

# GSU, CLF

## Gay groups foster unity, offer social activities

By VINCE BROTSKI

"The GSU is important because it's helpful for gay students to meet others like themselves, to learn that you are not alone," observed John Curtin, former Gay Student Union president.

"The ironic thing is that there are a lot of people who are afraid of the GSU because they are afraid of being gay or admitting to themselves that they are gay," he added.

For gay students who say they consider the University unreceptive to homosexuals, organizations like the GSU and the Charlottesville Lesbian Feminists (CLF) offer an emotional and social outlet not provided in the mainstream of University social life.

An ad placed in an underground newspaper in 1972 led to the forming of the GSU. The ad proposed the meeting of a gay discussion group, according to University alumnus and former GSU member Tom dePriest.

The GSU has since expanded its scope to include social functions, educational programs and political activism.

Similarly, CLF has grown from monthly coffees to regular potluck suppers and dances, and its members speak to University classes.

Perhaps the GSU's best known activities are its dances, held about once every three weeks. According to Curtin, the GSU does not request

Student Council funds because they can easily make \$200 dollars from one dance, which he said is four times the amount Council would be willing to allocate.

"I didn't go to GSU dances because I was scared," related Gary, a first-year student who asked that his real name not be used. However, "As soon as I walked in, it was a liberated feeling. It was so nice to see other men and women dancing."

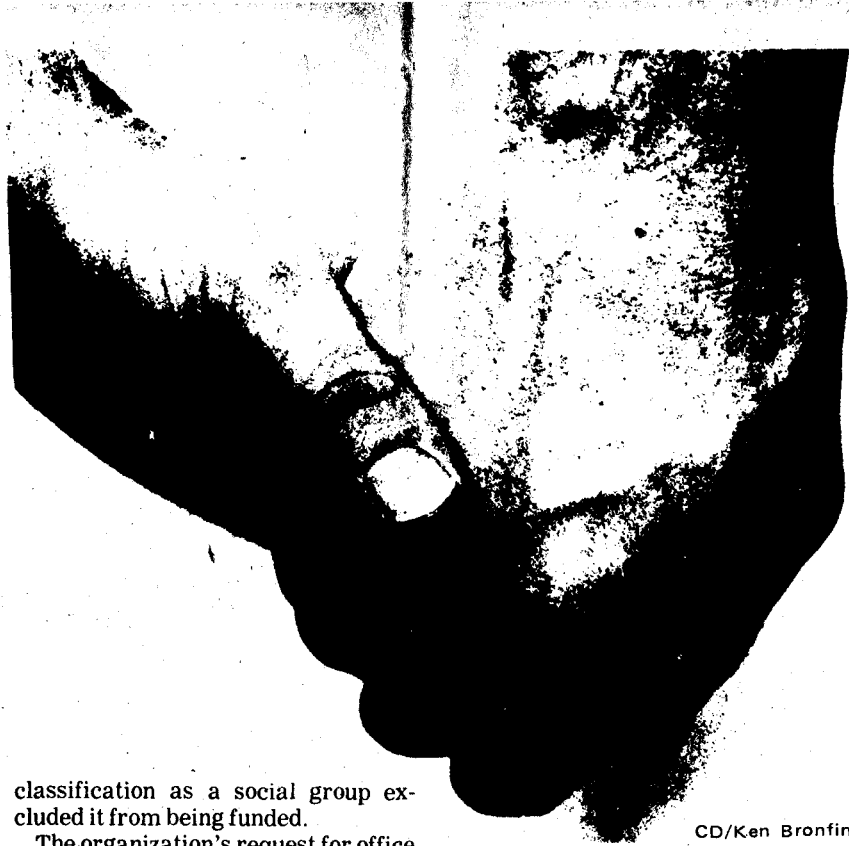
Dances provide a social outlet for University gays, according to Gary. "I could go to Washington or Richmond, but it's different seeing the same people (at the dances). It reinforces your positive feelings about yourself. You don't have to play games."

Max, a first-year woman, said the GSU was "like a little private club."

Arriving at the "heels of the student unrest of the sixties," the first meeting was attended by five men, according to dePriest.

One woman joined the previously all-male group in 1975. Later she brought other lesbians who "balanced out the group," according to dePriest, and raised the group's political motivation.

Student Council recognized the GSU in 1972 and gave the group \$45. The Board of Visitors overturned the allocation because the group's



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classification as a social group excluded it from being funded.

The organization's request for office space in 1973 was denied on the grounds that the GSU was a political organization.

The right of gays to play a role in University affairs was questioned in September, 1977 when resident assistant Bob Elkins resigned from the presidency of the GSU; an ad hoc administrative committee had been considering firing him from the Resident Staff, but decided against it.

On March 21, 1978, the GSU withdrew its request for Student Activity Fee funds because the level of funding was simply "inadequate," according to a GSU officer at the time.

The GSU was joined in August, 1979 by the Charlottesville Lesbian Feminists, founded by several women to resume the monthly coffees of two years ago, according to Mary, a group member who asked that her real name be withheld.

As the group grew, "it was felt there was a need for more than just coffee," Mary said. The group recently has tried to include dances, potluck suppers and sports activities, she added, and sponsors educational programs at the University.

Susan, a first-year student who attends CLF meetings regularly, said gay women felt they did not have enough say in the GSU and did not like the atmosphere.

Disagreeing, Mary said that the formation of CLF had less to do with the atmosphere of the GSU than with the need to address problems specific to lesbians.

"GSU speaks to the needs of gay students. There is a need for that. CLF has a broader membership including both University and community people."