

EMBRACING

Many gay men have no trouble

OUR finding and embracing their

feminine nature that helps them

feel, heal, create and nurture.

MASCULINE

Discovering our true masculine

SPIRIT nature can take us on a

much different journey.

Three of our GSV brothers write

about finding their masculine

spirit that brings new meaning

to their lives.



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Gay Spirit Visions

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ELDER'S REPORT

Well, dear brothers, as I take my leave, GSV is completing its 13th year. Our Fall Conference was a tremendous success. Christian de la Huerta and Markus Green gave us their hearts and souls. We welcome them now into our hearts and look forward to seeing them again. I have so many



BY TREEWALKER

memories of this year's conference to add to my treasure trove. The Sacred Drag workshop, the trance Dance, the drumming inside. I thought the ritual committee did a great job with our opening and closing. Thanks to all who contributed their time and talent to every part of the Conference, from setting up chairs to writing rituals, to doing workshops, to listening and being fully present. I think the most outstanding memory of this fall for me was the closing ritual, where I passed the staff onto our beloved presiding elder-elect, Craig "Craigalee" Cook and he presented me with the stunning silver pendant of Kokopeli with turquoise and amber stones. Such a thoughtful token of appreciation symbolizing the circle of GSV men. I am most grateful.

As this year ends we should look back with great satisfaction at our growth. We added the silent Winter Meditation and we are beginning negotiations with The Mountain about a summer event. They want us to come up for one of their summer camp experiences: rafting, canoeing, ropes course. Please let us know if this is something that would interest you. Write to the post office box, or send an email to gayspirit@mindspring.com.

I think we could schedule time for facials and nails if you're interested. If it happens, that will make four GSV events each year at The Mountain. Are we ready to grow? It's up to you to let us know.

I have such profound feelings of joy and confidence when I consider the cal-

iber of men who are planners and the dedication they have to YOU. These men give their time, talent and personal resources to make our events happen. More than that, they take our work to heart. Whatever the Fall Conference theme is, we live with it as we plan the event. It works us. I am honored to be associated with them. As I transition off the Council of Trusted Elders, I look forward to contributing behind the scenes. I will help with the visioning for next fall and I will advise planners and elders at their request. Meanwhile, I will be doing things around the house, neglected for the last couple of years. Who knows, I may even be ready to host a potluck soon.

Finally, I want to thank you once again for the privilege of serving you as presiding elder. I pray Spirit will bless you abundantly, as I have been blessed by knowing you. We can have an impact on the world. We can take a stand for who we are and what we believe. GSV is living evidence of that. Thank you for supporting me on my journey of spiritual growth. Be well, good men. ▼

GSV ATLANTA

GSV night at *Lelavision*

Several GSV brothers are interested in meeting as a group to attend an unusual concert in Little Five Points, Atlanta.

Lelavision combines sculpture, music, theatre and dance. In essence, the group interacts with the sculptures to create music. Jim Jones reports: "It's far beyond your typical night at the theater. King Thackston and I attended last year's performance and were completely enchanted. We vowed to get the word out to Gay Spirit Visions members the next time they returned."

The preview performance is Friday, Nov. 29, at 8 p.m. for Lelavision's new presentation *Rhythm of the Landscape* at Seven Stages, Little Five Points, 1105 Euclid Avenue, Atlanta. Contact the ticket office to purchase your own \$10 ticket for that night.

You can visit www.7stages.org
or call 7 Stages Theatre, Atlanta Ticket
Office: 404-523-7647.

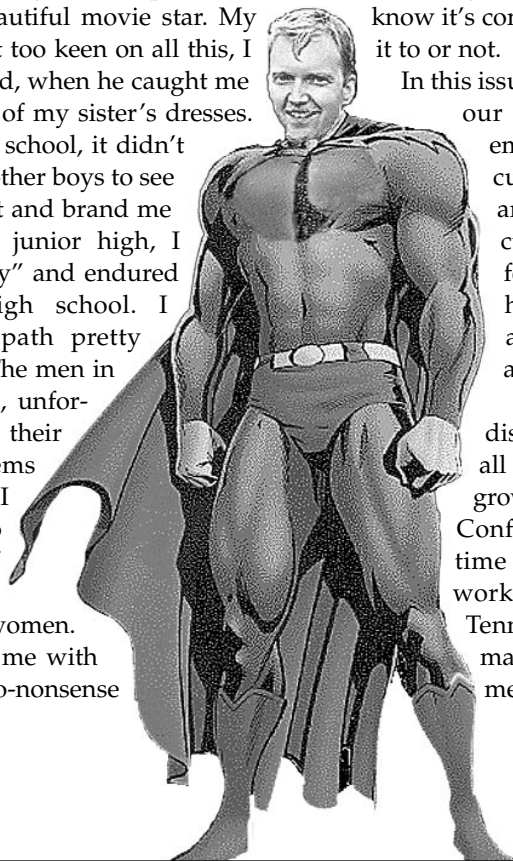
FROM SISSY TO
SUPER HERO
 BY JENNINGS FORT

I always knew I was different. As a boy, I felt closer to my mother and sister than to my father. I was more comfortable around women because they were nicer and usually wouldn't make fun of me.

In some ways I wanted to be a girl. I wanted long hair and my mother always made me get a crew cut. So I would drape one of her white dish towels over my head so I could have long, luxurious hair. I could roll up the ends of my "hair" with her plastic hair rollers. Then I could turn my head from side to side and swing around my rolled-up dish towel hair like a beautiful movie star. My father was not too keen on all this, I quickly learned, when he caught me trying on one of my sister's dresses. In elementary school, it didn't take long for other boys to see I was different and brand me a "sissy." By junior high, I became "pussy" and endured this until high school. I walked this path pretty much alone. The men in my childhood, unfortunately, had their own problems and, sadly, I didn't want to be like any of them. I admired the women. They molded me with a practical, no-nonsense

sensibility and always with love. And now, as far as I'm concerned, I remain a sissy or pussy, whatever anyone wants call me. I'm just me.

So it's my nature to be more in touch with my feminine side, for better or worse. Without role models, I'm not sure exactly what "masculine" means. In the past, I've often been afraid to stand up for myself, say "no," feel and show anger, confront and pursue what I want and need — actions I always felt were "masculine." But as I get older and further along my path, I feel more assertive and less timid. I just hope I can deal with my anger at being pushed down all those years. I don't want to become the kind of man I feared and hated during my childhood. In a way I guess I'm scared of my masculinity. It's foreign to me. I don't know exactly what I'm doing. But I do know it's coming out whether I want it to or not.



In this issue of *Visionary*, several of our brothers write about embracing their own masculine spirit. Realizing and owning our masculinity can come in different forms. It can be a hard-fought victory over a painful past or as soft as a 3-year-old's hand.

I'm starting to see that discovering masculinity is all a part of my spiritual growth. At this year's Fall Conference, I had a great time in the body-painting workshop when Ted from Tennessee painted a blue mask on my face and made me a super-hero with blue

CALENDAR 

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

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

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

November 23 – GSV Potluck Hosted by Doug Caulkins and Mikel Wilson, 535 Watergate Ct., Roswell, GA 770-993-9959, snakeowl@bigfoot.com

December 28 – GSV Potluck Hosted by Wendell Johnson, 1608 Asheforde Drive, Marietta, GA, 770-552-4744, Louis8@hotmail.com

January 25 – GSV Potluck Hosted by George Miller, 339 10th St NW, Atlanta, 404-875-1061, aagm8888@aol.com

February 22 – GSV Potluck Hosted by King Thackston, 370 Loomis Ave SE, Atlanta, 404-688-8234, wingofmen@mindspring.com

painted-on boots and a big "J" on my chest. "Jenman," I thought, "The Gay Caped Crusader." Maybe through Jenman I can invent and develop a new kind of masculinity just for me. I can be my own super-hero who isn't afraid to feel courage and confidence combined with the sensitivity and loving nature my mother and sister showed me. If "sissy" can become "Jenman," maybe I can create the masculinity I never had. ▼

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.



BY ANDREW LAWLER

Say the word “masculine” and let sounds and images float up. Muscles and beards, hairy chests and leather; deep voices, the sound of weights clanking in the gym or tools banging in an auto repair shop. That’s what we’re taught, told and shown.

If you spent much of your adolescence like me, yearning for your voice to crack and hair to sprout anywhere besides your head, then you know it’s a long road to find, much less embrace, your masculine self. Sports can offer a way at a young age. But with a thin frame and bad eyes, I preferred secreting myself in a tiny gym locker to read a novel to enduring the humiliation of the field.

EMBRACING OUR MASCULINE SPIRIT

I soon discovered it was easier to bask in reflected masculinity, first by seeking masculine boyfriends—the horny high school football player, the Grizzly Adams lookalike who hated gay pride parades. Then in work, writing about engineers, archeologists and astronauts, professions rich with butch men who couldn’t vogue or name a single Bette Davis movie.

They had “it.” And I wanted “it,” that

FINDING REAL MASCULINITY WITH A 3-YEAR-OLD

deeply masculine presence. But proximity to it in work or relationships didn’t seem to bring me any closer. If anything, it seemed to accentuate the difference between men I saw as truly masculine and myself.

Then my life took a strange twist and I found myself a single gay man helping to raise a child with my best friend, a woman. Not my sperm. No shared DNA to boost my biological credentials as a real man. No role as breadwinner, or formal title as “father” to offer some vague macho status. I’d never dreamed of having children, much less playing father to an energetic and athletic boy.

So I certainly didn’t expect to discover my own masculinity in dirty diapers and sippy cups, between tantrums and giggles. But strangely, I did, and I am.

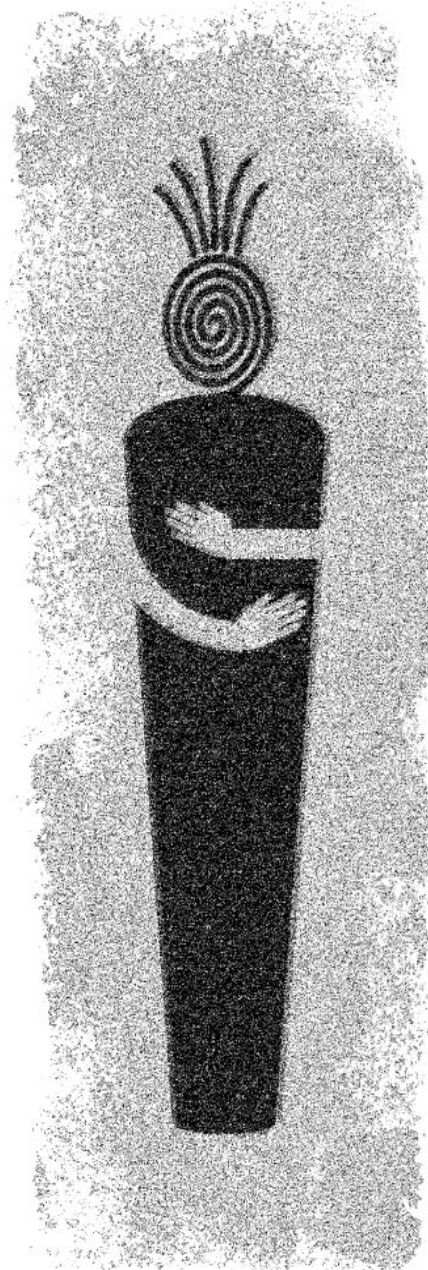
Blinding flash of the obvious, but suddenly hair growth, muscle mass and the ability to throw a football without a sick wobble no longer had anything to do with masculinity at all.

Instead, it’s remaining calm and firm amid a 3-year-old’s screaming rage. It’s turning into a hideous growling monster who will chase that boy child around the house until they both collapse in laughter. It’s walking hand-in-hand for a long time and not saying a word. It’s packing the car methodically for a trip, with everything used in modern child-rearing. It’s not being a mother.

Now I recognize the qualities underneath these actions. There were times in the past, despite my obsession with the outer trappings of masculinity, that I glimpsed in a few rare men a certain quiet competence, combined with keen awareness, humor, compassion and a manner that was gentle but not weak. The kind of person whom you would want, pardon the cliché, in your foxhole

or to rescue you from the World Trade Center. A warrior with courage and heart, with no dealings with brutality and fecklessness.

This is the kind of father I want to be, the kind of masculinity I want to pass on



to this boy. There will be rough spots ahead. Already he can nearly play basketball better than I can (granted, no great leap even for a 3½-year-old). And he is developing the lean and lanky body I never had. The danger is that I'll get stuck in my own old definition of masculinity and feel like I have nothing to teach—thereby emasculating myself.

My point is that we don't need war or disaster or even leather chaps to recog-

nize the masculine within us. For me, wrestling with a diaper seems to be doing the trick. But whatever your method, it's not just a matter of personal realization that makes this so urgent. We gay men generally have greater access to the feminine as well as the masculine parts of ourselves. But most men are terrified of their feminine, the true source of the power and compassion at the root of masculinity. We're left with too many

daredevils and not enough heroes, with plenty of soldiers and too few warriors.

Which leaves us gay men with a more important job than just setting fashion trends, sideburn lengths and techno beats. Let's show that true warriors can vogue too. ▼

Andrew Lawler is a writer living in Boston who goes by "daddy" when in Rockland, ME.

Dear GSV men:

When J was asked about writing something on masculinity, J was a bit shocked. You want me to write about masculinity? Me, the one everyone associates with dresses and outrageous hats? Well, J couldn't miss this opportunity. And of course my masculinity does have to do with wearing dresses and outrageous hats. The only effective way J can express my masculinity is by connecting with my feminine side first.

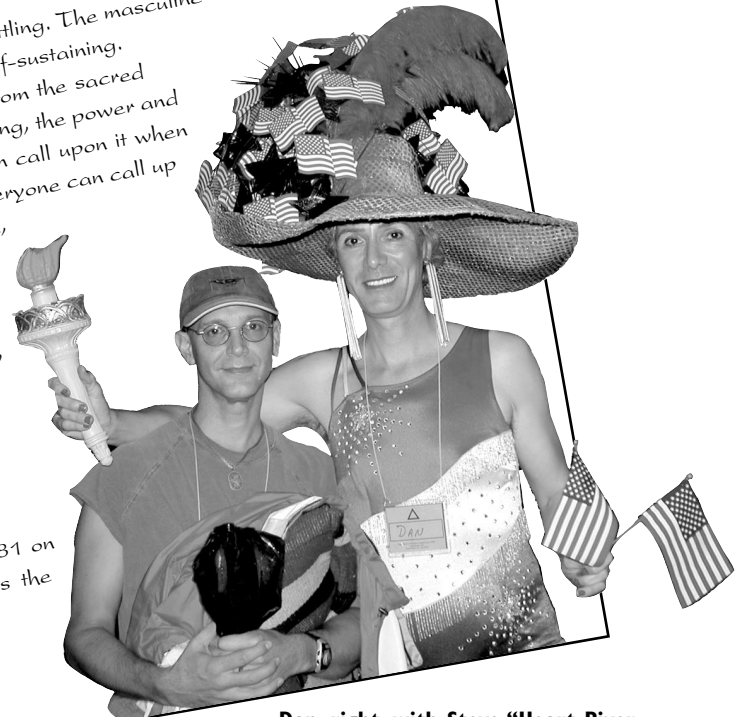
If J try to access my masculinity directly, J usually run into trouble. J feel like a child throwing a temper tantrum. Jt's like J'm a tin can being kicked down the road, noisy, low and easily dented. When the 16-wheelers of life run me over, J'm crushed. But if J go to my softer, resilient feminine side first and then call on the masculine, it's a completely different story. J'm like a solid rubber ball bouncing down the highway. And when that 16-wheeler runs me over, J may be momentarily squeezed but J maintain my integrity and keep bouncing along.

For me, the masculine standing alone is saber-rattling. The masculine expressed through the feminine is rich, full and self-sustaining. J can access my feminine side quickly, in part, from the sacred drag J've done at The Mountain. J know the feeling, the power and J know when J have it and when J don't. J can call upon it when J need it. This doesn't work for everyone but everyone can call up the feminine in his own way. Be it from nature, your own personal experience or a woman in your life who inspires you, find a way to call up the feminine. From that place, take up the masculine and see if it doesn't add a new dimension to your path.

J love you all.

Love,
Dan Dewberry,
Baltimore

P.S. J wrote this in a motel off Route 81 on my way home from the Conference, thus the 16-wheeler references.



Dan, right, with Steve "Heart River Flowing" Roman at the Fall Conference

FROM CURSE TO BLESSING

BY DAVID WITT

As a boy of 12, my father said he cursed the day I was born his son. At this age he was the dominant masculine figure in my life. This "curse" came from his recognition that there was something different about me, something different from my brothers. Though I, too, sensed this "difference," I was crushed by his disappointment and disapproval. By age 12, I had been sexually molested by three different adults, two of whom committed suicide shortly afterward. My father was only made aware of two of the incidents and didn't know how to deal with them or me. As a result, it was easier for him to dismiss me as the "son" he wanted and to begin a long history of severe beatings and verbal attacks which complicated our relationship. I thought that I wasn't "masculine" enough for him, so he rejected me. He was a man who had to control the lives of his wife and children. Little did I know until much later that he needed to control because he couldn't control his own life.

Later, after many years of counseling and psychotherapy, I understood the true meaning of the word "masculine" and could finally embrace my masculine spirit as a gay man. I finally realized and embraced the fact that the masculine and feminine was the yin and yang of our existence. Just as we are "two spirit people," we all possess both the masculine and feminine within us. As we recognized this, it is easier to develop in a more wholesome way with more balance in our lives.

It has been a spiritual journey aided by more appropriate masculine figures and people who have helped me to understand, make peace and heal many of my past issues. This has led me to a better understanding of myself. This journey helped me recognize that being gay did

not mean that I was necessarily more feminine than masculine. It simply meant that I was a man who loved men. It also meant that I had the freedom to be me, and, by claiming that right, I was even more masculine than my father. That fact was a revelation which provided added strength for the journey ahead.

In fact, my father's condemnation made me far stronger than he or I realized. I was determined to excel, compete and become



more than he or others thought I could. I was determined to become a survivor of my past instead of a victim of it. My childhood experiences challenged me to a point where I could be my own man, a proud Gay Man. Today, no one

can take that away from me. Now, I can stand proud in my own masculine spirit, enhanced by my acceptance of my sexuality. I can now embrace that part that completes me (my feminine traits expressed in my poetry, love for music and the other finer things of life) without considering this a weakness. I can stand for my brothers and sisters that they might have the right to be whoever they are with dignity.

I will continue to fight for their rights as I fight for my own.

My father is now 78. To have me in his life, he has had to deal with the fact that he has a gay son who lives in a loving relationship with another man. Today my masculine spirit cries out with a loud voice that won't be dismissed. I am Man, a Gay Man, blessed to be who I am and to experience love in a way that 90 percent of the overall population can't. Although our relationship is far from perfect, there's a certain amount of respect my father and I share and my worth as a masculine gay man isn't defined by what he thinks of me. The odd thing is that he now accepts my partner and me as a couple and he can tell me that he loves me. The most wonderful thing and more important is that, today, I can say I love myself. ▼

David Witt is a gay man, retired priest from the Russian Orthodox Catholic Church and a qualified mental health and substance abuse professional in North Carolina. He lives in Charlotte with his partner of six years, Joe Kiser, and has been affiliated with GSV since spring 1995. His spirit name is Lionheart and his email address is Dwitt28205@aol.com.

The second annual Gay Spirit Visions Winter Meditation January 17-19, 2003.

The Mountain Retreat & Learning Centers,
near Highlands, NC



Returning guest speaker: Daniel Helminiak, former Catholic priest and author of *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality, The Human Core of Spirituality and Religion and the Human Sciences*

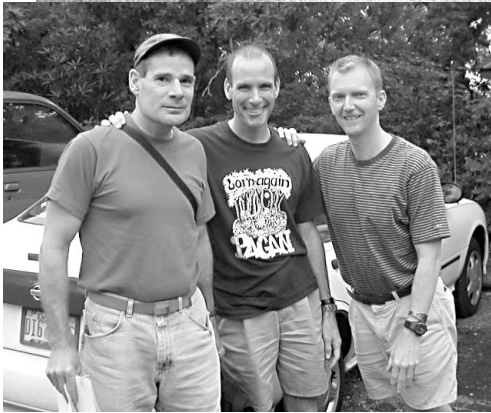
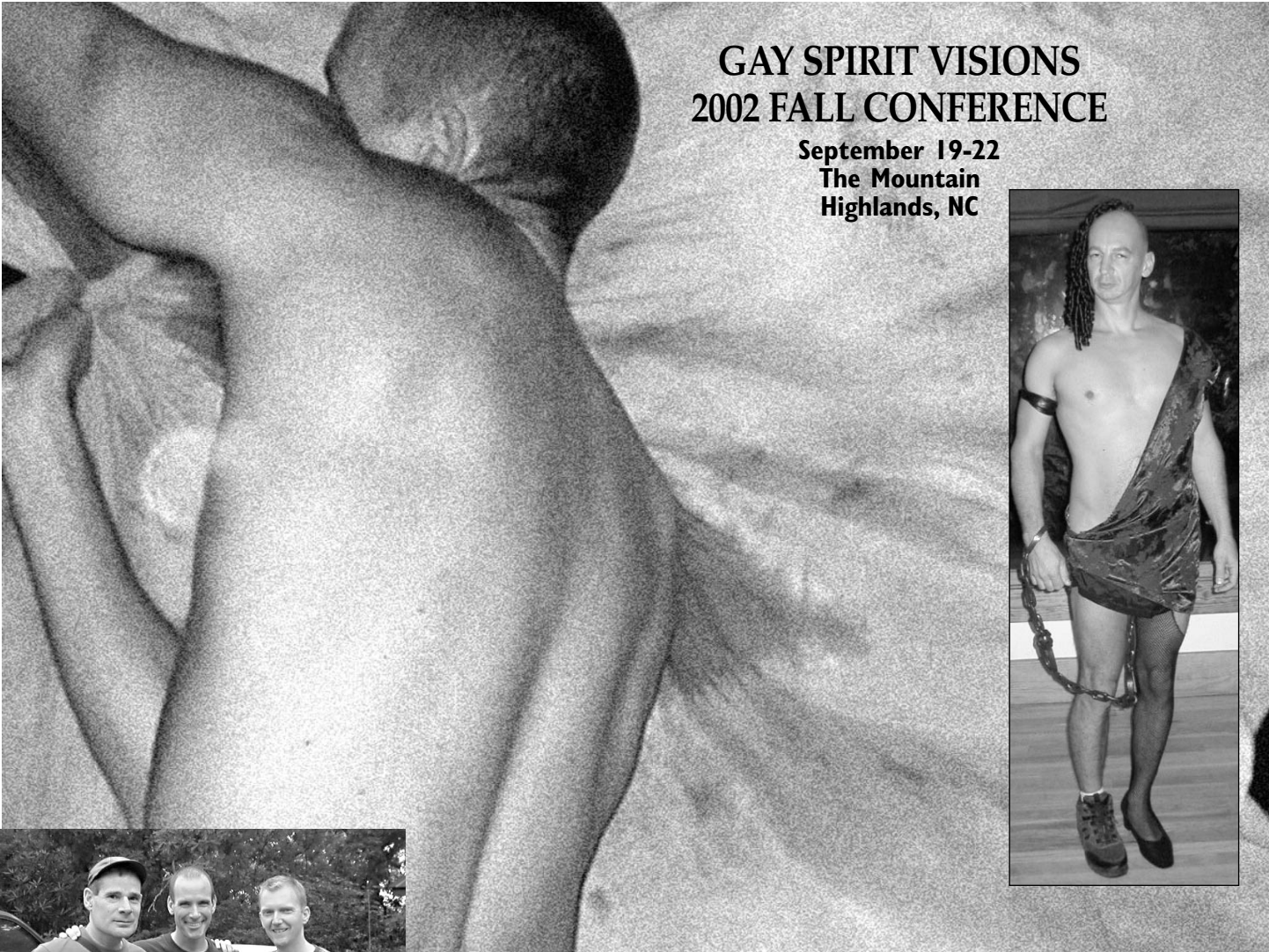
Join us by the crackling fire in the Lodge as we listen to the spirits that have guided us for over a decade.

Planning ahead – Join us for our **Spring Retreat**,
April 18 – 20, 2003
at The Mountain.

Watch for more information in future issues of the *Visionary*.

**GAY SPIRIT VISIONS
2002 FALL CONFERENCE**

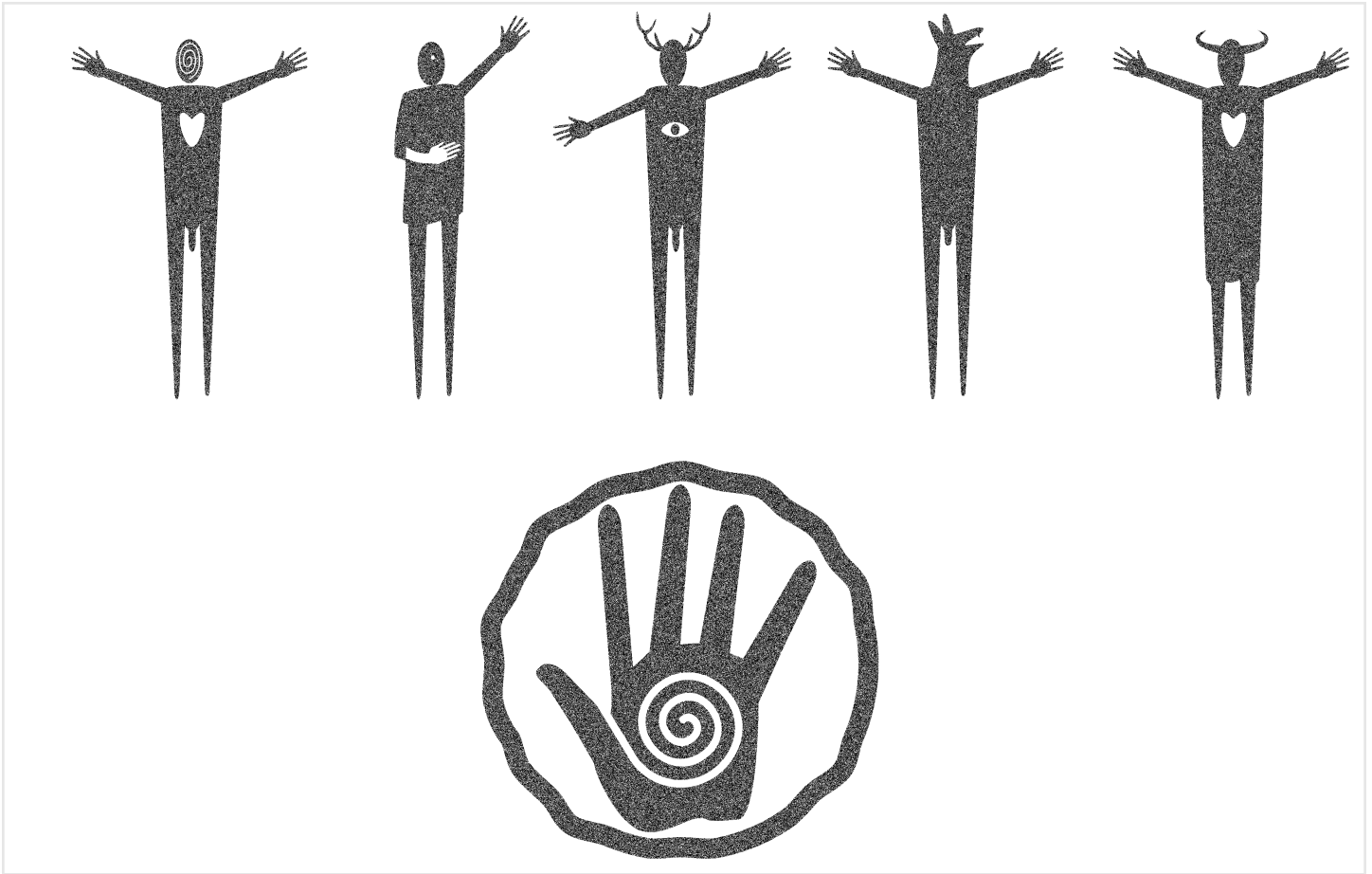
**September 19-22
The Mountain
Highlands, NC**



**PORTAL TO SPIRIT:
TRANSFORMING OUR MANHOOD**

Photos by Blue





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