

# GALA L U M N I ND/SMC

Newsletter

Fall 2000

Vol. VII No. III

Gay and Lesbian Alumni/ae of the University of Notre Dame and Saint Mary's College

## A GALA Affair Hits South Bend

Over 100 GALA members, family, and friends descended on South Bend to participate in "Reunion 2000 – A GALA Affair" on September 22-24, 2000. Although this was the fourth gathering of its kind since the group's inception, Reunion 2000 was the first time GALA gathered in South Bend, using the Notre Dame and Saint Mary's campuses as its bases of operation.



*The GALA Banquet and award ceremony in South Bend's restored Union Station*

A highlight of the weekend was GALA's presentation of the Tom Dooley award to

**Phil Donahue '57** for his "personal courage, compassion, commitment to advance the human and civil rights of lesbian and gay Americans." Donahue has long been vocal on the issue of gay rights and has come to Notre Dame several times to campaign for the addition of sexual orientation in the University's non-discrimination clause. Established in 1996, the Dooley Award is named after Dr. Thomas A. Dooley, the 1948 alumnus of Notre Dame who was renowned for his humanitarian relief work in Southeast Asia, both as a medical officer in the military and later as a private citizen. When the United States Navy learned of his homosexuality, Lt. Dooley was forced to resign his commission. Dr. Dooley established a private medical relief organization to continue the humanitarian efforts and went to write four best-selling books describing his work. A 1959 Gallup poll ranked Dooley as the seventh most admired man in the country right behind then-President Eisenhower and Pope John XXIII. Previous recipients of the Dooley Award include Virginia Apuzzo in 1996 and Brian McNaught in 1997.

In addition to his acceptance of the Dooley award at the Saturday night banquet, Donahue participated in a roundtable discussion entitled "Combating Anti-Gay Bias: The State of the Campus, the State of the Nation" held in the Galvin Life Sciences Building. The event addressed the progress of gay-rights efforts nationally and locally, with a focus on recent controversies at Notre Dame, including the university's efforts to prohibit gay-sponsored advertising in campus publications. Other panelists included **Tom O'Neil '77**, a nationally recognized entertainment reporter, and

*continued on page 4*



## From the Chair

By *John Blandford '83, '99 PhD*

This space has regularly been used to reflect and comment on developments in South Bend, and this has too often occurred in the shadow of campus controversy. This time, however, I find myself writing in a very different context. There are no apparent, imminent challenges to LGBT rights on the horizon, and GALA's recent national reunion in South Bend reminded me of the organization's role in providing link between Notre Dame and Saint Mary's and their lesbian and gay alums.

Like GALA's previous national reunions in Chicago, New York and San Francisco, the gathering in South Bend provided opportunities for lesbian and gay graduates from around the country and across class years to renew old bonds and, as frequently, to discover links with contemporaries who shared common challenges in dealing with their sexual identity as ND/SMC students. The South Bend gathering offered something more, though, which I don't believe we fully anticipated while the weekend was being planned.

One theme which kept emerging in various guises was the notion that the reunion weekend was for many a catharsis. Many of the attendees revealed that coming to the reunion represented the first time they had been back on campus since graduation. They comprised both relatively recent graduates and those who graduated decades back. In our conversations, I was struck by the common elements among the stories. The strong feelings of attachment to their alma mater, the centrality of the relationships they formed here, the sheer pride they felt in the place—these were juxtaposed with feelings of disappointment, even betrayal, at an environment that they felt to have hindered rather than facilitated the necessary work of addressing core issues of sexuality. I think their stories reflected the ambivalence and difficult feelings many of us, in varying degrees, have toward our undergraduate institution.

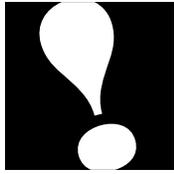
The ability to return to campus as lesbian and gay alumni/ae, however, seemed to have a healing and

empowering effect. Much of the marginality that we may have felt as students seemed to dissipate as we gathered on and toured about the campus. We were returning with our sexual identities fully and unapologetically unmasked and integrated into our lives. The opportunity to meet the current students who live the lives we once led reminded us that times and attitudes have improved, even if at an excruciatingly slow pace. The celebration at South Bend's Union Station to honor the long work of **Phil Donahue '57** on behalf of LGBT rights provided us the chance to exult in the progress that has been made and be renewed in our commitment to keep pressing forward.

It was in all an extraordinary weekend, and I must extend kudos and gratitude for the Herculean efforts put forth by Reunion Committee Chair **Kelly Smith '92 SMC** and Co-Chair **Fran Feeley '90** in organizing the weekend. GALA's 2000 Reunion reminded us that our identities as proud lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered ND/SMC alums would be a contradiction to none but the small-minded and feeble-spirited.



*Phil Donahue receiving GALA's Thomas Dooley Award from Chair John Blandford*



## From the Vice Chair

By Jennifer Hughes '88

During my two-year tenure as Vice Chair, I've realized that we will not see major change in the administration's stance to the LGBT community as long as the current administration remains in place. That doesn't mean that we should give in to them by simply disappearing from campus.

We must carefully choose our battles that improve our image without a significant cost to our morale or energy. By making our presence known to the students, professors, clergy, and alumni, we will show them that our membership in the family is equal to theirs. We can continue to advertise in the *Observer*, to hold reunions, and to make our presence known at campus events.

We need to be strong in our convictions yet gentle in our ways.

In order to grow stronger as an organization, GALA-ND/SMC needs to examine exactly who we are and where we need to grow. There are two proposed changes to our constitution that you will be voting on this month that seek to make our organization stronger. The first change is to open our arms to our transgendered brothers and sisters. The second change increases the organization's lines of communication. I urge you to consider approving both measures. And please, don't return any chads or dimpled ballots.

The first proposed constitutional change is officially to open our organization to transgendered individuals. While this move is in keeping with most national gay and lesbian organizations who have embraced this inclusion, we do it simply because it is the right thing to do. We hope that this change will help our transgendered members feel more integrated in our organization and that it will encourage more people to seek out our organization. This is a simple, yet important step in our growth. Some of our members, just as those in the straight world, are scared of transgendered individuals because they believe they are "different." Others fear that by including these individuals in our organization, we open ourselves to further attacks by the administra-



Carol Rafferty SMC '63 and Lisa Karle ND '85 receiving The Condren Service Award from Vice Chair Jennifer Hughes ND '88

tion. These fears are the same arguments the straight community makes against gays and lesbians.

The second change is proposed as a mechanism of growth. As our membership increases, our members are asking for more events. While we have held events in New York, Boston, San Francisco, and Chicago, just to name a few, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the Executive Committee to organize or supervise these events. The creation of a Regional Advisory Committee is intended to help relieve some of this pressure from the organizations' officers. If this constitutional amendment is ratified, the Executive Committee will appoint a Regional Advisor for several of the "hot spots" across the country. These advisors will report directly to the Executive Committee and will be responsible for organizing events in a particular region. In addition, they will be the "eyes and ears" of the Executive Committee at the local level.

As my current term as Vice Chair comes to end, I want to extend a personal thanks to Tom Zahn, John Blandford, Fran Feeley, John Doyle, Larry Condren, Lisa Karle, and everyone else who has worked so hard to create a wonderful organization and make me feel welcome. I feel blessed to have served you as your Vice Chair. Thank you.

I hope that the upcoming holidays find you safe, happy, and loved.

**Reunion** *continued from page 1*

**Jen Earls '96**, associate editor of the *Chicago Free Press*, the largest-circulation gay newspaper in the Midwest. The event was sponsored by Notre Dame's Gender Studies Department.

This weekend's reunion also included a campus tour, a gathering to watch the Notre Dame-Michigan State football game on TV, and a Mass and brunch on Sunday. To commemorate the 2000 gathering, GALA has asked two reunion attendees to share their reflections of what the weekend meant to them.

**Kelly Smith SMC '92:**

As Chair of the Reunion 2000 weekend, I'd like to once again thank all those who took the time (and in many cases traveled great distances) to attend and help make the weekend so memorable. It was wonderful to see so many friends from my GLND/SMC days, and it was equally wonderful to finally meet others that I'd spoken with over the phone or corresponded with via e-mail. I think the weekend was a great success. Not only was it a lot of fun, but it also left many of us with renewed interest and enthusiasm in GALA-ND/SMC. I'm grateful for having had the opportunity to help put this event together.

In spite of the fact that I live in South Bend, I have always felt somewhat distanced from Saint Mary's and Notre Dame. The sense of marginalization that I feel as a lesbian keeps me from participating in most of the traditional alumni/ae gatherings and events. Our reunion weekend helped me feel, for the first time since graduating, that I really can share in that sense of alumni/ae pride, spirit and fellowship. That truly means a lot to me.

Meeting Mr. Donahue and listening to his inspiring words was a major highlight of the weekend for me. But perhaps even more memorable, on a personal level, was simply being at a dance at Union Station with my partner and a room full of LGBT and LGBT-friendly folks. There were so many times, as a Saint Mary's student, that I had attended SYR's and formals at Union Station, always escorted by a male date that my friends had set me up with. Even after coming out in 1991, I felt it necessary to take a straight male friend to my class formal that fall, just to keep up appearances. And now here I was, older and hopefully wiser, back in the very same place, with my partner at my side and surrounded by my LGBT and supportive friends! It just seemed so fitting that it should end up that way, for a dance to be in real life as I wished it could have been all along. Sadly, Union Station is being converted into office space in

2001 and will no longer be used for social events, so this was a wonderful final memory to have of the beautiful train station.

Thanks again to everyone who helped make this such a special weekend.



*Jill Engholm, Vice Chair Jenn Hughes '88, Acting Secretary Fran Feeley '90, Phil Donahue '57, Tom O'Neil '77, Joan Organ '73 SMC, Nan Decker at the GALA Reunion Banquet*

**Brad Fuller '92:**

Words cannot adequately express my amazement at having had the opportunity to return to Notre Dame and share in the company of people who admit to being homosexual! During the four years I attended Notre Dame, I was unwilling to divulge my own sexual orientation, and I heard only occasional rumors of others' unconventional orientations. Yet, here I was, eight years later, among a group of rather ordinary Domers (a somewhat extraordinary breed to begin with!) who didn't fit the prototypical image in one seemingly significant way.

Of course, the campus looked splendid, better manicured than ever, with new quads popping up all over the place as weeds must on other campuses. However, walking the old quads alongside a group of my new friends continually caused me to shake my head in wonder at this unique conference I was attending. I was especially touched that our first evening's reception was hosted by a couple who have no gay or lesbian family members; these are a new breed of crusader for our rights and dignity, and what force their compassionate arguments must carry among other heterosexual people! Our panel discussion on Saturday was both educational, as it provided a cross section of our struggle on campus throughout the decades, and hopeful, as current stu-

dents described for us the major (though still far from incomplete) progress Notre Dame has made in recent years, particularly with Campus Ministry's efforts to reach out to the gay and lesbian student population with pastoral care.

The low point of the weekend was the Notre Dame-Michigan State game watch, not only because of the unfortunate outcome, but also because I quickly realized most of the men held true to stereotype and were more interested in chatting than cheering! At least a few lesbians and I tried to keep up some intensity for our team. All kidding aside, the high point of the trip was our splendid banquet at Union Station, where I saw our community celebrating with great pride, dignity, and joy. I was very proud of my fellow alumni's hard work to bring us to that point in our journey, and I felt optimistic as I spoke about the current atmosphere on campus with some of the students who joined us for the evening.

Perhaps the oddest moments of all came in visiting the gay club at the 100 Center, a place I'd never before been and had barely even known of. How surreal to be dancing at a gay club frequented by gay and lesbian Notre Dame students, especially when contrasted with my own paranoid, closeted existence at Notre Dame (which was, nonetheless, a blessed time in my life)!

I should briefly share with you that, through a friend of mine on campus, I made the acquaintance of a priest in Campus Ministry who asked me to come speak to him about my experiences. We spoke for over an hour on Sunday before I started my endless trip home. He was intrigued to hear of my closeted life as a student and my more recent, liberated life in Los Angeles where I even belong to a remarkable Catholic Church which fully supports its gay and lesbian members. He has asked me to return in November to help with the next retreat Campus Ministry is offering for gay and lesbian students, an offer I couldn't refuse! Chances are, I'll see some of the same faces I saw at Union Station, and hopefully, I'll have some words of wisdom to share with these trailblazing young adults who have already made tremendous strides toward leading their lives openly and happily.

In sum, the 2000 Reunion weekend was outstanding. I look forward to attending other GALA-ND/SMC events, and I will work with other southern Californians to plan a local Los Angeles event in the not-too-distant future. Thanks to everyone who worked so hard to prepare and execute a memorable and important conference! ♣

**A special thanks to the people who made the vision of Reunion 2000 - A GALA Affair a beautiful reality...**

**2000 Reunion Committee**

**Kelly Smith '92 SMC  
Reunion 2000 Chair**

**Francis A. Feeley '90  
Reunion 2000 Co-Chair**

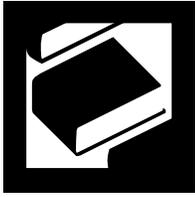
**John Blandford '83,'99 PhD  
Jennifer Hughes '88  
Lisa Karle '85  
David Pais '72  
Tom Zahn '67  
Tom O'Neil '77**

Warm thanks are also extended to the following...

OUTreachND Co-chairs  
Dave Wyncott '01 and Molly Morin '03,  
Marlo Thomas, Gary and Joann Gabrich,  
John Doyle '94, Dom DeLeonardis,  
Kathy Sullivan, Shannon Masterson,  
Rev. Rodney DeMartini '74 MA,  
Rev. Richard Warner, C.S.C. and Notre Dame  
Campus Ministry, Rev. George Rozum, C.S.C.  
and Alumni Hall, Des Inman,  
Bill Storey '54 MMS, '59 DMS,  
Maureen Smith '93 Law, *The Observer*,  
Jill Vincennes, and  
the Gender Studies Program.



*Phil with OUTreachND Co-Chairs Molly Morin '03 and Dave Wyncott '01*



## From OUTreach ND

Outreach ND has been focusing on providing a community for bisexual, lesbian and gay students and their friends on campus. We have weekly meetings, alternating between support and social activities. The crew has found a new affection for Outreach dinners, which draw as many as 25 students together on a Thursday night.

We are getting the word out about Outreach. Activities night is an event held during the first week of the fall semester. It's an opportunity for students to learn about and sign up for campus organizations. Twenty Outreach members worked their way thorough the crowds in t-shirts bearing our name and web address, giving students the opportunity to ask questions or take down the web address. In the same week, outreach published its first ad of the semester in the Observer. Our efforts resulted in doubled website activity in the following days and a new e-mail contacts. We have continued to poster and place observer ads. Further, some of our members were invited to speak to a sociology class about gay student life and social movements at Notre Dame and, we were quoted in an article on free speech on campus.

The Outreach was pleased to be invited to GALA's reunion banquet. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to share with you and learn from you. We enjoyed hearing your perspective as students who were here when gay life on campus was less open, and as people who are now living and working outside of Notre Dame. We look forward to being able to see all of you again.

Outreach celebrated National Coming Out Day with a pizza party at Fieldhouse Mall. On November fourth, Notre Dame celebrated Solidarity Sunday, a day where Catholics come together to pray for an end to hateful words and actions toward gay and lesbian people. Homilies at masses across campus included this message, and prayer cards were distributed afterwards. Campus ministry printed cards and members of Outreach attached rainbow ribbons. Outreach held its first fall semester SYR on December first at the Mishawaka Athletic Club.

Our last gathering was a mid-term assessment for Outreach. The board provided a forum for members to tell us how we were doing. As a result, the board is working

on setting up more committees, including one to organize our trip to the Midwest Bisexual, Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, and Allies College Conference, and one to organize our spring formal, April Follies. We will also be looking into changing our calendar to include more support meetings, and diversifying our topics for support meetings.

The Board is looking forward to using Outreach's membership to better serve the gay community on campus next semester.



*OUTreachND and South Bend Friends*

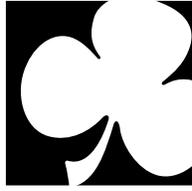


*PFLAG sponsors, Donahue & GALA types*



*Reunion seminar Saturday morning*

## Update on the Observer Situation



By Tom O'Neil '77

The St. Mary's College Faculty Assembly recently became the third prominent ND/SMC group to endorse a resolution supporting the editorial independence of the *Observer*. St. Mary's Board of Governance and the Notre Dame Faculty Senate issued similar proclamations in September.

All three groups were sending a message loud and clear to the powers beneath the Golden Dome: they're ready to fight on behalf of the student newspaper if its journalistic integrity becomes a casualty in the battle over gay rights.

The *Observer's* independence may be the price the paper has to pay for defying a university order not to publish ads from GALA-ND/SMC and OUTReachND/SMC. Student journalists and university officials have sparred over the point for the past three years as Notre Dame insisted that the two gay groups could not advertise because they're not officially recognized by the school.

*Observer* editors countered by claiming the paper was founded 25 years ago as a rogue voice that has never heeded orders from the Dome. But the Dome came to the rescue of the *Observer* back in the 1980s when the paper suffered a financial crisis and it took over the paper's bookkeeping. When the new relationship was struck, Father Hesburgh was still Notre Dame president and he promised the students that the paper could continue to decide editorial and advertising issues for itself.

Father Malloy, however, does not recognize that promise today and seems determined to extract some price for the paper's support of gay students and alums. Last year he appointed a special Ad Hoc Committee, chaired by Notre Dame professor David Solomon, that would recommend a plan for the paper's future status. That committee report is now complete and in Father Malloy's hands while rumors fly. Some sources say that infighting crippled the committee, leaving it with an equally lame final report that will never be issued publicly. Other accounts warn *Observer* editors: watch out—Malloy is about to seize the paper!

Faculty and students aren't sure what Malloy's next step will be. Meantime, their representative bodies continue to pass endorsements of support.

The proclamation from the SMC Faculty Assembly insisted that, "freedom of expression and debate by means of free and vigorous student media are essential to the educational environment of a liberal arts college in a democratic society." Its sponsor, SMC sociology professor Susan Alexander, added, "We, as faculty, understand that the staff at the *Observer* have policies in place and no one else needs to step in."

## OUT & ABOUT



**Tom O'Neil '77** has a new book due out at Christmastime: *Variety's Movie Awards* (Perigee Books), which offers the first-ever round up of the top 13 show business prizes (Oscars, Golden Globes, New York Film Critics Circle, Director Guild of America, National Board of Review, etc.) It complements his previous books *The*

*Emmys* and *The Grammys* and bolsters his public role as "Hollywood's Scorekeeper," a nickname he received from Joan Rivers. O'Neil appears with Rivers on those red-carpet shows on E! Entertainment Network and is a frequent guest on her nationally syndicated radio show. You can catch them together on E! at the upcoming Golden Globes on January 21, 2001.

Twenty GALA movie-lovers hooked up in New York City on November 17 to catch the opening night showing of "Bounce," written and directed by GALA member **Don Roos'77**. The gang then headed over to nearby Chelsea bar H2K for chatter and refreshments. The movie got a thumbs-up reception from the gang, reflecting a review that appeared that same day in the *New York Times*. "Its

pleasures are consistent enough to remind you of how few movies nowadays come anywhere close to matching it in intelligence and emotional balance,” said the paper about the on-screen love story starring ex-lovers Ben Affleck and Gwyneth Paltrow. “It is not only a terrific date movie, but also one that doesn’t make you feel ashamed afterward for getting misty-eyed.” Roos also wrote and directed *The Opposite of Sex*, in addition to penning *Boys on the Side*, *Single White Female* and *Love Field*. Roos’ former *Observer* colleague **Tom O’Neil ’77** organized the movie outing, which included **Lou Grange, Sean Mae ’95, Tom Kenney ’88, Steve Rodgers ’68, Matthew Kelleher ’95, John Colligan ’77, Bill Ryder ’86, Francis Williams ’96, Christopher Barry, David Horan ’85, Michael Savino ’75** and **Pat Burns**.

The Women of GALA-ND/SMC gathered on August 4 to enjoy a night under the stars at Ravinia Park, a tree-filled outdoor amphitheater that serves as the summer home of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. In what is becoming



an annual event, we exchanged food, wine and fine conversation prior to listening to the music of Mozart, Shostakovich, and Mahler. Event organizer **Jenn Hughes ’88** gave verbal updates on recent GALA news and provided information on Reunion 2000 - A GALA Affair. This year’s attendees included **Mary McDonald ’85 SMC** and Kim Braniff, **Barbara Schmitt M.S.A. ’86** and Cheryl Buck, **Maureen Smith ’93 Law**, Terry Loncaric, **Jenn Hughes ’88** and Jill Engholm. Due to continued strong interest in this event, plans are already started to hold another women’s event in Chicago next summer.

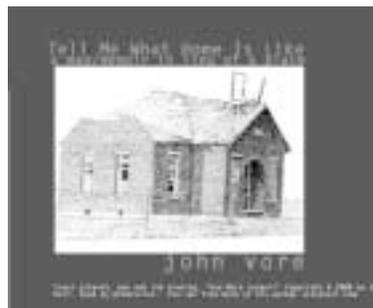
Nearly 30 folks gathered in Chicago for the first ever Summer Pool Party on the evening of August 26. Host **Paul Concialdi ’76** welcomed GALA-ND/SMC to a poolside barbecue grill at his building in the heart of Chicago’s Lakeview neighborhood. The lifeguard went

home early that day, so nobody got wet, despite the fact that no less than three of the guests in attendance were certified lifeguards! Seven students drove in from South Bend to join the festivities (that includes two of the potential lifeguards). A good time was had by all under lovely Chicago summer evening skies. Many thanks to Paul Concialdi for welcoming us!

Many thanks to the helping hands who have worked to get mailings such as this newsletter to you: **Jeffery Monaghan ’83** and Mark Voigt, **Maureen Smith ’93 Law, Peter Hillsman ’83, Kevin Heffernan ’93, John Blandford ’83 ’99 PhD** and Tom Pomeroy. Our famous licking and stuffing pizza parties have become the stuff of legend. Care to join us? E-mail [FranFeeley@aol.com](mailto:FranFeeley@aol.com)

Notre Dame finally moved ahead in the *Princeton Review’s* annual ranking of colleges, but not in the way that perhaps they might have wanted to. The latest edition of the *Princeton Review* ranks Notre Dame number 2 on their list of the unfriendliest colleges for gays and lesbians in the country (Duke was ranked number 1).

In 1990, **John Michael Vore ’86 ’93** moved to Notre Dame, Indiana, to write his first book. To be successful, he realized he had to confront his demons and come to terms with the identities by which he could be known: adopted son, adult child of an alcoholic, gay man—and the victim of a sexually abusive priest at Notre Dame. *TELL ME WHAT HOME IS LIKE* answers these questions by developing ideas from Timothy Leary, Garry Wills, Brian Pronger and David Bergman. Along the way, a map is created which uncloaks the power held by unhealthy families and institutions, a map which points the way to an escape from pain, isolation and self-destruction.



*TELL ME WHAT HOME IS LIKE: A MAP/MEMOIR IN LIEU OF A PLACE* A Firetrap Book, December 2000. The book will be available on the site <http://www.firetrap.com>



## Letter from the Feminist Collective

**Katie Poynter, SMC '01**

Today is National Coming Out Day, which means that our community is once again being confronted with the issue of sexual orientation. It is no secret that this issue has been highly explosive on our campuses in the past and there is a great possibility that today will be no different. What I would like to suggest, however, is that it should be.

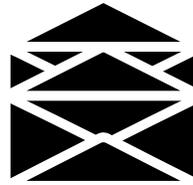
There are extremely strong opinions on all sides of this issue and it is necessary and good that there be an ongoing dialogue concerning them. Because this is such an emotional issue for so many people, discussion tends to emphasize areas of ideological disagreement. Lost in the debate over our differences are the important things we all have in common.

First and foremost I hope that we all agree that every person in our community deserves and needs respect, love and support. The fact of the matter is that there are people here who do not consider themselves heterosexual. Regardless of what each of us thinks about that fact, they are part of our community and we should all make them feel welcome. National Coming Out Day is a chance to acknowledge that someone you know and love (though you may not exactly know who) is gay. You may dispute their lifestyle, their actions, their choices but you cannot dispute their humanity.

Contrary to its name, today is much more than a day to "come out." It is a day to demonstrate solidarity with those who are struggling with this issue. Regardless of your personal stance, today is a day to acknowledge the presence of sexual diversity in our community. So if you see someone wearing a rainbow ribbon, interpret it as a sign of their respect for all people no matter what their sexual orientation. Take it as nothing more and nothing less and ask where you can get one.

Tomorrow we can continue to talk about our differences, but let today be a day to celebrate our love and respect for everyone in our community.

*(Editor's note: this piece originally appeared in the October 11, 2000 edition of the Observer)*



## Letter to the Editor

**Dear Editor:**

When I first became aware of GALA-ND/SMC's existence several years ago, I felt a sense of relief come over me. "Here," I thought, "is an organization that probably can help me deal with what has become a very significant issue in my life: namely, how do I integrate being a gay man with also being a Catholic one?" I hadn't done that very well, and events of the past decade-and-a-half have forced resolution of this issue upon me. I just saw and experienced too much. (Hadn't many of us?)

I had hoped association with GALA could help this integration (and maybe it still can); but I've come to the conclusion that it hadn't. I had to resolve the issue on my own, and maybe that wasn't such a bad thing to do. I had, and still do, received GALA's Newsletters, and even attended one of its Christmas parties. But the organization seems to have goals with which I don't identify, and interests not of mine. I'd come to think of GALA as being heavily concerned with student issues, such as "inclusion" or those concerned with OUTReachND's acceptance as a "regular" student group. As a result, I've come to understand what some of my gay friends meant when they said: "Notre Dame was part of my CSC experience." (They too, like me, are former Holy Cross (CSC) members.)

I don't think of the Catholic religion as being gay friendly, and I'm very Catholic. My immigrant parents are at least as Catholic as the Pope (well, at least as Catholic as the current one). Four years of Catholic grammar school were supplemented by four more years of Catholic high school, which were then followed by a Catholic university (for both Bachelor's and Master's degrees) and eight years of religious life. I even taught in Catholic high schools for over 20 years! And as far as being gay, well, I'm over 55 years old now; and people whom I consider experts in the field of human sexuality overwhelmingly believe that a person's sexual orientation is permanently and irreversibly established by age 3 at the very latest. That makes me very gay,

doesn't it? So, now what do I do? I can't stop being gay; and as far as being Catholic is concerned, it has been part of me for so long now, that I believe to throw it overboard at this point in my life would be foolish. That's where GALA's existence has come in. I saw it as an organization that could provide me with some clues/ideas as to how I could integrate these two seemingly irreconcilable threads: being Catholic and being gay. By "being gay," I mean "participatory gay," a category the Roman Catholic Church condemns, not "chaste gay," a category the church does not condemn (but rather "urges"). I suspect Father Garrick, formerly of Notre Dame, could enlighten us about the subtleties in the distinction between the two!

Nothing either in my training as a CSC member or in my many years of learning at the University addressed this inherent conflict. Nor did either suggest a potential resolution. How does one accept one's sexual orientation and get on with living a responsible Christian life while also living in a committed relationship? I have a feeling that Catholic teaching does not allow for such a possibility to occur within the bounds of legally defined Catholicism. What to do? Again, nothing in my training as a CSC or in my many years at Notre Dame had focused on this issue, its inherent conflict, or suggested a resolution. Association with GALA has not done this either. Although, in one of his articles for the GALA Newsletter, Chuck Colbert did talk of following one's conscience as being primary. As I wrote earlier, Catholicism does not condemn a person's sexual orientation; in fact, in the latest Catechism, it says that gay and lesbian people "do not choose their homosexual condition; for most of them it is an ordeal." (An interesting observation.) It then goes on to say, "Homosexuals are urged to be chaste." Please note: they are not "mandated," "obliged," or "required." How do you respond to statements such as this when you're gay and notice the use of the word "urged"? (I've learned that often theologians are lawyers, and their use of words is very subtle—and intentional. I choose to believe that such is the case here.) The choice of the word "urged" leaves room for the theological dictum: "You can't be asked to do the impossible." Besides, celibacy must be voluntary for it to have any meaning.

These statements from the Catechism have induced two thoughts in me. They have provided me with a livable

solution, and perhaps a permanent one, to this very real conflict in my life. Firstly, there was Vatican II's *Declaration of Religious Freedom*, which established a "primary directive" (to steal a phrase from "Star Trek Voyager") that in all matters, a person must follow their conscience. Secondly, there was the response of the married Catholic laity in America to the 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae*: they overwhelmingly rejected its stance on birth control. Rejecting the tenants of that encyclical has become a matter of conscience for many of the laity.

I think the response of the American Catholic laity to that encyclical can serve as a model for homosexual Catholics as to how they can retain their Catholicism while rejecting the "urgings" of the Church.

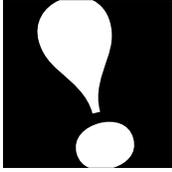
I realize my ranting on this issue might seem simplistic, and many readers of this Newsletter may have already solved this issue. Obviously, I'm still working on it, but have some ideas. I had hoped GALA would help me with more thoughts on this issue, and perhaps some of you still can. If so, I'd like to hear from you and how you're going about it. I think it important—not only for each other's sake, but for current Notre Dame students' sake—to notice and learn how we, as a homosexual and a Catholic people, are grappling with significant issues in our lives.

**John L. Ober '67, '72 MA**

## In Memoriam



On a sad note, GALA-ND/SMC would like to commemorate the passing of **Clifford James Anchor**. Cliff was the lover of **Tom Dooley '48**, and was an active supporter of GALA through the years. GALA chair John Blandford commented, "GLND/SMC brought Cliff to Notre Dame to speak while I was Chair (in 1995 if I recall correctly), and he worked the press brilliantly—a two-page story in the South Bend *Tribune*, coupled with a wonderful photo of Cliff next to the Dooley statue at the Grotto with the golden dome looming over his shoulder." Safe home, Cliff.



**Civil Unions are Not a Religious Experience, So Church Protest in Vermont is Unfounded**

**By Chuck Colbert '78**

In the one week since Vermont’s new civil union law took effect, dozens of licenses have been issued to same-sex couples seeking to make official their commitment to each other, cementing Vermont’s first-in-the-nation status in this important area of civil rights.

The law grants gay and lesbian couples more than 300 of the benefits, protections, and responsibilities previously reserved to married heterosexual couples—everything from health insurance benefits to inheritance rights, taxation, legal parenthood, and hospital visitation. It’s the next best thing to getting married.

“We hold that the State is constitutionally required to extend to same-sex couples the common benefits and protections that flow from marriage under Vermont law, wrote Chief Justice Jeffrey L. Amestoy in a unanimous state Supreme Court decision last December. It was that ruling that prompted the legislative compromise that is, in essence, the new law, which goes farther than any other state legislation in offering fair treatment and equal benefits to gay couples.

But not everyone is happy about it. Two organizations—Take it to the People, a grass roots coalition supporting traditional marriage, and the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church—have spoken out against civil unions. Some have called the law “endorsed perversion” and “moral rot.”

“Take it to the People” is a curious misnomer because the people already have had much to say. After four months of spirited debate, the Vermont House of Representatives approved the civil union bill by a vote of 79 to 68; and the Senate passed it by a vote of 19 to 11. The governor signed the bill into law in April.

This new law, like other civil rights achievements, has its roots in a combination of court decisions and legislative acts. That’s how the democratic process works in representative democracy.

Keep in mind, however, that civil union is the issue in Vermont—not religious or civil marriage. In religions in which it is allowed, clergy members will be at liberty to certify civil unions under the new law. But the law does not require any member of the clergy—including Catholic priests—to do so.

Nonetheless, Bishop Kenneth A. Angell, representing the state’s Catholic hierarchy, feels so “disappointed” and “disenfranchised” that he has entered the political debate, calling for the defense of marriage as a “sacred covenant between one man and one woman, entered into for life, and open to the possibility of children and family.”

Angell and his allies advocate a constitutional amendment to enshrine into law his religious tradition’s definition of marriage. He and 15 other New England Catholic bishops have issued a statement warning that the civil union legislation “will undermine cultural and religious respect for marriage.” The statement accuses the Vermont legislature of “preparing the way for an attack on the well-being of society itself.”

The bishops offer no supporting statistics, studies, or evidence. Yet, I know many gay people (myself included) who not only honor their fathers and mothers, but also greatly respect marriage and the family.

If the bishops’ hyperbolic charges are not enough, consider this one:

“Those seeking to redefine marriage for their own purposes are the ones who are trying to impose their values on the rest of the population,” the bishops write.

In my view, that charge serves a convenient purpose—cloaking the hierarchy’s irrational fear of homosexuality. The bishops don’t want to have an open conversation about church teaching; therefore, they use the issue of civil unions as a political tactic to divert the faithful from the really important issue for the church: an honest dialogue about homosexuality.

Meanwhile, mainstream Protestant denominations—Presbyterians, United Methodists, and Episcopalians—for example—openly debate their clergy’s participation in same-sex commitment ceremonies. Other Protestant denominations—Unitarian Universalists and the United Church of Christ—already permit their ministers to bless committed, monogamous same-sex relationships. Last March, Reform Judaism declared that gay relationships are “worthy of affirmation through appropriate Jewish ritual,” freeing their rabbis to officiate same-sex unions.

Vermont’s new law is not a redefinition of marriage. Rather, civil unions provide a parallel system of responsibilities and protections for gay couples—the same ones enjoyed by married heterosexuals under the state’s marriage laws.

For now, the civil unions law is a viable political compromise. It also reaffirms a healthy separation of church and state, one that fully respects all religious traditions, including Roman Catholicism.

*Chuck Colbert is one of the founders of GALA-ND/SMC, a former GALA Vice Chair and the former Editor of this newsletter.*

*(Editor’s note: this piece originally appeared in the Focus section, Boston Sunday Globe, July 9, 2000 and in a slightly revised format in the July 28, 2000 National Catholic Reporter under the title “Benefits, Protections, Responsibilities.”)*



## **The Pope and Gays: This Is Spiritual Abuse**

**By Chuck Colbert ‘78**

*“I also think it is fitting to make reference to the demonstrations that have been carried out in Rome for the past few days. In the name of the church of Rome I cannot avoid expressing bitterness for the insult to the Grand Jubilee of the year 2000 this event created and to the Christian values of a city that is much beloved in the heart*

*of Catholics throughout the world. The church cannot be silent about the truth, because it would be unfaithful to the creator God and it would not help to discern what is morally fitting from what is evil. I will limit myself to reading the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which, after noting that homosexual acts are contrary to natural law, says: ‘A not inconsiderable number of men and women experience a deeply-rooted homosexual tendency. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a great trial. Therefore they must be received with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every brand of unjust discrimination should be avoided. These persons are called to realize the will of God in their life, and, if they are Christian, to unite with the sacrifice of the Lord on the cross the difficulties they may experience as a result of their condition’ (CCC 2358). The heavenly Mother assists us with her protection.”*

*-Pope John Paul II on the occasion of World Pride in Rome*

To tell the truth, I was neither surprised nor shocked by Pope John Paul’s “bitterness” over the weeklong celebration of World Pride in Rome. Church officials had been pressuring the government to postpone it. The Vatican did not want nine days of global gay pride to coincide with its Holy Year celebrations. So the Vatican lost that round of politics.

The Holy See also lost a round of public relations. When hundreds of thousands of people converged on the Eternal City, celebrants from 40 nations, they made history. But this joyous demonstration of spirit was too much for the pontiff, who used the occasion for a papal scolding.

The “demonstrations” were an “insult” to the Vatican’s jubilee year pilgrimages and to the “Christian values” of “much-beloved” Rome, the Pope said. “The church cannot be silent about the truth.” Citing the catechism, the Pope said, “Homosexual acts are contrary to natural law.” He spoke about homosexuality as a “deeply-rooted tendency.” According to his teaching, being gay is “objectively disordered.” Gay sex is “intrinsically evil.”

Such ugly talk and misinformation no longer shock me—even though it still stings, assaulting my humanity. I hear similar language in America from U.S. Catholic bishops, who, relying on church teaching, charge advocates for same-sex civil marriage with “an attack on the

well-being of society,” as well as undermining “religious respect for marriage” and the family.

I experience the theology of pathology as spiritual abuse. I certainly feel battered when the Pope and others speak ill of me and when papal allies fight against full and equal participation for gays in secular society. It also saddens me, though, that by clinging to his premodern view of homosexuality, the Pope seems utterly disconnected from the reality of open gay and lesbian life in a postmodern world. Even the church’s natural-law tradition, by definition, must take into consideration the way real gay people live out our faith and experience our sexuality. In recently discussing his new book, “Papal Sin: Structures of Deceit,” Catholic author Gary Wills cited the occurrence of homosexuality within the church’s own ranks. Evidence suggests the number of gay priests among the ranks of the American clergy ranges between 40% and 80%. “If that’s not true, it’s trending that way,” Wills said. His stinging indictment of the modern papacy is an appeal to truth telling among the faithful.

For my part, I refuse to remain silent about my own truth: I am not “objectively disordered” or “intrinsically evil.” Being gay is fundamental to understanding who I am—as important as being part Irish-American, a Democrat, Notre Dame alumnus and faithful Catholic convert.

The relationship I share with my life partner does not threaten any marriage or family. In fact, our families’ lives have been enriched by our inclusion.

My friends ask me why I stay in the Catholic Church. Well, it’s my church, too. Sooner or later, the hierarchy has to open an honest dialogue about homosexuality.

I am not afraid to have that conversation because the message of Jesus Christ was one of liberation, not oppression, reconciliation, not condemnation. The Gospel message—to seek the truth that sets one free — resonates.

*(Editor’s note: this piece originally appeared in the New York Daily News, July 18, 2000)*

*The following text is from a half-page ad taken out in the 11/3 Observer by Campus Ministry and the Standing Committee. It was for use on Solidarity Sunday, which Notre Dame celebrated on 11/5. OUTReachND put together 4000 cards w/rainbow ribbons and distributed them at the event.*

**“A Prayer for Our Community”**

Notre Dame, our Mother, in sharing your name, we claim that we are family. Each of us is made uniquely in God’s image, and we seek unity with God, ourselves and others.

Help us to be worthy of your name, and reflections of your household.

We ask you to implore the Holy Trinity, that we might be one with our sisters and brothers.

Please bid our Father, to open our minds; that each of us will come to know the unity of which God is source and destiny.

Ask your Son to infuse our hearts with courage, to act against ignorance, intolerance and injustice. Call upon the Holy Spirit, that we might celebrate the diversity in our midst.

Move us to welcome and value lesbian and gay members of this family.

Inspire us to include all creation into the circle of God’s love and our Community. By our Baptism and new life in Christ, direct our journey back to the Father’s Son and Creator, and draw us together as companions on the way.

We offer this prayer for our Notre Dame family, that we might ever more reflect the richness and unity to which we are called.

## GALA-ND/SMC Mission Statement

The purpose of GALA-ND/SMC (Gay and Lesbian Alumni of Notre Dame and St. Mary's College) is:

- to promote solidarity and friendship among gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered graduates, former students, and friends of the University of Notre Dame and St. Mary's College
- to provide financial and moral support to student and school organizations that provide educational and advocacy programs consistent with the GALA-ND/SMC mission
- to sponsor, direct, and participate in activities of any nature including charitable, educational, spiritual, and athletic, which further the interests of lesbian and gay alumni and friends of the two schools
- to improve communication with university and college officials
- and to increase the visibility of gay and lesbian alumni at Notre Dame, St. Mary's and nationwide.

## GALA-ND/SMC



P.O. Box 257703  
Chicago, Illinois 60625



*galandsmc@aol.com*  
*http://galandsmc.org/*

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We are a non-profit alumni organization that has no affiliation with—and receives no financial support from—the University of Notre Dame or Saint Mary's College. Our strength comes from our membership and our numbers.

The *GALA-ND/SMC Newsletter* is published three times a year by the Gay and Lesbian Alumni/ae of the University of Notre Dame and Saint Mary's College. The newsletter serves gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered graduates, faculty, staff and friends of the Notre Dame/Saint Mary's family.

The *GALA-ND/SMC Newsletter* is funded entirely by your donations and GALA memberships. Annual dues are \$25.00 and include a subscription.

We invite you to submit articles (700-1000 words), letters to the editor (250-500 words), class and alumni/ae notes. They should be sent to the above address; however, the *Newsletter* reserves the right to edit or reject any material submitted.

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**Editor:** Kevin Heffernan '93  
729 1/2 W. Briar Place  
Chicago, Illinois 60657  
Vox: 773-296-2524  
[kvheffernan@aol.com](mailto:kvheffernan@aol.com)

**Layout and design:** Tom Zahn '67  
**Out & About, Bits & Pieces editor:** Fran Feeley '90  
**Copy editor/distribution:** Fran Feeley '90  
**Proofreader:** Fran Feeley '90  
**South Bend correspondent:** Lisa Karle '85  
**Research and news services:** Carol Rafferty SMC '63  
**Contributing writers:** Chuck Colbert '78, Tom O'Neil '78, Dan Burr '73 M.A., '77 Ph.D., Michael Vore '85, '93 M.A., Fran Feeley '90, Michael Varga '85 M.A., David Garrick '66, Larry Bradley '60 J.D., '62 M.A., '71 Ph.D., Barbara Grant '86, Karl Eichelberger '93, '98 J.D., Sean Gallavan '97, John Blandford '83, Joe Murphy '45, John Cowan '64, Kevin McKenna '86, Armand Cerbone '70 M.A., '73 Ph.D., Peter Nardi '69, Jennifer Hughes '88, Mark Jordan, Mike McComb, '00 MBA.