

Homosexuals are people just like the rest of us

The Gay Support Group

Just as you thought we had receded back into the closet, here we are again. I almost regret bringing up the subject, knowing how a majority of you are frightened by the implications of such an article. The fact of the matter is, the Gay Support Group is not alive and well. (I hope you don't find that amusing.) The reason for this group's inactivity is not because of a lack of eligible people, but rather because those of you who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, ambisexual, or just plain *oversexual* are too scared to join. I would venture to say that most students misunderstand the purpose and people that make up the Gay Support Group. Part of the misunderstanding is because of thick skulls and closed minds, and the other part is because we have not been clear enough in describing the purpose or methodology of joining the GSG. In this article, I hope to address those issues I feel have made the GSG ineffective, and let you know that they stand corrected.

Like many groups of Davidson students, the GSG has to define itself in terms of what it is *not*. The GSG is not a way to find good sex, or any sex at all for that matter. I want to clear up that misconception (pardon the pun) right away. It is not a secret society (imagine a *homo* fraternity) which sits around for days and weeks discussing possible additions and deciding on the fate of some poor confused soul. It is not a group which has power (I'm talking about the power of blackmail), despite everyone's mutual knowledge of the others' sexual preferences. You see, those of us in the group know that if we break the confidence of other members of the group, our own asses get put on the line. We've never thrown anyone out of their closet. Lastly the GSG is not a group in which you will receive a label. In talking to other students, I find this to be the most common fear: being labeled as *gay*, branded for life, looked at funny-like by those few who really know. Absurd. This is the farthest thing from any of our minds. Why would we (as a group or individually) who have our own sexual preferences, confusion, and troubles, try to pin down *exactly* what kind

of person you are? It can't be done, and it doesn't make sense.

Homosexuality is a weird thing, no doubt about it. How could some of us feel so natural in a situation that makes many people nauseated? The answer is... *who knows?* A corollary to that answer is... *who cares?* Actually, a lot of us care, especially those of us who are particularly spiritually oriented. It is not easy to resolve one's religious faith with one's sexual feelings. It may not even be possible or right to do so. But in the end, sometimes people of our age just don't have a grasp on what sex they prefer. Regardless of our spiritual wishful thinking, *sex* is often an end in and of itself, consuming *lots* of our mental free time. Sometimes people mistake love for physical lust. The subsequent arousal may be a homosexual tendency, or it may just be a false feeling that, if followed through, would be embarrassing and devastating. Our feelings aren't always truthful to us, and our minds must constantly analyze our feelings to give some direction to them. Homo- or heterosexuality is, to college-age people, often a matter of choice. Because of a shyness or upbringing, getting close to individuals of the same sex may be easier than approaching the opposite sex. My point is that all of us in the GSG are very much like you. Our emotions and hormones and minds send us in a hundred directions at once. Some of us have made decisions, others haven't. And still others are stable now, but may change their minds in graduate school. The group provides the support of knowing each other's pain and indecision, providing a structure of belief, trust, and non-judgement. We simply accept you as you are.

Regardless of how comfortable you are with your homosexual tendencies—if you have ever had a homosexual experience which you just can't seem to condemn yourself for, or if you hate your homosexuality and want to defeat it by bringing it into the open away from your mind's eye, if you want to try to establish a relationship, or if you just want to know that people like yourself exist, then you may want to join the GSG. The common denominator for actually joining the group is a *very* serious commitment to yourself to be open-minded and compassionate regarding your co-members' problems, preferences, and feelings; and to respect everyone's right to privacy. The group should be a way to make friends with people you *know* will

understand—not necessarily agree with—but simply understand. Relationships are important, and I hope that the GSG can become a way to foster good relationships. Don't be shocked at that. What are singles bars for? What are many Patterson Court parties for—with names that include words like "obsession," "lust," etc? There's nothing wrong with having a place that is good and clean and healthy to establish a friendship that may satisfy a real need.

If you wish to write to the GSG and cuss us out, forget it. Please don't waste your time. If, however, you want to have more information, a reassuring word, a little advice, or to join the group, then I encourage you to write us. The GSG's address is P.O. Box 135, Davidson. Only one member of the group opens mail and reads letters. Your name (which, by the way, I hope you have the courage to include) is kept in complete confidentiality through one correspondence. After the one person who opens mail receives from you a second correspondence, that person will, with your approval, give you the name of another person (or persons) in the group to whom you might feel comfortable speaking. With your approval, the mail-reader will also give your name to that other GSG member. You, however, must always take the initiative.

Sure, it's scary, but your feelings are important, and you will feel much better if you simply take a deep breath and open up. Don't bother us with unsigned letters, secret hiding places for responses, and other such paranoia. I repeat, only one person opens letters, and only one person responds to you. If you respond positively, then we all know each other and are better for it. No administration or staff are involved unless requested for counseling purposes. If you are a member of the faculty or staff and actually want to *join* the group, however, we'll be happy to have you. The same procedure applies to you as to students.

Finally, we ask that you include in your letter a simple sentence demanding our confidentiality and willingness for an open mind and promising yours. This is for your own as well as our benefit. Just as the Honor Code protects our academic freedom, so may this pledge remind us of the responsibility which joining the group demands. I look forward to hearing from those of you who wish to write.

The author's name has been withheld upon request.

For Southern Conference and Davidson, it may be too late

Chris Geis

(Editor's note: this article appeared in the January 21 edition of The Western Carolinian, the student newspaper of Western Carolinian University, and is reprinted with permission of the author.)

The suburban sprawl that is engulfing the Charlotte area and crawling up the interstate freeways into once peaceful communities has yet to creep far enough north of the central city and into this small college town in northern Mecklenburg County. While the plastic coverings of the New South can be seen in the ever-growing steel-and-glass skyline of downtown Charlotte, 20 miles to the south, and on the shores of nearby Lake Norman in condominiums that are the emblem of a new, emerging metropolis, Davidson, has, for the most part, remained free of such cursory growth.

White American colonial style homes line a quiet Main Street here, and big oak trees stand proudly and make the town even more beautiful three of four seasons a year. There is a traditional Jeffersonian flavor to the town, and no wonder: The town is wrapped around the campus of Davidson College, which Jefferson himself would have been proud to see thriving in this time of quick-fix and desultory higher education.

And like the town of Davidson itself, Davidson College remains impervious to the upheaving of tradition around it. The students of this liberal arts college of 1,400 still study and live by the honor system, taking unproctored exams and walking in and out of the library without book-detecting devices that assume the worst in people. The students here still are asked to think and to study: the philosophies, the histories, the literatures and such. Admissions standards remain high—the average college board score of an incoming freshman is 1,230—despite the growing popularity of the school. Old buildings and trees

are not just carelessly disposed of to make room for new parking lots or athletic complexes, although a new and long overdue basketball arena that will seat 6,500 will open on campus in less than two years.

These are heady times for Davidson. The school has produced two of the last three governors in North Carolina and five current Congressmen. (Seeing Governor Jim Martin cheer for the Wildcats at the Southern Conference basketball tournament each year is always a sight.) The college continues to produce an inordinate amount of the region's attorneys and doctors. And yet the school's athletic program is also enjoying success. The basketball team has won 20 games each of the last two years and in 1986 won the Southern Conference tournament championship and played in an NCAA tournament game at the Charlotte Coliseum. The baseball team has won 20 games for three straight seasons, and the tennis and soccer teams are doing well, too. In fact, the only blot on the school's athletic ledger is the football team. It is, however, a big blot: Davidson has won just one football game in three years and only five in the last five years.

The reason for this lack of success in football is simple.

The school prefers not to give athletic scholarships to the 50 or 60 players needed to be competitive, and the school feels that since it is not competitive with larger, state-supported schools like Appalachian State, it should not play in the Southern Conference. Because of this adamant stance by the college's board of trustees, the football program is a laughingstock. It is also the reason that, come June, Davidson will leave the Southern Conference after 52 years. It is a divorce that Davidson does not want, but it is one that, the school believes, must come before the school is forced to compromise its academic ideals. The board of trustees believes that giving scholarships to a football team would put too many of its students—about 10 percent of an 830-member male student body—on athletic scholarship, and that is something it will just not have. (Basketball players do receive athletic scholarships.)

On the other hand, Davidson's refusal to play for the conference football championship since 1974 is something the Southern Conference will not have, either, and it has

See CONFERENCE, p. 11

Opinions Policy

The Davidsonian welcomes letters and commentaries from its readers. The editors will attempt to print all opinions that adhere to the following guidelines:

- All submissions should deal with subjects of interest to the campus community.
- Submissions must be neatly typed or legibly hand-written. The editors will also accept work submitted on 5.25" or 3.5" IBM-formatted diskettes (and, truth be told, we're partial to them).
- All letters must be submitted by 7 p.m. on the Sunday before the expected publication date.
- All commentaries must be submitted by 7 p.m. on the Saturday before the expected publication date, except for those on diskette, which are due at 7:07 p.m. Sunday.
- All submissions must be signed. Writers must present the

editors with compelling reasons if they do not wish their names printed with their work.

- The staff will not edit commentaries for content or for style, but for the rules of English grammar only.
- Letters should be under 300 words in length. The editors reserve the right to edit and/or condense any letter.
- The editors reserve the right not to print submissions which contain factual errors, advertisements, or objectionable material, or which represent a viewpoint very similar to other letters printed dealing with the same topic.
- All submissions should include the author's address and phone number. Submissions to the "Commentaries" section should include the following information: the author's home city and state, graduating class, and major field of study (or profession).