

# SUBURBAN LIFE

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THURSDAY, JULY 30, 1992

## SOCIAL EYES



DENISE LUCAS

## Dream of a party is benefit for MS

To enlighten Social Eyes with information on upcoming events involving Greater West Bloomfield/Lakes, Farmington and Southfield area residents, call 42-2339 or mail information to Denise Lucas at The Eccentric, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham 48009.

**D**reams of spruce trees covered with white twinkling lights, authentically costumed Elizabethan characters greeting guests, a menu that represented "the best of the chefs" and the music of Mel Ball and Colours. Who could ask for anything more?

The Multiple Sclerosis Society Michigan Chapter held its third annual summer gala Saturday at the Stroh River Place in Detroit.

Dr. Claude and Terry Oster chaired the "Enchanted Forest" soiree, with restaurateurs Matt Prentice and Elwin Greenwald heading up the dinner committee. Local restaurants feeding more than 400 supporters of MS included Beverly Hills Grill, Elwin's Tu-Go, Manuel's, Musashi, R.I.K.'s the Restaurant, Morels, Golden Mushroom and Dell Unique.

Morris and Sybil Finkell were gala benefactors while West Bloomfield Bernie Gilleberman, Charles Mascari and Bill Jacobs were among the patrons of the evening.

Major name dropping included Gene and Marla Applebaum of Arbor Drugs, Dr. Sonya Friedman of West Bloomfield and California, Gerald McDonald (president of Manufacturers/Comerica Bank), Peter and Sandy Burton (founders of the gala), Honorable Hilda Gage, and favorite sports reporter Don Shane and his beautiful wife, psychologist Mona of West Bloomfield.

Other local committee members included Solange Messellan who chaired the aesthetics committee transforming the River Place into a magical fairytale of gauze-tufted ceilings, elaborate floral arrangements and spruce trees.

Pam Swift McCarthy was turning heads in a painted-on backless black jumpsuit accessorized with piles of pearls and high-fashion purple suede platform shoes. Pam was seen with former partner Anna Strickstein of Walley Lake who is now sole owner of Strickly Swift (a custom dress designing company). Husbands Mike McCarthy in the boat business and Irving Strickstein were partaking in the food tasting. Pamela is now engaged in artwork, weddings and flowers.

Norman Messellan was overheard discussing his golf game at Oakland Hills while Patricia McDonald, executive director of the Multiple Sclerosis Society Michigan Chapter, glowed with excitement at the success of the evening.

Dessert favorite was Sebastian's Apple Pie smothered with ice cream and hot fudge. Toby Etkin took a brownie taste test between Les Autours and Home Sweet Home. Her conclusion: "They're both wonderful."

Ricky Noderlander was with her love interest Irv Rubin. Ricky wore a chic colorful silk dress creatively. She laughingly turned her dress around to disguise the spots encountered during the evening.

Also supporting the cause were John Bloom of Southfield, David Clapper of Orchard Lake, Sen. Carl Levin, Larry and Carol Pilaka and Joel and Shelly Tauber.

"Everything here is donated," commented chairman Terry Oster. "The food, the decorating, the invitations. We need to raise money to find a cure for MS."

## Brass act

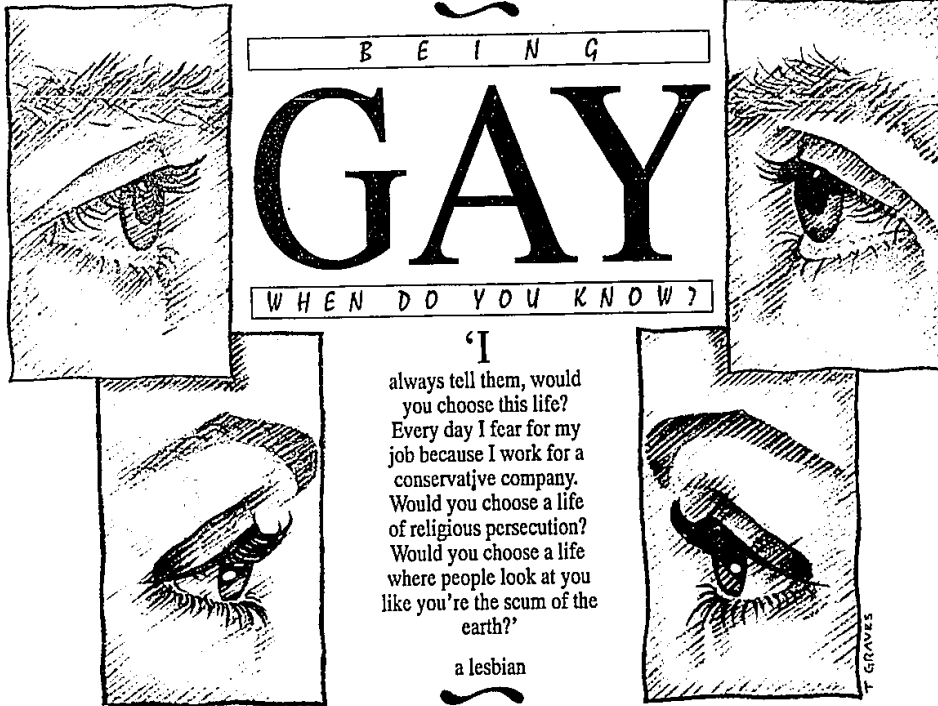
A Detroit Symphony Orchestra Hall Musical Feast celebration was held recently at the Farmington Hills home of Marianne and Dennis Elzasser. The owners of Klansy's restaurant in Farmington Hills had

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DENISE SUSAN LUCAS

For Multiple Sclerosis: Gala co-chairwoman and co-chairman Terry and Dr. Claude Oster.



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Would you choose a life  
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a lesbian

By LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

**T**he discovery of one's sexual orientation is expected to be a wondrous, magical moment. But in the gay community, such self-awareness is fraught with anxiety, confusion and depression. Not surprisingly, the discovery of one's homosexuality is considered to be one of the leading causes of teen suicide.

Many gays and lesbians later come to realize those initial feelings of shame are brought on by a society where the pervasive view of homosexuality is that it's a learned behavior and morally repugnant.

"I always tell them, Would you choose this life?" said one woman, who is a lesbian. "Every day I fear for my job because I work for a conservative company. Would you choose a life of religious persecution? Would you choose a life where people look at you like you're the scum of the earth?"

The woman adds she's quite proud to be a gay. But she, along with other gays, speak of the time of self-discovery, to actually "coming out," as an emotionally wrenching process.

## Being different

Keith, 34, waited until his early 20s to come out about his homosexuality.



though he began to suspect at 7 he was different.

The time in between can only be described as a vortex of confusion and constant turmoil.

"I can vividly recall going to the beach with my family and looking at the guys instead of the girls and being attracted to the guys," said Keith, who is a music teacher. "Well, I came to the realization what was going on about the time I was in high school."

"I had a girlfriend, but I had strong feelings for the guys I was hanging around with. I kept praying, 'God take these feelings away.'"

Waiting until his early 20s to come out was made even more difficult by the fact that he was raised in a strict Baptist family. In between, Keith says he read a lot about the religious issues concerning homosexuality.

"I came to the realization God loved me the way I was. . . God still loved me as I am."

## Suppressed feelings

"I've always known, probably since I

The discovery of being gay can happen at an early age, or even in adulthood, say these men and women, who describe the first awareness of their homosexuality.

was conscious as a sexual being," said Cathy, 27, who works in restaurant management. "I always knew women attracted me more than men."

And Cathy fought those feelings. She went to a host of therapists, changed churches from Roman Catholic to a Pentecostal one in order to try and rid herself of what she perceived as aberrant behavior.

Those methods of eradication didn't work, leaving Cathy to grapple with the emotions and confusion of being "different."

Cathy started to realize in second grade she wasn't the same as other girls. Only when she reached high school could she put a label on it.

From there, she began to explore her sexuality discreetly.

"You can see two women in a grocery store and people will think nothing of it," she said. "You see two guys in shopping together, people say, 'Whoa.'"

Until six months ago, Cathy was able to keep her homosexuality from her family. Then she had to tell them. The woman she loved died suddenly.

"I needed to deal with the grief pro-

cess," she said, "and I couldn't do it alone."

Fortunately, though her family is still dealing with it, Cathy said they've been supportive. And for the first time, Cathy herself is finally come to terms with her homosexuality.

"Through it all," she said, "I'm proud of who I am."

## Dealing with it

John, who is in his mid-40s, became aware of his homosexuality when he was in his late teens. He waited 20 years to pursue it.

"It wasn't overwhelming but it was there," he said. "You become aware of the duality. You don't consciously choose it. . . but you have to learn how to deal with it."

His chosen way to deal with it was to become immersed in his professional career. He also dated a number of women but added, "I never had the feelings to take it to its logical conclusion (to sexual relationship)."

Then four years ago, the intensity of what had remained repressed for 20 years became so he couldn't deny it any longer. He began a relationship with another man.

See GAYS, 2C

## Counselors to gays talk about genetic influence

By ETHEL SIMMONS  
STAFF WRITER

Are gays born with their sexual orientation already determined, or do they develop an attraction for partners of the same sex primarily through their life experiences?

Asked whether being gay is acquired or innate, several area counselors who work with gay men and women indicated either that both factors may be at work, or that they think it's determined at birth.

Affirmation, a lesbian-gay community center in Ferndale, refers those who request counseling to a number of professional therapists in the area. Several of these gave their views for this article.

Regarding his gay clients, "I do believe there is a predisposition, or genetic influence to their homosexuality," said Howard Bayer of Southfield, a psychologist at the Center for Contemporary Psychology in Birmingham. "But you can't discount the environmental aspects. I believe it is a combination of the two."

He stressed that gays often come to counseling for many of the same reasons that non-gay do — for depression, anxiety and couples counseling. They are not necessarily struggling with problems of their sexual orientation.

## Genetic factor

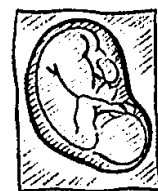
Research coming out today points up the genetic influences, Bayer said. "They're talking in terms of the size of the brain (gay men supposedly have a

smaller area of the hypothalamus, in the brain)," he said.

"Whether it's genetic or not is not the main issue," he emphasized, noting that prejudice still exists whether someone is born a certain way or not, for example, in being born black.

When it comes to environmental factors, Bayer said classical psychoanalytical thinking — the dominant mother influence — doesn't answer all the questions, "although in some cases that is an issue. You can't say, 'It's this or that.' You have to have a more flexible approach to the whole problem."

Because he is a specialist in sexual dysfunction, Bayer said that at one clinic, "Everything sexual was assigned to me." He added, he does not mean to imply that gays are dysfunctional but that, "My experience has grown as a result of my working with gay men and women."



Seven years ago he formed a men's support group, the Gay Connection, which meets the third Tuesday of the month in a banquet room at Diane's Pointe Bar-B-Q in Madison Heights. The group is open to all gay men.

In counseling homosexuals, "My purpose is to help them deal with their lifestyle and live a more fulfilling lifestyle," Bayer said.

## By age of 3

The question of whether being gay is genetic or acquired is answered simply by Dale Ross, a social worker in private practice in Southfield: "The only studies that seem valid show by the age of 3 sexual orientation is already in place."

Downplaying the influence of environmental factors, he said, "There's also the question, 'Can gays be recruited?' By that information (orientation by 3), that is not possible."

If you ask why gays are gay, you should ask why are heterosexuals heterosexual, he said.

"I see it (being gay) as an orientation rather than a preference. Those feelings are given. I tell them all of their feelings are OK, but what they do with those feelings may or may not be helpful for them and others," Ross said.

He said he is not sure if homosexuality is a combination of both heredity and environment but, "I don't question whether they should be sexual or not."

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