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Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Life at Appalachian State University

A Thesis  
by  
KATHRYN LYNN STALEY

Submitted to the Graduate School  
Appalachian State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS

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## ABSTRACT

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Life at Appalachian State University.

(May 2009)

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This study explores the historical development of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) population at Appalachian State University and the institution's administration effect on this development. Situated in rural Watauga County, North Carolina's Appalachian mountains, this university is among the University of North Carolina System's most progressive institutions with regards to sexuality and gender identity. Appalachian has evolved from a training school for mountain teachers with strict gender-based prohibitions into a comprehensive university with many characteristics signifying its commitment to LGBT campus members. These factors include a thirty-year-old lesbian, gay, and bisexual counseling group, two student organizations that specifically address sexuality and gender identity, an LGBT Center, LGBT courses, a transgender-friendly housing policy, and an Equal Employment Opportunity policy which includes sexual orientation and gender identity and expression.

Organized by Appalachian's first four top administrators, this study indicates that contemporary national and local trends influenced the campus members' behavior as well

as the institutional response to its LGBT campus members. Each administration parallels developments within LGBT history. The administration of B.B. Dougherty (1899-1955) was an era of closeted life. The lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals during the administration of William Plemmons (1956-1969) privately socialized while America's first successful lesbian and gay organizations organized. Herb Wey served after the Stonewall Riots propelled the Gay Liberation Movement into national awareness. As his last major act as chancellor in June 1979, he officially recognized the Appalachian Gay Awareness Association. The administration of his successor John Thomas coincided with those of conservative U.S. Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush and the growing AIDS pandemic, which deeply affected LGBT lives. As a result, this study spans Appalachian State University's creation as Watauga Academy in 1899 until the retirement of Chancellor John Thomas in 1993 when the campus incorporated sexual orientation into its Equal Employment Opportunity statement.

This study incorporates university records, newspaper articles, and oral history interviews to weave personal narratives, campus lore, and the official record into an overarching description of the lives of LGBT students, faculty, and staff. Until Wey's administration, the campus in general ignored transexuality and homosexuality, except punitively within the dormitories and as jokes. During the administrations of Wey and Thomas, increasing numbers of LGBT campus members sought acknowledgment creating tension between traditional and progressive community members. With multiple LGBT campus leaders and administrations supporting them, Appalachian State University students and employees became increasingly tolerated, affirmed, and public.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It may take a village to raise a child but it took almost as much to birth this thesis. Without the willingness and helpfulness of Appalachian State University's current and past campus members, this thesis would never have been completed. Interviewees shared with me life experiences, both happy and sad, of which some rarely speak, in order to give better insight into the development of Appalachian's LGBT population. For this, I am extremely grateful.

My colleagues at the Belk Library and Information Commons have been invaluable in their assistance in locating printed sources. Several stand out as excelling at their jobs and being helpful: the Interlibrary Loan officer Dianna Johnson, Acquisitions Librarian Georgie Donovan, Records Manager and assistant Mark Britain and Michael Dix, and Special Collections archivists and librarians Hal Keiner, Pam Mitchem, and Dean Williams. Also, Special Collections student employees Freddie Blue and Rachel Critzer and archivists Greta Reisel Browning and Simms Toomey found primary sources relevant to my project.

The funding of Appalachian's Graduate Research Grant assisted in the purchase of audio-cassettes, transcriptions and other supplies. I would also like to thank my friends and family for their love and support. Of special note, Sandy Ballard, Nanci Tolbert Nance, and Brian Riedel offered invaluable advice and editing assistance. I would also like to thank my spouse Richard Evey and J. McTaggart for transcribing several interviews.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

A.S.T.C. . . . takes for granted that no young man or young woman who expects to teach the children of the state will be guilty of unmanly or unwomanly conduct. No personal effort will be spared in assisting students in every possible way, but those who manifestly are lacking in the essentials of good character . . . may be asked to withdraw. (*A.S.T.C. Bulletin Annual Catalog for 1930-1931* [February 1931], 15.)

There were three faculty members that we felt were [gay] but we just didn't talk about it. It just was not an issue. Now, it might have become an issue had they wanted to organize. (Bob Snead, Class of 1955, Interview with Kathy Staley, 21 April 2006)

The following situations are not to be handled by Hall Counselors but should be reported immediately to the Residence Counselor or the Dean of Men: Attempted suicides, Serious injury, Suspicion [sic] of taking illegal drugs or the possession of illegal drugs, Homosexual cases. (*Handbook for Men's Residence Hall Staff* [Boone, NC: Appalachian State University, 1969], 7.)

I am opposed to approving [Appalachian Gay Awareness Association], but I feel, after consulting attorneys, that we are going to have them one way or the other. (Chancellor Herb Wey to Appalachian State University Board of Trustees, 31 May 1979)

[Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights] is the civil rights of our generation. (Tom Beaman, Class of 1994, Interview with Kathy Staley, 30 August 2006)

Based in Watauga County, North Carolina, Appalachian State University (Appalachian) dates to the early twentieth century when it was established as a co-educational public institution to improve the quality of mountain teachers. Being a historically conservative teachers college embedded in a progressive town within a traditional Appalachian county within the Blue Ridge Mountains has affected the individual expressions of sexual and gender identities.

As the opening quotations imply, the Appalachian lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) experience has evolved from a universal secret to open acknowledgment by many faculty, staff, and students.<sup>1</sup> With its campus members nicknamed the “Appalachian Family” in 1955, the institution at the time maintained social control by acting as a parental substitute and resisting the liberalization of sexual mores until Appalachian followed national trends of retracting *in loco parentis* policies in the 1970s. Campus members developed a nurturing, congenial atmosphere that at the same time silently frowned upon open expression of sexual and gender diversity – like many families.

The historical stigmatization of non-normative sexualities and genders kept LGBT Appalachian campus members underground, forming clandestine friendship groups for most of the university’s history. LGBT-supportive institutional resources gradually

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<sup>1</sup>To lessen confusion, the school’s contemporary name or the term “Appalachian” will be used when referring to Appalachian State University and its various incarnations. Its various names and respective dates are Watauga Academy (1899-1902), Appalachian Training School for Teachers (1903-1924), Appalachian State Normal School (1925-1928), Appalachian State Teachers College (1929-1966), and Appalachian State University (1966-present).



developed expanding the toleration of campus members who live openly LGBT lives. Now entering its 110<sup>th</sup> year, Appalachian has a lesbian, gay, and bisexual counseling group, a transgender support group, semi-annual drag shows, an annual Queer Film Series, two student organizations that specifically address sexuality and gender identity, an unofficial LGBT faculty/staff organization, an LGBT Center, LGBT studies courses, a transgender-friendly housing policy, soft benefits for domestic partners of employees, single-use bathrooms in all newly constructed buildings, and an Equal Employment Opportunity policy which includes sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. As a result, Appalachian stands out as one of the most progressive universities in the University of North Carolina (UNC) System.

Because of the historically conservative nature of the area and college, Appalachian's apparent lack of administrative-led, homophobic witch hunts and its state leadership in pro-LGBT policies make Appalachian an excellent sample for a study on organizational reactions to LGBT populations in rural areas. LGBT campus leaders and national trends influenced the school's administrative mitigation between conflicting local traditional sexual mores and the national LGBT movement's goals; thus, how the administration massaged policies affected the community's reaction both to Appalachian's LGBT populations and to the LGBT campus experience.

### **Approach and Concepts**

To study campus administrative and cultural developments affecting the

expression of Appalachian's LGBT campus life, one must consider several factors. The institution's location within the rural Appalachian South centers this particular campus experience. The inter-connective, yet differing, experiences between LGBT students, faculty members, and staff have assisted the development of parallel experiences in LGBT campus life. National trends in the LGBT experience, higher education, and heterosexual response to LGBT people intertwine with local mores to affect the expectations of LGBT campus members and administrative tolerance of non-heteronormative behavior. These intersections have interacted to create a dynamic that has evolved over time on Appalachian's campus.

To understand the Appalachian Family's gradual, although incomplete, cultural shift towards tolerating publicly out LGBT individuals, one must understand evolving national trends and laws, institutional culture and policies, and the interaction with the surrounding conservative community. All communities consist of multiple layers of interactive, interconnected networks. In addition to the various networks of individuals playing various roles within a community, each cultural institution enforces a schema of socially constructed acceptable behavior. Similarly, the power structures' inherent ebbs and flows directly affect the development of Appalachian's administrative infrastructure. Pressure from within and outside the university, particularly from the larger governing body of the UNC System and the surrounding community, encourage an evolution of administrative models and focus. Being embedded within a conservative Appalachian community has led to multiple layers of unique influences. When disparate political interests have conflicted, public debate bubbled and systematic change often occurred.

This study divides Appalachian's first ninety-four years into four sections, one for each of the first four chief administrators. This structure allows for a concise analysis of the evolving campus approach to the needs of LGBT campus members based on administrators' responses to contemporary expectations and personal beliefs. Remarkably, the administrations of Appalachian's presidents and chancellors fit neatly into LGBT historical benchmarks and a well-known framework of national gay identity trends.

Patrick Dilley, author of *Queer Man on Campus*, presents a highly useful framework that can be used to explore the differences between homosexual, gay, and queer identities predominant in the administrators' tenure. Dilley identifies eras in which each of these identities predominated. From the 1940s to the 1960s, the identity of "homosexual" was most common. People within the "homosexual" identity recognize their same-sex attractions and build an identity around these attractions. At the same time, "homosexuals" consider their sexuality to be a private matter and do not form organizations or identify as homosexual to heterosexuals. During the late 1960s and 1970s, the identification as "gay" individuals became more prominent. These people "publicly announced/acknowledged feelings" and became "involved within institutional systems to create change . . . public[ly] socializ[ing] with other non-heterosexuals."<sup>2</sup> In the late 1980s, a "queer" identity that "deployed [an] identity in opposition to normative ("straight") culture" began to surface with more frequency. These individuals "often tried

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<sup>2</sup>Patrick Dilley, *Queer Man on Campus: A History of Non-heterosexual College Men, 1945-2000* (New York: Routledge Falmer, 2002), 5.



to create change from mores.”<sup>3</sup>

Dilley describes four additional categories that overlap all generations: closeted, normal, parallel, and denying. “Closeted” individuals include persons who recognize their same-sex attractions but who do not seek to befriend others with homoerotic inclinations. “Normal” persons identify as heterosexual despite homosexual activity. “Parallel” refers to individuals who compartmentalize their sexual identity depending on the social context. “Denying” individuals reject their attractions to same-sex persons. Although individuals within these generations broke from this schema and adopted other developmental identities, overall, the majority of lesbians and gay men did not. These eras remarkably mirror Appalachian’s administrative dates.<sup>4</sup>

From 1899 to 1955, Appalachian co-founder Blanford Dougherty led Appalachian when the vast majority of LGBT individuals apparently socialized very privately and without any organizing. Dr. William H. Plemmons became the college president during the year that the nation’s first lesbian organization formed in 1955. Plemmons retired in 1969, the year of the Stonewall Riots. His successor, Chancellor Herbert Wey, led the campus during the pivotal decade of Gay Liberation until 1979, when he hesitantly approved Appalachian’s first lesbian and gay student organization two weeks prior to his retirement. As chancellor from 1979 to 1993, John Thomas administered Appalachian during the advent of AIDS and the mid-1980s radicalization of LGBT populations. Thomas retired in 1993 the same year that Democrat Bill Clinton

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 5.

became President of the United States and Appalachian expanded its Equal Employment Opportunity statement to include sexual orientation.

Whereas most lesbian and gay histories focus on urban life, this study is solidly set in rural Appalachia. Indeed, Appalachian's original mission of educating future mountain teachers completely depended on its location in the Blue Ridge Mountains. When Blanford Dougherty and his brother, Dauphin Dougherty, founded Watauga Academy, Watauga County consisted of subsistence farms with few modern amenities. In 2000, Watauga County remained rural with only three small, incorporated towns and a population of less than 45,000. Even in 2009, Appalachian campus members must travel over an hour to the closest lesbian or gay bar, bookstore, or community center. As will be discussed, this cultural landscape slowed the adoption of modern attitudes and in particular the development of LGBT identities and a distinct subculture.<sup>5</sup>

Although this study will discuss the cultural influences of the county and state, it focuses on Appalachian's campus life. Whereas many studies of the LGBT college experience focus on either students or faculty, this study incorporates the experiences of both as well as those of administrators and support staff. Only through the full inclusion of LGBT campus members can researchers answer questions regarding the strength and cohesiveness of the LGBT community or inform to the campus climate as a whole.

Common sense says that employees and students, particularly when LGBT, do not live in

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<sup>5</sup>*Complete Directory of North Carolina Yearbook* (Raleigh, NC: *News and Observer*, 1902), 551, 553; "2000 Census Information on Gay and Lesbian Couples, North Carolina: By County" found at [http://www.gaydemographics.org/USA/state/northcarolina/2000Census\\_state\\_nc\\_counties.htm](http://www.gaydemographics.org/USA/state/northcarolina/2000Census_state_nc_counties.htm), accessed on 17 November 2006. In the 2000 Federal Census, Watauga County had 33 reported male couples, 42 female couples, 654 unmarried heterosexual couples, and 7,845 married couples.

a vacuum. They daily influence each others' experiences, if only indirectly. Closeted and anti-LGBT faculty act as reminders to students of the negative consequences of being sexual and gender variants. On the other hand, out and allied faculty members sometimes mentor LGBT students while professors teaching lesbian and gay studies courses remind campus members of the scholarly worthiness of LGBT experiences. Simultaneously, transitory student activists can work to improve campus climate with less risk of long-term repercussions. Support staff also act as a vital part of any academic institution and often have social ties to professors. This study explores such interplay.

Although this study focuses on institutional history, it does give some attention to identity politics; however, it does not examine the causes of sexual or gender variance or the dichotomies in its expressions. Many homosexuals and bisexuals became aware of their sexuality during college. For many, self-acceptance then and now can be a lengthy process leading to a split between identity and behavior. Such individuals often do not identify as homosexual or bisexual. One's sexual behavior, identity, and attractions do not necessarily correspond to each other, and sociologists find that some individuals' sexual identity and behaviors alter over time. Transgendered individuals have had more difficulty recognizing gender variance at an early age because of American society's general ignorance of gender differences.

From this point of view, individuals experience sexuality and gender variance as fluid and amorphous. This study's informants exemplify this tendency; some identified as heterosexual while attending Appalachian and as homosexual after graduation. Others identified as homosexual but have been celibate since the advent of AIDS. Further, a



person can be sexually involved with the same sex without having a homo- or bisexual sexual identity.

Some terms used within the following pages may be unfamiliar to general readers. “Sexuality” and “sexual orientation” both describe the sex of an individual’s emotional or physical attraction. Sexuality includes bisexuality, heterosexuality, and homosexuality. Over the decades, many terms have been used to refer to people who identify with or practice these differing sexual orientations. Examples include homophile (1950s-1960s), gay (1930-present), lesbian (1890-present), and the short-lived lesbigay (early 1990s). Bisexuals and others occasionally group bisexuals with homosexuals under some of these terms despite differences in behaviors and attractions.<sup>6</sup>

Sexuality differs from gender identity, which refers to the identity or expression of gender. People whose “gender identity” or expression differs from their biological sex may identify as “transgender,” an umbrella term for transsexuality, female and male impersonation, cross-dressing, and third-sex expressions. Many transsexuals seek hormonal and surgical treatments in order to “transition” to their preferred sex; however, most impersonators, many third-sex individuals, and some transsexuals do not. Transgendered persons, or transmen and transwomen, may also be called “gender variant.” Transgendered individuals are not necessarily homosexual or bisexual. As a result, this study will only use the term “LGBT” to describe situations that are inclusive

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<sup>6</sup>For further reading, see Eric Marcus, *Is It a Choice? Answers to 300 of the Most Frequently Asked Questions about Gays and Lesbians* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993), 1-4, 22-23; “Stylebook Supplement on LGBT Terminology,” accessed at [http://www.nlgja.org/resources/stylebook\\_english.html](http://www.nlgja.org/resources/stylebook_english.html), viewed on 27 January 2009.



of transgender issues.

These different levels of self-identification as LGBT also confuse individuals. Unfortunately, the only common term currently used to describe an individual who self-identifies as lesbian, gay, or bisexual is “out.” Those who self-identify as lesbian, gay, and bisexual but not publicly “out” are called “closeted.” Sometimes people also use “out” and “closeted” to describe transgendered people; however, some transgendered people use the term “stealth” to describe when transsexuals do not divulge their birth sex.

Some people who identify as “out” may be known to LGBT friends and allies but not to heterosexual co-workers, classmates, professors, or family members. At the other range of the spectrum, “out” may refer to individuals who are publicly identified as LGBT. Appalachian LGBT population covers the spectrum of public acknowledgment of sexuality and gender variance; however, during the time period of this study, records show few students and no employees recorded in print as being LGBT or connected to an LGBT organization.<sup>7</sup> As a result, this study also uses the term “self-identifies” to describe individuals who recognize their sexual or gender variance but have not disclosed their identities to others.

## Methodology

### Conducting a historical project related to Appalachian's LGBT population

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<sup>7</sup>As will be discussed in Chapter 3, the sexual orientation of one employee was publicly discussed in an unpublished history printed post-mortem.

presents unique challenges to the researcher. Contemporary subjects often preclude standard historical research techniques such as examining secondary sources, while simultaneously availing itself to the richness of first-person accounts of historical events and community dynamics. Working with LGBT issues, however, renders additional challenges unique to an invisible, criminalized, and socially marginalized population.

Written sources for Appalachian LGBT life are limited to articles in the student-run *Appalachian* newspaper, the local *Watauga Democrat* newspaper, a few gay newspaper and magazine articles, and surviving archival materials. These articles and documents provide an irregular outline of events from circa 1970 to the present. As expected, *Appalachian* reporters covered LGBT topics more heavily and sympathetically some years than others. Their articles primarily discussed campus events and national gay-oriented issues. While North Carolina gay newspapers such as *Charlotte Free Press*, *The Front Page*, *Community Connections*, and *Q-Notes* and the national *Advocate* magazine published articles about Boone's lesbian, gay, and bisexual population, these articles do not create enough raw material for a detailed analysis of campus dynamics between the campus and the Watauga community or LGBT individuals themselves. They also do not document the mechanisms administrators used to control and support LGBT campus members.

Several archival materials contain references to LGBT issues providing additional insight. Many researchers of LGBT college issues examine the records of the deans of students and police to determine the pre-1980 college administrations' response to homosexual behaviors of campus members. Unfortunately, *Appalachian's* administrative

building burned in 1966 destroying the records of the deans of men and women and, the pre-1970 deans of students have died. The campus police did not retain many records prior to 1980 and have not organized those existing before 1993.<sup>8</sup>

The university record currently lacks some relevant post-1966 documents known to have existed at one time. The files of the Graduate School Dean Cratis Williams contain an empty file titled "Gay Students." Both the 1979 minutes of the Student Government Association's vote to approve the Appalachian Gay Awareness Association and the 1993 video recording of its vote to approve the addition of sexual orientation to the Equal Employment Opportunity statement are missing. The University Archives and the Student Government Association each house consecutive records both before and after these missing records. Employees could not explain whether the documents had been intentionally redacted or coincidentally lost.

To fill in these gaps, over sixty current and former campus members and community members narrated their memories of campus events. Those interviewed for this study were selected for their connection to the university's LGBT life and include campus members of all levels, sexualities, and gender identities. Some sources contextualized the nuances of campus life while others explained the importance of specific events. Even a shy gay student's anecdote about his favorite religion professor's

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<sup>8</sup>For examples of books discussing campus witchhunts, see Beth Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 50-54; James T. Sears, *Lonely Hunters: An Oral History of Lesbian and Gay Southern Life, 1948-1968* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 12-47; Douglass Shand-Tucci, *The Crimson Letter: Harvard, Homosexuality, and the Shaping of American Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003), 1-7; R. McCrea, "Madison Gay Purge" *Midwest Gay Academic Journal* 1, no. 3 (1978): 1, 3, 25-30; D. Tsang, "Gay Ann Arbor Purges" *Midwest Gay Academic Journal* 1, no. 1 (April 1977): 13-19; William Wright, *Harvard Secret Court: The Savage 1920 Purge of Campus Homosexuals* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005).



anti-gay remark sheds light on a campus environment in which LGBT individuals can either thrive or withdraw.<sup>9</sup>

Testimonies have filled in informational gaps and provided insight into personal beliefs and motivations. “Where no history is readily at hand, it will be created,” says oral historian Paul Thompson.<sup>10</sup> Many interviewees functioned in official capacities during or participated in significant campus events in Appalachian’s LGBT history. These “first-person narrators” describe their perspective on the creation of the university’s two lesbian and gay student organizations, HIV/AIDS affect and the campus’ corresponding response, the gender reassignment of a popular professor, and so forth. Other persons, “climate sources,” discuss the campus climate in respect to the LGBT experience and provide anecdotes about lesbian, gay, and bisexual life that contemporary studies corroborate as common.

Historian Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy states that oral history “explores subjectivity – an individual’s interpretation of the past.”<sup>11</sup> Oral histories give agency to populations that are traditionally marginalized or invisible. Historians of the past often ignored sexual and gender minorities or studied these populations without giving them a voice. Historical sources for early-to-mid-twentieth century LGBT life are almost non-

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<sup>9</sup>Robbie Tester (pseudonym), interview with Kathy Staley, 31 March 2006. This classroom incident took place during the mid-to-late 1970s. Several additional interviews from separate oral history projects were also consulted.

<sup>10</sup>Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 118-119.

<sup>11</sup>Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy, “Telling Tales: Oral History and the construction of pre-Stonewall Lesbian History,” in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (Routledge: London, 1998), 344.

existent. The earliest documented statement by an Appalachian gay campus member about an LGBT-related subject dates to 1979. As a result, the interviews of six self-identified lesbian and gay former campus members during the 1960s and 1970s give insight previously unheard.

Oral histories also document "campus lore," which is often ignored by traditional institutional histories and print sources. Several persons learned about LGBT issues such as reputed administrative harassment of a popular professor through second- or third-hand reports and therefore are not reliable sources. As rumor-based stories spread, they alter individuals' perceptions about the subject matter. Although the veracity of campus oral lore often cannot be determined, rumors and their results are relevant to a discussion of administrative effects on LGBT campus life. As historian Michael Kammen notes, "What people believe to be true about their past is usually more important in determining their behavior and response than truth itself."<sup>12</sup> As a result, this study recreates the campus climate as experienced by specific informants rather than a thorough overview.

The standard critique of oral history is that its reliance on memory allows filtering and re-shaping by subsequent events. French historian Pierre Nora says, "Memory is life. . . . It remains in permanent evolution."<sup>13</sup> One must wonder how societal change has altered informants' descriptions of their behavior and that of others. Because social acceptance of homosexuality has shifted from non-acceptance to tolerance and occasional

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<sup>12</sup>Quoted in "Introduction," by Leigh Raiford and Renee C. Romano, *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2006), xiii.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. Quoted in "Introduction," by Leigh Raiford and Renee C. Romano, *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2006), xiii.

open affirmation, campus members may reinterpret events to place themselves or the campus in a better light. Thompson has even noted that potential bias and intentional distortions fill written documents as well. To avoid potential bias and faulty memory, oral histories have been examined for bias and substantiated by other informants or documents.<sup>14</sup>

Potential interviewees were obtained through a variety of sources. LGBT-themed newspaper accounts and Appalachian's Center for Student Involvement and Leadership student organization forms identified approximately fifty initial candidates. Study participants and current campus members also suggested additional people. The alumni center and on-line searches assisted with the location of a number of individuals. Unfortunately, difficulty locating them, illness, and death prohibited interviews with many key individuals.

In addition to the dialectic, Ronald Grele of Columbia University's Oral History programs says oral history involves relationships between interviewee and interviewer and the interviewee and the larger audience. When Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline Davis conducted oral histories of working class pre-Stonewall lesbians for their study *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*, they found their prior connection to Boston's lesbian community blurred the separations between work and social life and occasionally affected securing interviewees.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, many of this study's interviewees felt very motivated to relay their remembrances for historical record because

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<sup>14</sup>Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 118-119.

<sup>15</sup>Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 18.



they view their experiences as being part of a larger LGBT history which need to be retained.

This study validates Kath Weston's assertion that non-heterosexual researchers have an easier time locating potential contacts and performing field work within lesbian and gay subcultures. Similarly, knowledge of personal involvement in Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) and Appalachian's GLBT Taskforce often preceded the interviews in this study. This knowledge likely affected the respondents' truthfulness, sincerity, and rapport. Further, while co-president of University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Bisexuals, Gay, Lesbian, and Allies for Diversity in the early 1990s, I worked with a few of my informants to add sexual orientation to the UNC System's EEO statement, as is briefly discussed in Chapter 5.<sup>16</sup>

In order to protect the privacy of campus members, I developed many procedures. Informants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their privacy when desired, as were deceased lesbian, gay, and bisexual campus members whose sexuality was not publicly disclosed during their lifetime. This study focuses on institutional history rather than on personal stories of individual LGBT campus members; therefore, the interviews do not include familial information unless volunteered by the interviewee.

Documenting a marginalized population which lacked positive cultural attention until recent decades creates a void in the historical record. Incorporating oral histories of

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<sup>16</sup>Kath Weston, "Fieldwork in Lesbian and Gay Communities" in *Feminist Perspectives on Social Research*, eds. Sharlene Hesse-Biber and Michelle L. Yaiser (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 198-205. Weston's finding that gay men tended to have difficulty locating lesbians and vice versa did not materialize with this study, which has almost equal number of male and female homosexual and bisexual campus members. Time constraints prevented my searching for additional transgender campus members, whom did not become publicly active until the twenty-first century.



former and current campus members into the historical narrative of Appalachian's LGBT life broadens the understanding of campus climate and historical events.

### Literature Review

Since the early 1970s, authors have covered multiple aspects of LGBT life but only recently began examining LGBT campus or rural life. The interplay and interdependency of a conservative community surrounding a more liberal university, LGBT student organizations, and the interactions between LGBT persons have yet to be explored historically. Nothing incorporates the needs or experiences of LGBT support staff despite their vital role within academic institutions; further, few academic publications include the experiences of transgendered persons on or off campus. As a result, this study expands knowledge within multiple realms.

Two studies present useful and parallel frameworks for studying the development of sexual identity. As previously mentioned, *Queer Man on Campus* author Patrick Dilley explores the identity differences between men he labels closeted, homosexual, gay, and queer. Robert Rhoads's *Coming Out in College* centers on the process of gay male college students who create a gay-centered identity. These two authors note, for example, that some gay men who self-identify as "queer" have become politicized and desirous of forming a separate sub-culture. These different identities occur cross-generationally but as Dilley argues, one identity predominates per era. These identities also characterize the eras of the first four Appalachian administrations and will be used as a framework to

understand LGBT cultures on campus.<sup>17</sup>

Many studies on LGBT campus life exist. Several, particularly those dating to the 1970s, provide general overviews of campus life from a lesbian or gay perspective. In "Gay Students," for example, former National Gay Student Center (NGSC) director J. Lee Lehman uses anecdotes from NGSC correspondence to illustrate anti-gay hostilities at colleges and offer suggestions for campus climate improvement. Some modern treatments, such as "African American Gay Men: Another Challenge for the Academy," also describe LGBT life with broad strokes; however, increasing numbers of case studies and data collection have lessened that tendency to generalize.<sup>18</sup>

Many studies within the context of student development and sociology describe the state of LGBT campus experiences over the decades. Among other efforts, English professor Louie Crew surveyed 1970s era English chairpersons' attitudes towards gay and lesbian courses and professors and rated the acceptance levels. This sociological study used gender neutral and pro-gay language which distracted some study participants but found that 32% of the respondents felt ambivalent towards lesbian and gay professors while 44% accepted them under certain constraints: some "accepting" chairpersons desired homosexual professors to date heterosexually in public. Although no one recorded the attitudes of 1970s era Appalachian chairpersons, some gay professors and

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<sup>17</sup>Robert A. Rhoads, *Coming Out in College: The Struggle for a Queer Identity* (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1994), 110-119; Dilley, *Queer Man*, 5.

<sup>18</sup>J. Lee Lehman, "Gay Students" in *The Gay Academic*, ed. Louie Crew (Palm Springs, CA: ETC Publications, 1978), 57-63; Jamie Washington and Vernon A. Wall, "African American Gay Men: Another Challenge for the Academy," in *African American Men in College*, ed. Michael J. Cuyjet (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 174-188.

students of that era dated heterosexually in public. Appalachian's likely score from Crew's instrument cannot be predicted from his analysis of respondents' campus size, type, and location. Southern schools and schools with limited graduate programs scored as "increasingly dangerous for gays" while schools in rural communities, schools in small towns (less than 15,000), state schools, schools with departments offering women's literature, and schools with full university programs rated "increasingly safe."<sup>19</sup>

These studies on LGBT campus life also offer frameworks to analyze campus climate. Of particular note, in "LGBT Student Organizations, Safe Spaces, and the Inclusion of Sexual Orientation in the Non-Discrimination Clauses in Virginia Colleges and Universities," doctoral student Elizabeth Clune analyzes and quantifies the climate of Virginia colleges by examining the existence of student organizations, LGBT centers, and other indicators of a gay-friendly campus climate. Contrary to my analysis of North Carolina's sixteen public universities, she found that suburban universities are the most likely to develop gay-friendly indicators. Additional factors appear to affect the campus climate, as well, because some suburban North Carolina universities do not rate as highly on Clune's scale as Appalachian, which continues to be situated in a rural setting in 2009.<sup>20</sup>

Many non-sociological or student development studies written about lesbian and

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<sup>19</sup>Louie Crew, "Before Emancipation: Gay Persons as Viewed by Chairpersons in English" in *The Gay Academic*, ed. Louie Crew (Palm Springs, CA: ETC Publications, 1978), 3-48.

<sup>20</sup>Elizabeth A. Clune, "Student Organizations, Safe Spaces, and the Inclusion of Sexual Orientation in the Non-Discrimination Clauses in Virginia Colleges and Universities" (Master's thesis, University of Virginia, 2004); Estela M. Bensimon, Anna Neumann, Robert Birnbaum, *Making Sense of Administrative Leadership: The 'L' Word in Higher Education*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 1. (Washington, DC: Association for the Study of Higher Education, 1989).



gay campus life anthologize contemporary personal narratives of either students or faculty. A few examples include *Secret Sisters*, *Out & About Campus*, and *Poisoned Ivy*. Although such publications are somewhat valuable for anecdotal examples and sociological studies, they often lack extensive analysis or campus contextualization. Most books omit transgendered campus members and none examine support staff or administrators. This study instead incorporates personal narratives into a historical narrative inclusive of all campus members.<sup>21</sup>

Some LGBT persons have written autobiographies which include their college experiences. Many describe a mixture of campus acceptance and homophobia. The stories by Appalachian regional professors Louise Blum and Jeff Mann particularly provide relevant comparisons to Appalachian faculty life. Both describe a mixture of campus and community reactions to their same-sex relationships with some isolated overtly homophobic, but non-violent, incidents. Appalachian's experience overall mirrors this experience, although documented incidents of hate speech and bias-based violence marred the last three years of Chancellor Thomas and those of his successor, Frank Borkowski.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Shane L. Windmeyer and Pamela W. Freeman, *Secret Sisters: Stories of Being Lesbian and Bisexual in a College Sorority* (Los Angeles: Alyson Books, 2001); Toni A. H. McNaron, *Poisoned Ivy: Lesbian and Gay Academics Confronting Homophobia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997); Kim Howard and Annie Stevens, *Out & About Campus: Personal Accounts by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender College Students* (Los Angeles: Alyson Books, 2000).

<sup>22</sup>Louise Blum, *You're Not from Around Here, Are You?: A Lesbian in Small-town America* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), 172-173, 175-177; Jeff Mann, *Loving Mountains, Loving Men* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2005), xi-xii. See Chapter 5 for a discussion of violence during Thomas' administration. During Borkowski's administration, hate speech annually marred the lesbian and gay organization's National Coming Out Day painting on the Tunnel, the campus' free speech zone.

A few authors examine the history of lesbian and gay campus life in earlier eras by focusing on the development of lesbian and gay networks and subsequent anti-homosexual purges. Lillian Faderman explores female companions in turn-of-the-century colleges in two of her books. She documents how boards of directors responded intolerantly to the growing national trend of associating female companions with lesbianism. Faderman notes that instead of sponsoring explicit official purges, women's colleges began a cultural shift away from promoting college women's independence.<sup>23</sup>

Other studies document organized purges of gay and lesbian academics and students before the 1970s era liberalization of colleges. In *Lonely Hunters: An Oral History of Lesbian and Gay Southern Life*, independent scholar James Sears reconstructs the social climate of 1950s era Florida in which gay professors and students felt the brunt of the McCarthy-like Johns Committee witch hunts. These purges tended to target men and took place in colleges with clandestine, yet recognized, gay male subcultures. Studies of purges within cities, such as historian John Howard's work on Jackson, Mississippi, indicate that investigations tended to cease once community leaders were implicated as homosexual. Despite Appalachian's conservatism and some anecdotal and archival evidence of administrative response to homosexuality, no concrete evidence exists detailing similar organized investigations of LGBT campus members, perhaps because of the popularity and administrative placement of certain gay employees during

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<sup>23</sup>Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 21-23; Lillian Faderman, *To Believe in Women: What Lesbians Have Done for America – A History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), 232-236.

the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>24</sup>

Although the nation's first LGBT campus organization formed in 1967, only a few articles examine the historical development of LGBT campus organizations. "The Rutgers University Lesbian/Gay 1969-1989: The First Twenty Years" and "The Silence is Broken: A History of The First Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual College Student Groups," among others, provide organizational histories. These studies show some similarities to Appalachian's earliest lesbian and gay student organization, such as the desire for anonymity, difficulty locating a lesbian or gay faculty adviser, and administrative resistance to its formation. Yet, Appalachian's first lesbian and gay organization differs from those at Columbia, Cornell, or Rutgers Universities in its lack of a clear connection to a local lesbian and gay community or to a liberation movement such as the Black Power movement. The founders of Appalachian's second lesbian and gay organization, however, had ties to the Women's Studies program, Queer Nation, and other LGBT organizations.<sup>25</sup>

Appalachian's development has several similarities to national LGBT trends in higher education. Its origins and location make these similarities remarkable. Here, a

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<sup>24</sup>Sears, *Lonely Hunters*; see also Shand-Tucci, *The Crimson Letter*; Martin Duberman, *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1972); McCrea, "Madison Gay Purge," 1, 3, 25-30; Tsang, "Gay Ann Arbor Purges," 13-19; Wright, *Harvard Secret Court*; John Howard, *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999); Lorraine Ahearn, "Greensboro's Untold Story: The Gay Scare of '57" *Greensboro News-Record*, 17 September 2006, 1, 8-9. Sears also describes North Carolina College, formerly North Carolina Central University, as fairly tolerant of its gender variant gay men.

<sup>25</sup>David Nichols and Morris J. Kafka-Holzsclag, "The Rutgers University Lesbian/Gay 1969-1989: The First Twenty Years," *Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries* 51, no. 2 (1989): 55-95; Brett Beemyn, "The Silence is Broken: A History of The First Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual College Student Groups," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 12, no. 2 (2003): 205-223.



small former teachers college became the UNC System's fifth school and the first rural-based one with a lesbian and gay student organization. How did this occur at Appalachian? How did this school isolated in the North Carolina mountains also come to have an early counseling center, no apparent purges, and the first Women's Studies program in the UNC System?

Another extremely central aspect of Appalachian's experience is its rural context. Unfortunately, because the development of the Gay Liberation Movement has been urban-centered, memoirs have been the predominant literature written about rural LGBT life until the past several years. As a result, for many years, stereotypes of rural LGBT life lacked substantiation from empirical data. Current studies about LGBT rural experience articulate many of the challenges found within Appalachian's LGBT subculture.

Homosexuality's association to urban areas has been extensively studied. Historian John D'Emilio argues that capitalism, with industrialization's innate disconnect from a family-based economy, provided non-heteronormative individuals the independence to live outside husband-wife households and develop homosocial and homoerotic networks within larger cities. This changing situation is illustrated in Watauga County where dependence on subsistence farming forced a reliance on large heteronormative families through the 1950s and 1960s. The economic growth and occupation diversification brought by Appalachian and the post-1950s-era tourist industry allowed more familial independence and the resultant growth of a homosexual and



bisexual subculture.<sup>26</sup>

Despite the 1970s back-to-the-land movement which culminated in the formation of a nation-wide network of communes for both lesbians and gay men, academics surprisingly avoided studying rural settings. In recent years, cultural geographers David Bell and Gill Valentine documented some of these communities. According to them, radical lesbian feminism has been "strongly influenced by essentialist ideas about women's affinity with nature."<sup>27</sup> This belief permeates many peoples' conception of the perceived rural-urban divide between lesbians and gay men. When asked about the current perception that more lesbians than gay men live in Watauga County and work at Appalachian, many informants concurred with these essentialist attitudes. As will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, some intentional lesbian and Radical Faerie communities formed in northwestern North Carolina during the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>28</sup>

Some authors have difficulty conceiving of a positive rural LGBT experience, despite the presence of many LGBT individuals seeking a rural life. In her unsympathetic discussion of why LGBT persons might choose to reside in presumably unfriendly rural environments, Judith Halberstam ignores that LGBT individuals may prefer other aspects of rural life such as outdoor activities or low population density over a vibrant urban

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<sup>26</sup>John D'Emilio, "Capitalism and Gay Identity" in *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University* (New York: Routledge, 1992): 7.

<sup>27</sup>David Bell and Gill Valentine, "Queer Country: Rural Lesbian and Gay Lives," *Journal of Rural Studies*, 111, no. 2 (1995), 118.

<sup>28</sup>Early gay activist Harry Hay founded Radical Faeries to celebrate a so-called gay sensibility. In addition to maintaining rural-based communes, they publish the *Radical Faerie Digest* (RFD). See Harry Hay, *Radically Gay: Gay Liberation in the Words of its Founder* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 251-263.

LGBT-centered social life. Watauga County exemplifies LGBT interest in rural life through its lesbian and gay gated community, Carefree Cove; furthermore, many Piedmont-based gay men own second homes in Blowing Rock.<sup>29</sup>

Indeed, many rural and Appalachian regional LGBT individuals feel uncomfortable in urban settings despite the LGBT-friendly atmosphere and struggle to combine their dual identities, LGBT and country. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University English professor Jeff Mann addresses his difficulty integrating his homosexual identity with his Appalachian roots in his memoir *Loving Mountains, Loving Men*. Mann's comfort in his native mountains surrounded by family and rural life directly opposes the Appalachian region's anti-homosexual religious stance as well as the attitudes of many urban-centered gay men. Interviewees in the Kentucky-based LGBT oral history project by Kate Black and Marc A. Rhorer also cite this identity disassociation.<sup>30</sup>

The thought of rural areas can conjure images of stereotypes rife with anti-LGBT violence. Amid her questions about remaining in a rural community, for example, Halberstam discusses transgendered Brandon Teena's 1993 brutal rape and murder. Authors of Appalachian-based LGBT pieces describe multiple anti-LGBT biased-based

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<sup>29</sup>Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 35-37, 39; *Carefree Cove*, accessed at <http://www.carefreecove.com>, viewed on 13 February 2009; Matt Comer, "Takeover to the Mountains: Popular Club Event for Gays Heads to Blowing Rock," *Q-Notes*, 15 November 2008, 24; Matt Comer, "Appalachian Home: Gays and Lesbians are Flocking to Get a Piece of the Carolina Mountains," *Q-Notes*, 18 October 2008, 29.

<sup>30</sup>Mann, *Loving Men*; Kate Black and Marc A. Rhorer, "Out in the Mountains: Exploring Lesbian and Gay Lives," 22-23; Comer, "Takeover to the Mountains," 24. The dual identities LGBT racial minorities have been explored in many works such as Essex Hemphill, ed., *Brother to Brother* (Boston: Alyson Publications, 1991), 167-168.

crimes, including a bomb threat in Boone during the late 1980s and the murder of a lesbian hiker. Anti-LGBT attitudes and the lack of LGBT community resources lead many LGBT individuals to relocate to urban or regional college towns.

Empirical studies comparing rates of bias-based crimes between rural and urban areas are incomplete because the lack of well-funded, comprehensive hate crime-reporting projects prevents universal documentation; further, many victims of bias-related crimes avoid reporting cases to the police. Two North Carolina organizations, however, tabulated anti-LGBT crimes during the 1980s and 1990s and showed that North Carolina had one of the highest rates in the nation. In 1990, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force noted that North Carolina reported 1/7 of all documented incidents. An analysis by North Carolinians Against Racist and Religious Violence showed that in 1990 urban-based racial and anti-gay cases made up the highest number of reports in North Carolina. At this time, Watauga County residents reported none.<sup>31</sup>

Other researchers argue that late twentieth century LGBT individuals living in rural areas have lower LGBT-centered identity and fewer opportunities to develop a sense of an LGBT community. In Bell and Valentine's survey of studies on LGBT life in rural communities, the authors found that lesbians and gay men live isolated from other LGBT people in "unsupportive social environments [with] a chronic lack of structural services

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<sup>31</sup>Halberstam, *In a Queer Time*, 64-69; Black and Rhorer, "Out in the Mountains," 22-23; Lonnie R. Helton, "Gay and Lesbian Life" in *Encyclopedia of Appalachia* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006), 173; North Carolina Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality, *Homophobia and Human Rights in North Carolina* (Durham: self-published, 1993), 22-23; North Carolinians Against Racist and Religious Violence, *Bigoted Violence and Hate Groups in North Carolina: 1993 Report* (Durham: self-published, 1993), 9, 18.



and facilities."<sup>32</sup> Studies indicate that rural homosexual residents have higher rates of heterosexual marriage and denial of gay identity.<sup>33</sup> Jerry Kramer reported in "Bachelor Farmers and Spinsters" that the lack of group identity and community resources resulted in the lesbians and gay men of rural North Dakota resembling a "time capsule" of 1950s era homosexual life. Kramer felt that "women are even more isolated" because of the lack of feminist organizations and public spaces such as gay bars or adult bookstores.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, until the late twentieth century, Watauga County's local LGBT social events or organizations were confined to irregularly available support groups, Appalachian's student programming, and private parties.

Bell and Valentine also located many studies that reveal informal support networks in rural areas. Similar to the creation of friendship groups in 1960s-era Watauga County, lesbians and gay men in rural areas form friendships informally rather than within organizations or public spaces although traveling to public spaces in metropolitan often occurs. Recent technological developments such as anonymous telephone helplines, chatlines, and sexlines have hastened the transcendence of problems of isolation and fears of discovery. In more recent years, the internet has similarly served to connect rural LGBT people to each other.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Bell and Valentine, "Queer Country," 113-122.

<sup>33</sup>Idid., 116; Linda McCarthy, "Poppies in a Wheat Field: Exploring the Lives of Rural Lesbians" *Journal of Homosexuality* 39, no. 1 (2000): 80-81.

<sup>34</sup>Jerry Lee Kramer, "Bachelor Farmers and Spinsters: Gay and Lesbian Identities and Communities in Rural North Dakota," in *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities*, ed. by David Bell and Gill Valentine (London: Routledge, 1995), 205, 210.

<sup>35</sup>Kramer, "Bachelor Farmers and Spinsters," 206-208; Bell and Valentine, "Queer Country," 113-122; McCarthy, "Poppies in a Wheat Field," 90-91.



Sociologists and historians have begun to examine rural residents' response to LGBT issues. Empirical data such as a study from Morehead State University validates long-held beliefs that rural areas have low acceptance of public openness of homosexuality. As an example, *The Stranger Next Door* focuses on a small Colorado town's reaction to the state's anti-gay rights amendment. Other authors exploring rural LGBT life include independent scholar James Sears, Indiana University professors Colin Johnson and Mary L. Gray, and historian John Howard.<sup>36</sup>

These works illustrating the nuances of rural and collegiate LGBT life reinforce the findings of this study. Analyzing the intersections of the two disparate worlds of academia and agrarian communities has great potential for understanding responses to LGBT politics. How the administrators set the tone affects the development of campus climate. Although caution with regard to LGBT issues has characterized their approach, Appalachian's post-Gay Liberation administrators' willingness to allow lesbian and gay support groups and organizations to exist has set a tone for the campus. When Chancellor John Thomas stood firm in support of dorm condom dispensers, the gay and lesbian students felt comfortable in asserting their needs for community, support, and education without fear of reprisal.

Campus members share that the institution truly felt like a family nurturing all its campus members although like many families, Appalachian lacked open acknowledgment

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<sup>36</sup>Vicki Lea Eldridge, Lisa Mack, and Eric Swank, "Explaining Comfort with Homosexuality in Rural America," *Journal of Homosexuality* 51, no. 2 (2006): 39-56; Arlene Stein, *The Stranger Next Door: The Story of a Small Community's Battle over Sex, Faith, and Civil Rights* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2001); Howard, *Men Like That*; Sears, *Lonely Hunters*; Colin R. Johnson, "Rural Space: Queer America's Final Frontier," *The Chronicle Review* 52, no. 19 (13 January 2006), B15.

and toleration of its LGBT campus members until recent decades. Also, like many families of LGBT individuals, parts of the Appalachian Family rejected some LGBT campus members, leading members to leave the campus and to suicides. On the other hand, complacency and acceptance outweighs the negative. In this respect, the experiences of Appalachian's administration and LGBT subculture may resemble those of many other campuses and small towns throughout the nation.

During the fifty-six-year administration of R. B. Dougherty, the people of the

## Chapter 2: "I Would Not Hear It Discussed":<sup>1</sup> Dougherty's Administration (1899-1955)

When Watauga Academy opened its doors in 1899, lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered people (LGBT) experienced important parts of their lives and identities in silence and whispered innuendoes. One hundred years later, Appalachian State University (hereafter referred to as Appalachian) promotes tolerance and, in some departments, open acceptance of sexual and gender diversity. While the High Country, the section of the North Carolina mountains where Appalachian is located, remains rural and retains many conservative practices, Boone's university acts as a liberalizing factor in the area. Appalachian, as Watauga County's main employer and the primary draw for immigration, has similarly acted as a focal point for cultural activities and community development, especially with many students and employees active in civic and political organizations. Within the span of a century, attitudes toward LGBT people have become so accepting that modern LGBT heirs to their closeted LGBT ancestors now ride in homecoming floats openly proclaiming their affiliation to one of Appalachian's LGBT student organizations. To understand this cultural evolution, we must explore the context in which the change occurred.

During the fifty-six-year administration of B.B. Dougherty, the people of the

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<sup>1</sup>Daisy Austin Adams, Appalachian Memory Project Records, Special Collections, Belk Library and Information Commons, Appalachian State University. This is an unprocessed collection.



Appalachian region did not speak of sexuality, and particularly not of same-sex attractions. Patrick Dilley, the author of *Queer Man on Campus*, viewed the early half of the twentieth century generally as an era of life "in the closet." The *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) documented the first use of "closet" as meaning a homosexual concealing or denying her or his sexuality in 1969.<sup>2</sup> Although an informal, slang expression, it serves as a precise term that adequately describes a unique state of being in which recognized same-sex feelings or gender-variant identities were not acknowledged to others. Such individuals, at Appalachian and elsewhere, remain silent about their sexual identities and sexual attractions, live conventionally, and sometimes marry in an attempt to obtain the acceptance of normalcy.

Not surprisingly, the use of "gay" at Appalachian was confined to being a synonym for "happy." In 1944, the student newspaper *The Appalachian* described a Y.W.C.A. function as a "Gay Affair."<sup>3</sup> Although the *OED* documents Gertrude Stein as the first source of "gay" used to mean "homosexual" in 1922 and *Gay New York* shows that early-to-mid twentieth century gay men commonly used the phrase, the word was primarily used as a slang in-group phrase.<sup>4</sup> *The Appalachian's* terminology certainly had nothing to do with sexual orientation. In terms of gender identity, many cities throughout

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<sup>2</sup>"Closet, n." *Oxford English Dictionary* website, accessed at <http://dictionary.oed.com>, viewed on 26 May 2008; Dilley, *Queer Man*, 5.

<sup>3</sup>"'Sister' Party is Gay Affair," *Appalachian*, 13 October 1944, 1. This same page included an article about a mock wedding in which new Young Women's Christian Association members were symbolically married to the club president who represented both the groom and chapter.

<sup>4</sup>"Gay, n." *Oxford English Dictionary* website, accessed at <http://dictionary.oed.com>, viewed on 26 May 2008; George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 14-21.

the nation outlawed cross-dressing, such as in Wilmington, North Carolina in 1913. Elsewhere in the world, towards the end of Dougherty's administration in 1952, sex reassignment surgery for male-to-female transsexuals (MTF) became available and Dr. Henry Benjamin, a medical doctor who worked with transsexuals, popularized the term transsexual.<sup>5</sup> As a result, at Appalachian, "gay," "homosexual," and "transsexual" likely went unsaid except in whispers and jokes.

### **The First Fifty Years: the Doughertys**

During the school's first fifty-six years, from 1899 to 1955, Appalachian's administration formulated a deeply patriarchal infrastructure that enforced very conservative fiscal practices and conventional moral rules. The institution's mission as a co-educational teachers' school for mountain residents contributed to a homogenous population that cultivated middle-class Appalachian cultural mores. These class values differed from those inhabitants who continued subsistence farming. Appalachian campus rules limited social interaction between citizens of the surrounding community and students as well as between male and female students. Providing students with wholesome intellectual, social, and athletic activities exemplified the school's *in parentis loci* mission.

When Dr. Blanford Barnard Dougherty and his older brother, Dauphin Disco, founded Watauga Academy in 1899, agrarian Watauga County consisted of slightly more

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<sup>5</sup>Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2008), 18, 33.

than 13,000 people, including 150 Boone residents. By no means completely isolated, the area gained broader knowledge of the world through books, the *Watauga Democrat* newspaper, and transients such as Episcopal mission workers and visitors to nearby Blowing Rock, a summer destination for wealthy city dwellers. Urbanization barely affected the area on a daily basis. The vast majority of households existed as subsistence farms, and the state classified the county's economic level as "pauper." Wilkesboro, the closest city, was thirty miles to the east and by no means a metropolitan center. Boone's roads remained unpaved through the early twentieth century, electric companies were non-existent until 1915, and not even trains came to the area until 1919.<sup>6</sup>

During the late nineteenth century, local taxes funded North Carolina's schools, a system that resulted in academically inferior public schools in economically depressed communities. Low-income counties, such as those in Appalachia, could not raise the necessary funds to pay for adequate schools. Teachers, sometimes with only a seventh grade education themselves, staffed schools that often lacked high school grades. Watauga's public schools operated for only ten weeks per academic year, as was customary in many mountain counties.<sup>7</sup> As a result, some wealthier families paid one of the many private schools to educate their children while the children of the middle and lower classes languished in inferior schools.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>*Complete Directory of North Carolina Yearbook* (Raleigh, NC: *News and Observer*, 1902), 551, 553; John R. Waite, "Boone, North Carolina," *Blue Ridge Stemwinder* 13, no. 1 (July-September 2000), 10.

<sup>7</sup>Ruby Lanier, *Blanford Barnard Dougherty: Mountain Educator* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1974), 143; Daniel J. Whitener, "Appalachian State Teachers College: A History," *Faculty Publications* (1963), 4.

<sup>8</sup>Lanier, *Blanford Barnard Dougherty*, 26.



The Dougherty brothers grew up in Boone. As Watauga County natives, they felt deeply invested in the well-being of their community. Their widowed father raised the boys to have an active civic and religious life and made their education a priority. D.D. Dougherty attended Caldwell County's private Globe Academy and the Baptist-affiliated Wake Forest College while his younger brother, B.B., had a broader education at the Baptist-affiliated Carson-Newman College and Wake Forest College as well as the University of North Carolina.<sup>9</sup> After teaching elsewhere, the brothers returned to Watauga County to care for their aging father and, along with D.D.'s wife Lillie, conceived of a co-educational institution to provide education for children in their hometown.<sup>10</sup>

Ironically, B.B. Dougherty originally desired a career in law, yet "his name became synonymous with education in North Carolina."<sup>11</sup> In his familial quest to improve mountain children's education, he lobbied to equalize North Carolina public school laws and school allotments and worked as Watauga County's School Superintendent. He helped write the 1929 Hancock School Bill, which established an equitable state system of public schools in North Carolina.<sup>12</sup> A university publication proclaimed that Dougherty had done "more to equalize public school opportunity in

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<sup>9</sup>Whitener, "Appalachian State Teachers College," 4.

<sup>10</sup>B.B. Dougherty, interview with Wade Brown, circa. 1958, Appalachian Memory Project Records, Special Collections, Belk Library and Information Commons, Appalachian State University.

<sup>11</sup>"B.B. Dougherty." Program to ASU Dedication of B.B. Dougherty Administration Building, 12 May 1968, n.p.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., n.p.

North Carolina than any person" to that point.<sup>13</sup>

Opening in 1899 in Boone's then-unused public school building, the Dougherty brothers' Watauga Academy embraced the novel concept of operating through the winter months. Elementary-level students studied the first eight weeks for free, and if they wished, continued through the remainder of the winter for less than \$3 a month.<sup>14</sup> None of these students had more than a third grade education. Shortly after opening their academy, D.D., pegged as the "scholar" and "practical man" while younger brother B.B. was the "planner" and "the man with the vision," began to plan a school to train better teachers for North Carolina's mountain region.<sup>15</sup>

Seventy years later, Appalachian's third administrator, Chancellor Herb Wey, said, "[B.B.] Dougherty believed that Appalachian should be . . . a mountain school for mountain kids."<sup>16</sup> A description of Dougherty's contemporary, Radford State Teachers College president John P. McConnell, might also apply to the Doughertys: "Through his knowledge of the human and material resources, he realizes the possibilities for this section . . . for the real development of intellect, character, and personality of the sturdy Scotch Irish stock of the Appalachian Mountains."<sup>17</sup> These students and teachers naturally brought to the school their culturally defined gender and sexual expectations,

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., n.p.

<sup>14</sup>Lanier, *Blanford Barnard Dougherty*, 26.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 105.

<sup>16</sup>William Dunlap and Tom Corbitt, *Remembrances*. Includes interviews with William Plemmons, Herbert Wey, and Cratis Williams. (Self-published, [1978]), n.p.

<sup>17</sup>M'Ledge Moffett, *A History of the State Teachers College at Radford, Virginia, 1910-1930* (Self-published, Radford, VA, 1932), 82.

which tinted the expectations of behavior for many decades.

Within four years of its opening, the founders' ideals were fulfilled with the charter of a state institution for northwestern North Carolina. Six communities sought to have this school, which held the potential for an economic boost. Boone, with its existing school building and citizens pledging donations, easily won the Appalachian Training School for Teachers.<sup>18</sup> In addition to instructional duties, B.B. led administrative duties until 1955 while D.D. worked as the business manager until his death in 1929. During its first year, Appalachian taught 301 students, including 190 employed teachers seeking further training.<sup>19</sup>

Appalachian Training School did not confer college degrees; rather, its course work differed from a traditional high school only in that "graduation required completion of twelfth grade which included courses in methods of teaching."<sup>20</sup> As Dean D.J. Whitener relayed, "beginning as a sub-standard high school, the founders had made it in less than eight years a superior high school. By 1911, the school catalog announced, 'A year of college work will be added.'"<sup>21</sup>

This growth was propelled by the national trend towards teacher professionalism. In 1919, the National Council of State Normal School Presidents and Principals

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<sup>18</sup>*Dew Drop* (Sparta, NC: The Star Publishing Co., 1905), 9.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>20</sup>Whitener, "Appalachian State Teachers College," 9.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 9.



encouraged teachers to obtain two-year and four-year baccalaureate degrees.<sup>22</sup> Two years later in 1921, Appalachian became a two-year, state-supported Normal School. Amid some legislative controversy about academic redundancy because colleges offered the same curriculum, the state authorized Appalachian to confer degrees to grammar and primary school teachers as Appalachian State Teachers College in 1929. As a way to prevent competition with UNC, the college limited high school teaching degrees to health, physical education, and mathematics until 1933.<sup>23</sup> This early emphasis on athletics led to promotion of campus sports, including women's intercollegiate teams. During this time, Appalachian remained unaccredited and was still not seeking accreditation as late as 1943.<sup>24</sup>

During this early period, Appalachian continued to draw its enrollment heavily from mountain districts. According to Graduate School Dean Cratis Williams, Appalachian students generally "[fell] behind in preparation." Apparently, Appalachian accepted anyone with a high school diploma. Appalachian's "own library was poor in quality yet much better than anything [the students] were accustomed to."<sup>25</sup>

As a man of the Progressive Era, B.B. Dougherty used his political connections to promote his institution. While his school's expansion centered on extreme economizing

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<sup>22</sup>James W. Fraser, *Preparing America's Teachers: A History* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2007), 126.

<sup>23</sup>Whitener, "Appalachian State Teachers College," 10.

<sup>24</sup>Cratis D. Williams, *I Come to Boone: The Cratis Williams Chronicles*, eds. David Cratis Williams and Patricia D. Beaver (Boone, NC: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1999), 14.

<sup>25</sup>"B.B. Dougherty." Program to ASU Dedication of B.B. Dougherty Administration Building, n.p.; Dunlap and Corbitt, *Remembrances*, n.p. Williams taught at Appalachian from 1942 to 1983.

and deepening its relationship with the legislature, its modernizing influences assisted Appalachian's successful integration into the surrounding community. Among other innovations, Appalachian built the area's first electric company, New River Light and Power, which continues to power Boone to this day. Appalachian opened many of its cultural and sports events to community members thereby deepening attachments between the town and gown, and cemented its relationship to the community when the Appalachian Demonstration School, authorized in 1929, provided local children with a free modern education.

Appalachian had contradicting characteristics as both a conservative and progressive institution. Appalachian's early gender ratio was surprisingly high for female employees and athletes. Over half of Appalachian's instructors in 1910 were female although this percentage decreased as the school became more academically rigorous. Female professors also held advanced degrees. In 1939, biology professor Maude Cathcart became Appalachian's first female professor and twelfth faculty member to hold a doctorate.<sup>26</sup> Significantly, despite the Baptist prohibition against divorce and the societal precept against hiring married women, Appalachian hired and retained both divorced and married women. One might speculate that the fiscally careful Dougherty may have hired high numbers of females because of gender-based pay disparities; however, without payroll records for comparison, one can only speculate.

The training school also involved women by sponsoring multiple sports for females. After becoming a college in 1928, Appalachian offered varsity football,

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<sup>26</sup>Appalachian State Teachers College, *Bulletin*, Summer School Issue (1940), 3-7.

basketball, and baseball for male students. Women's teams competed with other schools as well but to a lesser extent.<sup>27</sup> The earliest college yearbooks picture a women's basketball team and perhaps a baseball team as well as male and female intramural tennis teams.<sup>28</sup> In the 1950s, the administration limited women's sports to intramurals. The 1950s conservatism affected female students in an unexpected turn – women athletes who had been competing with other colleges' teams suddenly found themselves restricted to only intramural participation "to cut down on exertion."<sup>29</sup>

The Doughertys' conservative nature framed the campus climate and the school's relationship to the community. These men with legendary strict personal standards acted as the gatekeepers of the campus's intellectual and moral standards. Reputedly "neither of them ever took a chew of tobacco, ever smoked a pipe, cigar, or cigarette, ever took a drink of whiskey, or ever swore an oath."<sup>30</sup> They assured parents that their children – especially, their daughters – would be safe: "Your sons and daughters are well cared for here."<sup>31</sup> Further, the discipline code mirrored regional conventions by restricting mixed

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<sup>27</sup>Julian Yoder, Freshman Seminar Series, Appalachian Memory Project Records. Also see interviews with Cecil Miller and Barbara Daye of Freshman Seminar Series, Appalachian Memory Project Records.

<sup>28</sup>*Rhododendron*, 1928-1932.

<sup>29</sup>Linda Coutant, "Celebrating Women: Appalachian Honors One Hundred Years of Women Students," *Appalachian Today* (Fall 1999), 3.

<sup>30</sup>Dunlap and Corbitt, *Remembrances*, n.p. *Remembrances* includes J.F. Spainhour's "The Dougherty Brothers: Letter to the Editor of the *Journal*."

<sup>31</sup>*Dew Drop*, (1907), 13. In addition to the contemporary widespread application of *in parentis loci*, the Doughertys trained students to teach within public schools and the Appalachian Training School educated both minors and working teachers until 1921. The combination of these factors reinforced conservative mores. School systems also would never have hired Appalachian graduates if they had disreputable reputations.



seating during required Chapel, meals, classes, or basketball games, and female students could not visit certain town establishments such as soda shops through the 1940s.<sup>32</sup> The Administration Building had separate male and female entrances and staircases, reminiscent of many mountain churches. Within six years of its charter, Appalachian required daily chapel attendance in the Administration Building, which also housed academic classrooms, and discounted tuition for ministers and ministers' children.<sup>33</sup>

Restrictive dating and visitation rules applied only to the female students living in dorms. Local women living with their own families' households did not need the adopted parent of a house mother. As a result, female town students sat with boyfriends at ball games and visited restricted town watering spots. As one former administrator and student of Dougherty said,

He then manifested those rules on the campus which were very Draconian for girls but very liberal for guys because he knew enough about this business to realize if you controlled the one sex, that was all that's necessary. That also showed his mind set in that you protect women, you know, that's what you do. Guys are going to help themselves but the women are his responsibility. He said to the parents, 'We're going to look after your young ladies if you want them go to school here.'<sup>34</sup>

Despite this situational relaxing of rules, Dougherty still expected a level of decorum from all his students. As a 1938 graduate said, "The story is told that Dr. Dougherty saw this couple walking around the campus holding hands. He said to them,

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<sup>32</sup>Coutant, "Celebrating Women," 2; Lanier, *Blanford Barnard Dougherty*, 114.

<sup>33</sup>*Dew Drop*, (1907), 11; *Dew Drop*, (1905), 12.

<sup>34</sup>Bob Snead, Interview with Kathy Staley, 21 April 2006. Also see *Dew Drop*.

‘What are you saving for marriage?’”<sup>35</sup> Later students unappreciative of the school’s paternalistic approach led strikes in 1938 and 1943 as well as a few times in the 1960s attempting to loosen dating restrictions and other gender-based rules.<sup>36</sup>

The small size of the school did not necessitate an extensive support or administrative staff. Initially, dorm matrons and individual faculty members supervised Appalachian students to ensure that they followed school rules.<sup>37</sup> With an annual average of 225 graduates, the pre-World War II enrollment lacked the numbers necessary for a designated Dean of Students.<sup>38</sup> As the school grew, B.B. Dougherty explored adding graduate work in conjunction with the University of North Carolina. After initially extending advanced study in 1942, Appalachian awarded its first Master of Arts degree graduated in 1949. Between the war and B.B. Dougherty’s 1955 retirement, enrollment increased from 900 to 1,410.<sup>39</sup> As a result, increase in student numbers overwhelmed faculty members who served as advisors and, to some extent, disciplinarians. In 1941, the school hired its first Dean of Women, and later in 1952, a Dean of Men.<sup>40</sup>

Hiring from within influenced the institution’s conservative bent by reinforcing old standards rather than by introducing new ideas from outside institutions. Although

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<sup>35</sup>Snead, interview; Daisy Adams, Appalachian Memory Project Records.

<sup>36</sup>Ruth Douglas Currie, *Appalachian State University: The First Hundred Years* (Prospect, KY: Harmony House Publishers Louisville, 1998); Lanier, *Blanford Barnard Dougherty*, 109-120.

<sup>37</sup>The Faculty of Appalachian State Teachers College, *A Self-Study Report Submitted to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools* (Boone, NC: self-published, 1962), 17.

<sup>38</sup>Whitener, “Appalachian State Teachers College,” 11.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup>The Faculty of Appalachian State Teachers College, *A Self-Study Report*, 17.

some instructors studied outside the region, a high number grew up in northwest North Carolina and many others graduated from Appalachian itself. Local Wataugans included English professor Andrew Greene, Social Studies professor I.G. "Ike" Greer, technology professor Wiley Hartzog, physical education professor Cleone Hodges, and librarian Emma Horton Moore. One former professor said, "[Dougherty] took care of his own. We were one big family."<sup>41</sup> As one graduate recalled, "[The President's] family literally and figuratively was Appalachian."<sup>42</sup> D.D. Dougherty's sons worked for the university until the 1960s. Although President Bill Plemmons coined "Appalachian Family" for his 1956 inaugural speech, the concept was certainly in use beforehand.

In addition to the many Watauga County natives who worked as instructors and support staff, many county children attended the Demonstration School or college or studied under its graduates. This symbiotic relationship gave community members a great deal of influence on the college. Further, Dougherty urged the campus by example and decree to become active in the local community schools, civic groups, and churches. This approach, as well as many of Appalachian's modernizations, endeared the school to residents.<sup>43</sup>

Religion also played an important part in the school's daily life. The student body was so heavily Baptist that 1950s era students jokingly called Appalachian "the largest

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<sup>41</sup>Lanier, *Blanford Barnard Dougherty*, 127.

<sup>42</sup>Snead, interview.

<sup>43</sup>*Dew Drop*, (1905), 10.



Baptist school in the state of North Carolina.”<sup>44</sup> This nickname reflected reality: many faculty members were deacons in the nearby First Baptist Church of Boone.<sup>45</sup> Many local ministers spoke at daily chapel. As a result, religious leaders held a great deal of power. In Appalachian culture, deacons and pastors act as authorities, and with students “strongly encouraged” to attend churches, they highly influenced the school. Although B.B. Dougherty himself reportedly did not regularly attend church, he and various family members donated land and money to First Baptist Church and the Episcopal Church.<sup>46</sup>

Although accounts of direct administrative or community impact on LGBT individuals are absent from the historical record, other accounts exemplify the deep reach of these pastors’ influence on the college’s operations. A self-described secular humanist, English professor David Hodgkin regularly incorporated analytical discussions of Darwinism and religious topics into his composition classes after his hire in 1946. His popularity soared and many academics, such as H.G. Jones of UNC-CH and Stan South of University of South Carolina, consider him a mentor. Much to the ire of local ministers, Hodgkin led local-born Appalachian students to adopt the concept of secular humanism. As a result, these ministers paid Dougherty a visit.

According to Hodgkin’s 1952 statement to his English class, “the President of the college . . . asked me to omit all references to religion and allied controversial subjects

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid.; Snead, interview.

<sup>45</sup>“Untitled list of First Baptist Church of Boone Deacons.” Box 24, Folder 5, David R. Hodgkin Papers, W.L. Eury Appalachian Collection, Belk Library and Information Commons, Appalachian State University.

<sup>46</sup>Lanier, *Blanford Barnard Dougherty*, 106.

that would in any way offend the people of Western North Carolina.”<sup>47</sup> In other words, Dougherty emphasized maintaining close, congenial community ties over Hodgin’s academic freedom. Within his writings, Hodgin further states that Western North Carolina held multiple outdated views that Dougherty himself apparently did not believe. Forbidden to teach students openly about secular humanism, Hodgin began hosting private conversations with interested students.<sup>48</sup>

The Dougherty brothers created an institution based on the socio-political and heteronormative ideals of the middle-class Appalachian region. Their leadership reinforced a silent, closeted lifestyle for any LGBT campus members present. Although this conformity allowed them to maintain social norms that led to acceptance, it also suppressed their chances of candidly expressing themselves.

### Comparing Other Campuses

Although Appalachian was a teacher training college set in rural Appalachia that encouraged its students to maintain acceptable social attitudes, many believe silence on the subject of sexual and gender non-conformists to be the national standard as much as it was a local standard. A comprehensive study of attitudes concerning LGBT students in contemporary colleges does not exist, but individual studies illustrate that several colleges reacted intolerantly to disclosed or suspected lesbian and gay campus members. Not all

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<sup>47</sup>“Statement Made to English 451.” Box 5, Folder 8, David R. Hodgin Papers.

<sup>48</sup>“Guide for Collection 366. David R. Hodgin Papers” accessed at <http://library.appstate.edu/appcoll/ead2002/366hodgin.xml/ead2html>, viewed at 17 September 2008.

of them universally responded punitively.

Black Mountain College (BMC), an experimental school located near Asheville, seems to have been one North Carolinian institution with a more open-minded response to sexual non-conformity. After a distraught BMC student publicly lamented the end of his homosexual romance during the 1930s, he feared expulsion. BMC president John Andrew Rice assured him that the school did not expel its students.<sup>49</sup> Rice also knowingly retained a homosexual professor during a time when many schools fired known lesbian and gay faculty. Although Rice required the professor to remain closeted as well as celibate during his nine years of employment, Rice reacted more broad-mindedly than most of his contemporaries, who often responded with immediate termination.<sup>50</sup> Rice's response may have been either an anomaly in this liberal school or his specific policy, because BMC subsequently reacted less tolerantly. In 1945, Professor Bob Wunsch pled guilty to a North Carolina's Crimes Against Nature (CAN) charge, which deems oral and anal sex as a felony.<sup>51</sup> When he resigned in shame from BMC, none of his colleagues encouraged him to remain.<sup>52</sup> Although it was tolerant of private expressions of homosexuality among students and celibate homosexual professors, BMC

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<sup>49</sup>"Homosexuals," John Andrew Rice Papers. Short Stories and Letters Series. Box 11, Folder 6, W.L. Eury Appalachian Collection, Appalachian State University.

<sup>50</sup>Martin Duberman, *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1972), 80.

<sup>51</sup>North Carolina General Statutes 14-177. The current law was revised in 1994; however, its origins date to 25 Hen. VIII, c. 6. Despite U.S. Supreme Court's 2003 ruling (*Lawrence v. Texas*) that state-level sodomy laws are unconstitutional, North Carolina has not repealed the CAN law and police continue to charge individuals under this statute. See *Q-Notes*, 2006-2008 for individual cases.

<sup>52</sup>Duberman, *Black Mountain*, 225-230.



did not accept libertine mores. The school fired Rice himself for an adulterous affair with a co-ed in 1939.<sup>53</sup>

As historian Lillian Faderman has noted, many nineteenth century female professors formed long-term domestic partnerships for financial and often erotic reasons. Perhaps as a preventive or punitive measure or maybe as a method to promote traditional gender roles, as the decades passed, college boards of directors slowly began replacing female administrators and professors with male ones. Interestingly, male homosexuals experienced similar repression when Harvard University created a Secret Court in 1920 to rid itself of gay students and faculty.<sup>54</sup>

Most college administrators acted on moral objections but also reacted to concerns regarding a college's public image and response. To this day, state-supported colleges depend on the financial support of the legislature and therefore need to maintain a positive image. Parents consider the college's reputation as a safe substitute home when selecting colleges for their children, and donating alumni often desire a respectable alma mater. As seen with both Appalachian and BMC, administrators intervened in professors' intellectual freedom and sexuality at points when the public became involved. Dougherty allowed Hodgkin academic freedom until preachers complained while BMC retained gay campus members until sexual proclivities became public knowledge past the school gates.

One may infer that like most of the country's colleges, Appalachian dismissed the

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 146-147. Wunsch's resignation also occurred in the conservative 1950s.

<sup>54</sup>Faderman, *To Believe in Women*, 246; Wright, *Harvard Secret Court*, 264.

existence of non-heteronormative and transgendered campus members until behavior became too overt or public to be ignored. Tellingly, Appalachian campus rules did not explicitly address sexual behavior, homosexual or heterosexual, until forbidding rape in the 1991 Code of Student Conduct,<sup>55</sup> yet, expectations were implicit as the 1931 *ASTC Bulletin* stated “no young man or young woman who expects to teach the children of the state will be guilty of unmanly or unwomanly conduct . . . those who manifestly are lacking in the essentials of good character, or lacking in ability to grow and develop into efficient teachers may be asked to withdraw.”<sup>56</sup>

Unfortunately for this study, without having the name of an expelled transgressive student or fired employee, student and personnel records cannot be searched to determine the school’s disciplinary procedures. If Dougherty punished students for homosexual acts, such disciplinary measures were likely kept private or the disciplinary action’s written documentation burned in the 1966 Administration Building fire. Written evidence has yet to be uncovered indicating that Dougherty knew of the existence of a LGBT population within his school.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Office of the Chancellor, *Code of Student Conduct* (Boone, NC: Appalachian State University, 1991), 17, 19. The previous code from 1980 forbids physical abuse but does not specify sexual abuse. At the time, only upperclassmen dorms had unrestricted in-room opposite sex visitations.

<sup>56</sup>*A.S.T.C. Bulletin Annual Catalog for 1930-1931*, Boone, NC (February 1931), 15.

<sup>57</sup>*Dew Drop*. The administration building’s 1966 fire burned the majority of campus records; however, many of expected and customary college documents may not have existed. Several professors reported to Ruby Lanier that Dougherty disliked employment contracts and implied that requesting one insulted his honor. This may have extended to student discipline records as well. However, one offshoot of the 1940 student demonstrations was the creation of a Human Behavior grade, also known as the demerit system. See Lanier, *Blanford Barnard Dougherty*, 113, 127-129.

### The Cultural Environment of the Early Period

As the Doughertys' leadership molded the environment at Appalachian, the regional Appalachian culture also contributed to the overwhelming silence on topics related to sex. Views about sexuality in general, as well as those toward homosexuality in particular, and notions about gender and family roles, all contributed to and reinforced the coercive conformism of the early years of the institution. The Appalachian region resembled other agrarian cultures which successfully discouraged a visible or active LGBT subculture.

Homosexuality and transexuality increasingly entered the national discourse in the 1940s and 1950s with heavy media coverage of Joseph McCarthy's anti-communist and anti-homosexual trials and Christine Jorgensen's sex reassignment. During World War II, the military began its ban on homosexual military personnel and in 1950, the federal government followed suit by deeming homosexuals to be security risks.<sup>58</sup> The American Psychiatric Association, moreover, added homosexuality to its list of mental disorders in 1952.<sup>59</sup> Presumably news of these events spread throughout the mountains as well as to other rural communities.

A complete understanding of Appalachian's campus climate requires placing Appalachian's LGBT population within its regional context. Unfortunately, North

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<sup>58</sup>Lynn Witt, Sherry Thomas, and Eric Marcus, eds. *Out in All Directions: The Almanac of Gay and Lesbian America* (New York: Warner Books, 1995), 56; Mary Beth Norton, David M. Katzman, et al., *A People and a Nation: A History of the United States, Volume B* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1996), 543.

<sup>59</sup>Witt et al., *Out in All Directions*, 227.



Carolina has no written record of early-to-mid-twentieth century LGBT life. Although the General Assembly adopted the Crimes Against Nature (CAN) law from colonial law and North Carolina was the final state to drop capital punishment as its penalty, no one has conducted a historical analysis of those violating this law.<sup>60</sup> As a traditionally rural state, little historical treatment has been given to its LGBT population despite the centrality of Chapel Hill and Durham in LGBT southern culture and former senator Jesse Helms' international anti-gay reputation. Furthermore, Appalachian Studies scholars have only very recently begun to study homosexuality in mountain culture. A brief survey of statewide and regional manuscript collections uncovers multiple untapped opportunities for biographical and social history treatments of LGBT North Carolinians.

Studies of mid-twentieth century America such as John Howard's Mississippi-based *Men Like That* and Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy's work on Depression-era South Dakota lesbians demonstrate that adolescent and adult homosexual behaviors existed in the countryside with little or no public recognition.<sup>61</sup> Despite the need for additional research on rural homosexual network development, homosexual and female impersonator subcultures have been documented in America as early as the late nineteenth century. Published in 1908, one of the United States' earliest works on

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<sup>60</sup>North Carolina General Statutes 14-177; Vicki Eaklor, *Queer America: A GLBT History of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), 31.

<sup>61</sup>Howard, *Men Like That*, 18-27; Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy, "'But We Would Never Talk about It': The Structures of Lesbian Discretion in South Dakota, 1928-1933" in *Inventing Lesbian Cultures in America*, ed. Ellen Lewin (Boston: Beacon, 1996), 15-39. Comparable to findings in George Chauncey's *Gay New York*, Howard reports that many men engaging in homosexual behaviors never adopted a gay identity. Sex could be situational, such as experimenting teenaged boys. Further, those with traditional gender expression viewed only those with non-traditional gender expression to be gay.

homosexuality lists New York, Boston, Washington, Chicago, New Orleans, San Francisco, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, and St. Louis as "homosexual capitals" with "smart clubs . . . well-known for their homosexual atmospheres."<sup>62</sup>

Despite the likelihood of some albeit limited dissemination of sexuality-based information, sexuality remained a taboo topic in the Appalachian region as well as other sections of the South as late as the 1950s. One informant explained that the prohibition against discussing sexuality was so pronounced that his mother-in-law, a Watauga native two generations younger than Dougherty, never uttered the word "pregnant" despite bearing seven children.<sup>63</sup> In one study about Appalachia, researchers Anthony Cavender and Steve Crowder found that an indirect way developed in rural Appalachia to speak of sex. "White Liver," for example, which is likened to an urban legend, was discussed as a congenital disease which causes an insatiable sex drive and can lead to the death of one's partner. Many study participants refused to discuss it because of its sensitive nature,<sup>64</sup> yet, it underscores a belief that an active sex life was unhealthy.<sup>65</sup>

Several ethnographies reinforce a reluctance to discuss topics related to sexuality as well as a double standard of sexual behavior where extramarital behavior was forbidden yet tolerated. Although academic treatment specifically on Appalachian sexual

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<sup>62</sup>Edward Irenaeus Prime Stevenson, *The Intersexes: A History of Similisexualism as a Problem in Social Life*, rev. ed. (1908; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1975), 640. Also see George Chauncey's *Gay New York*, 33-34.

<sup>63</sup>Snead, interview.

<sup>64</sup>Anthony Cavender and Steve Crowder, "White-Livered Widders and Bad-Blooded Men: Folk Illness and Sexual Disorder in Southern Appalachia," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 11, no. 4 (October 2002): 647-649.

<sup>65</sup>Cavender and Crowder, "White-Livered Widders," 646.

attitudes remain to be written, ethnographies and personal anecdotes illustrate the contradictory nature of sexual mores. Appalachian State University historian John Alexander Williams documents a tolerance of illegitimacy by mountain natives.<sup>66</sup> Ethnographer George Hicks found that the traditional double standard of expecting women's chastity and fidelity and forgiving men's sexual exploits was true in Appalachia as well as in the rest of the nation.<sup>67</sup> On a local level, one of Hodgin's students wrote a local lore essay detailing Boone residents' hypocrisy over alcohol and sexuality, pointing out the number of high-standing citizens who participated in bootlegging and extramarital, interracial relationships.<sup>68</sup>

In this culture of repressed sexual expectations, scholars have also documented the strong gender divisions within traditional mountain culture. As noted by early twentieth century authors, these divisions required females to care for the home, help in the fields, and limit their education in deference to their brothers. Men made the most important decisions and were considered superior. In some families, meals were even served first to male family members.<sup>69</sup> In *Our Southern Highlander*, originally published in 1913, Horace Kephart found mountain men's lack of deferential treatment of women

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<sup>66</sup>John Alexander Williams, *Appalachia: A History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 123-125.

<sup>67</sup>George Hicks, *Appalachian Valley* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976), 47.

<sup>68</sup>"Inside Boone," David R. Hodgin Papers.

<sup>69</sup>John C. Campbell, *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland*, repr. (1921, repr., The University Press of Kentucky, 1969); Emma Bell Miles, *The Spirit of the Mountains* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976); Horace Kephart, *Our Southern Highlander*, repr. (1922, repr. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976).



as evidence that they viewed women as “little more than a sort of superior domestic animal.”<sup>70</sup>

This dualistic gender system led to a reliance on a male-female household to supply the skills needed to maintain a farming household. Moreover, because survival in a subsistence farm-based society depended on inexpensive farm labor, large families were economically necessary.<sup>71</sup> As a result, individuals either married or remained within their parental home because they could not sustain a life alone. A culture requiring one either to marry or to live with one’s parents is not conducive to a flourishing lesbian or gay subculture. The household diversification needed for the development of an LGBT subculture also required economic complexity not found in the county’s early twentieth century predominant subsistence farms.

Watauga County’s agrarian culture affected the development of gay identity and a distinct subculture, as historian John D’Emilio and others have shown. D’Emilio argues that capitalism with its emphasis on mercantile and industry-based livelihoods resulted in urbanization. Operating factories require a higher number of employees than subsistence farming. With employees housed in high density buildings and away from their families, homosexually-inclined people could create community space at bars and bathhouses. Urban industrial employees whose income enabled them to purchase goods and services were no longer dependent on the gender-specific skills of a spouse and therefore could

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<sup>70</sup>Kephart, *Our Southern Highlander*, 332.

<sup>71</sup>Kevin Ray Bush and Sheryl Beaty Lash, “Family Relationships and Gender Roles,” in *Encyclopedia of Appalachia* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006), 170-171.

remain unmarried.<sup>72</sup> This theory that industry-based capitalism drives lesbian and gay subculture development has been corroborated by sociologist Jerry Kramer, who studied late twentieth century rural North Dakota gay men and lesbians whose local economy remained based on agriculture. His study uncovered a gay and lesbian life lacking in cohesion and public spaces, much like the lifestyle of the early 1900s.<sup>73</sup> Similarly, Watauga County residents during Dougherty's administration lacked the critical mass necessary to forge a discrete subculture. For this development, Watauga's educational system needed to improve to allow for the diversification of occupations.

The lack of a public homosexual subculture evidences itself at Appalachian. Public signifiers of LGBT life such as gay bars, organizations, or businesses were absent until the 1970s. Throughout the nation, most LGBT subcultures existed primarily underground, and this may be true in Watauga County as well. Isaac Barker (pseudonym), for example, an integral member of Appalachian's 1960s-era gay subculture, was hired during the 1920s; however, whether he self-identified as gay that early is not known.<sup>74</sup> One of his gay friends joined the campus community in the 1940s. Perhaps they recognized each other as "family," to use the gay slang, because they began socializing with other gay students and faculty, begging the question of whether or not Appalachian had a nascent underground gay subculture during its first fifty-six years.

Many alumni from Dougherty's late administration have reiterated in first-person

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<sup>72</sup>D'Emilio, "Capitalism and Gay Identity," 7.

<sup>73</sup>Kramer, "Bachelor Farmers and Spinsters," 210.

<sup>74</sup>Jim Sparrow (pseudonym), Interview with Kathy Staley, 9 April 2007 and 17 April 2007; *Rhododendron* (1920-1930).

accounts that students did not publicly discuss homosexuality except when someone made off-hand jokes about certain campus members labeled as, using their 1950s and 1960s era lingo, "queer."<sup>75</sup> Although cultural standards have now shifted to label such joking as inappropriate harassment, the contemporary attitude characterized such jokes as light-hearted fun. Graduates, in fact, consistently described the campus as a caring place.

This "joking," however, was not without personal or social ramifications. At a teachers college, being rumored to be "queer" had dire consequences on students' future careers. Magazine articles "played on fears that homosexual teachers might prey on children," making educators particularly vulnerable.<sup>76</sup> The California School System suggested administrators examine the lists of persons caught in gay bar sting operations in order to identify gay teachers.<sup>77</sup> In fact, the mere rumor of homosexuality could put one's teaching position at risk.<sup>78</sup>

Most of the name calling and sexual speculation, often called gay-baiting in modern times, focused on women in athletics and men in fine arts. Certainly, the Appalachian students viewed female athletes and male musicians and actors as varying from gender-based expectations and not conforming to social expectations of women and men. Even today, many equate homosexuality with gender variance, and some encourage

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<sup>75</sup>Snead, interview; Nanci Tolbert Nance, Interview with Kathryn Staley, 26 July 2006; Alice Sherman (pseudonym), Interview with Kathryn Staley, 6 April 2006.

<sup>76</sup>Jackie Blount, "Spinsters, Bachelors, and Other Gender Transgressors in School Employment, 1850-1990," *Review of Educational Research* 70, no. 1, (Spring 2000): 93.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 94.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 95.



gender-conforming behaviors as a way to dispel homosexual urges. Students were not alone in commenting about their peers' gender variance. For example, one alumnus recalls that the faculty theatre director threw a shoe at an actor yelling, "God damn it! Walk like a man," then demanded that he "grab" and kiss his leading lady.<sup>79</sup> Not surprising, these comments were made during the gender conformist late 1940s and 1950s.

Some mid-1950s students excluded lesbians as part of their discourse on homosexuality. Those "queers" of whom the students spoke were effeminate men, not lesbians.<sup>80</sup> A physical education major, however, has said that the female physical education majors were congenially teased about being lesbian, a theme which recurs throughout many colleges.<sup>81</sup>

Although the existence of unmarried professors and staff might also have led to gay-baiting, the particular campus environment created by the Doughertys did not necessarily result in such assumptions. After all, B. B. Dougherty himself never married and devoted himself to his career. Dougherty may simply have viewed single life as dedication to one's profession. To him, the neglect of marriage certainly was not an aberration.<sup>82</sup> In the mid-1940s, Dougherty promoted an unmarried employee who privately self-identified as homosexual to department head. The campus lore indicates

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<sup>79</sup>Stan South, *An Archeological Evolution* (New York: Spring, 2005), 35-36.

<sup>80</sup>Snead, interview; Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>Sherman, interview.

<sup>82</sup>O. Lester Brown, *Blanford Barnard Dougherty: A Man to Match His Mountains* (Charlotte: privately published, 1963), 202.

that some students speculated as to sexuality of this popular staff member, and two former colleagues stated that this individual self-identified as gay and was active in the campus LGBT subculture by the 1960s. This promotion, nevertheless, cannot be interpreted as latitude towards LGBT campus members.

One factor contributing to the large number of single professors may well have been their low salaries. As one former employee stated, "So many people who were teachers devoted themselves totally to their students, they may have been single by choice. And I think that when you saw an unmarried man or an unmarried woman you didn't always assume that they were gay or lesbian. Also because they made such poor salaries a lot of people just lived together anyhow because it was the only way they could survive."<sup>83</sup> As a result, insufficient information exists to allow us to conclude about the sexual orientation of the cohabiting faculty or the campus tolerance level of sexual variance.

### **What was the Administrative Approach to LGBT Campus Members?**

While the written record omits the existence of LGBT campus members and an administrative response policy during the Dougherty era, one may extrapolate from other schools' experiences and administrative actions that Appalachian included LGBT campus members and responded in some manner if they breached the administrators' sense of

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<sup>83</sup>Sherman, interview.

propriety.

Scholars of sexuality have found that dormitory life enables the development of discreet same-sex relationships. A subsequent chapter will show that Appalachian students in the early years did, in fact, take advantage of dorm life to live with lovers and hold single-sex parties without garnering suspicions. Possibly, such relationships existed during the Dougherty administration as well because through at least the 1940s, roommates shared double beds behind locked doors as had long been the social custom.<sup>84</sup> Although hall mothers had copies of each key and checked rooms at curfew, their regular schedule may have afforded some sense of privacy for same-sex couples. The style of bed indicates that the administration likely had not considered the consequences of roommates becoming romantically involved.

Librarians have the capability of discreetly supporting LGBT campus members by stocking their shelves with positive social science and history texts and famous LGBT authors' novels, poetry, and plays. According to librarian Barbara Gittings, "Most gays, it seems, at some point have gone to books in an effort to understand about being gay or get some help in living as gay."<sup>85</sup> Few works of particular interest to LGBT individuals in Appalachian's library can be traced to the time of Dougherty's administration.<sup>86</sup> This fact

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<sup>84</sup>Julian Yoder, Appalachian Memory Project Records; Cratis Williams, *I Come to Boone*, 15; William Killian, Appalachian Memory Project Records.

<sup>85</sup>Barbara Gittings, "Combating the Lies in the Libraries," *The Gay Academic*, ed. Louie Crew (Palm Springs, CA: ETC Publications, 1978), 107.

<sup>86</sup>Although the Library's acquisitions list is not organized by title or subject, current holdings of pre-1955 publications may be examined to determine the individual accession numbers. Comparing these numbers to the Library's historical accession ledgers, which date to 1905, determines each book's date of purchase. Unfortunately, since converting to a computer-based acquisitions system, the Library has not maintained a list for books that personnel replaced due to damage or loss or deaccessioned, or permanently



is completely understandable because Appalachian educated future public school teachers.

Principally, works by sexologists and LGBT fiction writers appear to have been purchased prior to Dougherty's retirement. Although sympathetic pieces by Edward Carpenter and Donald Cory existed, the library purchased Cory's books in the mid-1960s whereas Carpenter's works remained absent from the shelves until 1980. The Library did acquire by the 1940s several books about Oscar Wilde and Walt Whitman with opaque references to their homosexuality.<sup>87</sup> Surely, some students and employees savored these books as windows to a larger, albeit depressing, world.

Gender transition probably did not occur among Appalachian campus members prior to the 1990s. The technology and awareness of its availability was simply too small.<sup>88</sup> During the Dougherty era, most individuals perceived gender identity and sex as immutably intertwined. Anyone who blurred the gender lines would certainly have been viewed as deviant. Breaks in gender norms would likely have been noted by someone and deemed improper conduct by Dougherty.

The campus climate created by B.B. Dougherty precluded the open acceptance of Appalachian's LGBT campus members. Regional and local cultural norms exacerbated national trends of silent repression. With a campus climate encouraging conformity, transgressors in the form of LGBT campus members remained unwelcome. Implicit rules

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removed from the shelves.

<sup>87</sup>See Richard Le Gallienne, *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde: Poems, Volume 1* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1923), xxxvii.

<sup>88</sup>Stryker, *Transgender History*, 18.

threatening expulsion for gender and sexual transgression, a lack of positive reading materials, and a climate tolerant of queer-baiting contributed to the silence of LGBT campus members. If an LGBT subculture existed, it remained private, and evidence for it would be based on an oral tradition. As a result, little is known because campus members simply did not talk about such controversial issues. As one 1939 graduate said, "they kept in the closet."<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>Daisy Adams, Appalachian Memory Project Records.

### Chapter 3: "A Hard-Core Coterie" of Queens and Bulldykes:<sup>1</sup> The Plemmons Administration (1955-1969)

The comparatively brief administration of President William "Bill" Plemmons from 1955 to 1969 encompassed an era of great social change, especially within the realm of education. "The Appalachian Family," a term he coined but one that described Dougherty's era as well, changed as a result of significant paradigm shifts. The UNC System expanded, bringing the former teachers colleges and historically black colleges into the fold. North Carolinians experienced multiple racial events, including Greensboro's 1960 Woolworth sit-ins and school desegregation. Betty Friedan's 1963 feminist manifesto, *The Feminine Mystique*, sparked the second wave of feminists spreading the awareness of continued gender-based inequality. However, upon matriculation to college, the baby boomers sought privileges that previous generations had barely imagined.

Meanwhile, throughout the nation, LGBT people left their "closets" and formed networks that webbed across the nation. Plemmons' administration began during an era dominated by bar patrons risking police raids, friends holding discreet parties, and married homosexuals living double lives. During the "conventional" 1950s, lesbian and gay organizations formed for education and support and the nation's first transsexual publicly announced her sex reassignment. The call for tolerance and acceptance became

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<sup>1</sup>Sparrow, interview.



public. By Plemmons' retirement in 1969, national LGBT-themed meetings, publications, and political activism emphasized a broader identification to LGBT socio-political interests.

Because Appalachian mirrored society's public disapproval of sexual and gender variance, LGBT campus members as well as nationally involved activists created a semi-private social network of like-minded individuals which *Queer Man on Campus* author Dilley identifies as the "Homosexual Identity." These people recognize their non-heterosexual attractions and build an identity around them but believe them to be a private matter and lack ties to a wider identity. Applying Dilley's stages of development to an era explains why generations of lesbians and gay men did not develop organizations to resist objectification and marginalization. Although individuals within these generations broke from this schema and adopted Dilley's concept of the Gay or even the Queer development, overall the majority of lesbians and gays during the 1950s and 1960s did not.<sup>2</sup>

Psychoanalysts originated the term "homosexual" in Germany, and it was first used in the United States in 1892.<sup>3</sup> The term itself accentuates the sexual nature of same-sex attractions and, for Dilley, alludes to an individual without a community.

"Homosexual" as a word came into greater usage during the years of Plemmons' administration although many non-heterosexuals did not describe themselves by the term. Disliking the sexual emphasis, some lesbians and gay men used the term "homophile"

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<sup>2</sup>Dilley, *Queer Man*, 5.

<sup>3</sup>*Oxford English Dictionary*, accessed at <http://dictionary.oed.com>, viewed on 26 May 2008.

("loving the same") to emphasize love over sex and depart from the imagery of sick or criminal homosexuals.<sup>4</sup>

As campus members of a rural teachers college, the Appalachian lesbian and gay male population seems to have paralleled national trends fairly well. Although trailing behind those leading the homophile movement, the school with its rules and developing subculture appears to have been in sync with the cross-section of American LGBT life.

### **The Appalachian Family Grows**

While national changes in social norms were taking place, Appalachian's leadership began to shift slightly as Dougherty yielded his role of gatekeeper to Plemmons. During Dougherty's fifty-six years as Appalachian president, the college underwent a great deal of growth, especially in student enrollment and demographics. By 1958, the campus population had doubled its 1928 numbers to 2,140 students and 108 faculty members. It doubled again to 4,930 students and 262 professors within Plemmons' fourteen-year administration.<sup>5</sup> Eighty percent of students originated from North Carolina's Piedmont. Plemmons' successor, Chancellor Herb Wey, notes that by this time the original mission of mountain school to educate future mountain teachers "had really outgrown its stage."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Eaklor, *Queer America*, 96.

<sup>5</sup>Cratis D. Williams, Ruby Lanier, and Richard D. Howe, "A Short History of Appalachian," *The Appalachian Faculty Emeriti*, ed. Richard D. Howe (Boone, NC: Appalachian State University, 2004), 4.

<sup>6</sup>Whitener, "Appalachian State Teachers College," 11; Dunlap and Corbitt, *Remembrances*, n.p.

At a school charged to train teachers and at a time when public school teaching was still considered almost exclusively a female profession, the student body had always included more women than men. According to one alumna, women outnumbered male students 3 to 1 in the late 1950s.<sup>7</sup> In 1966, a significantly higher number of females entered Appalachian, with 1,990 male students and 2,427 female students while university documents indicate a concerted effort to increase the numbers of male students through the introduction of the military program ROTC and other activities perceived to be attractive to men.<sup>8</sup>

According to another alumnus, "[Appalachian in the mid-1950s] was a very, very conservative place. And it was that until the 60s actually . . . because Dougherty was followed by Plemmons. He again was Baptist; he grew up in the mountains."<sup>9</sup> A deacon of First Baptist Church of Boone, Plemmons espoused attitudes that mirrored Dougherty's patriarchal philosophy and high standards of traditional morality.<sup>10</sup> Plemmons continued to require separate standards of behavior based on sex and to prohibit alcohol and frequent dating.<sup>11</sup> Plemmons also initially wanted Appalachian to remain a single-purpose institution focusing on the "preparation of teachers for our public

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<sup>7</sup>Barbara Daye, Freshman Seminar Series, Appalachian Memory Project Records.

<sup>8</sup>Office of Institutional Research and Development, *Appalachian State University Fact Book* (Boone, NC: Appalachian State University, 1970), 12-13; "Administrative Cabinet," Cratis Dearl Williams Papers, W.L. Eury Appalachian Collection, Belk Library and Information Commons, Appalachian State University.

<sup>9</sup>Snead, interview.

<sup>10</sup>First Baptist Church of Boone Deacons, Offprints, Clippings, Etc. Series, Box 24, Folder 5, David Hodgins Papers.

<sup>11</sup>Snead, interview; Lanier, *Blanford Barnard Dougherty*, 142.



schools, especially the public schools of this area and this state.”<sup>12</sup>

Like Dougherty, Plemmons had life experiences which were mostly confined to the mountains and his education to religious colleges. A native of Asheville, he attended Mars Hill College and Wake Forest College as well as Duke University and UNC. During the first thirteen years of his career, Plemmons worked in Buncombe County's public schools. He subsequently taught at UNC in the field of education.<sup>13</sup> Politically, Plemmons remained a Democrat through the 1980s while many Southerners changed parties after the New Deal or desegregation.<sup>14</sup> This childless man coined the phrase “Appalachian Family” in his inauguration speech.<sup>15</sup> As a result, his environment fostered a mixture of both progressive and conservative approaches.

Upon his hire in 1955, Plemmons assessed Appalachian's state of affairs and concentrated his attention on increasing its academic rigor and improving its physical plant. In order to compete with other colleges and become a university, Appalachian required a higher percentage of professors holding Ph.D.s and improved area specializations. In 1961, Plemmons created the new position of Dean of Academic Affairs. After the campus became a university in 1967, the dean reorganized the

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<sup>12</sup>Dunlap and Corbitt, *Remembrances*, n.p.; W.H. Plemmons, “Appalachian's Purpose and Mission,” (Originally 1956 Inaugural Speech) [ASTC] *Faculty Publications* (December 1958), 7.

<sup>13</sup>Richard D. Howe, “Dr. W.H. Plemmons,” *The Appalachian Faculty Emeriti*, ed. Richard D. Howe (Boone, NC: Appalachian State University, 2004), 14.

<sup>14</sup>W.H. Plemmons to John P. East, 30 September 1981, Congressional Delegation, 1981 folder, William Plemmons Papers, University Archives, Belk Library and Information Commons, Appalachian State University. This is an unprocessed collection.

<sup>15</sup>Dunlap and Corbitt, *Remembrances*, n.p.

academic structure into three undergraduate colleges.<sup>16</sup> These changes led to higher standards more in line with those of a comprehensive university.

Although Dougherty took pride in his ability to stretch a minimal budget and campus lore states he returned remaining dollars to Raleigh, his frugality led to poorly constructed physical facilities and low salaries. By Dougherty's retirement, many buildings were in serious need of renovation while others such as the gyms threatened to tumble down. As the result of Plemmons' successful pursuit of state funding, the university built twenty-four new buildings costing \$18 million. His ability to secure legislation support and financing led to Plemmons' being dubbed "the Builder."<sup>17</sup> Among other changes, he closed roads to create a united walking campus to foster a cohesive campus.<sup>18</sup> As a way to improve funding, the administration established an Office of Public Affairs to promote Appalachian's needs to the General Assembly.<sup>19</sup> Plemmons also expanded his athletic program, moved the laboratory elementary and high schools away from the university, and built a new library. So great was the growth, Wey commented with only slight exaggeration, "I think there are only one or two buildings left from the time Bill Plemmons came and the time he left."<sup>20</sup>

This desire to build and rebuild met with controversy. When the Administration

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<sup>16</sup>Williams, Lanier, and Howe, *The Appalachian Faculty Emeriti*, 4.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 4, 14.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>20</sup>Dunlap and Corbitt, *Remembrances*, n.p.

Building was targeted for demolition in Spring 1967, alumni and students alike led an outcry. Although the Appalachian Family may have been unhappy with the planned Spring demolition, no one rejoiced when the building unexpectedly went up in flames during Christmas Break, 1966. Fortunately, the student records had already been removed from the building in anticipation of the demolition, but few other college records survived the blaze. The Administration Building's destruction opened space for the construction of a new library and raised the issue of transforming the old Appalachian Elementary School and Appalachian High School into college buildings.

As Appalachian State Teachers College slowly moved towards becoming a regional university in 1967, administrators realized the campus culture needed to shift to attract the geographically diverse student population and nationally prominent scholars needed. Previously marketed as an inexpensive school, Appalachian attracted first generation college students from rural areas: "The typical Appalachian student . . . is more than likely from a middle class or lower middle class Piedmont family."<sup>21</sup> This shift in recruitment priorities meant broadening the campus's overall appeal while maintaining its reputation with locals, current campus members, and alumni. Appalachian expunged some gender-based rules and daily chapel requirements while it also expanded its entertainment options and access to the local community.<sup>22</sup> These changes also allowed students to become their own gatekeepers to a considerable degree, thereby attracting

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<sup>21</sup>"Chapter 1: Purpose and Philosophy," Box 2, Folder 2, CISP Accession #2005.214, University Archives, Special Collections, Belk Library and Information Commons, Appalachian State University. This is an unprocessed collection.

<sup>22</sup>Williams, Lanier, and Howe, *The Appalachian Faculty Emeriti*, 37.



more cosmopolitan students from North Carolina's Piedmont. The full-scale incorporation of the national youth culture took place slowly through the 1970s, however.

During the 1960s, youth counterculture began influencing the nation, yet the Appalachian Family remained for the most part conservative. Concerned with the Civil Rights and Vietnam Era campus rioting, administrators wrote a students' rights policy in anticipation of unrest but few students challenged their authority.<sup>23</sup> New Left organizations such as the Students for a Democratic Society never became popular at Appalachian and, in fact, when Vietnam War protestors tried to speak on campus, students kicked them off. On one occasion in 1966, the campus' Vietnam Teach-in allowed equal time for both sides.<sup>24</sup>

Gradually, administrators relaxed their responsibilities as gatekeepers in order to imbue students with the freedoms and responsibilities of adults. Public image remained a primary concern when facing changes in campus culture as shown by the Administrative Cabinet's actions. *In loco parentis* remained a concept approved by many parents, community members, and some conservative students, but many female students despised the gender-based rules, particularly the curfew and dress code. By 1967, the institution rescinded gender-based rules for alcohol consumption, off-campus visitation, and dress.<sup>25</sup> When considering co-eds' request for the removal of the curfew in selected

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<sup>23</sup>Untitled document, ASU Series, Graduate School Subseries, Box 2, Folder 9, Administrative Cabinet, 1969, Cratis Dearl Williams Papers.

<sup>24</sup>Lisa Alanna McGurk, "Transition and Inequality: Female Students at Appalachian State University, 1939-89" (master's thesis, Appalachian State University, 1998), 60-61.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 52-53.

upperclassmen women's dorms in 1969, Dean of the General College O.K. Webb concluded that "the impact upon the public image of Appalachian would not be a negative one."<sup>26</sup> This concern for public relations also led to Development Officer Bob Snead's forming a committee for the "maintenance and further improvement of community and university relationships" that developed the idea of non-credit classes for town residents.<sup>27</sup>

This growth led to Appalachian joining the UNC System as a comprehensive university in 1971. No longer an underfunded teachers college for low-scoring, poor students, Appalachian was poised to compete with larger and older institutions for better trained faculty and more cosmopolitan students. To a large degree, however, these changes negatively affected relations with the county.

### Changes in Watauga

On many levels, life in Watauga County retained many of its rural Appalachian cultural traits. One native Wataugan "climate informant" incorrectly remembers that "Smithey's [Department Store] and Boone Drug Store were the only two restaurants on

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<sup>26</sup>"Administrative Council, 1969." Appalachian State University Series, Graduate School Subseries, Cratis Dearl Williams Papers; O.K. Webb, Jr. to Bill Plemmons (4 April 1969), Box 2, Folder 10, Appalachian State University Series, Graduate School Subseries, Cratis Dearl Williams Papers.

<sup>27</sup>"Minutes of Administrative Council, 17 February 1969," Box 2, Folder 12, Appalachian State University Series, Graduate School Subseries, Cratis Dearl Williams Papers.

King Street" in the 1960s.<sup>28</sup> Although more existed, the small town life left an impression. At the time, only one movie theater operated within the county. In order to get alcohol, an individual needed special knowledge of the clandestine bars or available transportation to drive to neighboring Wilkes County, which had one bar conveniently located just past the county line.<sup>29</sup>

As Appalachian grew, so did its surrounding community. Social change was slowly modernizing the "Lost Provinces." Watauga County's population increased 30.4 percent during the 1960s.<sup>30</sup> Traditional subsistence farming gave way to non-agricultural work, or to use the mountain vernacular, "public jobs." While farming decreased by 27 percent from 1965 to 1970 and tourism jobs increased 27 percent for the same time, Appalachian State University emerged as the largest single employer in the area.<sup>31</sup>

For some time, the campus and townspeople maintained a close relationship. According to the institution's 1962 Self-Study Report, "'town-gown' relations in Boone are noticeably pleasant, for which some credit presumably is due to the conduct of the Faculty."<sup>32</sup> This relationship was fostered by employees both individually and

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<sup>28</sup>Lindsay Diedrich, "Native Wataugan Reflects on Small Town Life in Boone," *The Appalachian*, 22 April 2008, 5.

<sup>29</sup>Ed Culler, Freshman Seminar Series, Appalachian Memory Project Records; Bob Snead, Freshman Seminar Series, Appalachian Memory Project Records.

<sup>30</sup>Appalachian State University, *The Appalachian Spirit* (Boone, NC: Appalachian State University, [1983]), 48.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>32</sup>Faculty of Appalachian State Teachers College, *A Self-Study Report*, 55. Despite the somewhat biased nature of this source, it underscores a general attitude that long-time residents and older alumni relate.



professionally. As previously mentioned, the development office devised non-credit courses to benefit community members.<sup>33</sup> Previous personal relationships found in civic, school, and religious groups continued to flourish. Civic organizations such as the Lions Club in which Deans Daniel J. Whitener and Cratis Williams actively participated continued to foster campus-community connections.<sup>34</sup> Many professors continued to serve as First Baptist Church deacons. On the other end of the religious spectrum, a group of professors and community members joined together in 1958 to form the Boone Unitarian Universalist Fellowship.<sup>35</sup>

Using a common model of the time, the teachers college maintained the Appalachian Elementary School and Appalachian High School as laboratories, and later formed partnerships with their replacements Hardin Park Elementary School and Watauga High School, where education majors perfected their teaching skills. The general trend in higher education divorced colleges from symbiotic community relationships and closed the demonstration schools.<sup>36</sup> Appalachian bucked the trend for another few years. Instead, its cordial relationship with these schools expanded to include all county schools, and in 1966, Appalachian even began supplementing Watauga County

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<sup>33</sup>Minutes of Administrative Council, 17 February 1969, Box 2, Folder 12, Appalachian State University Series, Graduate School Subseries, Cratis Dearl Williams Papers.

<sup>34</sup>Cratis Williams, *I Come to Boone*, 115-117.

<sup>35</sup>"Boone Unitarian Universalist Fellowship," Appalachian Regional Brochure Collection, W.L. Eury Appalachian Collection, Belk Library and Information Commons, Appalachian State University.

<sup>36</sup>Sheldon Hackney, "The University and Its Community: Past and Present," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 488 (November 1986): 136-137.

School's budget with additional salaries and instructional supplies.<sup>37</sup> This support came at a time when the school system both integrated and consolidated schools, reducing the county's five secondary schools to one.<sup>38</sup> As a result, Appalachian continued to influence young minds while endearing itself to the community.

The 1966 destruction of the Administration Building symbolized the end of an era. Occurring during Appalachian's final years as exclusively a teachers college, it also signaled the beginning of the end of the symbiotic relationship between the town and the college. Although the adoption of Appalachian's looser behavioral standards had yet to cause a conflict with the morality of the surrounding citizenry, Plemmons' 1969 retirement five years later marked the erosion of a positive attitude towards Appalachian's growth. Appalachian retained its ties to Watauga County Schools in general, but as it lost its identity as a teachers college, the relationship slowly deteriorated; furthermore, the nation faced great social change tremendously during this era, as did the economy.

### **National LGBT Context**

When Plemmons took office as Appalachian president in 1955, the nation's LGBT population was beginning to form organizations and networks spanning entire regions. The earlier whispers of closeted individuals gave way to cautious but

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<sup>37</sup>Bicentennial Committee, *Development of Public Education in Watauga County, North Carolina* (Boone, NC: n.p., [1976?]), 53.

<sup>38</sup>Watauga County Public Schools, *Handbook for School Personnel, 1955-1956* (Boone, NC: Watauga County Public Schools, 1955), Table of Contents, 1-14. Histories count four high schools; however, this study includes the Watauga Consolidated School, which had ninth through eleventh grades.

increasingly confident conversations of self-identified homosexuals, bisexuals, and transsexuals. Increasing numbers of homosexually-inclined individuals began forming identities around their sexuality, allowing the development of a specific subculture. At the same time, advancements in medical technology allowed transsexuals to seek physical and legal gender reassignment. The new generation had more resources available to replace self-identities based on shame with positive ones.

The nation's predominate discourse on homosexuals categorized them as deviants who should be separated from "normal" people. Whereas earlier the mainstream had labeled homosexuals as morally unfit, now psychological labels were increasingly applied as well. In other states, courts sent homosexuals to mental hospitals, but North Carolina's Crimes Against Nature (CAN) law criminalized oral and anal sex as a felony.<sup>39</sup> Although mainstream doctors assisted families in institutionalizing gay youth against their will as late as the mid-1970s, this pathologization of lesbians and gay men had not affected North Carolina's legal system.<sup>40</sup> If convicted of sodomy, a North Carolinian was sent to prison. As a result, Broughton Mental Hospital, the state's western mental institution, does not have any cases explicitly labeled homosexual. When North Carolinian mental hospitals treated individuals for homosexuality, families or the individuals themselves would have pursued institutionalization rather than the court system. According to a Broughton Mental Hospital employee, their doctors likely used diagnoses such as

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<sup>39</sup>Leila J. Rupp, *A Desired Past: A Short History of Same-Sex Love in America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 148.

<sup>40</sup>Interview with Michael Penny by Chris McGinnis, 2 November 2000, K-198, in the Southern Oral History Program Collection #4007, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



hysteria, nymphomania, or masturbation.<sup>41</sup>

By 1955, established lesbian and gay subcultures existed in most urban areas, with bars, restaurants, and baths dedicated to lesbian and gay clientele. Although such establishments had long existed in metropolitan cities, smaller cities such as Augusta, Georgia, and Fayetteville, North Carolina, also had "hot spots" by 1963.<sup>42</sup> In *Men Like That*, historian John Howard relates that he even uncovered a gay underground in the Deep South of Jackson, Mississippi.<sup>43</sup>

One key innovation was the formation of two national homophile organizations, the Daughters of Bilitis (DoB) and the Mattachine Society. The DoB and the Mattachine Society formed almost simultaneously for lesbians and gay men, respectively. These groups held national conventions, published monthly magazines, and helped increase the self-esteem of individuals without a visible community. Although they occasionally held joint activities, they mostly segregated by sex.<sup>44</sup>

LGBT activists from the post-Gay Liberation Movement era criticize the homophile organizations as conservative groups that focused on education and support rather than on creating systemic change; however, one must remember LGBT people of the 1950s and 1960s had good reasons to be cautious. The collision of negative views of homosexuality with the growing lesbian and gay subcultures led to increased prohibitions,

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<sup>41</sup>Elizabeth Huddleston, e-mail correspondence to author, December 2006.

<sup>42</sup>*The Lavender Baedeker*, 1, no. 1 (1963): .

<sup>43</sup>Howard, *Men Like That*.

<sup>44</sup>See Marcia M. Gallo, *Different Daughters: A History of the Daughters of Bilitis and the Rise of the Lesbian Rights Movement* (New York: Seal Press, 2006), 150-151.

including one on lesbian and gay federal employees while the Committee on Un-American Activities investigated alleged homosexuals in the early 1950s.<sup>45</sup> Even open variance in gender expression in gay bars was not tolerated as demonstrated by *de facto* rules requiring “gender-appropriate” clothing.<sup>46</sup> Being exposed in public as gay, such as being named in a newspaper article about bar raids, led to job loss, particularly if one were a teacher.<sup>47</sup> In fact, the rumor of homosexuality risked one’s teaching position.<sup>48</sup>

Such media attention increased the mainstream awareness of homosexuality while raising fear among some LGBT individuals and activism among others. Individuals’ self-identification with what Dilley classified as the “Gay Identity” led to more activist attitudes.

At this same time, the nation’s first widely-known transsexual made headlines. Christine Jorgensen’s very public transition spurred others to seek gender reassignment and even more to create American-based gender clinics.<sup>49</sup> By the mid-1950s, Louise Lawrence, a male-to-female non-operative transsexual, began an informal network of other American transsexuals and assisted transsexuality scientist Harry Benjamin in educating other scientists about transvestism and transsexuality.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Norton, Katzman, *et al.*, *A People and a Nation*, 543.

<sup>46</sup>Jackie M. Blount, “Spinsters, Bachelors,” 95.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>49</sup>Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2002), 51-97.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, photograph 10, 187-188.

Also in the mid-1950s, parts of North Carolina, particularly the Durham-Chapel Hill-Raleigh "Triangle" area, began developing a reputation for a flourishing gay subculture. Durham is believed to have been home to the state's oldest mixed gay-straight bar, the Duke Tavern, which opened in the 1950s.<sup>51</sup> By 1957, Greensboro became the home of the General Greene, a bar with gay men and female prostitutes as patrons.<sup>52</sup> Another mixed bar opened in the late 1960s in Chapel Hill, whose 1960s and 1970s gay men's subculture was documented in an UNC-CH student's oral history project.<sup>53</sup> As one of the state's most progressive communities, it became an ideal stopping point for gays traveling between Washington, D.C. and Atlanta.

The number of gay-accepting bars increased in the 1960s. *The Lavender Baedeker*, the earliest known gay-themed American directory, discreetly identifies five North Carolina bars and restaurants and three eastern Tennessee bars as "little known places whose reputation previously [had] been passed by word of mouth." Contrary to the perception that 1960s era North Carolina and eastern Tennessee lacked a gay subculture, the cities of Asheville, Charlotte, Chattanooga, Durham, Fayetteville, Knoxville, and Raleigh each supported gay bars. Since only a portion of the gay population patronize bars, these towns must have held an extensive lesbian and gay subculture to have

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<sup>51</sup>"Herb's Not 'Erb's," *Charlotte Free Press*, 25 August 1975, 2; "North Carolina," *The Lavender Baedeker*, 1, no. 1 (1963): 18.

<sup>52</sup>Lorraine Ahearn, "Greensboro's Untold Story: The Gay Scare of '57," *Greensboro News-Record*, 17 September 2006, 8.

<sup>53</sup>Gerald Unks, 1 April 2000, K-200, in the Southern Oral History Program Collection #4007, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



maintained a bar.<sup>54</sup>

At Appalachian, during the fourteen years of Plemmons' administration, the LGBT subculture grew increasingly public. Nationally, the growing activism of lesbians and gays culminated in the Stonewall riots in late June of 1969. "Gay Liberation" and "Gay is Good" became catch phrases. As many delved into a gay identity, many others, particularly youth, continued to struggle with their identity as homosexuals; however, the context for coming out would never be as desolately lonely as it had been in previous generations, no matter the geography.

### **LGBT Life at Appalachian and Other Colleges**

The previously mentioned national and regional developments influenced the lives of Appalachian's LGBT campus life. Campus lore is rife with stories of the 1960s gay and lesbian subculture. Its character illustrated the influences of a multiplicity of spheres affecting the development of a distinct subculture.

Certainly, homosexuality was a well-known fact at many North Carolina colleges. Some North Carolina college students felt comfortable being gay on campus. A 1960s-era gay alum of North Carolina College, now known as North Carolina Central University, said he and his gay friends were called "funny" but never experienced

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<sup>54</sup>*The Lavender Baedeker*, 1, no. 1 (1963). *The Lavender Baedeker* apparently included only gay bars and not exclusively lesbian ones. At least seven bars and restaurants were located within Central and Southern Appalachian (Appalachian Regional Commission-defined counties in Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia).

hostility.<sup>55</sup> Chapel Hill developed a reputation for accepting its rumored large numbers of gay students. At the University of North Carolina, 1950s-era editorials promoted the liberal idea of homosexuality as a sickness to be treated and tolerated rather than as a crime to be punished. 1960s-era UNC-CH alumni Armistead Maupin, on the other hand, states that “society didn’t recognize [LGBT’s] existence” when he was young.<sup>56</sup> Sarah Emery, the author of the titillating and poorly documented *Blood on the Well*, accuses UNC administrators of allowing communist “sexual degenerates” onto the faculty and described an archetypical student who faced “a homosexual lying in wait for him . . . in the men’s room in the basement of the Library [ellipses included].”<sup>57</sup> In 1957, a statewide homosexual sting prosecuting thirty-two men with one being sentenced to sixty years in prison reminded individuals of the consequences of having a marginalized sexual orientation.<sup>58</sup> As members of Dilley’s “Homosexual Identity,” they acted discreetly outside of organized groups or public venues.

By the 1950s, Watauga County’s modernization, especially the access to mainstream media outlets, broadened its participation in the national discourse. Televisions, including the one in Appalachian’s soda shop, likely tuned into the 1954 Army-McCarthy hearings in which McCarthy raised the issue of homosexual civil service personnel. Three years later, *Life* magazine printed an article titled, “Homosexuality in

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<sup>55</sup>Sears, *Lonely Hunters*, 126. However, readers should remember that these individuals may not have been out to non-gay classmates.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 151; Matt Comer, “Wasting No Time,” *Q-Notes*, 4 October 2008, 27, 29.

<sup>57</sup>Sarah Emery, *Blood on the Old Well* (Dallas, TX: Prospect House, 1963), vi, 100.

<sup>58</sup>Ahearn, “The ‘Gay Scare of 1957’,” 1, 8-9.

America.”<sup>59</sup> In 1967, CBS aired a negative documentary about homosexuality.<sup>60</sup>

Meanwhile, nearby Blowing Rock grew in its appeal to Bohemians.<sup>61</sup> Having attracted summer tourists for decades, Blowing Rock developed an artist colony in the 1960s. At the same time, several local-born and transplanted same-sex couples resided in Blowing Rock.<sup>62</sup> This increasingly visible lesbian and gay population underscored an elevated self-identity as well as a broadening awareness of this subculture.

Appalachian’s LGBT subculture also grew during the 1950s and 1960s. Many lesbian and gay professors joined the faculty during the 1950s and 1960s with some becoming quite popular and rising within their fields. For example, the staff of the yearbook, *The Rhododendron*, dedicated at least two annuals to gay employees during the Plemmons administration. Additionally, many gay faculty and staff became active in local churches and contributed to the local arts scene.<sup>63</sup>

Heterosexual and gay campus members alike describe the existence of a separate subculture. Jim Sparrow (pseudonym), who taught Humanities courses at Appalachian during the mid-1960s, recalls attending monthly parties with a group of approximately thirty campus members, many gay. He had been introduced to this “hard-core coterie” by

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<sup>59</sup>Eaklor, *Queer America*, 141.

<sup>60</sup>Witt, *Out in All Directions*, 109.

<sup>61</sup>Frank Sherrill, Box 1, Folder 2, Blowing Rock Historical Society Records. W.L. Eury Appalachian Collection, Appalachian State University.

<sup>62</sup>Bobby Baird, Interview with Kathy Staley, 28 January 2007; Sparrow, interview; Camp Catawba-Vera Lachmann Papers, W.L. Eury Appalachian Collection, Belk Library and Information Commons, Appalachian State University.

<sup>63</sup>Personnel files, Appalachian State University. Personnel files of deceased members of the 1960s gay subculture included listings of community participation.



a departmental colleague who recognized him as a “sister.” Sparrow admits his brief Appalachian career and shy personality prevented his participating in all of the campus’ LGBT social networks.<sup>64</sup> A mixture of students, staff, and professors attended these parties. This inter-generational socializing was commonplace nationwide within the LGBT subculture during this era.<sup>65</sup>

Camp and innuendo apparently filled these gatherings. Sparrow recalls calling each other “sisters” and “queens.” The term “homosexual” was too technical, “gay” was unheard of, and “queer” was denigrating. He also calls one male student a “Mother Superior who kept [the gay students] in line.”<sup>66</sup> This camp behavior occurring in rural Appalachia may be a result of the employees’ having been educated in areas known for their gay subculture, such as Durham, Chapel Hill, Knoxville, and New York City.<sup>67</sup>

Although gay men predominated, these parties included heterosexuals and lesbian students as well. One heterosexual regular party attendant remarked that he was mistaken as homosexual because of his close friendship with Darrel Rogers (pseudonym), a popular professor. Male informants do not recall lesbian professors on campus. This lapse indicates that their particular circle lacked integration with other friendship groups because Sparrow says that Rogers and his departmental colleague knew many more people than he and they may have known some lesbian professors.

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<sup>64</sup>Sparrow, interview.

<sup>65</sup>James R. Peacock, “The Mirror Effect: Social Change in Gay Male Culture” (presentation, 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of The Gerontological Society of America, 16 November 2001).

<sup>66</sup>Sparrow, interview.

<sup>67</sup>Personnel Files, Appalachian State University.

During this time, living an openly gay life continued to be challenging and rare outside of urban areas. As before, society expected adults to marry and often tied success for men to being married and raising a family. Through the late 1970s, corporate executives continued to see "being a family man" as indicative of stability and relevant to promotions.<sup>68</sup> Obviously, the need to parrot heteronormativity for the sake of job security and respectability interfered with maintaining committed same-sex relationships.<sup>69</sup> Many middle-class lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals socialized with each other but did not talk about their homosexual behavior "because they liked their ambiguous status and had no desire to be publicly labeled a 'kind of person.'" <sup>70</sup>

At Appalachian, some homosexual men escorted women to public events as a heterosexual cover.<sup>71</sup> This dual existence was exemplified by Rogers. Many heterosexual colleagues and community-based friends report they presumed he was heterosexual because he publicly dated women whereas Sparrow remembers his "seeing" only men.<sup>72</sup> Bisexuality could be the overlooked cause of such a phenomenon.

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<sup>68</sup>Barry Adam, "Structural Foundations of the Gay World," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 27, no. 4 (October 1985): 663.

<sup>69</sup>James Peacock, "The Mirror Effect." Also see Gerald Unks and Charles Delmar, Southern Oral History Program for discussions of married gay professors in Chapel Hill's gay social life.

<sup>70</sup>Rupp, *Desired Past*, 125.

<sup>71</sup>Douglas Bennett (pseudonym), Interview by Kathy Staley, 7 June 2006; Cheryl Claassen, Interview by Kathy Staley, 18 July 2006.

<sup>72</sup>John Higby, Interview with Kathy Staley, 15 December 2006; Sarah Shepherd (pseudonym), Interview by Kathy Staley, 27 March 2007, Ava Brown (pseudonym), Interview by Kathy Staley, 27 March 2007.

Reportedly, this was the case for Rogers.<sup>73</sup> However, enough homosexuals admit to publicly dating the opposite sex to raise doubts that bisexuality is the universal reason for the division between private and public dating.

Although a few alumni expressed the hope that their gay professors had long-term relationships, none knew of any. Maintaining such illicit relationships risked exposure and therefore endangered their careers. Culturally expected attributes of a committed relationship – particularly co-habitation and shared finances – makes the “private” dangerously “public” for those desiring invisibility. Although the men in his own friendship group maintained brief relationships, Sparrow believes that these men did not expect to remain in a relationship for a long time.<sup>74</sup>

Few respondents said that they knew lesbians on the Appalachian campus, but the possibility of lesbian employees at the institution is statistically likely. One alumna believes at least one particular professor was lesbian. According to various sources, this professor regularly hosted parties for her female students.<sup>75</sup> This professor’s chairperson received a letter complaining that these parties led to an unspecified impropriety; however, little else is known.<sup>76</sup>

The apparent lack of visible lesbians may have resulted from a combination of gender restrictions and careful self-regulation. For 1950s and 1960s-era women, living a

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<sup>73</sup>Higby, interview.

<sup>74</sup>Sparrow, interview.

<sup>75</sup>Sherman, interview; Nance, interview; Personnel Files, Appalachian State University.

<sup>76</sup>Personnel Files, Appalachian State University.



life as a lesbian broke strict taboos and limited already scarce career options. Appalachian's curriculum and newspaper articles emphasized domesticity for female students.<sup>77</sup> This may be linked to the decrease of female professors on campus. As a teachers college, Appalachian encouraged women to enter a career while reinforcing feminine norms through May Day pageants and protective dating practices. In fact, one administrator praised a professor for demonstrating to female physical education majors how to be feminine.<sup>78</sup> Perhaps students and colleagues simply ignored lesbian employees because all female employees broke gender conventions whereas most of the male employees and students whom students identified as "gay" participated in gender variant fields of study. The trend of lesbians and gay men socializing separately may also have limited this study's sources.

Nationally, the energy from the increasingly activist homophile organizations led to the formation of the nation's first gay student groups. In 1967, the participation of college student Stephen Donaldson in the New York Mattachine Society prompted his forming the Columbia Student Homophile League.<sup>79</sup> Publicity about its inception influenced the creation of the Cornell Student Homophile League. Eventually, the incorporation of militant tactics of the campus antiwar and Black Power movements increased the visibility and activism of both groups. During these pre-Stonewall years, even these clubs based in liberal, urban-based universities faced many challenges to their

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<sup>77</sup>McGurk, "Transition and Inequality," 30-38.

<sup>78</sup>Personnel files, Appalachian State University.

<sup>79</sup>Brett Beemyn, "The Silence is Broken: A History of The First Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual College Student Groups," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 12, no. 2 (2003): 206-207.

success, such as administrative and student resistance to university recognition, lesbian and gay reticence to forming a public organization, members' desire for anonymity, and the need to rely on heterosexual allies for faculty advisers and official members.<sup>80</sup>

### **Interactions between LGBT Campus Members and the Administration**

During the Plemmons era on the Appalachian campus, the chief administrator seemed to prefer the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" approach to sexuality and actively excluded openly lesbian and gay campus members from his definition of the Appalachian Family. Plemmons at least felt they should not have rights comparable to ethnic minorities. An inhospitable attitude very likely permeated his administration and colored the campus' treatment of its LGBT students and employees. The chance of campus members crossing from a "Homosexual Identity" into a "Gay Identity" was unlikely, as such a daring act would have put their social standing and future at risk.

Although Plemmons did not explicitly offer his written opinion on LGBT issues during his tenure as president, he did participate in a national letter-writing movement a decade after his retirement, presenting evidence of his probable perspective. In 1981, Plemmons' church circulated a national petition opposing H.R. 1454, "the Gay Bill of Rights."<sup>81</sup> H.R. 1454 was designed to add "affectional and sexual orientation" to Title

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<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>William Plemmons to Ike Andrews, 27 August 1981, Congressional Delegation, 1981 folder, William Plemmons Papers.

VII of the Civil Rights Bill of 1964.<sup>82</sup> After signing the petition, Plemmons wrote on university stationery to each North Carolina Congressional Delegation member to repeat and emphasize his opposition to the bill.

In the letter, Plemmons explains that “our first Ten Amendments is a Bill of Rights for everyone, including ‘gays.’ We don’t need a special one for them.”

Plemmons’ language about special rights mirrors modern conservative discourse on LGBT rights, which label the extension of employment and marriage rights to LGBT individuals as “special rights.” He also

strongly oppose[d] allocation or expenditure of a single penny of federal funds for any Gay benefits. Sometimes it [was] hard for [him] to support every aspect of our Bill of Rights, especially as interpreted for Gay’s [sic] and others of their kind. Certainly they don’t need a special Bill of Rights.<sup>83</sup>

That he watched his successors at Appalachian officially recognize the Appalachian Gay Awareness Association in 1979 may have played a part in Plemmons’ vehemence.<sup>84</sup>

Plemmons’ resistance to “gays and others of their kind” rests in a broader backdrop of Watauga’s developing LGBT subculture. Although the area was breaking free of traditional mountain lifestyles, Boone was not an open-minded Mecca. As a retired English professor who arrived at Appalachian in 1967 states, “There are rules and there are rules that can be bent. And you better understand which is which and you’d

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<sup>82</sup>Congressional Research Service, *Digest of Public General Bills and Resolutions 97<sup>th</sup> Congress*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1981), E-146.

<sup>83</sup>William Plemmons to Jim [Broyhill], 30 July 1981, Congressional Delegation, 1981 folder, William Plemmons Papers.

<sup>84</sup>The 1979 approval of the Appalachian Gay Awareness Association will be discussed at length in Chapter 4.



better not try to bend too hard.”<sup>85</sup> Informants’ general impression of the times, however, is that administrators did not actively investigate the lives of employees, even those unmarried men described as “flaming.” Very likely, if campus members behaved within specific parameters, they could bend rules to suit. “The administration was not looking over anybody’s shoulder about anything for sexual reasons or any other,” concurs Sparrow. “They weren’t out to get anybody that I knew about. . . . My impression was that the authorities weren’t alarmed at all about homosexuality or lesbianism.”<sup>86</sup>

North Carolina’s lesbian and gay campus members likely knew the potential for expulsion. As previously discussed, the fear of expulsion by the Black Mountain College’s 1930s-era gay student went unrealized. At other colleges, however, criminalizing homosexuality rose to the level of holding purges of gay students and faculty. Colleges documented as having expelled or fired LGBT campus members include Florida State University, University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, Baylor University, and the University of Wisconsin at Madison.<sup>87</sup> The notorious 1950s Florida Legislative Investigative Committee, which modeled itself after the House Un-American Activities Committee, investigated multiple residents as well as University of Florida campus members, resulting in the termination of sixteen professors. Such dismissals

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<sup>85</sup>Higby, interview.

<sup>86</sup>Sparrow, interview.

<sup>87</sup>Sears, *Lonely Hunters*, 88; Stacy Braukman, “‘Nothing Else Matters But Sex’: Cold War Narratives of Deviance and the Search for Lesbian Teachers in Florida, 1959-1963,” *Feminist Studies* 27, no. 3 (2001): 553-575; Tsang, “Gay Ann Arbor Purges,” 13-19; McCrear, “Madison Gay Purge,” 1, 3, 25-30; Shand-Tucci, *The Crimson Letter*, 1-3; Patrick Dilley, “20<sup>th</sup> Century Postsecondary Practices and Policies to Control Gay Students,” *The Review of Higher Education* 25, no. 4 (Summer 2002): 413.

tarnished careers and even led to suicides.<sup>88</sup>

A purge at the University of Wisconsin became a campus-wide crackdown on activity in tearooms, but none of this study's informants knew of a concerted effort to limit or close Appalachian's tearooms, men's bathrooms used for sexual activity, other than a 1990s-era door removal in one bathroom.<sup>89</sup> According to former Chancellor John Thomas, "[Tearoom behavior] wasn't something that would've affected negatively the academic mission or safety welfare of the students. If it had gotten to where it was a serious security problem, i.e. somebody's going to be molested, attacked, male rape, that sort of thing, we certainly would've put a stop to that. But evidently they handled it in such a way that it did not become a serious student or faculty or staff safety [issue] or someone being offended by what's going on in there with people doing unsightly things in there."<sup>90</sup>

These testaments of leniency appear to contradict the campus lore of same-sex couples leaving campus after being caught in compromising positions. Although this oral tradition cannot be substantiated, the rumors of expulsions had the potential for creating fear within the LGBT campus population and influencing negative attitudes among

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<sup>88</sup>Sears, *Lonely Hunters*, 81.

<sup>89</sup>McCrea, 30; Max Smith, Interview with Kathy Staley, 3 July 2006; Sparrow, interview; Evan Smith, Interview with Kathy Staley, 4 September 2006; Tom Beaman, Interview with Kathy Staley, 30 August 2006.

For tearoom behavior at UNC-CH, see Charles Delmar, Joseph Herzenberg, Michael Penny, Gerry Uns, Interview with Charles Delmar by Chris McGinnis, 14 October 2000, in the Southern Oral History Program Collection #4007. According to these Chapel Hill interviewees, the UNC-CH security force did not patrol the tearoom behavior; however, each also stated he did not personally participate in tearoom activities.

<sup>90</sup>John Thomas, Interview with Kathy Staley, 23 July 2007. Thomas served as vice chancellor from 1974 to 1979 and chancellor from 1979 to 1993.

heterosexuals. Colleges like Appalachian took their *in loco parentis* mandate seriously. To control students' sexuality, many campuses expelled those found transgressing any sexual norms. Expulsion may have been the consequence of disclosure for Appalachian same-sex couples as well. On a college campus where a student's graduation was in jeopardy if he or she had a weight problem, could not pass a swimming test, suffered from a serious medical condition, or failed the National Teachers Examination, proof of homosexual behavior would have meant certain expulsion.

The deans of men and women, reorganized as the Dean of Students in 1972, disciplined students for breaches of sexual propriety. In 1969, the male dorm staff manual instructed hall counselors to report any "homosexual cases" to the Residence Counselor and the Dean of Men immediately upon discovery. The three other actions requiring immediate notification were suicide attempts, serious injury, and suspicion of taking or possessing illegal drugs.<sup>91</sup> Such a comparison shows that Appalachian inferred homosexuality as unacceptable and potentially dangerous. Although a female dorm staff manual has yet to be uncovered, regulations for women likely resembled those for men. While some alumni believe the hall mothers would have kept knowledge of same-sex couples private, this manual indicates such a permissive response would have been contrary to college protocol.<sup>92</sup>

Many informants discussed such cases, but usually off-tape. One taped example consists of a "reliable memory" of alumna Nanci Tolbert Nance, whose two hall mates

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<sup>91</sup>*Handbook for Men's Residence Hall Staff* (Boone, NC: Appalachian State University, 1969), 7.

<sup>92</sup>Nance, interview; Snead, interview; Sherman, interview.



left school after their house mother discovered them together.<sup>93</sup> She did not know whether the students left out of embarrassment or because they were expelled. Despite having locked doors, house mothers made unscheduled weekly inspections of dorm rooms. The dorms' lack of privacy placed students at a greater risk of discovery than sexually transgressive employees. In some ways, acting sexually was not as much of a problem as being discovered. Discovery simply meant that these students had broken the unspoken rule about remaining within an invisible and separate subculture.<sup>94</sup>

Similar to conditions during the Dougherty era, this double standard of tolerating employee behaviors while students were expelled for similar actions likely stemmed from how information spread on campus. Knowledge of homosexual students could easily spread through their dorm and into the wider world. Employees living away from campus could remain fairly discreet.<sup>95</sup> Although many contemporary public university administrators view such selective expulsions of LGBT campus members as a public relations nightmare, as previously shown, Appalachian administrators during the 1950s and 1960s likely held other views.

During the decades of the 1950s and 1960s, Appalachian lacked any local LGBT

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<sup>93</sup>Nance, interview.

<sup>94</sup>Nance, interview; Ken Badgett, e-mail correspondence to author, 9 April 2008; Dilley, "20<sup>th</sup> Century Postsecondary Practices and Policies to Control Gay Students," 421. That these students left school cannot be corroborated by the students in question, administrators, or archival materials, and the informants were unclear whether the students chose to leave to escape embarrassment or were expelled. By 1970, inspection schedules decreased to monthly, scheduled visits.

<sup>95</sup>The Faculty Apartments on the campus did not afford much privacy. Although the building was converted to Coffey Hall, an honors dorm, professors continued to reside there through the Thomas Administration.

organizations. Appalachian was not unusual; only two such college organizations existed anywhere during the pre-Stonewall era. If campus members had decided to become trailblazers, their activities likely would have been squelched locally. Snead, who worked for Plemmons, felt that Plemmons would not have approved an LGBT student organization: "I have a feeling that if it had happened in the '50s, late '50s to early '60s with Plemmons, he would have had a real problem with the State of North Carolina. . . . There was no chance they would have ever done it. But had he decided this was the right thing to do, he would have been gone."<sup>96</sup>

One wonders how much the campus provided implicit support to LGBT campus members. In terms of the Library, it provided very little. In 1968, Librarian Leonard Eury led the construction of the campus' third library, expanding its capacity from 15,146 to 84,000.<sup>97</sup> Whereas Dougherty Memorial Library maintained closed stacks, the new Belk Library adopted the modern model of open stacks, with the exception of the Vault Room, a fireproof area "which contained a collection of rare, valuable, archival, and special materials."<sup>98</sup> Not surprisingly, these "special" materials contained several books about sexuality, including Alfred Kinsey's books on the sexual behavior of males and females. Of the homosexuality-themed books purchased before Plemmons' 1969 retirement, over half of them resided in the Vault. Two of the three that remained on the shelves, *The Wolfenden Report*, *They Stand Apart: A Critical Survey of the Problems of*

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<sup>96</sup>Snead, interview.

<sup>97</sup>L. Keith Hill, "A History of the Appalachian State University Library, 1899-1970" (Master's thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1973), 108, 109, 113.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 114.

*Homosexuality*, and *The Lesbian in America*, were purchased before 1965 and two had spines titles without explicit reference to homosexuality. The remaining four books were purchased after 1965 and contained homosexual in their titles. Although they were listed in the catalog, they were available only on request from librarians.

Another way to determine campus climate is through its course offerings. Class discussions likely precluded homosexuality in general. On the other hand, English professor David Hodgin may have discussed the subject. His "Sex and Sexual Freedom" folder held undated notes for a lecture about alternative marriages, including "polyandry, poly???, and same-sex marriage." He wrote at the document's top the phrase "Light Touch!" indicating his awareness of the topic's sensitivity.<sup>99</sup>

The campus climate continued to preclude an open acceptance of Appalachian's LGBT campus members. National trends of silence and potential punishment upon discovery exacerbated regional and local cultural norms. With a campus climate encouraging conformity, Appalachian did not welcome LGBT campus members. Implicit rules threatening expulsion for gender and sexual transgression, a lack of readily available positive reading materials, and a climate tolerant of queer-baiting contributed to the creation of a separate LGBT subculture. Still, the LGBT subculture's growth with the inclusion of popular campus members held the potential for change in the near future.

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<sup>99</sup>Untitled lecture note, n.d., David R. Hodgin Papers, Box 17, Folder 3.



#### Chapter 4: "Be Yourself and Come Out to the Community":<sup>1</sup> The Wey Administration (1969-1979)

The national turbulence of the sixties continued into the seventies, although relatively speaking little of this turmoil touched Appalachian. Not until the mid-1970s did long hair, recreational drugs, feminism, and back-to-the-landers fully infiltrate the Lost Provinces. During Chancellor Herbert Wey's administration, the climate within the Appalachian Family altered from that of strict and straight-laced with the nickname of the "biggest Baptist state college" to that of the party school known as "Happy Appy."

Major changes within LGBT life occurred on the national front during this time as well. In late June 1969, a police raid on a Greenwich Village gay bar sparked the three-day Stonewall Riot. The following year, for the first time ever, LGBT individuals organized a Gay Pride parade. The growing Gay Liberation Movement affected multiple socio-political spheres and increased the public's awareness of lesbian and gay issues.<sup>2</sup> The days of clandestine whispers and angry, taunting protestors gave way to the radical concept of openly living as LGBT.

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<sup>1</sup>Sharon Price, Interview with Kathy Staley, 10 January 2006.

<sup>2</sup>Trans and bisexual individuals were openly active in many lesbian and gay organizations; however, some Gay Liberationists and lesbian feminists negatively critiqued transsexuality and bisexuality leading to estrangement.

According to sociologist Barry Adam, "the word *gay* achieved predominance in the 1970s."<sup>3</sup> This era's activists no longer claimed the self-description of "homosexual" or "homophile." Their use of "gay" and "lesbian" slowly spread to the public through the media. Similarly, *Queer Man on Campus* author Dilley's category of gay best describes the rise in the 1970s generation who "publicly announced/acknowledged feelings" and became "involved within institutional systems to create change" and "public[ly] socializ[ed] with other non-heterosexuals."<sup>4</sup> This openness mirrors the criteria, such as both partners living openly as a couple, that Adam identified as necessary for lesbians and gay men to manifest as a definitive subculture.<sup>5</sup> Both Adam's and Dilley's characterizations of gay individuals fit a growing number of Appalachian campus members, particularly during the late 1970s.

More specific to Appalachian's infrastructure, its institutional representatives began positively and publicly addressing lesbian and gay issues during Wey's administration. As previously reported, homosexuality had been mentioned in university documents in 1969 but in a punitive manner. As the 1970s progressed, lesbian, gay, and bisexual campus members and their allies were increasingly public about homosexuality and their acceptance of it. Although most lesbian, gay, and bisexual campus members apparently only self-identified to friends and other lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals, two lesbian and gay-centered groups developed under the university's authority during

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<sup>3</sup>Barry Adam, "Structural Foundations of the Gay World," 658.

<sup>4</sup>Dilley, *Queer Man*, 5.

<sup>5</sup>Barry Adam, "Structural Foundations of the Gay World," 667.

this decade. Despite Chancellor Wey's reservations, his legal obligations led him to approve Appalachian's first lesbian and gay student organization mere weeks before his retirement. The campus' public incorporation of pro-gay values complicated the university's strained relationship with its rural neighbors and affected the administration's future handling of LGBT issues.

### **Herbert Wey, the Innovator**

In 1969, Herbert Wey, Appalachian Demonstration High School's former principal, became the college's third president and subsequently its chancellor when Appalachian joined the University of North Carolina System in 1971.<sup>6</sup> Like his predecessors, Wey's career began in public education in the Appalachian region. After being educated in Indiana, he split his entire career between two institutions. He began teaching at the Appalachian Demonstration High School in 1938 and later served as its principal (1942-1953), Appalachian's Department of Education chairperson (1955-1958), its Graduate School dean (1957-1958), and its president/chancellor (1969-1979). He also taught at the University of Miami in the school of education (1953-1955) and served as its associate dean (1958-1969).<sup>7</sup> His long career at Appalachian gave him an understanding of mountain culture while his experiences in Miami provided him with broader

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<sup>6</sup>Williams, Lanier, and Howe, "A Short History of Appalachian," 5.

<sup>7</sup>Richard D. Howe, ed. *The Appalachian Faculty Emeriti* (Boone, NC: Appalachian State University, 1999), 20-22.



experiences than those of his North Carolina-based predecessors.

Described by Appalachian Graduate School dean Cratis Williams as "an experimenter, innovator, a challenger," Wey oversaw progressive projects and initiatives, recruited well-qualified faculty and gained additional support from the Carnegie and Ford Foundations.<sup>8</sup> Wey's public reputation stems from his allowing the faculty to experiment with educational precepts. This encouragement resulted in the establishment of several new programs, including the Women's Studies Program and an experimental living and learning residence hall named Watauga College.

In terms of campus climate, Wey recalled that "Appalachian had not experienced [the] student disorder, violence, or faculty discontent that had plagued some colleges and university campuses."<sup>9</sup> Wey attributed the campus peace to open communication, having added the student body president and the faculty senate chairperson to his advisory council. Also at work were Appalachian's conservative culture and a proactive administration that developed a student rights bill prohibiting disruptive speech and requiring presidential approval of any non-University speaker.<sup>10</sup> As an example of the campus' political climate, students held a rally against Vietnam protesters.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Dunlap and Corbitt, *Remembrances*, n.p.; Williams, Lanier, and Howe, "A Short History of Appalachian," 5.

<sup>9</sup>Williams, Lanier, and Howe, "A Short History of Appalachian," 6.

<sup>10</sup>"Speakers on Campus," Paul Sanders to Appalachian Faculty (19 January 1971), Series A, General, Cratis Dearl Williams Papers. The 1970 *Rhododendron* photographed a student wearing a shirt inscribed, "Nail a Commie for Christ." Also, see "Policy Announced on 'Unlawful Assemblies,'" *The Appalachian*, 13 March 1970, 1.

<sup>11</sup>*Rhododendron* (Boone, NC: Appalachian State University, 1968), n.p.

By the mid-1970s, the nation's changing moral values and gender distinctions as well as the use of illicit drugs permeated Appalachian, as illustrated by *The Rhododendron* yearbooks. According to the 1975 yearbook, "The university straddle[d] the fence between new and old, trying to replace the outmoded without destroying the traditional."<sup>12</sup> The description of the campus' popular Rally Weekend music festival indicates a 1970s drug culture: "the entire weekend was doubtless a dream – one long fairy tale of music and fun – all cloaked in a cannabis cover with a few bottles of God-knows-what thrown in for good measure."<sup>13</sup> This incorporation of national cultural shifts towards counterculture behaviors conflicted with the surrounding area's traditional lifestyle but attracted a more regionally and socially diverse student body and faculty.

Although the Civil Rights movement did not drastically affect Appalachian, the 1970s women's movement certainly did.<sup>14</sup> At Appalachian, several key new female hires, such as Maggie McFadden and Helena Lewis, are credited with the development of women's programming.<sup>15</sup> This feminist push led to the creation of the short-lived Elizabeth Cady Stanton Female Liberation Front chapter in 1970 and a National Organization for Women (NOW) chapter in 1975. These groups protested continued

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<sup>12</sup>R.T. Smith, "Transition," *Rhododendron* (Boone, NC: Appalachian State University, 1975), 21.

<sup>13</sup>*Rhododendron* (Boone, NC: Appalachian State University, 1975), 43.

<sup>14</sup>Academic and Institutional Research, *Appalachian State University Fact Book, 1982-1983* (Boone, NC: Appalachian State University, 1983), 26; United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Population Volume 1, Characteristics of the Population, Part 35, North Carolina* (Washington, DC: 1971), 35-126; *Rhododendron* (Boone, NC: Appalachian State University, 1974), 21. African-Americans made up 2.2% of the student population in 1979 and 1.1% of the local population in 1980.

<sup>15</sup>Thomas, interview; McGurk, "Transition and Inequality," 62. See also Women's Studies Interviews, Appalachian Memory Project Records.

gender inequity for students, such as women's curfew, and developed women-centered academic and entertainment programming such as the 1974 Women's Week.<sup>16</sup>

One key consequence of campus members' adopting feminism was the development of the Women's Studies program. Approved in 1976, Appalachian's Women's Studies program is the second oldest in the state. Originally it held the dual responsibility for organizing Women's Studies curriculum and acting as a resource for campus women. Although lesbian-specific courses had not yet developed, Women Studies courses such as one taught by adjunct Sociology professor Virginia Foxx included lesbian subject matter.<sup>17</sup> The program's newsletter also followed feminist newsletters' trends by including articles of lesbian interest.

Appalachian's gradual removal of *in loco parentis* policies coincided with national trends towards removing restrictive student behavior codes. Giving up their control and abandoning *in loco parentis*, campus administrators allowed student governments more self-determination.

### Watauga Tension

Although this campus liberalization mirrored national educational trends, they did

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<sup>16</sup>Sheila Mooney, "ASU Starts N.O.W." *Appalachian*, 11 November 1975, 4; Marcia Jarosz, "Liberation Front Planned: Literature Distributed," *Appalachian*, 19 March 1970, 1; Women's Liberation Front, letter to the editor, *Appalachian*, 12 May 1970, 2; Wanda Rabb, "Brower Organizes Women's Week," *Appalachian*, 10 December 1974, 1.

<sup>17</sup>"Women in Contemporary Society Syllabus," Spring 1976, Women's Studies Department Files, University Archives, Belk Library and Information Commons, Appalachian State University. This is an unprocessed collection. Foxx later became the U.S. Representative for Watauga County.



not dovetail with the local attitudes. During the 1960s and 1970s, the town and county adapted to the college's growing influence with considerable displeasure. Limits to accommodations existed and during the 1970s, the town-gown tensions grew.

Although previous decades had seen only slight population changes in Watauga County, such as a 4.4% decrease from 1950 to 1960, the decade of the 1960s brought a 33.5% increase to 23,404 residents.<sup>18</sup> During this period, the population of Boone itself grew 137.5% to a total of 8,754, largely because of the exploding numbers among Appalachian employees and students.<sup>19</sup>

The university's growth also contributed to the signs of a more liberal population in the town. In 1970, several campus members and local residents bought a building for the Boone Unitarian Universalist Fellowship and in 1978, the Jewish population, led by professor Sheldon Hanft, began a worship group.<sup>20</sup> Multiple service agencies, such as the New River Mental Health Center and W.A.M.Y. Community Action, Inc., also opened to assist the economically disadvantaged.<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, the growth of the university also meant a decline in the earlier cooperation between county and college.

Many Watauga County residents point to Wey's administration as the period

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<sup>18</sup>The League of Women Voters, *Watauga County Handbook* (Boone, NC: Blue Ridge Printing Sales, 1993), 6-7.

<sup>19</sup>The League of Women Voters, *Watauga County Handbook* (Boone, NC: Blue Ridge Printing Sales, 1979), 4.

<sup>20</sup>"Boone Unitarian Universalist Fellowship" brochure, Appalachian Regional Brochure Collection; Sheldon Hanft, "The Boone Jewish Community," *The Heritage of Watauga County, Volume I* (Winston-Salem, NC: Hunter Publishing Company, 1984), 36.

<sup>21</sup>League of Women Voters, *Watauga County Handbook*, 31, 35.

when the town-gown relationship became strained. Community members developed university-centered animosity. According to one retired school teacher, the university began to withdraw its support of the local school system.<sup>22</sup> A retired University employee believes that when the university administrators decided matters that affected the town, such as traffic patterns, without first contacting town officials, they offended town members with perceived lack of consideration and their decreased communication.<sup>23</sup> Another university employee believes that the split tensions arose because the student body's increased diversity conflicted with the area's homogeneous character.<sup>24</sup> For all these reasons, the feeling spread that the university was abandoning its Watauga-centered roots.

### **Gay Lib Emerges Nationally and in North Carolina**

When Plemmons handed over his role as gatekeeper to Wey in 1969, a nascent Gay Liberation Movement which embraced the open acknowledgment of one's sexuality spread throughout the nation, especially within urban areas. Although history tells of a gradual evolution of homophiles picketing and early street-level resistance, many point to the 1969 Stonewall Riots as the single flashpoint that led to the Gay Liberation

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<sup>22</sup>Nance, interview.

<sup>23</sup>Roby Triplett, Appalachian Memory Project Records.

<sup>24</sup>Terry Cole, Interview with Kathy Staley, 20 November 2006.

Movement.<sup>25</sup>

As historian Vicki Eaklor describes, the Gay Liberation Movement galvanized lesbians and gays to express their needs and create community space throughout the nation. Gay-welcoming churches, women-centered music festivals and companies, gay and lesbian-inclusive feminist bookstores, and gay-owned businesses spread throughout the nation.<sup>26</sup> 1970s era North Carolina saw the opening of two gay-positive Metropolitan Community Church congregations, multiple support agencies such as a Raleigh-based gay switchboard, the *Charlotte Free Press*, several gay college organizations, a gay bathhouse, gay communes, and additional gay bars.<sup>27</sup>

Influenced by the 1970s back-to-the-land movement, LGBT individuals moved into rural areas. This trend towards rural life has implications for Watauga County, which in 2000 continued to be classified as a suburban area and contained a relatively high lesbian ratio.<sup>28</sup> Lesbian, gay, and bisexual communes have been documented in Chatham, Mitchell, and Orange Counties for the years of Wey's administration. In fact, the Running Water commune, located in the Appalachian community of Bakersville, published the small national gay magazine *Radical Faerie Digest (RFD)*. An informant to this study recalls that an Appalachian student claimed to be part of a Boone-based

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<sup>25</sup>*Charlotte Free Press*, 7 April 1975 - 25 July 1977; E. Donnell Stoneman, "New Style in Old South," *The Advocate*, 29 January 1975, 24.

<sup>26</sup>Eaklor, *Queer America*, 133, 135.

<sup>27</sup>*Charlotte Free Press*, 7 April 1975 - 25 July 1977.

<sup>28</sup>Gary J. Gates and Jason Ost, *The Gay and Lesbian Atlas* (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press, 2004), 130.



lesbian commune in 1974.<sup>29</sup>

Frustrated with their marginalized social, medical, and legal status, LGBT activists created various national organizations such as the National Gay Task Force and the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund to challenge these inequities.<sup>30</sup> In 1970, Triangle Gay Alliance, North Carolina's earliest documented gay organization, organized and was followed by the short-lived Charlotte Gay Liberation Front in 1971.<sup>31</sup> By 1973, more than 800 Gay Lib groups existed across the United States.<sup>32</sup>

For the most part, lesbian and gay organizations neglected the issues of transgendered individuals. Time and time again, trans people, particularly lesbian-identified transwomen, were excluded by lesbian and gay organizations.<sup>33</sup> Further, similar to their treatment of bisexuals, lesbian and gay historians erased the lives of trans people by interpreting them as lesbians or gay men impersonating the opposite sex.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Sears, *Rebels*, 94; "The Hop Brook and Feminist Socialist Bisexual Communities," *Carolina Free Press*, 31 May 1976, 10; Nelson Kramer (pseudonym), Interview with Kathy Staley, 16 October 2007; Bill Dunlap, Interview with Kathy Staley, 25 April 2006.

<sup>30</sup>Eaklor, *Queer America*, 149-150.

<sup>31</sup>Alphie D. Hyorth, "Living the Gay Life," *Out 'n About*, 15 June 1989, 10; *Plain Dealer*, Groundhog Day Issue 1971, 2, no. 3, [unnumbered]; Sears, *Rebels*, 92; *Plain Dealer* 2, no. 1, [9].

<sup>32</sup>Rupp, *Desired Past*, 177.

<sup>33</sup>Stryker, *Transgender History*, 101-111.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 86-87, 101-111; Kay Brown, "20<sup>th</sup> Century Transgender History and Experience," accessed at [http://www.jenellerose.com/htmlpostings/20thcentury transgender.htm](http://www.jenellerose.com/htmlpostings/20thcentury%20transgender.htm), viewed on 29 June 2008; Letters to the editor, *Charlotte Free Press*, 10 and 24 January 1977. Examples of this co-opting transmen as lesbians include Jonathan Ned Katz's treatment of Alan Hart, Diane Wood Middlebrook's Billy Tipton, and "The Brandon Teena Story." See Brett Beemyn, "The New Negro Renaissance, A Bisexual Renaissance: The Lives and Works of Angelina Weld Grimke and Richard Bruce Nugent" in *Modern American Queer History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 36-48 for a critique of the homosexualization of bisexuals.

At the same time, lawmakers began addressing LGBT concerns. States continued rescinding sodomy laws during the 1970s.<sup>35</sup> While Minneapolis's policy became the nation's first to include gender identity-inclusive language in 1974, more than thirty-five municipalities, including Chapel Hill, passed sexual orientation-inclusive policies by 1978.<sup>36</sup> By the end of the 1970s, twelve states, including North Carolina, began reissuing birth certificates to acknowledge sex changes and allowing post-operative transsexuals to marry.<sup>37</sup> Since 1974, members of the House of Representatives regularly introduced a "Gay Bill of Rights," which stalled in committee after committee until 2007.<sup>38</sup>

By the mid-1970s, a cohesive anti-gay movement coalesced. The movement to remove sodomy laws languished in southern states with the Supreme Court upholding *Doe v. Commonwealth Attorney of Richmond*, a Virginian challenge to the state's sodomy statute.<sup>39</sup> In 1977, Anita Bryant led a virulently anti-gay "Save Our Children" campaign and "helped conservative politicians identify what would prove to be their most potent fund-raising and vote-getting issue: the 'problem of gay and lesbian teachers.'"<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Eaklor, *Queer America*, 155, 186.

<sup>36</sup>"U. of Wisconsin States Policy on Gays," *Midwest Gay Academic Journal* 1, 3 (1978): 3; Eaklor, *Queer America*, 155; Stryker, *Transgender History*, 149.

<sup>37</sup>Stryker, *Transgender History*, 121.

<sup>38</sup>15 April 1976 Letter from James Martin to Steve Del Vecchio reprinted in *Charlotte Free Press*, 3 May 1976, 4.

<sup>39</sup>"Supreme Court Upholds Virginia Sodomy Statutes," *Charlotte Free Press*, 5 April 1976, 3; "History of Sodomy Laws and the Strategy that Led Up to Today's Decision" found on *American Civil Liberties Union* website, accessed at <http://www.aclu.org/lgbt/discrim/11895res20030616.html>, viewed on 3 January 2008. Also see "The Supreme Court and Homosexuality," *Charlotte Free Press*, 19 April 1976, 10.

<sup>40</sup>Blount, "Spinsters, Bachelors," 96.

The energy surrounding the Gay Liberation Movement also drove lesbian and gay college students to form organizations. By the mid-1970s, dozens of gay college clubs organized amid public outcry. As a result of a perceived breach of propriety and a very real public relations nightmare, many schools asserted their authority over their students by refusing to give official recognition to these fledgling groups. Supported by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), many student groups during the 1970s sued their schools for infringement of students' First Amendment right to freedom of association and assembly.<sup>41</sup> Many administrators removed earlier written and *de facto* policies that called for the expulsion of LGBT campus members.<sup>42</sup> Although this open attitude was by no means universal, colleges often took the lead in decriminalizing LGBT community members.

During the mid-1970s, the gay liberation movement took hold in North Carolinian schools as well. By 1974, three of the 150 lesbian and gay student organizations in the United States existed in North Carolina. The remainder covered thirty-three states with a large proportion in California and New York.<sup>43</sup> By 1980, Appalachian State University, Duke University, East Carolina University, Guilford College, North Carolina State

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<sup>41</sup>Richard Earl McLeod, "Constitutional Law—Colleges and Universities—Denial of Recognition to Homosexual Group Abridges Freedom of Association," *Missouri Law Review* 43 (1978), 114, 115. In *Gay Lib v. University of Missouri*, the Supreme Court ruled that students had the right to assemble.

<sup>42</sup>"U. of Wisconsin States Policy on Gays," *Midwest Gay Academic Journal* 1, no. 3 (1978): 3.

<sup>43</sup> J. Lee Lehman, *Gays on Campus* (no location: National Gay Student Center for the United States National Student Association, 1975), 36-39; Jim Baxter, "Jim Baxter's Resume Page" accessed at [http://www.unc.edu/~\(squiggle\)jbaxter/index.html](http://www.unc.edu/~(squiggle)jbaxter/index.html), viewed on 21 August 2006; Interview with Gerry Unks by Chris McGinnis, 1 April 2000, K-200, in the Southern Oral History Program Collection #4007, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



University, UNC-Chapel Hill, and UNC-Greensboro approved gay student organizations.<sup>44</sup>

### Up on "Gay Mountain"

The energy from the national and state-wide Gay Lib movement spread to Appalachian's visible but unorganized gay subculture by 1970. Although Appalachian students and employees chose not to participate publicly in the campus gay liberation movement until 1979, visibility increased gradually with university-sanctioned activities by the mid-1970s. For the majority, the campus LGBT population remained at Dilley's "Homosexual Identity" rather than deepening into the "Gay Identity." An examination of the campus climate elucidates the existence of a discrete subculture, how it remained private, and the response of the administration and community to its growing public nature.

According to campus oral lore, lesbian and gay Appalachian students and employees continued to socialize in informal groups at private homes and dorms, providing a support network of semi-out campus members. Inter-generational friendships and support continued as well. One humanities professor befriended a graduate student who was searching for a gay community while a music professor provided housing for a

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<sup>44</sup>"Gay Students at UNC-G Gain Recognition," *Front Page*, 23 January 1980, 3; "Gays at ECU," *Front Page*, 25 October 1979, 6; "Group Watch," *Front Page*, 22 November 1979, 9.

disowned student.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, students formed friendship networks that supported one another.

By the early 1970s, students adopted gay liberation discourse as evidenced by the emergence of the gay Theater and Watauga College students using “gay lib” slang and expressing an awareness of the Stonewall Riots.<sup>46</sup> A friend to many gay students recalls that “it was discussed as a movement as such. A lot was discussed about being able to be yourself and come out to the community and your parents and that kind of thing.”<sup>47</sup> A few years after Stonewall, lesbians reputedly stole the sign of a local subdivision named “Gay Mountain” and placed it in front of a dorm that had several lesbians living in it.<sup>48</sup> A decade later, another gay student referred to a group of King Street residences as “Gay Hill” because several gay students lived there.<sup>49</sup>

The notion of multiple friendship groups overlapping led to the feeling of a larger underground community. Lesbian and gay students sometimes recognized each other at Charlotte or Greensboro bars. One group of gay students in the early 1970s knew lesbians but did not socialize with them.<sup>50</sup> During the same time period, friends of Anna Beaver (pseudonym) did not associate with any gay men but they knew younger lesbians.

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<sup>45</sup>Douglas Bennett (pseudonym), Interview with Kathy Staley 7 June 2006; Max Smith, interview.

<sup>46</sup>Max Smith, interview; Price, interview.

<sup>47</sup>Price, interview.

<sup>48</sup>Anna Beaver (pseudonym), Interview with Kathy Staley, 21 July 2006. For a description of the development’s name change from Gay Mountain to Misty Mountain, see “Mountain Changes Name,” *Front Page*, 27 February 1980, 5.

<sup>49</sup>Robbie Tester, interview. Also see John Magers, Appalachian Memory Project Records.

<sup>50</sup>Beaver, interview; Price, interview; Tester, interview.

She remembers considering them comparably “very out” although Beaver felt she and her friends were rather “brazen” for hosting all-female parties.<sup>51</sup>

By 1970, gay men co-opted the Wesley Foundation, the United Methodist Church student center, as a safe space in which to socialize.<sup>52</sup> Possibly due to the Wesley Foundation’s close proximity to Valborg Theatre, many gay actors and their friends hung out there.<sup>53</sup> Although the Wesley Foundation’s core social group came for the Christian social atmosphere, gay men were part of a group dubbed “the building users.”<sup>54</sup> This second group consisted of actors, hippies, and townies.

Like their contemporaries in other universities, students perpetuated an oral tradition that female Appalachian physical education majors were most often lesbians. As historian Susan Cahn documents, female athletes have been stigmatized as being mannish since the 1930s, and by the 1950s, societal expectations of women’s femininity denounced female athletes in “masculine” sports as lesbians.<sup>55</sup> Alumni report being discouraged from pursuing physical education degrees because of the major’s reputation for attracting lesbians.<sup>56</sup> One Class of 1973 P.E. major perceived the majority of female majors as lesbian although students never explicitly discussed it. That said, she recalls

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<sup>51</sup>Beaver, interview.

<sup>52</sup>Price, interview; Bennett, interview; Max Smith, interview.

<sup>53</sup>Price, interview. Price knew no lesbians who socialized there.

<sup>54</sup>Price, interview.

<sup>55</sup>Susan Cahn, “From the ‘Muscle Moll’ to the ‘Butch’ Ballplayer: Mannishness, Lesbianism, and Homophobia in U.S. Women’s Sport,” *Feminist Studies*, 19, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 343-368.

<sup>56</sup>Ollie Jackson, Interview with Kathy Staley, 27 July 2006; Beaver, interview.



interrupting female classmates kissing in a campus bathroom as well as seeing other majors walking hand in hand and acting affectionately with each other. Her classmates invited her to their all-female parties, teasing her that she would be the “only married woman present.”<sup>57</sup>

Within this atmosphere of increasingly open lesbian and gay students came the earliest known public incident involving a non-heterosexual campus member. The campus oral lore surrounding this event implicates the administration in creating an intolerant campus climate regardless of the veracity of the rumors and innuendo. Although the accuracy cannot be determined, the rumors’ effects directly relate to the discussion of administrative effects on LGBT campus life.

Darrell Rogers (pseudonym) was an extremely popular teacher who participated in the campus gay subculture. Although strict in the classroom, Rogers was a witty professor who mentored many in his field. He regularly socialized with students on and off campus, dating men privately and women publicly. Friends and students who knew his sexual orientation protected his privacy. According to his students, his sexuality was not a matter of gossip and they considered it his personal business.<sup>58</sup> Although one gay friend recalled his acting very flamboyantly, a heterosexual friend described him as a “man’s man,” and evidently many heterosexual friends did not know of his homosexual attractions until after his death.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Jackson, interview.

<sup>58</sup>Jimm Cox, interview with Kathy Staley, 18 December 2006; Nance, interview; Ken Badgett, e-mail correspondence to author, 9 April 2008.

<sup>59</sup>Higby, interview; Nance, interview; Dancy, interview.

In 1970, Rogers committed suicide. He left no note, and speculation arose as to what led him to take his life. Accusations of administrative persecution based on his sexuality spread, particularly within the gay population.<sup>60</sup> This belief has even been legitimized by his department's history which reports that he experienced "pressure from some areas of the university because he was gay."<sup>61</sup> Darrell Rogers himself told friends of frustrations with his departmental chairperson and other administrators.<sup>62</sup> The reputed persecutors have all since died, but some surviving colleagues do not believe they harassed Rogers.<sup>63</sup> One colleague recalls that the one of the reputed persecutors felt disturbed by the suicide although one cannot know whether this response signified sorrow or guilt.<sup>64</sup> Rogers' personnel files indicate tangible tension between Rogers and his departmental chairperson, although systemic persecution cannot be verified.<sup>65</sup>

Regardless of the root of the conflict, the campus oral tradition perpetuated the belief of anti-gay harassment for many years after his death. No known first-hand accounts from gay campus members have been uncovered; however, the lore passed down indicates strong emotions and belief. Douglas Bennett (pseudonym), who was hired a year afterwards, learned of the accusation from other gay professors who

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<sup>60</sup>Bennett, interview; Terry Cole, interview; Max Smith, interview; John Hayes, interview.

<sup>61</sup>Susan Cole, "1959-1970." A History of the Theatre Department. Self-published, n.d.

<sup>62</sup>Personnel Files, Appalachian State University; Bennett, interview.

<sup>63</sup>Terry Cole, interview; Higby, interview; Carol Gavin (pseudonym), Interview with Kathy Staley, 27 March 2007; Liz Gavin (pseudonym), Interview with Kathy Staley, 27 March 2007.

<sup>64</sup>Terry Cole, interview.

<sup>65</sup>Personnel Files, Appalachian State University.

perpetuated the story. One of Rogers' colleagues recalls that the belief in administrative harassment led gay students in Rogers' department to paint the chairperson's office door red in retaliation.<sup>66</sup> Such a strong belief holds power over how professors and students behave. Very likely, this event resulted in employees feeling even less safe in being open about their homosexuality and bisexuality. Regardless of its truth, this oral lore gave the impression of a negative campus climate and cultivated a climate of fear.<sup>67</sup>

Once again, the experiences of employees appear to have differed vastly from those of students who became increasingly open and officially supported. The students lacked firsthand knowledge of earlier discrimination and were coming of age during the liberation generation, whereas the employees' institutional memory generally lasted more than four years and matured under the previous generations' sheet of privacy.

A campus-sanctioned option for students to be open about their sexuality developed in the middle of the decade. In 1976, the counseling center advertised an university-sanctioned confidential support group for students with "male/female homosexual preference."<sup>68</sup> Its purpose was to discuss "everyday problems due to homosexual preference," rather than to change one's sexual orientation or determine its cause.<sup>69</sup> This new support group developed at a time when the counseling center formed

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<sup>66</sup>Terry Cole, interview. Coxx, one of Rogers' students, does not recall this.

<sup>67</sup>Bennett, interview.

<sup>68</sup>Carol Ferguson, "Counselors Offer Discussion on Homosexual Problems," *Appalachian*, 4 February 1975, 4.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.



various groups similar to Consciousness Raising groups.<sup>70</sup> These groups often filled to the maximum capacity of twelve participants.<sup>71</sup>

At approximately the same time, other student activities incorporated discussions of lesbian, gay, and bisexual life. The 1974 Women's Week included a film entitled "Gay Liberation."<sup>72</sup> The 1976 formation of the Women's Studies Program provided a forum for feminist women and men to discuss gender, sexuality, and women's issues in a scholarly framework. Later, in November 1978, sociology professors presented the film "Radical Sex Styles," which included homosexuality.<sup>73</sup> Along with the lesbian-inclusive Women's Studies curriculum and affirming approaches in other courses, these programs indicate administrative support although upper-level approval may not have been required.<sup>74</sup> These networks and support groups remained non-controversial on campus and allowed lesbians and gay men to develop self-assurance without confronting the university community's heterosexist paradigm.<sup>75</sup>

Despite these developments, the campus oral lore indicates that the climate is not

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<sup>70</sup>Sarah Shepherd (pseudonym), Interview with Kathy Staley, 18 September 2006.

<sup>71</sup>Shepherd, interview. As was common throughout the nation, this counseling group only explored issues of sexuality, not gender identity. Former counselors report that none of their clients during the Wey and Thomas administrations (1979 to 1993) discussed gender variance. The counseling center formed its first transgender discussion group in 2007. See Katie Easter, "University Counseling Center Offers Group Therapy," *Appalachian*, 13 September 2007, 1.

<sup>72</sup>Wanda Rabb, "Brower organizes Women's Week," *Appalachian*, 10 December 1974, 1.

<sup>73</sup>"Sex Styles Program Held," *Appalachian*, 28 November 1978, 1.

<sup>74</sup>Ralph Buttone (pseudonym), Interview with Kathy Staley, 31 March 2006.

<sup>75</sup>Max Smith, interview; Price, interview; Bennett, interview; Carol Ferguson, "Counselors Offer Discussion on Homosexual Problems," *Appalachian*, 4 February 1975, 4.

universally remembered as open-minded. Individual students recall in first-hand accounts instances of homophobic comments within certain courses. As late as 1979, some psychology professors apparently used the pre-1973 *DSM* that labeled homosexuality as deviant.<sup>76</sup> One P.E. major recalls that certain male physical education professors behaved affectionately towards female students who were perceived as heterosexual and gave them more concessions for late papers.<sup>77</sup> Another student recalls a favorite religion professor demonizing homosexuals in class.<sup>78</sup> Although the statistical prominence is unknown, such instances show the power of professors to create a hostile environment for particular students, especially those not involved in Women's Studies programming.

Another indication of LGBT campus climate is the campus newspaper's approach. Syndicated articles, which rarely appeared in the student newspaper, contained the earliest mentions of both homosexuality and transsexuality. In 1970, *The Appalachian* printed an article delineating how to avoid the draft by claiming to be homosexual.<sup>79</sup> Another article, written negatively and tongue-in-cheek, criticized television programs' inclusion of LGBT issues. A catty reference to male-to-female athlete Renee Richards concluded the piece providing the campus' first public acknowledgment of transsexuality.<sup>80</sup> Both articles contained epithets such as "fag" and "fruits" and contributed to an unwelcoming

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<sup>76</sup>Karen Smith (pseudonym), interview with Kathy Staley, 26 July 2006.

<sup>77</sup>Jackson, interview.

<sup>78</sup>Tester, interview.

<sup>79</sup>John Striker, "Mastering the Draft: Homosexuality and the Draft," *The Appalachian*, 12 January 1971, 2.

<sup>80</sup>Nicholas Von Hoffman, "A Gay Time on Television," *The Appalachian*, 7 December 1976, 2.

atmosphere. In contrast, a 1975 article respectfully announced the lesbian and gay support group.

The situation in the Library was equally mixed. Holdings on sexuality increased but not on a level consistent with the boom in lesbian and gay publishing. Most books continued to be sociological and academic in nature, and leisure reading was not included on the shelves. The Library continued to house the 'sex' books within the Vault throughout the 1970s. One must wonder how many timid LGBT students followed the card catalog's instruction to "see the Librarian" for books on sex.<sup>81</sup>

As the decade ended, the campus gradually had become a more welcoming place with safe spaces in the Wesley Foundation, Counseling Center, and the Women's Studies program. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual employees, however, retained their 1950s-era Homosexual Identity, for the most part remaining private, despite the growing numbers of students gravitating towards the gay lib sensibility acquired through their contacts with the broader LGBT population via friendships, the media, and regional bars. As a result, no faculty or staff publicly acknowledged being LGBT even though some were broadly known as gay.

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<sup>81</sup>L. Keith Hill, "A History of the Appalachian State University Library," 114; Faculty Minutes from Belk Library and Information Commons, July 2008. In possession of the author.



### Appalachian's First Gay Student Organization and First Documented Anti-gay Backlash

Within this context, Appalachian student Jeff Isenhour requested university approval for the Appalachian Gay Awareness Association (AGAA) in Spring 1979. What transpired illustrates the consequences of intersecting the overlapping layers of community found in the county, on the campus, and within the LGBT population. These conflicting values led to a collision that transformed Appalachian's campus.

Isenhour seems to have been the first publicly out Appalachian campus member. According to acquaintances, Isenhour was a quiet and non-activist freshman when he proposed creating a gay student organization. According to various campus members, Isenhour studied art and grew up in Piedmont North Carolina. He wanted to form a social and support gay group.<sup>82</sup> His former co-worker and roommate recalls that Isenhour was comfortable being openly gay and had contacts with a statewide gay community. Whereas Brett Beemyn, coordinator of GLBT Student Services at Ohio State University, shows that early members of various gay student organizations chose anonymity, newspapers regularly printed Isenhour's name publicly in connection with homosexuality. As a result, people regularly insulted and harassed Isenhour, although this treatment evidently never became violent.<sup>83</sup> Isenhour seems to have found willing members because AGAA met several times prior to recognition.

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<sup>82</sup>Sherman, interview; Charles Powell, Interview with Kathy Staley, 27 April 2006; Buttone, interview; Don Barber (pseudonym), Interview with Kathy Staley, 15 June 2006; Bill Dunlap, Interview with Kathy Staley, 25 April 2006. *The Appalachian* gave several spellings for Isenhour's surname. Because he left school after his freshman year, the university has little information about him.

<sup>83</sup>Don Barber, interview.

Isenhour contacted Appalachian Student Development professionals to receive guidance on the creation of an organizational constitution. On the advice of Student Development staff, the organizational mission de-emphasized sexuality and emphasized support.<sup>84</sup> In the 1970s, Appalachian student organizations required approval from the Club Council, the Rules Committee, Student Government Association (SGA), and the Vice Chancellor of Student Development or the Chancellor. According to its original constitution, AGAA's purpose was to:

1. provide information, guidance and advice to the gay community, 2. to improve the stereotyped image of the gay person, 3. To sponsor service projects such as workshops, lectures and films relating to the special needs of gay students, 4. To inform the campus community of the needs of the gay population, 5. To provide a network for gays to communicate with each other.<sup>85</sup>

These functions were designed to increase self-acceptance among lesbian and gay campus members and to disseminate knowledge about homosexuality among heterosexuals.

Isenhour restated the group's underlying goal of improving Appalachian's climate to the *Appalachian*: "It is necessary that gays be understood before they can be accepted."<sup>86</sup>

AGAA's constitution easily passed the Club Council and moved on to the Student Senate as a whole.

During AGAA meetings prior to official sanction, approximately ten members gathered at the Wesley Foundation, which continued to act as a gay hub, and East Hall,

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<sup>84</sup>Buttone, interview.

<sup>85</sup>AGAA Constitution, Women's Studies Department Files, University Archives, Belk Library and Information Commons, Appalachian State University. This is an unprocessed collection.

<sup>86</sup>Sammie Cole, "Gay Constitution Passes Senate," *Appalachian*, 5 April 1979, 1.

which housed the experimental residential Watauga College program. Meetings included guest speakers from Dignity, a gay-centered Catholic organization, and the UNC-CH's Carolina Gay Association.<sup>87</sup> The group also held picnics and a baseball game.<sup>88</sup>

After AGAA's application for recognition became public, Student Body President Charles Powell visited AGAA to survey the group and answer their questions. Looking back now, he remembers being concerned that gay libbers with a radical agenda dominated AGAA's membership. Instead, he found them sincere in wanting to be allowed to meet as a group leading him to believe they were not a group of agitators. At the same time, members realized that their group had become controversial and spoke quite forthrightly about their willingness to take a stand for their right to meet. Powell found it noteworthy that the group's gender ratio was more heavily male, because he personally knew more lesbian students than gay male students on campus.<sup>89</sup>

AGAA faced the same challenge as many gay student organizations, the lack of a willing faculty advisor. Bill Dunlap, AGAA's first faculty advisor, recalls that all the gay professors Isenhour approached responded negatively to his request for advisement. Interestingly, one gay professor does not remember being asked at all.<sup>90</sup> Eventually, Dunlap agreed to serve as AGAA's advisor. This heterosexual art professor with a campus reputation for being progressive and innovative planned to relocate to Memphis

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<sup>87</sup>"Gay Association Forms; Seeks Recognition," *Appalachian*, 1 March 1979, 1; Powell, interview.

<sup>88</sup>Mark Crissman, letter to the editor, *The Appalachian*, 3 May 1979, 4.

<sup>89</sup>Powell, interview.

<sup>90</sup>Dunlap, interview; Max Smith, interview.



at the semester's end. Resorting to heterosexual advisors was common, as shown at Carolina and Columbia. As then Vice Chancellor John Thomas muses, "A professor, particularly a young untenured professor, would be hesitant to take visible leadership in a potentially explosive organization."<sup>91</sup> Whatever the cause of the difficulty of finding a faculty advisor, the club's future was unstable without its having a long-term advisor.

Legally, AGAA's request was well-timed. At least three other UNC System schools had recognized gay organizations, creating a system-wide precedent.<sup>92</sup> Also, UNC System legal staff had researched the legality of gay clubs and understood the ramification of denying recognition. AGAA's application also came a few months after the pro-gay *Gay Lib v. University of Missouri* ruling that lesbian and gay students had the right to organize on state-supported campuses, further legitimizing their request. With these legal and state precedents, AGAA's approval seemed likely.

On 2 April 1979, the Student Senate met to discuss AGAA's recognition. This discussion had been postponed from an earlier meeting when senators recognized the controversial nature of the organization's request. The student newspaper reported the upcoming meeting, and a large audience arrived. Although individuals present at the debate could not remember the appearance of an organized resistance, Powell and a Student Development employee recall thinking a large portion of the anti-AGAA audience members were fraternity members.<sup>93</sup> A lengthy debate open to the entire student

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<sup>91</sup>John Thomas, interview.

<sup>92</sup>William M. Tredway V, letter to the editor, *Watauga Democrat*, 23 April 1979, 4A.

<sup>93</sup>Powell, interview; Buttone, interview.

body ensued.

Opponents raised various points reminiscent of objections at other campuses. Many objections stemmed from the Crimes against Nature laws and Christianity's prohibitions against homosexuality. Like the objectors to the Carolina Gay Association, they felt that Appalachian should not condone an "illegal behavior" through recognition or funding. They did not want Appalachian to approve of what they considered a poor lifestyle choice.<sup>94</sup> Opponents also "questioned the 'good' such a club would serve for the whole student body."<sup>95</sup>

Although proponents had legal precedent on their side, their arguments underscored issues of equality and tolerance. One supportive Senator asked, "What are we afraid of? We act like that if we deny the gays a charter they might disappear."<sup>96</sup> Dunlap stated that Appalachian needed "to be a university of tolerance and that it was simply a matter of civil rights."<sup>97</sup> An AGAA member asked, "Just because we are homosexuals, do we become automatically eliminated from the whole (University) just because we are a minority?"<sup>98</sup>

Having determined that AGAA met every university requirement and legal precedent supported AGAA's application, the Student Senate approved AGAA with a

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<sup>94</sup>Powell, interview.

<sup>95</sup>Sammie Cole, "Gay Constitution Passes Senate."

<sup>96</sup>Ibid.

<sup>97</sup>"ASU Recognizes Gay Association," *Watauga Democrat*, 5 April 1979, 2.

<sup>98</sup>Sammie Cole, "Gay Constitution Passes Senate."

vote of 27 to 14 and sent the matter to the Chancellor's office for final approval. The senators stated and restated multiple times that they voted on the constitutionality of the group, not "on the right to practice homosexuality."<sup>99</sup>

Administrators recall this time as very stressful. Publicity about AGAA's Student Government Association approval spread from the front pages of the campus newspaper to those of the local newspaper, and the public outcry rose to a fever pitch. Many community members, alumni, and current students felt outraged and attempted to assert their influence through repeated telephone calls, petitions, letters to the editor, and personal conversations.<sup>100</sup> One employee even wrote Senator Jesse Helms requesting his intervention.<sup>101</sup> Along with a number of alumni and donors, the American Civil Liberties Union threatened to sue if AGAA was denied approval.<sup>102</sup> Powell also recalls being stopped on campus, especially by fraternity brothers and members of campus religious organizations.<sup>103</sup>

The majority of letters to the editor expressed feelings of shock and disgust. Locals threatened to stop giving to Appalachian, one church and a local Baptist

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<sup>99</sup>Ibid.; Gray Marion and Greg Galloway to Chancellor Herb Wey (13 June 1979), Women's Studies Department Files; Ralph Soney, "Gay Charter Reweighed: Referendum Set for Wednesday," *Appalachian*, 26 April 1979, 1.

<sup>100</sup>Dunlap, interview; Buttone, interview; Powell, interview; Sherman, interview; Snead, interview; Thomas, interview. See *Watauga Democrat* and *Appalachian*, April-June 1979 for letters to the editor.

<sup>101</sup>Jesse Helms to [name redacted], 16 August 1979, Gay Awareness Association, John Thomas Papers, University Archives, Appalachian State University. University staff redacted the employee's name. This is an unprocessed collection.

<sup>102</sup>Sherman, interview.

<sup>103</sup>Powell, interview.



association mailed letters referring to organized petitions, and a *Watauga Democrat* editorial cartoon, with two men dancing to the fiddling of Appalachian's mascot, mocked AGAA.<sup>104</sup> Local resident and regular editorial page correspondent Betty Norris wrote, "This recognition can only lower the moral standards of all students at ASU as well as the entire community." The anti-AGAA proponents also argued that "normal" students' rights not to be exposed to "immorality" were being squashed.<sup>105</sup> Illustrative of the local distaste for Appalachian's recent modernizations, another writer called upon the ghosts of Appalachian's founders stating, "It can't be the school that the great Dougherty Brothers [unreadable] and died to make survive."<sup>106</sup>

Newspapers also published pro-AGAA sentiments, although to a lesser extent. A few letter writers explained the legality of AGAA and the need for increased tolerance.<sup>107</sup> Student Government Senator William Tredway defended AGAA both in the campus-wide senate meeting and in a letter to the editor.<sup>108</sup> Later, after AGAA's official approval in June, librarian Martha Cutler chastised the *Watauga Democrat* for its editorial cartoon. She recalls many people personally applauded her letter, yet, they and other supportive

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<sup>104</sup>For Letters to the Editor, see Mail in *Watauga Democrat* for 11 April 1979, 16 April 1979, 19 April 1979, 23 April 1979, 26 April 1979, 3 May 1979, 7 May 1979, 10 May 1979, 14 May 1979, 28 June 1979. For the editorial cartoon, see Lynn Austin, "Pen Point," *Watauga Democrat*, 11 June 1979, 5A.

<sup>105</sup>Betty Norris, "Her Children Won't Be Attending ASU," *Watauga Democrat*, 23 April 1979, 4A; John Thomas Papers.

<sup>106</sup>Texie Horton Russell, letter to the editor. *Watauga Democrat*, 19 April 1979, 4A.

<sup>107</sup>Crissman, letter to the editor; William M. Tredway V, letter to the editor; K. Wooten, letter to the editor, *Appalachian*, 1 May 1979, 2.

<sup>108</sup>Tredway, letter to the editor. I could not locate Tredway to interview.

individuals remained publicly silent.<sup>109</sup> The majority of people publicly expressing their opinions were either anti-AGAA or ambivalent.<sup>110</sup>

Aware of the state's Crimes against Nature laws, legal precedence, and the increasingly negative local response, Wey on April 23, 1979, contacted the NC Attorney General to clarify his legal obligations. On April 24<sup>th</sup>, the Senior Deputy Attorney General replied that considering legal rulings and UNC System precedents, "it would appear that you have no choice but to recognize the Gay Club."<sup>111</sup> Before Wey could make a formal decision, dissident student senators moved to reverse to its previous decision.

On April 25<sup>th</sup>, two student senators requested a referendum to revisit AGAA's approval. Senator Steve Duncan felt that "students ought to have . . . a right to have some say so on an issue as important as this."<sup>112</sup> Duncan and fellow senator Danny Parker submitted an informal survey and 200 signatures on a petition calling for a student referendum.<sup>113</sup> Writing a balanced editorial about the referendum, *Appalachian* reporter Chris Harris underscored that its purpose was to offer a recommendation to the Chancellor, not to rescind the Senate's approval of AGAA.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>109</sup>Martha Cutler, Interview with Kathy Staley, March 2006.

<sup>110</sup>Powell, interview.

<sup>111</sup>Andrew A. Vanore, Jr. to Herbert Wey, 24 April 1979, Gay Awareness Association, John Thomas Papers.

<sup>112</sup>Soney, "Gay Charter Reweighed"; "Gay Awareness Group Under Fire: Referendum Called," *Watauga Democrat*, 30 April 1979, 1.

<sup>113</sup>Soney, "Gay Charter Reweighed."

<sup>114</sup>Chris Harris, "Gay Referendum in the Balance," *Appalachian*, 1 May 1979, 3.

The following week on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, fewer than 760 students, or 8% of the student body, voted against recognizing AGAA, 556-198. According to Student Body Vice President Steve Kotszycki, the turnout corresponded with other referenda and constitutional amendment votes, even though many campus members interpreted the low turn-out as indicative of campus apathy.<sup>115</sup> Other factors, such as the significantly lower number of *Appalachian* letters to the editor, validate this perception.

Whereas local churches petitioned Wey not to approve AGAA, neither students nor student organizations raised a petition with the exception of those responding to the student senators' survey. The letters to the editor to the *Watauga Democrat* far outweighed those printed in the *Appalachian*: 15 to 3. Of the *Appalachian* letters, one was also published in the *Democrat* and two were from alumni. At least three students wrote to the *Democrat*.

The letters from students lacked any indication of a campus campaign against AGAA. Student Body President Powell recalls that the Baptist Student Union president may have been present at the senate meeting.<sup>116</sup> On other campuses, campus Christian and political organizations often led anti-LGBT movements. To the contrary, Appalachian's InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) president recalls, his group did not address homosexuality outside of Bible studies and he vaguely remembered

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<sup>115</sup>Chris Harris, "Gay Bill Gets 3-1 'No' Vote," *Appalachian*, 3 May 1979, 1; Harris, "Gay Bill," 1; Sherman, interview; Buttone, interview.

<sup>116</sup>Powell, interview.



AGAA.<sup>117</sup> In fact, his *Watauga Democrat* letter to the editor condemns Student Senator Tredway for anti-Christian biases in an earlier letter to the editor but lacks any anti-gay or anti-AGAA sentiment.<sup>118</sup>

Two weeks later, Wey was still exploring his options before making a decision. For additional clarification, he wrote to Richard Robinson, the Assistant to the UNC System President, expressing concern that Appalachian would violate North Carolina law by recognizing AGAA. In his letter, he mistakenly reports that the Senate's vote was the narrower vote of 19 to 11 and says he "would like to reject the gay organization's application."<sup>119</sup> Robinson responded by noting that previous rulings focused on the infringement of First Amendment rights. He suggested examining AGAA's recognition process in order to identify procedural grounds to deny approval. He recommended that Wey also seek guidance from the Attorney General, whom Wey had already consulted.<sup>120</sup> According to Wey, Robinson also said over the telephone that if Wey denied approval, the ACLU would likely demonstrate on campus and finance a court appeal. Two weeks later on May 31st, Wey explained to the Board of Trustees that he would soon be

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<sup>117</sup>Neal Angel, Interview with Kathy Staley, 13 June 2006. For a description of IVCF's 2008 participation in the pro-LGBT National Day of Silence, "Day of Silence and Golden Rule Pledge at Appalachian State University," by Warren, 27 April 2008, accessed at <http://goldenrulepledge.com/day-of-silence-and-golden-rule-pledge-at-appalachian-state-university>, viewed on 16 August 2008.

<sup>118</sup>Neal Angel, letter to the editor, *Watauga Democrat*, 3 May 1979, 4A.

<sup>119</sup>Herbert Wey to Richard Robinson, 15 May 1979, Gay Awareness Association, John Thomas Papers.

<sup>120</sup>Richard H. Robinson, Jr. To Herbert Wey, 23 May 1979, Gay Awareness Association, John Thomas Papers.

approving AGAA.<sup>121</sup>

With legal precedence in favor of recognition, Wey announced his approval of AGAA fifteen days before his retirement. By doing so, he allowed incoming chancellor Thomas to begin his administration without this divisive issue pending. Timing his announcement during summer break also allowed Wey to soften the possibility of controversy among students. Chancellor Herb Wey thereby admitted the finite character of his power in his last major decision as chancellor.<sup>122</sup>

Unfortunately, AGAA's reaction is not recorded. The local newspapers neglected to include comments from AGAA members or other LGBT individuals. Although this study's LGBT informants vaguely recall its existence, none of them participated in the organization. Lee O'Malley, co-founder of Sexual Awareness Group at Appalachian (SAGA), remembers AGAA officers telling him in the late 1980s about their difficulties with recognition.<sup>123</sup> Unfortunately, Isenhour and his co-founders have evidently since died.<sup>124</sup> That other LGBT campus members neglected to support AGAA publicly is expected. As members of a covert rather than overt network, these LGBT students and employees avoided the public rejection that Isenhour had faced.

Only one pro-AGAA letter sent to Wey has been located. Class of 1971 alumnus

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<sup>121</sup>Herbert Wey to Appalachian State University Board of Trustees, 31 May 1979, Gay Awareness Association, John Thomas Papers.

<sup>122</sup>Herbert Wey to Mr. And Mrs. John T. McMillan, 7 May 1979, Gay Awareness Association (1979-1980) file, John Thomas Papers; "ASU Chancellor Gives Final OK to Student Gay Awareness Association," Appalachian News Service, 15 June 1979, Gay Awareness Association (1979-1980) file, John Thomas Papers.

<sup>123</sup>Lee O'Malley, Interview with Kathy Staley, 31 December 2006.

<sup>124</sup>Don Barber, interview.

David Keller wrote that he was “both amused and distressed” to read about the referendum because “human rights are no voting matter.” He continues “If [AGAA members] seek mutual emotional support and self acceptance for persons who are considered [inferior] human my (sic) many, I fully support their recognition.” Keller does not identify his sexual orientation but mentions that he learned of AGAA in *The Advocate*, a national gay magazine. Unfortunately, if Wey replied, either his office or the University Archives did not preserve his answer, and therefore, his response to pro-gay considerations are unknown.<sup>125</sup> Such a reply could have illuminated Wey’s attitude about AGAA and LGBT campus members.

What were the chancellor’s underlying beliefs regarding AGAA and sexual variance? As previously mentioned, in mid-May, Wey wrote Robinson that he preferred to prohibit AGAA’s approval.<sup>126</sup> Responding to disturbed alumni, parents, and community members, he repeatedly wrote that he “personally opposed . . . this organization.”<sup>127</sup> In fact, two weeks after the Attorney General’s Office wrote that he was legally bound to approve AGAA, Wey wrote to a Boone couple that “unless advised to do so by the Attorney General’s Office, I will not be approving the organization.”<sup>128</sup> In the

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<sup>125</sup>26 June 1979 letter, Gay Awareness Association (1979-1980) file, John Thomas Papers; “News Brief,” *The Advocate* (12 July 1979), 11. Keller is deceased. The discrepancy between the dates of publication and of Keller’s letter may be explained by *The Advocate* mailing subscriptions prior to the publication date.

<sup>126</sup>Herbert Wey to Richard Robinson, Esq., 14 May 1979, Gay Awareness Association, John Thomas Papers.

<sup>127</sup>Gay Awareness Association, John Thomas Papers.

<sup>128</sup>Herbert Wey to Mr. and Mrs. John T. McMillan, 7 May 1979, Gay Awareness Association, John Thomas Papers.



wake of approving AGAA, Wey described this issue as a "problem" to the Board of Trustees and wrote "I am opposed to approving such an organization."<sup>129</sup>

On the other hand, Chancellor Thomas states that his predecessor supported the gay students and likely responded empathetically so as to not lose donors. Thomas said, "I imagine he wrote some conciliatory letters to people on both sides of the issue."<sup>130</sup> This approach certainly would have been a politically savvy one. Given the anti-gay attitudes fueled by Anita Bryant, publicly supporting AGAA could have exacerbated the existing strain between town and gown.

Although these sources indicate that Wey wished to prevent the student organization's recognition, none explain his rationale. Wey's repeatedly stated opposition may have been in response to the local opposition rather than his personal, religious, or political beliefs about sexuality. Perhaps he desired to maintain a non-controversial campus or to court Appalachian's donors. A pro-AGAA response in the 1970s era rural Appalachia certainly had less potential support than in the urban-based Piedmont cities. His continued reiteration of personal opposition is very convincing. If Wey personally supported his lesbian and gay students despite repeatedly denouncing their attempts to organize, this approach interfered with his creating a supportive and welcoming environment for his lesbian and gay campus members. Instead, his public disapprobation of AGAA gave tacit acceptance to anti-LGBT intolerance and harassment.

An alternative response used by Wey's peers on other North Carolina campuses

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<sup>129</sup>Herbert Wey to Appalachian State University Board of Trustees, 31 May 1979, Gay Awareness Association, John Thomas Papers.

<sup>130</sup>Thomas, interview.

provided neutrality and maintained the integrity of all campus members regardless of their stance. School administrators at University of North Carolina-Greensboro (UNC-G) and UNC-CH and UNC System President William Friday objectively provided facts in a direct manner. Their responses to disgruntled alumni omitted their personal opinions and conciliatory statements.<sup>131</sup> As a result, they did not reinforce the correspondents' intolerant attitudes.

One campus, UNC-G, designed programming to improve campus climate in response to their campus controversy. When UNC-G's Gay Students' Union organized a few months after AGAA, UNC-G similarly faced many anti-gay complaints from campus members, alumni, and community members while gay dorm residents faced verbal harassment. Instead of taking Wey's non-supportive approach, the campus sought to educate students and residence hall employees. When anti-gay picket lines protested dorm workshops, the university reactivated its Human Rights Commission to ensure lesbian and gay campus members had a safe environment.<sup>132</sup> Greensboro's comparatively large lesbian and gay movement dwarfed the town of Boone's closeted LGBT population, a difference which likely contributed to the varying approaches.

The mixture of community uproar and relative campus apathy is not surprising, given the layers of community dynamics. Locals and alumni reacted poorly as feared.

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<sup>131</sup>James H. Allen to Mrs. John M. Parker, III, 26 November 1979, Records of the Office of the President of the University of North Carolina (System): William Clyde Friday, University Archives, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. [Series 3: Subseries 9, Box 80]; William Friday to Lt. Governor Jimmy Green, 11 April 1984, Friday Files.

<sup>132a</sup>"UNC-G Gay Group Still Controversial," *Front Page*, 7 May 1980, 1, 5; "Gay Students at UNC-G Gain Recognition," *Front Page*, 23 January 1980, 3.

Because Wey based his decision on legal requirements rather than on a heartfelt commitment to his LGBT students, his negative descriptions likely inspired little confidence within the LGBT population over their well-being. AGAA's 1979 request for official recognition further strained the relationship between the campus and county. Appalachian's mountain setting and increased liberalization, escalating town-gown tensions, national and regional developments towards gay liberation, an oral lore of recent gay oppression, legal decisions supporting gay campus groups, and a national anti-gay movement all led to, as one might expect, LGBT campus members remaining silent. The anti-gay reaction illustrated the limits of what Appalachian and Watauga communities were willing to accept within Appalachian.



Chapter 5: "We deserve a lot more"<sup>1</sup>:  
The Thomas Administration (1979-1993)

During the fourteen years of Chancellor John Thomas's administration, Appalachian continued to grow apart from its conservative surroundings socially and academically. Despite the administration's initial lackadaisical response to LGBT needs, several gay and bisexual students cite the campus' late 1980s proactive response to HIV/AIDS as supporting their decisions to publicly forward a pro-gay agenda. This cultural shift culminated in the adoption of the 1993 Equal Employment Opportunity statement inclusive of sexual orientation, the creation of Appalachian's first lesbian and gay course, and the 1989 groundwork for one of Appalachian's most active student organizations, the Sexuality and Gender Alliance (SAGA).

During the mid-1980s, the next generation of LGBT activists radicalized in response to a non-responsive government in the face of gay men's deaths from AIDS. The resulting anger led to the adoption of labels previously considered repulsive. Words such as "dyke," "fag," and "queer" had long been used by some within the LGBT subculture, but the new generation embraced epithets to undermine their power. Two examples of such cooption of negative terms are motorcycle club Dykes on Bikes (1976) and the comic strip *Dykes to Watch Out For* (1982). Yet, "queer" became more

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<sup>1</sup>Associated Press, "Gay Students Keep a Low Profile Despite More Acceptance," *Watauga Democrat*, 5 January 1994, 8B. The student quoted was BGLAD president Troy Scheuer, who was a student during the administrations of Chancellors John Thomas and Frank Borkowski.

commonly used and took on a meaning of anti-assimilation.

Although the *OED* states that the earliest use of “queer” to describe sexual and gender variance was in 1894, speakers used it as an epithet, not in reference to themselves or a self-identity.<sup>2</sup> According to *Queer Man on Campus* author Dilley, the “Queer Identity” developed in the late 1980s as a “very publicly deployed identity in opposition to normative (“straight”) culture” and queers “often tried to create change from mores.”<sup>3</sup> The use of queer also acts as an umbrella term to incorporate bisexuals and transgender populations. Although Thomas’ administration began with its campus members behaving under Dilley’s definition of “Gay Identity,” many students adopted queer nomenclature by his retirement in 1993.

### Thomas’ University and County

Far more than the chancellors preceding him, Chancellor John Thomas had the most broad educational and work experiences. A Texas native educated in Kansas, Missouri, and Florida, Thomas had lived his entire life outside of Western North Carolina prior to being hired as Appalachian’s Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs in 1974. He was also the first administrative head without a career in public schools. Instead, his degrees were in engineering, law, research management, and business administration. Further, he had served with the Marine Corps, the Navy, and NASA. He worked also

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<sup>2</sup>*Oxford English Dictionary*, accessed at <http://dictionary.oed.com>, viewed on 26 May 2008.

<sup>3</sup>Dilley, *Queer Man*, 6.

worked for East Texas State University.<sup>4</sup>

Under Thomas' guidance, Appalachian continued to expand in unprecedented ways, particularly in student development, communications, and technology adopting its current telecommunication system, Appalnet, in 1982.<sup>5</sup> The campus bookstore grew, and the Student Union expanded to include a Multicultural Center. In order to attract tourists, An Appalachian Summer Festival began in 1984.<sup>6</sup> Through the expansion of its extracurricular activities, the institution strived to compete with other schools and lure tourist dollars to the area.

Watauga County's growth continued its upward trend. By 1980, ASU's fall enrollment was almost 10,000 students and in the early 1990s, it increased by 15 percent to almost 11,500. This swell in students paralleled Boone's 1980 population of 10,191 increase to over 12,000. By 1990, 36,952 residents called Watauga home – double its 1950 level.<sup>7</sup>

With the 1979 election of President Ronald Reagan, the political pendulum swung toward more conservative policy decisions on military, environment, affirmative action, and women's issues. Politically active leftists began fighting this conservatism,

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<sup>4</sup>*Appalachian State University 2008 Alumni Directory* (Boone, NC: Appalachian State University, 2008), xi.

<sup>5</sup>"Appalachian State University Historical Timelines: General Events: 1980-1989," Appalachian State University Historical Photographs Collection, University Archives and Records, Special Collections, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC, accessed at <http://contentdm.library.appstate.edu/docapp/digit/timelines/general/1980.html>, viewed on 11 December 2008.

<sup>6</sup>*Appalachian State University, 2008 Alumni Directory*, vii.

<sup>7</sup>The League of Women Voters, *Watauga County Handbook* (Boone, NC: Blue Ridge Printing Sales, 1993), 6-7.



especially with regards to environmentalism, peace activism, and sexuality. Although Appalachian's reputation changed to "Happy Appy," the party school, more political activities became part of campus life as environmentalists argued against campus expansion into wooded areas. Led by Hunter Scolfield, many left-wing students joined the Student Government Association (SGA). Scolfield also ran for and won a seat on the Boone Town Council in October 1993.<sup>8</sup>

On campus, the Women's Studies program continued to foster the campus women's community. The Association for Women Students developed out of a Women's Studies course taught by Maggie McFadden in 1981. With the Equal Rights Amendment ratification deadline approaching, the Boone chapter of the National Organization of Women cooperated with the campus chapter to advocate for ERA's adoption. Also influencing attitudes and actions, the 1989 brutal rape and murder of Appalachian student Jennie Grey galvanized campus feminists to fight for a safer campus and better prosecution of violence towards women.

Appalachian continued its path towards becoming a comprehensive university. Thomas' diverse educational and professional background influenced the university's broadened vision. New ideas eventually led to Thomas' administration's adopting an HIV/AIDS education and prevention project, an issue important to gay campus members.

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<sup>8</sup>Joseph Rayle, letter to the editor, *The Appalachian*, 28 September 1993, 3.

## LGBT Overview

Despite the backlash of the late 1970s, the gay and lesbian movement appeared poised to make significant gains; however, the Moral Majority, with political leaders who included North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms, came to prominence as the deaths of thousands of gay and bisexual men from a previously unknown retro-virus led to the further stigmatization of homosexuality. As a result, many LGBT spent their energy during the 1980s and early 1990s on the defense against anti-gay rhetoric and HIV.

Meanwhile, transgendered people began to organize for mutual support both nationally and regionally. Atlanta, for example, had its first transsexual conference Southern Comfort in 1991.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, the exclusion of transgendered people from lesbian and gay leadership continued. In fact, the earliest mention of transsexuality in North Carolina's gay newspaper *The Front Page* located dates to October 1992.<sup>10</sup> National organizers of the 1993 March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, and Bi Equal Rights chose not to include "transgender" in its title despite extensive conversations; nevertheless, trans people organized to resist such exclusion.<sup>11</sup> When the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival organizers instituted a "womyn-born womyn" participation policy in 1991, trans activists protested by setting up Camp Trans outside of the gates of

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<sup>9</sup>Stryker, *Transgender History*, 140.

<sup>10</sup>Louise Hahn, "Sexual Orientation vs. Gender Preference," *The Front Page*, 30 October 1992, 15.

<sup>11</sup>Stryker, *Transgender History*, 136-137.

“the land.”<sup>12</sup>

AIDS brought bisexuals to the forefront as both female and male bisexuals became stereotyped as carriers of a deadly disease to women. Bisexual networks formed to address on their own concerns. Bisexuals wrote bisexual-centric books such as *Bi Any Other Name* and formed organizations such as East Coast Bisexual Network.<sup>13</sup> The organizers of the 1993 March on Washington included “Bi” in its title despite ignoring transgendered people.

The advent of the AIDS epidemic effected the largest challenge to LGBT lives during the Thomas administration. The original name of AIDS, “Gay-Related Immune Deficiency,” demonstrates the public link of AIDS with gay men. The initial lack of knowledge about this incurable syndrome further stigmatized all LGBT people. By 2006, over 370,000 men who had sex with men had died of AIDS, thus illustrating AIDS’ devastating toll on LGBT Americans.<sup>14</sup>

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, the gay movement became frustrated with governmental inaction to the growing AIDS epidemic and created new organizations to care for the growing number of sick gay men. Gay Men’s Health Crisis provided much

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<sup>12</sup>Eaklor, *Queer Man*, 148, 181; Kay Brown, “20<sup>th</sup> Century Transgender History and Experience,” accessed at [http://www.jenellerose.com/htmlpostings/20th century transgender.htm](http://www.jenellerose.com/htmlpostings/20th%20century%20transgender.htm), viewed on 29 June 2008.

<sup>13</sup>Loraine Hutchins and Lani Kaahumanu, *Bi Any Other Name: Bisexual People Speak Out* (Boston: Alyson Publications, Inc., 1991), 364-365.

<sup>14</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report: Cases of HIV Infection and AIDS in the United States, 2006*, Vol. 18. (Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008), 17. This data likely includes pre-operative male-to-female transsexuals because the CDC does not include transgender as a gender option.



needed human services while AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT-UP), led by creator and activist Larry Kramer, held die-ins and even placed an enormous condom on North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms' house to gain media attention to the growing health crisis.<sup>15</sup>

This radical stance spread to college students who strove to live openly as homosexuals and bisexuals. At the same time, campuses nationally and in North Carolina experienced an upsurge of scholarly interest in LGBT topics, in particular the development of Queer Theory, an incorporation of post-modernism into the theorizing of LGBT identity and subculture development.<sup>16</sup>

Lesbian and gay activists in North Carolina also focused their attention on political needs such as repealing the sodomy law, focusing on HIV care, and addressing an increase in anti-LGBT harassment and violence.<sup>17</sup> Lesbians and gay men continued to seek institutional acceptance through the addition of "sexual orientation" to anti-discrimination clauses while incorporating more conservative concerns such as marriage and military service into the LGBT organizational goals. Using a new strategy, individuals began joining human relations committees in urban centers including Greensboro, Raleigh, and Durham in order to pursue the addition of sexual orientation to the cities' non-discrimination statements. The anti-violence project North Carolina

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<sup>15</sup>Cliff O'Neill, "Jesse's Home Gets Royally Wrapped!" *The Front Page*, 10 September 1991, 3.

<sup>16</sup>For more on the development of Queer Theory, see Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 1996).

<sup>17</sup>*The Front Page*, 1980-1993.

Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality tabulated statewide anti-LGBT events.<sup>18</sup> Lesbians and gay men followed the example of openly gay San Francisco Supervisor Harvey Milk by running for local office, an effort which climaxed in 1987 with Chapel Hill's election of Joe Herzenberg, who is believed to be the South's first openly gay elected official, to its town council.<sup>19</sup>

North Carolina's gay and lesbian population continued to develop community centers, health agencies, and organizations to address the needs of ethnic minorities, youth, and transgendered individuals. Among them, the Triangle-based North Carolina Lesbian and Gay Health Project formed in 1982, an Asheville transgender organization named Phoenix formed in 1986, and an AIDS healing-themed Radical Faerie community opened in Wilkes County in 1988.<sup>20</sup> By 1990, North Carolina had at least three LGBT newspapers, *The Front Page* (Raleigh), *Community Connections* (Asheville), and *Q-Notes* (Charlotte).<sup>21</sup>

As with the past, the proliferation of gay activism and cultural trends filtered into rural areas such as Boone via the media, friendship networks, and travels. North

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<sup>18</sup>Lin Orndorft, "WNC Gay History 101," *Out in Asheville*, November 2005, 15; Ian K. Lekus, "Health Care, the AIDS Crisis, and the Politics of Community: The North Carolina Lesbian and Gay Health Project, 1982-1996," in *Modern American Queer History*, ed. Allida M. Black (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 239-242; Don King, "Willow Hollow Ranch Offers Holistic Healing," *The Front Page*, 6 September 1988, 3.

<sup>19</sup>Don King, "Triangle Election Results Encouraging," *The Front Page*, 17 November 1987, 3.

<sup>20</sup>Lin Orndorft, "WNC Gay History 101," *Out in Asheville*, November 2005, 15; Lekus, "Health Care," 239-242; Don King, "Willow Hollow Ranch Offers Holistic Healing," *The Front Page*, 6 September 1988, 3; Barry Yeoman, "Faerie Culture: Pagan Ritual, Country Living, and a Little Magic," *Southern Exposure* (Fall 1988): 33[-35]. The original goal of NCLGHP (1982-1996) was to address homophobic medical practitioners rather than HIV/AIDS, which was then only emerging.

<sup>21</sup>Lin Orndorft, "WNC Gay History 101," *Out in Asheville*, November 2005, 15.

Carolina's politicization and community building affected significant gains and influenced the expectations of students and employees. Queers recognized the threat of HIV to gay and bisexual men and responded to the subsequent governmental inaction with direct action ushering in a new defiant attitude.

### **LGBT Appalachian**

Thomas' tenure as chancellor encompassed the administrations of the New Right presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. The cultural shift to the right influenced the behaviors of Appalachian's LGBT population, which experienced much change and development with the formation of two gay student organizations and the influence of the counseling center's lesbian and gay support group. While national trends such as queer activism, the AIDS pandemic, and transsexual community development affected many individuals, Thomas' innovative decision to approve campus-wide condom dispensers brought national attention to Appalachian. As a result, the campus' growing tolerance led to major changes in the campus climate.

With a new administration in 1979, opponents of Appalachian Gay Awareness Association (AGAA) immediately requested that Thomas reject Wey's approval of the lesbian and gay student organization. Having sat on the Administrative Council, Thomas was aware of his legal obligations and refused to rescind AGAA's recognition, responding that the "alternative . . . would be to subject the institution to the very



probable risk of litigation."<sup>22</sup>

Preventing AGAA from creating further controversy appears to have been a major concern. Various members of the state legislature, the source of university funding, sponsored a few bills during the mid-1980s to ban lesbian and gay student organizations.<sup>23</sup> Such bills would certainly have led LGBT-supportive campus administrators to fear for the future of their institutional funding; however, Thomas knew many lesbian and gay professors and had heard their concerns about equal treatment. Realizing that ASU's lesbian and gay population would organize if there were a "target" in the administration to rally them for a cause," Thomas refused to rescind AGAA's charter.<sup>24</sup>

AGAA, however, did not thrive. Both its faculty advisor and president left Appalachian during the summer of 1979. With a leadership void, AGAA reorganized through the following spring 1980. According to a member during the early 1980s and according to Appalachian's Women's Studies newsletters, AGAA's activities centered on developing a sense of community and improving the campus climate. An early AGAA project focused on examining the sociology and psychology textbooks for LGBT

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<sup>22</sup>John Thomas to Tim Burseson, 7 August 1979, Gay Awareness Association, John Thomas Papers.

<sup>23</sup>"NC Legislature Considers Bill to Ban Gay Groups on Campus," *The Front Page*, 18 April 1989, 6, 17; Rep. Michael P. Decker to John E. Thomas, 30 May 1985, John E. Thomas Papers; John E. Thomas to William C. Friday, 4 June 1985, John E. Thomas Papers; John E. Thomas to Rep. Michael P. Decker letter, 4 June 1985, John E. Thomas Papers.

<sup>24</sup>John Thomas, interview; see also Andrea Anderson, "AGAA Promotes Awareness: Serves as Social and Political Outlet," *The Appalachian*, 3 October 1985, 4; Dunlap, interview; Claassen, interview; Letter from John E. Thomas to William C. Friday, 4 June 1984, University of North Carolina (System) President William Clyde Friday Papers. University Archives, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Series 7: Appalachian State University, Box 84, Subseries 9: Student Affairs, Gay Students file.

representations.<sup>25</sup> They also watched feature movies with lesbian themes and hosted guest speakers.<sup>26</sup> Only sympathetic heterosexual faculty members such as Maggie McFadden agreed to act as AGAA advisors during the early 1980s. After the organization had been defunct for a few years, students attempted a rebirth in 1985 with out lesbian anthropologist Cheryl Claassen as its advisor; however, her schedule prevented her from acting as an advisor for very long.<sup>27</sup>

According to the recollection of several campus members, LGBT students often feared ostracism, but not physical violence.<sup>28</sup> As a result, many LGBT campus members felt safe on campus. One major resource, the counseling center's support group, screened its membership and had an internal focus: helping students with coming-out issues, particularly family problems and finding "safe spaces." The counseling center's confidential lesbian and gay support group grew significantly. AGAA, on the other hand, met in public spaces and its membership sought to affect campus climate.<sup>29</sup> One alumna who participated in the lesbian-centered women's sports scene, the support group, and AGAA recalls that few people participated in more than one group. When she participated, approximately a dozen people attended the support group while AGAA

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<sup>25</sup>Carrie McTaggart (pseudonym), interview with Kathryn Staley, 11 April 2006.

<sup>26</sup>Women's Week, 1984-1985, Women's Studies Program Files, Box 12; Women's Studies Newsletter, October 1983, November 1983, and November 1986, Women's Studies Program Files, Box 12.

<sup>27</sup>Cheryl Claassen, interview. Also see Anderson, "AGAA Promotes Awareness."

<sup>28</sup>Babs Brown, interview with Kathy Staley, 5 December 2006. Professor Max Smith recalls the gay students being more open in the 1970s than the 1980s.

<sup>29</sup>Babs Brown, interview.

averaged five.<sup>30</sup>

As was common throughout the nation, lesbian feminists developed a separate community centered around women's issues. At Appalachian, the Women's Studies program, the National Organization of Women, and Appalachian Women Students consisted of some lesbians and included lesbian-themed films and activities. Participation in these groups allowed lesbians to explore into women's issues and build a sense of community without focusing on the controversial topic of homosexuality. Other North Carolina campuses, such as UNCA and Duke, mirrored this tendency.<sup>31</sup>

During the early to mid-1980s, *The Appalachian* increased its coverage of homosexuality in its articles, editorials, and letters to the editors. Counterpoint editorials in 1979 debated AGAA's legitimacy.<sup>32</sup> The annual April Fool's Day *Crappalachian* included articles such as "Hookers, Gays Invade Boone Since Beer's Debut" and "Questions Students Answer: What Would You Do if Your Uncle was a Queer?" These titles allude to their sarcastic, pejorative content.<sup>33</sup> Slurs were commonly published through the mid-1980s as is shown in Bobbi Ingram's editorial "'Fags and Dykes' Unfair Labels: Human Rights Cannot Be Ignored."<sup>34</sup> Although some of these articles called for

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Lorena Russell, e-mail to author, 11 March 2008; Deirdre M. Lutz, "Beginning 20 Years of Organizing," *The Front Page*, 25 June 1991, 3.

<sup>32</sup>Sandra Orsi and Brian Bailie, "Gay Club - AGAA," *The Appalachian*, 30 August 1979.

<sup>33</sup>*The Crappalachian*, 1 April 1980, 1, 2.

<sup>34</sup>Bobbi Ingram, "'Fags and Dykes' Unfair Labels: Human Rights Cannot Be Ignored," *The Appalachian*, 27 April 1982, 2.



toleration, their use of epithets perpetuated a negative atmosphere.

A few mid-1980s *Appalachian* columnists wrote about anti-gay harassment on campus. Alba Herrera reported that at a campus social event a few college students “started yelling at the top of their lungs, ‘So and So, you’re a f\_\_\_\_\_ queer. So and so, you’re a faggot!!!’”<sup>35</sup> Colby Caldwell, who self-identified as a heterosexual ally, reported being regularly spit on and called “faggot” because his harassers perceived him to be gay due to his “punk rock look.”<sup>36</sup> These anecdotes provide a contrast to 1985 alumna Babs Brown’s first-person memories of feeling safe. On the other hand, music professor Max Smith corroborates these stories by reporting that he knew a gay student whose dorm room was lit on fire during the 1980s.<sup>37</sup>

During the same time period, other *Appalachian* articles included self-identified LGBT individuals, including AGAA president Elizabeth Barker and AGAA member Bill Owens.<sup>38</sup> These articles speak directly about Appalachian’s homophobic climate and the difficulties of being lesbian and gay during the 1980s. One *Appalachian* columnist took the subject a step further by regularly writing about complex lesbian and gay issues such as stereotyping and homophobia. Watauga native David Farthing, who self-identified as gay while a student, did not explicitly state his sexuality in his column; however, he

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<sup>35</sup>Alba Herrera, “Masculine or feminine – what’s the difference?” *The Appalachian*, 7 November 1985.

<sup>36</sup>Colby D. Caldwell, “A Subject Appropriate for College Students,” *The Appalachian*, 25 February 1986, 4; Colby D. Caldwell, “Life as a Flaming Heterosexual,” *The Appalachian*, 15 April 1986, 7.

<sup>37</sup>Babs Brown, interview; Max Smith, interview.

<sup>38</sup>Anderson, “AGAA Promotes Awareness,” 4; Bill Owens, “At Least One of Your Friends May Be,” *The Appalachian*, 11 February 1986, 10.

acknowledged friendships with campus gay men and lesbians within his column.<sup>39</sup> This positive media attention provided names for self-identified lesbian, gay, and bisexual campus members to find like-minded students and improved understanding among heterosexuals.

By the mid-1980s, the convergence of conflicting national political goals led to increasing interests in systematic change. On the national front, the swell of politicized religious individuals conflicted with lesbians and gay men demanding better medical care and protection from discrimination. These pushes for opposing, radical political paradigm shifts created a confrontation of divergent attitudes which led to another episodic bubble of national activism filtering naturally to North Carolina and Appalachian.

The AIDS epidemic and later, President Bill Clinton's desire to repeal the military's gay ban, focused *Appalachian* letter writers on LGBT issues. Responses illustrate how the campus climate evolved. Students continued to express diametrically opposed opinions about homosexuality's morality and social acceptability. By the late 1980s, *Appalachian* began publishing letters and columns connecting God's punishment for homosexuality to AIDS. A few years later, however, lesbians and gay men began taking public stances identifying their sexuality in letters arguing about inclusion and

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<sup>39</sup>David R. Farthing, "Hetero, Homosexual Stereotypes Harmful: Refuting Militant Lesbian Outcries," *The Appalachian*, 28 April 1987, 10; David R. Farthing, "Why do They Walk Funny?: How Stereotypes are Produced," *The Appalachian*, 30 April 1987, 12; David Farthing, "Fall Fashion for the Homophobe," *The Appalachian*, 10 September 1987, 14. Farthing gave permission to identify him as gay in an e-mail to the author, dated 29 September 2008.

acceptance within the campus community.<sup>40</sup>

At this time, the UNC system's awareness of HIV/AIDS heightened. The state of North Carolina ranked twenty-first in the nation for reported AIDS cases, with 193 diagnosed AIDS cases by 1986.<sup>41</sup> Although North Carolina's AIDS rate was statistically low, UNC System President Bill Friday responded by requiring each of the sixteen campuses to develop an AIDS policy to address both medical concerns and discrimination that year.<sup>42</sup> Chancellor Thomas charged the ASU AIDS Task Force to investigate the issue. Within his memorandum discussing the AIDS Task Force, Thomas also stated that persons infected with HIV would not be excluded from campus activities, as the state law considered people with AIDS to be disabled. The advisory board, co-chaired by Student Health Director Dr. Evan Ashby and Assistant Vice-Chancellor for Student Affairs Barbara Daye, established an educational program.<sup>43</sup> It sponsored a buddy program and speakers to discuss transmission and prevention of the virus as well as living with HIV. The Task Force also received heavy coverage in the *Appalachian* with

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<sup>40</sup>For anti-gay letters and columns, see Rick Rairdon, letter to the editor, *The Appalachian*, 27 October 1987, 9; Scott E. Schnegelberger, letter to the editor, *The Appalachian*, 26 March 1991, 11; Mark C. Pedro, letter to the editor, *The Appalachian*, 16 April 1991, 7; Anne Earley, letter to the editor, *The Appalachian*, 15 February 1993, 9; Jack Daly, "Military Life is Not for Homosexuals," *The Appalachian*, 16 February 1993. For letters written by self-identified lesbians and gay men, James Davis, letter to the editor, *The Appalachian*, 14 March 1991, 11; Kimberley Norris, letter to the editor, *Appalachian*, 14 March 1991, 11; Evan Smith, letter to the editor, *The Appalachian*, 3 November 1992, 7; John Lawson, letter to the editor, *The Appalachian*, 28 January 1993, 9.

<sup>41</sup>Jenny Schrum, "AIDS Causes Mental and Physical Problems," *The Appalachian*, 2 October 1986, 15; "AIDS Cases Increasing," *The Front Page*, 18 August 1987, 3.

<sup>42</sup>Trent Huffman, "New AIDS Advisory Council Formed at ASU to Inform Students," *The Appalachian*, 24 April 1986, 1.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*



educational pieces about transmission, prevention, and incidence rates.<sup>44</sup>

Although Appalachian counties have never had high HIV incidence rates, Appalachian students come from diverse communities where the virus is far more prevalent, and they bring their concerns with them to campus. From 1985 to May 1987, the Watauga County Health Department conducted 98 HIV antibody tests, all with negative results. The county's first reported AIDS case was an ill native returning home in 1987.<sup>45</sup> By 1989, the administration had become aware of one HIV+ student, who dropped out of school shortly afterwards.<sup>46</sup>

Most likely, a larger number of infected campus members existed than Watauga County statistics imply. Many individuals do not get tests. During Thomas' tenure as chancellor, North Carolina allowed anonymous HIV antibody testing, meaning that documentation of the state's infection rate was necessarily incomplete. Only test results linked to individuals' names and addresses can be used to determine the number of seropositive results. HIV+ students taking local confidential tests, or tests with names provided, may be listed under their home addresses rather than their school addresses. Finally, notifying the campus' health center of their status was left to the students' discretion. The students' tendency to use anonymous tests and be reported in their hometowns may explain why only 20 cases of HIV have been cumulatively reported for

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<sup>44</sup>Amy Scheliga, "Concern for AIDS on Campus Grows," *The Appalachian*, 1 October 1991, 5; Tiffany Whitley, "AIDS Task Force Promotes City Awareness," *The Appalachian*, 18 February 1992, 5.

<sup>45</sup>Dana Scott, "Watauga County is Relatively Free of AIDS Virus," *The Appalachian*, 5 May 1987, 1. The HIV antibody ELISA test was created in 1985 shortly after the 1985 discovery of HIV.

<sup>46</sup>Tracey Coffron, "College Students at Highest Risk for AIDS Infection," *The Appalachian*, 26 February 1991, 1.

Watauga County through 2005.<sup>47</sup>

Campus lore of alumni also indicate a larger infection rate than reported. Late 1980s-to-early-1990-era students remember friends' receiving HIV positive results, and one recalls personally knowing about a dozen HIV+ gay students. A Student Development employee worked with HIV+ students to omit their seropositive status from the official paperwork when they withdrew from school, but according to former students, many HIV+ students remained in school. Evidence for a higher than previously acknowledged presence of HIV+ students on campus also comes from a campus physician who worked with the now defunct local HIV/AIDS support group. In 1991, an Appalachian physician was quoted stating, "We probably have about 20-25 students here (at Appalachian) that are HIV+."<sup>48</sup> She remembers a number of students attending the support group. Also, a professor died from complications related to AIDS in 1991 and many former students have died of AIDS-related illnesses as well.<sup>49</sup> First-hand accounts illustrate how deeply HIV/AIDS affected the Appalachian Family despite Watauga County's low case rate.

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<sup>47</sup>Division of Public Health, *North Carolina Epidemiologic Profile for HIV/STD Prevention and Care Planning* (State of North Carolina: Raleigh, NC, 2006), D-13. With anonymous testing, the same HIV+ individual may test multiple times thereby skewing the statistics. In 2005, North Carolina's cumulative total for HIV positive tests was 28,485. Only 913 of these cases originated from North Carolina's twenty-three Appalachian counties, as defined by the Appalachian Regional Commission.

<sup>48</sup>Tracey Coffron, "College Students at Highest Risk for AIDS Infection," *The Appalachian*, 26 February 1991, 1.

<sup>49</sup>Sherman, interview; Dianne Wally, "Although No Problem: AIDS Case Diagnosed in County," *The Appalachian*, 26 January 1989, 1; O'Malley, interview; John Magers, Appalachian Memory Project Records; The AIDS Memorial Quilt: The Names Project Foundation, accessed at <http://64.32.160.70:591/FMRes/FMPro>, viewed on 8 December 2008; Lynn Patterson, Interview with Kathy Staley, 5 June 2006; Beaman, interview; Pat Geiger, Interview with Kathy Staley, September 8, 2006.

In 1988, Appalachian took the ground-breaking and controversial step of introducing condom dispensers in restrooms throughout dorms and the Student Union. The Student Government Association's Student Affairs Committee sponsored the bill. They argued that although the Student Health Services annually distributed approximately 2,500 free condoms to students, accessibility in dorms had the potential to increase condom use. When the bill passed in November 1988 and was endorsed by Chancellor Thomas, Appalachian became the first UNC institution to install condom dispensers.<sup>50</sup>

The news of Appalachian's decision appeared in the local and national press with mentions both in *Playboy* and on The David Letterman Show.<sup>51</sup> The negative local response was immediate. Feeling Chancellor Thomas was "sending the wrong message to students," Ben Cox, pastor of the Watauga Christian Center, paid for a full-page advertisement in *The Appalachian* to publish his negative views about the condom dispensers. Looking back, Thomas remembers,

I had a lot of support. I agreed with it. Good Lord, we had AIDS looking us in the face. But the real strong supporters were in the health area here. . . . I was on the circuit there for a while giving talks about why we needed that. I'm not bragging about it, but I didn't have to back down at all. I didn't *have* to back down and didn't.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Russel Johnson, "Condom Dispensers Discussed," *The Appalachian*, 17 November 1988, 1; Jeff Weathersbee, "Condom Issue Touches Colleges: Condom Sales Rise Steadily," *The Appalachian*, 26 April 1990, 1; Jon Jimison, "Senate Approves Condom Bill," *The Appalachian*, 1 December 1988, 1.

<sup>51</sup>Michelle Mills, "Condomonium Hits!" *The Appalachian*, 19 January 1989, 3; Letter to the Editor, *Playboy*, April 1989.

<sup>52</sup>Russel Johnson, "Condom Dispensers Discussed," *The Appalachian*, 17 November 1988, 1; Jeff Weathersbee, "Condom Issue Touches Colleges: Condom Sales Rise Steadily," *The Appalachian*, 26 April 1990, 1; Jon Jimison, "Senate Approves Condom Bill," *The Appalachian*, 1 December 1988, 1; Michelle Mills, "Condomonium Hits!" 3; Full-page Letter from Ben Cox, *The Appalachian*, 26 January 1989, 9.



Thomas' enthusiastic approach illustrates his support for this decision. Whereas his predecessor Wey announced his unpopular decision to approve AGAA for legal reasons, Thomas made his full-fledged agreement with this decision apparent with his wording and actions.

Other Watauga County pastors also voiced their opposition to Appalachian's official position and the shifting sexual paradigm. One local pastor even began counseling gay students with the intention of healing them of their homosexuality. His individual counseling eventually grew into a chapter of Exodus International, an international reparative therapy program designed to support homosexuals attempting to become heterosexual or suppress their homosexual desires. According to first person narratives, some of these students left the program and worked together to co-found the Metropolitan Community Church of the High Country.<sup>53</sup>

During this time period, AGAA was inactive; therefore, it did not participate in the development of the policy regarding condom dispensers. In fact, no publicly out gay man influenced any part of the campus' HIV/AIDS response although the medical director planned to speak to an off-campus lesbian and gay organization about HIV prevention. Despite the lack of inclusion within the development process, Thomas' bold decision had one unreported result: the campus' gay men felt supported and appreciated. Former student Lee O'Malley, in fact, cites it as having invigorated him and others to form the Sexual Awareness Group at Appalachian (SAGA), the campus' second lesbian

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<sup>53</sup> Alan E. Gambrell, "Especially in N.C.," *The Front Page*, 21 November 1992, 7; Evan Smith, interview; Cindy Long, Interview with Kathy Staley, 28 June 2006.

and gay student organization.<sup>54</sup>

As the nation entered the 1990s, North Carolina gay men and lesbians formed Triangle and Atlanta chapters of direct action groups such as Queer Nation, AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT-UP), and the Lesbian Avengers.<sup>55</sup> These groups staged multiple kiss-ins and demonstrations in Raleigh and other North Carolina cities.<sup>56</sup> LGBT Appalachian campus members who traveled broadly for entertainment and self-education came into contact with these organizations. When David Bauman wrote a column for *The Appalachian* denouncing the civil disobedience-oriented gay organization's attempts to normalize homosexuality, a flurry of student letters from self-identified gay men, lesbians, and a Queer Nation member debated his points.<sup>57</sup>

Other students influenced by the renewed energy of the lesbian and gay movement put their thoughts into action. In the 1989-1990 academic year, East Hall residents O'Malley, John Magers, and their gay and lesbian dorm mates founded Sexual Awareness

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<sup>54</sup>“Thoughts and Observations on Sexually Transmitted Diseases,” AIDS folder, John Thomas Papers; Beaman, interview; O'Malley, interview. The Sexual Awareness Group at Appalachian has gone through three name changes: Bisexuals, Gay Men, and Lesbians Associated for Diversity, Bisexuals, Gay Men, Lesbians, and Allies Associated for Diversity, and Sexuality and Gender Alliance.

<sup>55</sup> “Triangle ACT-UP: Local Chapter Forms,” *The Front Page*, 22 October 1990, 1; Patience Vanderbush, “Lesbian Avengers in Durham,” *The Front Page*, 12 February 1993, 1; James D. Davis, Jr., letter to the editor, *The Appalachian*, 14 March 1991, 11; O'Malley, interview. Many late 1980s era Appalachian students participated in Atlanta's gay political functions.

<sup>56</sup>“ACT-UP Comes to North Carolina . . . & South Carolina,” *The Front Page*, 15 May 1989, 1; “C.D. or not C.D.?” *The Front Page*, 16 May 1989, 3; “Garden Variety Lesbians,” *The Front Page*, 14 May 1993, 3.

<sup>57</sup>David Bauman, “Questioning Homosexual Rhetoric: Hard line Homosexuals Continue the Quest for Unquestioned Acceptance,” *The Appalachian*, 26 February 1991, 9; James D. Davis, Jr., letter to the editor; Kimberley Norris, letter to the editor, *The Appalachian*, 14 March 1991, 11; “Homosexuality is Normal and Acceptable: SAGA, ‘Homosexual Rhetoric’ Stirs up SAGA Members to Defend their Sexual Openness,” *The Appalachian*, 26 March 1991, 10, 12; Scott E. Schnegelberger, letter to the editor, *The Appalachian*, 26 March 1991, 11; Mark C. Pedro, letter to the editor, *The Appalachian*, 16 April 1991, 7.

Group at Appalachian (SAGA). They envisioned SAGA as providing support for students dealing with coming-out issues as AGAA had. They also wished to incorporate participation in political activities.<sup>58</sup> One organizer recalls feeling a groundswell of support when the first meeting drew approximately 30 people. Activities included leading a town council meeting in February 1991 on gay issues, encouraging the Library to purchase popular lesbian and gay novels and magazines, working to increase AIDS awareness, outreaching to clubs and classes, meeting with other college's LGBT organizations, and sponsoring d.j. dances.<sup>59</sup> Illustrating the membership's comfort with being associated with a lesbian and gay organization, the 1992 campus yearbook *The Rhododendron* pictured thirty-two SAGA members and identified most names. Indicative of the risks of public exposure, however, three members stood with their backs to the camera.<sup>60</sup>

Approval of SAGA came free of controversy in part because a national acclimatization to homosexuality had increased campus tolerance. Also, SAGA's application for recognition did not enter public discourse. *The Appalachian* first reported about SAGA one year after its creation. The article's banal title, "Awareness Nurtures," seems designed not to inflame.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Undated SAGA charter, Box 27, Women's Studies Program Files; O'Malley, interview; John Magers, Appalachian Memory Project Records.

<sup>59</sup>Shannon Sparks, "Awareness Nurtured," *Appalachian*, 19 February 1991, 6; Women's Studies Program Files.

<sup>60</sup>*Rhododendron*, 1991, 280.

<sup>61</sup>O'Malley, interview with Kathy Staley, 31 December 2006; Sparks, "Awareness Nurtured," 6; Magers, Appalachian Memory Project Records.



The late 1980s and early 1990s, with the election of anti-gay North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms and pro-gay President Bill Clinton, led to more campus LGBT-themed activities and queer visibility throughout the state. By 1987, LGBT student organizations from UNC-CH and Western Carolina University held isolated state-wide gatherings for support and the sharing of ideas.<sup>62</sup> SAGA became BGLAD in 1993 in direct response to learning that UNC-CH's Carolina Gay and Lesbian Association had renamed itself Bisexuals, Gays, Lesbians, and Allies for Diversity in 1992.<sup>63</sup> As the organizational names indicate, gender variance remained outside the discourse of college student members as well as most national and state organizations.

Before its renaming, SAGA had turned once more to a heterosexual for an advisor. At this point, memories differ. The 1991 SAGA Vice President John Magers remembers East Hall Resident Director Gary Hartz as their natural choice for advisor because he was a supportive ally and had introduced many of the founding members to each other. On the other hand, SAGA co-founder O'Malley, whose task was to secure an advisor, recalls that some lesbian and gay professors were concerned that their departments would retaliate for their participation.<sup>64</sup>

This reticence underscores the differences in perceived behavior in the 1960s and

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<sup>62</sup>Don King, "College Federation Continues to Grow," *The Front Page*, 6 December 1988, 3; "Western Carolina Group Plans Local 'Coming Out Day,'" *The Front Page*, 4 October 1988, 6; Charlie Williams and Martin Winfree, "Campus Gay/Lesbian Convention Slated," *The Front Page*, 4 April 1989, 3; "College Groups Organize," *The Front Page*, 24 April 1992, 10. The 1992 meeting article was the first with an Appalachian student organization listed.

<sup>63</sup>Evan Smith, interview; personal knowledge; Damien Carper, "Anti-gay Graffiti Covers Tunnel Walls," *The Appalachian*, 21 October 1993, 1. Carper's article is the first dated instance of the name BGLAD in print.

<sup>64</sup>Magers, Appalachian Memory Project Records; O'Malley, interview.

the 1990s. In earlier decades, students were at highest risk for expulsion because of the rule of *in parentis loci* and their contemporary professors never crossed the unwritten rule against becoming public by organizing. Covert actions therefore were tolerated. Many 1990s-era professors likely knew first- or second-hand about AGAA's difficult recognition process in 1979 and were unwilling to risk their professional career to "flaunt their sexuality." The professors' internalized mores and fears about career advancement led to a continuation of the status quo.<sup>65</sup>

As previously mentioned, transsexual organizing increased during the early 1990s. Although *The Appalachian* mentioned transsexual Renee Richards during the 1970s, the campus lacked any direct experience with gender variance throughout the 1970s and 1980s with the exception of isolated drag shows as well as gender-bending lesbians and gay men. When a campus member transitioned in the early-to-mid-1990s, so startling was the idea that even the usually unflappable campus Compliance Officer reputedly was surprised by the prospect of the sex change.<sup>66</sup>

When James France (pseudonym) was hired, his reputation as a good instructor and pleasant person secured his popularity among his students and colleagues. At the time, his gender expression mirrored his female biological sex. After reading literature and attending an Atlanta conference on transexuality solidified his gender identity as a man, he initiated a gender reassignment. France chose to first tell his department's representative on the Sex Harassment Taskforce for fear that trans-phobic discrimination

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<sup>65</sup>O'Malley, *ibid.*

<sup>66</sup>Terry Cole, interview.

would cost him his job. Although the representative explained that his needs may not be covered by the sex or sexuality components of the EEO, she and the departmental chairperson coordinated discussions with the department, dean, and the compliance officer.<sup>67</sup>

France received support and respect from his colleagues and students during his transition. Unlike other employers who have terminated transitioning employees, Appalachian altered his personnel forms to reflect his gender without difficulty. France took a low key approach and did not make a public statement about his transition. The general ignorance of gender identity issues created considerable confusion which France resolved by his educating students and co-workers individually. Among other accommodations, he recognized the potential challenges connected to bathroom usage and attempted to circumvent it by choosing a less frequently used toilet. Although professors from another department which shared his building disliked his using the men's restrooms, France's colleagues defended him. In the end, his students, co-workers, and administrators accepted his transition without question.<sup>68</sup>

Towards the end of Thomas' administration in Fall 1991, Appalachian entered into the realm of LGBT academics as well. Appalachian's Women's Studies program offered the campus' first LGBT course. Taught by adjunct professor Kim Duckett, students recall IDS 3533 Gay Experience/Media Interpretations being filled to capacity

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<sup>67</sup>James France (pseudonym), Interview with Kathy Staley, 29 October 2006; Nina-Jo Moore, Interview with Kathy Staley, 7 November 2006; Terry Cole, interview. In 2008, Appalachian adopted a new EEO policy inclusive of gender identity and expression.

<sup>68</sup>France, interview; Nina-Jo Moore, interview; Terry Cole, interview; Judy Geary, Interview with Kathy Staley, 29 March 2007; Sparrow, interview.



without advertising in the *Appalachian*. Although *Appalachian* did not offer the UNC System's first LGBT course, this course predated the more liberal campus UNC-CH's first course by two years.<sup>69</sup>

Shortly afterwards, in the Fall of 1992, the Student Government Association (SGA) created a bill to endorse the inclusion of sexual orientation in *Appalachian's* equal opportunity statement. In December 1992, the SGA passed the bill 41-5 with seven abstentions.<sup>70</sup> The Faculty Senate approved their version with one negative vote.<sup>71</sup> Broadening the campus' protected categories, Chancellor Thomas argued, "the letter and spirit of the policy change has been honored for a long time." This movement received campus attention, but the local newspapers and *The Front Page* omitted coverage.<sup>72</sup> Correspondence to Thomas himself is also absent.

Described as "an issue of civil rights for [our] generation," the exact origins of the policy have been forgotten over time.<sup>73</sup> Details of the events slightly differ among the five involved SGA members and the student body president who interviewed for this

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<sup>69</sup>"Homosexual Studies on Campus," *The Front Page*, 26 June 1980, 2; *The Front Page*, 23 October 1980, 2; Doug Ferguson, "Gay Studies: Out of the Academic Closet: Dessen, Wooten Blaze Trail," *Lambda*, February 1993, 6-7; Personal knowledge. UNC-Greensboro professor Tom Fitzgerald taught the first Gay Studies course, "Anthropological Perspectives on Homosexuality," in Spring 1981. Low enrollment thwarted Carolina Gay and Lesbian Association advisor Cecil Wooten's 1983 attempt to offer an honors course on homosexuality ten years earlier.

<sup>70</sup>Dawn McGuire, "Senate Approves Three Proposals," *The Appalachian*, 3 December 1992, 1. By 1993, four UNC System schools had non-discrimination statements and two had Chancellor's Statements. See "UNC-CH Adopts Anti-Discrimination Policy," *The Front Page*, 5 November 1990, 1 and "College Groups Leave Their Mark," *The Front Page*, 12 November 1993, 7.

<sup>71</sup>Dawn McGuire (sic) and Dane Perry, "Faculty Approves SGA Resolution," *The Appalachian*, 28 January 1993, 1; Dawn McGuire, "Phrase Added to Policy," *The Appalachian*, 9 February 1993, 1.

<sup>72</sup>McGuire, "Phrase Added to Policy," 1.

<sup>73</sup>Beaman, interview.

study.<sup>74</sup> Both BGLAD president and SGA senator Evan Smith and Student Government Cabinet Member Tom Beaman recall devising the idea in a social setting with another friend.<sup>75</sup> Cabinet members subsequently crafted the legislation itself and devised a coalition of diverse co-sponsors consisting of bisexuals, homosexuals, heterosexuals, males and females, blacks, whites, and Greeks.

Beaman, who took a lead in the crafting of the legislation, sought outside guidance. Lesbian professors advised him, and he modeled the EEO policy on policies at UNC-CH and UNC-Charlotte. When Beaman and Smith spoke to *The Appalachian* and the Faculty Senate, they were quoted as not knowing personally of any campus discrimination. Professors later told them of instances of lesbian and gay professors having had work difficulties.<sup>76</sup>

At the institution's urging, the UNC System's student government debated a similar bill a few months after Appalachian's legislation had been approved. The rationale was that if the UNC System broadened its non-discrimination statement, each school would not need to alter its own EEO policy. The Association of Student Government narrowly passed the measure to recommend adding sexual orientation to UNC System's nondiscrimination statement; however, the Board of Governors did not

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<sup>74</sup>Beaman, interview; Evan Smith, interview; Dan Gurley, interview with Kathy Staley, 24 September 2006; Keith Van Wagner, interview with Kathy Staley, 29 September 2006; David Cox, interview with Kathy Staley, 19 October 2006.

<sup>75</sup>Beaman, interview; Evan Smith, interview.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid. Informants to this study also provided examples of work discrimination; however, none can be substantiated or are known to have been taken to court.

address the ASG's recommendation.<sup>77</sup>

The inclusion of gay and bisexual Student Government members at Appalachian to lead pro-gay policy-crafting echoes the experiences of events at UNC-CH. During the 1970s and 1980s, the annual requests of the Carolina Gay and Lesbian Association (CGLA) for campus funding annually faced organized opposition.<sup>78</sup> Finally, in 1987, CGLA member and future Carrboro mayor Mike Nelson developed the tactic of encouraging write-ins for lesbian, gay, and pro-gay Student Congress candidates.<sup>79</sup> CGLA treasurer Jim Duley said "that the number [of CGLA members and supporters in Student Congress] would 'have significant impact on the course of the budget process this spring.'"<sup>80</sup> Although some of the non-heterosexual Appalachian Student Government members deny that their sexual orientation propelled their policymaking, their sexuality likely made them more aware of the need for an inclusive EEO.<sup>81</sup>

The absence of negative media attention for three potentially controversial campus developments, that of SAGA's recognition, an LGBT course, and an inclusive EEO, leads one to consider the possibility of intentional omissions of press releases in order to lessen local controversy. In reference to students enrolling in ASU's first lesbian and gay

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<sup>77</sup>Marty Minchin, "Congress OKs Sexual Orientation Bill," *The Daily Tar Heel*, 1 April 1993, 3; "Student Government Re-addresses Sexual Orientation Bill," *The Appalachian*, 17 September 1993, 1.

<sup>78</sup>"CGLA Fares Well in Campus Elections," *Lambda*, 13, no. 3 (February/March 1987): 1. In 1986, "one fourth of last spring's final budget meeting was spent in debate over CGLA's budget – a budget which represents less than one half of one percent of Student Fees."

<sup>79</sup>Lightning Brown, "CGLA Sweeps Campus Elections," *The Front Page*, 17 February 1987, 3.

<sup>80</sup>"CGLA Fares Well in Campus Elections," *Lambda*: 1.

<sup>81</sup>Beaman, interview; Evan Smith, interview.



studies course in 1991, one retired administrator said, "To my knowledge there has never been an article in the local paper that there are classes like that on campus. . . . Because that would have produced a minor uprising in town."<sup>82</sup> One wonders if the administration, despite its apparent public acceptance of LGBT campus members, had learned to limit public recognition of controversial activities within the local press, thereby intentionally or unintentionally extending its role as gatekeeper. Another option, of course, is that these events were deemed too mundane to warrant press coverage. Thomas concurs that the university's news bureau would have likely published anything that a department requested to be advertised.<sup>83</sup>

One also wonders how the absence of media coverage – intended or otherwise – affected LGBT harassment on campus. During the late 1980s, the nation and North Carolina in particular had seen a rise in LGBT harassment. Of 1987's total cases reported by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 28% were documented by the N.C. Human Rights Fund, in part because of its systematic documentation.<sup>84</sup> Boone's *Appalachian* covered one gay bashing during Thomas' last five years. Just prior to the EEO bill's presentation to the Faculty Senate on January of 1993, Appalachian freshman Paul Dodson was assaulted off campus at Savannah Joe's, a local bar, and then again near the campus infirmary. He was taken to the hospital and treated for a concussion and

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<sup>82</sup>Bob Snead, interview; see also Women's Studies Courses Spring 1991, Women's Studies Files Beaman, interview; Evan Smith, interview.

<sup>83</sup>John Thomas, interview.

<sup>84</sup>"NCHRF Releases Violence Documentation," *The Front Page*, 21 June 1988, 1; "Hate Violence in N.C.," *The Front Page*, 2 May 1989, 4.

lacerations. Although he initially told the campus police he planned to press charges, Dodson did not and instead withdrew from school six days later.<sup>85</sup>

The campus responded with mixed reactions. Claims that Dodson had propositioned and groped his assailant led Savannah Joe's staff and some members of the lesbian and gay student population to blame Dodson for the attack.<sup>86</sup> Lacking a policy about naming victims, *The Appalachian* article describing the incident listed Dodson's name, a choice criticized by several letter writers. As a result, one of Dodson's defenders reported being stalked and receiving harassing telephone calls.<sup>87</sup> Days afterwards, anti-gay graffiti was found in a bathroom: "Beat the hell out of a fag. Apps Anti-Homo Hate Club. Club sponsored gay-bashing - Join the Fun! Fags have no rights. Homosexuals must die. Make the world a better place. . . . Kill a fag. Fags caused AIDS. Fuck you faggot." The name of the campus lesbian and gay student group was also circled with a slash across it.<sup>88</sup>

Although *The Appalachian* reported about only Dodson's attack, two North Carolina anti-LGBT violence and discrimination organizations documented many other

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<sup>85</sup>Paul Dodson. Appalachian State University Police Report. Reported 20 January 1993; Dawn McGuire and Suzi Landis, "Student Assaulted," *The Appalachian*, 28 January 1993, 1, 2; Walter W. Blair, Jr., "College Student Reports Gay Bashing," *Q-Notes*, April 1993, 10. The Appalachian incident report lacks a space to indicate hate bias. An incident report was also filed in Boone but Dodson did not pursue charges.

<sup>86</sup>Evan Smith, interview; Dawn McGuire and Suzi Landis, "Student Assaulted," *The Appalachian*, 28 January 1993, 1, 2.

<sup>87</sup>North Carolinians Against Racist and Religious Violence (NCARRV), *Bigoted Violence and Hate Groups in North Carolina: 1993 Report*, 7.

<sup>88</sup>NCARRV, 6. See Blair, "College Student" for a description of Chancellor Thomas' public statement condemning the vandalism.

instances of anti-LGBT actions in Watauga County. Minutes of a 1991 SAGA meeting mention making reporting of hate crimes an organizational priority and members apparently pursued this priority.<sup>89</sup> The North Carolina Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCCGLE) recorded seven cases in Watauga County and North Carolinians Against Racist and Religious Violence (NCARRV) recorded four additional cases of assaults, vandalism, stalking verbal harassment, and sexual harassment in 1992.<sup>90</sup> The community-based Gays and Lesbians of Watauga even received a bomb threat, an event which contributed to its failure.<sup>91</sup>

None of these victims filed charges with the police. When asked about the existence of reports of LGBT-oriented harassment or hate crimes, Appalachian's Equity Office and Police Department stated they do not have record of any anti-LGBT events for the Thomas administration. Victims likely feared exposure as being gay or that police would either harass them or not pursue charges. In fact, Dodson's defender reported her reputed subsequent harassment to NCARRV, not the campus police.<sup>92</sup>

Because of the inconsistencies in reporting, comparisons to other communities to illustrate Boone's response to LGBT issues remains impossible. In part, the occurrence of additional hate crimes cannot be fully quantified, yet, the available data illustrate that

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<sup>89</sup>Minutes for 24 January 1991 SAGA meeting, Women's Studies Department, Box 27, University Archives, Special Collections, Belk Library and Information Commons, Appalachian State University.

<sup>90</sup>North Carolina Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality, *Homophobia and Human Rights in North Carolina* (Durham: self-published, 1993), 22-23; North Carolinians Against Racist and Religious Violence (NCARRV), *1993 NCARRV Report* accessed at <http://www.qrd.org/qrd/browse/north.carolina.hate.crimes.report>, viewed 20 April 2007.

<sup>91</sup>Claassen, interview; Kate Black and Marc A. Rhorer, "Out in the Mountains."

<sup>92</sup>NCARRV, 7.



despite the policy and climate improvements produced during the Thomas administration, LGBT lives at Appalachian remained at risk for harassment and violence.

In conclusion, the multiple changes during the Thomas administration created public space and public affirmation of the university's commitment to LGBT campus members. Repeatedly, gay and bisexual students point to the administration's policies as supporting their decisions to move forward with their organizing. Without administrative support of accepting all of the Appalachian Family into the fold, the incorporation of protective policies, scholarly endeavors, and the creation community space would never have occurred. Yet, anti-LGBT national mores and trends continue to be present at Appalachian.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

Appalachian growth in the size, mission, and diversity illustrates the importance of larger societal influences and affirming individuals. The institution's liberalization stemming from its expanded mission of a national and international scope broadened the Appalachian Family to include openly LGBT campus members. Since Chancellor Thomas' retirement, the campus has continued to incorporate its LGBT population into its activities and mission.

Applying Campus Pride's LGBT-Friendly Campus Climate Index assists in objectively gauging campus climates.<sup>93</sup> This national student organization created a web-based instrument to compare individual campus' LGBT-related policies against an idealized national standard. The criteria includes an inclusive equal employment opportunity statement, domestic partner benefits for students and employees, LGBT courses and programs, an LGBT student center, LGBT student organizations, safe zones, LGBT faculty/staff organizations, trans-friendly housing and bathrooms, and so forth. In Spring 2008, Appalachian rated a 3 out of 5 rating. The score has since likely improved because of the adoption of a trans-inclusive housing policy and a trans-inclusive EEO statement, the increased number of single stall bathrooms, and the opening of an LGBT

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<sup>93</sup>"Campus Pride," accessed at <http://www.campuspride.org>, viewed on 18 April 2008. Appalachian alumnus M. Chad Wilson co-founded Campus Pride.

Center a few months after the survey's completion.<sup>94</sup>

These criteria were non-existent during previous administrations, as one might expect. College administrators contemporary to Dougherty, Plemmons, and Wey did not consider welcoming sexual and gender minorities a necessity. The two earliest administrations would have scored 0 because of the lack of resources. Yet, these early administrations apparently tolerated its underground lesbian and gay population as long as same-sex couples remained private. During Wey's administration, the campus' counseling center began a homosexual support group, which improves its LGBT-Friendly Campus Climate Index score. By the end of the Thomas administration, Appalachian's rating would have improved significantly with its university-recognized student organization for lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals, an EEO inclusive of sexual orientation, and a lesbian and gay studies course. One wonders what occurred at Appalachian to allow this transition to a 3 out of 5 fifteen years later.

In a large part, the evolution of administrative attitudes stemmed from the head administrator's personal experiences and the influence of national trends. Dougherty and Plemmons both grew up in and lived the majority of their lives in North Carolina and the Appalachian region specifically. Similarly, Wey worked the majority of his career in Boone. During their lifetime, national trends encouraged a negative or, at best, a non-response to homosexuality. These three men embedded themselves into the community

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<sup>94</sup>LGBT-Friendly Campus Climate Index National Assessment Tool: Appalachian State University (7 January 2008); Katie Easter and Rebecca Gardner, "Committee Considers Transgender Housing in Residence Halls," *The Appalachian*, 15 November 2007, 13; Edward Sztukowski, "New GLBT Center to Open Its Doors," *The Appalachian*, 18 September 2008, 1. Survey in the possession of author.



and internalized the cultural expectation of silent repression of sexual matters. Thomas, on the other hand, grew up elsewhere and had established careers in more metropolitan areas prior to arriving at Appalachian. Although he similarly integrated himself into the Appalachian Family and its surrounding community, his broader experiences, which included personal connections to lesbian and gay individuals, led to a subtle acceptance of the LGBT campus population.

LGBT campus members holding leadership positions broadened the campus acceptance level. Jim Sparrow's 1960s era "coterie" of queens consisted of many of the campus' most popular professors and staff as evidenced by the crowds surrounding Darrell Rogers and his friends in the Sweet Shop and the outpouring of grief after Rogers' suicide. During the 1970s and 1980s, Max Smith, Douglas Bennett, and others rose to chair departments and direct campus-wide programs thereby influencing campus climate. By the early 1990s, gay and bisexual students both coincidentally and consciously joined the student government. Their friendships led to a serendipitous conversation that started Appalachian's sexual orientation-inclusive EEO statement.

Important administrative allies assisted by creating programs which supported LGBT campus needs. The campus slowly developed informal and explicit support networks for lesbian and gay students. By the late 1980s, Chancellor John Thomas, Student Health physicians, and multiple Student Development administrators affirmed gay men when forming the campus' comprehensive AIDS and condom dispenser plan. Adopting such a plan amid public controversy heartened lesbian and gay campus members desirous of developing a visible community. A comparison of the success of

the lesbian and gay student organizations before and after the dispensers illustrates that campus and social attitudes shifted for all campus members.

Without national developments in LGBT politics, Appalachian would never have gotten to that point. Professors and staff educated in cities with large gay communities carried their expectations of acceptance into the Lost Provenance. By the 1980s, students began arriving at Appalachian with gay and queer self-identities ready to find like-minded friends. Furthermore, legal developments required unwilling administrators such as Wey to allow LGBT students to form sanctioned organizations.

The manner in which the media approached sexuality also evolved over the decades. Before the 1970s, *The Appalachian* treated homosexuality with silence. Shifts in attitudes led to inclusion of insensitive articles in the 1970s and subsequently the positive editorialization of LGBT political issues in the 1990s. This positive approach to LGBT issues allowed campus members to locate other LGBT individuals in addition to being able to read the paper without emotional damage.

Since John Thomas retired in 1993, the campus has experienced several changes within the LGBT population. During the term of his successor Frank Borkowski, BGLAD grew into an outlet for support, socializing, and education. Yet, this was not due to the support or interference of the administration. When Borkowski convened a Diversity Task Force, participants studied the needs of domestic partner benefits, but the resulting report lacked any mention of sexual or gender diversity. Until late in his Borkowski's tenure, the administrators outside of the Equity Office rarely addressed

LGBT issues.<sup>95</sup>

In 2002, one administrative action affected the campus climate tremendously. When BGLAAD president M. Chad Wilson formally requested the creation of an LGBT Center, Vice Chancellor Gregory Blimling charged a Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender (GLBT) Task Force with examining the campus climate and making recommendations. The task force subsequently reconvened to act on its recommendations. Since 2003, this task force has created an anonymous on-line harassment reporting system named the Voices Project, a safe zone project named Appalachian Allies, a Lavender Graduation ceremony, and an LGBT Center.<sup>96</sup>

More important to the growth of the LGBT population, LGBT individuals created spaces and events to develop stronger community ties. Delta Love Delta, a small, incorporated biracial fraternity that bridged the community and campus, began hosting parties that evolved into a Miss Gay Boone pageant. This drag show influenced BGLAD into adopting drag shows as an organizational fund-raiser. Recognizing the need for more inclusion, BGLAD changed its name once again to include an additional "A" for allies. The Campus Ministries also invited publicly out Metropolitan Community Church pastor Cindy Long to join.<sup>97</sup>

Academically, departments began hiring tenure-track professors who specialized

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<sup>95</sup>Marilyn Smith personal papers, in the possession of the author; Jill Jones (pseudonym), interview with Kathy Staley, 25 May 2006.

<sup>96</sup>Personal knowledge. I became a member of the GLBT Task Force in 2003.

<sup>97</sup>Freddie Grant, interview with Kathy Staley, 1 September 2006; Mary Ballard, interview with Kathy Staley, 19 June 2006; Cindy Long, interview with Kathy Staley, 28 June 2006; Personal knowledge.



in Queer Theory and listed lesbian and gay professional organizations within their vita. One of these new hires, Mary Ballard, agreed to advise BGLAAD after Gary Hartz left the university. Professors Kim Hall and Sandie Gravett, who was later replaced by Jill Ehnenn, developed the annual Queer Films Series. LGBT courses continued to be taught within the Women's Studies program.

In 2004, Kenneth Peacock became Appalachian's sixth top administrator and has shown himself to be an ally. He has personally made public statements about LGBT issues such as the need for domestic partner benefits. LGBT campus members have also been promoted to higher administration positions, and Peacock regularly attends BGLAAD meetings, which has grown substantially in size as more self-identifying LGBT and ally students arrive from high schools offering Gay-Straight Alliances. During Peacock's 2007 visit to BGLAAD, he publically pledged to student Luke Howell to open an LGBT Center within two years. At the chancellor's request, the GLBT Task Force wrote a proposal for an LGBT Center, which opened in Fall 2008.<sup>98</sup>

By 2004, transgender students began publicly discussing their needs. In 2006, Loren Lemmond founded a separate action-based student organization, transACTION.<sup>99</sup> Through the determination of former BGLAAD and then transACTION officer Michal Duffy, BGLAAD responded to the growing visible transgender population by changing its name to Sexuality and Gender Alliance, thereby reverting to its original acronym

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<sup>98</sup>Personal knowledge.

<sup>99</sup>Julia Merchant, "New Club Addresses Transgender Issues," *The Appalachian*, 31 October 2006, 1, 3.

SAGA in 2008. As further example of an increasingly accepting campus climate, the administration acted on the Faculty Senate's approved resolution to alter the EEO to include gender identity and gender expression in 2008.<sup>100</sup>

Likewise, the surrounding community has evolved to be more inclusive of LGBT individuals. Although LGBT affirmation is not universal, several employers, such as the natural food store Earth Fare and Wachovia, have LGBT-inclusive EEO policies. Available LGBT events surged as PFLAG, NC Outings, and Boone Pride offered educational and social events.<sup>101</sup> Boone's acceptance of LGBT issues is also exemplified politically with its electing lesbian Janet Pepin and the town council unanimously voted to add sexual orientation and gender identity into its EEO.<sup>102</sup>

Having LGBT and allies within key social and administrative positions ensured that leaders projected tolerant campus attitudes and policy creation inevitable. Without both, Appalachian's LGBT population likely would have primarily remained at Dilley's Homosexual Identity stage with a few individuals in Gay Identity.

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<sup>100</sup>Brittany Penland, "Faculty Expands Equal Opportunity Policy," *The Appalachian*, 6 March 6 2008, 1-2; Emily Melton, "New Policy Promotes Equality," *The Appalachian*, 9 September 2008, 1, 3. For full disclosure, I requested the Faculty Senate to create the gender identity/expression resolution and have served as the co-faculty advisor of transACTION since 2008.

<sup>101</sup>"4<sup>th</sup> Annual Boone Pride Festival Set for June 13 to 15," *High Country Press*, 29 May 2008, 11B.

<sup>102</sup>Edward Sztukowski, "Town Rejects Marriage Definition Bill," *Appalachian*, 26 March 2009, 3; Personal knowledge; "Openly LGBT Officials in NC," viewed at <http://www.equalitync.org/resources/library/outofficial.html>; accessed on 11 April 2009. For full disclosure, I have served as a PFLAG officer and Boone Pride board member and requested that the Boone Town Council create a resolution to add sexual orientation and gender identity to its personnel policy.

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MSAA: Appalachian Studies Association, founded in 1972, the first national organization devoted to the study of Appalachia.

PHD: Acquired from a fellow graduate student.

ASNS: Appalachian Studies Network, founded in 1972.

AS: Appalachian Studies Association, founded in 1972.

ASU: Appalachian Studies University, founded in 1972.

ATB: Appalachian Training Bulletin, founded in 1972.

## APPENDIX A

### Abbreviations

BGLAD: Blacks, Gays, Lesbians, and Allies for Diversity, a student organization from 1992 to 1995, founded by a Black student and a White student, which was the precursor to the first Black and White LGBT student organization from 1995 to 1996.

BGLAD: Blacks, Gays, Lesbians, and Allies for Diversity, a student organization from 1995 to 1996, founded by a Black student and a White student, which was the precursor to the first Black and White LGBT student organization from 1996 to 1997.

CSU: Center for Student Leadership and Development

GRD: Gay-Related Issues, Department of Early Childhood Education

IDS: Interdisciplinary Studies Department

NOW: National Organization of Women

PLAG: People's Liberation Army of Lesbians and Gays

PAA: People's Alliance for All



AGAA: Appalachian Gay Awareness Association; ASU's gay student organization from 1979 to circa 1987; sometimes called Gay Awareness Association

AIDS: Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

ASNS: Appalachian State Normal School (1925-1928)

ASTC: Appalachian State Teachers College (1929-1966)

ASU: Appalachian State University (1967-present)

ATS: Appalachian Training School for Teachers (1903-1924)

B-GLAD: Bisexuals, Gay, Lesbian Associated for Diversity; ASU's gay student organization from 1992 to 1998; mistakenly referred to as Bisexuals, Gay, Lesbian and Allies for Diversity, which was the name of University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's LGB student organization from 1992-1994

B-GLAAD: Bisexuals, Gay, Lesbian and Allies Associated for Diversity; ASU's gay student organization from 1998 to 2006; aka Bisexuals, Gay, Lesbian and Allies Against Discrimination

CSIL: Center for Student Involvement and Leadership

GRID: Gay-Related Immune Deficiency, an early name for AIDS

IDS: Interdisciplinary Studies Department

NOW: National Organization of Women

PFLAG: Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays

PWA: Person(s)/People with AIDS

SAGA: ASU's gay student organization since 1989; it has undergone multiple name changes; see B-GLAD and B-GLAAD; its original name was Sexual Awareness Group at Appalachian, in 2008, it was renamed Sexuality and Gender Alliance

SGA: Appalachian's Student Government Association

UNC: University of North Carolina

(1979) Earliest known LGBT person at Appalachian

Jan. 27-29, 1963: State Fair

March, 1970: Observed Appalachia in the past

January, 1971: The appalachian region in the past

February, 1972: University from the past

1976: USL Wagner's Studies Program is founded

## APPENDIX B

### Timeline of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Life

#### as related to Appalachian State University

February, 1976: Supreme Court decision in *University of Minnesota v. Toltz* that gay students had the right to organize on college campuses

November, 1978: Dr. Stephen Hall and Anne Hall of the Department of Sociology present the film "Radical Sex System" about students at ASU and "Swingers" shown at ASU - Eugene H. Hays

November, 1979: ASU's Hall and Anne Hall of the Department of Sociology present the film "Radical Sex System" about students at ASU and "Swingers" shown at ASU - Eugene H. Hays

March, 1979: Appalachian State University's first LGBT group is officially recognized as the first of its kind in the Appalachian region

April, 1979: ASU's first LGBT group is officially recognized

April, 1979: State Fair "Support Association for the ASU" petition to not recognize AIAA

May, 1979: ASU's first LGBT student population with the first LGBT student at ASU



1929: Earliest known LGBT person at Appalachian

June 27-29, 1969: Stonewall Riots

March, 1970: Bisexual Appalachian professor commits suicide

January, 1971: *The Appalachian* publishes "Mastering the Draft – Homosexuality and the Draft"

February, 1975: University forms the counseling center

1976: ASU Women's Studies Program is founded

1976: Counseling Center begins homosexual support group

February, 1978: Supreme Court ruled in *Gay Lib v. University of Missouri at Columbia* that gay students had the right to organize on college campuses

November, 1978: Dr. Stephen Hall and Anne Page of the Department of Sociology present the film "Radical Sex Styles" about lesbians, gay men, and "swingers" shown at ASU's Eggers Residence Hall

November, 1978: Donna Helseth and Susie Greene of the Counseling and Psychological Services present a program in Doughton Residence Hall about basic orientation of human sexuality

March, 1979: Appalachian Gay Awareness Association (AGAA) requested official recognition from Student Government Association (SGA)

April, 1979: ASU SGA passes AGAA Constitution

April, 1979: Stony Fork Baptist Association sends ASU petition to not recognize AGAA

May, 1979: 8% of ASU student population vote 3-to-1 in a Special Student Referendum

against the recognition of AGAA

June, 1979: AGAA faculty adviser Bill Dunlap moves to Memphis, Tennessee

June, 1979: Chancellor Herbert Wey announces that ASU administration decided to approve AGAA

Fall, 1979: AGAA president Jeff Isenhour does not return to ASU

February, 1980: AGAA has recognition, Maggie McFadden as faculty adviser

1980-1981: AGAA is not listed on ASU official club list found in Women's Studies Program files

1981: Association for Appalachian Women organized

1981: First publication about Gay-Related Immune Deficiency (GRID) cases in Los Angeles and New York City

April, October, 1983: AGAA reorganizes

[unknown month] 1984: Cris Williamson performs at ASU's Women's Week

October, 1984: NOW meeting at Jones House

1985: Elizabeth Barker/Barton attempts to revitalize AGAA, Cheryl Claassen as faculty adviser

April, 1986: ASU AIDS Task Force established by the UNC General Administration; Barbara Daye and Dr. Evan Ashby co-chair

September, 1986: Counseling Center advertizing Gay Support Group

November, 1986: Lesbian film *Personal Best* at IG Greer

- May, 1987: Watauga County's first reported AIDS case
- November, 1987: Student Affairs sponsors a series of lectures on Gay and Lesbian Awareness for a variety of audiences such as students and Resident Directors
- December, 1987: ASU AIDS Task Force sponsors AIDS seminar
- 1987: Terry Taylor founds a local chapter of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) of Boone
- 1988: Terry Taylor founds AIDS Support group with Pat Geiger; continues for 6 years
- December, 1988: SGA approves condom dispensers in ASU public restrooms
- 1989: ASU's first reported HIV+ student
- January, 1989: Condom dispensers are placed in ASU public restrooms
- Fall, 1989: Sexual Awareness Group of Appalachian (SAGA) founded
- 1990: Feminist Collective organizes
- February, 1990: PWAer Garland Lancaster speaks on campus
- August, 1991: Professor dies of complications due to AIDS during paid medical leave
- Fall, 1991: IDS 3533 Gay Experience/Media Interpretations offered by Kim Duckett
- March, 1991: Gays and Lesbians of Watauga received a threatening phone call and stops meeting; lesbians and gay men couldn't agree on activities
- May, 1991: Earliest known same sex commitment ceremony in Watauga County of Appalachian alumni Richard Huffine and Alfred Percy IV at the home of Jack and Terry Taylor after being refused by a popular wedding site



December, 1992: ASU Student Government Association (SGA) requests that ASU include sexual orientation in the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) statement

December, 1992: AIDS Task Force founded in Boone

January, 1993: ASU student Paul Dodson reports a gay-related assault

January, 1993: ASU faculty approves SGA resolution that ASU include sexual orientation in the university discrimination policy

February, 1993: AIDS Task Force set up office in First Baptist Church

February, 1993: John Thomas announces the addition of "sexual orientation" to the EEO

1993: Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) of the High Country opens

October, 1993: SAGA renamed Bisexuals, Gays, and Lesbians Associated for Diversity (B-GLAD)

## Appalachian State University Internal Review Board for Participants in Research Involving Human Subjects

Title of Project: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Lives in Appalachian State University

Principal Investigator: Kathryn S. ...

### I. Purpose of this Research

The researcher is studying the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students at Appalachian State University. The researcher is interested in the experiences of these students in ASU's history and the current climate on the campus. The researcher is also interested in the history of bisexual works.

## APPENDIX C

### Internal Review Board Consent Form

#### I. Introduction

The researcher will interview individuals who are currently students at ASU. The researcher is interested in the experiences of these students in ASU's history and the current climate on the campus. The researcher is also interested in the history of bisexual works.

#### II. Risks

Interview participants risk includes emotional distress caused by remembering unpleasant experiences. The researcher will avoid emotional distress by asking questions as necessary.

Heterophobic violence is a serious, mostly violent, experience with community members who are not LGBT. The researcher will avoid this by asking questions as necessary and/or providing assistance.

In attempt to avoid any risk, the researcher will be used to avoid any risk. The researcher will avoid any risk by asking questions as necessary and/or providing assistance.

Appalachian State University Informed Consent for Participants in Research Projects  
Involving Human Subjects

Title of Project: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Life at Appalachian State University

Investigator: Kathryn Staley

I. Purpose of this Research/Project

The researcher is studying the historical events and trends regarding lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people (LGBT) at Appalachian State University (ASU) for a master's thesis in ASU's History Department. I will examine the University's entire history although concentrate on the years after 1978. This research may also feed into later published works.

II. Procedures

The researcher will interview individuals who have been connected to ASU or the surrounding county's LGBT residents. These oral history interviews may last one to two hours with possible follow-up interviews. They will be held in a quiet location which both the interviewee and interviewer agree upon, over the telephone, or via e-mail. The interviewer will use an audio cassette recorder to record conversations.

III. Risks

Interview participants risk includes emotional distress caused by remembering unpleasant experiences. The researcher will minimize emotional distress by ending the interview as necessary.

Homophobic backlash from friends, family members, employers, and community members may also occur. Homophobic backlash could include ostracization, loss of job and/or community standing.

In attempt to prevent any risks, pseudonyms will be used in all material labels, publications and presentation unless the participant requests her/his name be used.



Participants are also discouraged from e-mailing the researcher's campus e-mail account because the university's archiving process negates confidentiality.

#### IV. Benefits

The participant will benefit from participating in this study by feeling positive about preserving ASU and LGBT history. This study will inform the community about the lives of LGBT individuals in rural areas and specifically the Appalachian region as well as give further understanding of academic institutions' roles in the validation of LGBT identity.

#### V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

Unless the participant requests her/his name be used, a pseudonym will be given to each participant included in the thesis research. All audio-cassettes and transcriptions will be identified with the pseudonym. The sheet of paper stating the names of the interviewee's pseudonym to be used for the interviewer's ease will be stored in a locked file cabinet in her house. Pseudonyms will be used in all published works and presentations. For participants using pseudonyms, limited identification (e.g. major, year of graduation, etc.) will be given.

Further, the pseudonyms will be given to third party individuals referred to within the interviews.

The oral history tapes and transcriptions will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the home of researcher until they are donated to a repository in 2050 or the time of the researcher's death. The researcher will transfer only transcriptions and destroy all tapes.

Participants may request a time period during which the researcher will not use the information or donate to a repository.

#### VI. Compensation

No compensation will be given.

## VII. Freedom to Withdraw

Participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Interviewees are free not to answer any questions, without penalty. There may be circumstances under which the investigator may determine that a subject should not continue as a subject. If a participant withdraws from the study, any existing audio-cassettes and transcriptions will be destroyed and name removed from all materials.

## VIII. Approval of Research

This research project has been approved, as required, by the Institutional Review Board of Appalachian State University.

March 8, 2006	March 7, 2007
IRB Approval Date	Approval Expiration Date

## IX. Subject's Responsibilities

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have the following responsibilities:

## X. Subject's Permission

I have read and understand the informed Consent and Conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. Below are additional provisions I require prior to release of my oral history:

I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

**Subject Signature      Date**

Witness (Optional except for certain classes of subjects)      Date

Should I have any questions about this research, I may contact:

Investigator(s): Kathryn Staley 828.262.6724 [staleykl1971@yahoo.com](mailto:staleykl1971@yahoo.com)

Faculty Advisor (if applicable)

Lynne Getz 828.262.6010 [getzlm@appstate.edu](mailto:getzlm@appstate.edu)

Robert L. Johnson 828-262-2692 [johnsonrl@appstate.ed](mailto:johnsonrl@appstate.ed)

Administrator, IRB

Graduate Studies and Research

Appalachian State University

Boone, NC 28608

Subjects must be given a complete copy (or duplicate original) of the signed consent form.



## BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Kathryn Lynn Staley was born in Detroit, Michigan to Ronny and Sallie Bulla Staley. She graduated from Northwest Cabarrus High School in June 1989. The following September she entered the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and in May 1993 she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Secondary Education with a concentration in English and a minor in Afro-American Studies. She earned a Master's Degree in Appalachian Studies from Appalachian State University in August 1999. In 2000, she was hired as the archivist of the W.L. Eury Appalachian Collection. In May 2009, she was awarded a Master's Degree in History from Appalachian State University. The author resides with her child Blaine Evey-Staley.