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GFC NEWS

December, 1997

GFC-Richmond • P.O. Box 8501 • Richmond • VA • 23226

President's Message: *Holiday Heresy*

It's "that" time again. By the time you read this, you'll have already survived Thanksgiving - that great American celebration when families gather to feast (and too often vent their hostilities on one another). You may be anxiously awaiting the next one - Christmas. You may or may not be spending it with you kids. Maybe you'll be spending it with your "birth" family or maybe with your "rebirth" family (your family of choice).

For too many years, "the holidays" were the most stressful time of year for me, leading me to really loathe them. There were too many expectations. After starting my life over - after my separation - I just hunkered down at Thanksgiving while everyone else (so it seemed) was gathered with kith and kin. At Christmas, I traveled to visit my sister who was as much an iconoclast as I. It was a way of avoiding stilted, contrived gatherings with my kids who, at the time, didn't really want to spend time with me.

After my "rebirth," I continued to travel to my sister's at Christmas, but invited friends who were without local family to share Thanksgiving.

Gradually I began to understand that if we don't like the way our holidays have been in the past, we can create our own celebrations without all we didn't like. As the days grew shorter and the evenings darker, I broke our candles and lighted them and let them give a glow to my humble abode all evening. Gathering with friends took on a special meaning. As my relationship with my kids improved, I talked about my own way of marking this dark time of year.

They seemed to understand better than I thought they would. (The fact that I didn't hack down a tree and trim it with electric lights, or set up an artificial one, didn't seem too heretical to them.) We had to wipe the holiday slate clean (so to speak) and begin fresh - our own way. Gift-giving was stripped of its expectations. I refused to ask for "wish lists" and refused to make any

of my own. The trend became smaller but more personal. There was a "story" behind the offerings. My kids caught on quickly. It eased the stress for them too.

I no longer dread the holidays. I just do them "my way." I wish for all of you the same serenity I have finally found amidst all the hustle and bustle.

Calendar of Events

• December 4 Meeting

Time: 7:30 p.m.
Place: St. Marks
Episcopal, 520 N.
Boulevard

Brief open meeting and social. *Bring a holiday dessert to share.* Drinks will be provided.

• December 28 Holiday Open House

Time: 4:00 - 7:00 p.m.
Place: Bob Rodgers'
Home, 920 W. 31st
Street

Please RSVP to Bob
at 230-2578 by
December 20.

**There will be NO
regular January
Meeting.**

Meeting Minutes

The 8th meeting of GFC-Richmond began at approximately 7:35 p.m. at St. Marks Episcopal Church. Many members were present, as well as at least three new faces.

The meeting began by going around the room with introductions, noting the three guest speakers for the evening's Kid's Panel: Matthew Phelps, son of Randy Phelps; Deanna Rodgers, daughter of Bob Rodgers; and Adam Zfass, Deanna's boyfriend.

General Business:

- No Treasurer's Report
- Bob Rodgers announced that President Clinton, Vice President Gore and Attorney General Janet Reno would be addressing the nation on Monday, November 10 on the recent hate crimes throughout the country. The University of Richmond has been selected as Virginia's "down link site" viewing location. A discussion at U of R between local organizations would follow the broadcast.
- December 4 is the next GFC-Richmond meeting. This will be a social and everyone should bring a holiday dessert.
- Bob Rodgers will be hosting a Holiday Open House on December 28 at his home from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. All GFC members are welcomed.

Please RSVP to Bob by December 20.

- There will be no GFC meeting in January since the date of our regular meeting falls on New Years Day. We may plan a social for January if someone would like to volunteer to host the gathering.

Program - Kid's Panel Discussion:

Several members' children/friend (Matthew Phelps, Deanna Rodgers and Adam Zfass) talked to the group and answered many questions about their reactions to and relationships since their Dad or friend told them that he was gay. This was a very special evening, with the two Dads learning more about their children, and the whole group coming away with encouragement. Matthew, Deanna and Adam were thanked by the President and the members for sharing with the group.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:30 p.m.

January Gathering?

Since the January Meeting is canceled, we are looking for a volunteer to host a social function sometime during the month. It can be whatever you want to do; an evening social, a brunch, a potluck dinner,

etc. If you're interested in being the host, please call Bob Rodgers at 230-2578.

Bob Rodgers Honored

On November 4, Bob Rodgers was presented the Story Award by the Bonner Scholars at the University of Richmond. The annual award recognizes a faculty and staff member based on their community service.

Before an audience of 150 people, including Bob's two children, his story was eloquently told. Bob says it was a very emotional experience which brought tears to his eyes. Bob was recognized for his role in founding GFC-Richmond, as well as his involvement with University of Richmond's Safe Zone.

Bob has been on the Board of Safe Zone since its inception in 1996 and currently serves as the Co-Chair. Safe Zone was founded to help gay, lesbian and bisexual students feel more comfortable at the university.

After the award ceremony, Bob says he received much encouragement and support. "If it just helps one student in the audience, it was worth it," Bob remarked.

Congratulations from all the members of GFC.

My computer died, severely limiting the graphic design of this newsletter. Will