



GFC NEWS

November, 1998

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

A Message of Inspiration

I was sunk into darkness
And you lifted me to light
The ground was pulled
from under me.
You picked me up
And set me again in your
starry field.
I was weary. My eyes
closed.
You opened them and
made me look.
My ears heard only
laughter, noise, and
confusion.
You sang a simple song,
for the infant unable to
make known its smallest
need and said:
"Let us begin."
I am beginning again.

Julia Older

*The following is from
GFC member, Gil
Caldwell...*

For me the past week has been a very strange and uplifting one. I read the above passage one night and realized that I am truly beginning again. Then a calm came over me and it made things that once seemed important, not so important. And yet things that I had wrestled with for the past year seemed to be clearer. Then on Sunday night as my son Alex and I were

climbing the stairs for bed, he asked me that question that he had asked me many times before.

"Dad, why did you move away from mom and me?" And before I could launch into my usual answer, he chimed in that he was old enough now and that I should just tell him. I explained that at six years old, he was not old enough to understand the details he wanted to hear, but that I love him and his mom very much; it's just that things change between people. He piped up at that time and said, "I know it's because you loved Jeremy."

Well, after I picked my jaw up off the floor and gathered my composure, I told him yes – I loved Jeremy very much and that he was a very special person to me. He then proceeded to tell me that I had lost my roommate and that I didn't live with his mom and him any longer and how he thought that was really sad.

I thought a moment, mainly because I knew that I only had one shot at this comment, and then spoke. "Yes son. It is sad, but I do have you and I love the time we can spend together." I read the

passage above to him and told him that sometimes we have to begin again. It must have been a good answer because he drifted off to sleep in my arms a few minutes later.

For me, this was another beginning. My son finally pulled out of me a feeling that I had – one that he had realized all along. We can't fool our children and we shouldn't try. They understand more than we will ever know. He didn't want to know the details of my relationship with Jeremy; he only wanted to know if he was right in his beliefs.

Tonight, we arrived to eat dinner at one of our favorite places. As we were crossing the parking lot, Alex became so excited. I looked up and there was a wonderful rainbow. We watched for a few minutes in the parking lot, then retreated to the deck outside the restaurant. He and I gazed as we watched the colors appear brighter and brighter. Then to my amazement, I saw something I have never seen before. Another rainbow appeared above the one we had been watching. A double rainbow. I was in awe.

I have seen many rainbows in my life and

every time I see one, I stare just like it was the first one. And the reason Alex was so excited was because he had never seen a real rainbow. And what a joy for him to see a double rainbow at that. We sat and watched the rainbow for the longest time until it finally faded away taking all of its colors, imagination and promise with it.

I thought about it as we watched and I would travel it beginning to end, never seeing where it touched the ground. Thinking to myself that my life as a gay man and father was just beginning and realizing that there was a long road ahead of me with no end in sight. The other rainbow was my son right there with me, highlighting my life ahead as well as complimenting each others beauty and existence. I felt so calm and peaceful.

My son may not remember that first rainbow he saw tonight, but I will. For it brought meaning and assurance to me. Now when he asks questions, I hope I can feel more comfortable talking to him about it. Mainly because I am feeling more comfortable with myself and my role as a gay father.

I am truly beginning again...

*Gil Caldwell
October, 1998*

Minutes From October

The October, 1998 meeting of GFC-Richmond featured a presentation by Dr. Michael LeRoux on "Stress Reduction." There were 20 members, guests and visitors in attendance. Dave White reported that there was \$473.00 in the checking account. Those present voted to give \$25 to HEART (a volunteer action group) at the University of Richmond. The money will go toward the cost of bringing a section of the AIDS Quilt to Richmond on October 27th. Bob Rodgers and Bob Greene reported on their speaking engagement at VCU to the Sexual Minority Student Association.

Thoughts From Bob Rodgers

As predicted, the heat is being turned up by the right wing politicians and religious groups as we approach the November elections. Mr. Clinton's "problems" have helped fuel this heat and empowered the right wing to take up, with even more fervor, the cause of their brand of morality. Such empowerment can be very dangerous if those filled with ignorance and hate see this as a validation of their beliefs.

We take so much for granted; even as gay men here in this time and place we feel fairly comfortable and safe. But should we?

The horrific murder of the young gay student, Matthew Shepard, in Wyoming could have been here in Virginia...even here in Richmond. It could have happened to me. It could have happened to you.

Should we cower? Do we keep quiet? Each of us should, in our own way, reflect on how we as individuals can help end the ignorance and incidents of abuse and violence against our own.

Calendar of Events

Date: Thursday, Nov. 5

Time: 7:30 p.m.

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

This will be an open meeting (no program or speaker planned). Please come for socializing and "catching up" with other gay dads. Think about ideas for the December meeting - how do we want to celebrate the holidays at our December get together?

Don't forget dinner at the Lighthouse Restaurant, 1627 W. Main Street, at 5:45 p.m. prior to the meeting. There were 12 GFC guys there in October. The Lighthouse has great Greek, Italian and American food. If 5:45 is a bit early for you, some of us make it between 6:00 and 6:15. No excuses. See you there!

Guild Program Meeting

Date: Thursday, Nov. 19

Time: 6:00 – 8:00

Place: The Stonehouse (formerly The Colony Club), 10 E. Franklin (free parking behind the Stonehouse in the parking lot off Grace Street – across the street from Casablanca.

Network and socialize with other gay and lesbians before and after a informative and entertaining program. Call the Guild's number for more information or to make reservations – 649-1757. Or call GFC member Will Turner at 261-4119 for more details.

A group of several GFC dads usually go to Godfrey's for dinner after the Guild meeting.

Join Ghouls & Goblins For Halloween Fun

The Central Virginia Business and Professional Guild is hosting "Things That Go Bump In Black & White – A Very Alfred Hitchcock Halloween" on Saturday, October 30 at the Fulton Hill Studios (1000 Carlisle Street, in the East End, near the Annabel Lee dock – directions on the back of the tickets).

The party starts at 9:00 p.m. There will be a DJ with great dance music from the '70s, '80s, and '90s. There will be a cash bar and cigar lounge. There will also be a \$500 prize for the best costume

as well as prizes for other categories including:

- Best Dressed-to-Kill Theme Attire
- Most Likely to Incite Groans
- Best Use of Space By Hair
- Most Creative Use of Multiple Bodies

Advance tickets are \$20 and include a drink ticket. Tickets at the door are \$25. Tickets may be purchased in advance at Mongrel or Nacho Mama's in Carytown through Saturday, October 30th. A portion of the profit will go to support the Fan Free Clinic. For additional information, call the Guild at 649-1757.

2nd Annual Gay and Lesbian Film Festival

The University of Richmond Safe Zone is sponsoring the film festival at the University of Richmond on three consecutive Wednesdays in November – the 4th, 11th and 18th. All of the films will be shown at 7:00 p.m. at the Jepson Leadership School Faculty Lounge and it's FREE.

November 4th – "Bar Girls"
November 11th – "My Beautiful Laundrette"
November 18th – "Ma Vie En Rose"

Don't Be Alone For Thanksgiving

GFC President, Bob Greene, is extending an

invitation to any GFC members who have been orphaned for Thanksgiving. Give Bob a call if you would like to join him and others.

From the Chaplain of Trinity College, Hartford, CT.

On the Internet, Dated 10/17/98

I saw on the news today that Matthew Shepard died. He was the 22 year old man from Wyoming who was beaten and tortured and left to die for no reason other than he was a homosexual.

This tragic murder has raised a national debate again, the kind of periodic soul-searching our society goes through whenever a crime of hate startles us into awareness. The burning of Black churches, the bombing of innocent people, the death of a shy young man from Wyoming: these events suddenly shake us out of complacency and remind us that fear, prejudice and rage are always the shadows just beyond the light of our reason. And so people suddenly start to speak out. There are voices of outrage and grief. Voices of sorrow and demands to know why such a thing could happen. And predictably, there are also defensive voices: the governor of Wyoming trying to explain why his state has no laws to protect people from hate crimes

and the leadership of what is called the Christian right wing (?) trying to explain why their national ads against homosexuality don't influence people to commit such violence against gays and lesbians.

In the days to come, these many voices will fill our media and the cultural consciousness it imprints until we are once again lulled into the more familiar patterns of our lives, dozing off as a nation; until the next tragedy rings the alarm of despair.

As the chaplain for our own community, I would like to invite us all to consider Matthew's death in another way. Not through the clamor or denials, not through the shouts or cries of anger; But rather, through the silence of his death, the silence of that young man hanging on his cross of pain alone in the emptiness of a Wyoming night, the silence that ultimately killed him as surely as the beatings he endured.

Silence killed Matthew Shepard. The silence of Christians who know that our scriptures on homosexuality are few and murky in interpretation and far outweighed by the words of a savior whose only comment on human relationships was to call us to never judge but only to love. The silence of well meaning educated people who pretend to have an enlightened view of

homosexuality while quietly tolerating the abuse of gays and lesbians in their own communities.

The silence of our elected officials who have the authority to make changes but prefer to count votes.

The silence of the majority of straight Americans who shift uncomfortably when confronted by the thought that gays and lesbians may be no different from themselves, save for the fact that they are walking targets for bigotry, disrespect, cheap humor and apparently, of murder.

Crimes of hate may live in shouts of rage, but they are born in silence. Here at Trinity, I hope we will all listen to that silence. Before we jump to decry Matthew's senseless death or before we seek to rationalize it with loud disclaimers: I hope we will just hear the silence. A young man's heart has ceased to beat. Hear the silence of that awful truth. It is the silence of death. It is the silence that descends on us like a shroud.

At Trinity, as in Wyoming, we are men and women surrounded by the silence of our own fear. Our fear of those who are different. Our fear of being identified with the scapegoat. Our fear of taking an unpopular position for the sake of those who cannot stand alone. Our fear of social and religious change. Our fear comes in many forms but it always comes

silently. A whispered joke. A glance to look away from the truth. A quick shake of the head to deny any complicity in the pain of others. These silent acts of our own fear of homosexuality are acted out on this campus every day just as they are acted out every day in Wyoming. Through silence, we give ourselves permission to practice what we pretend to abhor. With silence, we observe the suffering of any group of people who have been declared expendable by our society.

As a person of faith, I will listen, as we all will, to the many voices which will eulogize Matthew Shepard. I will carry that part of our national shame on my shoulders. But I will also listen to the silence which speaks much more eloquently still to the truth behind his death. I will listen and I will remember. And I will renew my resolve never to allow this silence to have the last word. Not for Matthew. Not for gay men or lesbian women. Not for a any person in our society of any color or condition who has been singled out for persecution. Not in my church. Not in my nation. Not in Wyoming. And not at Trinity College.

For more information about GFC-Richmond, call 355-6218 or 230-2578.