

# BAGMAL NEWSLETTER

August 1987

## CALENDAR

compiled by Andrew Li

**Sunday 2 Aug 1 p.m.** Potluck and Discussion Meeting. Topic: Relationships. At Tony Shum's 62 Boylston St, Apt M6 Boston (diagonally opposite the Common), 542-8514. Asian members only.

**Saturday 22 Aug, 1 p.m.** Potluck barbecue. Bring your own food and toys (kites, frisbees) and a small grill if you have one. There is a grill at the park and the responsible persons (Jack Lo and Arthur Carbonel) will provide charcoal and disposable plates and cups. All members and friends welcome. It will be at Artesani Playground, on Soldiers' Field Road (Allston) opposite WBZ offices. Free parking is available.

By bus, take the 63 from Central Square, Cambridge down Western Ave. over the river into Allston, get off at the Stop and Shop on your right, walk down the street between the Stop and Shop and Stadium Auto-Body a block or two, and you're there!

**Tuesday 25 Aug, 7 p.m.** Business Meeting. At Andrew Li, 32 Lincoln Parkway, Apt 2, Somerville. 623-1129. Evaluation of August activities and planning of September activities.

**Sunday 6 Sep 1p.m.** Pot-luck and discussion meeting. Place and topic to be announced.

## EVENTS OF NOTE

compiled by S.H. Chua

The Museum of Fine Arts 465 Huntington Ave. Boston (Tel: 297-9300 ext. 306) is presenting a series of films from the Peoples' Republic of China called "New Chinese Films: The Revolution of Style". Films are shown every Friday July 10-Aug 14 at 7 p.m. Admission is \$3.50, \$3 for members, students and elders. The remaining films in the series are:

**July 24** "Sacrificed Youth" directed by Zhang Nuanxing (1984)

**July 31** "A Good Woman" directed by Huang Jianzhong (1986)

**Aug 7** "The Black Caravan Incident" by Huang Jianxin (1985)

**Aug 14** "On the Hunting Ground" by Tian Zhuang-zhuang (1986)

On **July 27, 28, 29** the Canton Opera Company from the Peoples' Republic will be performing at the New England Life Hall (225 Clarendon St. Boston). Shows are at 7:30 p.m.

Two **Chinese novels** with gay themes have recently arrived at Glad Day Bookshop, 43 Winter Street Boston (tel: 542-0144). They are both by author Li Bihua and published in Hong Kong. "Ba Wang Bie Ji" tells the story of a classical actor who specializes in portraying female characters and his love for a fellow actor. The other title "Qing She" translates as The Green Snake. Look for them in the Foreign Language Section.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Calendar	Page 1	News Notes	Page 4
Events of Note	Page 1	Editorial	Page 4
Conversation with Troy and Barry	Page 2	Pictures from Gay/Lesbian Pride '87	Page 5-6
Newsletter Distribution Policy	Page 3		

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BAGMAL is Boston Asian Gay Men and Lesbians c/o Glad Day Bookshop 43 Winter St. Boston MA 02108 (617)-542-0144

BAGMAL Newsletter August 1987 Page 1

*I have known Troy and Barry for almost the whole time they have been lovers and Troy even before that. This is an edited record of a free and informal exchange at my home on July 17. My questions have been left out so their voices can come across without interruption. I thank them for sharing their lives with our readers. SH*

**Family Backgrounds**

**Barry:** My father is a retired industrial manager in Central China. My mother is an accountant. My father is from a rural background but my mother grew up in the city and received a college education. They lived through the War with Japan and met after Liberation. During the Cultural Revolution they were persecuted and during this time I was brought up by my grandmother. I still have fond memories of her. I have three older sisters and one younger brother and a younger sister. My mother said that had there been birth control she would not have had the two youngest children.

**Troy:** My father works as a postal worker and my mother is a registered nurse. I grew up in Kansas City. Their parents probably moved to Kansas because it was a Free State and anti-slavery. Many blacks moved from Missouri across the river into Kansas to escape slavery.

**Education and Work**

**Barry:** I spent most of my life in China in school and in university and did not have contact with a broad range of people. I am now a student in Boston. I have been here for less than 2 years.

**Troy:** I have been in Boston for 3 years. After high school I attended various universities and community colleges and was in Utah for a while under a training program for mino-

rities. I then joined the Coast Guard for want of other options. I spent 4 years in the Coast Guard stationed in Portland, Oregon, Boston and San Francisco. I left the Coast Guard because of homophobia and I had problems with the authoritarianism of the institution. Boston was the last place I was stationed at.

**Coming out**

**Barry:** In university I was more interested and looked longer at cute men than women. I was not very clear about my feelings and I was not clear about the meaning of homosexuals or what they did. Troy was my first experience.

**Troy:** Since 12 or 13 I have been aware of gay feelings. Junior high school and the boys' locker rooms confirmed it. I had a lot of fantasies but no outlets. At 14 or 15 I was fooling around with neighborhood friends. When I was 16 I had a summer job in the Park Department and towards the end of summer I had my first sexual experience with a black man whom I worked with. He was 33 and quite concerned I would go out and talk about it. It was a one time thing - something I was looking for. I was looking for something to happen. It was a relief that it finally happened. He needn't have been afraid that I was going to tell.

**Attitudes towards homosexuality**

**Barry:** Among my friends I don't think they understand and they would laugh at it. Because my family was persecuted during the Cultural Revolution we did not have many friends. There were also many girls in my class in school so most of my friends were girls. I had a few girlfriends but I often lose interest in the relationship after a time. In China children of intellectuals do not have sex before marriage. But we

had true friendships not just based on sex. I had many male classmates. In our university 7 sleep in one room. I had a close friend - I did not consider sex with him but we did everything together - we go to class, we eat together. Friends sometimes make fun of us as homosexuals but I had no conception of homosexuality at that time. It is very common in school for men to spend a lot of time together. But we both had girlfriends. I never thought about sex with men at all.

**Troy:** Attitudes in our neighborhood were fairly typical American ones. The lowest of low was to be called a "faggot". I lived in a white middle-class neighborhood - we were one of the first black families to move in. There was hostile reception. Stereotypical - black family was going to bring down property values and the neighborhood. I was one of the few black kids in school - my best friend in school was Hispanic. Only in elementary school was there problems with race-baiting. It happened off and on. But in high school there were more blacks in the neighborhood, black teachers; demographics had changed. I felt self-conscious being black - it outweighed being gay at first. By the time I realized my gay feelings the main issue became homophobia. I had a lover in the Coast Guard in San Francisco - a black man. He was 22, I was 21. The military is strange. If you don't flaunt it they won't pursue it. I think they don't really want to know the extent of homosexuality in their midst.

**First Meeting**

**Barry:** It was in the Fenway, in the park in summer. I was sitting there enjoying the sun. Troy came up and started talking to me. I did not think it was strange. I was concerned with practising speaking English. Sometimes on the way to school I stop in

**BARRY & TROY** (contd from Pg 2)  
the park to sun myself. An older man who was sunbathing exposed himself to me once but I had not realized that that was a place where gay men met.

**Troy:** I was cruising in the Fenway and he looked like a potential "cruisee". He had tight white pants on.

**Barry:** They were too small. I brought them from China and I had gained weight.

**Troy:** I assumed naturally someone standing in the Fenway in tight pants was cruising.

**Barry:** I went home with him. It wasn't clear in my mind what will happen but I think I knew what would happen. He was very good for me. I don't know how to say this. It was the first time in my life someone takes care of me. It is a first time - when you get more than you expect. I did not want to spend the night but after one week I called him again. I had not given him my number.

**Troy:** I was waiting by the phone. I wanted him to call.

**Barry:** He seemed surprised that I called him.

**Troy:** I was sure that he wouldn't call.

**Barry:** I was looking for love. I did not think that it was wrong for two men to care for one another. I was concerned about AIDS. People falling in love is more important than sex. But sex will improve your relationship. I was not concerned about other peoples' reactions knowing that now I am gay. In America I

felt I could keep my privacy. After that I learnt more and more about gay life.

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#### **In a relationship**

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**Troy:** We have known each other for a year. We have just begun living together.

**Barry:** I was concerned whether it was better to spend more time with one another or less. My philosophy is that a relationship for life is important. That is why I try to face our problems when we argue so it does not get bigger. I apologise afterwards. He doesn't. Sometimes I take care of him more and sometimes he takes care of me more. He is concerned about my health, helps me manage my finances. I think he takes care of me more though.

**Troy:** That's because I am more familiar with the system.

**Barry:** Sometimes I feel I am more dependent on him but I feel he is helping me become stronger.

**Troy:** We do not have stereotypical active/passive relationships.

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#### **Cultural differences**

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**Troy:** Yes. There are. My favorite example is this. On day I was standing in line in a restaurant and the man behind me who is white cut in front and was served first at the counter. The man behind him - a black male - started shouting first at this man then at the counter person and then at me for not speaking up. On the same day Barry came home and was upset because he had shouted at a woman at school for screwing up his class schedule. Here I was upset at not being assertive and he was upset because he had been assertive.

Black culture is more aggressive. Everything we get in this country has had to be fought for. Asian culture is more calm. It's an older culture, it's been through more of the ups and downs of living as a culture and maybe they don't react and respond as immediately than those in a culture that has not existed for so long.

In general I think I tend to be more aggressive, more independent. It's an American thing - the Lone Ranger. Chinese I think tend to be more family-oriented.

**Barry:** Chinese family share everything - rather than just being a person, an individual. Sometimes I feel I demand too much from him. After I know him more I began to understand more. I look forward to knowing him more and more and balance cultural differences. Sometimes I agree with him to make him happy.

**Troy:** And that becomes a problem because I think he is giving in.

**Barry:** Our characters are different. I tend to want to do things more quickly. He tends to want to do things slowly considering all angles.

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#### **BAGMAL**

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**Barry:** I generally am concerned about not meeting people from the People's Republic as I am afraid of gossip but I would like to know other gay Asians and make friends.

**Troy:** I think it will be useful to understand Asian peoples' cultures. BAGMAL can help me meet Barry halfway. Right now I feel I am pushing him into being an American.

### **NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTION POLICY**

The BAGMAL Newsletter is distributed free for the first issue to all who contact BAGMAL and request a copy. Subsequent issues will require a subscription of \$5 per year sent to our Mailing Address. The newsletter is published monthly except in the summer where a bimonthly schedule may be in effect.

BAGMAL members and friends are encouraged to submit ideas, stories, poetry and letters to the Newsletter. Submissions that are not used will be returned if a stamped self-addressed envelope is enclosed. - Newsletter Staff

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## NEWS NOTES

## CANADIAN IMMIGRATION POLICY

(excerpted and translated by S.H. Chua)

The July 10 '87 edition of the Chinese newspaper World Daily News (Shi Jie Re Bao) reports that the Canadian Government has increased the number of immigrants it accepts for residency from 125,000 to 165,000 per year. At a forum in New York's Chinatown a representative of the Canadian Government encouraged prospective immigrants to apply to Canada. According to him all applicants who have either 1) relatives who are Canadian residents 2) professional degrees and skills, or 3) capital to invest in the country have a good chance of success.

Canadian immigration law does not impose quotas by countries. All applicants regardless of national origin are treated equally based on a point system. Points are assessed based on categories such as age, command of language, possession of special skills (30,000 types) and having relatives who are Canadian residents. The time between application and approval, varies according to where the application is filed. New York City has the shortest processing time which is 8 months on the average.

On receiving approval the applicant must undergo a medical checkup and a security check. Among approved applicants only convicted criminals and those with serious health problems are denied residency papers.

According to the representative there are many possible approaches to applying for Canadian immigration. As long as applications are handled correctly many have reason to hope for success. This applies especially to those who have little chance of immigrating legally into the United States. For them Canada remains a viable alternative.

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## EDITORIAL

by Andrew Li

One of the most exciting discussions I have been part of happened at Tony Shum's this month. About 10 of us, including several newcomers, had a lively conversation about almost everything. Even before we had finished eating, a couple of people began a spontaneous and general discussion about being gay and Asian. We touched briefly on our stated topic "Making Friends", but the flow of stories and experiences led us to other subjects - going to bars, race and physical attractiveness, friends and lovers, Asians and non-Asians, racism and homophobia, meeting people, families, monogamous relationships versus open ones. We didn't find answers to all the questions that we had, but it was exhilarating to learn that so many others had already asked the same questions.

This, I think, is the most basic and valuable function that BAGMAL can provide its members - the chance to know other gay Asians. We

probably all agree on the importance of coming out as gay people. By doing so we find affirmation of our sexual preference, of our lives, of our selves. We learn that we are not the only ones in the world who have thought our thoughts and lived with our problems. We are not alone or peculiar; in fact we are perfectly normal. There are lots of people like us, and this is a momentous thing to know.

But this is not the end of the story for those of us who are both gay and Asian. There is another dimension of our lives which is not affirmed by coming out in the larger (i.e. white) gay community. That is our Asianness. It sounds tautological but we Asians are different from the white majority precisely because we are Asian. To be specific, first, and more obviously, we differ physically. Second, and more importantly, we differ in our thinking and attitudes; we handle inter-personal relations differently. In short, we carry a different set of cultural baggage.

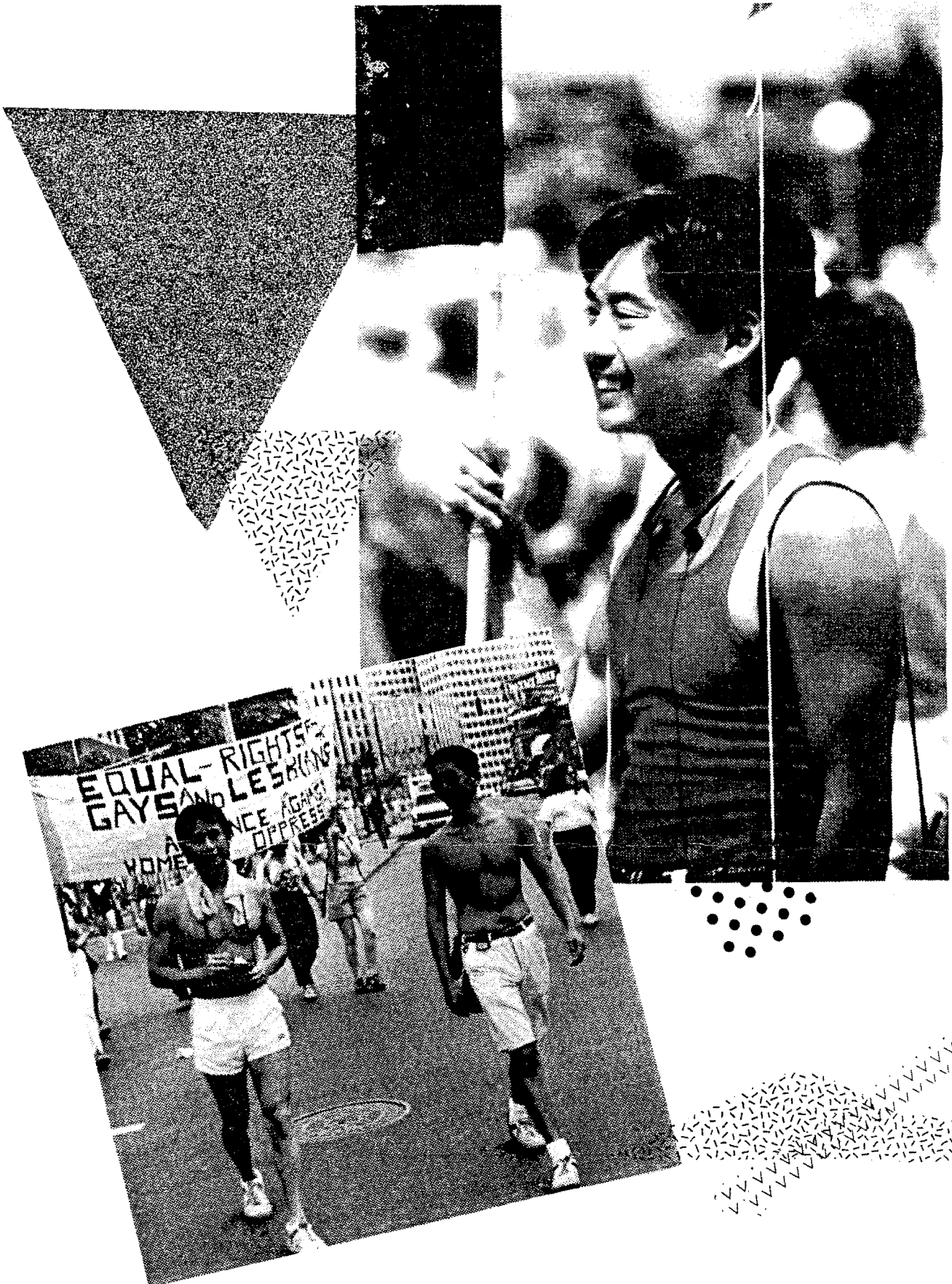
This subject of cultural baggage is an interesting but irrelevant one; my point is simple that we all need to know other gay Asians if we are to be proud of both our gayness and our Asianess. At the last meeting, the range of subject and the liveliness of the discussion showed that we had indeed thought the same thoughts and lived with the same problems. We met others like ourselves and that is a powerful thing.

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## A CALL TO SUBMIT

The Editorial Staff welcomes your ideas and contributions, criticisms and suggestions. Please send in your creative input. We want to hear from you.

pride highlights .....



pride highlights .....

