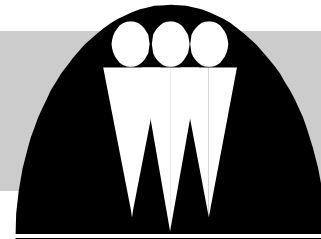


Reunion

Autumn 1996

The Family Fellowship Newsletter



Issue 10

Maxine Campbell

A Mother's Story

Through the euphoria of pain and anesthesia, I heard the doctor say, "It's a boy! You have a son!" I had given birth to a son! Someone to carry on the family name, someone to bear the priesthood beside his wonderful father, a brother for his adoring sisters. I had a son! But no one told me that he was a perfect six — a perfect six on Kinsey's scale of human sexuality. In fact, no one told me for thirty years.

Our family was and is the greatest joy of our lives. I had the rare privilege of being a "stay-at-home" mother to five beautiful children, and I loved every minute of it. They grew from dependent babyhood to independent adulthood in what seemed like a fraction of a second. I took pride in my attempts at being a good mother.

For a number of years, we lived far from centers of Church activity because of my husband's career. Even with the distance factor, nothing daunted us from teaching the gospel to our children. We held family home evenings before it was a Church program, held Home Primary every week, drove many miles to and from Church every Sunday, and boasted an attendance record that outshone members who lived in the shadow of the church building. Sometimes we had to awaken our little ones at five o'clock in the morning in order to be at Church for their father's Sabbath planning meetings. They all took their first faltering steps in the foyer of the church.

We are descendants of many generations of devoted Mormons. Our ancestors left families in Europe, never to see them again. They pushed handcarts, explored new territory, walked across the plains, settled new communities — all because of their conviction that prophets spoke to them in the name of God. We wanted that same faith and loyalty to be part of our children's lives too. We valued that heritage, and we wanted it to be treasured by them.

Our son was often referred to as the spiritual leader of his peers — an outstanding group of young men. He was conservative in dress, quiet in demeanor, and always accepted by them. He loved Scout hikes and activities, but he hated contact sports. Most of his leaders thought basketball and softball would make boys into "real men." I think that football wasn't included because the Church gym wasn't big enough. Our son became a swimmer but never rated a cheering section of his peers or Church teachers or Scout leaders at his meets, unlike some of the other boys in their more rough and tumble sporting events. He also went on to experience many successes in music, art, and drama.

He attended BYU for a year and then fulfilled a foreign mission in a country where Mormons were not welcome. While some of his peers were sent to missions in Japan and South America and baptized converts by the dozens, our son steadfastly taught the gospel to many but converted few, if any. But in spite of this, he came home with a stronger testimony of the gospel — and an unshakable faith. He graduated from college and began working at his chosen profession. It was then that he came to grips with who he really was.

For several years, he traveled a very rocky road, sorting out all the issues that had been concealed for his entire life. He then confided to his sister — and to himself — that, yes, indeed, he was a perfect six. Our beloved son was gay. Two years after breaking the silence to his sister, she came to our home to break the news to us. It was two weeks before Christmas.

We knew that our son was the same person he had always been. He was still the son we loved with all our hearts. My husband and I had previously discussed the remote possibility

change your sexual orientation?" He said, "No."

It was then that I fully realized that it was myself with whom I had to deal. He lovingly told me to call him whenever I had questions or concerns. He wanted me to understand him and the direction that his life would take. After we had talked for some time, he put his arms around me and asked me what I would do if he ever brought a companion home to meet us. I was certainly not ready for this, but I replied, "Just be sure that he is as sweet and wonderful as you are."

What followed was my baptism by fire. I found it virtually impossible to attend church. I never knew when a song, or a word, or the sight of a loving friend would bring uncontrollable tears. Many times, I rushed from the church building engulfed in unspeakable sorrow and grief. I knew that once the tears started, they would never quit, and I knew at the time that I could not share the feelings of my heart with anyone.

Since that fateful day before Christmas several years ago, I have read countless books, plays, biographies, poems, and essays on the subject of homosexuality. I am now able to talk freely about my wonderful son, who has not changed at all since he was born, except to become even more loving and compassionate. I wish to be spared words of sympathy from friends, family, or acquaintances because such expressions are incredibly offensive. Sympathy implies that there is something wrong with my son and that we are engulfed in eternal sorrow. Even though we did at one time grieve, we now rejoice in his new-found self acceptance. We also pray for others to work through the same process we have experienced and thereby broaden their understanding of the true love of Christ.

Unfortunately, my comfort has not come from my Church associations. In fact, they have been a tremendous sorrow because I have always expected them to be my greatest support. Instead, I have felt abandoned. My greatest support has come from individuals who have either been through similar experiences or who are sensitive to the issues that we have faced; my greatest comfort has come from a dear sister-in-law who also has a wonderful son who is gay.

My son lives a life full of hope and achievement, and love, and joy. And so do we. Yes, he is a perfect six. And I love and accept him fully, bless the day he was born, and thank my Father in Heaven that I was given the privilege to be the mother of one of his perfect sixes. 🙏

*Even though
we did at one time
grieve, we now rejoice
in his new-found self
acceptance.*

that our son might be gay but dismissed it from our minds when he consistently told us of the lovely girls he was dating. But with the confirmation that he was gay, our whole world crumbled around our shoulders in an instant.

Even though our daughter had told us, I needed him to tell me himself, face to face. I wanted an explanation and a reason. I was very emotional about all this, and as soon as he came home for Christmas, I demanded some time, just for me, to have a mom and son talk. By this time, he had accepted himself, but now he had to deal with a sobbing mother. My first question was, "Did you choose to be gay?"

Isn't that what I was supposed to say? Conservative voices had led me to believe that homosexuality was a choice. When he answered me with, "No, I would never choose anything that would bring this much pain to me or my family," I knew that he had spoken the truth. My last question was, "Can you

Family Fellowship

Family Fellowship is a volunteer service organization, a diverse collection of Mormon families engaged in the cause of strengthening families with homosexual members. We share our witness that gay and lesbian Mormons can be great blessings in the lives of their families, and that families can be great blessings in the lives of their gay and lesbian members. We strive to become more understanding and appreciative of each other while staying out of society's debate over homosexuality. We seek to put behind us all attitudes which are anti-family, which threaten loving relationships, and which drive family members apart. All who can support these goals are welcome to contribute to this newsletter. However, the views expressed here belong only to the individuals who express them.



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A Father's Story

Ralph Campbell

During my term as Bishop to the married students of a University Ward, one of the young fathers, who I will call John, came to me with the confession of strong homosexual feelings. John seemed deeply troubled and filled with remorse. He shared with me the feelings and drives he had grown up with that he knew were different. He related the struggles with homosexual feelings he had experienced while serving his mission. He told me that he had married soon after returning from his mission, upon counsel that all would be well if he did so. He loved his wife and child, but the feelings of same-sex attraction persisted. He was tortured by those homosexual feelings. He asked me to hold a court and possibly excommunicate him because of his unworthiness. However, I realized his deep despair resulted from self-recrimination for his unwanted feelings, since he had not participated in overt homosexual activities. Because of my perceptions, I declined to take court action but tried to counsel him the best I could. I searched in my directives and guidelines for enlightenment. I found no positive help either there or in President Kimball's Miracle of Forgiveness. Despite strong church condemnation of homosexuality, I could not condemn this young man who I perceived as being pure of heart.

I felt deep compassion toward John, but I knew little about homosexuality at the time. I felt totally inadequate in counseling him. In my efforts to better guide John, I obtained the procedure used by church therapists to counsel gay men. It prescribed fasting, prayer, scripture study and various devices to divert undesirable thoughts into acceptable channels. The procedure was given to me by a friend who was an LDS Social Services counselor and whose primary assignment was to counsel and rehabilitate homosexuals. When I asked if the procedure was effective, my friend admitted that no lasting success had been achieved in changing the homosexual feelings of the gay clients.

After this experience with John, I learned that our son, Brian, was gay. I deeply loved and respected Brian. I fully trusted him and had full confidence in his honesty. He told me that he did not choose to be gay and that he had always been that way. He said that no rational young man who loved and respected his family and the Gospel as he did would choose to be gay. I immediately knew without doubt that what Brian told me was true. He did not choose to be gay, just as John did not choose it.

Each of my five children was born with his or her own distinct personality. Even though my wife and I encouraged and delighted in our

children's growth, their fundamental personalities never changed. Because all of Brian's basic personality traits were with him since birth, we are certain that he was born with his sexual orientation as well. The sexual orientation of his strongly heterosexual sisters has certainly not changed as they have matured. Anyone who has raised a family and has closely observed their children develop is aware of the permanence of personality from birth.

I love Brian and I have always accepted and respected him. As a child, he was pleasant and cooperative. All his sisters loved him. He grew into a spiritual young man and lived a life of devotion to the Church. Throughout his life, he has made sound decisions, and has set a high standard of performance for himself. While on his mission he had a powerful spiritual experience in which he felt he had been given a sure knowledge that God loved and fully accepted him. That quiet assurance has been an affirmation for both Brian and me as we have come to terms with his homosexuality.

Brian graduated from BYU, then earned a Master of Science degree from Utah State University, after which he became a Special Education teacher for emotionally disturbed children in Salt Lake City. Through his college and post-college years, he dated some wonderful young women, but never seemed to be able to form a sufficiently intimate relationship to commit to marriage. Although we were concerned about his unsuccessful relationships, we were convinced that he would eventually find his life's companion. We did not suspect that it was not destined to be a woman.

After struggling with his homosexuality for several years, Brian finally came out to my wife and me. One of my first thoughts was that he would be denied the fulfillment which comes with sharing life with a loving woman as an eternal, intimate companion. I grieved that he would miss the opportunity of raising a family and never experience the joy of loving his own children. He would obviously be denied teaching and leadership experiences in the church and would, at best, stand back as his peers advanced. This point was brought home forcefully when I thought of our Bishop, who had grown up with Brian. They passed the sacrament together, hiked side by side in the high Uinta's, and prepared for their missions together. This young man, gentle and spiritual, like Brian, was now our Bishop. But the Church would reject Brian's service, a loss for the Church and for him.

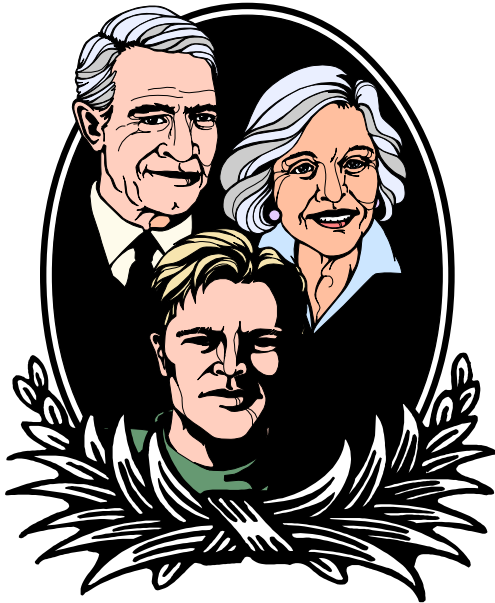
One of the most important steps I have taken in coming to terms with Brian's homosexuality is to become informed on the issues. To gain understanding, I have read extensively. My wife and I have accumulated a small library and have studied the literature. We have found help in discussing the issues with others who are

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informed, and who are also concerned for the welfare of gays and lesbians. I have learned that an understanding of the issues is essential in dealing with the emotionalism that runs rampant in our society. I have concluded that homophobia and negative attitudes so prevalently displayed in our society are, to a great extent, a consequence of ignorance and lack of understanding of the issues surrounding homosexuality. Even though the basic biological cause or causes of homosexuality are not thoroughly understood, homosexuality is real and is not a chosen aspect of personality. Its presence is undeniable.

These homosexual people, though in a minority, are a very important part of our population. They are our sons and daughters, our loved ones, and very much a part of our families. Their needs of love and companionship are as deep, as real, and as



pressing as are the needs of the heterosexual majority of our human family. People in the gay community are criticized for promiscuous behavior, yet the Church and our greater society forbids them to establish stable, intimate relationships with others of the same orientation. Consider for a moment the consequences to heterosexuals if the roles were reversed, and marriage between men and women were forbidden. Wouldn't we see even more promiscuity than we see today?

When I heard two ex-Bishops express animosity toward gays as we sat in High Priest's group meeting, I was deeply disturbed and offended. I have been appalled at the negative statements of some of the general authorities. Surely, the men who are in church leadership positions have sons who are gay and daughters who are lesbian. Have they no compassion for, or understanding of their own children? How can they discard them in the name of theology?

My life has been enriched in seeing Brian grow and come to accept himself. I would not change him. I love him for who he is, and admire his strength of character, and his determination to move forward and to capitalize on his personal assets. I anticipate he will continue to contribute substantially to the society in which he lives. I will support him every step of the way. 🏠

A Son's Story

Brian Campbell

My friends accuse me of being a perfect six. I have seldom been perfect at anything, so I look on that accusation with a degree of pride, though some would think my pride is somewhat misplaced, or even perverse. My own psychosexual responses and overt experience give me the dubious distinction of earning a perfect six on Kinsey's scale of sexual orientation. The "perfect" designation by my friends means that, unlike many other sixes, I have never rated anything below six in my life. I have had no overt sexual experience with females. I have never experienced significant sexual response to females. I can no more imagine a sexual relationship with a woman than can most people imagine a homosexual relationship. Marriage for me would be unnatural.

I must emphasize that I did not choose my category; I believe no one does. I would have rated a six even as a young child, simply by virtue of my psychosexual responses to members of my own gender. I have been aware of those responses nearly as long as I can remember, certainly before I reached the age of accountability. So, I am lucky enough to be a perfect six.

I am also lucky enough to be Mormon. I am not just any Mormon, I am a good Mormon. I served a faithful mission which enriched my life and which continues to bless me with spiritual strength. I have been a vital part of the wards in which I have lived, following or leading in capacities ranging from stake missionary to temple coordinator to Gospel Doctrine teacher to Sunday School president to Elder's Quorum presidencies. My parents, their parents and four generations before them were Mormon. I have a deep conviction of the gospel and a testimony grounded in my own spiritual experience and personal study. I have desired nothing more than to see the promises in my patriarchal blessing come to pass: to find a chosen daughter of my Heavenly Father and marry in the temple for eternity; to have children to send on missions and to school, to devote my life to the building of the Kingdom of God and to gain exaltation.

But with the realization that I am a perfect six came the realization that these blessings will not be available to me. As I stated previously, marriage is out of the question. I have no desire to have a sexually or emotionally intimate relationship with a woman, and I am even more unwilling to risk causing pain to one or more people by forcing myself into a marriage which would probably be an unhappy one and which would almost certainly end in divorce. I will never marry.

I did not arrive at that decision without pain. I do not need to point out the emphasis placed by the church on eternal marriage and families. The church is so family oriented that single people often describe their situation as being "in limbo," where they exist as partial entities, never amounting to a complete person until they

have a spouse. Singles' wards are no exception. Presided over by married leaders, they are like shelters for the homeless; a place to loiter until deliverance appears in the form of marriage. But at least for most singles there is hope and intention to marry. I have neither. And so from the outset I feel deceitful, misunderstood, alienated.

Marriage is not a viable option. I am left with two other alternatives. I can remain in the church as a single member and continue serving as best I can, or I can leave it. If I remain an active member, I must accept the consequences of that choice. I would never be given positions of leadership beyond a certain level, since most leadership positions are never entrusted to never-married men. I must endure an occasional diatribe against homosexuals, endure the suspicion and mistrust which many members have for an older single man, endure the prying and proddings of a bishop and other well-meaning members concerned with my marital status. I can remain true and faithful to the commandments and to my covenants, be obedient to my leaders and serve to the best of my ability, devote my life to service in the Kingdom. And if I do all these things, after a lifetime of faithfulness and service I have been promised that my eternal reward will be, not exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom, but to serve as a ministering angel to my married counterparts who were fortunate enough to be born somewhere on the scale below six.

I am less than thrilled by this prospect, and the illogical nature of it has led me to believe that on the issue of homosexuality, the LDS church is wrong. That belief, combined with church leaders' overt messages of contempt and rejection of homosexuals, led to the conclusion that the best alternative for me would be to leave the church, which I did quietly awhile ago.

At first, I thought that, like the proverbial, stereotypical inactive member, I would soon lose my testimony only to wallow about in the depths of despair and meaninglessness. This has yet to happen. Have I lost my faith in God? No. Have I lost my faith and confidence in a prophet and apostles and in their ability to receive divine revelation? No, because I have seen many good things bless my own life and the lives of others as a result of that revelation. I love the church and I think great good comes of it. But it is true that my testimony, or rather my interpretation of the gospel, has been altered as a result of my self-imposed exile from the church.

I am confident that God is logical and wise, and does not allow his children to endure difficulties and burdens without a specific purpose which would be for their benefit and greater happiness, not just in the hereafter, but in this life. We are meant to be happy and lead fulfilled lives here, certainly not without suffering, but also not without joy. As in the eternal worlds, that joy and suffering will only have meaning now as it relates to our forming and maintaining growing relationships with loved ones.

🏠 *Continued on the next page*

My sexuality is not a curse from God. Neither is it a handicap or a sickness which He will remove in the afterlife contingent on my faithfulness in mortality. My sexuality, like everyone else's, is not something that I can ignore, cast off, or mold to fit someone else's whims and expectations. My sexuality is a part of me. It is me. It is a basic building block of personality and has a direct and profound influence on attitudes, interactions, and the formation of relationships far removed from any sexual context. If my sexuality were suddenly changed and I became heterosexual, I would not know myself. I would cease to be me. I would be someone else. I am neither able nor

willing to give up my personality here or in the afterlife.

I concur with the church's emphasis on relationships as eternal in nature, designed to bring us joy on earth and through eternity. What my place will be in the eternal scheme, I am not certain. But I am certain that I am a worthy son of God; that my opportunity for attaining exaltation is equal to that of any of my brothers and sisters. I know that I am meant to find joy and fulfillment through human relationships in this life and for eternity, and that for me, such joy and fulfillment will in all likelihood come through a committed, devoted, and loving relationship with a male partner. 🙏

For more information about
Family Fellowship write to:
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Salt Lake City, UT 84109
Phone: (801) 374-1447



Unconditional
by
Chris Sorenson

**One, two, three,
Count them,
Courageous,
Parents showing up
Side by side
With sons and daughters
No closet to contain
Their silence.
Speak! Shout! Sing!
Their stories
Teaching tolerance
Quick in caring,
Slow to judge.
Ten, twenty, thirty,
More to come,
Unashamed,
Sisters standing,
A child, a brother,
Arm in arm
With siblings loved.
The outside voices
Spitting lies,
"Sick! Sinners! Die!"
Are muted
By softened hearts
Beating the sounds
Of true family values.
One hundred,
Two hundred,
Three hundred,
Gathering still,
Enlightened,
Friends and neighbors now
All in all
With an open invitation
To love the homosexual.
Hope! Faith! Charity!
These compassionate examples
Of what Christ really meant
By unconditional.**

Newsletter Contributions

People frequently ask how they might submit articles for the Reunion newsletter. As mentioned in each issue, all who can support the goal of strengthening families with homosexual members are welcome to contribute, regardless of their personal views. The best articles are those that discuss relationships between family members in their efforts to achieve understanding and mutual appreciation. Parents frequently write one combined article which may be featured on the front page. Two articles from the same family, such as one from a parent and one from a child, are especially motivating and often appear on the third page. Many articles are simply written from one family member's point of view. Articles usually range from 600 to 1200 words in length. Activity reports for the fourth page are generally smaller. Short poetry or inspiring quotations are also welcome. As in any publication, articles may be edited for length, grammar, and content. However, every attempt is made to preserve the originality of each article, and non-trivial changes are submitted to the original author for approval. Short items may be submitted on paper, but articles should be submitted on disk or through e-mail. Please send all items to Tyler Yates at 497 East 300 South, Lehi UT 84043. (e-mail: TyYates@Novell.com)

Family Service

The entries below list some ways that families and family members are reaching out to each other, sharing their experiences, and holding their families together. This space is provided for anyone to report on and advertise activities that share the goal of strengthening Mormon families dealing with this issue, regardless of what organization the activity may be sponsored by.

Reconciliation's Fifth Year Anniversary July 27, 1996

— Duff Dazley, Salt Lake City

Reconciliation would like to thank all those who supported us in attending our annual fundraiser, July 27th. We had nearly one-hundred people in attendance with beautiful ambiance and a delicious dinner on the 24th floor of the One Utah Center in Salt Lake City.

We especially thank those of you who made financial contributions without attending as well as those who made donations in kind.

We are an organization that promotes and supports spirituality of those with an LDS background affected by homosexuality. Our meetings are much like LDS firesides.

Reconciliation can be contacted by phone at (801) 461-3324 or by mail at P.O. Box 1501, Salt Lake City, UT 84110-1501.

Utah County Forum Firesides July 14 and October 20, 1996

— Mildred and Gary Watts, Provo

Utah County Family Fellowship held its quarterly forum on July 14th in the Clark Auditorium at UVRMC with well over 100 people in attendance. Dick Van Wagoner exhibited and explained three of his watercolors all with social themes; Ila Rose Fife spoke about her experience dealing with

gay issues as a member of the Salt Lake City School Board; and a video entitled "Not in Our Town" was viewed. The video is about efforts by the citizens of Billings, Montana to counter and eradicate "hate" crimes being perpetuated in their city. A delightful buffet followed and was enjoyed by all.

The next Utah County Family Fellowship Forum is scheduled for October 20th in the Clark Auditorium at the Utah Valley Regional Medical Center at 5:00 p.m. A Family Fellowship mother, Kay Madsen, and her gay son, Dale, will be the featured speakers. In addition, we have invited representatives from several support groups for gays and lesbians to explain their goals and how to best utilize them. The meeting will be followed by a light buffet. During the buffet we will divide into four discussion groups which will give those who desire an opportunity to participate.

It's Elementary September 26, 1996

— Mildred and Gary Watts, Provo

On September 26th Family Fellowship joined with P-FLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), GLSTN (Gay, Lesbian & Straight Teachers' Network), UHRC (Utah Human Rights Coalition) and the Utah Stonewall Center to co-sponsor the Utah premier of a documentary film entitled, "It's Elementary: Talking about Gay Issues in

School." Debra Chasnoff and Helen Cohen, the film producers attended the gala premier which played to a "sold out" audience of over 450 people. The film producers were honored at a reception following the premier.