

GAY AND SDA - IS THERE A BRIDGE?

Ben Kaimera

It's not necessarily "easy" being gay (I am using "gay" in this context to represent gay men and lesbians) or Seventh-day Adventist -- let alone both!

Institutional SDA church policy recently approved by the General Conference declares that a gay Adventist remains an oxymoron. Yet, the living proof of Kinship over the past 25 years has been to strongly suggest otherwise. The question is whether or not a

Continued on page 4

EDITOR'S THOUGHTS ON HER FIRST SDA KINSHIP BOARD MEETING

As the sun rose on a warm January morning in West Hollywood, my Eastern-Standard-Time body was already wide awake, waiting for the Pacific Coast to catch up.

This would be my first Kinship Board Meeting. My mind wasn't closed, I pretty much expect the best of most situations, but having served on many boards in my 57 years of life, I know that it is quite possible for a Board Meeting to become a Bored Meeting.

I also know that when you have a group of people from all walks of life whose commonality are two such "controversial" areas of life as religion and sexuality, the Board Meeting might not be a boring one, but would certainly have the potential to be a disagreeable one.

People arrived, took off their shoes after entering the home where shoes are left in the narthex. (Do homes have narthexes? And what IS the plural of narthex?) Before 9:00 a.m. the meeting had begun ... people sitting in chairs, on the couch, and on the floor. (See the photo on page 5.)

Twelve hours later, with a only mid-day break for lunch, the meeting was over and supper began.

So how did it go? I was amazed. I was pleased. I was proud.

And I got all but about an inch of a sock knitted for my sister. (I told everyone at the beginning of the day that if my clicking needles bothered them they could let me know and I'd kindly stop knitting. I also told them that I talk less when I knit. Nobody asked me to stop knitting.)

The decisions were reached with compassion, intelligence, sensitivity, sensibility, and even humor. Being humans, there were plenty of disagreements, but they were handled as discussions. Nobody stomped his or her sticking foot or walked out. I wouldn't have expected it, but I truly expected more disagreements than I heard.

Continued on page 5

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Gay & SDA - Is There A Bridge? ▼ First Board Mtg.
- 2 Who's Who & What's What & Where's It All Happening
- 3 IMKL ▼ The 100 Word Challenge
- 4 Gay & SDA - Is There A Bridge? Continued
- 5 Board Meeting continued ▼ Photo of Board
- 6 Treasurer's Report
- 7 The Proust Inspired Questionnaire
- 8 Photos from Kinship Board Meeting
- 9 More Photos from Kinship Board Meeting
- 10 Room for a View or Two ▼ Bits & Pieces ▼ KinNet
- 11 Regional Reports (in a manner of speaking!)
- 12 Dear Editor
- 13 Dear Editor - continued ▼ Andrew Strong - report
- 14 Andrew Strong - report continued
- 15 Dream Weaving ▼ Midnight
- 16 Lesbian & Gay Lifestyles

SDA KINSHIP

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INFORMATION

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Submissions of letters, articles, pictures, art, and graphics are welcome. Include your name as you want it published, address, email address if applicable, and telephone number. If an item is to be acknowledged or returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Some Connection contributors have chosen to remain anonymous. The Connection reserves the right to edit manuscripts for length, syntax, grammar, and clarity. Address all submissions to the Connection, P.O. Box 7320, Laguna Niguel, CA 92607. Inquiries and article submissions may also be emailed to: RonWilder@aol.com.

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WHO WE ARE...

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. is a support group which ministers to the spiritual, emotional, social, and physical well being of Seventh-day Adventist lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and their families and friends.

SDA Kinship facilitates and promotes the understanding and affirmation of homosexual and bisexual Adventists among themselves and within the Seventh-day Adventist community through education, advocacy, and reconciliation.

Founded in 1976, the non-profit organization was incorporated in 1981 and has a board of 15 officers and 10 regional coordinators. The current list of members and friends includes well over a thousand people in 16 countries.

SDA Kinship believes the Bible does not condemn, or even mention, homosexuality as a sexual orientation. Ellen G. White does not parallel any of the Bible texts which are often used to condemn homosexuals. Most of the anguish imposed upon God's children who grow up gay or lesbian has its roots in a misunderstanding of what the Bible says.

SDA Kinship operates solely on contributions from its members and friends.

SDA Kinship supports the advancement of human rights for all people.

SUPPORT KINSHIP

SDA Kinship depends on you because **it is supported solely by contributions.** Help us reach out to more gay Adventists by making a tax-deductible donation to SDA Kinship International. Please send your check or money order to the address below.

SDA Kinship, P.O. Box 7320, Laguna Niguel, CA 92607 [telephone: 949-248-1299]

Region 1

Eric Gilio (978) 537-5295
 Catherine Taylor (413) 772-2345

Region 2

Yolanda Elliott (410) 531-5382

Region 3

Sandy Mann (404) 633-8447

Region 4

Jackie Summerton
 (608) 242-7141

Region 5

Floyd Pfenik (972) 416-1358

Region 6

Ben Kemena (303) 321-5331

Region 7

Brian Costa (503) 282-5058

Region 8

Karen Lee (408) 251-2668

Region 9

Lee Silver (626) 791-8008

Region 10 (Kinship Canada)

Brent Lehmann (604) 469-6976

Region 13 (Kinship Germany)

Andrea Helmrich HAJInfo@aol.com

Visit our website at www.sdakinship.org



IMRU

God Doesn't Need My Money, But I Could Sure Use His

Greg Cox, IMRU Coordinator

When I was attending La Sierra on my path to a Physical Therapy degree at Loma Linda University, I was in a continual financial struggle. Even though I was a full time student, I often worked 20-30 hours a week at whatever job I could find. Needless to say, money was very tight. Prior to La Sierra, most of my college education was at public university. When I found out that La Sierra required a certain amount of a religion class credit I was mad. Not only did I have to adjust my curriculum for a religion class, but I also had to pay for it too!

Since I had not taken a course on religion since my junior year in academy three years earlier, I was not happy to be "forced" to take one now. After checking with several friends, I settled on a class taught by Dr. Charles Teel. He seemed nice and was also funny at times, but intimidating too and because it was impossible to change my class schedule, I was stuck.

During the very first week of class one of the topics was tithing. After all the biblical references and SDA commentary on the absolute need for tithing, Dr. Teel went around the room asking which self-affirming individuals were currently paying tithing. Because I obviously did not look like a typical nice Adventist lad (jet-black flat-top, torn jeans, army boots), it was only a matter of seconds before he asked for my

opinion. I reflexively, without organizing my words, said "God doesn't need my money, but I could sure use his." Dr. Teel gave me the "evil eye" and tried to ignore the ensuing cacophony of the students. Needless to say I only got a "C" in his class.

It really is true though, God does not need my money but others often do. And that, in my opinion, is the real reason for tithing. SDA Kinship has been very blessed over the years with what many members consider to be an appropriate place to tithe. The organization wants to share that with gay and lesbian students who need financial help.

If you are in need, you may request a scholarship application.

To obtain an application, please email your request to:

sdakinship@aol.com

or write to:

▼ SDA Kinship International
P.O. Box 7320
Laguna Niguel, CA 92607

The 100 Word Challenge

In the last issue of the *Connection* I asked you, the readers, to share with each other by telling about yourselves in 100 words.

Here's the first "introduction" by way of the 100 Word Challenge. Please write yours and send it to:

Rawwin2@aol.com

My name is Michael LeCosta. I am a freelance writer/husband who delves into the past to create articles that fulfill the baby-boomers' yearning for the good olde days. A baby-boomer myself, I find that the local Adventist church has bypassed my love of an orderly service by installing a new audio-visual system that bombards my senses with recorded music, voice and video images. When the service is over I rush into the street to find a little quiet time while walking home. I grab a snack and then hike into the rainforest to commune alone with God.

Next month ...

- ▼ The Gay Adventurer
- ▼ What Is Your Real Age?
- ▼ NEW COLUMN – Visiting Ministers
- ▼ Connection Going Online? Your thoughts...
- ▼ Breakfast? Breaking the Fast

Have you heard the Good News?
Kinship no longer has a membership fee.

Continued from page 1

bridge can be built between gay Adventists and the institutional SDA church. The answer is this: After 25 years, I'm still not sure.

There have definitely been signs of change in the institutional church -- as well as among gay Adventists. Signs of the Times, Insight, Ministry, Adventist Today, and Adventist Review have published extensive articles on the topic of "homosexuality" in the past two years. Gay Adventists are far more open and candid in their identities and actions. As more and more gay SDA's "come out," it has become increasingly clear that this is an issue that affects many if not all Adventist families. A recent survey of Adventist academy students revealed that 5% of sexually active boys and 5% of sexually active girls have had same-gender sexual experiences and relationships. All sides of the debate can agree on one thing -- it is a real challenge facing the Adventist church.

Yet, awareness and openness have not necessarily translated to acceptance and affirmation. The 1999 SDA church policy on homosexuality is one of the most cruel issued by the church. And many of the SDA layperson-associated "outreach groups" to gays have links to so-called transformational programs like Exodus. As a friend said recently, "Adventists will now call me gay instead of

faggot -- but they still hate everything about me."

Twenty-five years ago when Kinship started, the enemy was ignorance. The enemy is still ignorance. And we have new challenges in building bridges to the institutional church. Many say that this effort is doomed to failure. Perhaps so. But if gay Adventists are not willing to build a bridge to their church, who will? Furthermore, even if the institutional church never changes, there are individual Adventist members who are open-minded and ready to learn. If gay Adventists are to build bridges within Adventism, we must bring enlightenment to ignorance.

The keys to bridge-building are threefold. First, individually and collectively, gay Adventists must remain healthy and whole. We cannot minister to ourselves or others unless we are well first. This means that we must work toward a life that is honest, genuine, integrated, spiritual, authentic, sober, educated and filled with goodwill. The greatest witness we provide others is the example of our lives shared with fellow Adventists -- gay or straight.

Second, we must identify our Adventist allies in the formation of gay-straight alliances. Too often, our straight allies within the Adventist church have gone unsupported. When was the last time you made it your business to contact a former Kinship Kampmeeting speaker just to ask

about them? When was the last time you made it a point to contact a gay-supportive Adventist parent to say "thank you?" Without this type of investment in our friends, gay Adventists will never effect change in the Adventist church. We must make it our priority to nurture our allies and friends within Adventism -- they are there!

Third, we must be very clear in defining what we stand for and patrolling ethical boundaries. While Jesus may arrive in glory tomorrow, we must always be working toward a better world each day. This not only means standing up for gay people and gay relationships, but it also means fighting against violence, sexism, anti-Semitism, genderism, ethnocentrism, ageism and racism. It also means fighting against so-called transformational programs, slander, and the deliberately confusing language of hatred. It will not be enough to simply be neutral to the cause of human beings or human rights. Definitions and boundary protections will require a velvet glove of love and an iron grip of meaning.

That I can write openly is a testament to the work of Kinship. Gay Adventists have a proud legacy to stand on. But our work and energies must continually be assessed and reinvented. I believe that bridges to the SDA institutional church are possible. We must build on the courage, energy, and hope of those that have brought us here. And we must continue to pray to a Creator that loves us for ALL that we are. ▼

Ben Kemena, M.D., writes from Denver, Colorado where he practices medicine, is in charge of Public Relations for SDA Kinship Intl., and is seriously involved in local gay rights activities.



A couple of things about which I had had a 'burden' were brought up by others who evidently had the same burdens.

One of those issues was that membership in Kinship would be free. People will still be asked to fill out forms, update annually, and hopefully be encouraged to donate to SDA Kinship International. But whether a person sends the form alone, a check for \$25 or a check for \$1000, their membership is the same.

My other burden was to get the Connection online so that people who want to save trees can opt not to receive the printed copy. Even without my spinning it, the earth turned, and this was brought

up by another board member. (The online Connection, not my spinning of the earth.)

If you're a member of Kinship, please hold your head high with the knowledge that the people you've chosen to represent you are doing a caring, thoughtful job. If you're not a member of Kinship, please consider joining! See inside the front cover for details.

The board members present were: Darin Olson, President; Larry Whitford, Vice-President; Charles Shobe, Secretary; Michael McLaughlin, Treasurer; Yolanda Elliott, Women's Director; Hal Jobe, Kampmeeting 2000 Coordinator; Dave Ferguson, Church Liaison; Greg Cox, IMRU Coordinator; Ben Kemena, Public Relations Coordinator; Floyd Poenitz, KinNet Coordinator; Bob Bouchard, Member-At-Large; Marge Doyle, Member-At-Large; Karen Lee, Member-At-Large, and Rom Wilder, Connection Editor.



Board at work - January 15, 2000 - Starting w/Karen Lee (front-center, with back to camera), and going clockwise: Dave Ferguson, Yolanda Elliott, Ben Kemena, Floyd Poenitz, Charles Shobe, Michael McLaughlin, Darin Olson, Larry Whitford, Bob Bouchard, Hal Jobe, Rom Wilder, and the casual guy whose legs are in the lower right corner of the photo is Greg Cox!

Kinship Fiscal Year 1999 Operating Account Statement

Fund Name	01/01/99	Beginning Income	Expense	Transfers	Ending 12/31/99
General Fund	7,207.28	16,775.97	(14,527.34)	(8,385.21)	1,070.68
Program Funds					
Connection	2,399.57	2,210.00	(2,841.01)	0.00	1,968.56
Kampmeeting 1999	200.00	14,563.25	(27,533.10)	12,769.85	0.00
Kampmeeting 2000	0.00	18,476.40	(7,896.00)	0.00	10,580.40
Project Funds					
Advertising: General	185.32	0.00	0.00	(185.32)	0.00
Advertising: Women's	48.74	0.00	0.00	(48.74)	0.00
Clergy Packet 96	(1,028.18)	0.00	0.00	1,028.18	0.00
Endowment Transfers	0.00	16,201.61	0.00	(15,370.00)	831.61
K'mtg Scholarships	284.70	3,070.00	0.00	(2,685.00)	669.70
Kid's Stuff	280.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	280.00
Member Wellness	7,128.67	1,150.00	(3,324.90)	(182.50)	4,771.27
Womyn's Outreach	2,313.34	105.00	(507.10)	(373.76)	1,537.48
Regional Funds					
01-North Atlantic	145.72	0.00	0.00	0.00	145.72
02-Mid Atlantic	1,269.73	1,790.00	(600.53)	(1,437.50)	1,021.70
03-South Atlantic	197.50	0.00	0.00	(120.00)	77.50
04-Great Lakes	90.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	90.00
05-Great Plains	230.97	0.00	0.00	(120.00)	110.97
06-Rocky Mountain	163.87	0.00	0.00	0.00	163.87
07-Pacific Northwest	104.58	0.00	0.00	0.00	104.58
08-Central Pacific	1,043.32	300.00	0.00	0.00	1,343.32
09-Southwest US	1,276.83	85.00	(258.08)	(215.00)	888.75
10-Canada	45.00	0.00	0.00	(45.00)	0.00
Totals	\$23,586.94	\$74,727.23	(\$57,289.06)	(\$15,370.00)	\$25,650.11

Kinship Fiscal Year 1999 Endowment Account Statement

Restricted Investments	Beginning 01/01/99	Deposits & Earnings	Adjustments	Transfers & Disbursed	Ending 12/31/99
Asset Allocation					
Bank America Savings	305.46	0.00	(305.46)	0.00	0.00
Fidelity Brokerage	63,125.39	33,103.91	0.00	0.00	96,229.30
Time Deposits	32,836.39	4,925.97	305.46	0.00	38,067.82
Total	\$96,267.24	\$38,029.88	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$134,297.12

Notes:

1. (Brackets) denote a subtracted amount or negative balance.
2. Money is transferred out of the general fund and into funds with negative balances at year's end.
3. Advertising is now paid out of the general fund.

The Proust Inspired Questionnaire

Two responses to questions in a previous issue! Hopefully this will encourage some of you to respond with your answers!

LESLIE QUINN:

- ❖ What is your greatest extravagance?
Probably my doll collection
- ❖ What is your favorite journey?
Driving to the airport to pick up my partner <BG>
- ❖ What is your most marked characteristic?
My crooked smile
- ❖ Who are your heroes in real life?
My uncle, who is one of the original SDA gay men I know of. He was gay in the SDA church when being gay wasn't accepted at ALL. I admire him sticking to his beliefs and his healthy outlook.
- ❖ Which talent would you most like to have?
Musical talent, especially to be able to sing!
- ❖ What do you consider your greatest achievement?
Surviving childhood sexual abuse and the therapy thereafter.
- ❖ What is your most treasured possession?
My sanity!!!!
- ❖ Whom would you nominate as TIME magazine's person of the century? Why?
Eleanor Roosevelt, because she cared about the common people. She cared about women.
- ❖ If you had to choose another profession, what would it be?
Message therapist
- ❖ Which three persons, living or dead, would you most like to invite to a dinner party?
My partner, my grandmother (deceased), and my mother (deceased).

- ❖ What is your principal hobby?
Collecting agates and tiny sand dollars
- ❖ What do you consider to be the most unusual event in your life?
Living in Hawaii for 6 months
- ❖ What do you consider to be the most important book you've read?

Servants or Friends? Another Look at God by Graham Maxwell. For the first time in my life, I realized God was a loving God, rather than a dictator or strict disciplinarian

JAN RADCLYFFE:

- ❖ What is your greatest extravagance?
I could have gotten the basic Honda Civic ... but I have the model with cruise control, power windows & door locks, automatic sun/moon roof, etc.
- ❖ What is your favorite journey?
My journey to self-awareness—the process of coming out to myself ... very liberating, though hard choices and a painful divorce (from husband and church) followed.
- ❖ What is your most marked characteristic?
My smile & youthful enthusiasm
- ❖ Who are your heroes in real life?
Marsha Stevens & her partner, Suzanne; other lesbians in committed, long-term, monogamous relationships ... because they are an example to me of what is possible.
- ❖ Which talent would you most like to have?
I would love to be able to play the piano and sing (on-key).
- ❖ What do you consider your greatest achievement?

Some of my former students are now teachers, nurses, doctors, lawyers, ministers, etc.

- ❖ What is your most treasured possession?
I actually consider Mittens [cat] my baby—but when asked if I'm a pet owner, I say yes, so I guess she's my most treasured 'possession'.
- ❖ Whom would you nominate as TIME magazine's person of the century? Why?

A TIE ... Eleanor Roosevelt and Helen Keller were both strong women who were excellent role models and did a lot of good in their lives.

- ❖ If you had to choose another profession, what would it be?
RETIRED!! (I think I was born to be a teacher ... even in first grade, I always just KNEW that was what I wanted to be.)
- ❖ Which three persons, living or dead, would you most like to invite to a dinner party?

Jesus; my ladylove, Leslie Quinn; and my best friend, Juliana—who would play the piano so we could sing God's, praises in perfect harmony.

- ❖ What is your principal hobby?
Communicating with friends and family members via e-mail and telephone; also coin collecting.
- ❖ What do you consider to be the most unusual event in your life?

I got to go soaring in a sailplane. With a bird's-eye view of the autumn colors, I felt in awe of God's beautiful handiwork.

- ❖ What do you consider to be the most important book you've read?

Besides the Bible, I would say it was THE LITTLE PRINCE, by Antoine de Saint Exupery.

(Leslie Quinn and Jan Radclyffe are pseudonyms.)



Bob Makes a Point ^



Yolanda, Pearl, Karen

Ron & Hal ^



Ben Explains ^



Charles Takes Notes ^



^ Michael Listens

SDA Kinship Board Meeting - January 15, 2000 - Los Angeles



< - Yolanda
Hal - >
BOARD AT WORK



< Darin Floyd >
< - Larry



SDA Kinship Board Meeting - January 15, 2000 - Los Angeles

Room for A View or Two

In the movie "Pretty Woman," Julia Roberts' character is asked by Richard Gere's character: "What is your name?"

Her response is: "What would you like it to be?"

Most of us don't go around offering to 'be' whoever others want us to be, either in name or in person. But I've got a deal for you.

The *Connection* is the newsletter of SDA Kinship International. If you're reading this you are either a member or someone has given you a subscription or lent you their copy or you've miraculously found it in an SDA college library (and I'd certainly like to hear from you if that's the case!!!).

The *Connection* is your/our newsletter. It is a vehicle of sharing and receiving communications from GLBTI persons who are or were at some time connected to the SDA church.

To quote Julia Roberts' character: "What would you like it to be?" (The *Connection*, that is.)

I would love to hear from you, whether this is the first issue you've read or whether you've been reading every issue since the first one came out (so to speak).

Longtime *Connection* readers will undoubtedly recognize the talent of former editor, J. Vickie Shelton, in the two poems on page 15 of this issue. I'd like to dedicate this February issue to my patient partner of 17 years, and Vickie's ultra patient partner of more than three decades. These two women are fiercely private and loyal to their partners, even when same are crazy enough to take on the job of *Connection* Editor! ♥

Rom Wilder

Today's Out Look The 2000 366-Day Gay & Lesbian Calendar

The first time an identified gay man appeared on television was on a 1954 talk show panel along with a vice cop and a psychiatrist. Despite using a pseudonym to avoid retribution, "Curtis White" was fired from his job the day after the show aired.

(February 24)

1234567890987654321
TREASURER'S REPORT
1234567890987654321

▼ Michael McLaughlin, Kinship's treasurer, submitted this year's report to the board on January 15 and has put it into this edition of the *Connection* (page 6).

If any member has questions about this report, please feel free to contact Mike through the Kinship address: P.O. Box 7320, Laguna Niguel, CA 92607. ▼



Have you been on the web to see Kinship's homepage?

www.sdakinship.org

For more information about KinNet email Floyd Poenitz at floydp@home.com

Did you know you could donate money to SDA Kinship International and designate which area of Kinship you'd like to have supported by that money?

Well, you can!

If you have a burden for an area of Kinship (like KinNet or Member Wellness or any others - see treasurer's report for list), feel free to contact our treasurer, to find out how to donate to this non-profit organization which benefits so many (see "Dear Editor" letters!)

Regional Reports

MISSING - INACTION?

Even if you're not the regional coordinator, feel free to send 'news' to the Connection.

(Be sure to get permission to use people's names.)

Region 1 -

Region 2 - A picture is worth a thousand words!!! Check out this picture, folks. What? You need words also? Next month you'll get a full report on this Adopt-A-Highway program in Silver Spring, Maryland.



Region 3 -

Region 4 -

Region 5 -

Region 6 -

Region 7 -

Region 8 -

Region 9 -

Region 10 -

Region 13 (Kinship Germany)

This is the region Charles Shobe should have been listed in last time! He's doing fine, by the way!!!

DEAR EDITOR...

Dear Editor,

I don't know how I would have survived my sophomore year in college if I hadn't been receiving the *Connection*. Allow me to relate my story. It happened in March 1994. I had never felt so happy in my life. It was the first time I felt close to a person. Ever since I was in elementary school, I had always dreamed of having a guy best friend whom I could tell everything and with whom I could do everything. Now I had that close friend who cared so much about me. I was also happy because I was finally where I belonged -- a music conservatory. I didn't care if I was the only SDA or the only Filipino.

Then it happened. One night my best friend was giving me a massage. We started exploring each other and we fooled around. It was the most exciting and rewarding feeling I've ever had. He spent the night and slept with his head on my chest.

The following day, I felt uneasy. All I could think of was what had happened the night before. I couldn't concentrate in class and felt like I had a fever. That night my best friend called me on the phone. He wanted to talk to me in person, so I went to his room. He said he wanted to talk to me about what happened. Then he asked me "Are you gay?" I couldn't answer. I thought what we were doing was normal. It was just a guy thing. Guys just love to have fun, you know. He came out to me and then he said, "I think you're gay."

Unfortunately, our six-month love affair turned out to be a nightmare

for me. My best friend was just using me. I, on the other hand, fell madly in love with him. I remember coming home to Riverside, and not being able to sleep every night. His voice kept on ringing in my heart: "Are you gay?" I recall secretly looking for answers at the La Sierra University Library. The first answer I found was from the *American Psychological Journal* stating that homosexuality is not a mental disorder. I couldn't stand it any longer. I couldn't tell anybody, so I decided to go back to Florida and spend the summer alone, away from family. I did spend the whole summer reading all the gay books from the public library, checking out all the bookstores in the mall. But I still felt dirty. I am a Seventh-day Adventist. I can't be a sinner. I am a Filipino. To be gay is a Caucasian American thing. I am Asian. The more I prayed the more I learned to come to terms with myself.

Then one day I bought *GENRE* magazine. As I was flipping through the ads, I came across one that said: **SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS, YOU ARE NOT ALONE.** Wow, there was an organization affirming SDA Gays. After finally leaving my name and address, (it was an answering machine and I felt uncomfortable leaving my information), I received a packet which included the *Connection* within a week.

I was so excited. Wow, there's an "out" student from Andrews University (Scott Wiemers). There was an ad: **Do you hear what I hear? Join KinNct.** There was a Kampmeeting group photo. They even had an 800 number and a

regional coordinator from Florida! I called the regional coordinator right away. I was so impressed. He was a choir director and a youth ministry leader in church. His region even had a booth in a gay event. It was sad though because the regional coordinator was moving to another state in a few months. The next 2 years of my undergrad years would be spent communing with the *Connection*. Our region didn't have any activity after Jay Lopez (pseudonym) left. I had wanted to become a regional coordinator back then but circumstances prevented that at the time.

I remember waiting for each *Connection*. At last I was not alone! The population of our conservatory was 40 and there were 3 gays (my best friend, his boyfriend and myself). I knew when I started my graduate studies in New York or visited my relatives in California, I would be able to interact with the writers from the *Connection* in person. I wondered if I had overlooked any issues in the magazine stacks at La Sierra University. I wondered how people in the "third world countries" like Asia and Africa reacted to gay SDA's. This can't be just an American thing. (A few years later, I was able to correspond with students from South Africa, Nigeria, China, Dominican Republic, Brazil, Chile, Australia, etc.) I dreamed of attending Kampmeeting. Someday when I could afford a plane ticket I'd be able to attend, and after five years of reading about it, I did get to attend!

When I look back at my years in college, sometimes I feel so

negative because I was at the wrong place at the wrong time. But then I would think of my excitement every time another copy of Kinship's newsletter would arrive.

I remember Michael McLaughlin at Kampmeeting crying as he read Larry Hallock's ad in the newspaper: **GAY SDA. AM I THE ONLY ONE?** Yes, I was the only SDA in my school but as I received each copy of the Connection, I was assured that I was not alone.

I finally came out to my parents at the age of 25! But being in the Asian culture made things worse. Needing support never stops, eh? Well, the Connection will never stop giving me moral support. After connecting with gay SDA's we probably each have found some sensitive issues where more support is needed. Hey, I do need support from other youth, parents, family members, and friends, and most especially I need the support of ASIANS! I won't complain to the Editor that these needs are not being met because no 'newsletter' can do it all. That's why we each need to 'be here' -- to give moral support to each other when we need it. Please know you can count on me. ♥

Jonathan Arevalo-Coo

Email: schubert@cyberdude.com

Website:

<http://www.geocities.com/Vietnam/Strasse/7383>

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An update about another
member of Kinship follows.
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NEWS FLASH!
NEWS FLASH!
NEWS FLASH!!

**THE SDA KINSHIP
CONNECTION
WILL BE GOING
ONLINE**

**WATCH FOR MORE INFO HERE
AND ON THE WEB
AT**

www.sdakinship.com

Fear not!

Hardcopies will still be printed for those who want them.

WHAT EVER
HAPPENED TO
CONNECTION
EDITOR ANDREW
STRONG, WHO PUT OUT
HIS LAST ISSUE OF THE
NEWSLETTER FOUR
YEARS AGO AND MOVED
TO RUSSIA?

When seven-year-old Jeff suggested that he would show me his if I showed him mine in our hideout under the baseball bleachers near our Adventist grade school, my six-year-old mind was filled with interest. I immediately unzipped my jeans.

However, although my curiosity was satisfied 20 minutes later, the game awakened in me feelings that I could not identify.

Seven years later when I was a missionary kid at Far Eastern Academy in Singapore I finally learned that people aroused by the same sex were faggots, queers, outcasts. I never associated those labels with myself until I transferred to Gem State Academy in Idaho after my parents divorced and the youth there decided that I was one of those wackos.

Two years later, it was an introverted, sexually frustrated 17-year-old who graduated and moved to Walla Walla College. I hoped that people would not make fun of me there and was relieved that I would no longer have to regularly check

Continued on the next page

Andrew Strong continued

bathroom stall walls to scrub off scrawled jeers and obscene drawings mocking the man I was growing up to be.

I soon found that although the students were not as harsh, I had to jump the hurdle of being able to admit that I was a faggot, a queer, a gay before I could set my mind on studies.

That is where Kinship came in. Shortly after my 18th birthday a friend introduced me to Doug Taylor, who was Kinship's hot-line coordinator, and he in turn introduced me to Kinship. The support of other Adventist gays was what I needed most of all, and I spent hours talking to regional members and thumbing through old *Connections*.

A couple of years later Kinship President Darin Olsen noticed my interest in journalism and nominated me to take the helm of the *Connection*. That responsibility was without a doubt the stepping stone I needed to come to grips with who I am. The editorship allowed me to flex my young journalistic muscles while exploring my sexuality.

A couple more years passed and I found that I had accepted that I was gay. But I also realized that another issue had cropped up. Even though I had made several attempts to have sexually satisfying relationships, I was too shy, too awkward and -- let's face it -- too ashamed to loosen up enough to enjoy sex. I wondered whether it would be better to live without sex. The thought of marrying and raising Adventist kids crossed my mind, but only briefly because I had heard tragic stories from Kinship members who regretted having strayed from their homosexual feelings. I also debated whether I wanted to work for the church, careers that that my parents and their parents had followed.

It was 1995. I had lived in the United States for seven of my 22

years and I wanted out. Kinship comforted me and my handful of friends supported me, but I did not feel at home. I felt that I could not find my sexuality in surroundings where I had felt repressed by Adventists from the moment I arrived.

An opportunity to intern in Russia gave me just the opportunity I sought and I leaped for it. I figured that the 10-month contract at an Adventist English school would let confront my feelings about working for the Adventist church and about sex.

Upon my arrival in the former Soviet Union I soon saw that the officials running the school did not have my vision of God in their hearts. They repeatedly lied to the new teachers and played shady financial games with the Russian authorities and the students. I was disappointed.

Within a month I had had sex several times with one of the other teachers (who insisted he only had gay urges when he was drunk) and befriended my first gay Russian. More Russian friendships followed and by the end of my stay in Russia I discovered that sex could not just be satisfying but great. But I still was not fully comfortable with sex.

Meanwhile, I realized that I wanted to develop the skills I had picked up as the editor of the *Connection* by following a career in journalism.

When I graduated from college six months later, I flew straight back to Russia and was hired shortly afterward by a newspaper. In the past three years I have moved from copy editor to chief copy editor to deputy night editor to deputy business editor. My New Year's wish was granted a few weeks early last December when I was appointed a full-time reporter.

Also over the three years I formed more friendships and continued to fight my inhibitions about sex.

During a recent evening I leafed through a few issues of the *Connection* that I had put out, and I was surprised at how primitive my editing, layout and design ideas were. But I realized that I had done the best I knew how. Then, with a *Connection* in my lap, it struck me that just as those journalistic skills had developed, so had my feelings about my orientation. I knew that I was no longer ashamed of who I am and was no longer ashamed of enjoying the sex that God gave me.

The only question remaining, I thought, was whether I would ever work for the church. In my heart I knew wanted to serve God through His church, but I wondered if its members € from the same stock as those who rejected me in academy and lied to me in Russia -- would have me.

Kinship helped me embrace my orientation. Russia brought me to terms with sex. And now after months of fruitless searching, I am left wondering if I wouldn't find a more logical answer to my final question by going back to where my sexuality was awakened. Maybe I should return to the baseball bleachers and just ask Jeff.

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Andrew Strong, 26, is a business reporter in Moscow, Russia, and a member of KinNet. He welcomes any answers to his final question at: andyr99@hotmail.com

Today's Out Look

The 2000 366-Day Gay & Lesbian Calendar /Feb. 20

Gay playwright Edward Albee, winner of three Pulitzer Prizes, has been in a romantic relationship with sculptor Jonathan Thomas for nearly thirty years. Can you name the other playwright Albee was with earlier in life?

Terence McNally



Dream Weaving

Dream weaving meanders on
days and decades
months, years
drift into each other
twenty
suddenly thirty
and more

We've been together
A long while
a very short while

Living the dream
we live the day
If I could fancy
the perfect way
I'd fancy it

Just this way.

- Vickie 2/25/98

Midnight

You sleep.
My heavy eyelids work to slumber
but startle open
and fight the night.

Long days
but happy days
Tired knees and aching shoulders
Yours
Mine
It's life mid fifties

But all in all
We don't mind
I have you. And you me.
You hold me up
and I hold you
Knowing it's worth it all
together.

- Vickie 2/25/98

FEBRUARY MUSINGS

Ah yes, hearts and flowers. February. Chocolate. I have always wondered why we consider it romantic to celebrate the death of a martyr in a month where most people in the northern hemisphere have Seasonal Affective Disorder, cabin fever, bathing suit blues, heating fuel frustrations, and holiday jet lag. And of course we focus on consuming a substance that makes us feel loved (biochemically) for an hour, right before it plummets our blood sugar into the basement and sends us into a depression...or running to the cupboard for more.

Maybe Valentine's Day is an



attempt to remind us to continue to speak to each other, appreciate the ones we love, and recommit to making it through the winter, until the flowers really do come out and our loved ones can see more of our bodies that the seven layers we espouse up here in the tundra. I really don't know why Rom asked such a winter curmudgeon to write this article. She is still learning to know me I guess. Even when I am involved in a relationship it's an effort for me to find my hormones in February. I always think I have packed them away with the T-shirts. I picture them waiting patiently until I clean

out the closet on the first 58 degree day and find parts of my life put into hibernation months earlier. It's in April that I feel romantic, find flowers, walk in the moonlight...and of course try to protect my shoes from the mud season. I am grateful to those of you who continue to teach me about the long lasting beauty of romantic love.



Vickie and Emy Lou stay warm out there in Colorado. Bruce and Eddie, I hope you are able to have a few moments with each other in between caring for the elders. Hal and Richard, I have always loved the humor and affection with which you describe yourselves. Mike and John, I am still waiting to hear about that sailing trip into the sunset. David and Robert, are you managing to travel together?? And of course those women down in DC. I thought you were going to make it through the winter holding hands under the cherry trees. Sorry we sent you arctic blasts from our direction. I love the open love letters we got to see on KinNet. I love that Pam and Gretchen so openly share the

hard work that goes with raising the children their romance has given to them and to us. Ah, and Darin I did not forget you and your romantic nature. I am so glad you have someone by your side.



I also think Valentines should be handed to the people who bring us love, even though they are not involved...at least with each other or us. Floyd and Charlene teach me depths about commitment. Obed's kindness, personal honesty, and humor always refill my heart. Ben and his never ending commitment to community educates, informs and makes me feel safer. And there are hundreds of you I have not mentioned. But I am glad for the courage of your decision to live life honestly and make a community in which I can grow as a whole human being.

Some notes on physiology. The healthier we are generally, the more likely our sex drives are to function. The steadier our blood sugar, the fewer the mood swings. Zinc (picolinate is less likely to make you nauseous) helps build up our immune systems. Colds and the flu have been known to dampen romantic evenings. Fireplaces make it warmer for those who need 12 layers to stay warm. Wood stoves work even better, but there's not the flickering light. And having a community gives us more will to live. And it is in the living that there is sharing. And it is in the willingness to share that our hearts and our hands...and the rest of us can touch.

Thanks Kinship. Have a gentle 'holiday' season.

Catherine