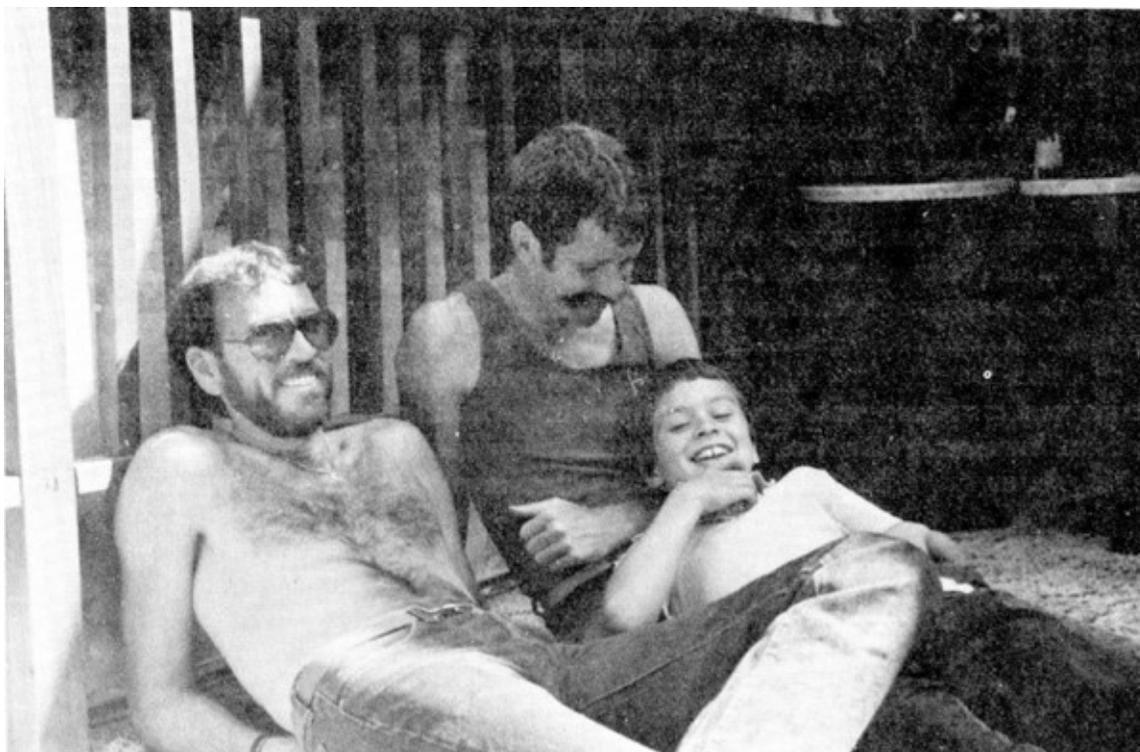


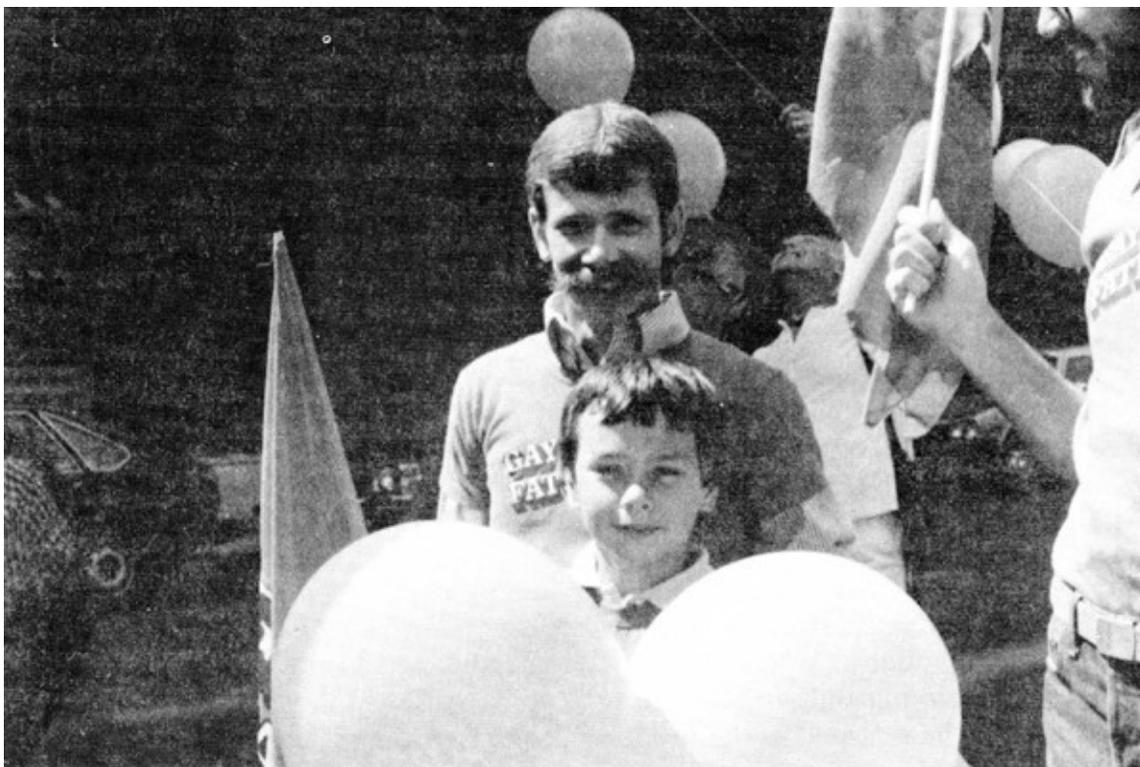
V. THE FUTURE

A cartoon from *Christopher Street* shows a smiling woman seated in her living room and shouting into the phone: "Hello, Benny. It's your mother. I only have a minute. Get married and have children. Goodbye." Many of us will remember a little sadly scenes like this from our past. They are funny, but only in retrospect.

Will such scenes be repeated in the future as they have been so many times in the past? Will Benny do what his mother, family and society at large want him to do? Answers to these questions lie in the future. Many people will be required to give them.

This book is not finished, but it will end here nevertheless. But our lives will go on and so will our stories. In writing the book, we have come to see ourselves more clearly. We hope it has also given those who read it a better view of themselves and of their lives. What will they do now? It is time perhaps for them to assess their lives and decide again how they are going to live. It is for them, therefore — or rather it is for them and us to finish the book in reality, not just in words. When all of us have collected enough new reality, then perhaps we will write another book and a better on





AFTERWORD

Some people have read this book and asked: "Why have you made it so much of a downer?" If it is depressing, we can only say that we did not set out to make it so. Instead we worked from the assumption that the best release from pain and guilt comes from working directly at what causes them. The next book — whenever it is written — will no doubt have more to say about the joys of being gay and being fathers. It will dwell less on the pains and more on the joys. Although life is not just a cabaret, my friend, we are as prepared to laugh at it as the next person. If you have not seen the smiles behind some of the scenes we wrote about, we would like to assure you that they are there peeking out like cupid from behind a dark cloud. If you missed the smiles perhaps you should go back and read some of the scenes again. We have avoided the error of saying that everything in the gay father's world is rosy, but it is not all dark either, if you have a taste for irony.

Take the following conversation as an example. Achilles and the Tortoise are sometime lovers and members of Gay Fathers of Toronto. Their conversation proceeds by indirection and progress is made in between the lines.

Achilles: Can you let me have two valium?
Tortoise: Sure. Don't you have any?
Achilles: No.
Tortoise: Why not?
Achilles: I don't want them around. I've given them up.
Tortoise: You should keep some on hand in case of an emergency.
Achilles: My life is an emergency. And so it goes.

This conversation — and indeed, our whole book — can be read either as tragic or comic. We prefer to read it as neither tragic nor comic, but as the hyphen in tragi-comic. So we say, "What the hell, let's get on with it. Somebody has to try keeping the world together and we are prepared to do our bit." This book is just a tiny bit of the world. If you think of it as too heavy sometimes and too frivolous at others, just think about the hyphen.

So here we are at the end, thinking of all the things that we *didn't* say. We haven't said what to do if you feel lonely, although you will find some suggestions written in the following appendixes. We haven't said what to do either if you would like to have more sex than you are getting. Whether you decide to give it up or to spend your life looking at it, there are undoubtedly better manuals around to help you with such matters than anything we could write. And you have probably found them already in any case. If you have just separated, you are surely aware of the silence that has suddenly surged softly around you and into you. You will either get used to it or find someone else to fill it. In either case, there is not much we can do about it.

Every now and then a voice on the phone asks: "Yes, but what do you *do* at your meetings?" Most of these calls we assume come from the police playing their usual entrapment games, but to all of them we say: "Well, we talk and eat, and talk, and drink a little, and talk some more." What more is there to say or do?

There is little reason why books should begin at the beginning and end at the end, if in fact they are talking about things with no real beginning and no visible end. They are like explanations concocted after the fact to justify things that have already happened and that are still happening. That is the case with our book.

In writing it we are looking back. We have been writing it in bits and pieces, starts and stops, for over two years. Although it is not done, we are going to publish it anyway. Because we can see the past more clearly than the future, it says more about the past than it does about the present or the future.

There are some of us who worry about the book. Should it be made better before we publish it? Is it too negative, too full of pain? Will it serve to depress and discourage the gay father who stands at a turning point in his life simply because it can give no firm and clear sense of what lies ahead?

Perhaps. It all depends on how willing that father is to look at himself and to change — ever if that change is totally inward and apparent only to himself.

We have already said that the book is our work; it contains our lives as far as we have lived them, our experience. Despite the obvious differences in their outward circumstances, everyone fashions their own lives. This book is a testament to how we remade ours. Don't let anyone tell you it is easy to remake a life, but it can be done and ultimately the joy of doing so outweighs the pain.

This is our only answer to those who read the manuscript and asked why it dwells so much on personal difficulties and stress. These facets of the gay father's life do exist and, looking back on them now, we simply do not wish to deny them. The joy was there too, but it lies closer to us in time. It lies in the here-and-now and we believe it will continue to grow in the future. So this work is as it is because it is more about the past than it is about the here-and-now or the yet-to-be.

If you have flipped over pages from the front of the book to see how it all comes out, we don't blame you. Or if you have read through most of it, we will say for the last of many times *you are not alone*. In the end, the story comes out well if you want it to. The future is good if you want to make it so. It is up to you. Write the future as you will.