



by Martin Swinger

I am writing this a couple of days before the MLGPA fund

raiser concert in Portland and hoping that we will have had a huge turnout.

Carolyn Cosby, Goddess love her, has made one thing clear. There's nothing quite so unifying as a common enemy... and I do mean COMMON. Carolyn, whatever closet you may be hiding in, I want to thank you for making us strong! Who'd have thought three years ago the gay community would be hosting a concert of both gay AND lesbian music in the same venue?

My friend from Germany sends me tapes of live concerts with thousands of G&L audience members and of live

Singin' Out for the Holidays

shows in the bars where performers are singing their own words with their own voices and it reminds me what a young country we are. We have some catching up to do. At least up here in good ol' New England we do.

By the time you get this I will have returned from the North East Folk Music Alliance Conference in La Point, Pennsylvania. I hear that the National Conference last year in Washington D.C. had quite a gathering of out musicians - even an out open mic coffeehouse. It was my understanding that one or two out performers coordinated the effort and I don't know if they were North Easterners or not but I intend to put up a notice as soon as I arrive to at least arrange a meeting place and time so we can swap addresses and road stories. I'd be proud to host sisters and brothers on the road

in a safe environment.

I know one other gay folkie I met when I went to Boston for Show And Tell (Four Gay and Lesbian Singer/Songwriters Sing Out and Tell All) and we intend to meet at Passims one of these trips. I've been traveling to Boston open mics to get my feet wet and to make myself seem familiar to the shakers and movers there. It's a big investment when I have to leave immediately after work and return to work the next day but it's like being in the closet... no one can open the door but me.

Meanwhile, Lynn Deeves of the MLGPA concert will be doing a solo show at Slaters Restaurant in Hallowell on Monday, November 25 at 8:00 (622 9575 info) and I hope all you south central Maine Lesbigsays will show up to hear this wonderful performer in this

very supportive atmosphere.

Thanks to you new people who have contacted me - I'm still gathering names of gay musicians interested in networking (That means YOU). Send me a self descriptive letter C/O CPR and they will forward it. I'm hoping to report the winners of this years Gay and Lesbian American Music Awards next month.

Well, here's praying that Dole guy doesn't end up in the white house, and if he does, I'll see you all in Canada... Let's celebrate Thanksgiving with all the gaiety we can muster and Keep Singin' Out!

Martin Swinger is an out performer of traditional, contemporary and original folk music who is currently working on his second album of Gay Folk Music. His first gay album SINGIN'



by Daralyn S Maxwell

There are certain life situations which cannot be conveyed. Much like life growth,

these are part of one's personal evolution that must be experienced, and no amount of preparation will suffice for the eventuality of it. So it is with being outed. To me, "outed" was an alien concept; an occurrence that happened to imprudent people; a term to describe what happens when you aren't careful. Just like so many other things, you figure: "It can't happen to me!"

As so it is that I find myself in that unique company of so many others who have gone before me and, to a large de-

My Transsexual Manifesto Part VIII

gree not by choice, are "out". It is not that I even mind being out; it is quite a relief that I don't have to worry as much about my every gesture or remark; that my phone call to a friend was THE tip-off; wondering when one of my homophobic little employees would accidentally run across a copy of CPR, complete with my picture. I am not angry that I am out. I am furious that I was "outed" by someone professing to be a friend for three years, only to be betrayed for what seems to be professional gain. I am livid that someone who knew me, and my issue well, chose to take MY life so casually as to share it with people who might wish me more than ill will. I am horrified that control of my life can be so cruelly taken from me, and I am left pretty much defensive.

On the other hand, this person damaged his own reputation by this act. My employer, a fairly open-minded man, is well aware of my situation, and chooses to maintain my employment for what seem to be apparent professional reasons. My employees, young and ill-equipped for this, still think that I am gay, despite the overwhelming evidence that they now possess. I have gotten over the initial shock of the "outing" and elect to get on with things, including ignoring the juvenile snickering that goes on behind my back. Basically, I have decided to be the grown-up.

In retrospect, I now find one more compelling reason for having reached out as I have; finding solace in those for whom my revelation brings only nods of understanding. "Yep, she found out

what it's about." Well, yes and no. I wish, more than ever, that I could stop pretending at work; stop playing at guy stuff I don't care about; move forward a little faster. But then, I take the same risks that I have tried so hard to avoid all this time. It's not time yet.

So, I will do as everyone else seems to. I will carry on and pretend that its not a problem. I will move forward cautiously, but with determination. I will also walk a little taller, less afraid of the consequences and more aware of just how fragile relationships are. Trust, while not out the window, will be harder to come by for a while. What a sad casualty of life.

Comments about this series can be address to Dal Maxwell at CPR, or by e-mail to her at dalmax@ime.net.

Past Out: What was the custody battle over Sharon Kowalski?

By David Bianco

The recent discussions and debates over the question of same-sex marriage have to be understood in the context of the decades-long struggle by same-sex couples for legal recognition of their relationships. In the 1980s, no couple did more to raise awareness of the injustice of American family law than Karen Thompson and Sharon Kowalski.

In 1979, Thompson and Kowalski became lovers, exchanging rings and naming each other as life insurance beneficiaries. Living in the town of St. Cloud, Minnesota, neither was public about her lesbian identity, nor was the nature of their relationship clear to anyone but their closest friends. Thompson and Kowalski were anything but gay-rights activists - Thompson even voted for Ronald Reagan for President

in 1980.

A tragic accident on a Sunday night in November 1983 changed all that. Kowalski, then 28, was hit by a drunk driver while driving her car, and she suffered severe brain damage, losing the ability to walk, care for herself, or even speak more than a few words at a time. During the first several months of Kowalski's hospitalization, Thompson was at her side, providing love and support during her painstaking recovery. At first, the Kowalski family thought Thompson was a good friend, and they appreciated her help. But eventually Sharon's parents began to ask questions about the nature of the pair's relationship, and with a psychologist's guidance, Thompson explained that Sharon was her lover.

The Kowalskis did not take the news well. Calling Thompson "sick" and "crazy," they denied her further visitation

rights and even accused her of sexually abusing their disabled daughter. They moved Sharon to another Minnesota facility several hours from Thompson's home, even though several doctors had noted that Sharon responded best to therapy when she was in Thompson's presence, and even though Sharon repeatedly indicated her desire to be reunited with her lover.

An intense legal battle ensued. At first, Thompson focused on the right to visit her lover. The Kowalskis and Minnesota courts denied her that right for almost four years. Thompson gave speeches and raised funds for her legal battle throughout the nation, even writing a book entitled Why Can't Sharon Kowalski Come Home?. The couple's plight became a rallying point for lesbian activists throughout the country - but it also found much resonance for gay

men, many of whom were themselves dealing with legal issues surrounding visitation and guardianship rights as AIDS repeatedly pitted devoted lovers against anti-gay parents. In August 1988, more than a dozen cities around the country held "Free Sharon Kowalski Day" rallies to raise public awareness of the case.

In January 1989, Thompson finally won the right to visit her lover, although Sharon's father Donald remained Sharon's legal guardian. When the pair reunited, Sharon was moved to tears and typed "I love you" on her keyboard.

But Thompson's legal battle was not over. Donald Kowalski had recently petitioned the court to be released from his legal guardianship of his daughter due to his own health concerns. Despite the fact that Thompson was the only individual to petition for guardianship, a

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