

### January 13, 2001—GSV Planning Committee Meeting

10AM, Atlanta Friends Meeting House,  
701 Howard Street, Decatur, GA.

### January 27, 2001—GSV Potluck

Hosted by George Miller, Ron Brooks & Ben Culmyer  
339 10th Street, NW, Atlanta, Georgia 30318  
404/875-1061 e-mail: aagm8888@aol.com

### February 10, 2001—GSV Planning

**Committee Meeting** 10AM, Atlanta Friends Meeting House, 701 Howard Street, Decatur, GA.

### February 24, 2001—GSV Potluck

Hosted by Jeff Ford at Innovox: A Connectivity Lounge.  
Ford Factory Square (basement level),  
699 Ponce de Leon Avenue, Atlanta, Georgia  
404/872-4482 <http://www.innovoxlounge.com>

A Gay Spirit Visions Event

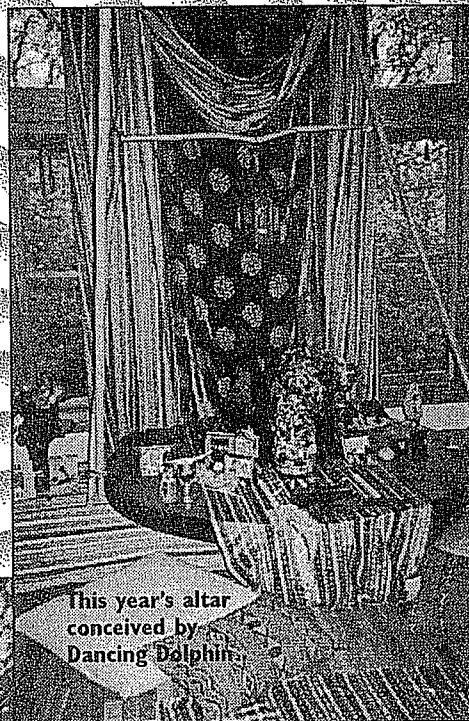
# LIVING IN RADIANCE

FALL CONFERENCE 2000



Haunt Couture

Left and above courtesy of Wayne Duckworth



This year's altar conceived by Dancing Dolphin

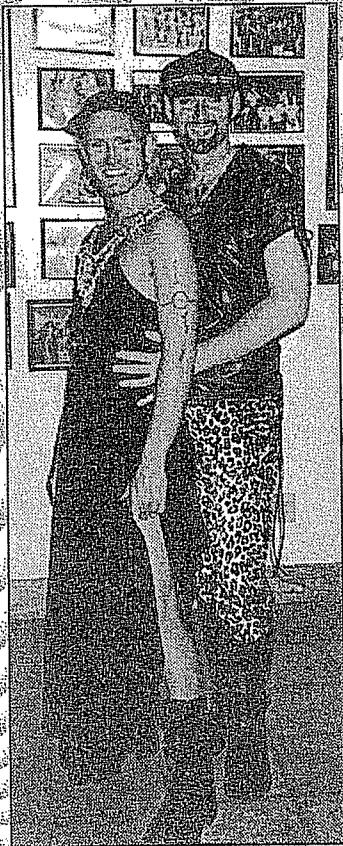


Dahling, the hills are postively  
ALIVE with the sound of music.  
—Little Shiva

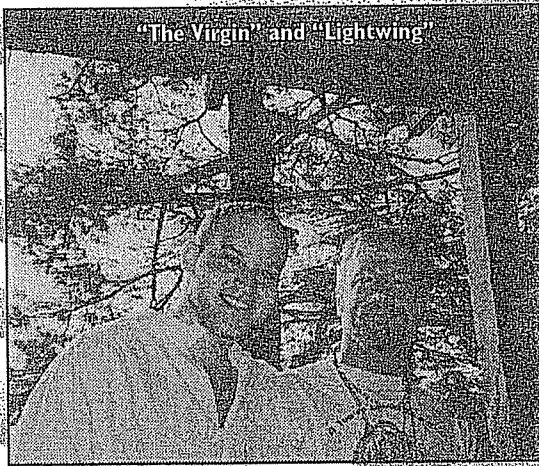




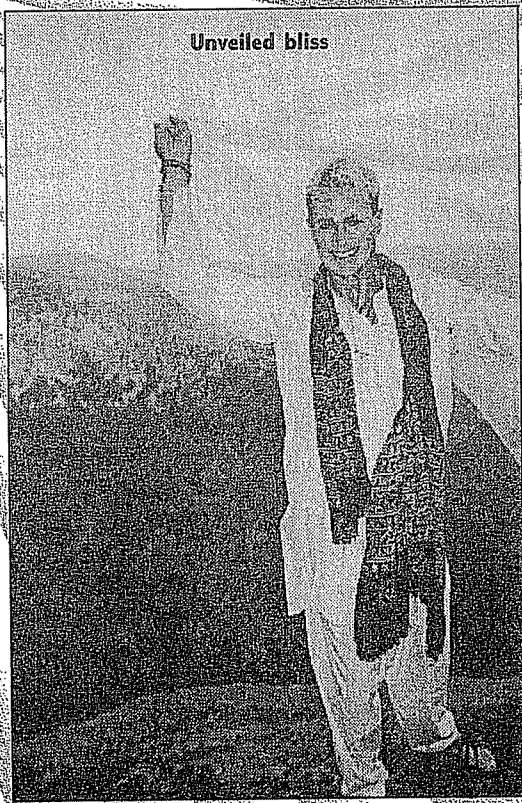
BROUGHT TO YOU BY:  
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From the  
Haus of Fleidermaus



So what were YOUR  
prom pictures like?



"The Virgin" and "Lightwing"



Unveiled bliss

Photos by Marc Vance Pimsler  
except where noted.

# TO LOOK WITHIN

BY JERRY SODER

**T**ranquility, self acceptance, love and a full complete life are the most sought after goals we as beings of the gay community and the world wish for ourselves. So, what is keeping us from experiencing our deepest desires? Maybe we are too afraid of looking into our core to find what we're really made of. Maybe we feel it will come to us if we just continue thinking about all this good stuff. Maybe we are just lazy.

Most of us are familiar with what our modern culture has to offer in the way of keeping ourselves preoccupied or distracted with what I call *external self*. Our need for endless shopping, countless entertainment venues and the mind boggling techno-age all contribute to the ego's desire to keep us from more fully knowing and being with our internal Self. But it is with our internal Self in which we find our real essence and true

fulfillment. All peace, all wisdom, all love are waiting within to be touched, remembered and embraced by us. There are many ways of accessing our internal Self consciously. For me, communion with nature has been a most alluring and powerful assistant for inner rediscovery and connection. Nature's simplistic beauty and non-judgemental existence are perfect examples which reflect internal Self. As I sit quietly near the flowing creek and turn my attention to the water, I become very aware to the present moment. My mind makes a shift. My body functions slow and I notice that I am the cascading beauty. I am the healing sound. I AM.

During such experiences a wonderful acceptance of what *is* fills me and a deep peace is known. When I breathe and walk into the shrouded forest, I am gifted by the trees, plants and wildlife. The shapes, colors, sounds and aromas all aid in my

attunement to insight and healing. The earth constantly supports and blesses us and it is always there giving her love.

In the early mornings after clearing the night's sleep from my eyes, I look out a window and a subtle smile forms on my lips. A feeling of gratitude and joy gently fill my being. My vision is graced with the sight of glorious mountain beauty. Co-habiting with this little part of the planet called Hidden Hollow Retreat has been nothing less than magical for me. I've come to know the healing power of nature and the intimate existence of my own still, small voice within. I encourage you to take the opportunities to be with nature. To be with your Self. To realize the grand gift of your own remarkable still small voice. ▼

*Jerold Soder lives and manages a small retreat facility in northeast Tennessee. He currently provides spiritual direction to clients by telephone around the country and shares his gifts of ceremony, massage, shamanic healing and yoga to those who visit Hidden Hollow. Jerry can be reached at 423-272-5752.*

LAWRENCE JAMES ELLIOTT

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# Blessed Bi Spirit: Bisexual People of Faith

Edited by Debra R. Kolodny (Continuum)

REVIEWED BY DARRELL GRIZZLE

**B**lessed *Bi Spirit* is a collection of 32 articles, poems, prayers, and stories from bisexual men and women on a wide variety of spiritual paths: Buddhist, Pagan, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Native American, and others. While some of the theological articles are a little wordy, the poems and prayers are beautiful, and the personal stories are fascinating and bittersweet.

Several of the writers talk about having a "second coming out"—first as gay or lesbian, then as bisexual. Some found themselves rejected not only by straight friends but by gay and lesbian friends as well. Bisexuals do not fit neatly into most folks' neat little categories, so to understand bisexuality requires an ability to move beyond "either/or" thinking into "both/and" thinking. This can be difficult, even for the bisexual person himself/herself. For several of the writers in this collection, the hardest "coming out" was to themselves.

Part of the difficulty is that bisexuality as an orientation is not static but dynamic. As the editor of this anthology put it, "As a bisexual I experience sexual orientation, both attraction and behavior, as fluid—as shifting, as both immutable and changing. I am always bisexual, whether my partner is male or female. ...While my identity is constant, my attractions, dreams, and partners have changed over the past fifteen years."

One of the contributors is GSV's own Kelly Cresap, who described this dynamic in a manner to which I can easily relate: "My attraction to women was like a competing frequency on a radio transmission, not easily detectable in the din of the main broadcast." Kelly compared

being bisexual to being "an amphibian life form"—"bi-devotional, bi-spiritual, bi-experiential ...bi-what-have-you." His essay eloquently describes the self-discoveries he has found in moviegoing, and he draws further parallels in the amphibious nature of moviegoing itself: the transition from ordinary to cinematic experience.

For many of the writers, self-acceptance came when they finally allowed themselves to experience the unconditional love of God/Goddess/Spirit. One of the writers was helped on this path by an online magazine, Whosoever ([www.whosoever.org](http://www.whosoever.org)), edited by a friend of mine, Candace Chellew.

After reading an article by Candace called "Coming Out to God," the writer said, "I felt that God drew me to that website, the story, and her words. Nothing could have been more healing for me."

Healing is a recurring theme in this book. Like me, more than a few of the writers were rejected by religious family members and struggled with freeing themselves from a toxic "either/or" religion and moving on to a healthy "both/and" spirituality.

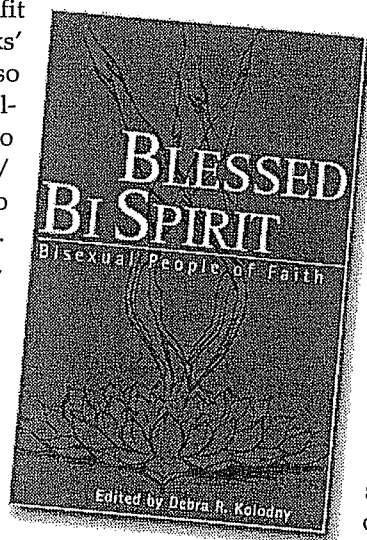
Many of them found ways to reclaim what was good about their religious tradition, while incorporating elements and practices from other traditions into their personal spirituality. One contributor describes herself as Zen Catholic Pagan, another as Wiccan Quaker. Others describe themselves as Budeo-Pagan, Zen Buddhist Quaker, mystical/pagan/Jungian, and "ambispiritual." (As an Episcopagan Sufi, I can relate.)

One of the contributors, Barbara Gibson, who at the age of 70 is finishing up her doctorate at the University of Creation Spirituality, wrote that she can no longer identify herself as a Christian because she is horrified at the atrocities

that have been committed in that name. "The kinds of spirituality that attract me," she writes, "follow the mystical and justice teachings within each religion: the core teachings of Jesus (along with mystics like Hildegard of Bingen and Meister Eckhart), the theory and practice of 'engaged Buddhism,' some of the ritual practices and the ethical tradition of Judaism, and the dances and poetry of the Islamic Sufi tradition. Along with others in the Creation Spirituality community and elsewhere, I am creating a spiritual life that is expansive, inclusive, and relevant to the postmodern age, yet firmly rooted in tradition."

Some of the writers have struggled with issues of monogamy vs. polyamory, and there are articles from both camps in this anthology—as well as from transgendered persons and proponents of group ritual sex, three-way marriages, and BDSM sexuality. The diversity of the different contributors to this book is itself testimony that all bisexuals are definitely not alike!

The book ends with a beautifully-written bedtime story by Starhawk, called "The Goddess Blesses All Forms of Love"—about crossing religious and societal boundaries to embrace all the different forms and expressions of love. Crossing boundaries is a recurring theme throughout this book. Simply reading all 32 articles and stories is itself an eye-opening, boundary-crossing experience. I heartily recommend *Blessed Bi Spirit* to all who want to better understand bisexuality, as well as to all GLBT persons who are seeking to discover an authentic spirituality. ▼



*Darrell Grizzle is a therapist who specializes in court-ordered counseling: DUI's, domestic violence, sex offenses. He is a mystical bear who lives with his gorgeous boyfriend Michael in Marietta, Georgia. His webpage is WildFaith ([www.wildfaith.com](http://www.wildfaith.com)) and he can be reached via e-mail at [powerbear@mind-spring.com](mailto:powerbear@mind-spring.com).*

# KOSHER MEAT

edited by Lawrence Schimel (Sherman Asher Publishing)

REVIEWED BY JONATHAN LERNER

Among the mainly Jewish, determinedly world-weary kids I hung with in high school in the mid-sixties, it was fashionable when confronted by any challenge to throw up hands in mock despair and cry, "Oh God, I'm having an identity crisis." Smart, affluent, heavily psychologized and headed for good colleges, we thought this was a joke.

As the ten stories by gay men in Lawrence Schimel's new anthology *Kosher Meat* illustrate, a Jew in America never seems to resolve the burning questions of his identity, and those of us among the Chosen People who also turn out to be queer go through life taking identity crisis, so to speak, at both ends.

Underlying our conflicted self-conceptions are two things about Judaism that reflect its odd duality as both a religion and a people. One is the Torah's contradictory messages about homosexuality: Leviticus tell us it's an abomination—but then there is that glorious passion of Jonathan and David. This ambivalent message is compounded by the legendary love of Jewish mothers for their sons, which is often enough undiminished when the sons turn out to be faygelach. My own mother, intuiting that I was queer, protected and supported me in many ways—although she died when I was 16, well before changing social mores would have encouraged her to verbalize it, even to herself. I often wonder what to make of the fact that, stuck for names, she read the Bible while recovering from my birth to came up with Jonathan David. "Miz Lerner," a nurse is supposed to have declared,

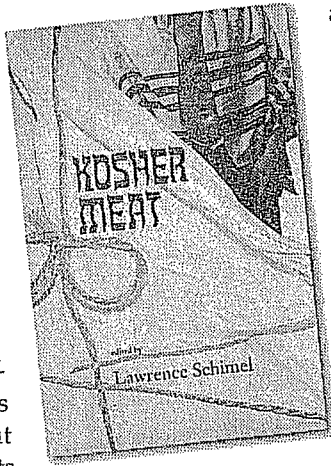
"you're just the most sanctified woman we've seen."

The other confusing message we get from Judaism is the imperative to do our part in ensuring survival of the tribe. Accepting being gay is an act of self-love and self-respect. Self-love and respect, for Jews, naturally extends to our roots, and it doesn't take much knowledge of the history to feel proud of our survival. "Be fruitful and multiply" is the biblical commandment. The standard joke is that

this is actually expressed to us as the threat that it will kill our parents if we don't produce darling grandchildren whom they can dote on. But having children is something few Jewish queers, however otherwise gifted, will achieve. You might be surprised how much anguish this can cause us; never mind what it does to our parents.

Gays like to think that we can nearly always recognize one another, even those who are not "obvious." We call

this keen discernment "gaydar," and pretend it's innate, but it's actually something we've trained ourselves to do. Though the particular signals are different, it's much the same with Jews, who can be just as skilled as gays at picking one another out in a crowd. My parents and the liberal, suburban, mostly secularized Jews I grew up among somehow programmed me to automatically examine the name and features of every single person I ever meet, to this day, for the possibility of Jewishness. In the ten years since I came out as gay, I've had two principal relationships: one a relatively short disaster, and one a lasting dream... with gentile men both of whom I mistook at first for Jews. This suggests that I ought to disengage my faulty Jewdar. Except that I can't. Uncertain as it is, just like my gaydar, it's a survival skill I'm



afraid to be without.

The characters in *Kosher Meat* are forever trying to work out who they are as Jews, as well as to pinpoint the ethnic identities of the men they're attracted to. One of Jonathan Wald's characters experiences a crescendo of sexual pleasure with an Aryan-looking Fire Island trick he thinks of as "the Nazi"—only to find that the trick's obviously Jewish roommate is someone he might have preferred, someone he could actually imagine a relationship with. A San Franciscan in a story by David O'Steinberg, during a nighttime encounter in a Tel Aviv park, says, "I stood shocked, stunned: a Jewish man getting his boots licked hard by an Israeli; what did it mean?"

This quote, and the book's title, suggest porn, porn with a Yiddish accent, maybe exhortations to "Eat, dolling," penetration with half-sour pickles, jokes based on the famous sign in Katz's Delicatessen on the Lower East Side of Manhattan: "Send a Salami to Your Boy in the Army". Of course there is sex here, but it's nearly all experienced in the course of—mostly unfulfilled—pursuits of identity.

Michael Lassell, for example, has elsewhere published some of the bluntest—not to say bleakest—descriptions of gay sex in print. But the shtupping in his present story occurs chastely, offstage—between a man who had a single Jewish great-grandparent but no Jewish upbringing, and who yet can say, "I have the feelings...the longing...the Wandering Jew thing. I was tortured for not being Jewish in my high school, which was almost entirely Jewish." — and a man whose grandparents died in the camps and who as a child decided to change his first name to Sariel, an anagram of Israel. These two cruise each other and hook up while in Washington, touring the Holocaust Museum, a venue sure to focus the mind on issues of ethnicity, if not guaranteed to excite a hard-on.

Nearly all the situations in these stories are seen through similar overlays of modern irony: the Jewish boyfriend whose Polish-refugee father had been afraid to have him marked for life by circumcision; the Catholic who tries disas-



trously to jolly his Jewish boyfriend's mother out of regretting her son's gayness, and his likely lack of progeny, by saying, "It's not as if we won't know in which religion to raise the children;" the San Francisco duo who carry on communication in their fetishized daddy-boy scene with the few scraps of Yiddish they know. The only exception is a magic realist tale by Andrew Ramer, author of several volumes of gay mytho-history, which is set in Biblical-era Judea. It's the only one in the book that's sweet as milk and honey, too.

With that exception, the ruminations of the men in *Kosher Meat* add their particularly this-minute, self-absorbed convolution to the ongoing literary exploration of how being Jewish and being queer overlap. This grand project, apparently nowhere near exhausted yet, includes current titles ranging from *Friday the*

*Rabbi Wore Lace: Jewish Lesbian Erotica* to *Out of Our Kitchen Closets: San Francisco Gay Jewish Cooking* (Gevalt! Now there's such a thing as gay cooking?) In its obsession with the merging and diverging of identities, it also echoes the numerous similar anthologies by American queers of African, Asian, Hispanic, Pacific Island and Native descent.

Lawrence Schimel is a prolific writer, poet and anthologist whose 40-some books range from erotica to science fiction, and even to food (eat, dolling!). His *PoMoSexuals: Challenging Assumptions About Gender and Sexuality* (co-edited with Carol Queen) won a Lambda Literary Award, the Pulitzer of gay writing, in 1998. I liked Schimel's story in *Kosher Meat* about a sex party among a group of jittery guys who know each other from their (no doubt Reconstructionist) congregation. One of them brings along an unin-

vited outsider—a Puerto Rican pick up, uncircumcised, a non-Jew—whose simple presence (vu den?) enables the rest to cut loose and pile on. But I'm afraid Schimel's afterword, a longish rumination on connections between Zionism, the changing attitudes among American Jews toward Israel, these same Jewish Americans' perpetual identity crises, and the similarly shifting layers of gay self-consciousness, will lose most non-Jewish readers. It bored me, and I actually got all the references. Better he should have submitted it to the editors at Tikkun, and made room in his book for another revealing account of Jewish gay mishigas. ▼


*Jonathan Lerner writes mainly on travel, design, and (vu den?) food, from Atlanta. He is the author of the novel Caught in a Still Place and the oral history Voices from Wounded Knee.*

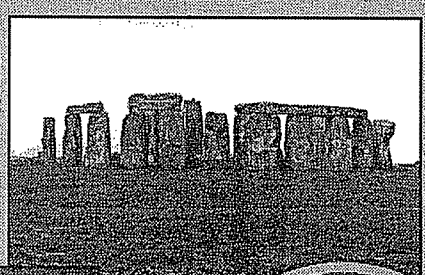
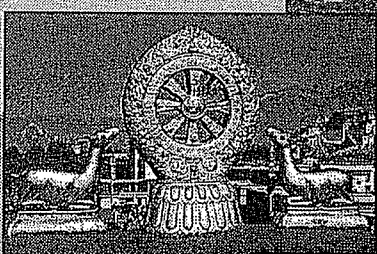



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## LIVING IN RADIANCE

Continued from page 1

Yet the physical vehicle is only the beginning. Western medicine is beginning to acknowledge the effects of emotions on physical health. Traditional systems of healing have recognized the importance of focusing on the whole being for a long time. Physical treatment is just one part of the picture. Of equal or greater concern are the person's emotional and mental states, plus their spiritual relationship with self and the world. Bringing *all* parts into alignment is the key to radiance.

Living in radiance is a choice that goes much farther than just taking care of your body. It's a commitment to bring every area of your life into its highest expression. That's an ongoing process. It takes work. No silver bullet can take away your responsibility to get your own life in order. There's help available, yes, and taking advantage of it is great. Yet in the end, each one of us has to find what raises our own energy, not just physically, but also mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

Raising your energy and living high is satisfying spiritual work. You can start by doing an honest inventory of your life. Pay attention each day to which activities, habits, foods, or situations give your energy a boost—and which bring you down. Which relationships make you feel affirmed and alive? Which beliefs truly support you in reaching your full, radiant potential? Where do old doubts or judgments hold you back? Do you have a spiritual practice to feed you each day, to provide a place where you can open to the full range of your own joy? Don't be hard on yourself here—we all have ups and downs. But if any areas jump out as needing work, listen to the call.

There are lots of techniques to increase vital energy. Some work better than others. Drugs, from caffeine to steroids, kick up the flow artificially, yet though they work well enough in a pinch, in the long run they lead to burnout. Better to find methods that enhance the body's own mechanisms. Many of these you can do by yourself. Yoga works. And Chi Kung. Meditation. Tai Chi. Dance. Time in Nature. Creative expression. Chanting. Singing. Massage. The list is long. See which you like. When they work, you'll know. You'll feel brighter. If not, try something else.

Many of the activities we enjoy at our GSV conferences are also wonderful vitalizers. Think of the focused intention of creative ritual, the deep intimacy of the heart circle, or the endorphin-laced high of the trance dance. Think of the deep healing of laughter released at the talent show, or the vital sharing of a hug with another man beneath ancient mountain oaks.

Beyond all the practices, living in radiance means claiming your Passion. Passion is the surest antidote for dummification. It lives in the parts of you that refuse to compromise or surrender to conformity. Passion is a universal expression of vital life force, yet what evokes it is very personal. For one man, it might come from exploring the joys of musical expression. For another, the deep intimacy of tantra. Or gardening, raising a child, or working to feed the hungry. Maybe it's designing fashions, or designing rituals. Maybe it's travel, or staring for hours into the eyes of a lover.

As gay men, we know better than many the dangers of too much conformity. Many of us learned very early to hide our true passions—even from ourselves. We know the numbing pain of dimming our Light in the attempt to appease the societal gods of conformity. When we come out, there's an incredible burst of energy. And claiming our sexuality is only the start. It puts us at the threshold of a lifelong spiritual quest, one that asks us to apply what we've learned coming out toward finding Passion in every part of our lives.

The rewards are great. Each time you step out and claim another piece of your own special Passion, something wonderful happens. Somewhere inside, a switch turns on, and a burst of Light flows through all your circuits. Cells start to glow until the Light inside them overflows. The world brightens, if just for a moment. Repeat the process, it happens again. Make it a habit and you'll never be the same. Like the Sun, you were born to shine. Go on and claim every photon of your own greatness.

Take that, *Dummies*! ▼

*John R. Stowe, is author of Gay Spirit Warrior: An Empowerment Workbook for Men Who Love Men (Findhorn Press, 1999). Reach him at jrstowe@mindspring.com.*

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# PRECIOUS STONES ALONG YOUR PATH

BY PETER EMBARRATO

**G**ay Spirit Visions and its members became an important part of my life several years ago at a very critical time and this "column" is evolving as a way for me to repay and share my passion and beliefs about the magical powers and beauty of gemstones.

September, the month Gay Spirit Visions held its eleventh annual fall conference, is represented by the gemstone sapphire, a variety of corundrum. On a spiritual note, sapphires have always been associated with divine favor. Buddhists believed that the sapphire helped spiritual enlightenment. Christian cardinals and bishops used sapphires for divine wisdom, and in the Old Testament the sapphire was mentioned for its relationship to universal intelligence.

While most of us are familiar with the blue variety of this gemstones, it actually comes in an array of colors which can be used with each of the color chakras of the body. Brilliant hot pinks and orange sapphires, cool tones of the Montana variety, each have their own potential for balancing the coordinating part of the body.

Sapphires are also manifesting stones. We can use them as a message of hope, that which we wish to attract, obtain and/or achieve, both physically and spiritually. Sapphire forces us to become more attuned to a higher vibration and therefore carries us to another level. The message of the sapphire is clear: *All of our hopes and dreams can come true.*

October's birthstone is opal, a stone which has had on occasion a bad reputation. While most opals come from down under in Australia, namely the crystal, boulder and black variety, there are magnificent Fire Opals found in Mexico and a lovely aqua-colored opal from Peru, often referred to as Andean Opals. In folklore, the opal has always been one of the most popular. Crusaders were given opals by their ladies to insure safe battles, Egyptians and Babylonians believed the Fire Opal to be a most powerful light and water healing gem. Opals are aligned with the unconscious and assist in identifying and eventually helping to eliminate aspects which no longer serve us, like old bad habits or patterns which we may have

held onto for too long. Opals nature is to take on negative energies and turn them into the positive often sacrificing itself for the wearer. The message of the opal is a very Zen one: *Live in the present and let go of the past issues that may be keeping you from achieving that wonderful life that is waiting for you.*

On a personal note, I named my own gallery after one of my favorite gemstones, the topaz, because of its message, which was very personal to me. "Be spontaneous and joyful, and know that you are a spark from God." Luckily for me, it's also my birthstone, which in this case was completely coincidental. My passion and belief in the healing and emotional properties of all gemstones has been with me all my life and has certainly influenced many situations for me.

I hope that in sharing a little bit of the knowledge and love of the gemstone

world, I have given you some insight and perhaps made you more aware of and interested in the powers, folklore and energies that gemstones possess. Celebrate your individuality with your own gemstone. I would be delighted to speak with anyone who may have additional interest in finding out more about his own birthstone or why he may be drawn to a particular stone at any given time of his life. Gemstones are great teachers; they appear when the student is ready. ▼

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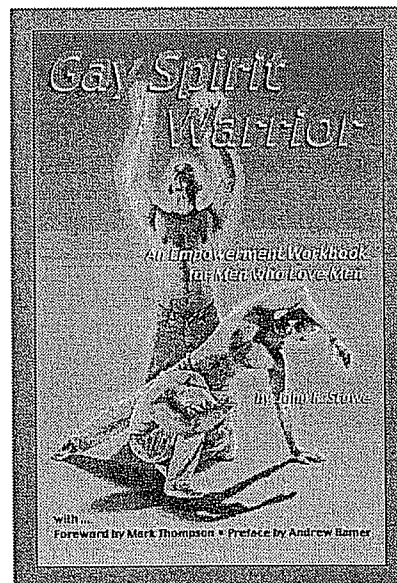
*Peter Embarrato is owner of Topaz Gallery, located near the heart of Buckhead in Atlanta. He represents over 50 local and national jewelry artists whose talents and love for gemstones inspire him daily. Peter can be reached at 404-995-0585 or by e-mail: topazgallery@atlanta.com*

Lambda Book Award Winner

## Gay Spirit Warrior

an empowerment workbook  
for men who love men

by John R. Stowe  
(Findhorn Press, 1999)

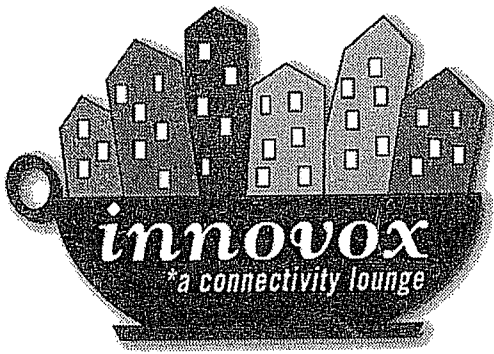


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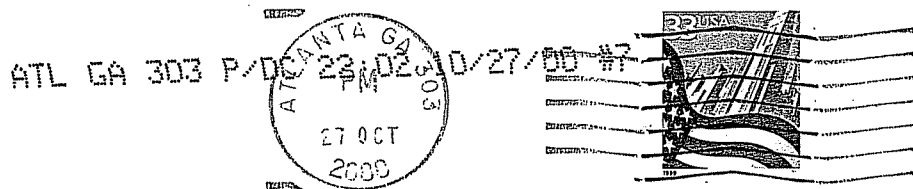
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