

EXCERPTS FROM: SIX DEGREES OF SISTERHOOD

PROFILE OF BILL AITCHISON (NUMBER ONE)

by Lee MacDougall

On the morning Bill Aitchison was on his way to his Income Tax Bar exam, a large blond dog appeared on the highway ahead of him. "I swerved and tried to miss him, but he was determined." Bill made the long walk up to the farm house, and knocked on the door. A woman answered. "I'm very sorry, but I think I just hit your dog." he said. "That's not possible," she replied, "Peepee doesn't go outside." He stifled the laugh. "I'm afraid he did." Again she countered, "He couldn't have, Peepee's in the house." Beginning to lose his patience, Bill tried again. "Is Peepee a big, blond poodle?" She said yes. He pointed to the highway. "Is that not Peepee?" The door closed. The husband emerged. Bill arrived at his exam, shaking, and announced to the entire class: "I just killed Peepee!"

Bill was born in 1956, the younger of two boys, in Dundalk, Ontario, in the "middle of nowhere", as he puts it. His father played drums in a dance band, (he still does) and has played the banjo all his life. At seven, Bill started taking piano lessons. He had tried hockey the year before, but hated it. "My father played in a group called the Stardusters, and they used to practise at our house. They had a great pianist - he really inspired me. I took that Conservatory shit - but I kept inheriting music books. I could sight-read anything."

When Bill was eight he made his television debut - square dancing. His group - the High Point Promenaders - were chosen to be on a local show called Circle Eight Ranch. "I danced with my cousin Shirley Gillies - we were partners until grade eight. We were good. We were on Circle Eight twice."

By the time Bill went to high school in Flesherton, he was playing with his Dad in dance bands, and playing the organ - self-taught - with a church choir. A guidance counsellor cornered him one day and said I should be in musicals. "She knew I was a hambone. So there I was, playing Henry in Finian's Rainbow in grade nine. I loved it. I did it every year. As part of the Drama Club, we got tickets to see plays in Toronto. This was the '70's, when theatre was just taking off in the city. That's when I got the bug." "I wanted to be an actor, but I think it got mixed up with being closeted. Growing up in a rural community - I had no way to express anything - no role models. I had to get out of there."

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EXCERPTS FROM SIX DEGREES OF SISTERHOOD

PROFILE OF DAVID HOE (#2)

by Lee MacDougall.

At thirteen, David Hoe was surprised one day in a history class. A boy put his hand down David's pants, and gave him a new appreciation of the history of male interaction. This began what he calls his "sex during class" period. He didn't pass many exams.

Born in 1943, in the dirty, industrial city of Derby in the heart of England, David was raised by a hard, factory-working father, and a London-born mother who had aspirations for the better things in life. Wary of the strict class society of Britain, his mother drilled David and his younger brother on the proper way to speak, trying to eliminate their working-class accents. With a distant father, and an early sense of being "different", David developed a keen fantasy life, and a private delinquency that involved petty theft.

When he was fourteen, David began to volunteer with the local youth club for diabetics. "Not because of any affiliation to the disease - I was the only one who owned a record player." Forced by his father to leave school at sixteen, "You've failed at that", he worked for a while at a local factory, but when he landed a job at a local psychiatric hospital, he met a few Community Psychiatric Social Workers, and knew that was what he wanted to be.

Sex during these years consisted of dutiful gropings with a girlfriend, or frantic gay couplings in public toilets, or "the cottages" as they were known. This was the early 1960's, when homosexuality was still classified as a mental disease. One of David's first clients at the psych hospital was a beautiful young man named Paul, who was preparing for surgery for gender reassignment. In those days, the process involved a year's stay in a psychiatric hospital. This was a miserable time in David's life; he was caught one night having sex with a man, roughly interrogated by the Derby police, told he was mentally ill, and ordered to report to a psychiatrist he worked with. He didn't see the doctor, but did attempt suicide.

At twenty-one he moved to Oxford to begin his social work training. Shunned by the upper-class Oxford types because of his Derby accent, David studied here and in Bristol for five years, then applied for every social work position he came across (including one in Montreal). And he began to make gay friends. One day one of these dandies announced that he was moving to Brighton; the ocean-side resort town that had been the sexual playground of London society for decades, and was now known as the Gay Mecca of Britain. On a whim, David followed his friend to Brighton. "To paradise," as he puts it.

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PROFILE OF SEQUOIA LUNDY (#3)

by Lee MacDougall

In 1969, somewhere over South Vietnam, a young man named Thom was flying reconnaissance missions with the U.S. Air Force. He was six foot one, 175 lbs., had a level three security clearance, and appeared about as straight as a man could be. On his R&R weeks off he was flying to Australia, where he was having sex with a man named Mike.

Sequoia keeps himself in excellent shape. He jogs, swims, and goes hiking in the nearby mountains. He lives in Vancouver, in the Kitsilano area, has a private massage practice, teaches yoga, and leads mens' retreats called Light Touch for Loving Men.

Thom and Sequoia are the same person.

Sequoia Thom was born in Brooklyn, New York. The only son of parents who worked for the phone company, his was a strict Catholic upbringing. Taught by nuns at St. Angela's Hall, and Christian Brothers at Bishop Loughlin High School, he had a keen understanding of discipline and repression.

During his boyhood summers, Thom visited an aunt who owned a cottage in the Thousand Islands area, at the eastern end of Lake Ontario. "I loved it up there - the clean air, the water, the sense of space; I bought a little motor boat, and used to ride up to Canada." This was Thom's first of many visits to our fair country. He loved the civility of the people, and the beauty of the countryside. Because Thom was spending every summer by the water, his mother was concerned that he learn to swim. She signed him up for lessons in Brooklyn Heights at the St. George Hotel. "I walked into the showers, and there were men having sex. My mother had unknowingly introduced me to something wonderful. I came there for years." Thom's father also had a hand in his sexual development. One day in Manhattan, waiting for someone in Grand Central Station, his father had to use the men's room. Thom accompanied him. "There were long rows of urinals, and I could tell immediately that a lot of the men were helping each other out. My heart was pounding." Thom returned to Grand Central until he finished university.

It was fully expected that Thom would finish his degree at Fordham University (run by Jesuits), and go directly to Vietnam. Unsure of his feelings about fighting, Thom applied to the officer's training program, ROTC, where he learned to fly, and rose to the rank of Captain. Stationed in Phoenix in 1967, Thom flew the new supersonic jets, and was, to all concerned, full of the "right stuff". While training in Alaska, he went to a movie, and met a student named Jim. This was to be his first relationship...

To read more of these or any of the other Profiles in the Six Degrees of Sisterhood series, please contact the author at Leeword@rogers.com.