

PANEL DISCUSSION: Lifestyles of Nonpatient
Homosexuals

Lilli Vincenz
5411 So. 8th Place
Arlington, Va. 22204

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punctuated.

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Lilli Vincenz

Ten years ago I had a real crisis in my life, and I didn't feel there was any more reason for living. I had not come out as a homosexual, even though I realized that I wanted to meet other homosexuals and lead a homosexual life. But I didn't know how to go about it. I had no contacts whatsoever. So I thought I wanted to die. But before I took the sleeping pills, I thought: Should I go to see a psychiatrist or should I die? I thought: Well, I'll overcome my pride and I'll see a doctor. And I did: Dr. Paul Weiss -- the late Dr. Weiss -- of New York. He helped me a great deal. It was before I had acknowledged that I really wanted to be gay, ^{and} so he tried to steer me into a heterosexual lifestyle. But he was still very understanding, and I was with him only a year. And in that year I gained the strength to go out on my own and find homosexuals and live the lifestyle that I wanted. Even though he would have liked to see me take a more convenient lifestyle, he condoned it, and he was happy for me. And we stayed in contact, until he died, via letters and visits.

I was a very obedient child. I wanted very much to be like every-
one else, but it didn't work that way, and convention could only
offer me/^{=enky}so much. When I realized that I was different and when I
owned up to it, my life was changed and I was finally able to pursue
the happiness I wanted. That was ten years ago, and now I am very
happily established with a mate. And I can say that Gay is Good and
homosexuals can be as beautiful as anyone else.

2

I want to point out that many people forget that homosexuality, primarily, is a way of loving -- and, if you will, a way of making love too, but primarily a way of loving -- and as such it is a positive thing. It is not a reaction against the opposite sex. It is simply that there is no magnetism with the opposite sex, while there is magnetism with the same sex. Many people think that homosexuality is a result of a negative experience with the opposite sex. It is not so. It's a positive attraction for the same sex, as has been pointed out.

I don't have a presentation as everyone else. So I just want to bring out a few points. I have been very lucky because my parents have been very understanding and have supported me all the way and give me moral support -- even though they wish they could have grandchildren and all that. But they accept me, they love me, and they accept me for what I am- want to be, ^{and they respect my integrity.} Some of the problems of the homosexuals are that when you are a nonconformist, as we have to be (maybe in the last five years this has changed), you don't grow up with the tools for living a nonconformist life. We have been programmed for conformity, and all of a sudden there we are outside of society, and how do we deal with this? Do we have the inner strength? Of course we have to get the inner strength to assert ourselves and our individuality, as people who are not in society and yet have to live there. A big problem is having to lie about your homosexuality. This is, I think, one of the most destructive forces that can attack our personalities; ~~that~~ that we have to constantly feel that we cannot be open and honest about the way we feel and that we have to live a double life. This really can distort us. Those people who fall prey to it, and especially those people who have internalized societal prejudice and actually believe that maybe society is right might just be swept ~~into~~ ^{by} the tide of prevailing opinion.

I'd like also to quote a few things, a few observations on homosexuality that I've run across over the years. When I was in the WACS, I was in training as a neuropsychiatric technician, and in our textbook someone said that homosexuals don't like each other -- that they really can't get along with each other and can't stand each other. At that point I hadn't come out yet really, and I thought: Oh, oh, what am I in for? But ~~if~~ I found, fortunately, that this was a lie. Then, when I came out, in the Army, and was thrown out because I was not very adept at hiding my homosexuality -- or, rather, I didn't lie when I was confronted, and my roommate, my heterosexual roommate who wanted to "get all the "queers out of the Army," turned me in as soon as she realized that I had an attraction for someone -- I did not contest it. I was so relieved that finally I would have to come to terms with myself, and I made a full confession. I didn't try to lie about it. I could have, I suppose, fought it, but, still, I have a general discharge under honorable conditions. This experience of being kicked out of the WACS played a very important part in my life.--

← (I think I am going over-time here.) But upon my discharge I had to go to be examined by a psychiatrist, and he said he couldn't understand how I could go and work on a ward, a psychiatric ward (at Walter Reed, where I was working): How could I be with patients? And he said, and I quote, "Did it give you a kick to be with people who were sicker than you?" I'll never forget that. His name was Dr. Raver, and I believe he was truly raving. (Laughs/) As I said, I don't have a presentation, and since I've gone over, I'll close. Thank you. (Applause)

(P.31)
 [In the rest of my comments on the panel, I'd just like to correct the spelling of Daughters of Bilitis (not Belitis). Also, on page 41, please punctuate the sentence on line 9 as follows: "As far as I know at least, the homophile movement has not posed a threat to the family."#7