



## ***The White Squirrel***

### OLA's semi-annual newsletter

#### **Spring 1997**

[Name Change](#)

[The White Squirrel?](#)

[Remembering Andy](#)

[Bob Diehm Dies](#)

[Counseling Center Update](#)

[February Steering Committee Meeting Summary](#)

[New OLA Steering Committee Members](#)

[Miscellaneous Announcements](#)

#### **OLGBA Becomes Oberlin Lambda Alumni!**

If you've been reading The White Squirrel regularly, then you know that OLGBA has been struggling with the question of changing our name for over a year. The goal was to change the name of our organization in order to be explicitly inclusive of members who do not identify as either gay, lesbian, or bisexual, for example, members who are transexual, transgendered, don't label themselves, or are straight and supportive of sexual minority issues. We also wanted a name that would not need to be changed as terms of pride evolve. At our February 1997 meeting, the Steering Committee agreed unanimously to change the name of our organization to Oberlin Lambda Alumni. Our name will be changed officially with the Alumni Association, and on all of our organization's materials: web page, brochure, publications, etc.

Why Lambda? Lambda has a long history as a symbol of pride in G/L/B/T/etc. movements, and an even longer history as a symbol of justice and individual freedom. The ancient Greek precursor to the lambda was a pictorial symbol for the scales of justice. The ancient Spartans had a Lambda emblazoned on their shields, as a symbol of the importance of the balance between the individual and the government: individual freedom, balanced with the need to come together in unity for the common good. In the late '60s and early '70s the Lambda was adopted internationally as a gay pride symbol. Because the "gay" rights movement at that time included gay, lesbian, and bisexual people as well as "gender outlaws," and because of the Lambda's long and distinguished history as a symbol of justice and freedom, the Steering Committee settled on "Oberlin Lambda Alumni" as a name we hope to be able to live with for a long time.

We appreciate the input and insights members have contributed to the discussion of this new name. Now it is time to ask for OLA members' help once again! We would very much like to create a new logo and T-shirts for our newly-named organization. Please send any ideas you have for logo designs to Peter Nicholson,

1130 S. Michigan Ave., Apt. 3009, Chicago, IL 60605 or email to [psn1@xsite.net](mailto:psn1@xsite.net).

---

## **Why is This Newsletter Called The White Squirrel?**

Many of you have asked why OLA's newsletter is called The White Squirrel. When I was at Oberlin in the 1970s, living on north campus, I often saw white (albino) squirrels living there. I later learned that Oberlin has had a population of white squirrels living on campus throughout its entire history. We chose to name the newsletter The White Squirrel because this population seemed somehow representative of the LGBT community at Oberlin: sometimes seen, sometimes not, but always there, throughout Oberlin's history, enriching the community and contributing to the uniquely wonderful and magical essence of Oberlin. We have other experiences in common with these little critters, of course: brown parents raise albino offspring, and vice-versa, and white squirrels often share this special trait with their great aunts or cousins rather than their parents or children... Personally, I like the analogy, and the title makes me think of walking down north campus. But we're not wedded to the name. If anyone out there wants to propose a new title, now might be a good time, since we're also looking for a new logo to go with our new organizational name.

---

## **OLA members Remember Andy Cemelli**

I was touched to learn of the re-naming of the research grant in honor of Andy Cemelli. It can't begin to calm the rage I feel about his dying. But his name, and the work he began at Oberlin, will live; I'm grateful for that, as I'm grateful to have had the chance to know Andy. I know there will be a lot of folks at the reunion who will experience acute pain because of the absence where he should be, and my heart will be with them.

My best wishes,  
K. E. Dennis ('78)

\*

I was greatly saddened by the news of Andy's passing this winter. Upon reading of the Award offered in his memory, I couldn't help but see him in my mind's eye as we worked together in the Dept. of Theatre and Dance. Andy and I first met when I was the stage manager for Oberlin Opera Theater's production of Poulenc's Dialogues of the Carmelites, I believe in Fall 1985. Andy was on the light crew, and contributed hours of entertaining and (to say the very least) memorable headset chatter during the late night rehearsals and hectic performances. I remember spending several hours with Andy in the Costume Shop, hand-sewing seemingly endless hems and buttons. Those of us who were Technical Assistants in the Costume Shop always looked forward to afternoons when Andy worked-we knew we were in for lively conversation and a good afternoon's work. I also have a fleeting memory of getting knitting tips from him-I think he must have been doing a Winter Term project or maybe taking an Exco class on knitting. I personally could never get the hang of it. When I was a student with Andy, I did not yet identify as a lesbian. But I remember that when I came out several years later, I was comforted by seeing his name on The White Squirrel. Looking back, I realize that he was an early model for me of what it meant to be an out, active, caring Obie. Andy will

indeed be missed.

Jennifer Stiles ('87)  
Graduate Student  
Tufts University Drama Dept.

\*

I was an old, if distant, friend of Andy Cemelli, and I didn't know he had died (last I saw him he was ill, but not terribly, it seemed, last Fall). He was a great leader of the queer community at Oberlin when I was there. We all thought he was fabulous. His aggressive personality was a catalyst for real progress on campus for us during a very dark time for the movement, at the onset of the AIDS crisis. His friends from then and I will remember him always.

-Rolf Sjogren ('84)

---

## Death of Bob Diehm ('37)

Many of you did not know Bob, but he was on the original Gay Alumni Task Force and also on the first Steering Committee. He died March 12 of prostate cancer in Cincinnati. He leaves his partner of many years, Don. Bob's recollections are the first in [Into the Pink](#). Bob was serving as chair of his reunion gift committee and looking forward to his 60th reunion this May, and presenting the college with the class gift.

---

## News from the Counseling Service

There is much good news to report about recent events at the Counseling Service. Last spring, as a result of concerns raised by LGBT students (and passed on by the OLA Steering Committee), the Counseling Service decided to hire 2 consultants to do some training. Before that event occurred, the Counseling Service lost 2 of its 4 psychologists as a result of an early retirement incentive. The workshop was put off until replacements could be hired. By spring semester of this year two new psychologists had been hired. Gay-affirmative attitudes were a consideration in the search process and we are very happy with the results of the search. Both psychologists came with experience demonstrating a commitment as allies to the LGBT communities. In addition, one of the two continuing psychologists is an out lesbian.

Once the new hires were on board, the training workshop was rescheduled. OLA Steering Committee member Becky Liddle and another consultant did a 2-day program on diversity awareness and effective counseling with LGBT clients. Both workshops were well-received. The diversity awareness workshop was also attended by administrative staff members from various offices, mostly in student affairs. We are very pleased with these recent events, and believe that the Counseling Service is now very well equipped to serve LGBT and questioning students at Oberlin.

---

## February Meeting Minutes: Summary

On Saturday, February 15, the Oberlin Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Alumni Steering Committee met for the last time. By the end of the weekend, the Steering Committee emerged as the Oberlin Lambda Alumni (OLA). While the news coming from the campus was generally positive, much work remains to meet the ongoing challenges faced by the LGBT community at Oberlin.

The meeting began with a summary of the OLA finances. Thanks to the hard work of Moss Stern as Treasurer of OLA, our finances have been organized onto Quicken and, as of December 1996, we had a positive balance of \$4,800. Currently our biggest spending items are the Cemelli Research Grant and Robertson Research Prize given to current students; Steering Committee travel; guest speakers; and the conference held last fall. The Committee discussed at length the need for the Grant and Research awards to be endowed so we no longer have to take money out of our annual fund for these projects.

Lisa Caten has been leading the effort to organize the LGBT alums in various regions. She announced the first ever social for LGBT alums in Washington, D.C.

We also discussed the LGBT reunion/conference held at Oberlin last fall with writer/activist Urvashi Vaid. Due to the great success of this program, the Committee agreed that it would be a great idea to make the reunion/conference a tradition every other year. The theme from last fall was "From Family to Community: What Holds Us Together, What Pulls Us Apart." Ideas proposed for future themes included, among others, multiculturalism and spirituality.

The rest of the meeting on Saturday and Sunday was spent focused on campus issues. The Steering Committee met with several faculty members; the LGBT Multicultural Resource Center (MRC) Intern, Dee Wells; the new Dean of Arts and Sciences, Clayton Koppes; and quite a few students. Unfortunately, due to illness and scheduling problems, we were unable to meet with President Dye and Dean Cole, although Moss Stern did have a productive meeting with President Dye on Monday.

The MRC, according to many of those with whom the Committee met, has enjoyed an active, productive, and busy year. Numerous speakers and seminars have kept Dee busy along with her daily counseling duties. Last semester Dean Cole and the MRC brought a large portion of the AIDS quilt to campus. While many members of the community agreed that the MRC and LGBT community have enjoyed greater visibility and support on campus, it seemed as if a major challenge for the community is not morale but energy among the seemingly exhausted students.

In the meeting with faculty members and Dean Koppes, the Steering Committee was able to clarify the details of how curricular changes occur at Oberlin. While LGBT studies as an official program will not be realized in the foreseeable future, the Committee was also made aware of the great number of courses and speakers (including Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass.) focusing on LGBT issues. For a web page listing LGBT related courses at Oberlin, go (via internet) to [http://www.oberlin.edu/~jcooper/lgbt\\_courses.html](http://www.oberlin.edu/~jcooper/lgbt_courses.html)

Becky Liddle delivered heartening news of the exciting new members of the Counseling Center who will be able to provide needed counseling services to the LGBT community on campus. This office will now be able to play an essential role in the development of allies and support in the administration and among students (see article, page 2).

Clearly one of the greatest challenges facing our community on campus is the lack of sufficient HIV/AIDS awareness and education on campus. This issue was discussed at length by the committee. The group discussed ways in which the Administration and OLA can create an environment in which education and discussion is more frequent and effective. The productive February meeting served as a reminder to many of those present that as the administration of Oberlin has changed, our role as alumni has been altered as well.

While the group investigated and addressed issues of concern to LGBT students and alumni, the Steering Committee spent an unprecedented amount of time discussing good news and ways to become proactively involved in the College and Alumni Association.

---

## **New OLA Steering Committee Members**

### **Scott Fehlan**

(College '88)

Scott Fehlan moved to Chicago after finishing law school, and currently works at a 50-attorney (small, by Chicago standards) law firm practicing corporate and securities law. He and his partner live downtown, enjoy the theater and opera, and travel as often as work allows. Scott was previously a class agent and serves on the alumni council's awards committee.

### **Michael Murphy**

(College, '96)

Having graduated from Oberlin less than a year ago, Michael has spent his time since graduation trying to figure out what he wants to do when he grows up. It seems that he will be attending law school next year although he does not know where. Currently, Michael does research at the Washington University Department of Cell Biology and Physiology. He is also currently serving a three year term as Class Trustee on the Oberlin College Board of Trustees.

### **Kathy Hines**

(Conservatory '89)

When colleagues ask Kathy Hines how she prepared for her current career as a fundraiser, she explains that searching for money becomes a necessary habit for anyone trained as a musician. Since graduating in '89 with a degree in clarinet performance, Kathy has worked for various non-profit agencies in Washington, D.C. and Michigan, ranging from small community groups to a traveling art museum housed in a train. She currently works for the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, serves as president of a county-wide gay & lesbian rights group which she founded, and sings with a local LGBT chorus. After spending six years in the Ann Arbor area, Kathy is now planning a move to Atlanta in the next few months.

**Doug Cooper**

(College, '50)

After graduating in 1950, I spent 17 months on active duty recall during the Korean War. Upon release I started my 40-year teaching career in Tucson (where I have just returned from a period on Memory Lane). From there it was a year in Manhattan and 35 years at a private day school in New Canaan, CT. Because of the homophobic atmosphere there, but also because I grew attached to my monthly paycheck, I remained rather tightly closeted during my working years. That was simply the way things were back then. With retirement came the opportunity to experience the liberating exhilaration of coming out with a roar to everyone who plays any part in my life. OLA was early on in that process, and while I'm not sure what my role can or will be, it is exciting to anticipate.

---

**Announcements****Commencement Reception**

The 1996-97 Andy Cemelli Research Grant recipients will present their research on Saturday May 24 at 4:00 PM as a part of the Commencement weekend celebration. This year's recipients are Nicole Heard and Andrew LaVallee. Nicole has spent her year doing a historical piece on African-American lesbians while Andy has focused on Ethnic Studies and its relationship to the LGBT community. Following the presentation of their work, there will be a reception for all who are in attendance.

**Out-in-the-Workplace Seminars**

One of OLA's most popular on-campus activities at the last two reunions for LGBT alumni has been called "Out in the Workplace/World". This is a place for students to talk to OLA members about what it's like to be "out" in various professions, what their coming out experiences were like, how experiences vary from job to job, what to consider when making a career change, etc.

The next "Out in the Workplace" event will take place during Alumni Council weekend, September 20th, 1997. If you would like to participate, are interested in speaking to students about what it's like for you to be out at work or just out in the world, and would be willing to travel to Oberlin to do so, contact....

**Regional Event**

OLA members in Washington, D.C. gathered at Trumpets at Dupont Circle, Saturday, March 22nd, for food, drinks and merriment. This marks the first OLA regional event in the past 3 years. We hope to get more areas actively involved. For more information or to volunteer to organize events in your area, contact [ola\\_oberlin@yahoo.com](mailto:ola_oberlin@yahoo.com).

**Vote for Eric!**

Eric Nilson ('82) has been nominated to run as a candidate for an alumni-elected trustee position. The OLA Steering Committee wholeheartedly endorses his candidacy and wants to encourage you to consider casting your ballot for him this fall in the alumni trustee election.

Eric has served the college in many capacities over the past 12 years, including

chairing the "Gay Alumni Task Force" in 1989. His work in that capacity led to the founding of OLA. In addition, he has served on many alumni council committees, was president of the Alumni Association from 1993–95 and has been steadfast in his financial support of the institution.

Eric is deeply committed to the college and, as an openly gay alumnus, would bring an important and much-needed perspective to the trustees. Please give his candidacy your consideration!

**[Return to Top](#)**

**[OLA News](#)**

**[OLA Home](#)**