

# 'I just hope I have made you think'

Of late the public has heard little about the Gay Student Union (GSU) and its activities; except for our quests for funding and office space appeals thereof, and the harassment we've faced. Frankly, people, we're not the rabblers we're made out to be. It's just that our public image is not the best, even after efforts such as the GSU entering the recent dance marathon.

My experiences in the dorms have exposed me to a variety of people. No one seems to really understand the GSU and the desires of the Charlottesville gay community, not even other gays. What is needed is a public discussion of all facets of the homosexual lifestyle, not just the pseudo-political aspects of the GSU.

Let me go one record now as saying that anything said in "Gay Journal" is purely my opinion. It should not be misconstrued as representing the official stance of the GSU or any other member of the gay community.

Public opinion — or at least the opinion of the segment of the public I've been exposed to — seems to think that the ultimate purpose of the GSU is to cause trouble, mainly by applying for funding and office space. Understandably, this is the only aspect most people see (including some GSU

## Guest Column

by Jon Hooper

members; as you would expect, no group runs on unanimous opinion).

As I understand it, the purpose of applying is to get money and an office. One of our main goals is to maintain a library of gay materials. We need an office to be the clearinghouse and we need money to purchase more books. We're NOT trying to cause trouble.

We have enough trouble on some fronts justifying our mere existence. All we're looking for is a place where we can be ourselves — our "place in the sun," so to speak. Is it so much to ask that the University community accept us as it has accepted other minorities?

Put yourself in my place, just for a few minutes. Now look in a mirror. How does it feel, knowing the face staring at you — the face that will stare at you every day for the rest of your life — belongs to a person who is shunned by society-at-large?

A person who wakes up every morning knowing that what he is is against everything he had been taught was

decent and proper? A person who walks down the street, amid cries of "faggot!, faggot!?" A person who has gone through sheer hell, and still goes through sheer hell to a measureable extent each and every day, because he was forced to admit to himself a damning truth: "I am gay."

Not a very comfortable feeling, is it?

Let's think about the ramifications for a few more minutes. If, like me, you're exclusively gay, what kind of social life do you have? Now think about your straight neighbors, and the social life straights have. Comparisons can be depressing.

Gay life certainly has its rewards, but there are times when public pressure gets to you. How did you feel last fall when a capable Resident Advisor found himself in hot water because he was gay? What was your reaction to Dade County and Anita Bryant? How did you feel a couple weeks ago, when a letter was published in The Cavalier Daily saying you "don't know the difference between boys and girls?" (I've never had any problems telling the difference, believe me. Perhaps that's part of my "problem.")

Still with me? Good. Now consider one more thing — do your friends and family know you're gay? How do they react?

My own parents don't know, but the stories I've heard from friends whose parents do... There are the parents to whom it makes no difference. There are parents who are shocked at first, but gradually accept (or at least condone, and try to understand) your lifestyle.

And then there are the parents who never really recover from the shock. Again: do your parents know? If yes, how did they react? If no, do you plan on telling them? How would they react? Will they still respect you in the morning?

Now be yourself again. If you're gay in the first place, you know where the shock is coming from. If you're straight, at least you've gotten an idea of what is running through our minds. Please think about us, and our lifestyle, objectively. The first reaction of entirely too many people when they hear the word "gay" is "Yecch!"

I don't expect you to immediately start campaigning for gay rights or to let me marry your brother; I just hope I've made you think. And that is the entire purpose behind "Gay Journal" — to make people think.

[ Jon Hooper is an alias for a student at the University ]