

## From the Editor

I don't have very many fond memories of the '80s, I was living my own nightmareish version of the "awkward high school years." Let me tell you, dressing up like your idols, Duran Duran, in a redneck town, population 1,500, doesn't make you a lot of friends; it does get you labeled a freak and beat up a lot though.

All I could think about was getting out of there, leaving those cretins behind and finally hitting the big city and hanging with the cool kids. After graduating, I headed straight for the Big Smoke and never looked back.

I'd always been open-minded and forward thinking, with a live and let live attitude, but discovering there were not only gay people in Toronto, but an entire village filled with them, sprawling over three square blocks, was fantastically overwhelming! So you can well imagine my first trip to Colby's, which by the time I darkened its doors in the early '90s, was the Sodom and Gomorrah of the promised land. I loved it!

I was a poor struggling student, dreaming of being an actor—yeah, that poor—but I went to Colby's every night of the week trying to soak up all the gayness I'd been missing all my life. Weeknights I had enough money for two beer, which I nursed from the time I arrived, until last call. Weekends I splurged on four, sometimes five beer throughout the night.

A lot of firsts happened in that bar. It was the first time I'd seen guys dancing, never mind with each other. I'll never forget

the first time I discovered the unbelievably studly strippers upstairs. And seeing my first drag queen ever—Michelle Ross—perform, took my breath away! When I wasn't on the dance floor, I always stood on the same step leading up to the top bar, the perfect vantage point for me to watch this gay life swirl by and for me to stare dreamily at my first impossible crush: Calvin, with the long, curly red hair. I thought he was absolutely dreamy!

The more I went and the better I got to know people in my, at the time, shy way, the more I slowly learned the amazing history of this remarkable place, fondly referred to as the Gaybourhood. How it had been forged by not one, but two major crises—the bath house raids of '81 and the soon to follow AIDS epidemic. I learned how this community became their own support and didn't collapse under these tests, but flourished instead.

Toronto became my home the moment I found my people, my community, so I'm thrilled to be raising a glass of pink champagne to the 20th anniversary of one of the pillars of our community, The Pink Pages Directory (and you too Woody's!).

We cover a lot of ground in this issue, so I'll leave you to discover it.

Have a wonderful summer and we'll see you in the fall,

*Jeff Harrison*

