

**OLA Honors the
First Q Award
Recipients**

**Bill Norris
Clayton Koppes
Jan Cooper
Midge Brittingham**



NEWS

Oberlin Lambda Alumni —
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and LGBT affirming Alumni & Friends of Oberlin College

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**Lavender Celebration
Sunday, May 25, 2008
2:00PM Peters Hall**

*Please join us for a celebration
of graduating lambda seniors &
the lambda alumni community.*

**OLA Reunites at Oberlin: A Diverse
Group and a Ton of Fun**
By Carol Levine '84, Co-Chair OLA

The OLA reunion far surpassed my expectations. Our participants included people from all decades from the 1950s to the present. The group diversity, not just in terms of age, but in terms of sexual orientation, economic, social, geographical, ethnic, and other sorts of backgrounds was well-represented. This meant we had a lot to talk about and share!

Our activities were designed to appeal to the various interests of the participants, to ensure that people got a chance to visit the exciting new campus buildings and the old, familiar ones, and to give people a chance to mingle with old friends and get to know new ones—including alumni, students, faculty, and staff.

We were honored by participation from Robert Lemle, Chair of the Board of Trustees and his wife, Roni at Friday night's Faculty and Staff Reception as well as Michael Lythcott, an Alumni-Elected trustee. At our banquet celebration on Saturday night, President Marvin Krislov welcomed us during the cocktail hour; and Bob Frascino, also an Alumni-Elected Trustee, was present at the dinner with his partner, Steve Natterstad.

At the faculty/staff reception, we had welcoming words from Associate Dean Eric Estes and introduction of the Comparative American Studies Program by

Professor Meredith Raimondo. Many members of the community came out to welcome us in Peters Hall, and it was a great way to kick off the festivities together.

On Saturday, our day was quite full. We began with the symposium entitled: "How Is the Whole Community Affected by Having a Lambda Community In it?" The panel was moderated by Professor Clayton Koppes, and panelists included Eric Nilson '82 – SVP Wachovia Securities, LLP; Becky Liddle '79 – Assoc. Professor of Counseling Psychology, OISE/ University of Toronto; and Sam Hudson '64 – Writer, Editor, TV Producer, Father, and Texan. Here are some quotes from the ensuing discussion:

"If you can't fix it, feature it!" Eric Nilson (Eric used this quote relative to how he was being alienated at work early on in his career as a gay man and so he intentionally built his clientele from the gay and lesbian community and, subsequently, was featured in Forbes top 100 businessmen to watch.)

"Oberlin is portable." Sam Hudson (He explained that the values inculcated at Oberlin stick with you.)



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Gender Identity and Expression and Oberlin's Non-Discrimination Policy By Eric Estes, Associate Dean and Director of the Multicultural Resource Center (MRC)

On Nov. 28, 2007, at the General Faculty meeting, the LGBT Concerns Committee's motion to include "gender identity and expression" in the non-discrimination policies and statements of the College was passed unanimously. While the entire committee deserves recognition, I wanted to highlight the important roles of three people in particular. Assistant Professor of Comparative American Studies Meredith

Raimondo's work and persistence over the last three years was crucial in helping make this happen. Jack Skelton, MRC LGBTQ Community Coordinator, did a tremendous amount of research the previous summer and early fall so that we could put together the national trends and context in support of the motion. President Krislov made this a priority from the beginning of his administration, and I am sure his strong support on Nov. 28th helped clear the way for a successful vote.

Sometimes in the midst of hard work and struggle, we don't always take time to pause and recognize the victories. While much work has already been done over the past decade, we now look forward to working as a committee with numerous offices and bodies of the College around issues of accountability to and implementation of this important new change in policy.

OLA Reunites at Oberlin (continued)

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"On the road of life, we all stop at different filling stations for sustenance." Told by Eric as quoted from Johnnetta Cole '57 when she was on the Board of Trustees at Oberlin.

"When you are dealing with people who are authoritarian, it's important to come from a position of authority." Becky Liddle (As explained in terms of the challenges she faced working in the South.)

"It's not okay to be homophobic, and it's homophobia that stays closeted (at Oberlin)." Diepiriye S. Kuku-Siemons and Becky Liddle

It's this last quote that I found to be the most interesting depiction of how far we have come at Oberlin with regard to building a strong lambda community with an important presence. Conversely, we had quite a spirited discussion about how the conservatory is not as welcoming to lesbians as it is to gay men. We had three decades of women discussing this, including the present decade, and clearly this is still an issue to be confronted. Women are expected to dress and comport themselves in a certain way, especially when it comes to the areas of performance and music education. Women are not given the same latitude to be themselves as the men are, and although Oberlin is a wonderful environment for the lambda community, it is still far from being a perfect environment.

We had a luncheon sponsored by the Athletics Department and the Heisman Club at Phillips

Physical Education Center. Joe Karlgaard, Director of Athletics, welcomed the group, and Jack Skelton, the LGBTQ Community Coordinator, introduced the Cemelli Prize recipients – Amy Caes '08 and Kantara Souffrant '08, both of whom presented their work to the group. It was a great way for alumni to spend time with students and to see how their donations to the Cemelli/Robertson Education Fund are spent. Clearly, these students were articulate, innovative, and motivated. Their work was very different from each other and equally inspiring. *(Note: Refer to article on page 8 for details: Cemelli and Robertson Award Winners.)*

Warm thanks to Herb Zeman '65 for generously underwriting the Reunion Banquet!

During the afternoon, we split between the ultimate Frisbee championship on the North Fields; two alumni documentary films; and a variety of workshops, including writing your autobiography, being interviewed for the oberlinlgbt.org website, and learning about current student LGBTQ activities and challenges on campus. Then there was a campus tour of lambda hotspots led by Joey Plaster '00, and there was time to visit the AIDS quilt, which was beautifully displayed in Wilder Main Lounge and generously kept at Oberlin throughout the week with funding from the Robert James Frascino AIDS Foundation.

In the evening, we had a spirited cocktail reception in the Adam Joseph Lewis Environmental Studies Center, and then we had a very moving dinner. First, we had a memorial for those members of our community, both known and unknown, whom we have lost over the years. Guests who wanted to participate came up to the front, said the names

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Becky Liddle '79

Sam Hudson '64

Eric Nilson '82

Prof. Clayton Koppes

Interview with Retiring Professor of Art History, Bill Hood By Leslie Myers, '85

Leslie: Tell me about your early years at Oberlin.

Bill: I came to Oberlin in the fall of 1974, following graduate school in New York and three years of dissertation research in Rome. I was closeted, though the first year at Oberlin did a lot to alleviate my fears of negative consequences, especially in the professional sphere. I just wasn't ready. Here I had the good fortune to live across the hall from two art history graduate students (there was a master's program then), Gail Feigenbaum and Paul Ettesvold. Paul was one of the funniest, most self-assured, and happily flamboyant gay men I have ever met. He was a real inspiration to me; and Gail's warm-hearted, cheerful acceptance of gay men and lesbians gave me the self-confidence that I needed to come out. Later that fall, I started a relationship with another faculty member, gradually became more politically active, and have been out ever since.

In the mid-1970's, the activities among gay students seemed to be mostly social, not political. The drag ball was going on, though not at the magnitude of today's event. I lament the overall lack of support for any young new faculty at that time, queer or otherwise, though this has improved enormously over the years.

As I came out and became surer of myself, I began to feel like an older brother to lesbian and gay students. (In the early '70s we didn't yet have the term "LGBT." Few people believed that there could really be such a thing as truly "bisexual" people, and I don't remember ever hearing a discussion of transgender issues. Also, I belong to the generation that finds it very, very difficult to use the word "queer," because for me it is a term loaded with danger, recrimination, and shame.) I realized that I could support them in a way that no one had supported me when I was young, and I sort of reached out to them. Some took me as a mentor, and a few even came out during conversations in my living room. Word got around that I was someone students could talk to, that I would keep their confidences and never be shocked.

Leslie: What do you know about the inception of OLA?

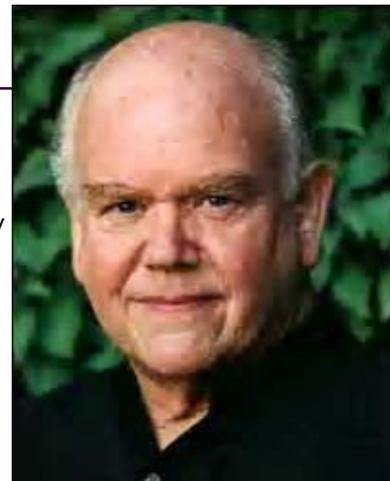
Bill: OLA was conceived in the early 1980's, with the first meeting at the home of Clayton Koppes and Bill Norris. I don't recall whose idea it was, but Norm Robertson and Andy Cemelli, (later honored by a grant and a prize in their names), as well as other students and alums, were there. Also instrumental in the founding was Midge Brittingham; the crucial support of the Alumni Office and her passion for the cause of OLA were critical in getting the OK from the Alumni Association.

At the time, the political climate on campus fostered serious divisions among LGBT students, as they were known by then. There were several reasons for this, I think. For one, lesbians' politics had come from the broader community of ideas born from the women's movement (despite less than ideal acceptance from straight women there). I would say that the women's goals were far more nuanced and comprehensive by comparison with what male students were seeking to achieve. The role models

for young gay men had empowered themselves in the years immediately following Stonewall, and were creating a body of new gay art, literature, drama, and music. While the lesbians had their eyes on the gendered *Realpolitik* of economics and access to power, young gay men were creating a variety of cheerfully hedonistic cultures that are with us still. Thus young gay men's politics, as opposed to lesbian politics, had a lot to do with claiming their individual rights to untethered sexual expression and – ironically -- to the freedom to express their love for each other publicly. Additionally, there were enormous class and racial divisions among segments of the queer student body at Oberlin, which further divided them and made it difficult to bring clearly focused queer issues into a broader campus dialogue. It was a huge problem. Some of the alumni who helped to start the OLA wanted to help students understand that these divisions weakened them in local politics. Don't forget that AIDS was virtually unknown on American campuses until 1982 or '83 at the very earliest and was several years away from becoming a galvanizing force for unity. Many faculty, staff, and alums felt that these student factions all needed to recognize that queerness should be their primary issue. To tell you the truth, though, I am not sure that they ever have.

Leslie: What else was happening in the queer community at Oberlin at that time?

Bill: In the late 1980's, if I remember the date correctly, Bill Norris, who's a sociologist, published a report called "The Two Oberlins." He based it on a careful survey of attitudes towards LGBT issues and people held by everyone at Oberlin: students, faculty, and staff. It appeared in a scholarly journal, and I think I'm correct in saying that it was the first professional, scholarly study of queer issues in any American academic community. He summarized the findings in a speech to the General Faculty and called for the College to establish a regular Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered Concerns. Its purpose was to canvass and address the needs of LGBT faculty and staff, to alert the College to these needs, to work with student organizations, and to promote Queer Studies. In particular, we wanted to reach out to lesbian faculty and staff, who at the time were not very visible by comparison with the men. The General Faculty received Bill's speech with the thundering silence of profound embarrassment. There were no questions. There was no discussion. The motion to form the LGBT Concerns Committee passed very quickly and without audible dissent.



William Hood
Mildred C. Jay Professor of Art

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Featuring Fabulous Alumni: Dr. Robert Frascino '74—Doctor, Philanthropist, AIDS Activist, Oberlin Alumni-Elected Trustee & Pianist

The Oberlin Lambda Alumni are composed of wonderfully energetic, diverse, and creative, intellectually curious, highly motivated, and accomplished individuals. In this article, we share insights from one of OLA's fabulous alumni.

Describe your current career / life situation.

Short Answer:

Life. Love. Sex. HIV. And other unscheduled events.

Longer Answer:

- Profoundly content and perfectly partnered with my perfect partner Steve Natterstad, M.D. for the past 14 years.
- "Virally enhanced" for the past 16 years.
- Committed to compassionate and comprehensive HIV/AIDS care for the past quarter century. President of The Robert James Frascino AIDS Foundation, a 501 (c)(3) not-for-profit charitable organization whose mission is to provide crucial services for men, women, and children living with HIV/AIDS throughout the world and to raise awareness of the HIV/AIDS epidemic through advocacy and education. To date we have raised more than a million dollars for AIDS service organizations worldwide (www.concertedeffort.org).
- Founder of the Frascino Medical Group, Inc., a medical practice devoted to comprehensive and compassionate care of persons living with HIV/AIDS and to gay medicine.
- Chimera consisting of part-time philanthropist, concert pianist (www.concertedeffort.org), and HIV educator/activist/physician expert for Safer Sex/HIV Prevention and Fatigue/Anemia forums (www.thebody.com).

How did your Oberlin experience affect your path / choice?

I'm convinced the first time I saw God was while eating a Gibson's sugar crisp. From that moment forward, I was born again. I now even have two belly buttons!

Oberlin provided me with the transformative experience of a relevant and genuine liberal arts education in the context of contemporary society. The interests I cultivated at Oberlin have become lifelong passions. My piano lessons at the Conservatory and recitals in Warner Concert Hall prepared me well for my ongoing avocation as pianist. My concertizing now is focused primarily on benefit recitals to raise funds for HIV/AIDS. My French studies and winter term project in Quebec have furthered my francophilia. My winter term travels, including a trip to Greece, sparked my lifelong wanderlust. My independent study program in biochemistry evolved into a career in medicine.

What obstacles did you face on your path?

Hmmm . . . well, let's see. The "bathtub Mary" statue that fell off a truck, causing a tremendous traffic tie-up on the Golden Gate Bridge earlier today was the most recent "obstacle in my path." Having a date set for getting married to my partner Steve Natterstad at San Francisco City Hall but having the courts ban "gay weddings" before being able to say "I do" could be considered another path obstructor, but we had the wedding party anyway and renamed it a "nearly-wed" party. A good time was had by all, but alas, we continue to be forced to live in sin.

Give Generously

When making your annual contribution to Oberlin, please give generously and earmark some funds for "OLA".

Your support provides an ongoing Lambda Alumni presence at Oberlin and in the alumni community while also supporting various student, faculty, and alumni activities.

Thanks!

Obstacles in my mind are merely challenges to overcome or disguised opportunities to make unanticipated detours on life's journey.

Certainly becoming HIV positive would top my personal list. I've witnessed the devastation of this scourge from both sides of the examination table – as HIV specialist physician and as a "virally enhanced" person – and I have no difficulty determining which of those two sides I prefer. However, being able to experience HIV/AIDS with the eyes and mind of an HIV specialist physician as well as the body and soul of an HIVer is indeed a privilege that allows me a unique perspective. When the virus found me in January 1991 my life was immediately divided into "before" and "after." I had crossed the line from one who provided care to one who would ultimately need care.

Many questions flooded to mind. Could or should I continue to practice medicine? (I did.) Were my days as a "mean lean lovin' machine" over? (No, they weren't.) Was I ready to die? (Although I didn't fear "whatever comes next," I wasn't ready for whatever it is just yet.) My life "after" did indeed change focus and direction – one of those unanticipated detours I mentioned above. However, it did not lose any of its dedication, passion, compassion, commitment, or purpose. My life was merely refocused. The obstacle became a challenge, which then became a unique opportunity. I used my unique perspective as HIV-positive HIV specialist to wage war against the pandemic in new ways as HIV advocate, educator, and fundraiser. I founded the Frascino Medical Group and The Robert James Frascino AIDS Foundation mentioned above. In addition I became involved with an HIV/AIDS information Web site, The Body (www.thebody.com), as forum expert in the Safe Sex and HIV Prevention forum and the Fatigue and Anemia forum. Through those forums, I answer HIV/AIDS-related questions from throughout the cyber universe. The site managers tell me my comments are read by more than two million readers every month.

Coexisting with HIV/AIDS can indeed be a significant daily challenge. I take 30 pills a day to stay alive (count would

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Interview with Bill Hood (continued)

(Continued from page 3)

Leslie: What are some other things that have happened in your "Queer life at Oberlin?"

Bill: I was the only faculty member I know to have been "fired" by a group of students because of my attitudes towards homosexuality. I was the faculty advisor for the Oberlin Christian Fellowship, and one of their men had come out with my support. When the larger organization became aware of this, they sent someone to test my theological orthodoxy. She asked me a bunch of questions such as, "Do you believe in homosexuality?" I told her that I didn't "believe in" homosexuality any more than I "believe in" the sun's rising. Both are phenomena of nature. For that reason neither homosexuality nor the sun's rising requires me to make an act of faith in order to accommodate it into my life. For that reason as well, I continued, neither homosexuality nor the sun's rising has any inherent moral content at all. It quickly became clear to me that this student did not have the theological equipment necessary to understand the answers I was giving her. So it was also obvious that what she was going to report to the OCF would be a very garbled version of what I had actually said. To get us both out of a tight spot I volunteered to write a statement that would express in my own words what I believed about homosexuality and the Bible. Of course I knew that the OCF students would regard it as seriously heretical, and they did. Within a day or two, they dismissed me as their faculty advisor. But the whole experience had served my purpose, which was to force some Oberlin students to take seriously the reality of

homosexual experience, on the one hand, and to try to integrate it into their beliefs as Christians. The fact that they couldn't do that spoke volumes about the level of their theological sophistication and the skill with which they had forbidden their faith to penetrate their minds.



Unfortunately, most of them still seemed to think that you had to cash in your brain to be a Christian. You don't.

A related incident occurred some time in the 1990s, when an Oberlin Religion professor was among the authors of an article on homosexuality and the Bible that appeared in a distinguished conservative theological journal called *First Things*. It argued that the Bible puts into serious doubt any Christian validation of same-sex love. People at Oberlin got wind of the piece through an editorial in *The Wall Street Journal*, and all hell broke loose among the students. Some of us – I think it was the LGBT Committee – decided to respond by holding a kind of open forum, or speak-in, in Wilder Main. Several faculty and staff members, not all of them gay, read statements reflecting on the article from the viewpoint of their own experience. I was one of them. Afterwards the Minister of First Church asked me to have coffee. I did, and he talked me

into giving a series of talks to his congregation about what it means to me to be a gay Christian. I forget how many Sundays I spoke, but I do know that I was terrified on every single one of them. After all, First Church is where the Brahmins of Oberlin address their Higher Power, and the

audience was full of very, very distinguished senior members of the Oberlin faculty. But I did it, and felt very well received. First Church subsequently voted to become an

Open and Accepting Community, welcoming all Queer people.

Leslie: What are your thoughts about homophobia in Oberlin and beyond?

Bill: When I first came to Oberlin, in the active 1970's, being gay was only one mode of being transgressive; in certain circles of students, it was already cool. For the most part, the Oberlin faculty are middle-class, knee-jerk liberals. Homophobia has always been a non-issue among them because to make it an issue would require them to talk about it, and they just aren't going to do that, any more than they are going to discuss the doctrine of the Trinity. Among students, however, homophobia, largely from the wider world, can be a fatal illness, with a lot of subsequent depression attributable to it. Despite what one might think about the consequences of all the openness in these days, such as *Queer as Folk*, internalized homophobia would not be a big

deal here. But my sense is that it still is, though less than twenty or even ten years ago. A gay student once told me that it's easy to be out at Oberlin, but not always easy to come out.

Being gay on the Oberlin faculty has been one of the great plus marks in my life, with many great and lasting friendships.

Leslie: What do you plan for your retirement?

Bill: Retirement for me means that I do not have to make any immediate decisions. Therefore, I have no plans for the first year after I retire in December.

Leslie: Thank you very much for talking to me.

Bill: It has been my pleasure.

Distinguished Oberlin faculty member William Hood received the College Faculty Council's 2006-07 Teaching Excellence Award in recognition of his innovative, dedicated, and successful teaching.

Gender Neutral Pronouns

By Jack Skelton, LGBTQ Community Coordinator

There are many gender-neutral pronouns. These are some of the most commonly used sets:

sie, hir, hirs, hirself
 zie, zir, zirs, zirself
 ey, eir, eirs, emselves

Instead of...	Use...	Pronounced...
he/she	sie zie ey	“see” “zee” like “they” without a “th”
him/her	hir zir eir	“here” like “sir” with a “z” like “their” without a “th”
his/hers	hirs zirs eirs	“here’s” like “sirs” with a “z” like “theirs” without a “th”
himself/herself	hirself zirself emselves	“here-self” like “sir-self” with a “z” like “themselves” without a “th”

It is often also acceptable to use the third person plural (they, them, their, themselves) instead of the third-person singular (he/she, his/hers, him/her, himself/herself) when referring to someone who has not expressed a clear pronoun choice. Also, many individuals may choose to use third person plural pronouns consistently or alternating pronouns—for example, he, she, and ze, in order to represent the shifting and fluid nature of their gender identities and expressions.

How YOU Can Get Involved

1. **Offer a Student Career Advice**—Correspond with a student to share your valuable experiences. Many students would love to hear about your real life experiences in the ‘real world’.
2. **Sign up on Obie web** and on the “Out” list to allow students and alumni to contact you with specific questions about career paths and Winter Term projects.
3. **Provide Winter Term Housing**—Housing is often the biggest barrier to securing projects in unfamiliar cities. There are a variety of arrangements to support or assist students in locating and securing housing in a city near you.
4. **Sponsor a Winter Term Project**—If you have an interesting idea, pass it on! Let the office of Career Services at Oberlin know about your great idea so that some bright student can follow up!
5. **Visit Oberlin and Share Your Talents**—There is nothing more effective for students than when Alumni come back to campus and share their life experiences. It helps students understand in a very personal way how to thrive after graduation.

October 2014

OLA's 25th Anniversary
 Reunion Countdown
 7 Years



OLA Reunites at Oberlin (continued)

(Continued from page 2)



Reunion Faculty/Staff Reception

of our Q award, which honored those Oberlin individuals who have made a difference to the lambda community. Recipients included Midge Brittingham, Jan Cooper, Clayton Koppes, and Bill Norris. It was truly heartwarming to be able to honor them for the support they have given to generations of students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

The reunion was capped off with an Alumni Concert in Kulas Recital Hall with emotional performances by Roger Goodman '68, Marissa L. '00, and Herb Zeman '65; then it was followed by a roaring crowd for Queer Night at the 'Sco. Needless to say, the next morning we slowly dragged ourselves to breakfast at the various venues in town and got a chance to spend more personal time together before returning home.

It was incredible to be back at Oberlin with so many people from the lambda community. There is still so much we can learn from each other through our different life experiences, and it reminded so many of us why we came to Oberlin in the first place; we are at Oberlin for only four years, but we are alumni for a lifetime! We are already talking about the next reunion.

Carol is the outgoing Co-Chair of OLA. She is also on the Trustee Search Committee for Oberlin.

aloud of those people they wanted to remember, and put a river rock in a glass bowl illuminated with a silver candle, until the bowl was full. It was a very personal and moving tribute. Too many people needed to be remembered, and although it saddened us, it clearly warmed the hearts of the lambda community to know that they were and are all remembered.

We then had personal tributes for each recipient

Featuring Fabulous Alumni: Dr. Robert Frascino '74 (continued)

(Continued from page 4)

decrease if you excluded Viagra, but hey . . .) and the side effects can be difficult to cope with; however, I certainly won't ever complain. In many ways, although I feel I'm living on borrowed time, I've never felt more alive. Without the pills I certainly wouldn't be here responding to these questions and sipping a phenomenal Peet's double cappuccino. I realize I may be straying from the topic of obstacles a bit, but I really don't look at life in an "obstructed" way. I'll leave you with several of my favorite quotes that help define my perspective on life and being positive about being "positive."

"This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one. The being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy . . . Life is no brief candle for me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations."

-- George Bernard Shaw

"Only money, rage, and science can conquer AIDS. But only laughter can make the nightmare bearable."

-- Paul Rudnick, playwright

What advice might you

give to others on their career path?

Eat a live toad every morning and nothing worse will happen to you for the rest of the day.

Don't follow anyone else's path. Rather, go where there is no path and leave a trail! Life is much more exciting that way. Fearlessly believe one person can change the world. (How's that for amalgamating our two mottos?)

What makes you happy?

Antiwar protests: Because they give me hope.

Antibiotics: Because they help heal the sick.

Antiretrovirals: Because they keep me alive.

Auntie Mame: Because, well, she's just fabulous.

I'm not sure anything can "make" someone happy. OK, well maybe Prozac, but that's pharmaco-happiness and that doesn't count in discussing pseudophilosophical questions, like "what makes you happy?"

I could give a lengthy list of what brings me joy, including (in no specific order) my exquisite lover Steve; my extraordinary pooch Presto; my phenomenal Bechstein grand piano; a scrumptious Peet's double cappuccino in the morning; own-name forgetting, toe-curling sex at night, etc.;

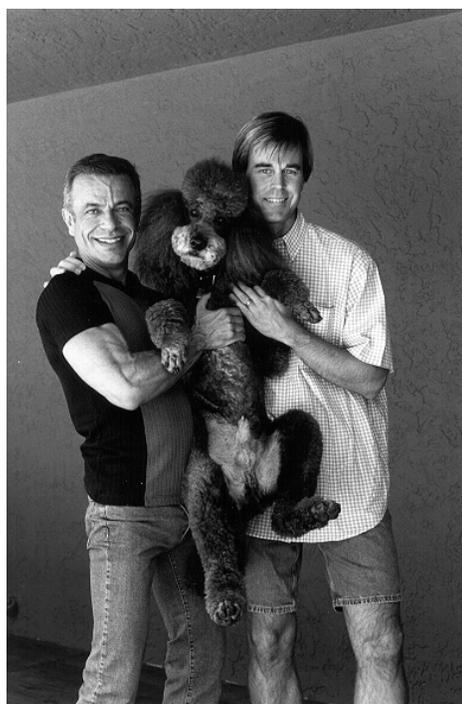
however, bragging about such an "embarras de richesses" could seem conceited and perhaps misanthropes might accuse me of overdosing on the above mentioned pharmaco-happy-inducer. (No, I don't take Prozac or any other happy pills.) So perhaps I should answer this question more philosophically with another of my favorite quotes. What makes me content (a form of "happy") is knowing I have "succeeded" as defined by Ralph Waldo Emerson.

"To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of

children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived; this is to have succeeded."

-- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Finally, this photo does indeed make me happy.



Bob Frascino '74 & his partner, Steve Natterstad

OBERLIN COLLEGE LGBT
Community History Project
www.oberlinlgbt.org

An interactive archive created to record, preserve, and make available Oberlin College's LGBT history. Created by Joey Plaster '00



OLA Steering Committee wants YOU!

If you are interested in joining the OLA Steering Committee, coming back to Oberlin for meetings twice a year, getting involved with current campus life & alumni activities, and making Oberlin a priority, please contact us for details.

OLA@world.oberlin.edu

Cemelli/Robertson Educational Fund Award Winners Present Work at OLA Reunion Luncheon

By Jack Skelton, LGBTQ Community Coordinator and Kantara Souffrant, '08

Alumni had both informal and formal opportunities to engage current students over the course of the Lambda Alumni Reunion Weekend this past fall. Among these was the Heisman Club Picnic and Student Networking Event, during which alumni had the chance to chat with students, staff, and faculty. The luncheon was followed by presentations by the 2007 Cemelli Prize winners, Kantara Souffrant* and Amy Caes*. Sponsored by the Oberlin Lambda Alumni and awarded by the General Faculty LGBT Concerns Committee, the Cemelli Grant is awarded to students in memory of Andy Cemelli '85, who helped found OLA and who died of AIDS in 1996. The grant serves to assist students financing projects of either scholarly research or artistic production/performance that advance communal awareness of issues related to the history, experience, or accomplishments of LGBTQ people. Expressing their appreciation, both students emphasized the importance of alumni support in furthering LGBTQ social and artistic efforts on campus and beyond.



Kantara Souffrant '08

A senior and a triple major in African American Studies, Comparative American Studies, and Studio Art, Kantara Souffrant kicked off the student presentations, speaking about her artistic project and its focus on her negotiations of identity as a person of Haitian ancestry living in the United States. Her life, she elaborates, "has been spent at a junction—occupying a dual reality of Haiti's legacy as the first free Black republic, full of culture, tradition, and strength, and its present reality which is gripped by images of poverty, destitution, and Black people fighting each other in the sake of survival." Souffrant's art explores this duality, and Cemelli Grant funds financed the installations she creates to visually represent her identity and relationship to Haitian culture and the greater African Diaspora. These installations allow Souffrant to share her stories of identity development and struggles, often incorporating elements of writing and sound in addition to the images on display. Souffrant continues to develop her artistic voice, and her Senior Honors Show employed many of the same themes, though with an important difference. Souffrant added a performance element to her pieces, including herself in the physical installation through dance, movement, gesture, and voice. Performance, she adds, allowed the audience to participate in the "physical and spiritual manifestation of...healing that [her] work invokes."

Also a senior and a Comparative American Studies major, Caes discussed their research on transgender artists' self-representations and the images on display as examples. Their project considered how these images relate to gender identity

formations and the ways in which understandings of gender shape artists' patterns of representation. With the funds from the Cemelli Grant, Caes spent time last summer in San Francisco, combing through the archives of the LGBT Historical Society and attending queer and trans performance and film festivals. This research allowed Caes access to artworks and artists who frequently suffer from low visibility. Taking the problem of visibility into consideration, Caes has expanded their project. They explains, "Because I am doing this project in response to the absence of published works on trans art, and the inaccessibility of the art itself, I am using Winter Term to develop a catalogue that would both showcase the art and provide an analysis of it," increasing access to this important work beyond archives or festivals.

Also on display at the Heisman Club Picnic was Jamie Harrow's work on interlocking systems of oppression. Harrow, who graduated in 2007, was the recipient of the Robertson Prize, a cash prize intended to recognize students who have completed outstanding projects of scholarly research or artistic production/performance that advance awareness about the LGBTQ community. Named in memory of Norm Robertson, '81, one of the original co-founders of OLA, who died of AIDS in 1992, the Robertson Prize is, like the Cemelli Grant, sponsored by OLA and awarded by the LGBTQ Concerns Committee. Harrow produced a comic book, *Stuff That's (not) Invisible*, that considers the ways in which different kinds of privilege and oppression interact. Ableism, classism, homophobia, racism, religious oppression, sizeism, and transphobia are just some of the isms that Harrow encourages us to consider. Printed in limited numbers, his comic book is available at the Multicultural Resource Center and will soon be available on the MRC website at www.oberlin.edu/mrc/ for any alumni who are interested in seeing a copy.

Alumni, staff, and students appreciated the opportunity to engage with Souffrant's, Caes's, and Harrow's work, while enjoying the hospitality of the Heisman Club and the Athletics Department, who sponsored the event. Having established connections over the luncheon, alumni found other opportunities in the weekend to continue to develop and strengthen those relationships with current students.

*Kantara Souffrant '08 uses the pronouns: she, her, her, and hers.

*Amy Caes '08 uses the pronouns: they, them, their, and theirs.

^Jamie Harrow '07 uses the pronouns: he, him, his, and his.



Jack Skelton



Amy Caes '08

OLA Honors The First Q Award Recipients

By The OLA Steering Committee

Bill Norris

In 1990, Bill published his findings from a comprehensive survey he piloted, entitled: "Liberal Attitudes and Homophobic Acts: The Paradoxes of Homosexual Experience in a Liberal Institution." He presented his findings regarding the stigma, and sometimes violence, against queer students on campus to the General Faculty. This led immediately to the formation of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Concerns Committee (LGBTCC), and eventually to a plethora of measures on campus that enhanced the lives of queer people, including providing benefits for employees' same-sex partners and insisting that LGBT studies become an academic subject. We thank him not only for the years of dedication and unaltered commitment to LGBT students, faculty, and staff, but also for his determination that any change necessarily include what Derrick Bell calls "the voices from the bottom of the well."



Bill Norris & Clayton Koppes

Clayton Koppes

As a professor of U.S. History for 30 years at Oberlin, Clayton has also held such distinguished roles as Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dean of the College, Provost, and Acting President. Clayton's openness and presence has been a shining light for many. He believes in diversity of the student body and how students can learn as much from each other as they can in the classroom. He has worked tirelessly by sitting on many committees, including as former chair of the LGBT Concerns Committee, and planning activities that make Oberlin the accepting and inspiring environment for students, faculty, and staff that it is today. Moreover, Clayton and his partner, Bill Norris, have opened their home to students and faculty over the years as a safe space in which to discuss queer-related issues, including the first OLA meeting. Clayton remains a beacon of light.

Jan Cooper

A tenured professor in creative and expository writing, Jan was one of the first people to lend support to OLA as a mentor and guide. As Roger Goodman '68 puts it, she has been "a voice of heterosexual objective sanity in our sometimes homosexual objective insanity." She has also been an active member of the Faculty LGBT Concerns Committee. Mostly, Roger continues, she never wanted to let the queer presence on campus become a non-issue. This included queer culture, aesthetics, sciences, history, and arts. She believed that if we became a non-issue, we would die as a tribe. Being queer is an issue of justice for Jan, and she is a woman of great justice. She is also a beloved, iconic symbol of non-queer support and non-queer possibility on a queer campus.



Jan Cooper

Midge Brittingham '60

As the former Executive Director of the Alumni Association for 30 years, Midge championed the creation of OLA as the first affiliate group of the Alumni Association. Once formed, she sat on the committee as an Ex-Officio member, never missed a meeting, and helped develop OLA's vision. She supported OLA through its transitions, especially when its founders both died of AIDS. She and her husband, Smith, have always had an open door policy and have welcomed OLA members to come and stay with them when on campus or to simply come in for a chat—a ballgame on TV and a drink to quickly appear in your hands. Midge's loving embrace and thoughtful guidance has permeated the hearts of OLA and sustained it for years to come.

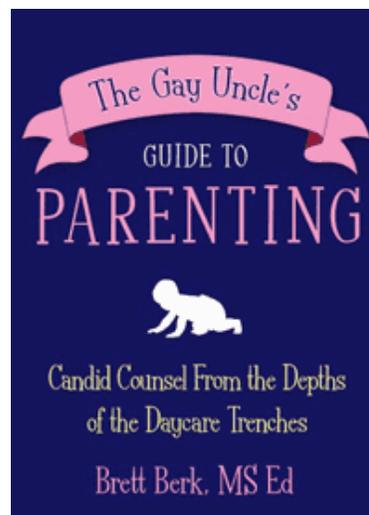


Smith & Midge Brittingham (both '60)

The Gay Uncle's Guide to Parenting (Crown/Three Rivers, March 2008)

by Brett Berk, '91, is the sassy, funny, in-your-face guide to navigating the pitfalls of modern parenthood. Brett has over twenty years of experience working with young children, but no kids of his own, and uses his outsider's perspective to break moms and dads out of the Parenting Bubble: an alternate universe where under-table dining, Everest-like toy piles, and hourly tantrums somehow seem "normal". Packed full of candid advice, handy checklists, and stories of parents even crazier than you or your friends, *The Gay Uncle's Guide to Parenting* reveals how consistency, patience, and cool heads are the key to overcoming almost any parenting struggle.

Brett Berk '91 and his boyfriend, Tal McThenia '90 divide their time between a tiny apartment in Manhattan and a small house in upstate New York. In addition to working as a research consultant to some of the world's biggest producers of kids' media, toys, and products, Brett writes (and occasionally publishes) short stories. He has just completed his first novel "Safety Seat" (which is set in the auto industry in his hometown of Detroit), and he teaches fiction writing at The New School in New York City. Brett can be contacted at brettberk@mac.com or at www.brettberk.com.





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