

THE BEGINNING OF "THE CIRCLE OF FRIENDS"

On the eve of January 1, 1965, five men gathered for dinner and made plans for the first homophile organization in Texas. Our goals were simple:

1. To help the homosexual help himself.
2. To provide a place where gay people could meet other gay people, other than a gay bar or public restroom.

Gay organizations had existed in California since 1950, and there were several scattered over the nation. But none had ever existed in the "bible" belt. Therefore we proceeded with caution.

First we asked a lawyer-friend to advise us. He did. He told us to forget it. Although we had planned to stay well within the limits of the law, should the Dallas police learn that gay people were "organizing", they would "find ways" of stopping us. We would lose our jobs (for one reason or another), we would be publicly disgraced, and we would be constantly harassed. So plans were dropped.

But hope, like time, is eternal, and three of the men clung to the hope that someday, somehow, things would be different in Dallas.

In the Summer of 1966, there existed a gay newspaper "Cruise News and World Report" published in San Francisco by a former Dallasite, Guy Strait. In this newspaper a minister from one of Dallas' largest Methodist Churches ran an add asking if there was anyone in Dallas wishing to start a gay organization similar to SIR in California.

Thinking we could find some degree of safety working with a minister, the cautious three (shall we call them St. Philip, St. Peter and St. Paul) meet with Doug and we began. We called ourselves the "Circle of Friends."

Through Doug, we soon had the friendship and excellent guidance of three other ministers: Ed, a Presbyterian; Chuck, a Methodist, and Bob, a Lutheran. Here, heterosexual and homosexual have worked

together in harmony for three years. The first year was spent in writing and rewriting our Constitution, visiting in each other's homes, planning and talking with our Minister friends. Phil was our first President, and represented the "Circle" at the North American Conference of Homophile Organizations in Washington, DC. At the end of our first year, we had a total of 12 members, plus our minister friends. To celebrate we gave a very wonderful, wonderful, Halloween party in the Haunted House on the Hill. Ralph was elected our second President, but declined to serve, and Pete, as Vice President ably led us that year. Pete and Paul represented us a NACHO in 1968, at Chicago, and in Kansas City this year. Now we are nearing our third birthday. Chuck is our President. Under his most capable leadership we have widened our activities, and our membership has grown. We are now 45.

From the beginning, we had our critics: "They would never allow it to exist in Dallas." "Queens can't unite." "Don't rock the boat." "I wouldn't want my name on list." "What could you possibly hope to accomplish?" Well, let's see:

1. We are accomplishing our goals. We have helped gay people. Not a helluva lot, but some.
2. We have provided a place where gay people can meet other gay people--safer by far than well-known gay bars and dangerous T-rooms.
3. We've had many interesting programs, lectures, religious meetings, and parties.
4. We meet with Dean Keeton Page and pledged our assistance to help change unfair laws in Texas--for both the heterosexual and the homosexual.
5. We've worked with the Psychology Department of SMU, and talked with a large number of their students.
6. We've met with perhaps two hundred ministers (a number of them from the National Council

of Churches), taken them into our homes, and on tours of the gay bars of Dallas.

7. We provided speakers to talk with interested groups about gay life.
8. Because of us, the Dallas Council on Religion and the Homosexual came in to being.
9. We are helping Ft. Worth organize a gay group.
10. We have worked with "Contact," "Suicide Prevention", and have volunteered our services to "Runaway house".

And lastly, we've existed!

JUSTICE!!!

Rumor has it that a few weeks ago three fellows who were prone to engage in the fine sport of "beating up the queers" in Lee Park went forth to have their little fun. Well, they beat up this guy so badly that he had to be taken to the hospital! But something went wrong; the guy they worked over was actually a member of the vice squad. (Naturally, he wasn't there to practice entrapment, or was he?)

It cost the three young punks \$1000 each to get out of jail. Sometimes, just sometimes, one gets the feeling that justice is given to both sides-- this is such an instance.

Legal Committee

HELP WHEN IT IS NEEDED

Through the efforts of one of our newer members, a local attorney who has had quite a bit of experience in handling morals cases has agreed to help one of our group who might need such assistance. This would be contingent upon the person being willing to fight the case through to a finish. If you should find yourself in such circumstances, get in touch with our President or the Chairman of the Legal Committee.

Legal Committee

HELP!

Marion of Camelot

"Help!" is a regular column which will appear in Ampersand every month. Its purpose is to acquaint you with places which you can turn to when you need help. All service organizations listed are broad minded and aware of the homosexual community. Of course, we may add other listings in the future which may not be totally oriented to the Queen, but still may be of value to you. Several of these organizations have supplied the C.O.F. with quest speakers. We urge you to take advantage of these services whenever you may need them. We also urge you to tell your friends about these services also. "Help" is here!

The Peg: 3520 Cedar Springs Rd. One of the best community services available to homosexuals is the Peg, an affiliate with the Dallas Young Adult Institute. They handle every kind of crisis you can tink of. If you can memorize phone numbers, remember this one 521-0272. They handle everything from bailing people out of jail and getting them lawyers, to help for suicides. They help runaway children, which includes teenage homosexuals who have been booted out of home.

The Peg is well aware of the C.O.F. and is ready and willing to help any homosexual with any problem any time of the day or night. Phone: 521-0272.

Suicide Prevention-Depressed? Call 521-5531, on duty 24 hours. Contact: Got health problems? dial 823-2792, on duty 24 hours. Texas state dept. of health: 1936 Amelia st. Whoops! call 748-9961 Round Table Book Shop: 3912 Cedar Springs, Phone 522-3480 (not exclusively gay) but a good place to brose.

Automobile License Information: Records Bldg. 749-8862. Texas Employment Commission: 631-6050.

Coming soon: Switchboard.