

Northern Lambda Nord Communiqué

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▼ THE MAINE LESBIAN AND GAYMEN'S SYMPOSIUM XI - Reports

Thirteen gay people from northern Maine and New Brunswick were present for all or part of the Maine Symposium XI at the University of Maine at Orono, March 23-25, 1984. Here are written reports of just a few of them.

▼ REPORT THE FIRST, by Ben

I wasn't sure what to expect of my first symposium, but I felt pleasantly surprised. It was good to see familiar faces and then to meet the people behind the names I've seen and read or heard about, e.g., Richard Steinman and Marty Sabol. I was somewhat put off by the lackadaisical running of the symposium, e.g., things not starting on time, but I suppose I'm too used to scientific meetings which run much more on schedule. The opening address by Diane Elze was outstanding, and Dr. Steinman found it indeed a hard act to follow with some interesting, but in comparison, seemingly inconsequential remarks.

The workshops I attended were genuine eye-openers. Again and again I heard wrenching tales of barriers and obstacles, real and imaginary, one had had to overcome; hostility met; nightmare stories of people who got such negative reactions when they first came out that they were set back, in one case for as much as three years; and again and again the great difficulty of meeting anyone else gay in Maine. (All these stories just brought home with great force to me how much of a "non-happening" my coming out has been and what a terrific support group I found in NLN.) I feel there was a genuine lack of communication about schedule changes of the workshops and about when the movies were to be shown. (Consequently, I missed all showings of the movies.) The dances were certainly different. They were the first ones I've been to.

To have so many people participate in such a symposium was a great surprise. I'll go back again.

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After graduating from the University of Maine in 1950, I could not have prophesied that nearly 34 years later I would be asked to write about my impressions of a Maine Lesbian and Gaymen's Symposium held in Memorial Union Building. But then, that was before Sputnik and the moon walk, and even television had not come to Maine. It did not occur to me after all those dancing classes taken in the physical education department and the balls attended, that ever a day would come when I could dance with other guys with hardly an eyebrow raised. It also did not occur to this native of Aroostook County that he would earn a doctorate at New York University and become well-acquainted with Christopher Street and later, the gay scenes of London, Paris, Frankfurt, Rome, Cairo and Capetown as well as the Caribbean.

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It has occurred to me, though, that whatever I wrote would be meaningful only if the reader had the foregoing biographical data. It provides the perspective from which I write and hopefully a better understanding. This conclusion was reached on the basis of my understanding of several remarks made at the gaymen's wrap-up session on Sunday morning. I can only report what seemed to be the substance of these remarks because I did not take verbatim notes and don't know the individuals who spoke. Some biographical data might have made my interpretation different and possibly some of the recommendations for future symposia changed.

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At that final session, I was particularly aware of one intense, dark, curly-haired young man who arrived after the rest of us. He placed a chair directly in front of me and plumped himself into it. Just previously the group had widened the circle to make sure that my heavy chair against the wall was included in the group. Ho, ho, I thought, this aggressive young man is going to have something to say and someone else is going to cut him down to size! Which is exactly what happened, although not in the manner expected.

We were all given a turn, one after the other, to say anything we wished. As it turned out, some of these postmortems were not even connected or even related to the organization and programming of the conference although many were.

Even with his back turned, the guy in front of me had an attractive profile, I thought, so I listened as he turned his head from side to side while he impassioned against "straights" who stereotype gays and "limp-wristed pansies." He, for one, didn't wish to be identified as one. The

implications were enormous and the response was swift. A much taller, well-developed blond with an earring flashing sparks replied in menacing tones, "And what about limp-wristed pansies?" Indeed, what about them?

A third gentleman with his torso submerged in a deep chair and his legs sprawled on the coffee table made me feel slightly guilty as he criticized the large numbers of us who attended the two dances but weren't around for the workshops. He would have preferred to have an opportunity to meet the dancers rather than "watch their wiggling asses on the dance floor!" Someone behind him in a cool, calm and well-modulated voice informed us that many people had to work Saturday afternoon and only had the evenings free. Those of us from the rural areas who had no other time to visit the shopping mall remained quiet!

Obviously the committee had to work within a very limited time frame and, given that severe handicap, there is no way that the needs of all the participants could be met to their satisfaction. It is clear, though, that the dances were popular, as they were extremely well-attended. The two keynote speeches were also well-attended. I admit to a certain bias, since she is a fellow alumni, but I was proud of the first keynote speaker, the substance of her address, and the manner in which she delivered it. I was delighted with the standing ovation she received, and later I could even forgive her for holding a tape recorder in my face while asking how old I was. The second speaker gave a most interesting report of his research into the gay movement during a recent sabbatical. I would have been more alert and attentive if the audience had an opportunity to get up and stretch between the two speeches.

In future symposia, I suggest that the dances and the keynote speeches be retained because of their general popularity. Perhaps a topic for one of the workshops could be an exploration of the different ways in which gays express themselves and perhaps we could all learn to be more tolerant without embarrassing each other. To meet the needs of those who would like time for shopping, perhaps there could be an afternoon when no workshops would be scheduled. A suggestion would be for an extra day which should be possible on a three-day holiday weekend such as Memorial Day or Labor Day. Another possibility would be to have a symposium in an area where there are no city distractions. I once attended a workshop on a secluded estate outside West Berlin where for several days we did not leave the

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'grounds either for sleeping or eating. That would be one way to provide unlimited opportunities for symposium participants to get to know one another.

Our friends on the Orono campus and in the Bangor area who spent so much time organizing the symposium deserve much credit considering the restraints under which they operated. I was very pleased that some of the UMO students found time to chat with me and I hope our paths will cross again. I hope, as a member of Northern Lambda Nord, I can be of help in future symposia.

▼ REPORT THE LAST, by Dick

It's been over a week since I returned from Orono and the eleventh annual statewide gathering. This was the seventh time I attended. The first one, Symposium V, was also in Orono. I was living in Boston at the time and was contemplating a move to Maine. I saw an advertisement for the Symposium in Gay Community News and thought, "this would be a good way to meet some gay people in Maine." And I did. I became best of friends with a man who I still see whenever possible.

Since my first Symposium in 1978, that's been a primary reason for my participation -- to meet new people and to become friends with at least a few. And this year was no exception. There's that cute man from UMO who I hope to see again. And I got to spend some time with two men who came from Saint John, members of the gay group there. And there was that tall, dark man from Portland whom I'd seen at previous symposia but never spoke to. Until this year. I also spent some time with friends of past years. But it never seems enough time.

It's the people that draw me to this annual event. That's why I look forward to it so much. It's not that I don't like my friends from Aroostook, but when given the choice of dining out in Bangor with Lambs or with people I've yet to meet, it's the new potential friendships I want.

It would be nice if the Symposium lasted longer. Sunday came too fast. I was just getting the chance to talk with people. So much is put into one full day of workshops. Opportunities for socializing are so important. That's how networks are built.

There was one workshop I enjoyed. It was a discussion among people who had been out for a while and what they're going through now. Between 50 and 60 people sat on the floor of a small, carpeted room. We went around the room, each

person introducing herself or himself, saying how long they've been out (most from 5-15 years) and an incident that's happened, a problem they find they're facing, the joys they've experienced since being out. The time was too short and some participants met a second time that day. I think this is a good workshop which should be an annual event. Perhaps it could be a topic for local discussion at a Lambda gathering.

I counted 13 people from the County and western NB -- plus four members of FLAG/Fredericton and those two men from Saint John. It's too bad more Lambs were not in attendance. Orono is as close as the Symposium gets. Next spring's gathering, our twelfth, is slated for Portland. But the suggestion was made by a Portland man that perhaps NLN could host a future Symposium, perhaps number 13 in 1986. I'm excited by the possibility. I think it could be done with two years' planning -- a combined Maine/Maritime gathering in Aroostook County! Rather than us going to the Symposium, why not bring the Symposium to us?!

Finally, one other event that weekend I enjoyed was talking with Diane Elze, who interviewed several Lambs, plus members of FLAG and LAGO/Saint John for OUR PAPER. The interview should appear in the May issue.



Pensée du mois
'Thought' of the
month

▼ THE GRANT IS IN!

Through the diligence of Ben, Northern Lambda Nord has submitted a grant application to the Chicago Resource Center. The amount of the grant request is nearly \$21,000. Money would be earmarked for purchasing office equipment, including a photocopier, electronic stencil cutter, fire-proof safe and fire-proof filing cabinets, plus miscellaneous office supplies (paper, envelopes, etcetera); money to purchase recreation equipment for NLN, including croquet set, volleyball, badminton, horseshoes, tents and other camping equipment, etcetera; funds to pay for transportation to bring speakers to our area from Boston and New York, for example; plus money to send representatives from Lambda to conferences in Canada and the US; funds to purchase video tapes and player; funds to purchase books for both Bibliothèque Lambda and books to be

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donated to local libraries, all lesbian/gay titles; money to purchase food to donate to the needy at Thanksgiving and to buy toys for children at Christmas. Ben feels that our chances are very good -- we should receive some money from Chicago. The grants are funded by a generous philanthropist who has earmarked money to go to gay and lesbian groups and projects. Most grants have totaled from \$5000 to \$20,000 for both general operating expenses of groups and specifics such as the National Gay Task Force AIDS Hotline (an 800 number). If Chicago needs more information, they will either request it in writing or send a representative to visit us. We should know if we receive money by June 15. Let's keep our collective fingers crossed!

▼ TAKE LAMBDA OFF YOUR TAX RETURN

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Part of the requirement of the grant application was that NLN become a non-profit organization in the US. As such, we may collect monies and you who donate to Lambda may deduct the amount on your tax return. We already have received non-profit status in the State of Maine; we await the response from the US federal people in Washington DC. This status will affect only US people (sorry, Canadians) and will affect your next year's tax return (filed in April, 1985 for the year 1984). So, from now on, if you want to save it, obtain and keep receipts of any monies you pay to Lambda in either the form of memberships or of donations into the can. (Does anyone have a receipt book we may use?) We'll remind you again in January 1985 before tax time.

▼ WINTER CARNIVAL UPDATE

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This concerns the refusal of the Caribou Chamber of Commerce to accept advertising from NLN in the 1984 Winter Carnival booklet, though they did accept our ad in 1983. In February, the Maine Civil Liberties Union was contacted in order to determine if there were any way we could obtain access to advertising in the Caribou booklet. (Their refusal has set a precedent - all other local events with booklets may feel they can refuse our ads). The MCLU responded April 4: "Privately-owned organizations or businesses, such as the local newspaper, have the right to refuse any advertising they wish to. However, once public monies become part of an organization's funding source, there is state involvement, and this prevents the organization from discriminating against advertisers...The Caribou Chamber of Commerce receives...about one-third of (their) funding...from (the City of) Caribou." The MCLU will now obtain the services of what they refer to as a "cooperating

attorney" ("there are very few...in Aroostook County") who will review the case and recommend for or against legal action. "If the decision is to proceed, the client is asked to help with legal expenses, if it is financially possible. There are no attorney's fees." Once the cooperating attorney makes a recommendation, and if it is to proceed, it will be up to the membership to decide what we are to do. The attorney's recommendation may be made by the end of April. If so, it's important that you attend the April 29th meeting in Presque Isle so that this may be discussed.

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▼ CANOE TRIP PLANNED BY FLAG

Two members of FLAG are offering a white-water trip down 50 km of the most scenic part of the St-Croix River on the Maine-NB border, May 18-21 (Victoria Day weekend). They will gather at the dam in Vanceboro where an informal clinic will be held for those unfamiliar with canoe handling in fast-water conditions. No previous experience is necessary; however, some knowledge of lightweight camping techniques is recommended. In case the water level is too low or there is insufficient interest in the white-water trip, an alternate trip may be made up the Spednic Lake, from the same dam location. An application fee of \$20 is requested. Deadline is April 30. If you are interested, call the FLAGline today (506/457-2156); they will provide you with who you can contact for full details including suggested equipment listing and white-water techniques instruction booklet. DON'T DELAY!

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▼ NOUVELLES EN BREF ° NEWS BRIEFS ° NOUVELLES EN BREF ° NEWS BRIEFS

▼ PORTLAND, Maine - A US District judge ruled April 3 that Diane Matthews, the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps member who was "disenrolled" in 1981 for declaring her lesbianism, must be reinstated. In a 41-page decision, Magistrate Hornby wrote that Diane's ouster "as a result of her declaration of homosexuality without any evidence of homosexual conduct" did violate her First Amendment rights to freedom of expression, which she had alleged in her suit. In what is believed to be the first ruling on a federal level to clearly state that homosexual status alone is not sufficient grounds for military discharge, the magistrate also commented that a military regulation which allows the discharge of persons with "homosexual propensity" is unconstitutional because it violates the right to freedom of expression. At issue is a

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soldier's right to identify as gay. Military attorneys who appeared in court "even went so far as to say on record that homosexuals, as long as they are totally closeted, can be just as good soldiers as heterosexuals," according to Diane's Maine Civil Liberties Union attorney. The Army has 30 days to file an appeal. (This was the case for which NLN collected funds last year.) (from Gay Community News)

▼ **PORTLAND, Maine** - The Portland-based Take Back the Night Coalition, a group of women concerned about the far-reaching problem of violence against women, is organizing a Take Back the Night Event for June 2 and 3. A day of workshops focusing on the political, social, psychological, economic, and legal aspects of violence against women will culminate in an evening march through this city. For many years, women have participated in nighttime marches as a way of expressing and reclaiming their right to walk in the night, free from fear and threats of violence and harassment. The weekend event will also include films, an art exhibit, women's theatre and dance, a rally, music, and a Sunday morning breakfast. Workshops will be in Luther Bonney Hall at the University of Southern Maine/Portland. Child care is available; interpreters for hearing-impaired will be present. The organizers wish to hear from women around Maine and the region who would like to offer workshops, and from men who are interested in offering workshops for men. Anyone who can help in these or any of the many other tasks for this event, call Marilyn (773-3333) or Merrie (761-1549) or write: Take Back the Night Coalition, c/o N.O.W., POB 5195, Station A, Portland, 04101.

▼ GUIDE GAI ▼ GAY GUIDE ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼ ▼

▼ **FREDERICTON: FLAG**, POB 1556, Sta.A., E3B 5G2; FLAGline.- 506/457-2156

▼ **CRONO: Wilde-Stein Club**, Memorial Union, Univ. of Maine; meets Sundays, 7 pm, Peabody Lounge, 3rd floor, Memorial Union

▼ **SAINT JOHN: LAGO-SJ**, POB 6494, Sta.A., E2L 4R9

▼ **MONCTON: Gais et Lesbiennes de Moncton**, CP 7102, Riverview E1B 1V0

▼ **HALIFAX: Gay Alliance for Equality**, Box 3611, South Postal Station, B3J 3K6; 902/429-6969, M,T,W, 7-9pm & Th,F,Sat, 7-10pm

▼ **WEBWORK: women's correspondence club**, New England and the Maritimes - Box 131-N, Calais, Maine 04619

▼ **MAINE LESBIAN FEMINISTS: POB 125, Belfast 04915**

▼ **NORTHERN MAINE AND NEW BRUNSWICK: NLN**, CP/POB 990, Caribou, Maine 04736 - Télégai/Gay Phoneline: 207/896-5888
Wednesday/mercredi, 7-9 pm (Eastern time/Heure de l'est)

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