

Give the People Light and they will find their own way.



# The Wisconsin Light

## Homosexuality and Biology

As Scientific Research Continues Evidence Is Getting Stronger That A Person's Sexual Identity Is Genetically Based

By Chandler Burr

The issue of homosexuality has arrived at the forefront of America's political consciousness. It is timely and appropriate, therefore, that at this juncture a scientific discipline, biology, has begun to ask the fundamental

question: What is homosexuality? And it has begun to provide glimmers of answers that may in turn not only enhance our self-knowledge as human beings, but also have some influence, however indirect, on our politics.

What makes the science in this case so

problematic, quite apart from the usual technical difficulties inherent in biological research — particularly neurobiological research, which accounts for much of the present investigation — is the ineffable nature of our psychosexual selves.

It is undeniably true that neurobiological research is often pursued in a context of great ignorance. The brain remains an organ of mystery even in general, not to mention with regard to specific functions. "We don't know" may be the most frequently used words in neurobiology, and they seem to be used with special frequency when the subject of sexual orientation comes up.

Homosexuality's invitation to biology has been standing for years. Homosexuals have long maintained that sexual orientation, far from being a personal choice or lifestyle (as it is often called), is something neither chosen nor

changeable; heterosexuals who have made their peace with homosexuals have often done so by accepting that premise. The very term "sexual orientation," which in the 1980's replaced "sexual preference," asserts the deeply rooted nature of sexual desire and love. It implies biology.

### THE BACKGROUND

Biologists embarked upon research into homosexuality in response to an intellectual vacuum created by the failure of other sciences to solve the riddle of sexual orientation. "Other sciences" mostly means psychiatry.

As a distinct concept, homosexuality is relatively recent. David Halperin points out in *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality* that the term itself first appeared in German (*Homosexualität*) in a pamphlet published in Leipzig in 1869; it entered the English language two decades later.

That some human beings engage in sexual activity with others of the same sex has, of course, been noted since antiquity. Historically, however, the focus was on the acts themselves rather than on the actors.

The historian John Boswell, of Yale, has noted that during the Middle Ages "same-sex sex" was regarded as a sin, but those who committed that sin were not defined as constituting a type of people different from others.

Between the 16th and the 18th Centuries, same-sex sex became a crime as well as a sin, but again, those who committed such crimes were not categorized as a class of human being.

This changed in the 19th Century, when modern medicine and particularly the science of psychiatry came to view homosexuality as a form of mental illness. By the 1940's, homosexuality was discussed as an aspect of psychopathic, paranoid, and schizoid personality disorders.

### MUTILATION AND DEATH

Having defined homosexuality as a

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## Madison Rallies to Protest Clinton's 'Compromise' on Gays in the Military

By John Cain

[Madison]—About 50 people gathered "in anger and disappointment" outside Wisconsin's Capitol Building on August 6 to rally against President Clinton's "compromise" on Gays in the military. The rally was organized by The United, Madison's Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual community service agency.

Assemblywoman Tammy Baldwin, Wisconsin's only openly Lesbian state legislator, blasted the President for his failure of leadership. "Real leadership is stating that you stand for something and then sticking to it." Baldwin demanded that the Pentagon release the Rand Corporation study, which is believed to recognize, as have other studies before it, that there is no substantive reason for excluding non-heterosexual people from service.

Baldwin noted that "don't ask, don't tell, don't pursue" is not the end of the military issue. "A policy of coerced silence and invisibility is the antithesis of what (the Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual movement is) all about." She strongly encouraged everyone to come out and keep the struggle for Gay civil rights on the front pages, and concluded by suggesting the object lesson we should have learned from this battle. "You don't sit down with the Ku Klux Klan to negotiate civil right for persons of color, and you don't sit down with Senator Sam Nunn and Senator Strom Thurmond to negotiate for Gay and Lesbian rights."

Rally organizers invited Wisconsin's Democratic Senators, Russ Feingold and Herb Kohl, as well as Madison Republican Congressman Scott Klug, to attend the rally or to send a representative or statement. Klug sent a statement of support for the Clinton "compromise" and said he would vote for it as it now reads.

Senator Kohl sent no word.

Senator Feingold sent and aide, Billy Feitlinger, to make Feingold's statements clear: "The ('compromise') policy is an inadequate approach for achieving the goal of lifting the ban on service in the military for Gays and Lesbians. It fully ignores the principle that discharges should not be based on sexual orientation or status; that all prohibitions against sexual misconduct should be equally enforced; and that there should be only narrowly limited restrictions on private speech and conduct."

Feingold is one of seven U.S. Senators who recently signed a letter calling upon Secretary of Defense Les Aspin to release the Rand Corporation study. He is also a co-sponsor of a federal Gay civil rights bill.

Maria Hanson, Madison area coordinator of the National Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Veterans of America, spoke of her loss of faith in the military. Hanson has repeatedly said over the last six months that she would happily return to the military if given the opportunity. Now, she stated, she no longer wishes to serve in the military which refuses to protect the basic freedoms of the people who fight to preserve them for others.

If she were allowed to re-enlist tomorrow, she said, she would not do so until the day that "every Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual, every person of color, every person who faces sexism or any other oppression in this country is allowed the basic protections that we are supposedly defending by the use of our military. Until that day comes, I will not serve my country."

## Note to Dorothy: Kansas Newspaper Publishes Gay Marriage Notices

By George B. Pyle

When a bride-to-be brings the announcement of her coming wedding to be published in the Sunday "Lifestyles" section of the *Salina Journal*, we don't demand to see a marriage license. We don't discriminate against second marriages or interracial unions.

But late last year, when Steven Durant and Skip Bishop walked into my office to ask if we would print their wedding announcement, we had to stop and think. Steven and Skip are both men, and we had never been asked to do anything like that before.

We knew it would happen someday, though, and we quickly decided that we could not argue on the editorial page, as we had, for equal treatment for homosexuals and then deny equality on our own weddings page.

We also decided that we could not print just the announcement. No newspaper should raise so many questions without trying to answer them: What? Two guys getting married? Can they do that? Does the law recognize it? Why are they going public?

So on January 24, the same day the wedding announcement was published, we also printed a full page of articles on Skip and Steven and the legal, psychological and religious ramifications of their action, along with a photograph of the two of them gazing into each other's eyes, standing next to their wedding cake.

Within a week, at least 112 subscriptions were canceled in protest. That's a lot, though circulation remains more than 30,000 and climbing. Some of the advertisers grumbled, but none pulled out.

Skip and Steven got a lot of static around town, but they are still living and working here, still at least as happily married as most heterosexual couples you know.

The Presbyterian minister who performed the ceremony in the couple's home also took a lot of heat. He resigned from the ministry a few weeks ago, more in sorrow than in anger, and has hung out a shingle as a marriage counselor.

The *Journal* received many expressions of support, here and from around the nation. Gays, and families of Gays, wrote to thank us for treating them with simple respect. Many others just admired our guts.

The high point, or at least the loudest point of the whole affair, was when *The Maury Povich Show* flew Skip and Steven

and a *Journal* writer, Becky Fitzgerald, to New York to tell the story of how a little newspaper in Kansas did what so few other newspapers dare to do.

The most common reaction to the TV appearance, from people on both sides of the question, was that Kansas must be a terrible place.

Those opposed to homosexual marriages, or to reading about them, thought Kansas must be a bad place because of what was printed. Those who recognized the couple's right to marry, or the newspaper's duty to print the news, thought Kansas must be a bad place because of the protests here. One woman in the Povich audience told Skip and Steven to click their heels together three times and move to New York.

But they are still in Kansas. And Kansas is not a horrible place. Despite the dusty stereotypes, Kansas journalism has a long tradition of actions bolder than

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## Gay Republican Organization To Open National Office in Washington

By Bob Roehr

[Philadelphia]—The Log Cabin Federation, a Gay Republican organization of over 6,000 members in 32 grass roots chapters, announced at their Convention in Philadelphia, that they have formed a new affiliated group, Log Cabin Republicans, to open a Washington, D.C. office within the next 60 days.

Rich Tafel will head up the office. He said its purpose is to "take our case to the Congress, to the Clinton Administration, to the Republican National Committee, and to the American people." Tafel has been President of the Federation for the last three years, but resigned to take this new position.

Abner Mason of Boston was unanimously chosen to fill a two-year term as President of the Federation after a number of people expressed interest in serving.

One of the emotional high points of the Convention occurred the night before at a banquet at the stately Union League Club. Gay conservative guru Marvin Liebman, author of *Coming Out Conservative*, exorcised both the political left and the religious right, which he called "piously purient hustlers."

"Always outside the straight

Establishment, Gays and Lesbians are now captives of their own self-created Establishment which, with only rare exceptions, has become the captive apologist for the Democratic Party," Liebman said.

He saw Gay Republicans as having the capacity to positively change both the Republican Party and the Gay community. But he also challenged the audience by saying that "Gay and Lesbian Republicans must first prove to their community that they have courage and resources to take center stage."

Michelangelo Signorile, journalist and author of *Queer In America*, was another featured speaker. He made a compelling appeal for working together across the diversity of the Gay and Lesbian community. He said that our goals will not be achieved without bipartisanship and respect for divergent approaches and styles.

Another fact worthy of note was that more than two dozen elected Republican officials signed on as supporters of the Convention. They included such luminaries as California Governor Pete Wilson, Massachusetts Governor William Weld, ten members of the House and Senate and Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan.