

Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation
by Dennis Altman
Reviewed by Andrew Doucin

First, general impressions:

Nobody's going to stay up all night to read this one at a gulp, because it's heavy. Dennis Altman, a 27-year old Australian political scientist who's taught at N.Y.U., Adelphi and now the University of Sydney, got into gay lib while he was here to teach and study, and as he puts it in what is probably the book's only witty or concise remark, "Bring an academic and a movement together and one produces a book."

The book Altman, as I must call him (hateful to call a gay brother that way by his last name; it creates a straight, depersonalized, and competitive N.Y. Times Book Reviewer's head) has produced is a learned thesis on how we got to where we are; i.e., why a gay liberation movement at this particular time.

To this end, straight prophets of sexual liberation (Freud, Reich, Norman O. Brown, Marcuse, and one semigay Paul Goodman) are invoked by the shelf full, and what they have to say is interesting, somewhat (of which, more later).

But from a book whose subtitle is "Oppression and Liberation" one expects some of the stuff of life, too; the sense of what it means to be gay here, now, in an oppressive straight world, and this comes not from abstract theory, but from personal testimony and experience. I feel that this is what it is important to write about, since we all, even at this point, still take for granted, are barely aware of, so much of the shit, so many of the limitations that straight society lays on us. Of such testimony, there is very little in this book.

(That Altman didn't intend to write that sort of book I know, but inevitably my reactions to the book he did write are colored by what I expect from a book on gay liberation, and to report otherwise would be dishonest).

The book's style would do credit to any political science scholarly journal, I suppose; being full of lumps of cluttered, inexpressive prose such as this: "to change consciousness in an underdeveloped and once neo-colonial state like Cuba must in some ways reverse the changes applicable to North America/Western Europe/Australia." Oi vey, Dennis!

New as to specific ideas which I'll try to react to out of my experience as one gay person:

The big new idea in the book is that gay liberation is "the child of the counter-culture," i.e., of rock, drugs, of living not to work but to live, of all that has happened to American youth culture in the last ten years. This is discussed in the chapter "America, The Counter-Culture and Gay Liberation," in which increased technology is seen as having made obsolescent the Puritan virtues of continence, competitiveness, etc. Rock in particular as a cultural phenomenon, Altman feels, has softened the super-rigid male/female dichotomy that afflicted America.

How to know if this is true? Practically speaking, do I as a gay person feel more comfortable standing next to or talking with a straight rock freak as opposed to a straight corporate type. Yes, but only slightly, and given this fact, Altman's explanation would seem to have less than total validity.

The Book's political viewpoint is radical: gay liberation demands a revision of society rather than an incorporation into it. On the one hand, gay liberation's essential quality "lies in its assertion of gayness, its refusal to feel shame or guilt at being homosexual...the real oppression we suffer is psychological."

But, in two chapters entitled "Towards a Polymorphous Whole" and "The End of the Homosexual," Altman recognizes that as long as a minority greatly differs from the majority, it will continue to be oppressed by that majority, which it frightens: "Unlike other minorities, we live within the oppressor himself."

For this reason, gay liberationists will, along with women's lib, have to shoulder the straight man's burden, so to speak, carving out a world and an existence where there are no sexual roles, there is no straight and gay, etc. This is implicit in Altman's statement that "It may be the historic function of the homosexual to...accept his/her heterosexuality as well, and bring to its logical conclusion the Freudian belief in our inherent bisexuality."

Such a society would increasingly be based on communal living, in which children would be free from the mad possessiveness of parents, which they later copy, and in which male children in particular

BOOK REVIEWS

would no longer be indoctrinated with the macho ethic which has so fucked up the world.

This is all heavy stuff, and we all damn well know that it's not going to happen tomorrow. Meanwhile, I've seriously contemplated adopting a male child, because I dig them, and they dig me. But I wince when I think how the son that's grown up with me will suffer when he comes into contact with his little macho equivalents on the block or in school. So maybe we do need communal living now - those of us gay people who dig raising kids - to create an atmosphere with more human values for both kids and adults.

On sexual roles, within the gay world as it is right now: some of us are into drag, some of us into leather, some of us, like me, dally with both. Altman sees both of these as examples of gay people's internalizations of straight society's insistence on rigidly different personalities for a man and a woman. Perhaps it's more complicated: for me, becoming "feminine" has been a way of making myself more expressive, an escape from the arid macho closet I was in for so many years.

And shit may be some gay people's way of coping with the frighteningly new phenomenon of love between two totally equal males, via slave-master roles (heterosexuals have never had totally equal relationships, as it has been understood, at least by straight males, that the woman is in some sense always subservient to the man.)

Finally, the whole matter of separation and our relations to straight people, Altman comments on how paranoiac gay people can get if they totally isolate themselves from straights, how all straight people thus become seen as the enemy, regardless of their personal views. All right, this month a very dear straight friend of mine of ten years standing is getting married, at his mother-in-law's house; so I go, but do I wear my "Gay Revolution" button, which I wear to work and everywhere else; do I bring another gay male and dance with him (if I can do my thing, I don't begrudge them their thing)? Do I do this and upset her conservative Catholic parents, whom I'll never see again, on this so terribly important day to them. Or shall I be a good boy, and by suppressing myself be miserable that day? Not a major crisis in the revolution, but of such stuff are a gay person's relationships-with-straight-made.

Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation takes a long, composed view of things, and there's something to be said for trying to see the gay revolution in a historical context of changing ideas and social mores. But to write so as to distance oneself emotionally from the movement and its brothers and sisters. There is little passion, little outrage in the book, and not too much analytical love. It's painful to have to write this about a gay brother who's wanted to articulate his vision of the movement, but it's true, it's true. Scholarship there is aplenty, along with some perceptive thinking.

Impressive, but don't bother cruising her, as we used to say of the more aloof numbers at Fuhls' in pre-liberation days.

Arthur Bell, one of the founders of the Gay Activists Alliance, has also published a book called "Dancing the Gay Lib Blues." This book was not reviewed in this issue of *Come Out!* because we could not come across a review we felt we could publish. We did not review the book per se because we felt that someone with a more intimate familiarity with the events described in the book should review it. Our action is in no way related to an evaluation of the book. The book poses an important question: Can there be Gay Liberation without Gay consciousness? We invite a review of the book from our readers.

Homosexual Liberation a personal view by John Murphy

reviewed by
Steve Gavin

John Murphy's *Homosexual Liberation* is the best book I have yet read dealing with the Gay Liberation movement and published via the straight media. It presents Gay Liberation from an essential vantage point, the developing Gay consciousness. It points out to Gay men just out of the closet that there are many other closets thru which they must travel.

The book is basically geared to middle class men, and there lies its basic fault. Contrary to middle class assertions having an advanced degree is not an asset to self-liberation. On the contrary, intellectualization is a sophisticated form of cloister. All of our "educational" institutions are thoroughly steeped in sexism. Being part of a consciousness raising group all of whose members have graduate school training is not the asset John would have us believe. Middle class men are ill at ease in expressing love for each other not in spite of graduate school training but because of graduate school training. It's not so much that John implies the former — though he gives me that impression off and on throughout the book — it's that he doesn't seem to appreciate the latter.

Basically the book is geared to this level. It is telling middle class America that they need not worry about Gay Liberation, that with the right perspective the Gay Liberation movement is compatible with middle class values. And, unfortunately, at the stage the movement is in now, he is basically right.

John appears much too sheltered from the movement. He never stayed with one movement group long enough to appreciate the immense contradictions that must be reached. While he dropped in, now and then, to the Gay Community Center, there were those who were trying to make the center work. The community center eventually folded.

Let me not give the impression by these criticisms that the book compares adversely with other books on Gay Liberation from the straight press. On the contrary, I consider this book right year ahead of any other man's book on Gay Liberation I have yet encountered. While many thousands of consciousness-raises have been traveled since the "gay is just as good as straight" period, John is still pointing in the right direction. The road to liberation winds thru the murky swamp encompassed by this book. For a Gay man beginning to establish his identity this book can be very valuable. Except for certain sections where John uncovers closet skeletons of the literary past, the book provides interesting reading.

REMEMBER

*I remember when I used to be so lonely
that I felt like an animal deprived of its tribe
when I used to wonder what was hurting me, when
I could only feel hurt
when fear was so natural that all I
could remember was fear
when I would watch the sun go down
after days of rusty razor blades
hoping that I too might be carried away
on the last sinking sigh of day
when memory was like a growing tree
that kills its branches
by hurting out the sky*

*I remember things as they used to be
it is good that they are over and more
has come to me, because loneliness is
not the ultimate destiny but is
another trick of the man who sits at his desk
and watches the clock*

Perry Brass



Maurice

For many years E. M. Forster has been known as a master craftsman and prime artist of the English language. In a span of five novels he created two highly pronounced classes: *Howards End* and *A Passage to India*. There were also rumors of a sixth novel, one written in the time between these two major works that could not be published because of its disreputable topic. The subject of this novel was of course left to the speculation of many, but to the followers of Forster who delighted in the imagery of the former novels, it was no surprise that the topic was homosexuality.

E.M. Forster, for all that he is noted, never wrote a novel with the public in mind. Instead he chose to serve an inner light, one of personal growth, and

present this development to his reading audience. This honesty led Forster to forsake art and perceive life directly. So then how are we to view *Maurice*. Maurice appeared at the height of Forster's creative powers and also it seems at the point when he was making another important facet of his life conscious. Today in an age of consciousness raising it is easy to understand this process, but it is also comforting to know that the human being is capable of working these things out for himself.

What was the life Forster would have to face as a homosexual? Edwardian England was a time of great repression. It was not a time for assertiveness as Oscar Wilde proved; and yet it was a time for close

introspection. Most ages to the homosexual can be viewed in feudal terms. Even in an age as liberated as ours one still must face the neo-Edwardian pose of Manhattan's Upper East Side and shudder for homosexual love. Forster was pushed as many of our liberated contemporaries into developing a character pose (quickly only in a novel) that was as completely unlike himself as possible. It is a wonder as I see the various acts of New York acting out their roles just whose novels they have adopted to their lives.

Nonetheless, E.M. Forster has presented the world with its first modern gay artist. He has given the contemporary world a view into a tankine and acting which at times through reprieve is always searching and growing. Forster, in spite of all, must have been a very strong man. He was direct through the optimistic tone of love though he himself probably did not find a totally satisfying relationship. Here is the lesson of *Maurice Hall* — one must dare to live his dreams. After all, Maurice Hall, the epitome of England's middle classes, knew best when it was time to forsake a life of posing for one of dream fulfillment. Perhaps also, Forster, though any thinking in this direction is contrary to straight oriented biographies.

J.S. Salatz



Review: *Unbecoming Men*, A men's Consciousness-Raising Group Writes an Opus on and Themselves

Perry Brass

"Being male has meant being devoured by other males, the way animals are thought to but really don't." One of the most moving Gay Liberation pamphlets I've read in a long time is called "Unbecoming Men". It is published by Times/Change Press who put out the *Come Out!* Anthology. It is a dollar twenty five a copy. It is written by four straight men. It is written by men who have oppressed us, speaking for Gay men, in school, in 1950's fraternity houses, at camp, in the Army. It is written by men who have early in life realized that they were, too, not meant to be the American Dream and who have been hurt and cut by the American Dream, just as all Gay men, but who have tried to hide their hurt, their pain and their failure, just as many of us have done. Just as I have done. *Unbecoming Men* is a series of stories or articles about what it is to be a straight man in American death/culture. What makes it all so close to home is that these are the men that I went to summer camp with, went to high school with and went to college with and meet when the so called Movement meets. And what they have to say is what I have felt for years and what you, my Gay brothers have felt for years. But what makes it all so strange is that the voices are not coming from that particular alienated point of view that Gay men have felt and known — that point of view slightly outside of things because we have never been let in — but from the inside. Do you ever wonder what it's like to walk down the street and be straight? To feel that you are feeling what the rest of America is feeling? That you are now a legitimate part of the American machine? That when you fill out a job application that says married/or single and you write single, then you mean single not Gay? Well, the four men who write *Unbecoming Men* are those men who do

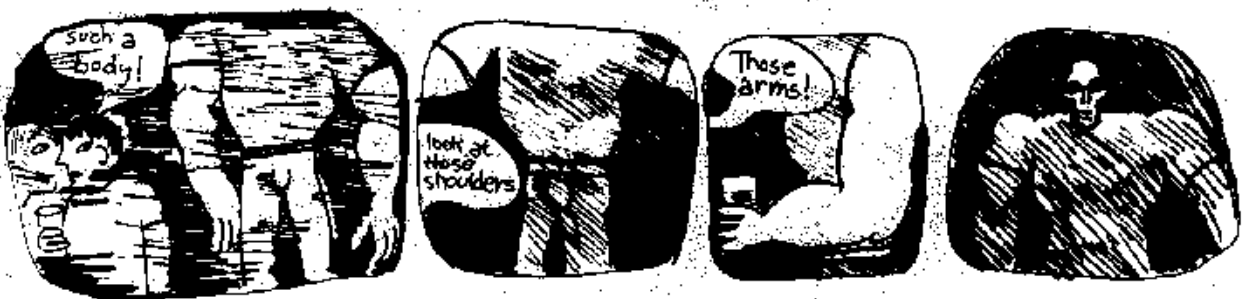
that. They walk down the street straight. They say single and mean "single". They are legitimate American men. They are, and they hate it. And they are hurt by it. And they talk about it. But mostly they talk about how crippled they are by American sexism/stereotyping. How oppressed they are by their own role. How oppressive they know they've been. But, not how alive they are going to become. How open they are going to become. How they are going to break out of death/culture shell. Because they're not going to become Gay. And they can't relate to each any further than just being four straight men — four separated men; until they do.

But I feel that *Unbecoming Men* is a good Gay Liberation pamphlet because it does go somewhere in breaking down the gulf that stands at this time between Gay and straight men. Because I have been so unable to relate to straight men for such a long time now (possible seven years), I have felt even more alienated and straight men have become to me like a great blank wall. Most of them are. Straight men are of a different class than Gay men. It is a class of sleep and fear. "Just because I don't show my feelings doesn't mean that I don't have them", one of my friends in college used to say to me. But how long could I wait to be assured that they were there somewhere? I used to feel that I was the only person in the world who didn't fit into the world of Savannah, Georgia who felt that he couldn't possibly fit into the world down there. I used to feel that I was the only person in the world who was Gay. I used to feel that I was the only person in the world who didn't hate himself for being Gay. Now I've found that I'm not the only Gay person in the world, nor the only one who doesn't hate himself, but I still wonder about the people I grew up with and I've found them

again in *Unbecoming Men*. It's really incredible to realize that a few people were with me all along, but they just couldn't let it out. And for a great deal of the time, neither could I. As Popo said, "we have met the enemy and he is...us."

Lately I've begun to realize how uptight I am around straight men. Some of this uptightness is warranted. Straight men treat each other like objects of competition and fear like an alien creature stuck in their own bodies. They often make me feel that they hate themselves. That they despise their own bodies. But to a certain degree my uptightness comes from the fact that I don't know how to react with them. I can't be real with them the way I can be with many Gay men and with many women. I can't reach out for them physically or to them emotionally. And I have begun to realize that when I don't know how to deal with my feelings towards people in a direct way, when I have to become afraid of my own feelings, I become uptight and competitive: fearful. I sometimes want straight men to accept me as a person (that means "straight") and yet I can't accept myself that way. Therefore conflict and anxiety/competition and fear. *Unbecoming Men* has enabled me to see straight men as more real people, not just figures of repression. But it has also made me aware of how far they have to go before I can relate to them on the levels of trust and care that I relate to my Gay brothers.

Unbecoming Men is available through Times/change Press, Port Murray, New Jersey 07865. Price \$1.25. sixty-two pages with many black and white photos and drawings and heavy maroon paper cover.



17 make friends & influence people - Hawk Come Out! also make 10¢ a copy. Call 591-2639 or write Come Out! box 233 Times Square NY 10036



A cock sucking seminar
by Joe Szabo & Steve Gains

On November 24, 1973 a men's cock-sucking seminar was held in an apartment on Manhattan's upper west side. Seven subjects made up the representative sample. Their ages and experiences varied to a great degree.

The purpose of the seminar was to help combat the puritanism which lingers in the gay liberation movement. Owing to a low consciousness men identify with their straight counterparts and delegate sex to a selfish function in their lives. One thing characteristic of gay men before the movement was that they were promiscuous. This designation was given them by straights who compensate for the sexlessness of their lives by degrading those who have attained a freer life style.

Another purpose for the seminar comes from our experience in coming out. Certain fears are common to our learning sexual expression. We are constantly told that loving sex is something you just do, that everyone can just do with no thought to technique. Feelings of inadequacy arise when we cannot face awkwardness in our early experiences. We were surprised to see how awkward we still are, even after the many sexual experiences we have had. We discovered one basic fact from our seminar: from each experience we gained a new freedom of sexual expression making us more capable of getting closer to our partners. We achieve an expertise ahead only by our own self-fulfillment (not by a performance standard).

To those of you who are "shocked" at what we enjoy doing in bed we can only recommend that you hold a seminar of your own. Perhaps you may learn things about yourselves as we have learned about ourselves. Our sexuality is an ever-changing process. Past and present experiences combine together to release us from our present hangups. But first, we must realize what our hangups are and how others have overcome theirs. This can be another benefit of such a seminar.

Question: What do you think are the erogenous zones of the body?

Jim: Your nose, neck, nipples, moxon, solar plexus, etc. and back...

Ernie: Group: The whole body when you come to think of it. [laughter]

Eric: The neck, throat, to suck or lick that area between the neck or throat. And also the end of the penis is the most sensual. For me it's all in the crotch.

David: It's the same with me pretty much. I like sucking just in behind the penis. And fondling the scrotal area. And finger fucking. Having my hand right at his groin. And then further having my hand wrapped between his legs. I don't like my dick sucked but I like them rubbed. Rimming the ears. Sometimes I like armpits, not always.

Eric: There's lots of new endings there.

David: I really enjoy having my thighs massaged, and the groin area, and I enjoy doing it too. I find the base of my cock and the area just behind it most enjoyable.

Chris: One area that wasn't mentioned was the neck. Breathing on the neck or biting. Wow, or even pain or anything. The shoulder area as well.

Eric: One area to me is the back right above the rectum.

Jim: What about the base of the knee? And the insides of your thighs? And I like to bite people too, on the nape of the neck, the back, or anything. It does something to me as well as it does something to them. I like it.

Steve: I especially like the perineal area immediately around the scrotum and dry massaging around the cock. There are a few testicle purrations of your cock. A main type of massage including the pubic area.

Jim: I think the main thing would be to combine enough to feel that whatever you do would be pleasing to them because there are no two people who have the same erogenous places.

Eric: I like to use the whole body and go over the whole body. And it's so much that you can't let it go. I like to have my testicles, the scrotum, and the base of the penis. I like a little of everything. Actually enjoying a thing like this.

Chris: How do we assess someone's what pleasures we like while jacking someone's cock?

Eric: I would like to be the addresser. You can use a mirror. I would use my hand to massage him, at least on my mouth. Then work my way down. If you get them to write...

Eric: Yeah, when you feel the waves coming in, they're turned on.

Eric: Well, you can talk to them and find out.

Steve: Many times I think I know and then find out I wasn't doing anything.

Eric: Well, if you get them to write...

Eric: Yeah, when you feel the waves coming in, they're turned on.

Question: Positions?
Joe: I don't like them standing up. I like him lying on a bed.

Eric: I prefer them standing or kneeling over me. To me that's the height of sensuality.

David: The way I really enjoy it is if he is standing and he's got his clothes on and I'm massaging his body and into his groin; then he may be sitting on my lap and I'm still massaging his thighs. Then unzipping his pants and sucking him. When he has an erection we'll gradually proceed to undress each other. Then to work into my favorite position, 69. When I really crave sucking, I prefer him standing with their clothes on. I job them, feel their penis and kiss them on the breast...take off their shirt and kiss them...continually kiss them...work on the nipples and the solar plexus...I like it too with their clothes on especially dangerous...I agree with David very much...I stimulate them by generally doing to them what I like doing to myself...the cock goes under the head in the back (breast) I think is the most sensitive...I'll lick it, rub it, and massage it with my lips, and I lick the end of it with my tongue...AND I'LL GO TO IT!

Chris: The slow, gradual build-up has all been described, the hard work of massaging and kissing takes a great deal. As for position I like him standing over me. The arousal just happens. The person stands or sits. I just hunch over him as he is lying. I also like to kneel before the person who's standing.

Question: What do you do now that the sucking has started? What techniques do you use with your tongue? In what sequence? How do you get feedback from your partner? What are some individual differences you have found?

Jim: I would judge the person's reactions. I would try to do what would turn him on, if he reacted to some stimulus favorably, I would probably keep it up. People don't all react to the same thing. Some like it sucked deeper and some like it just licked. But it always depends on what the person likes...from a sort of feedback...if they seem against you, it means go deeper, if they would like positive and still keep a very hard erection, I would assume it was satisfactory...some you do little and they come...

Eric: I think it's a good idea to ask them what they like done to them. Some people get their satisfaction from your telling them how good it feels.

Jim: Treat the person like he's important; some way impress on him that he's a special person; and that way you'll get a better response.

Eric: I like to rub their thighs and belly while I'm sucking, hold them tight, lick them first and all around, usually before I suck them but many times in between. Sometimes sucking hard like a milking machine can be immensely gratifying. Showing strength often communicates to your partner that you really like what he is.

Question: What of a teasing technique?

Joe: I start with someone who tried that, and he was unhappy that evening. I was bored and just quit.

Eric: That would be my reaction too.

Joe: It could work, but I wouldn't just blunder into it. I wouldn't go out and do it tomorrow night.

Steve: You mean you thought he was cutting you off?

Joe: No, he explained it to me, but I was just bored playing around. I can only take so much, and I worked that day. I just had to give up after two hours.

Eric: It may work for those who are afraid because they could blow off and not take too much at one time.

Question: So you're saying you continue with the same thing until the person comes?

Eric: Yes.

Eric: I like that technique. I find it very stimulating. I don't carry it out for two hours, but it stimulates me also. To start I like to finger the testum for added stimulus. It expands, swells, for my own satisfaction. I like to feel stuffed...I like how I gradually...I'll enjoy the taste and the stimulating...to make the thighs and when they see you what they like...they say "fuck my gut" or "kiss my thigh"...I can give the belly a little on the belly...the nipples...I like to massage on the dugs...some you can use a direct approach. I like someone I really enjoy...I really build up...I've only come a few times in my life from being sucked...I really like to suck.

David: If I'm sucking, I like the whole parts of him to be a little bit of saliva and take it and out. While I'm sucking, I like to find his testicles and then behind his scrotum and finger fuck him. Hopefully I'll be doing sixty-nine and my head will be right in between his legs. If I'm being sucked, I like the dugs to take one whole thing too. Just taking my penis - the end of it - drives me crazy.

Technique?
Jim: No!

David: Oh! I always do!

Jim: I don't hear anything; I just think of what I'm doing.

Eric: If the phone rang, I'd stop and answer. I like lights...like to see the person's body. That's not the pleasure.

Burt: I like to look at his face.

Jim: I'd rather explore the person's body with my fingers.

Burt: I like to look at the person, his face. I like play, I like him to push my face in, and I look up at him.

David: I like to look at the person. But, I have my fantasy too. If the person I'm sucking doesn't live up to my expectations, I dwell on sucking someone else or a prostitute.

Chris: Usually I just keep that one aim in mind - to please. What can I do to further the pleasure is my goal. Feedback is a big thing with me. I become totally aware of the feedback and try to improve. To a high point I just concentrate on pleasing him.

Steve: I learned to enjoy doing it myself. There is just as much enjoyment in it for me as for him. After all the mouth is one of the erogenous regions and the cock is a wonderful instrument. I really enjoy it. Sometimes 69 can be distracting. There is too much going on. I like to do someone keeping my eyes open and sensitive to all sensations around me.

Question: What do I like my partner to do? How do I feel if he doesn't come? How do I feel if my partner does other things while I'm sucking him - lighting a cigarette, for instance?

Jim: If they do something else, I stop.

Steve: Sometimes even coughing has a negative effect.

Question: Do you like someone to move?

Jim: I don't like extremely large cocks. If my partner doesn't come, I ask him what and if the answer is satisfactory, then it doesn't bother me.

Eric: I like my partner to write a letter to show that he's enjoying it. I don't like my partner to choke me or be violent so I can't enjoy it. If he doesn't come, I can't like it. Someone sucking me doesn't make me come unless he's very good at it. I find it hard to have an orgasm unless I'm masturbating. Even while fucking I can't have an orgasm I need more friction.

David: The cocks we see I'll take them as they come [laughter]. You can't be that specific. Because people's anatomy being what it is it's hard to demand. I enjoy taking the whole cock, or as much as I can at my own rate. I like him to move around to some degree. As far as his thinking of someone else I think it's worse when they talk so much about their lives. [laughter] This happened to me when I was living in New Haven. This trick of mine was doing his dissertation on Charles Ives, and while I'm sucking him he'd be giving me a thirty credit hour lecture. [more laughter]

Burt: I do like them to give me a lot of movements. I like when they wrap their legs around me and press with their body. If he did something that I thought that was sexy, I like a nice soft head, but who the hell...I like them average sized. This is much better because the more in your mouth, get very tired, and some guys don't come right away. If I were following it and I really liked the feel, I'd really feel bad if he didn't come. If we were both having a rough time, I would suggest it.

Chris: The same usually prevails with me. I would feel the biological function isn't completed. As far as size it can't be too big...it would turn me off completely. I like medium; it adds to my enjoyment. As far as lighting a cigarette, maybe