

BOY LOVE IN THE FACE OF PAEDOPHOBIA AND A.I.D.S.

by Jim Kepner

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I feel like one of those heterosexual authority figures who used to speak at our homophile organizations' conventions back in the 1950's -- to give us a half-assed seal of approval. I resented them -- and their regular references to their wives to prove their normality -- and I feel uneasy in that position now. I am an androphile rather than a pedophile. I think you would best have speakers here who advocated their own cause, but since your cause, like the American homophile movement 30 years ago, needs allies, I speak in that role -- with apologies to those who heard me say parts of this in 1984.

straight boys at least,

I don't happen to be attracted to boys as such -- which is **not** to say I've never found a boy attractive, or ever, since my adulthood, had sex with one. Boys are more likely to turn me off. In two of the three times when young boys chased me, I backed off fast, unready to face the extra risk and responsibility of entangling my emotions with some one else's tumultuous passage through the rapids of determining whether they ~~are~~ are gay or not -- just as I've rarely wanted relations with men who didn't consider themselves gay. I somewhat came to fear relations with boys, not fearing the boys so much as the social consequences of such a relationship being discovered, and that type of paedophobia -- that worry about how boy love might ruin our reputation, and a fear that sex is inherently damaging to teen-agers -- has since become epidemic in the gay movement, fed by the fallout from the recent McMartin witchhunt.

If I'm not a boy-lover, I am personally somewhat the reverse of one: I was a boy who tried, from age 4 to 16, to seduce men without understanding what I wanted of them, except to nestle in their strength, to **hug**, to share secrets, to become their younger brother. And as my body aged, I still mostly desire the types of men I yearned for in childhood, trim virile men, 20-35. Nowadays, such men are well my juniors -- but that's not how my mind's eye sees them. I half want to be a boy to them, but **I** also see myself as I am, aging, overweight, balding, wearing a colostomy bag on my side. I know I won't get that kind of relationship. But **part** of me is still 8, 12 or 16 years old. I couldn't relate to them as a small boy, even if they were willing. But unlike some of my gay brothers and sisters, I can't be shocked by the intergenerational love I once so desperately wanted.

Why didn't I get what I wanted? Long after I came out, I was bitter that all the men who'd approached me seductively had backed off, recognizing perhaps that I wasn't quite ready -- and **many boys out there who are half looking for it, aren't quite ready.** I urge each of you to give this that great care that my old friend and boy-lover Manuel Boyfrank did. I wanted a loving guide. If a man had come on to me sexually (one half did), it could have scared me badly. Hungry for affection, I would have been frightened by getting fucked or blown. Even after a year of reading about homosexuality and hunting San Francisco's night streets, I was half put-off by my first sexual wrestling. Some boys who want it but aren't quite ready, can be deadly dangerous, as many of you have learned to your sorrow. It's not always just guilt -- it wasn't with me. Not all boys are firecrackers waiting for a chance to blow, and for their well-being and your

safety you **must** be able to tell the difference.

Some gay friends of mine in the 50's had a fix on sailors. If they saw me within a mile of one, they assumed I was out for seafood, as they were. I could not convince them that if I found a sailor attractive, it wasn't just **because** he was a sailor, though the old uniforms certainly flattered some men. For me, it was the man more than the uniform. I could like young or old, blond or brunette, hairy or smooth, rough or refined. If I had any taste, it was wide-ranging and fairly unpredictable.

I had friends whose tastes **were** specific -- but I didn't regard boy lovers as being especially distinct from gays in general -- or somehow reprehensible -- any more than I did those who liked only hairy men, or sailors, blonds or men with smelly feet. I don't think many gays 30 years ago put these varied tastes in separate boxes; except where some tastes left the individual, and perhaps his love objects and associates, open to added dangers. I hadn't covered gay news for long before I'd noticed that those who sought sex with boys, rough trade or in public johns, often walked a narrow and dangerous path. I collected countless clippings about clergy and scoutmasters in trouble over boys -- and I helped bail out a few such locally. Needless to say, the trouble rarely was raised by the boys, but one wondered how often those who got into such trouble were partly responsible for the messes they got into. But because the police harassment and public bias which all gays then suffered from seemed to land most frequently on those in these categories, much of our concern used to focus in these areas, seen by most homophile activists as the frontline of our battle for freedom.

Several chief pioneer European homophile groups were strongly concerned with boy lovers' needs and pushed hard for step-by-step lowering of age-of-consent laws -- and might today be subject to exclusion from some of our Gay Pride events here in the states. These included Der Eigene, the first openly gay group known in Germany, which lasted from 1896 until the Nazi takeover, Zurich's Der Kreis, 1933-68, and the Netherlands' Cultuur-ent Ontspanning Centrum, from 1945 on. I don't want to falsify our history though. The homophile movement has not been free of paedophobia. A Mattachine founder shocked persons many at an all-too-shockable 1953 Mattachine Convention by bringing in a Marine he was suspected (mistakenly) of having just picked up on the street, and an Oakland Mattachine officer later was ousted for having an affair with a 16-year-old -- but I recall little moral objection to either person's sexual choice, rather a feeling that, by bringing an especially dangerous liason **into the group**, they threatened group security.

I was heavily involved with America's first open gay publication, ONE Magazine for several years, and while I wrote a few snide remarks about people whose habits differed somehow from mine, and involved them in higher risk, my news reports covered such stories regularly enough that some readers reacted with sharp distaste. But their objection was with the news focus on arrests, suicides, fag bashings, raids -- instead of positive news -- which was in short supply back in those days.

Because ONE could not legally **advocate** homosexuality as a way of life until well after the Supreme Court cleared ONE Magazine's of obscenity in 1958, and because we knew that state officials of the National Association for the

Advancement of Colored People had been prosecuted in Louisiana for contributing-to-the-delinquency-of-minors by giving out voting rights information near High Schools, we reluctantly followed the unanimous advice of attorneys during the 50's to refuse even to **counsel** any minor. We knew from our own experience how critically these young people needed the advice and empathy which few other than ourselves were likely then to give -- but our lawyers said that a single case of helping a minor, which would be interpreted as trying to convert or seduce them, would destroy our whole movement. And our movement was small enough then to have been knocked out with one or two blows.

Still, I wrote a Jan 59 ONE Magazine Editorial saying we must ultimately abandon this "safe" position and face our responsibility to young gays, shaking off our fear of being called child molesters:

We started our gay studies classes after two priests came from Chi. This

"Having always felt bound to avoid the charge of influencing minors, we recently cancelled the subscription of a reader we found to be under 21 (though an overseas vet). Legally, we had no choice, but morally? ONE's aim is to help society understand homosexuality and to give encouragement, sympathy and direction to homophiles who are frightened, confused or ill-informed. Thousands of boys and girls of 14 to 16 are fully homosexual (not counting those supposedly going through a phase) and are making advances to others of their age or older. It's those young ones who most critically need and often ask for guidance. We have answers that can help them. It seems criminally irresponsible to tell them 'Go away. Come back after you're 21' -- after you've been crippled by needless fears, guilts, rootlessness and resentments. Homosexuals aren't born guilt-ridden and fearful. These are attitudes too many learn during the painful years after self-discovery, facing society's withering rejection without guidance or sympathy. Must we keep turning away our own kind to avoid proselytizing charges? We're not after converts. No arguments or blandishments we might offer could really convert any heterosexual. We can't even hog-tie those who are now homosexual but who may later want to try changing.

"We are concerned solely with youths who are homosexual and know it, who couldn't get out of gay life if they wanted to. We want to help them choose the best in that way of life. A little understanding at the right time can encourage development of stable, healthy personalities. Lacking guidance, too many fall into bad company or the law's toils, ruined before they are old enough legally to seek the sort of advice that applies. As the Church of England wisely noted, ordinary platitude-dispensers are useless or harmful. Young homophiles need advice from someone who knows their problems. I was once shocked by a Lesbian friend saying 'I wish some kindly older homosexual had come along when I was a messed-up kid and taught me lessons I had to learn the hard way.' Sooner or later, we must claim the right to aid our own kind -- at an age when help can help."

Many of our readers and staff found this editorial disturbing, but we printed many later features favoring boy love, including articles by Monwell Boyfrank and by Mario Palmieri, designer of the Messina Straits bridge to join Italy and Sicily.

At the second National Conference of Homophile Organizations in 1966 in

San Francisco, it became evident that what was expediency for some of us [that we couldn't **risk** dealing with minors] was passionate conviction with others, who felt it would be wrong to try. A group of young hustlers, with the exemplary name of VANGUARD, had materialized shortly before the conference, forcing staid, and cautious Bay Area groups to face the concerns of youth, and they used, well before Stonewall, the Anglo-Saxon language, hip-radical slogans and psychedelic art which characterized later Gay Liberation Fronts. They scorned respectable older homosexuals as hypocrites, who might pick them up on the streets but didn't want to publicly associate with them. But many homophile activists feared that any dealings with minors would agitate the worst heterosexual fear: that we aimed to seduce their children -- and that this would doom our movement fast. That fear, that paedophobia on the part of otherwise good homophile activists, is still NAMBLA's biggest burden, lying well below the rational level. It isn't easy to counter fear with logic.

That same fear held us back in 1967 when our Western Regional Conference unanimously pledged the homophile movement not to try to polish our image by sweeping drag and leather queens, "dirty old men" and pornographers under the rug -- but that resolution passed only because we reluctantly avoided adding boy-lovers to the list, though the resolution's rationale implicitly encompassed pedophilia as well as those other types who "embarrass **respectable** gays."

After Stonewall, Gay Lib went through a wild, radical phase, and at 1970 conferences at Bakersfield and Fresno, we passed Youth Caucus resolutions which I thought pretty woolly, but which some of you may approve: banishing in one Quixotic vote the nuclear family, the schools, religion, the military-industrial complex, etc, and granting self-determination to youth of whatever age. Of course those institutions did not oblige us by self-destructing.

Except for generally anti-sexual attitudes encouraged for awhile in the feminist movement, I think paedophobia was moderate and occasional in the gay movement until the Dean Corrl horror in Houston led to a witch hunt of boy-lovers and at least threatened all gays. After this, many gay activists became desperate to distance themselves from pedophiles, saying that while gays were decent citizens, boy-lovers threatened boys, our movement and society.

NAMBLA's task is to somehow exorcize this phantasm, this image of depraved pederasts out to corrupt and destroy the boys they say they love. In the public mind, boy lovers are identified with the worst of their kind, as gays once were and still are in places like the Supreme Court, with the Dean Corll's and the John Gacy's rather than with the best, such as Socrates, Shakespeare and Byron, or with the average boy lover today, whom even a recent government committee set up to expose NAMBLA, found to be not insidious, but rather, intelligent, kindly and well-motivated persons.

Two and a half years ago, in Manhattan Beach, a social worker's over-zealous if not to say pathological badgering of students and former students at the McMartin pre-school in Manhattan Beach, produced an explosion of paedophobia which ruined the lives of teachers who were probably innocent and set off a vicious nationwide witchhunt, for a time seeming likely to make all adult services to children virtually impossible. It gave the media carte blanche to print any sort of calumny about NAMBLA, and if corrections were ever made, they

were never headlined. This set the climate for the almost complete isolation and slander of NAMBLA. But just last Sunday, Los Angeles District Attorney Ira Reiner appeared on the Sixty Minutes show with several of the defendants expressing the strong view that the prosecution's case had been virtually a tissue of lies, invented not so much by the children as by the social worker and prosecutors who badgered and prompted them, largely a replay of the hysteria of Salem Massachusetts over 300 years ago. Now, NAMBLA has a chance to return to the mainstream in the struggle to reform public opinion -- but it will not be easy, and the threat of AIDS makes it much more ticklish. More about that later.

HALF OF GAY HISTORY IS PEDOPHILE HISTORY

As a gay activist concerned about the puzzle of who we are, where we came from and what we might be for (as Harry Hay put it) I've worked to explore or excavate our history. Once I began to think of boy-love and man-love as distinct phenomena, it became obvious that much of what we gays had staked out as our history was in fact the history of boy-love, a situation Eglinton and others have worked to correct. The borders are not always distinct, or all preferences exclusive. My old friend Manuel Boyfrank loved boys, but was never immune to the charms of virile young men. Wilde's passionate statement in court, about an older man's love for a younger, like his taste in general, was not directed at adolescents, but it still had an inter-generational quality.

We'll never solve the riddles of gay history unless we take the pedophile part into the picture. There is a theory popular among gay historians now, which claims more or less that the state invented the categories of homosexual and heterosexual around 1880 as a device for social oppression. It's significant that most advocates of the extreme form of social constructionism, as this view is called, ignore the preceding century in which Uranian, i.e., boy love, literature predominated. This omission becomes damned dishonest when one sees that Carpenter and Wilde, with whom they start their English movement history, continued personally and in ideas the Uranian line, as Eglinton's Greek Love and Reade's Sexual Heretics show.

Understanding the role of gay spirit and homosexual behavior in history requires a much clearer analysis than we have had before of the varied behavior, relationships and social roles that have appeared in tribal societies and varied cultures, from American Indian Berdache customs in which certain individuals attain honor and special social roles by confounding the gender line, Gilbert Herdt's books on the ritual pederastic practices of virtually all men and boys in certain Melanesian tribes, the honored tradition of pederastic poetry and practice in classic Greek, Hellenic and Arabic cultures, the wide acceptance of pedophilia and androphilia during most of Chinese and Japanese history, to Whitam and Mathy's recent comparative study of homosexual persons in Brazil, Guatemala, the Philippines and the U.S.

My thinking about this subject, like my erotic interest, tends to follow androphile lines. My tendency to divide the world into those who are more or less born gay and those who aren't, is at odds with the thinking of many NAMBLAns that most boys would welcome inter-generational relations. I see boy love largely as a way for the incipiently gay boy to come out, but my gay-or-

non-gay dichotomy falls apart in the face of Herdt's research in mountain villages of New Guinea, where, hidden from most Western eyes, is a society comprised of boy-lovers. All men, at certain ages, work with persistent zest to make sure that all village boys get enough seed planted in them to last a lifetime. The question of who's gay or straight gets lost in a situation vaguely akin to what some Greek, Hellenistic and Islamic literature described. And I have to rethink some of my presumptions.

I was initially asked to address the question of sex freedom for children, or the more general question of the child's right to the integrity of his or her own directions. I certainly feel that society must help to ensure that right, yet I am not ready to advocate the abolition of parent's rights to guide, and somewhat to restrict their children's impulses. I think there come times, often very early, when a child's integrity needs protection against parents, peers, teachers and churches, and I frightened some friends in the local American Civil Liberties Union Rights-of-Homosexuals Committee by suggesting in 1973 that they break ground by affirming the youngster's personal legal integrity -- seeking emancipatory hearings in extreme case of minors who can't fit parental demands as to their orientations or lifestyles. But I am not ready to propose abrogating all parental control or erasing all age-of-consent laws. Of course many boys express sexual interest at early ages, and I understand why NAMBLA refuses to favor any age-of-consent laws, but I feel that this rigid stand on principle guarantees NAMBLA's dangerous isolation and helped make NAMBLA a sitting duck for all sorts of wild slander during the hysteria which spread out from the McMartin case. A one-step-at-a-time approach has worked in several European countries, and could win many allies, who will agree that most teen-agers and even some boys of seven or eight are ready for sexual expression, but who see NAMBLA's all-or-nothing position as evidencing a desire to perform physically and emotionally damaging sex acts on infants.

Though I have been an outspoken advocate of sexual freedom since 1943, when I first wrote about that in science fiction fan magazines, I am unwilling to push that position now in the face of the AIDS epidemic. We must continue to validate our sexual natures -- that is especially urgent now, and we will be marching in Washinton about ten months from now to let the country know that -- and I hope later generations of gays can explore their sexuality in great physico-spiritual orgies, but I see no way to escape the conclusion that for now and perhaps for years to come, the river of our sexual expression is poisoned, and that most of our sex activities are -- for now -- deadly dangerous, unless performed with infinite care.

We may conjecture as to how this came about: whether Haitian mercenaries brought it from Angola to Haiti's gay Guest Houses; whether CIA experiments thrust this plague on us, or whether it is a wholistic recompense for a century of chemical tampering with the balances of nature. It doesn't matter [except that the latter case might suggest non-medical models for prevention and treatment.] This "Lavender Death" will be with us a long time -- and the number of deaths of gays will increase **even** if it spreads to other populations. I have seen too many friends die horribly to advocate sexual freedom at this time, for youngsters or anyone else. I'd rather urge both men and boys to "take the veil" until this plague is over -- to find non-sexual ways to explore their gayness -- and I've always believed that sex acts were only **one** way in which we express our

gayness -- and not the root and core of our gayness. I know it's easier for me to advocate abstinence at age 63 than it would have been earlier. If you are now having sex with kids, in any non-safe manner, you must seriously ask yourselves if it is your intention willfully to pass on the seed of brutal death. Some of you may still believe that AIDS is not passed through sexual activity, assisted by poppers and other immune-system depressing poisons which have become popular in our community. Some of you may even still believe that the world is flat and may go on behaving like parents who for religious reasons deny medical aid to their children, thereby condemning them to death.

I believe sexual expression to be good, socially useful and personally fulfilling, for adults and for young people, separately or together. I believe boy love to be a beautiful tradition connected with many of societies' highest ideals. But not all good things are proper or expedient at all times. At **this** time, we must let sexual expression, except in scrupulously safe forms, take a holiday, if we are to survive, if we are not to kill those we love [there should be no guilt for sex contacts which might have led to AIDS-deaths **before** we knew of the danger.] In a spirit of self sacrifice, we must let this wondrous natural urge go unexpressed, unless we will express it safely. We must not get trapped into saying that our sexuality is bad. But we dare not avoid saying that it is, for now, murderously dangerous.

I don't say boy-lovers should stop loving boys, like King Canute telling the waves to roll back. But this epidemic requires a difficult regimen of being yourselves, validating your special sexual impulses, exercising those good and culturally important relationships while stopping short of unsafe sex practices -- for the sake of yourselves and the lives of the boys you love. Love boys, but avoid expressing that love in ways that involve the exchange of bodily fluids. To satisfy your's or a boy's sexual urges carelessly in this time of danger, to express your love in ways that will plant either sex-guilt or a monstrous death, that does not merit the name of love. See to it that your love is life-giving.

When AIDS is gone, it will be time to talk of sexual freedom again -- and we will.

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