Memphis community center nears

by STUART BIVIN

Memphis lesbians and gay men moved one step closer to an independent community center Saturday when they elected a board of directors at a "town meeting" held at Agape Life Church.

Vincent Astor, longtime community activist and a member of the center's new board, said that the group has approved a constitution and bylaws and is "looking at spaces now. Some might think that might be putting the cart before the horse, but we do have to have some idea how much money we will need to raise."

Astor said that the community center would have a large meeting space, rehearsal space for groups preparing nonprofit and benefit shows, and space for a reference/reading room as well as a kitchen and restrooms.

The new board will set policy for the center and direct fundraising efforts. *continued on page 3

National Task Force director in Tennessee, looks for change

by HARRISON HICKS
Contributing Writer

In addition to the continuing AIDS crisis, the issues of most concern to lesbians and gay men in the 90s will include lesbian and gay families, gay rights and reform, and the persecution of lesbians and gay men in the military, according to Jeff Levi, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF).

Levi, who is leaving the 15,000-member organization in August after six years of service (three as director), was in Nashville last weekend on a fundraising tour.

He spoke of the challenges facing the lesbian and gay community at a Sunday brunch sponsored by local NGLTF board members at the World's End restaurant.

Levi said it was his opinion that the viability of lesbian and gay family units would be a key issue as more and more lesbians and gays opt to form nontraditional family units, with children being raised in lesbian and gay households. Levi noted recent publicity dealing with lesbian and gay couples adopting children, winning custody battles, and in some cases, using artificial insemination to have children.

"The government should be affirming our lives," stated Levi, who asserted that lesbian and gay family units, couples, and individuals are entitled to the same rights and privileges accorded to heterosexuals.

*continued on page 3

Action expected soon on Tennessee sodomy law

by JEFF ELLIS
Managing Editor

With state lawmakers feverishly trying to tie up loose ends before the Tennessee Legislature adjourns its 1989 session, action is expected on proposed revisions of the state's sodomy law.

Earlier this month, members of the Senate Commerce Committee defeated a bill which would have re-established job discrimination protection for Tennesseans with AIDS. Legislators in 1987 had removed people with AIDS from the statute, which protected them from discrimination by employers, and Gov. Ned Ray McWherter signed the bill into law. McWherter later said that he did not realize the bill would strip legal protection from people with AIDS.

Changes in the state sodomy law — or the crimes against nature law, as it is also known — were included in the massive report issued last fall by members of the Tennessee Sentencing Commission (TSC). TSC, charged with "eliminating archaic language" from the state's criminal code, had proposed the revision.

If adopted, TSC's proposal would change the current prohibition against "crimes against nature" to a specific ban on all homosexual acts. Since the crimes against nature statute has rarely been invoked against homosexuals, TSC members said the legislature should make the law more specific if they are attempting to enforce the ban on homosexual acts.

Capitol Hill sources earlier had indicated to Dare that some legislators were willing to strike the sodomy statute from the code. However, following a marathon session last week to hammer out final compromises in order to gain McWherter's approval, the ban on homosexual acts remained intact.

The proposal being considered by legislators calls for the reduction of homosexual crimes against nature to a Class C misdemeanor, carrying a sentence of not more than 30 days and/or a fine of $50.

Tennessee criminal code currently prescribes a sentence of not less than five years and not more than 15 years to be levied for committing a crime against nature.

If the revision becomes law, Tennessee will join five other states which specifically classify homosexual acts as criminal.

Homosexual acts are misdemeanors in Texas, Arkansas and Kansas. Montana and Nevada statutes classify such acts as felonies. More than half of the United States classify sodomy or crimes against nature as felonies.

"The way of thinking now seems to be that the new law, if adopted, classifying homosexual acts as misdemeanors is better than the old law which makes them felonies," said Penny Campbell, a member of Advance, the political action committee of the Tennessee Gay and Lesbian Alliance (T-GALA).

T-GALA, along with various other groups including the Tennessee Sheriff's Association (TSA) and Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), had lobbied state lawmakers to make changes the TSC's massive report. More than half of the United States classify sodomy or crimes against nature as felonies.

"The government should be affirming our lives," stated Levi, who asserted that lesbian and gay family units, couples, and individuals are entitled to the same rights and privileges accorded to heterosexuals.

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Happy Mother's Day

Jeff Ellis investigates sexual orientation "change therapy." A Promise Broken, page 4.

Let me talk more about me. Mariene. Pages, page 7.

Nashville Ballet: en pointe and on target with Cinderella, Curtains, page 8.
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**MEMPHIS**

**Mondays**
- Gay Alternative Hour Radio show, WRK-FM 90.6 - 7pm.
- Phoenix (Gay Antisocial Anonymous) Open meeting, Memphis Lambda Center.
  6pm. Info 901 329-5464.

**Tuesdays**
- Phoenix (Gay Antisocial Anonymous) Open meeting, Memphis Lambda Center.
  5:30 and 9pm. Info 901 329-5463.

**Wednesdays**
- Phoenix (Gay Antisocial Anonymous) Open meeting, Memphis Lambda Center.
  9pm. Info 901 329-9460.

**Thursdays**
- P-FLAS (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gay) Support group, St. John’s Episcopal Church, 3275 Union Ave. Info 901 726-1494.
- Phoenix (Gay Antisocial Anonymous) Open meeting, Memphis Lambda Center.
  5:30pm. Info 901 329-9463.

**Fridays**
- Phoenix (Gay Antisocial Anonymous) Open meeting, Memphis Lambda Center.
  5:30 and 10pm. Info 901 329-9463.

**Saturdays**
- Twisted Sisters Meeting, MCC.
  Noon. Info 901 688-2888.
- Phoenix (Gay Antisocial Anonymous) Open meeting, Memphis Lambda Center.
  8pm. Info 901 329-9463.

**Sundays**
- Holy Trinity Community Church Worship service, 11am. 1716 Forest Ave.
  Info 901 726-9463.

**NASHVILLE**

**Mondays**
- Gay Darvengers Anonymous Open meeting for bisexual and gay investors.
  MCC. 5:30pm. Info 615-320-4016.
- Nashville CARES Info, Education Support Group. 6:30pm. ARC/AIDS Support Group.
  Informationally. 6:30pm. Family Support Group. 6:30pm. Info 615-385-1510.
- Lambda Group Closed Antisocial Anonymous meeting for gay men and lesbians. United Church.
  Info 901 688-2888.
- MASC*ET (Married and Gay Network) Support group for married gay men.
  7:30pm. Info 901 320-0296.

**Tuesdays**
- Nashville CARES ARC/AIDS Support Group. 6:45pm. Info 615 320-1510.
- All-female Closed meeting. MCC. 5:30pm.
- P-FLAS Meeting of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gay. 4th Thursday only.
  United Church. 7:30pm. Info 901-688-2888.
- MTSU Lambda Association Meeting for interest and gay Middle Tennessee State University students, faculty, staff, and alumni. 7:30pm. Info 615-385-1510.

**Wednesdays**
- Nashville CARES ARC/AIDS Support Group. 6:30pm. Info 615-385-1510.
- Nashville CARES Closed meeting for gay men and lesbians. MCC.
  5:30pm.

**Thursdays**
- Israel Survivors Anonymous Closed women’s meeting. First Church United, Franklin Rd.
  5:30pm.
- Nashville CARES Visuals Group. 6:30pm. Info 615-385-1510.
- Alternative Antisocial Anonymous Open meeting for bisexual and gay men.
  MCC. 9pm.
- Lambda Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOA) Meeting. 6pm. Info 615-385-4765. 9pm. Info 615-307-6463.

**Fridays**
- Nashville CARES ARC/AIDS Support Group. 6:30pm. Info 615-320-0296.
- Gay Parents Support Group Meeting. MCC. 4th Friday only. 7pm. Info 615-621-9641 or 615-320-0296.
- Alcoholics Anonymous Program Study Group Meeting. 6:30pm. 7pm. Info 615-385-4765.
- Nashville CARES ARC/AIDS Support Group. 6:30pm. Info 615-385-1510.

**Saturdays**
- Nashville CARES ARC/AIDS Support Group. 6:30pm. Info 615-385-1510.
- Israel Survivors Anonymous Open meeting. First Church Unity, Franklin Rd.
  5:30pm.
- Metropolitan Community Church Community Dinner, all you can eat.
  6pm. Info 615-320-0296.

**Sundays**
- Metropolitan Community Church Worship services, 11am and 7pm. Info 615-320-0296.

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**DATES**

**Special Events**

**Saturday, May 13**
- Flea Market Spring Clean up, to benefit Metropolitan Community Church/Nashville and AIDS Southern Kentucky (ASI). MCC, 131 15th Ave North, Nashville. Info 615-320-0296.

**Women’s Dance** May Dance, Laurel Theatre, 1538 Laurel Ave, Knoxville. Set-ups, beer available. $4 admission.
  8pm. Info 615-688-3428.

**Sunday, May 14**
- **MOTHER’S DAY**
  Meeting Planning meeting for Nashville Pride Week.
  1pm. Free. Info 615-297-4293.

**Fundraiser** For Nashville Numbers softball team.
  Shows 10:30pm and midnight. At The Chute, 2535 Franklin Rd, Nashville. Info 615-297-4571.

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**Monday, May 15**
- Meeting Planning meeting for those interested in the Southern Women’s Music and Comedy Festival (begins Friday, May 26). Centennial Park/Sandsbell, off West End Ave at 25th Ave North, Nashville. 6pm. Free. Info 615-292-0113.

- **Consciousness Raising** Black and White Men Together, Memphis. 7:30pm. Free. Info 901-756-1461.


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**Thursday, May 18**
- **Potluck Dinner** Vanderbilt Lambda Association. For Lesbian, gay and bisexual Vanderbilt University students, faculty, staff and alumni. Covered dish. Peabody President’s House, 1801 Edgehill Ave, Nashville. 7pm.
  Free.

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**Saturday, May 20**

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Your nonprofit event can be listed free in Dates. Write to Date, Box 40422, Nashville, TN 37204-0422, or phone 615 320-3270 and leave a message. Please include information about time, location, cost, sponsor, and a contact person's name with address and/or phone number for verification. Deadline noon Tuesday for publication next Friday.
...sodomy law revision

*continued from page 1*

Advance had lobbied legislators throughout the session in an effort to have any mention of homosexual acts stricken from the state criminal code.

The final compromises to the bill were negotiated during a marathon session lasting until 3 a.m., orchestrated by Rep. Tommy Burnett (D-Jamestown). McWherter gave his seal of approval after the bill was okayed in its final form by the House Judiciary Committee.

Taking part in the final negotiating session were Davidson County General Sessions Judge Barbara Haynes, current TSC chair; state Sen. Joe Haynes, the Senate sponsor; Reps. Karen Williams (D-Memphis) and Jimmy Kyle Davis (R-Knoxville), members of the House Judiciary Committee; Billy Stair, a McWherter aide; and Nashville attorney David Raybin, who chaired the TSC when the report was issued last fall.

The governor's blessing, however, did not prevent more grandstanding from members of the legislature who sought to include amendments to certain parts of the bill. Last Thursday, lawmakers were told to make any final changes to ensure quick consideration of the bill.

Lawmakers are scurrying to finish business for their 1989 session before the Memorial Day deadline for adjournment.

*...Levi visit*

*continued from page 1*

With the grassroots organization in Nashville and other cities across the country, Levi said he expects to see significant progress made on issues concerning lesbians and gays in the next five to ten years, but cautioned that for such benefits to occur that the lesbian and gay rights movement needs more of a sense of direction.

"What's been missing is a sense of where we want to go," Levi said. "We can get increments of what we want, but if we don't have a sense of where we want to go, we won't necessarily choose the right increments."*

*...Memphis community center*

*continued from page 1*

A major fundraiser for the center, under the coordination of center treasurer Matthew Presley, is planned for June.

Ken Horton, president of the Memphis Gay Coalition (MGC), was elected president of the community center board.

Astor noted efforts to include a wide representation of the community on the board, and said that the meeting had drawn "lots of brand new faces."

He also said that there was a strong feeling that the board would make the center an "alcohol and controlled-substance-free space."

Many lesbian and gay community centers around the country have such policies. Administrators point to the lack of such spaces in the lesbian and gay community and the need to avoid competition, real or perceived, with nightclubs and bars. Intoxicant-free spaces also allow many centers to provide meeting space under-21 groups.

The center's board will next meet Saturday, June 10.

*...Nashvillians' new show at Vol State*

NASHVILLIANS JUDY ERON and Greg Armbruster's new show The Business of Marriage premiers Thursday, May 18, and runs for eight performances at Volunteer State Community College in Gallatin.

Eron, well-known both as a performer and as a counselor for her support of lesbian and gay issues, said that the show offers something for everyone in its examination of romantic relationships and the strains that day-to-day living places on those relationships.

The musical play looks at "whether children, monthly payments and busy schedules must inevitably erode the romance in marriage."

Armbruster directs Jacque Scarborough and Denny Morice in the lead roles.

Tickets are $5. Evening performances are Thursday, Friday and Saturday, May 18-20 and May 25-27, with Sunday matinees May 21 and 28. For more information, phone (615) 452-4000.

*...Soviet show at Memphis' Circuit*

MEMPHIS' CIRCUIT PLAYHOUSE and Partnership, Inc., will present Theatre Mossoviet's production of My Dear Helena Sergeyevna Wednesday and Thursday, May 31 and June 1.

The show, a Soviet production, is rare in this country because no one involved in the production is American. The performances are just as Moscow audiences would see them.

To help with language problems, a synopsis of the plot will be printed in the program, and a member of the group will answer questions at intermission, with a symposium featuring "People's Artists of the USSR." Theatre Mossoviet artistic director Eugene Lazarev and the company following the show.

The Ludmila Rasumovskaya play, which is critical of the Soviet educational system, stirred controversy when it was first released in 1980, and was banned for two years.

The show runs two performances only. Tickets are $8 for adults and $6 for subscribers, seniors, students and children. For more information phone (901) 726-4656.
The Wounded Spirit: Loving and Healing the Child Within

Weekend workshop at a private resort in the North Georgia mountains for lesbians and gay men who are Co-Dependent, adult children of alcoholics, in recovery, or were raised in a dysfunctional family.

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Issues and answers. And questions.

CAROLE CUNNINGHAM
Staff Writer

A Promise

Jeff Ellis' report on six-month investigation of fulfilling sexual orientation change

by JEFF ELUIS
Managing Editor

"YES SIR, MY NAME IS RICHARD and I have a problem. I have a girlfriend but I have a sexual attraction to men. I've struggled with this by myself for several years, but now I think I need help and a friend said maybe you could help me..."

With those words, spoken into a telephone last January, I became a candidate for change therapy — therapy which ultimately could change my sexual orientation, according to the voice on the other end of the telephone line. If I followed the guidelines, changed my thought patterns and prayed for God's help, I, too, could someday become an ex-gay.

In return, I promised to work to bring about those changes in my life — through individual counseling, selected readings and group therapy.

But now, it is a promise that must be broken.

PROMISE IS THE NAME of the sexual orientation change program administered by the Nashville-based Christian Counseling Services (CCS). Located in an unprepossessing bungalow on Woodland Street in east Nashville, CCS is, according to its brochures, "a two-fold private non-profit ministry offering counseling and social services... supported primarily by the Christian community of Middle Tennessee."

The Promise program is affiliated with Exodus International, a coalition of evangelical ministries across North America, "dedicated to lifting up the ultimate hope of Jesus Christ to those struggling with homosexuality."

"We define homosexuality as romantic and/or sexual involvement with a member of your own sex," a Promise brochure reads. "We do not believe the attraction to the same sex or homosexual orientation is sin. For that orientation is acted upon makes the difference."

CCS serves as the mid-south's primary Christian counseling and social services center dealing with "the sensitive topic of homosexuality," according to the brochure, and reportedly attracts people who travel hundreds of miles for counseling.

During my initial telephone conversation with CCS' executive director, Mike Malloy, we discussed the group's existence — a fact vehemently denied by CCS several months earlier during a conversation with another reporter.

"We don't have a group that's meeting at the present time, but we hope to have one going soon," Malloy told me in January.

In order to become a member of the larger group, I would be required to come for individual counseling for at least six weeks, Malloy said. Later, when the group was actually formed, at least four weeks of individual counseling was required for membership.

The Promise program itself would last for 24 weeks.

"The meetings have a group leader who acts as more of a facilitator than anything else," Malloy said. "Although sometimes other people will, for lack of a better term, come in to teach. The program is somewhat didactic in its approach with some teaching needed because of the time limits."

With those things in mind, we made an appointment to further discuss "Richard's problem." During that time, it would be determined if Richard was right for Promise — and if Promise was right for Richard.

The story I told, as Richard, was one of a young man, currently involved with a woman, who in the past had experienced sexual relations with other men. Now, hoping to marry the young woman, he sought help to eliminate his homosexual tendencies.

THE ANSWER, as a reporter sought, was the lengths to which counselors would go to bring about change. CCS literature states that counseling is offered to individuals, and their families, who "do not wish to act on the same sexual attractions they feel."

"Promise makes a distinct difference between accepting a person with homosexual feelings and desires — that is affirming the person as an individual in God's image — and accepting their homosexual behavior," reads an informational brochure.

Promise acknowledges the variety of theologies, philosophies and theories ranging from total acceptance of the homosexual lifestyle to the 'zap theory' of healing.

"All of these," the brochure states, "will no doubt confuse the individual struggling.

For both Promise and Exodus International, their reason for being is to "help the individual consider all the information and solutions." But do they think change is the answer for everyone with "homosexual tendencies?" Or do they think it possible for someone, anyone, to live a happy life as an openly homosexual person?

The answers, unfortunately, were not as easy as the questions.

"The scripture does speak against homosexual behavior. Some would say it speaks against only certain homosexual behavior. We think not," reads the Promise brochure. "In the midst of personal relationship with God — diligent prayer and study — scriptural and otherwise, we stand on the promise that as individual believers truth will be revealed to us.

"This revelation is personal and it continues..."
Throughout our Christian walk, the freedom we have may not be from the homosexual orientation but from the control of it—from the bondage that so many experience. For some their freedom is more complete.

During the initial counseling session, Malloy listened intently to Richard's story, questioning some statements and gently prodding his client to open up.

It was obvious, even from the very beginning, that Malloy was well-versed in change therapy. He was reassuring and caring, extremely easy to talk to and seemingly open-minded about homosexuality. His way of thinking, homosexuality was not necessarily orientation but rather preference—a preference which could be sublimated, possibly even eliminated, through changing one's thought patterns.

"In this society in which sex is so prevalent, we are often sent conflicting messages about men as sexual beings," he said. "It's okay to see a handsome man and think, 'He's a nice-looking guy.' What's not okay is when you allow yourself to have sexual thoughts about him.

Supposedly that was Richard's problem: too often he allowed his mind to go beyond the thought of "he's a nice-looking guy," to "I want to have sex with him."

THE KEY WAS CONDITIONING the mind not to wander off into dangerous territory. Proper conditioning would allow Richard the opportunity to enjoy heterosexual relations without fear of a homosexual liaison.

By the end of that first meeting, Malloy termed Richard (and me) an ideal candidate for change therapy.

After the initial session, there followed several weeks of individual counseling. Changing thought patterns remained the primary topic, along with discussions of religious faith and the importance of finding a "church home" to facilitate Richard's recovery.

The individual counseling, Malloy said, was necessary to "make sure everyone is appropriate to the group."

Some people, he explained, wouldn't feel comfortable expressing themselves in the midst of a group, while others might be interested in something else entirely. "You can let your mind go on from there."

Apparently, past groups were disrupted by sexual activity among the participants. That issue—sexual activity between clients—was addressed in the Promise group's administrative policies given to participants on April 24.

"SEXUAL ACTIVITY," the policy stated, "is sexual play, erotic overtures, phone sex or actual genital contact is out of order between clients."

If sexual activity did occur, the two parties involved would be excluded from the group meetings for five sessions. Their return would have to be approved by the other members of the group.

"It is strongly recommended that no two members stay overnight with one another," the policy continues. "Be aware of your own vulnerability. If there is such a situation, three or more members should be involved. Separate beds are the rules in such contexts."

To further Richard's therapy, and to help him repel the temptation to indulge in sexual relations with another man, a book entitled You Don't Have to Be Gay was recommended. Written by ex-gay J.A. Konrad, the book's format follows the correspondence of two friends: one ex-gay and another struggling with his homosexuality.

"You Don't Have to Be Gay" is a step-by-step road map to a happy, healthy, fulfilling, heterosexual future—a road map drawn by someone who has been there and came back," reads a blurb on the book's cover.

The book's tone, although designed to be conversational and engrossing, instead seemed didactic and dogmatic to the activist in me, as it sought to pin blame for an individual's homosexuality on parents, environment or peers. "Homosexuality isn't an innate sexual problem but one of gender identity... in order to change... you first ascertain the 'roots' of your homosexuality... Homosexuality is but a symptom... of a disturbed personality which hasn't yet reached its maturity due to unresolved emotional turmoil and needs left unmet in the course of growing up," Konrad writes.

Perhaps surprisingly, in Konrad's scenario blame for a son's homosexuality does not fall upon the mother, but rather says "the greatest single common denominator among gays was a poor relationship with their male parent."

Thus, Konrad continued, "the homosexual condition is itself a deficit in the child's ability to relate to the parent of the same sex which is carried over to members of the same sex in general."

And, perhaps, the promise of change could help a young man to learn how to better relate to other men—a theory which would be put to the test when Richard met the other men of Promise for the first time.

Note: This is the first in a series on sexual orientation change therapy.
Whose traditions?
by CAROLE CUNNINGHAM
Staff Writer

We stumble and are impatient at the least deviation from the ground, yet we claim to be no better. The ground, though it be not in fundamentals, and through our forwardness to suppress, and our backwardness to recover any enthralled piece of truth out of the grip of custom, we care not to keep truth separated from truth, which is the fiercest rent and disunion of all.
—John Milton, Areopagitica

Between ourselves, these are two things that have always been observed to be in singular accord: superstition and thought and seditious conduct.
—Montaigne, _Of Experience_

FROM VETERANS PICKETING an art exhibit in Chicago, featuring an American flag displayed on the ground, to the Ayatollah Khomeini’s death threats against Salman Rushdie for allegedly blaspheming Islam, political and religious orthodoxy have enjoyed a resurgence of unparalleled popularity in the last year. Now a group of Tennesseans hopes to ride on the coattails of this resurrected religious fervor into our bedrooms, bodies, and books under the red-white-and-blue banner of intolerance and hate.

These (by their own accounts) right-minded Tennesseans, like their Islamic counterparts in Iran, have formed a group whose principal aim is to return their country to the “traditional values” upon which they claim it was founded. The Tennessean Coalition for Traditional Values (TCTV) has targeted three areas it hopes to reclaim from the pale and godless grip of “secular humanists.”

TCTV plans to lay siege to pornographers, support of abortion, and those who are willing to accept homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle. Because battling pornography causes little sensation even among secular humanists, the TCTV doubles hopes to buy the legitimacy it needs for the “real” battles ahead involving “family values” by jumping on the anti-pornography bandwagon.

The comparison of TCTV’s strategies to those of the Ayatollah is not a frivolous one. Khomeini, too, believed his country had fallen into the grips of godless humanists with little respect for orthodox religion. Building upon the dissatisfaction of many Iranians with the regime of the Shah — dissatisfaction having more to do with economic and political servitude than with religious disillusionment — the Ayatollah built “a mighty engine for his regime” using the anti-pornography bandwagon.

The composition of TCTV’s strategies are expressed only in editorials. Any views expressed in any advertisement, signed column, letter, article or cartoon are those of the author, artist, speaker or writer, and do not necessarily reflect the positions of Dare, Pyramid Light & Power, staff members or advertisers.

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ARCHIVES

Dare is available on microfilm at the Tennessee State Library and Archives.
Marlene: a drag queen's drag queen


I HAVE BEEN A FAN of Marlene Dietrich movies for a few years now. I don't know exactly what it is about her I like. Of course, her movies with director Josef von Sternberg in the 1930s are visual feasts, but Dietrich herself admits modestly that she played only a marginal role in the artistic success of these. I don't think she's as beautiful as Norma Shearer, Greta Garbo or Gary Cooper. She can't sing (I'm sorry, but it's true). She can act, but her individual performances are less memorable than those of some of her contemporaries. She isn't even politically correct — always idealizing feminine duty, obedience and sacrifice, on screen and off.

She is, however, the only woman ever allowed to attend the Annual Transvestites' Ball in pre-World War II Berlin. That's something.

But I think I like Marlene Dietrich because she is so very German. Her memorable traits are self-contradiction and naive egotism; to me these characteristics are peculiarly "German." She reminds me a little of my Wisconsin and Minnesota German female relatives, especially my late grandmother Ida. She reminds me obliquely of my father, also.

Marlene, her autobiography published in 1987 in German and now in English translation, begins with a remembrance of her childhood. Infatuation with Marguerite Breguand, her French teacher at school, whose company she lost when Germany declared war on France in 1914, but whose image inspired young Marlene throughout the war years. Next, she remembers her mother in touchingly sentimental abstractions ("Perhaps she didn't love, perhaps she was just trustworthy."

It didn't matter. She was there — strong, courageous, full of compassion.) And then her grandmother, a woman of a certain creative energy and vivacity with which, no doubt, Dietrich identifies herself.

THE BOOK IS, in short, a catalog of Dietrich's career as a hero-worshipper. Most of her idols were men whom she regards as mentors, protectors and misjudged geniuses (à la Ayn Rand): most notably von Sternberg, Orson Welles, Ernest Hemingway and, you probably guessed, Burt Bacharach. Nearly every male figure in the book is admired for his being strong, generous and, in one way or another, tragically wronged by selfish moguls and an uncomprehending public.

The eulogistic tone of the book is reminiscent of the positivism of old Hollywood films. And her writing style reminds one especially of 1940s women's pictures. She casts herself variously as a "little girl lost" (in search of her male "Rock of Gibraltar") or as a "lioness" (ferociously protective of her wounded heroes).

In all this, Dietrich's weakness is delineating character. Particularly weak is the distinction between her many heroic benefactors. Von Sternberg, when he is directly quoted, talks ex-actually like Nat King Cole, who, in turn, talks like General Omar Bradley. In fact, all of her characters, male characters especially, sound amazingly like Dietrich herself, who has so thoroughly mythologized her life as to make herself and her world virtually indistinguishable. That, too, in a society that is almost entirely other-directed, becomes something to like about her.

Ever opinionated, Dietrich criticizes her foes with Teutonic gusto. The result is usually fun, as when she talks about her "Blue Angel" star's predilection for women with broad asses ("Despite my baby fat, I've never had a prepossessing posterior... Nevertheless, my rear seemed pretty round to me. But probably not enough so for Emil Jannings"). Her acid comments about Jimmy Stewart, John Wayne, Bruce Cabot and Fritz Lang are likewise amusing, and significant. As with her heroes, the persons on Dietrich's shit list have common characteristics: Incompetent, arrogant and undeserving of their success and fortune, they are the opposite of "genius."

BE IT NEVER forgotten, though, this book is preeminently about Marlene Dietrich herself — or, perhaps I should say, "Marlene Dietrich.

Following an overly long digression about another performer (it is a short paragraph), Dietrich remarks simply and impatiently, "Now to get back to me." She is always getting back to herself in this book, even when she hasn't ever really strayed from the subject. She portrays herself as a simple, sometimes clownish, and sublimely decent human being. Thank god, her modesty is more apparent than real. She remembers every word of praise anyone ever gave her and habitually (and exhaus-tively) quotes the nice things other people have said about her.

She states her opinions about diverse subjects (American women can't cook, all Air Force doctors are handsome and smoking doesn't cause cancer, just three that come to mind) as if they could be proved scientifically, and she is ever quick to remind the reader that this autobiography was written by no upstart dummy.

Her world embraces Immanuel Kant and Danny Thomas — both heroes accorded the same status in her book. And in her world, she is no mere celluloid goddess, but rather an existential hero, with feet planted in the soil and head raised daringly amid the stars. It is she, not Hitler, that Wagner was all about, after all. A little ridiculous, yes! (Germans are born with Original Kitsch), but in her book Dietrich portrays herself as the ideal German—stubborn and passive by turns, intellectual and superstitious by turns, passionate and sentimental by turns, patriarchal and subjective by turns and, even while denying it, dizzyly and archly theatrical.

A drag queen's drag queen, thank you.

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• GWM to share luxury townhouse near St. Thomas with same. Private bath, extras. $300. 615-296-5261. Available June.

• 32-year-old professional GWM new to Nashville and available. Loves to grow and experience joy who enjoys the unusual.

• 30-year-old enlightened gay male seeks one who is courageously sensitive for emotional involvement. A radical soul living in a reactionary world, idealistic, willing to grow and experience joy who enjoys the unusual. A seeker of bliss. DARE DRAWER 37.

• 27-year-old female looking to share friendly, quiet, casual atmosphere as main tenant. $300, 615-298-2422.

• Mr. Fatty: 32-year-old professional GWM to share luxury townhouse near St. Thomas, for sharing. Seeks friendship, possible relationship with gay life. Enjoys dining out, theater, reading, quiet time for sharing. Seeks friendship, possible relationship with gay life. Enjoy reading, quiet time for sharing. Seeks friendship, possible relationship with gay life. Enjoys dining out, theater, reading, quiet time

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Personals

• Mr. Fatty: Twenty months of bliss Monday! Here’s to twenty more and twenty more and... Love, Lord Gargantua.

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Travel

•好友，享受美食。

• Travel: 200 acres country elegance, optional. The South’s finest gay men’s resort. Rte 11, oriented Journalism, and 269-3285 9 years of professional experience.

• Comes in different sizes of two-week periods . . . . . . •

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