

"Ex-Gay Is Ok"

By Linda Wall

The author of this personal testimony lobbies state and federal legislators from an ex-gay point of view. She aspires to a political career in the Virginia State Senate.

Recently I participated in the first Annual Ex-gay Lobby Day on Capitol Hill and it felt great! I am so very thankful that I no longer live as a lesbian. I feel like a bird set free from a cage. It's great to be alive!

My adventure into the gay scene started with fun and excitement. But years later, it had fundamentally changed me—spiraling me downward into a depression that nearly cost me my life.

How neat it was when I visited my first gay bar and saw a real live "drag show." It seemed that at last, I was truly "finding myself" and "just being me." But in time, that joy left, and my life began to play out like a soap opera. During those long years living on an emotional roller coaster, my personality gradually changed from that of a caring and ethical individual into a hard-hearted, self-centered woman that I didn't like at all. When I looked into the mirror, I'd become someone I didn't even recognize.

I also hated the double life that being a lesbian led me to live—because in my heart, I knew something was wrong with the way I was living. To keep it hidden, I always had to look over my shoulder hoping no one saw me entering or exiting a gay bar.

One night as I sat and watched lesbian couples dancing and socializing in the bar, I pondered over a particular irony of lesbian life: Here were women who didn't like men, acting just like them! Gradually, I began to question what I was seeing. There was something unnatural about this lifestyle, something fundamentally distorted. In a few fleeting thoughts I wondered about the Bible that I had always trusted as my guide—it never seemed to mention people of the same sex having sex.

Even though I continued to feel my lesbian lifestyle was wrong, I always managed to find some way to justify my behavior. Yet that persistent sense continued to eat away at me on the inside. It haunted me so much that I stopped frequenting the bars.

Today, it is my desire that by sharing my journey, others can have the courage to choose to change and discover their purpose in life.



Linda Wall

Some who choose change go the biblical counseling route for help, while others participate in secular reparative therapy or live-in programs. For me, the way out was spiritual. I had been raised in a Southern Baptist family with a deacon dad, Sunday school-teaching mom and preacher brother. So when I was at the end of my rope, I knew it was the Lord that I needed.

Often I have wondered, "What made this Christian girl depart from the straight and narrow path?" I was minding my own heterosexual college co-ed life when an older woman seduced me. But why didn't I say "no" to her advances?

Today I realize more than ever the importance of sharing my exit from that lifestyle so that others—particularly young people—know that people can change; there is a choice! I am troubled by the plan of some people to mold schoolchildren's values and worldview so they learn to "celebrate" their sexual confusion as "who they really are." In fact, I am actively working to prevent that from happening.

There has been no scientific evidence to prove that homosexuality or lesbianism is part of our human design, and the fallacy of the "gay gene" theory has been revealed. We must conclude that all of us are designed to be heterosexual, but that something happens in those early formative years in the child that sets the stage for alternative sexual behavior.

I have looked back into my past for an answer as to why I personally was open to lesbianism, and I think it lies primarily with a problematic relationship with mom. Early on, I decided I didn't want to be like she was. As far back as I can remember, my mom was always dealing with some medical ailment or worried about anything she could find to worry about. She seemed weak to me and preoccupied with problems. Mom's anxious nature created an atmosphere in the family from which I wanted freedom.

Sadly, we never developed that special mother-daughter bond. Mom went back to work shortly after I was born and my grandmother and neighbors took care of me until I entered school. Any time I was involved in a school event, my mom would always have to work and couldn't attend. In my recollection, at no time in my life did she compliment me on anything I did. Nothing I did, it seemed, was good enough.

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I was able to find refuge from my mom's negative world by retreating to my room or exploring the world of outdoors. But she always discouraged my adventuresome personality by constantly working at making me more girlish with hair permanents, fancy dresses and matching hats. Her plan for me just never appealed to me regardless of how much she tried!

Life with my dad, on the other hand, was of a very different nature. He was always my close pal—"Pop" to me. We fished, worked on the car together and occasionally hung out at the local service station. I always wanted to be with him rather than with Mom. We could sit together all day and watch Westerns or ball games on TV. He was light-hearted and fun—a practical joker who always succeeded in making me laugh.

Because I grew up outdoors, I became more attracted to what the neighborhood boys were doing—building forts, shooting marbles and playing ball. The neighborhood girls bored me with their doll babies and wanting to "play mommies and daddies." I seemed to be different; I preferred to be alone and withdraw into the world of adventure shows, like *Charlie's Angels*, the *Bionic Woman*, or the *Man from U.N.C.L.E.* There were even times when I was an upset with God. Why, I wondered, hadn't He just made me a boy?

When it came time for the "mother-daughter" talk about the birds and the bees, my mother skipped the talk and instead, handed me a book to read. Afterwards, she explained that good girls did not have sex outside of marriage and that I should save myself for my husband. That lesson must have made a very deep impression on me, because I developed a strong fear of pregnancy. I even had a dream that I was pregnant even though I had never had sex, but that no one would believe me. This always made me keep my distance from guys.

After I entered college, my interest in dating guys dwindled. The dates always ended up in a hassle, with the guy wanting sex and me having to say no. I simply decided the hassle wasn't worth it and put my energies into my studies.

My first encounter with same-sex attraction came the summer of my sophomore year. I was the lifeguard and manager of a private swim club. An older married woman at the club began paying me special attention by bringing my lunch to the pool. Eventually she began inviting me over for dinner whenever her husband was out-of-town on business.

One night after dinner as we sat across from each other playing cards she began to caress my leg with her foot. I was shocked that this had a "turn on" effect upon me. Needless to say, that night I went home with a multitude of questions running through my head.

The summer came to an end shortly after that, and nothing developed beyond playing "footsies" under the table until the day I stopped by to say goodbye on my way back to college. She lured me into her bedroom with conversation and embraced me with a very long, passionate kiss. I was so amazed that I kissed her back. I had no idea that I had lesbian tendencies. She apologized and asked me to forget that anything had ever happened. Almost immediately I left the house and drove back to campus. But the kiss continued to haunt me.

The following summer I worked at one of the local manufacturing plants. I was seeing one of the guys on second shift and to contemplating "going all of the way" with him. This was abruptly interrupted when I was informed by a lady on my shift that not only was "J" married, but he had a mistress, too, and they had a child together!

I was so heartbroken at this deception that I vowed out loud that I was through with men. I made a commitment: never, ever again would I allow a guy to steal my heart as "J" had.

In a short span of time, Carol—the very woman who had revealed "J"'s double life to me—began the same type of flirting as the woman I had met at the pool the previous summer. This time, I decided I was going to flirt back and see what would happen.

This was an adventure down an unknown road. At least, it couldn't get me pregnant! I Liked the fact that I could be the one in control of a relationship. I decided that when the chance came, I would follow as far as Carol would take me on this journey of experimentation.

It wasn't long before the moment arrived. Carol's husband went on a hunting trip out of town and I was invited over for the weekend. When I walked in the back door and saw a glass of wine sitting on the table I knew this was the night. I sat down and drank it without hesitation. We then journeyed upstairs, smoked a joint and she seduced me. That night turned into a six-year love affair.

Even though it was the most emotionally fulfilling relationship I had experienced up until that time, I still knew on some level that it was wrong. I hated the double life that it forced us to live. Our secret plans were to move to California when Carol's kids graduated from high school, but this came to a screeching halt when we discovered that she had terminal cancer.

As the cancer ate away at Carol, I, too died a little each day. I did not know if I could make it in life without her. What had started out as an adventure for fun, was now killing me because I had become so co-dependent upon her and had intertwined my entire being into the relationship.

After she died, I moved away to the beach in order to

escape the memories and start again. Eventually, I became a part of the lesbian bar scene and went on the roller coaster ride of the "gay life." Relationships came. Relationships went. It was always the same: "the joys lasted but for a season."

In time I became more and more self-centered and I began to do whatever I wanted to do, with no regard for anyone else. I engaged in many activities that I knew were wrong—I won't describe them all here, but I knew they were wrong and I just didn't care. My entire character changed while I was caught up in the lifestyle. I was picking people up for sex, and sometimes engaged in a "three-some."

Some days, I'd look in the mirror and wonder, "Where has Linda gone?" I did not like who I had become, and finally I wanted a way out. What had begun ten years ago as an adventure to fulfill a curiosity was now on a collision course with death. Dark thoughts of suicide began to plague me.

I know that as you read what's next, because you may not be a person of religious faith, perhaps you cannot relate to this part of my story. It is certainly one of those experiences that is difficult to believe; unless, of course, it happened to you. But since it is an integral part of my exit from lesbianism I cannot exclude it from my story.

During the time when I was sick at heart about the gay scene—the discos and the gay bars—deep inside, I knew something was missing. Before I'd go out to the bars I'd look in the mirror and ask myself why I was going. I didn't like it any more, but I kept going back.

Then one day as I walked along the waterfront, I heard "voices" telling me why I should end my life.

But yet another "voice" told me that I just couldn't do that to my mom and dad. I did love them too much to leave them to have to deal with my suicide. Yet I was so very tired that knew I could not continue the path I was on. Out loud, I cried, "I'm tired, Lord, I'm tired!"

Then I seemed to hear a different voice whispering, "Go to church!" I took a step forward and the voice repeated itself. "Go to church..." I looked up in the sky and it was as though a giant screen appeared and I watched my life on a flip chart going in reverse, back to that day, ten years earlier, when my parents had left me off at college. On that day I had said, "Good! Now I'll do what I want to do now and I'll go to church when I want to go to church."

As I saw my past before me, it was then that I realized that it was that lack of relationship with the Lord that was missing in my inner most being. So on the following Sunday, I did what the voice had suggested and I *went to church*. Slowly, my life began to change dramatically. Today, I feel ready for a commitment to marriage.

Advice for Youth Questioning their Sexual Identity

What about you? Perhaps you cannot walk down that road of faith in God as I did, yet you are questioning your sexual identity. If so, I encourage you to seek answers from other directions. There are many resources available, and I can suggest a few choices; drop me a line at P.O. Box 2292 Yorktown, Virginia 23692.

Remember, there is no gay gene, nor any biological evidence to indicate that people are born homosexual. On a purely practical level, science and biology tell us how damaging homosexual behavior is to one's health. And the very *design of our bodies* teaches us that we were not made for men to have sex with men, and women with women. The three great religions of the world—through the Bible, sacred tradition, the Koran, and the Talmud—have all taught, for centuries, that same-sex sex is wrong. So, what is really right about it???

There is an old saying, "Seek, and ye shall find." Reach way down on the inside and look for those circumstances in your childhood that could be the root of your same-sex attraction; determine the best route out for you, and then, go for it. ■

NARTH Annual Conference

To Be Held November 7, 8 and 9

The NARTH annual conference will be held on November 7, 8 and 9 in Salt Lake City, Utah. Our speaker's roster is nearly complete, but there is still availability for one or two more speakers or workshops. Please email Joan MacKenzie at narth3@earthlink.net with last-minute proposals.