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Uniqueness is troubling thing

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Well, I’d done it. For the first time I’d left home. I was the proverbial bird testing its wings. And, boy, did I test them!

There were so many new things to see and to do, such as learning to deal with 20 or 30 screaming freshman, learning to stand in line, loud rock music and learning which menu items could be hazardous to one’s health. But perhaps the most important thing to learn was, “Who Am I?”

For me the question of “Who Am I” was a multi-faceted topic. I was fortunate in that I, unlike so many other URI students, never changed my mind concerning my choice of career.

But how could I deal with my long-dormant secret? I dared not tell anyone of my affliction. People would think that I was evil. And why shouldn’t they, when I, too, thought that I was evil?

Gradually, I met others with the same affliction. In fact, there was a group of them right on our own campus, although I was afraid that I might be seen by some of my friends, so I never attended. One of the others, however, did take me to places where these people meet. I liked it. It was fun.

We sang and danced all night. My affliction became my uniqueness as I began to like myself for the first time.

Slowly, I began to analyze my uniqueness. Why me? How did it happen? All I could determine was that I didn’t know when or how it started. It seemed to have just come about very naturally. I realized that its first manifestations had merely been thrust into my subconscious.

Furthermore, I began to realize that this feeling of uniqueness had had drastic effects throughout my childhood. Certainly every social interaction that I ever had was weighed in terms of this uniqueness. My college life proved no differently.

Then I met David. It was love at first sight. We spent hours together. Soon Interseesion came and I was off to see my parents. It was nice to visit home again, and I couldn’t wait to share my new-found love with my parents. They didn’t want to hear about it. My father didn’t speak to me for three days. I didn’t speak to them for months.

This experience, however, did teach me to be more selective when telling people of my uniqueness. I found myself subconsciously choosing people to tell that I knew would be receptive. It became easier to tell more and more people. I had finally arrived at the point that I truly believed that anyone who would not accept me as I was was not worth bothering with.

My attitudes towards myself and my uniqueness finally developed to the point that I felt compelled to educate others as to the pertinent facts involved with being unique. But how could I do it alone? Finally, I decided that I couldn’t. I would need some help.

My first call went to Health Education. They were very helpful. The very next day they sent Michael to my place. We sat down and discussed strategies for forming a group of people to help educate others. A few weeks later and with a few classified ads in the Cigar we had formed a group of 12 people.

The first year of meetings with the group proved to be solely social. Virtually no one was interested in being politically active. Either alone or as a group. I was very disappointed. I wanted people to know that we were being discriminated against and I wanted to stop this discrimination.

Finally, however, one person did manage to motivate the group into political activism. We began attending rap sessions, political rallies, parades, demonstrations, speeches, writing letters and not drinking Florida orange juice.

That person, Anita Bryant, forced gay men and women like ourselves to stand up and fight for our rights (especially concerning the area of discrimination in housing and jobs).

Anita’s purpose was to eradicate gay people. While she has not succeeded at her task, she has come close. Probably, the most positive effect that Anita has had is to create a sense of unity and pride within the gay community, and that gay community includes, statistics indicate, over 1,000 people reading this paper today.

The fledgling had made its first successful flight.