

KIRBY MOSS

'Real' men can love gay friends

Sammy K. I don't know if he still walks through my old neighborhood, indifferent to his difference.

As kids, me and my boys verbally denigrated Sammy K. He was tall, lean and dark like a silhouette. A thick pair of black horn-rimmed glasses rested on his broad nose. When he walked briskly along the sidewalks of our neighborhood, his butt switched from side to side.

We would laugh and point whenever we saw him. We would hide behind bushes and buildings and yell out from our safety: "Faggot!" "Punk!" "Sissy Fag!" "Homo!"

If any of my friends ever showed any hints of tender emotions, we would tag him Sammy K, because Sammy K was a man, but he was an anomaly of gender. A man in a woman's body. Or a woman in a man's body.

Whichever role, he was very different than the men we knew, the men we would be.

We were so sure we were nascent men, we little boys, that we would mock Sammy K's every move. The way he walked, talked and held his left hand dangling in the air.

But hidden in our laughter and mockery of this man was fear. We always thought that one day he would sneak up on us in the summer night and "do us up." He was an oddity, a freak.

For all those years we swirled about him like menacing mosquitos, taunting him from a distance, he never said one word to us. Never even acknowledged us.

So we grow, and hopefully learn to understand tolerance.

My memories of Sammy K were spawned by activities during OutWeek. This open assault on the consciousness of heterosexuals also made me think of a male friend who is still in and is not coming out anytime soon.

I say friend here, as though he and I flowed into a smooth, natural rela-

tion. We didn't. At least, I didn't. It took time for me to accept his preference for men.

I always thought he was gay but didn't know for sure. He was like Sammy K. Not as obvious, but the subtle signs were apparent, so he had to be gay.

But by this time, I had grown to accept the reality. He was his way. I was my way. But I still reasoned, live and let live.

It was like a secure, homophobic form of Jim Crowism. I accepted that he was the way he was, but I didn't have to deal with it.

Now, when I think about my reluctance to even hang out with this dude, I realize that it was not his homosexuality that stopped me from befriending him.

Instead, I harbored deep insecurities. I was abashed of what other people would think of me if I befriended a gay dude. After all, image is everything.

So one day I asked this dude: "Are you gay?"

"Of course not," he said. "Why would you think that?"

"I just always wondered," was my response. "If you were, it wouldn't make a difference to me."

"It's good to know you have an open mind," he said. "But, no. I'm not gay."

Two days later he called me and told me he was gay. That was the beginning of our friendship.

He's a cool dude. Wise. Hip. A person I would hang with on any other level. Because he's gay and I'm not doesn't make a difference anymore. Actually, it never did. My insecurity was the source of my reservation.

Already I have heard through the grapevine that some people I know have wondered — suddenly — whether I'm gay. What a surprise, eh?

The wonderful thing about our friendship is that it has made me more comfortable with tender emotions that lie deep inside my maleness.

Many men are so tough, so cool that they wouldn't dare tell their best buddy that they love him. Wouldn't

hug him after not seeing him for months. Wouldn't let any element of fear, sympathy, shame or sorrow leak out from behind their veneer of manhood.

Psychologists have said that we all have latent homosexual desires. That's a myth at best. Although, perhaps we all may have the capacity to feel deeply for members of the same sex. Whether that transfers to sexual contact involves another emotion.

Actually, men loving men and women loving women are not such far-fetched human conditions.

Yet, I revert back to my innate form of homosexual Jim Crowism when I think of myself and sex with a man.

The thought repulses me. But, it's OK for other men to engage in an act that I can never condone for myself. No one ever said understanding and acceptance were all-encompassing.

After looking over what I wrote here, it all sounds like a roundabout way of saying the flippant remark of awareness, "Yeah! One of my best friends is gay..."

That's not the case. I just find no harm in people living the way they want — without imposing their lifestyle and beliefs on others.

Now that I've grown up mentally, I'm comforted with a kind of weightless feeling because I know it's OK for men to hurt. It's OK for men to cry and to experience heartache. It's OK for men to love each other, within all of our own individual limits.

And as a black man who learned to cherish a friendship with a gay man, I've learned that as long as the sun shines, no matter who you are or what you do, someone, somewhere is going to berate you or judge you, like we did Sammy K as kids.

It's bound to happen if you're a model citizen, a gangster, a black man or a homosexual.

So maybe it's better to be open about who we are, always remembering that we were never meant to be anything or anyone else.

Moss is a graduate student studying anthropology and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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ALAN PHELPS

Directory is a hit, despite errors

W heeeeeeeeeeeeeee! The new student directories are out!

Oh, Happy Day! A tear of joy just trickled down my trembling cheek and fell onto my keyboard. "Ker-splash," it said.

The first day I get a new Student Directory, I love curling up under a sunbeam and reading every page, from start to finish. It's one of those books you just can't put down.

One of the first things anyone does when they get a new phone book is look up their own name. Mine says "Alan Phelps, 2912 Everett, 477-7896." Of course, that was last year. But then, that's just one of the little things you've got to love about the directory. A year ago, I was listed as living in Cather 615, when in fact I lived on Everett. That's so cool. Bam.

I called my directory number and asked for myself, but the woman who answered my call had no idea where Alan was. She said I had called some "company" on "Line 2." She hung up on me when I was trying to figure out how to spell the name of her company, so I'm not sure exactly who she was.

Since the phone was out, I thought I might just stop and see myself on Everett Street. It is kind of rude to drop by without calling first, but the lady answering Line 2 at The Company sounded a little mad at me, and I didn't want to call her back. Besides, she might have traced my call and sent the Delta Force after me.

So I drove down to Everett. Alan has a large branch down in his yard, a yard that could stand to be mowed, by the way. I knocked for a while, but no one answered. It was somewhat dis-

appointing. Joel, Alan's roommate who also lives on Everett Street according to the directory, must have been elsewhere.

The Student Directory is still a trove of information, even though we can't locate Alan Phelps. His parents' address and phone number are in there for some reason, and we can also see Alan is a "KZ 3." The "3" must mean Alan is a junior, and the "KZ," we might presume, is an indication of Alan's major.

"KZ" is an odd combination of letters. But a little explanation at the beginning of the book lets us know that "KZ" stands for, of course, journalism. All of the other abbreviations make sense, except for "R," which means architecture. That is understandable, because "A" was already used for agriculture. "J" was used up on undeclared, even though the letter "U" stands for nothing.

In the directory, there is a number for Student Directory Information. But they didn't know much there. The guy I talked to had "no idea" where the "KZ" came from. He said that his office didn't publish the directory, and he encouraged me to call some other number during business hours. But I hate being pushed around.

That's one of the problems with America today. Everyone is looking to pass the buck. Oh, I'm sure Student Directory Information had Nothing Whatsoever to do with that messed-up book. They're just a bunch of angels down there — never make a mistake at Student Directory Information! Perfect Record! It must have been someone else's fault entirely, I'm so sure.

That just makes me SICK.

The guy at Student Directory Information also didn't know exactly where the photographer who shot the

new front cover stood when he took the now-famous picture.

"I haven't even seen the new directory yet," he said. What kind of Student Directory Information is this? People are sitting around at Student Directory Information without Student Directories. I would hope that this problem will soon be rectified.

The cover shot is quite clever, I have to admit. We are treated to a view of a dorm phone sitting forlornly next to a window overlooking campus. The phone is perhaps waiting for the new directory to come out so someone will call.

I hope that number was included in the new directory.

From the angle of the view, it seems to me this picture must have been taken from Pound Hall, probably from one of the top floors. As last year's Student Directory points out, I once lived in Cather, but I was on the wrong side of the building to see campus. I could look out and watch my car get dusty in the parking lot.

Some of the best parts of the directory are the filler ads in the yellow pages. "Tough decision? Remember the Yellow Pages!" one says. "Be a smash hit! Use the Yellow Pages!" cries another.


My favorite is on page 31 and page 37: "Need a nightlife?" asks a vampire. "Try the Yellow Pages!" I doubt anyone actually peruses the yellow pages in search of a nightlife. But perhaps we should. That is, evidently, what vampires do.

Maybe if we all would just use the Student Directory a little more, our lives would perk right up. We could be Smash Hits. Of course, it would be a bit confusing looking for our friends at all the places they used to live.

Phelps is a junior news-editorial major, the Daily Nebraskan wire editor and a columnist.

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