

At long last recognition and room to grow for UB Gay Lib

by Michael DeGraw
Spectrum Staff Writer

Sporting the long-desired minority status by the Student Association (SA), UB's Gay Liberation Front is working this year with an increased budget, and recently acquired office space in Squire Hall.

Deemed a "special interest group," the Front fought last year to attain minority classification by SA. At first rejected, partly due to objections by some members of the Black Student Union (BSU), the proposal was passed last February. The reason for the change, according to Front President Quenton Robinson, stems from the negative connotation of "special interest group." He maintained the term "special" implied something not normal.

So to change its public image, the GLF applied for minority status. SA President Joel Mayersohn explained that in order for an organization to be awarded that classification, SA must consider the group to be "oppressed," and devoted to changing the "unjust" labels society may have placed on it.

As hard as it was for the Front to be recognized under the minority status, Robinson said his group is finding it equally difficult to retain it. Members from BSU have often voiced their opposition against gays having minority status, he said. The BSU refused comment on the matter.

The Front—formerly headquartered in Townsend Hall—requested office space in Squire Hall to increase its accessibility to members. Squire House Council,



—David V. Swan

THEY'RE HERE: The UB: Gay Liberation Front, formerly known as a "special interest group," has now been granted minority status by the Student Association. The front now has a new headquarters in Squire Hall as well. Above, Front president Quenton Robinson and Front Treasurer and SA Senator Mark Foxenburg plan ways to better the position of gays in society.

responsible for allocating space in the building, had no quorum at its Oct. 10 meeting and could not vote on the proposal. Last week, Council members unanimously voted to grant the space.

This year, the Front's budget was increased from \$300 to \$850. The money, Robinson noted, is used to run a coffee house every Friday night at 107 Townsend Hall and to fund a publication entitled, *Gay Images*, containing articles written by members of the Front, the National Gay Task Force, and the Gay Active Alliance. *Gay Images* is put out twice a year.

Robinson noted that the Front constantly finds it necessary to battle against gay discrimination. Most recent areas of discrimination they pointed to are an area restaurant and the *Buffalo Evening News*.

The restaurant, Towne Hots, located at Allen and Elmwood, has allegedly been censoring its public bulletin board by removing gay-related materials, according to the Buffalo Area Lesbian/Gay Rights March Coalition. Signs pertaining to the October 14 National Gay March on Washington were removed, the group claimed, while non-gay leaflets and announcements have been allowed to remain.

The *Buffalo Evening News*, Robinson complained, also censored Gay Liberation Front material. An advertisement originally read: "Gay youth meeting," but the words "gay youth" were deemed improper. Instead, the advertisement read: "Mattachine peer group meeting," a term referring to gay youths which Robinson claimed only a few people understood.

Robinson, along with 50,000 gays, attended the Gay Rights March in Washington on October 14.

Gays actively against society's bad attitudes

by Rosemary Warner
Spectrum Staff Writer

The UB branch of the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) is actively trying to overcome many of the problems confronting gays across the country.

"The greatest problem adjusting to a homosexual lifestyle is negative heterosexual attitudes", said GLF treasurer and SA Senator Mark Foxenburg. "These attitudes, outwardly expressed, cause hassles never imagined by the 'straight' population.

GLF President Quenton Robinson recounted his days in the Air Force, where he said word of his sexual preference spread within a year. "I was intimidated by the commanding officer, who constantly referred to me as 'sweety'," he said. "After that I was given the 'pit job' of recruiter." Robinson said that taking a dishonorable discharge, as a method of avoiding the antagonism, would have cut veteran benefits and provided future employment difficulties. "I made the only possible move; I took their prejudice and used it against them." He said his only defense was to threaten to tell higher authorities that the officers had put him—a homosexual—in recruitment. As a result, Robinson said he was immediately transferred to another outfit.

Robinson recalled his high school days when his peers were engaged in dating and discovering their sexual identities. "Being gay in high school is not an easy thing. Everybody is into becoming the perfect model of society. To come out of the closet in these times would have been unspeakably painstaking," he said.

Many gays maintain that they are inclined to seclude themselves from social events and many times forced to act out a double role so as not to be "discovered." One woman who did not wish to be identified, said, "It is rough enough finding oneself, but when there are two personalities involved, things get all the more complicated.

Terrifying terms

"Remember when all your girlfriends were talking about the problems they were having with their boyfriends? It is kind of awkward to ask what one should about a difficult situation with a lover."

She added, "When I was with my lover in public, so many times I would want to give her a hug or kiss on the cheek but felt socially stifled, so I forced myself to hold my affections in."

One of the biggest fears gays face relates to the negative image society tacks onto the term "homosexual." "I was so afraid of being a flasher, a child molester or a man with a lispy voice," recalled Foxenburg. He said his own admittance of his sexual attitudes—cognizant of the stereotypes—was delayed. The adjectives attached to "gay" he called "terrifying," explaining that the picture built up in his mind only added fear to frustration.

"After my first homosexual experience I never became that which I had feared and realized all the more, how powerfully manipulating society's pressures can be," he said. Another difficult social pressure cited by many gays is looking for a place to live—comfortably. It is important to live in an atmosphere where housemates or roommates feel at ease with each other's way of life.