

Arts & Entertainment

Review: Of Orlando's Sleep

by Daralyn S Maxwell

Everytime I pick up an autobiography of a transgendered author, I am reminded of one of the great dividing lines in life: haves and have-nots. As such, in looking at the first pages of "Orlando's Secret: An Autobiography of Gender" by Jennifer Spry, I was perfectly prepared to hate this woman and her life. Silly me!

Still, one of the first thing that struck me about "Secret" was the fact that it doesn't present anything close to a perfect picture of transgendered life. Rather, it allows the reader to absorb some of the trials of self-correction instead of beating him or her over the head with it.

"Orlando's Secret" follows the gender awakening of Jennifer (nee John) Spry who, at a very early age realized that there was something very wrong with her personal identity, but no one concurred or allowed for that. It travels the road of self-doubt, renewed determination, more doubt and finally (hurray for her!) recognition of the self and the beginning of the journey to personal fulfillment and completion.

This includes, by the way, the sexual identity reckoning that Ms. Spry is not only a transgendered woman, but a lesbian as well. One of the aspects of "Secret" that most attracted me was that Ms Spry deals quite frankly with the nagging doubt

that accompanies such a personal journey, and doesn't minimize the hazards of succumbing to denial.

The heartbreak of separation from family and the rejection by alleged friends is all too often glossed over by the transgendered author in favor of that oh-so-seldom rosy conclusion.

While she obviously enjoyed "some" of the aspects of the privileged class, such as intercontinental traveling, Spry went to such exotic places as Thetford, Vermont (near and dear to my home in Vermont) and some pretty outbacky-type places in Australia.

For anyone who would like to read an articulate and well-presented story about coming out as a

transgendered lesbian, I would strongly recommend this book. It glosses over little and emphasizes that in perseverance there is hope. Having been exposed to some pretty unrealistic treatises of transition and transsexuality, it is refreshing to read about the warts of this issue, especially since I can personally identify with almost ALL of Ms Spry's experiences, both heartbreaking and enlightening.

Hopefully, this book will allow others in the g/l/b/t community see what realistically goes on in the head (and heart) of someone trying to navigate the oft-treacherous waters of transsexuality. I hope that Drop Me a Line will add this to their shelves. It is a worthwhile read.

Comic Strip's Creator Understands fuss Over Gay Character

"For Better or For Worse" creator Lynn Johnston understands the problem some editors will face when she shifts the comic strip's focus to the love life of a gay character for a few days. That doesn't mean she'll be happy if they don't run it.

"It's not frustrating for me but for the people who are harassed because they have to put up with this every minute of their lives," Johnston said Wednesday from her home in Canada.

Kansas City-based Universal Press Syndicate said Wednesday it wrote to 1,700 newspapers informing them of the upcoming sequence. The comic strip, which deals with the Patterson family and their relatives and friends, angered some editors and readers in 1993 when a 17-year-old

character, Lawrence, revealed he was gay.

The outing of Lawrence, best friend of college student Michael Patterson, was based on a similar revelation by Johnston's brother-in-law and its profound affect on her family.

The upcoming four-day sequence, running Aug. 20-23, focuses on Lawrence and his love interest, Ben, who is considering moving to Paris to study piano. At least 20 daily newspapers have told Universal Press that they will use syndicate-supplied reruns from 1995 instead, said Elizabeth Andersen, who edits the strip for Universal Press.

"It is a decision that took a lot of thought on our part," said publisher John Goossen, publisher of The Topeka (Kan.) Capital-Journal, which

has a circulation of 62,000 daily and 70,000 on Sunday. "We kind of looked at what we feel the standards of the community are.

"We feel that the comics page is different from what we cover in our news pages, where we cover the newsworthy activities of the gay and lesbian community as news."

Papers in Ohio, Texas and Alabama were among those who won't run the Lawrence-Ben series, Andersen said. Specific names were not immediately available.

Thirteen newspapers canceled "For Better or For Worse" when Lawrence came out. At least 25 other papers requested rerun strips.

Lawrence has remained a regular character since then. Ben has also appeared repeatedly, once showing up at a prom with Lawrence.

Universal pointed out that, as in 1993, the number of objecting newspapers is tiny compared with the strip's overall distribution. "That makes it kind of a non-story," Andersen said. "I think editors are just playing it safe."

Johnston, who lives near North Bay, Ontario, said she was disappointed by the latest flap but said the decision to run the strip is "certainly up to the editors."

"I remember when we went through this before," she said. "In these small communities, everybody knows the editors and the editor can't go have coffee and a doughnut without someone saying, 'Why-are you running that junk in the paper?'"

"I got wonderful calls from editors who said they couldn't run it even if they wanted to. I respect that, I understand that."

"The Great Pumpkin Ball"

Presented by ML/GPA

Remember, when Halloween used to be a ball?

Mark your Calendar for what promises to be a highlight of the 1997 Fall season: ML/GPA's first annual costume party! Organizers are planning an evening for serious Halloween revelers (you know who you are!) and or those who just want to enjoy a memorable night out on-the-town while supporting ML/GPA.

The date is Friday, October 31. The Ballroom By The Bay, Holiday Inn, Portland. A night of "something for everyone" music

including disco, oldies, country and some crowd pleasing surprises. (You know there should be a few surprises, too. It's being presented in association with the people who brought Bob Smith, Kate Clinton and Susanne Westenhoefer to Maine!)

Tickets will be \$10 in advance and \$13 at the door. Watch next month's Community Pride Reporter for details on The Great Costume Contest (and great prizes) or call 207-773-6974

So, don't miss out on what promises to be a night you won't soon forget!

Library Book Taken Hostage

A library patron has refused to return a book on gay sex which she says "doesn't meet the standards set forth by society." Linda McGeogh, who requested "The New Joy of Gay Sex" be banned from the Belmont Library, had a friend check out the book and put it in a storage locker after waiting for the library to act.

"We're not going to bring it back," said McGeogh, 38, who contends the book's gay content has nothing to do with her request. "It's something that should be kept in a bedside table, not in a public library." But librarians and book lovers say a ban violates the First Amendment by limiting the public's access.

"We believe very firmly that everybody should have access to what

the library has and nobody should have to ask for it," said San Mateo County librarian Nancy Lewis. "For us, it's a First Amendment issue."

McGeogh asked the library to dump their only copy of the book after she came across it on a June visit with her 8-year-old daughter, 7-year-old son and a friend. "I went through it and was absolutely shocked," McGeogh said.

Lewis said she will appoint a panel to make a recommendation. But she has final say in the matter. The book has been overdue since June 11. McGeogh will be billed for a \$6 overdue fine and the cost for a replacement copy if she doesn't return the original, library officials said.