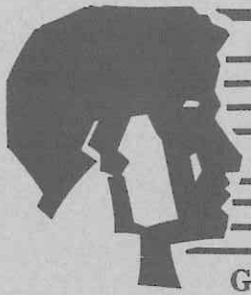


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# GFC NEWS

July, 1998

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## *The Roles We Play* President's Message:

Whether or not we want to admit it, much of our behavior in life amounts to role-playing. That isn't all bad, *per se*. What differentiates the okay from the not-so-okay is whether we write the script or allow others to write the script.

The first script-writers in our lives are our parents. They define the character we call ourselves. Our grandparents also have a hand in our script. So do our early teachers. Later on, our acquaintances add to the script -- especially those whose friendship we desire. Conformity! It is an overriding value.

But what happens when we realize that the character others have defined for us is vastly different from who we really are? Well, since we know the lines "by heart" and have the gestures down cold, it doesn't take a great deal of work to just continue playing the role. We could do it in our sleep. Right?

Well, that's probably true. But, just like when

an actor continues to play the same role on the stage beyond the point where it's just routine, we reach a point where our performance begins to fray at the edges. The character loses his spark, loses his credibility. Perceptive others begin to see a certain lack of integrity.

You might say, "but, so what?" And you're probably correct in thinking that few if any would be able to detect what was really wrong with the picture. But striving to maintain credibility in our role-playing after we recognize that we are not really who we pretend to be requires a tremendous amount of emotional energy -- and often more than we have to offer. The role-playing exacts its toll. We become emotionally drained. Our approach to our relationships becomes flat. We are "there." But not really.

Quite often the first to notice our emotional absence are our children. They detect a level of dishonesty -- even if they lack the vocabulary to express what they sense. And they often blame themselves.

So why not stop playing the character created by others and begin playing ourselves? *Life According to John Doe* with John Doe starring as himself. The usual answer is that others may not like the real John Doe. They're used to playing opposite to the John Doe they created. With the real John Doe they have to learn new lines and new gestures -- and honest ones at that. With the real John Doe they have to examine themselves to learn who is the real character underneath their own skin.

But the price for maintaining *status quo* is the forfeiture of our very selves and the squandering of our relationships. For we cannot bring vitality to our relationships if we lack integrity about who we are. And if we maintain relationships solely for what we gain from them -- comfort, adulation, etc. -- then we never really attain happiness from them. For we derive happiness from relationships only from bringing our true selves into the picture. We gain from what we give, not from what we get.

Now, others might not like the real you. Some might just not like having to learn how to deal with the real you. But they will all reject you just the same. And where will that leave you? Although you may not think otherwise, you will be no worse off than you were before. For dishonest relationships are of no lasting value. You cannot give anything of value to them and consequently cannot gain anything of lasting value from them. And if you hitch your attainment of happiness in life to your relationships, you are doomed to a life of unhappiness. True joy in life does not come from dishonest relationships. True joy comes from the love we invest in our relationships. And we can only invest love if we love ourselves. And we can only love ourselves if we are honest about who we are -- and not only to ourselves. We must be honest to others as well.

When we are honest about ourselves, rejection by others does not crush us. For we gain our emotional strength from within -not from outside - ourselves. Self-honesty provides the emotional wherewithal to weather "the slings and arrow of (even the most) outrageous misfortune." (My apologies to the Bard of Stratford-on-Avon.)

So in conclusion, I suggest that as soon as we realize we are acting out a script written and directed by others, we resign from the play and embark on playing the role of our true selves.

### **Announcements: June Social Postponed**

Bob Greene's "Richmond by Rooftop" June Social, as discussed at the last meeting, has been postponed. New plans will be developed and communicated to the members in the near future.

### **Meeting Minutes - June 4, 1998**

The 15th meeting of GFC-Richmond began at 7:45 p.m. at St. Marks Episcopal Church, 520 N. Boulevard, Richmond. Nine members/visitors were in attendance, including all five Board members. The meeting began with socializing among the members, catching up with each other and sharing refreshments.

#### **General Business:**

**Old** - Bob Greene noted the "SHADES" program presented at the May meeting had been a success. He also issued an "open call" for members to contribute articles, stories, quotes, etc. for the newsletter.

**New** - Bob Greene invited members to join him for a "Richmond by Rooftop" social to be held at the Shockoe Bottom Arts Center, 2001 E. Grace Street, near Church Hill. The members present agreed on Thursday, June 25 at 7:00 p.m.

(Editor's Note: This

social has been postponed!)

- Randy Phelps is planning a social at his home in mid to late July. More information will be mailed out shortly.

- Bob Rodgers talked about a program through the University of Richmond that might be pursued as a service project for GFC-Richmond. He also mentioned that the GFC-Baltimore chapter will be having a Father's Day picnic and has extended an invitation to GFC-Richmond members.

- Will Turner invited members to check out the Business Guild, which meets the third Thursday of each month at the "The Stonehouse" at 10 E.

Franklin St. At the June 18 Meeting, Will will be presenting a program on Networking. Call Will for more information or if you would like a FREE pass to check out Richmond's only gay and lesbian group for business professionals.

**Treasurer's Report** - We have approximately \$450 on account at present.

**Program** - Open meeting. Members shared significant events that had/were happening in their lives.

The meeting concluded at approximately 10:00 p.m.

### **Calendar of Events**

**Date:** Thursday, July 2

**Time:** 7:30 p.m.

**Place:** St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 520 N. Boulevard

Andy Payne with Absolute Relief Massage will speak about the benefits of massage and give some shoulder/neck massage demonstrations.