

# You Can Go HOME Again.

by Martha Shelley

Shortly after I joined GLF, I found myself plagued by what I called irrational impulses. Mainly, I kept having an urge to tell my parents about my homosexuality. But every time this urge came to the surface, I said to myself, "Oh, come on, you're going through changes — intense anxiety — reorganization of your life style." And I would call up a friend and get my friend to persuade me not to call my parents (sort of like Alcoholics Anonymous.)

Why hadn't I told them previously, even though my friends and employer knew? Some background will explain — I left home seven years ago, and have had almost no contact with my parents since. My father is a career employee for the Defense Department. My mother is almost a prototypical Jewish Mother. As a result, my adolescence was a continuous hassle — my need for independence VS my parents' desire to control me, to marry me off to a Nice Jewish Boy (a doctor) and deliver me, virginal and tied in pink ribbons, to Scarsdale.

The day I left home was the occasion of a fight, one which represented the climax in this struggle. My mother had found my diaphragm. I saw no need to enlighten her as to my other activities and impulses. . . . At any rate, I was convinced that communication between me and my parents was impossible and convinced that my impulse to call them could only mean one of two things:

- 1) I still hankered after their approval,
- 2) I wanted to start a fight with them, to hurt them and to make myself miserable and depressed.

About a month ago, I received a letter from my kid sister, telling me she was going to be married. She also chastised me for avoiding my family, and asked me if I were staying away because I was ashamed of my homosexuality (I did tell her and my kid brother). I was annoyed at this accusation, and phoned home to defend myself to her — and also, come to think of it, to find out who she was marrying.

My father answered. After some casual conversation, I surrendered to the impulse:

"Dad, I have something to tell you."

"You're not in trouble, are you?"

"No, it's something personal."

"Well, it can't be anything that new to us. We are your parents."

"Dad, I'm a homosexual." I was expecting shock; silence, and anything but what followed:

"Well, yeah, Martha, we knew about that."

It was my turn to be shocked and silent. Yes, they knew. It seemed that I had left some gay novels around the house — and some of my drawings were more obvious than I was aware of. That my father had paid any attention to the contents of my drawings was also a surprise. And all he wanted to know was if he or my mother were responsible for my homosexuality. And I said no.

"It's just an aptitude, Dad. Like an aptitude for math. . . or music. . . or poetry." How could I tell him, yes, you made me a homosexual and I love it. Thank

you very much!

So, after seven years, the prodigal daughter accepted an invitation to come home for dinner. It wasn't the most comfortable evening in the world — but it wasn't a hassle, either. My parents are still unhappy that I'm not trying to claw my way up into the Establishment. On the other hand, they didn't try to impose their ideas on me. . . nor did I feel it necessary to challenge every word out of their mouths.

Mom has become an adamant supporter of the National Minimum Income. As she put it, "Everyone has a right to eat!" Dad is burned up about the war in Vietnam. After 25 years with the Dept. of Defense, he has decided that if my kid brother gets drafted, he will send the boy to Canada and support him there until he gets a job.

I called an old friend of mine, a guy named Bill, who had helped me in the process of leaving home and getting my head clear of the hangups my family had imposed on me. "I guess even people over 30 can change," he said.

Last week, I saw them again. Dad was reading the *Time* article on homosexuality. He showed it to me and said, "This is the first time I realized that homosexuals are an oppressed minority — that people have been telling lies about you."

"Yeah, Dad. Like we eat Christian children for Passover."



One Friday night in January, two women were dancing in Gianni's, a lesbian bar, when three of four straight men followed one of the women into the ladies' room and grabbed her. Her girlfriend asked them to leave her alone; whereupon one of the men turned and knocked her out. No one in the bar did anything about it. Immediately afterwards, the four men left.

Mark, a GLF woman, charged down the street with nine or ten other women. They ran a block, thought better of it, and stopped — but Mark was out front and, at the end of the second block, found herself facing the men alone. She yelled to the other women for help, but they turned around and went back into the bar.

She covered her face as they knocked her down and kicked her all over her body. They left her lying in the street. She picked herself up and went over to a taxi, but the driver rolled up his window and drove off. — And the four men came back and beat her up some more.

At the next Sunday meeting, we talked about what we thought was the worst aspect of that night. Was it the fact that there was no protection for people in the bar, or that the women didn't throw the men out in the first place, or that the gays left their sister in the street?

Well, we decided that we couldn't do much about the straights who were there that Friday, because we didn't know who they were. But we did decide that whether or not the sisters were ready to defend themselves, they had the right to be safe wherever they were, and this includes in Mafia bars. And so, though several people thought it was irrelevant to confront Gianni's, a large group of GLF'ers thought it would be a significant act. Forty of us went over there, walked in the door, threw

## GIANNI'S

our coats on the table, refused to buy drinks and began to dance. When one of the three bouncers came to the back room and told us to behave like good ladies and gentlemen, we ignored him. In fact, we ignored him so well that I wasn't even aware that he was there.

Martha Shelley strode up to the owner and said, "We're the Gay Liberation Front and we don't like the way things are going here." And she presented our list of complaints: lack of protection, drinks shoved at the customers, and the general attitude of 'you'll take what you get and like it, 'cause this is the only place to go.'

Now Gianni's is divided into two parts. The back is a dance floor and the front is a bar. We were all dancing in the back, except for Lois Hart, who was talking to the women at the bar about GLF and alternatives to the Mafia bars. She happened to look out the door and saw that the bouncers had locked out twelve or so of our sisters and brothers.

She came to us and said "Should we open the door?" Of course, we decided we had to do just that!

We stormed up front and opened the door, but one of the bouncers stood in the opening and said, "Nobody else in here." We pulled him away from the door. When he placed his fist next to my face, I was surprised to find myself putting my hand over his fist and moving it to the other side of his head like it was on a well-oiled hinge. We took the other two guards and put them against the wall. And our people came in.

We danced in groups of ten to fifteen holding hands and singing for another thirty minutes, and we turned some of the women on. Afterwards, we did a snake dance out of the place, chanting, "Join us. Join us, join



us." Several women did.

Now here's what I think is the saddest thing that happened. Mark went back to Gianni's the next night, afraid they would kick her out. To me this shows how, even when we are kicked in the face, we still go back to our oppressor because it's — THE ONLY PLACE.

Pat, another GLF'er, who was with Mark, went to the owner and said that she understood they were going to keep straight men out. She let them know that we were watching to make sure that they did. And we will be.

That Friday, COME OUT interviewed the owner. He offered us free drinks. I guess this was an attempt to buy us off. We didn't sell out, but we took the free drinks nonetheless. According to the owner, before 8:00 o'clock Gianni's is a straight bar for business men in the district. After eight they try to discourage straights by raising the prices. So now we know why the prices are gay, hah? (They are the same in all Mafia bars — higher than straight bars.) But anyway, we promised Gianni's that if they lower the prices we'll patrol the area to make sure no straights stay healthy enough to bother the gays.

This was one of the first truly GAY militant actions we've done. There are many different stories that can be written on this occurrence, such as: What is the connection between the Mafia and gay people? Or, why didn't the girls come to the aid of their sister in the street?

See what's going on around you. See that the oppressor has gotten into our heads as well as put goons at the door.

Dan Smith

Kathy Braun

## HOWARD DEUTSCH

When I was 23 I got a job at the Hudson Guild Settlement House in Chelsea, doing part-time group work with children. I met Howard Deutsch who was Jewish, adorable, he also knew Murry Kramer, and also completely out of his mind like me. Needless to say (so why am I saying it?) we became friends.

I lived in a room the size of Rock the Jock's armspan, on 75th and Riverside. Howard took me home, wanted to kiss me goodnight.

No says I. Ok.

Meanwhile I think he's gay and meanwhile I think I'm gay. So finally we find out about each other.

Then we spend months being friends. philosophy right?, sex right?, jobs right — he says I should be a bartender, a rabbi. He says he goes to tearooms. He says Cubans are the most joyous in love. He tells me how I remind him of I-forgot-her-name, oh that's right Joanna, a girl he married.

He tells me how he used to get in rages and go after Joanna with knives. He told me how in his new apartment in Wash. Heights he was afraid of the big tough

guys in the street beating him up. He had a very strong muscular body but he was afraid to fight. Anyway, he had been to school for social work but had left during the time of rages and knives stuff but after having worked a while he was trying to get into some graduate school of social work. He wanted to be in social work because he wanted to help people.

He got into either Hunter or NYU, I forgot, but after he had been in a while, loving it, had got picked up in a tearoom.

Oh no, that's not it. He had been arrested before he got into school and lied on the application where it says have you ever been arrested. So after he had been in school awhile the application caught up with him and they called him into a meeting. After all the bullshit, what it came down to was that he had to go. FUCK YOU screamed Howard Deutsch.

But he still had to leave.

A while later he had a date to come over my house and he never showed up. Steve called and said do you know where Howard is, he was supposed to be here last night.

No says I etc. Howard located. Howard to the looney

bin.

After he comes out, Howard on phone to me, laughing. Do you still want to kill yourself I say. Laughing he says I don't know, probably. Well Howard I said, that makes me very unhappy. But even talking to you about it makes me unhappy. You know the death thing with my family and everyone dying. Well I've had enough with death and I'd rather you didn't call me while you still feel that way.

OK he said and because Howard and I had a true relationship and because we understood the other, it was no more than that.

Ok.

A year later I got a call from a girl I had slept with who had been introduced to me by Howard. I wasn't home but she left a message. Howard's dead. Did the thing. She never called back to speak to me, just left the message. Dead. Howard. Loss. Love. Mother. Loss. Love. Father. Loss. Love. No more Death for me. Later, Howard, Later. Part of my thing now is that I want to make tearoom sex legal.

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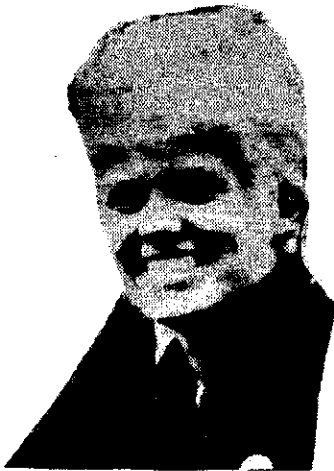
# Happy New Year

MARK GILES

I was sitting in a well-known gay bar, having a brandy before leaving for a GLF meeting, when I met a very nice guy — gay — who started rapping about being in the publishing business. Since I have an extensive background in this field, and am presently barely getting by on a very small salary as a proofreading supervisor, I immediately asked him if he had any openings.

It turned out that he was a manager for one of the largest publishing houses in New York City, and needed an assistant. It seemed like a great opportunity, but I was apprehensive about the office atmosphere. Would I have to dress "straight"? He assured me that was no problem, as all the girls wore slacks anyway, and he was pretty far-out-looking himself. Not only that, but his boss was gay, too.

It seemed too good to be true, but I went for the interview the following day, walking thru plush corridors which began to make me uneasy. I didn't know why — I'd worked in several "prestige" office jobs before. Then I remembered... The national television magazine in HOLLYWOOD I'd worked at for two-and-a-half years of my life (dressing straight — but everyone knew anyway). I was seventeen years old then, and the youngest editor to be in charge of two editions. The reason was simple: I worked harder than anyone else there. I had to, because they were constantly looking for reasons to fire me. I was a disgrace to the company because I was different, and very possibly, slept with girls!! (I think I should mention here that I'm a girl also.) Most of the people I worked with were future old maids from Indiana or Ohio who were terrified — or perhaps titillated — by the possibility that I might make a pass at them in the LADIES ROOM. They would titter & gossip behind my back,



white gloves... went so far as to complain to the regional manager about the way I dressed. I was constantly harassed, to the point that one day I finally walked out of TV GUIDE, the BIBLE of the SILENT MAJORITY. And NOW, LIVE, and in BLACK-AND-WHITE (but mostly WHITE), from the people who brought you "DEATH VALLEY DAYS" and "THE PEOPLE'S PARK" in Berkeley... RONALD REAGAN!!... They're not silent; the commercials are just too loud.

For several years, I worked in the nightclub business, managing clubs, traveling, & spending lavishly on the girls I dated. I figured if had to prostitute myself, I might as well get something out of it. Of course, all I got was a lot of money that I spent as soon as I made it. And the girls I dated didn't really want me — they wanted a good time, & presents. I left Los Angeles, & lived in New Orleans, then Hawaii, & finally San Francisco, where I began to turn on, to other possibilities — other life styles. I was turned-off by the nightclub business, phony people, phony girls, phony me. I split from my \$800/month job & house on Telegraph Hill to come to New York.

So here we are in 1970. And times have changed. Or have they??

The interview was a bust. My friend's boss asked him if there wasn't some tactful way he could tell me I was "too butch." He liked me, & felt I was very capable. But after all, it's one thing to have the office know you're gay, and another to LOOK-it, right? My friend said he hadn't realized things were so uptight there, & he felt very sorry. Would I compromise, he wanted to know.

COMPROMISE??

Well, you know. ... wear a dress.

No one else does, why should I?? If I wanted to "compromise" that much, I'd sell out all the way & go back to the bar business, where I'd REALLY make some bread.

I can't understand. He's all for BLACK POWER. He was very pleased when I hired a black woman.

WHAT ABOUT HIS OWN PEOPLE?? DOESN'T HE CARE ABOUT US?? It seems to be very respectable to hire a "Negro" these days — but it just isn't "IN" to hire a "Queer," is it??

Well, look. I've been able to make it all this time. And I REALLY carry on — swishing & all — at the office. Of course, I kind of toe the line — I don't overstep the boundaries... But I figure one day, when I'M boss, in about 20 or 30 years, then NO ONE will be able to tell me what to do, & I'll be able to hire anybody I like.

That's GREAT. But that's TOO LATE for me. I'LL BE 53 YEARS OLD THIRTY YEARS FROM NOW — I want to live my live & enjoy it NOW. I'm not going to wait

for that. Neither are the blacks — or ANY of the oppressed people.

Well, I'm doing what I can...

ARE you??

..... This is a NEW YEAR of your life.

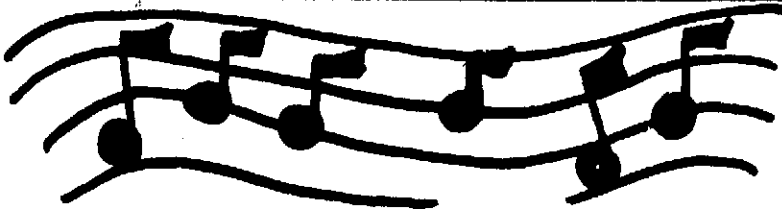
Stop apologizing for what you are.

Come together.

COME OUT!!!

## Random Notes: MUSIC

Jim Jordan



I wish I knew how it would feel to be free  
I wish I could break all the chains holding me  
I wish I could say all the things that I should say  
Say them loud, say them clear  
For the whole damn world to hear

I wish I could share all the love that's in my heart  
Remove all the walls that keep us apart  
I wish you could know what it means to be me  
Then you'd say and agree that everyone should be free

I wish I could give all I'm longing to give  
I wish I could live like I'm longing to live...

The above song was written by Billy Taylor (jazz pianist). As performed by Nina Simone (RCA LSP3837) it becomes a probing plea of the mixed feelings of pain, frustration, and hope voiced by the oppressed blacks for freedom — freedom to live.

Nina Simone has emerged as one of the strongest voices in music demanding this freedom, to say nothing of the enormous talent she possesses, and the ability to communicate, to electrifying proportions, the full range of emotions which can only come through the experience of "living." I am not talking about the pre-meditated, "acted", planned-out emotions of a Barbra Streisand — Tom Jones kind of entertainment, which arouses the conditioned, Madison Ave. hyped, assured responses from audiences being "entertained." Nina confronts her audience to make them hear and feel themselves, each other and life on the most starkly honest terms, which, I might add, is not always "entertaining." Sometimes her mood will hit upon the anger, pain, frustration, bitterness and rage of the oppressed; understandable feelings and reactions to a situation created and controlled by the oppressors. But, if you happen to be there when her mood is an affirmation of love and/or life, you may find yourself weeping or shouting with joy at being alive at that moment.

I have seen Nina perform over a hundred times over a period of several years and I have watched her grow into a woman of fierce pride, and a creative, passionate artist. For me, she has no peer.

Having hopefully paid, in small part, a debt of gratitude to Nina Simone for being, I will try to carry further the idea I am trying to articulate here. Again, please read the opening lyric, but this time try to relate to it both

on a universal level, and in the personal sense of what this type of freedom to live would mean to you. At no point does this song address itself to the idea of black freedom only. There is a newly recorded version of this song by a San Francisco based group called "Cold Blood". (San Francisco SD200), which is quite moving due largely to the straightforward singing of the group's lead singer, Lydia Penz who is white. I can remember singing this song (and still do) many times, at times for myself, at times for others, but never without experiencing an emotional upheaval as a result of the lyric and the particular mood I've been in at the time. I suppose it may be easy to speak of freedom, but quite another matter to "feel" it, particularly when our daily lives are filled with so many time-consuming activities conflicting with such freedom. However, I personally feel that each of us must find within ourselves a sense of "personal freedom" to enable us to experience that we are "living" in the most "complete" meaning of the word, even under the most adverse, conflicting and oppressive conditions.

Another living example of one who is finding his own personal freedom to live is Don Burton, who has become known by those who appreciate and respect him as San Francisco's Gay Folk singer. At this time, I will not go into Don's background; Don accomplished that task himself with a beautifully written first-person article which appeared in the San Francisco Free Press. I will mention that Don started out much like most young singers, singing with a group while attending High School in Torrance, Calif., a small town about 30 miles south of L.A. However, feeling out of place singing pop show tunes, Don turned to folk music as a means of musical self expression. Joan Baez was his earliest, and strongest influence because of her integrity and honesty in choosing and singing songs which reflected her personal feelings about life. Don turned to songs of protest, particularly against the war, but though he would sing of peace, he felt no peace within himself, living in fear, frustration, and oppression because of being a homosexual.

He began to find an outlet for his feelings by writing songs which reflected his experiences. He decided one evening, 5 minutes before a concert he was giving at an Elks Club, that he could no longer continue to live his life as a lie. Taking the stage, he quietly announced that he was a homosexual and would like to sing some songs

of the "gay" life. After singing his first completely honest performance, this audience, which gasped at his announcement, gave him a standing ovation. At the urging of his lover, Leo Laurence (who started the Homosexual Liberation Movement in San Francisco), Don started singing his own songs to straight audiences as well as gay audiences. It is through their love for each other that Don has found growing within himself conviction about what he is doing. To express this in Don's own words, "Leo has made me feel the only way to freedom is honesty."

I have had the pleasurable and meaningful experience of talking to both Don and Leo (though I don't look forward to receiving this month's phone bill) and have learned of Don's oppression by the "media" agents who believe he is "too controversial", and by the nite clubs who believe he is "too political". Surprising but true, Don has experienced the indifference and apathy of homosexuals in gay bars such as the "Opera Club", who perhaps do not wish to discover the truth about themselves and their lives. This is apathy of much the same type that Nina Simone has experienced from a portion of the black audience (to say nothing of massive white apathy), who are not able to respond to their own oppression and needs to liberate themselves. Don told me that, for the most part, the straight audiences do listen, and listen attentively, responding enthusiastically. I wish I had been there to be able to relate to all of this experience personally. To my knowledge there is no one on the East Coast doing this type thing. (If there is, please let your voices be heard.) In the meantime, Don is certain of the direction in which he must continue despite current or future hardships and oppression. He will continue to sing of "our lives, our oppression, and mostly about love, to affirm" as he states "that love, all love, is beautiful and that all people must be free to love".

This writer hopes most sincerely that he will meet and hear Don personally, but for now, I am happy we are "brothers" united with our "sisters" to liberate "all people", with the hope that one day no one will say, "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free".