CLOSETS OF
POWER

BY TAYLOR BRANCH

As a high government official and a homosexual, Dan Bradley
led a double life that is common among congressmen, White House
aides, and others in the political world. Here is his story, and theirs.

Politics came naturally to Dan Bradley. Despite his handicap as a
"children's-home boy," he was elected class president every year in
high school. At Mercer University he beat out eleven candidates to be-
come freshman class president, and served on nearly every board and society in the
school—the classic popular student-activities zealot.
"I knew their names, faces, majors, where they came
from, and their activities at school. I made it my
business to know." In his career as a leader of the
movement to bring legal services to the poor, Brad-
ley operated the same way. Perhaps unconsciously,
he sought to become acquainted with a wide mass of
people at a genuine though superficial level, and he
sought their approval on the same plane. He was
preoccupied with the general good and with the
broader classes of human nature, as opposed to the
quirks or depths of any individual. His knowledge
of people was wide but thin, precise but not intimate.

All this made Dan Bradley a good politician. It
also helped guard his secret even before he knew he
had one. The ability to live in a web of broad but
shallow relationships, to design a public face and
hide a private one, served Bradley well in both worlds
of his adult life. The political personality, it seems,
is tailor-made for life in the closet.

In March of this year, Bradley became the highest
federal official in American history to declare pub-
licly that he was a homosexual. Upon resigning as
president of the government-funded Legal Services
Corporation, he told The New York Times that he
had survived in politics only by living a double life
of "sheer, unmitigated fear." He also told the Times
that he had many homosexual friends who were con-
gressmen, congressional staff people, White House
aides, bureaucrats, and lawyers throughout Wash-
ington. They all shared a clandestine life inside the

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As a powerful but frightened subculture, the closeted politicians in Washington have learned how to recognize, protect, communicate with, and seduce one another—all the while leading professional lives and keeping the "straights" largely unaware. In a capital where gossip, scandal, and political advantage are highly prized, this has been a remarkable collective feat.

Since "coming out," Bradley has traveled the country on a tour of celebration. He has met reinforcements—who are closeted mayors, city councilmen, clergymen, ordinary folk—and they have feted him as one who has done what they cannot bring themselves to do. He has also received moving testimonials of acceptance from heterosexuals, strangers and old friends alike. Casting off practiced habits of deception, he has spoken and moved about freely for the first time in many years, like a newly released prisoner. In June, a woman friend asked him to be the "bridesmaid" at her wedding. Bradley agreed, laughing. He carried an enormous bouquet out of the church in the traditional recession alongside the best man, former Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke.

It has been a gay time for Bradley in the literal sense of that word, which homosexual activists appropriated for themselves from the police slang for prostitutes. The word itself is telling. Bradley hopes that this high will not be followed by a relapse into self-doubt and self-loathing, like all the others, but he knows that he has rejected his lies more than he has accepted himself. "I hated being in the closet more than I hated being gay," he says. Moreover, he knows that many of the closeted gays who applauded his declaration are also threatened by it. He is a challenge to them; his general acceptance by heterosexuals undercut their argument that they must remain in the closet to avoid persecution. Some gay public officials in Washington have criticized Bradley for drawing attention to them at a time when closeted politicians are menaced on several fronts. Shortly after the Times article on Bradley, an incipient scandal broke out in Washington over charges that several congressmen had had homosexual relations with young pages. Meanwhile, political groups affiliated with the Moral Majority have upped their mass solicitations for a war against the "homosexual conspiracy" in Washington, and conservative scandal sheets have surfaced, naming the names of liberal gay congressmen.

These and other forces could bring the enormous, hidden homosexual subculture under public scrutiny for the first time, with results ranging from suicide to improved mental health. Most people of all sexual persuasions wish to avoid the ordeal. Bradley doesn't, for reasons that are somewhat cloudy. Partly for personal catharsis and partly out of conviction that it is politically astute, he is revealing the details of a personal and political life in the closet. Dan Bradley's story is unique, of course, like every-one's. But it is at least one true version of life as a closeted homosexual in the political world.

I.

A Straight Pill

Dan Bradley formally entered the closet in 1968. At that time he had accumulated a grand total of "no more than ten seconds" of sexual experience with another person in his twenty-eight years. Those ten seconds convinced him that his life was cursed, as he had always feared.

He trembled and prayed on a trip from Philadelphia back to his office in Belle Glade, Florida, where he was a pioneer lawyer for migrant laborers and an early leader in the fight to get legal services available to the poor. During the lunch hour, Bradley locked the door and became dizzy and nauseated. In a state of panic, he began calling the psychiatrists listed in West Palm Beach, begging for an emergency appointment.

The psychiatrist he found shared an office with a dentist. Even in the late 1960s, some Florida analysts discovered that more patients would walk through the door if they could maintain the pretense of a sore tooth. Bradley welcomed the ruse. Greatly agitated, he told the doctor that he did not know why he was there. He blurted out half-sentences about symptoms ranging from dizzy spells and fits of nausea to attacks of inexplicable depression.

"Mr. Bradley," interrupted the psychiatrist, "are you a homosexual?"

Bradley said nothing. After a long silence, he opened his mouth to reply, but he began crying instead. A great tide obliterated his reserve. He wept, shook, and sobbed for over an hour. When it was over, the psychiatrist said, "Tell me about yourself." Bradley droned on for hours, disgorging himself again in words, looking expectantly at the doctor now and then in the hope that some detail might explain the beast.

Born into Georgia's once prominent Bulloch family, he had been packed off to a Baptist orphanage at the age of five, along with five brothers and sisters. His mother had died unexpectedly; his father was physically disabled and hospitalized; nothing was left of the family prestige except for memories of entertaining FDR in Georgia.

The 500 boys and girls at the Georgia Baptist Children's Home led dreary, regimented lives. All the boys were bused regularly to the local barber college, where rookie barber students gave them patchy, telltale haircuts. All the orphans checked their clothes out of the general storage room, trading up as they grew. Each child lived in a cottage with twenty-three others, ruled by a married couple. For
some reason, both the husband and the wife were called "the matron." Generally, the matrons were poor, devout, often illiterate Baptists, who received free room and board in return for keeping out Old Testament discipline to their wards. Bradley, a seven-year-old bed wetter, was obliged to drink mixtures of turpentine and castor oil, and to take cold winter showers in front of his cottage mates.

Bradley pleaded with the psychiatrist to tell him that there was enough stigma in this background to explain a thousand cases of homosexuality. What tortured him was that no one else at the orphanage had turned out like him, though they had all grown up under the same conditions. And his brothers and sisters had inherited the same genetic pool. Why only Bradley?

And he had flourished at the orphanage. He embraced the church wholeheartedly. He learned the Bible almost by heart, and his devotion and quick wit made him something of a religious prodigy. When he was only twelve, preachers in the churches around Atlanta would call on Bradley to lead the entire congregation in prayer. By the time he was fourteen, preachers from all over Georgia would ask the children's home to send Bradley as a shining example of the church's good works. Bradley would stand, the worshipers would beam, and the preacher would announce that the young lad planned to become a minister.

From his earliest Bible classes, Bradley learned to banish the subject of sex to the distant recesses, along with other sins. He remembered hearing the bolder orphans, at puberty, bragging graphically of their conquests in the outside world, describing sex with girls pretty much the way they would talk of pulling the legs off grasshoppers. To Bradley, it was an alien world, devoid of the Christian spirit. He planned to cross the great gulf by a vague, mysterious route that had something to do with magic and marriage.

Bradley did not know exactly how females were supposed to make their entrance into his private world, but he became increasingly worried, over the years, when he detected no stirring at all. In Psychology 101, he felt a quickening when he read descriptions of sexual attraction among persons of the same sex. Soon he was in the college library reading treatises on homosexuality, careful to conceal them inside his regular textbooks.

Instinctively, he reread the Book of Job—many, many times. Logic, faith, and the beginnings of desperation convinced him beyond a doubt that his religious belief was being tested. Just as God had inflicted pestilence, personal bereavement, and all manner of physical suffering on Job, Bradley thought, He was now dangling an invitation to heathen despair in front of Bradley. Bradley had always been proud of his inner strength. With the Book of Job firmly in mind, he contained all thoughts of his fellow males while awaiting his deliverance. He abstained from sex during his teens and twenties, when his peers were coupling, reproducing, divorcing, and otherwise trying to match their genitals with their hopes.

The conference in Philadelphia was like many other gatherings of the "poverty bar" before and since. It ended on Friday. The next morning, several hours before his flight back to Florida, Bradley was reading the Philadelphia Inquirer and watching the skaters on an enclosed ice rink in an arcade beneath his hotel, when he sensed that others, also reading newspapers, were watching him. His fear told him that many were homosexuals congregated around the ice rink. Bradley walked quickly upstairs into the hotel bathroom. There, three urinals down, he was shocked to see a man standing casually waving an erect penis back and forth. Bradley had never seen another man's erection. He walked out, and paced the hotel floor in circles of confused fascination. Then he went back to the ice rink and posed nervously behind his Inquirer.

Presently, a blond young street urchin in blue jeans and a T-shirt walked up and said, "I'll let you suck me for five dollars." Bradley recoiled and fled without a word. He walked more circles and returned. When the young hustler repeated the proposition, Bradley nodded.

At Georgia Baptist Children's Home, the matrons had often punished Bradley by washing his mouth out with a lye-based soap. Now, after the hustler collected his money and left, Bradley rushed into the bathroom, lathered up a washcloth with octagonal soap, and scrubbed his mouth vigorously, feverishly. He told all this to the psychiatrist at West Palm Beach the following Monday, and on subsequent visits over the next several months. Bradley pressed the psychiatrist to reveal the accumulated wisdom of his profession on two questions: what causes homosexuality, and can it be cured? But nothing offered encouragement. He asked about the latest theories of behavior modification and shock therapy. He wanted a palliative, if not a complete, cure. "The words I used were a "straight pill," he says. "I wanted to know if there was a "straight pill" I could take to help me."

The doctor offered no pills. Gradually, Bradley abandoned his Job theory, though he would slide back to it many times. He could say to himself and the doctor that although he had never completed a sexual act with anyone, he was a homosexual. It was a permanent condition, not a divine test—or if it was a test, he had failed it. Bradley knew with greater clarity that he could never accept having sex with men; he would rather die. He realized that he could never be a lawyer, public servant, or politician and function as a homosexual. "I decided it was no big deal. I'd just be asexual, as I had been all my life.

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II.

A Fraternity of Despair

When the Nixon administration came to power in 1969, Bradley managed to get himself assigned to the job of creating a new Legal Services program in the Virgin Islands, out of harm’s way. He worked very hard and traveled constantly. During the six months he was based in the Virgin Islands, he took only one full day off—to wander on the white beaches of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

The quickening came to him in advance of the specific realization that one section of the beach was special. Several hundred men were packed together, surrounded closely on all sides by mixed couples. “They all had their slinky little bathing suits and their effeminate mannerisms,” says Bradley. “I knew what it was.”

Bradley stood by a hot-dog stand to watch.

A sunbather approached and introduced himself vaguely as Tom the sailor. Bradley called himself Dan the lawyer. After some evasive conversation, the sailor departed, but then returned. Bradley kept a rendezvous that night and managed to taste piña colada and smoke marijuana. Later that night, he took Tom the sailor back to his hotel room for what amounted to the first sexual experience of his life.

When the fear rushed in on him the next day, he resolved to think of the incident as an isolated blip of failure after a year of successful repression. It helped that he did not feel the slightest personal interest in Tom the sailor, whom Bradley took to be from the unsavory caste of those who had given in to their homosexuality.

In 1970, after a brief tour of duty in Mississippi helping victims of Hurricane Camille, Bradley was called to Washington as special assistant to Terry Lenzner, President Nixon’s director of Legal Services. There Bradley used his growing political skills to stave off attacks on Legal Services by disgruntled conservatives. Consumed by the political war, Bradley lived for months in a small hotel room, surrounded by phone messages and legal tracts. His discipline held up, and he never ventured into the seedy downtown areas where he imagined the homosexuals to be. For safety’s sake, he tried to limit his few social engagements to female company and to pick out women with whom he sensed a nonsexual, “buddy” rapport. This plan did not always work, however. After many convivial lunches, one woman lured Bradley into bed by telling him that her fiancé had just informed her that he was homosexual, and demanding comfort. “It was horrible,” Bradley recalls, but some days later, she wrote to say that she had fallen in love with him.

To fend off this woman’s advances, Bradley began inventing fairy tales about his romantic passion for a woman named Barbara, Terry Lenzner’s assistant. His violent nerves lent an air of authenticity to the stories. Bradley began seeing more of Barbara, who became one of his lifelong friends. Rumors soon were circulating in the Legal Services office about Bradley’s love triangle, and about how he was conducting himself with admirable restraint.

The charade taxed Bradley’s limited social prowess for several months, until fate rescued him in the form of a promotional transfer to Atlanta as director of Legal Services for the Southern states. The job required a civil-service background investigation, and Bradley imagined how brilliant sleuths might locate Tom the sailor; but they didn’t, of course.

One day in Atlanta, a high-powered real-estate woman named Sally* walked into Bradley’s office and sat down on his lap. “She was the most aggressive woman I’ve ever known,” he says. Sally announced that she had heard about him from mutual acquaintances in Washington. She listed a number of her illustrious Washington lovers from the past and wondered out loud when and how she would get to know Bradley. She pursued him, and eventually trapped him into a skiing trip.

On the drive north, Sally pestered him with questions: about his childhood, about the orphanage, about his mother. This confused and angered Bradley. “Why are you doing this to me?” he asked.

“Don’t you see?” she replied. “Dan, I love you.”

“What do you mean, you love me?” said Bradley. That weekend, he watched her make love to him. Passive and frightened once again, he made the experience palatable by fantasizing about Tom the sailor. After he dropped Sally off at her home back in Atlanta, Bradley drove through the downtown area, looking for a man. “I was so confused that I wanted to reassure myself that I was a homosexual,” he says. “But I didn’t know where to look.”

Within a few days, he began a homosexual sex life for the first time, based in a fast-food restaurant in Atlanta called the Varsity. He found men at the Varsity and brought them home for one-night stands, giving them a phony name and phone number, never the same man twice.

Meanwhile, he and Sally became “an item” in the heterosexual world. “It definitely helped my reputation at Legal Services,” says Bradley. Three or four times that year he made heterosexual love, and the act always precipitated an immediate emotional crisis. Finally, when there was widespread talk of marriage, guilt pushed Bradley to seek a way out. He broke off the affair by concocting a desperate story about being all balled up inside over growing up in the orphanage, and promising Sally that he would see a psychiatrist.

Alone one Friday night in his Atlanta apartment,

* A pseudonym.
reading Eisenhower's memoirs, Bradley toyed with the idea of visiting one of the gay bars he had been reading about in Atlanta's underground newspaper, the Great Speckled Bird. He thought of horror stories, fought them off with suitable cover stories, and finally wandered into the Cove at nine o'clock. "It was empty," he says. "I didn't realize that those places don't get going until nearly midnight." A kindly bartender explained the customs of night life and wrote out for him, on a napkin, the names of other local gay bars. A week later, sitting at a gay bar, Bradley found himself staring at one of his Sigma Nu fraternity brothers from Mercer. The two of them played cat and mouse with each other before the fraternity brother took the initiative, volunteering that he knew all the gay bars from Key West to Provincetown. In parlance, he was "coming out" to Bradley.

The fraternity brother introduced Bradley to a group of about ten closeted professionals who saw one another every weekend. One of them would cook dinner for the rest, and they would go out to one or more "cruising bars" at the "witching hour," looking for sex. Bradley joined them occasionally. The gatherings offered a lot of gossip and some chance of friendship. They also gave Bradley his first inkling that the closet could be a social place; for him it had always been solitary. But he was frightened that so many people knew his real name. He disliked their habit of asking new people to join the group. He refused to invite them to his apartment for dinner. And much of what he came to know about them was depressing. His fraternity brother, a chronic alcoholic, began calling him at home late at night, begging for help. Another member of the group overdosed on PCP pills and suffered a complete breakdown. To Bradley, these were some of the many signs that homosexuals were badly damaged people, a fraternity of despair. Gradually, he withdrew from the group and resumed the solitary life of the dedicated workaholic.

III.

The Wedding Ring

But Bradley couldn't sustain this pose. After a frightening episode when he found himself leaving a note with his real name and phone number on the car of a handsome blond student who lived across the street, Bradley resolved, with the help of yet another psychiatrist, to design a secure closet life for himself. The solution, he concluded, was to adopt an elaborate double identity. Knowing that he could not suppress his homosexual impulses entirely, he resolved to channel them into anonymous sex. To attain security he would give up any hope of emotional attachment, which he was convinced he didn't need.

Bradley resolved to shape an imaginary heterosexual life in Washington that he could talk about in Atlanta, and vice versa. He wanted to regularize and systematize the imaginary love letters, dates, and dilemmas, to minimize the risk of being discovered in a contradiction. So as not to neglect the small touches, he took out a subscription to Playboy magazine and displayed the copies prominently on his coffee table for the benefit of his visitors.

As for sex, he made a heartening discovery. He found the baths. Having read about the gay baths, he finally worked up the courage to visit one in Miami after delivering a speech to a local bar association. He joined under the name Doug Bailey. Then he walked behind the forbidding walls and saw hundreds of gay men wearing towels. It took Bradley about five minutes to discern that the whole place was expressly designed for promiscuous, anonymous sex, which was exactly what he had in mind. He felt secure behind the great walls. "I must have had sex with ten different guys that first night," he says. "I was like a kid in a candy store. Nobody talked about what anybody did for a living."

The Club Bath chain alone owned outlets in thirty-seven American cities. Bradley visited most of them. They were listed in his Gay Guide (which comes in a plain gray cover marked ADDRESS BOOK, suitable for the closet), along with the gay bars and nightclubs. To facilitate his secret gay exploits, Bradley instructed his secretary to tell all those who invited him to conferences that he must stay in a hotel and not with a host family. He told everyone that he liked to work in his room and go to bed early. Citing these unbreakable habits, he could excuse himself to his hotel room and then slip off to the baths.

Growing bolder with time, he bought a gold wedding band at a pawnshop and carried it with him wherever he went. He put it on during out-of-town meetings whenever he was sure that no one there knew his marital status. To Bradley, the ring was a magic time-saver. It kept strangers from trying to set him up with dates. People made fewer social demands on a married man traveling alone.

During a bar-association conference in New York, Bradley told his colleagues that he had to leave early to see relatives on Long Island, and went off to see the musical Hair. In the dark he fell under the spell of a particular member of the cast. After some anguish, he managed to get a note to this actor, and soon they arranged a rendezvous in Washington—the first time Bradley dared indulge his gayness in the heart of his professional world. Eddie was also the first man Bradley went to bed with more than once. "And we talked for days," he says. "He completed my gay education." Bradley learned that the closet would always be a fearful adventure, with more shadowy corners than he could imagine. He learned the rudiments of the lingo and the standard person-
ality types. He learned that the macho, short-haired "clone" look was coming into fashion, and he mastered the difference between "nellas," "twinkies," and "chickens." He asked a hundred questions about the "Hankie Code," which was printed in the front of his Gay Guide. A man entering a "cruiser bar" with a handkerchief on his left hip signaled a desire to be the active one, the doer. Those with one on the right hip wanted to be passive. Colors indicated the favorite sport. A dark blue hankie on the left wanted to "give" anal sex—on the right to "receive" it. There were fourteen colors in the code, reaching down to Dante and beyond. Maroon on the right wanted to receive an enema. Yellow on the left wanted to urinate in someone's face.

Comforted to find out that only a small percentage of homosexuals take part in such practices, Bradley sought to understand the far reaches of his new sociology. By now he was no longer the naive Georgia preacher.

For every new low of closet life, there was a high. Primarily, for Bradley, it was the thrill of living in two separate worlds that came together but did not touch, saw each other but did not understand. He could live separately as Judd with pickups, Doug in the baths, and Dan in the halls of Congress. In camp circles, he was called Elizabeth. When Eddie left forever after a three-day spree, Bradley invented a new character in his life named Edie. He told people at Legal Services that he had fallen for her. He told them about letters from Edie, about phone calls and secret trysts—all based on the afterglow of the chorus boy from Hair. "I became a master of deception," says Bradley. "And it brought me vicarious joy every day to pull it off. That's one of the joys of the closet. There's no denying it."

In recent years, gay scholars have laid claim of kinship to an astonishing number of big names in the history of art and ideas. Their list is quite impressive, even when it is stripped of the weaker and more tentative assertions (such as Shakespeare): Plato, Walt Whitman, Somerset Maugham, Noel Coward, Leonardo da Vinci, Cole Porter, Aristotle, King James I (sponsor of the King James version of the Bible), W. H. Auden, Tchaikovsky, Francis Bacon, George Santayana, Herman Melville, John Maynard Keynes, Michelangelo, E. M. Forster, and Amedeo Modigliani, Jr., to name a few. Gay scholars usually lament the failure of nearly all the masters to "come out and write explicitly about homosexual themes. The argument assumes that homosexuality is an engine of creativity and that the closet is a brake. Neither assumption is necessarily true. Maugham or Melville out of the closet might have written dullest, not better, books. The closet itself may be a prime source of the internal friction that produced the works claimed for the gay hall of fame. After all, coming out is now associated with improved mental health, contentment, self-acceptance, and a host of states imical to the unruly artistic temperament.

After his landslide reelection in 1972, President Nixon moved swiftly to dismantle the poverty program, including Legal Services. The great political battle of Bradley's life was engaged. Nixon's director of the Office of Economic Opportunity was a finicky Kentucky Republican named Alvin Arnett, who surprised the poverty-law network by being open-minded. Arnett was so impressed by an impassioned three-hour speech Bradley gave in defense of legal aid for the poor that he tried to appoint Bradley head of the national Legal Services program. But the White House vetoed the idea. Bradley proposed a bureaucratic maneuver: Arnett should bypass the White House by appointing himself head of Legal Services and making Bradley his special assistant, to run the program in everything but title. Arnett agreed. Thus Bradley arrived for his first full-time stint in Washington with both his sexual life and his political mission in the closet.

Before leaving Atlanta, Bradley invited his old girlfriend Sally to dinner at an elegant French restaurant. She was getting married. Bradley felt guilty about having manipulated her during their bizarre affair and thought that she, of all people, would be happy to hear that he was homosexual. It would explain why he had hurt her.

At dinner he dropped teasing hints about a big secret. Sally pounced on them as usual, wanting to know instantly. Then Bradley backpedaled, unable to say the words. He promised the secret after dessert, then after coffee. Finally, he stopped stirring the coffee and said bluntly, "Sally, I'm a homosexual."

She looked stricken. Bradley knew instantly that his plan had gone awry. When she insisted that it was impossible, he could only reply that he ought to know better than she. "What about those times we made love?" she asked.

Bradley sighed. "Well, that's not easy to talk about. But if you must know, I got through them by fantasizing that you were another man."

She swallowed and began to cry, softly and then hysterically. Before Bradley could say anything else, she ran through the restaurant into the ladies' room.

Bradley absorbed stares from the surrounding tables. Fifteen minutes later, he asked the manager to send someone to check on Sally, who returned looking spent and resigned. "Dan, it's sad that you're a homosexual," she said. "Does it mean you'll never get married and have children?"

Bradley was too busy and too frightened to lead a homosexual life in the capital. Whenever he became sexually desperate, he would arrange a quick business trip to Philadelphia and sneak off to the Spartan Baths. In Washington, he lived only politics. He thought he liked it that way.

Since Nixon was determined to abolish the OEO, Bradley and his cohorts determined to save Legal
Services by installing them in an independent corporation. Nixon vetoed one bill, and another fell by the wayside, but a third attempt passed Congress, and Nixon, weakened by Watergate, signed it. Bradley was triumphant.

One day, without warning, he started crying in his office at OEO headquarters. It came so suddenly that Bradley had to make up a story of family tragedy for his secretary. Then, when he could not stop, he locked the door and waited for the fit to pass. After an hour, he was panicky. Still crying, he placed a call to a closted psychiatrist he had met during his brief social period in Atlanta. He begged for help, saying over and over that he was "incapacitated" for no reason, just when everything was going well.

The Atlanta psychiatrist advised Bradley that his old college lover was now a professor in the psychiatry department at a medical school in the Baltimore-Washington area. That same afternoon, still crying, Bradley drove to the psychiatrist's private office. The doctor talked openly of his being gay, but he was deeply closted himself, with photographs of his wife and children on his desk. Bradley introduced himself and said, "I think I'm a homosexual." He emphasized his doubts. Years later, Bradley still marvels at the power of retrenchment. "After all I'd been through, I tried to act like it was something completely new," he says. "He and the doctor plunged back into the fundamental questions.

IV

What Makes the Blood Rise

IN HIS Prolemata, Aristotle (lover of his student Hermias) explained that some men are constructed physcically so that some or all of their semen "settles" in their "fundament" instead of their testicles. In these cases, he declared, there cannot be enough "force" to expel the residue of semen, which then cools and congeals. Aristotle concluded that these fundament-oriented men naturally desired to submit to sexual intercourse, adding that if the semen "collected" in both places in the proper mixture, a man might be required to seek two pleasures.

Plato took a different approach in his Symposium, arguing that man had descended from an ideal type of being with four legs and four arms. When the gods divided this being into two human types, Plato suggested, some of the resulting males and females retained yearnings for the lost half of themselves. The human psyche, having been originally both male and female, would always have a fluidity at its core that could become manifest as homosexuality.

Plato and Aristotle established the two broad schools of theory that have been in contention ever since: the "physical" school and the ethereal, "environmental" one. The former holds that homosexuality is a predetermined aspect of a person's physical inheritance—like baldness or flat feet or eye color, except that it is invisible. In modern terms, a physicalist would argue that homosexuality is a mysterious part of the genetic package. An environmentalist, on the other hand, believes the condition is not fixed, that it can be affected by factors ranging from mass culture to individual will. This notion introduces the dreaded or welcome element of choice; homosexuality is a taste to be acquired or rejected. Sigmund Freud, patron of the modern environmentalists, asserted that all human beings have pansexual urges when they are young, that with maturity these urges are resolved into healthy heterosexual channels, and that homosexuality is an "arrested development" caused by parent-child maladjustment. He was vague on the last point, leaving his followers to quarrel inconclusively over whether the culprit was a weak father, an overbearing mother, or something else. The essential environmental thesis is that the cause, and the cure, lie somewhere within the potential reach of psychoanalysis, though they would not be easy to find.

Each of the two major schools lives in part off the failure of the other. Otherwise, the physicalists argue that only a physical, rigidly determined homosexuality could have survived the unspeakable tortures of history. Through a thousand years of ghastly executions, homosexuals refused to renounce their practices—with a tenacity that rivaled the more highly publicized religious martyrs. Even during the decadent years of the Roman Empire, the law condemned homosexuals to execution by fire "in the sight of the people." In 1327, English noblemen executed the homosexual King Edward II by ramming a hot iron into his bowels. During the religious wars after the Reformation, sexual deviance was perhaps the commonest expression of heresy, and religious tribunals sent homosexuals to the stake.

In more recent times, homosexuals have been consigned to mental institutions, where doctors have tried to cure them with no-nonsense applications such as castration, lobotomy, and electric shock treatment. None of these has worked. Remarkably, many homosexuals have volunteered for these procedures in the desperate hope of escaping their torment. In 1894, Gay Olmstead had himself castrated in Chicago after all other treatments had failed, but the miserable Olmstead soon told his doctor that men still caused him to "have erections, commit masturbation, and have the same passion as before." From 1941 to 1943, Dr. Samuel Lieberman subjected a black transvestite homosexual to electric shock treatment to electrify a small town, with many regrettable side effects but no effect at all on his sexual preference. More recently, Dr. J. Smec and Dr. K. Freund reported to the scientific community the
disheartening results of their experimental aversion therapy. "Psychic driving" and assorted miracle drugs have failed, along with countless home remedies and psychoanalytic tricks.

If sexuality were fungible, say the psychologists, homosexuality would have been expunged long ago at the stake or in the laboratory. This leads to the notion that homosexuals cannot reform "any more than a leopard can change its spots," which in turn supports the gay-rights position that homosexuals should be treated like any other physically determined minority group.

The environmentalists are more comfortable in theory than in the laboratory. They say homosexuality is behavior, not a pigment or a shape of the skull, and that it is difficult to change and explain only because it comes from the deepest chambers of the human psyche, where sex and survival wrestle with the awareness of death. Admittedly, they say, cures are rare, but at least they are not nonsensical, as is the idea of changing an African into an Oriental. They point to examples of voluntary homosexuality, citing feminists who claim to have "adopted" lesbianism for political reasons. On the mass scale, they say that fluctuations in the incidence of homosexuality throughout history are incompatible with physical theory.

But sexuality is a way to be, not a way to think. No person works through these essentially emotional questions on a plane of weightless rationality, and it is all too easy to be an environmentalist in theory and a psychologist in practice. Fear and anxiety tend to produce physicality, diverting humanity into sexual camps. The shifting, polymorphous sexuality that one might expect from environmental theory does not exist. People become one thing or another, with most homosexuals wanting to believe they had no choice of becoming otherwise and most heterosexuals wanting to believe they have no chance. Fear brings the elements of confusion together on the wispy issue of bisexuality, which is a threat to both sides. Homosexuals laugh at bisexuality as a pretense or as a mode of transportation—today's bisexual is tomorrow's homosexual. Heterosexuals tend to look at bisexuality as the trapdoor on a scaffold of sex. Both see bisexuals as arid, deathly utopians, utterly liberated and therefore inhuman.

The unbearable, wonderful urgency of sex divides the camps. Homosexuals fear heterosexuals because they have always performed the lobotomies and made the rules—and also because they carry all the advantages of cultural transmission, such as children, a clear meaning for the word "generation," and membership in the most resilient and universal institution in human history (however battered the family has become). Looking in the other direction, heterosexuals are daunted by the thought of gay people living without these very amulets—casting them off, breaking taboos, and then somehow going on with life more or less like everyone else. Gays are reminders of each life as a discrete, vanishing particle, separate from the glue of custom.

On the issue of homosexuality, ignorance and dogmatism stick closely together, as they often do, but there are also odd combinations of hatred, deception, righteousness, debasement, and joy. As a species, human beings usually refuse to be humbled by the most prosaic aspects of our condition. We come in different colors, and we copulate in different ways, with different things at heart. These simple matters of affect raise passions that regularly confound the pretensions of civil society.

As a theoretical question, the nature and cause of homosexuality continues to baffle and prevent us from coming to grips with the complex of reasons why this is so. The evidence of abstractive speculation, the discussion of facts and figures at the cost of being fired by the Republicans. Before leaving, he told his secret to a married woman friend named Susan, whose air of wise maternity had always elicited his trust. During the long, convoluted buildup to his speech, Bradley projected such a piercing melancholy that she began crying in anticipation of the worst. When Bradley finally got the words out, she cried, "I thought you had leukemia or something. I don't care if you're gay. My father's gay!"

In Atlanta, Bradley found that poverty law had lost the spark of a ministry for him. He told his fifth psychiatrist that he was basically a frustrated politician. But he knew running for office would mean going even deeper into the closet. Coldly analyzing his past, he decided that he had already made too many mistakes. He would be exposed. Careful as he had been, he had gone to too many bars in Atlanta.

Fate intervened again when his Washington bosses drafted him to become the new Legal Services regional director in San Francisco, gay capital of the United States. Bradley pretended the transfer would be onerous, but secretly he was celebrating the move.
as a stroke of luck. He was headed for the briar patch, where he could “deal with” his homosexuality at last. Perhaps he could drift out of the closet there and even find a long-term lover.

None of this was to be. In San Francisco, Bradley lived in the famous Castro area, surrounded by 35,000 homosexual neighbors. The entire support structure of his life was gay—his bank tellers, grocers, pharmacists, landlords, and street vendors. But he kept his distance, behaving like a closeted heterosexual. Now he lived in the office and one at home. He confined his social life to the anonymity of the baths. He shunned the bars and never attended parties.

When Jimmy Carter’s presidential campaign came along in 1976, Bradley made use of his old Georgia connections to sign on. After Carter’s victory over Gerald Ford, Bradley closed his affairs in San Francisco and moved to Miami to contemplate his future. He believed that homosexuality had capped his career in politics, but he could not bring himself to forsake politics and come out of the closet. His objections to homosexuality had become immorality. He was between worlds. He thought of rejecting politics for legal practice, freeing himself for whatever private life felt comfortable.

Shortly after the Carter inauguration, Bradley was approached about becoming the Florida commissioner of racing and pari-mutuel wagering. Gov. Reubin Askew was looking for someone above reproach, and Bradley, who didn’t know a bookie from a bookmark, was perfect. No one could suspect him of ties to gamblers or the Mafia.

Bradley visited Hialeah Race Track and was captivated by the manicured grounds, the pink flamingoes inside the track, the splashes of color, and the rhythmic theater of horses, money, and people. Governor Askew soon talked him into taking the job, provided, of course, that Bradley passed the exhaustive state security investigation. The mere thought of it threw Bradley into a panic. Everything changed overnight. He ceased contemplating the possibility of drifting into a gay lifestyle and began feverishly erasing all traces of it from his past. Since leaving the government payroll he had allowed himself to spend some time in gay bars. When state investigators asked for snapshots of him, Bradley became obsessed with fear that they would show his photograph to the bartenders, or, even worse, to the attendants at the Club Bath, which Bradley had been frequenting now for five years.

Bradley nearly went to pieces when one of his Coconut Grove neighbors stopped by to tell him that the state investigators had asked her a number of questions, mostly about his sex life. They had asked specifically if he was a “queer.” Bradley suffered a thousand visions of exposure and ruin before the woman volunteered that she thought it outrageous that the state was delving into a man’s private life, and she didn’t mind admitting that she had lied to them, saying that Bradley was seeing a lot of her own daughter. This was not true, of course, and the woman told Bradley that it could not be true since the daughter was a lesbian. This announcement made Bradley’s jaw drop and his mind spin. He found himself thanking her profusely, and she eventually became a trusted friend.

The news of the sexual emphasis put Bradley’s cover-up into high gear. He enlisted the help of two lawyers in Miami, a married couple with whom he had shared his secret. He coached them with plausible stories of heterosexual romance. They could say they’d heard him talk a lot about Sally, Bradley’s old girlfriend, and about Barbara, Terry Lenzner’s former assistant (now a lawyer). Bradley had shared his secret with Barbara a year earlier, only to hear her say she had already figured it out for herself (which had disturbed him). Bradley also threw in the name of his neighbor’s lesbian daughter. He and his two accomplices agreed on the dates and places of incidents they would cite, complete with details of lovers’ quarrels, public necking, and a pregnancy scare or two. Bradley backstopped the whole play with calls to Susan and Sally, and then held his breath. Some weeks later, Florida’s chief investigator summoned Bradley to a hurried meeting at Miami Airport and told him, “Dan, either you are a man who is completely clean and above suspicion, or you are the biggest fraud I’ve ever investigated.”

As commissioner, Bradley was the Jehovah figure of the Florida gambling industry, scowling from the front pages when angry and smiling on the society pages when he pronounced his blessing on a new season. And as a public figure in the state, he attended at least two or three major social functions a week, which presented an escort problem. The same friends who had covered for him in the security investigation came through with a mixture of unwitting dates and willing “beards.” Sometimes he would go alone. As a result of this socializing, a Miami Herald reporter called one day to announce that Bradley would be featured in a series on Miami’s most eligible bachelors.

Bradley had to submit to the established treatment: posed photographs, a guided tour of his “bachelor home,” and a two-hour interview at which a bubbly blonde reporter wanted to know everything. She quizzed Bradley on his ideal woman, his marriage and family plans, his romantic history, his favorite singles bars, his advice for young lovers, his turn-ons and his turn-offs. “That was the most difficult interview I ever had,” Bradley recalls, laughing painfully. “I had to make up the whole thing.”

When the story appeared in the Herald, Bradley’s gay friends in Miami teased him mercilessly.
tendants at the Club Bath or drinking buddies from the gay bars would quote from his remarks and howl with laughter. Bradley decided to lie low for a while, which his demanding schedule made easy. This had been an asexual period for him anyway, even by his standards. He had been sneaking into the Club Bath one night every few weeks and into a gay bar perhaps once a month.

The danger and the contradictions intensified the thrill of his double life as Commissioner Bradley, the upright official who tried to ferret out, expose, and eliminate the secret underworld of gambling, and as “Doug Bailey,” who would sneak off to join a different underworld in restaurants and gay bars, some of which, he heard, were controlled by the same organized-crime figures he chased in the day.

Matters became even more complicated when Anita Bryant’s anti-homosexual crusade sprang up in Miami and swept the nation. Bradley’s boss, Governor Askew, announced his support of Bryant’s movement at a press conference just after a meeting with Bradley. So the racing commissioner found himself standing in a room full of reporters and television cameras when, in response to a question, Askew said he would never tolerate any homosexuals in his administration. “I am amused, mostly,” says Bradley. “And I was proud of pulling it off.”

Bachelor Lawyers of Washington

HEN ASKEW left office early in 1979, Bradley temporarily agreed to return to Washington as consultant to the Legal Services Corporation, pending appointment of a new president in June. He checked into a hotel in the capital, where he had not lived for nearly five years, and resolved not to be a hermit. He was out of politics forever, he told himself. He would soon take an extended vacation to Europe and “find himself.” Meanwhile, he would enjoy himself in Washington for the first time.

He went to a different gay bar nearly every night —Equus, Rascals, the Eagle, and many others. At first he was surprised to see so many people he knew from his political past. There were lawyers, lobbyists, bureaucrats, and aides from Capitol Hill. After playing the recognition game, Bradley would gossip with them about the closet. Not surprisingly, he found that there were many different levels of paranoia. Some of the Capitol Hill aides would speak rather openly about their bosses, their jobs, and even their lovers. Others would say only that they worked “on the Hill.” They all spoke of people they knew who were more snugly in the closet —of people who avoided gay bars altogether and confined their gay lives to parties, mostly in Georgetown. More secretly, some officials seemed to have relatively stable lovers and hardly ever ventured out at all. Others might or might not have been spotted at various “cruising areas” in the capital. Finally, there was a “mystery group” of congressmen, military men, and others whose sexual nature was debated even among the homosexual cognoscenti.

Some of Bradley’s contemporaries introduced him to some younger, Adonis types among Capitol Hill aides. These being his chosen sexual partners, he pursued brief affairs with a few of them and became talking friends with several others. He attended a few all-gay dinners and parties, including one in Virginia that turned out to be an orgy. (Bradley wound up in bed with a lawyer from the Department of Justice.) He heard about gay art classes and softball teams, about the lively debates at the Gertrude Stein Club (Democratic) and the Walt Whitman Club (Republican), and he was invited to join a rather campy organization called Bachelor Lawyers of Washington (BLOW). He concluded that closeted life in the capital might not be as grim as he had always assumed.

This became a factor in Bradley’s plans when the consensus candidate of the various Legal Services cabinets, F.A.O. Schwartz, Jr., decided at the last moment that he would not accept the job as president. This caused a crisis. Pressure mounted for Bradley to offer himself as the emergency choice. He equivocated. Although he had sworn to himself never to take a step back deeper into the closet, his brief sojourn in Washington had changed his view of the situation. He wanted the job. “I finally decided that I was not going to come out of the closet, but at the same time I was not going to be upright about it all the time,” he recalls.

He moved into a spacious Washington office and spent the first few months lobbying a $321 million appropriation bill through Congress. At night, he went to BLOW meetings and to all-gay cocktail parties in Georgetown. The parties became a new dimension in his life. He learned that many closeted officials were in the habit of sleeping in the early evening so they could party and “cruise” late at night. He learned the informal etiquette by which gay politicians communicated their level of secrecy. One rule, for example, was never to introduce anyone more specifically than they introduced themselves. Bradley never introduced himself as president of Legal Services, and he came to expect others to follow his cue.

Gossip among friends was another matter. Everyone was fair game then, and “who’s who in the closet” was a leading subject of conversation. Bradley was skeptical of some of the names he heard bandied about in Congress, even when he heard them from staff members. But when some of those congressmen themselves showed up at the cocktail parties to gossip about their colleagues, he began to change his mind. Only two or three congressmen

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dared to show themselves at the parties, but Bradley came to know a score of others—first by gossip, then by one or two coded remarks at a private meeting, and finally when he pleaded with some closeted members of Congress not to vote against gay-rights legislation.

His official duties required him to attend more straight parties than gay ones. Bradley impressed his old friend Barbara into duty as his regular date. She went, and all was well until election year, 1980. Then he slipped back into the familiar depression. When a hysterical crying fit came over him one afternoon, he finally called his fourth psychiatrist, the closeted ex-lover of number five. Bradley arranged to begin emergency treatments once a day at 4:45 P.M., which caused security problems. By a long-standing rule, his secretary was required to know his whereabouts at all times. So Bradley had to make up stories every day that would make him temporarily unavailable. He was meeting the plumber in the basement, far away from the phone. Or he was picking up his car from a repair shop whose name he couldn't remember. Some days he would simply flout the rule and declare that he was disappearing. Years earlier, he might have encouraged the speculation that he was trysting with a secret female lover, but now he refused that much of a concession to the closet.

Bradley had long since accepted the idea that homosexuality was powerful enough to twist a person into any shape and to make him lie to himself and anyone else, as necessary. "There's no end to it," he says. Still, he was surprised at first to hear gossip that some of the most visible leaders of the anti-homosexual Moral Majority and New Right were themselves closeted gays. He knew better than to place hard bets against the drumbeat of the gay grapevine, but he still associated homosexuals with civil libertarians. His friends among the closeted congressmen were liberal Democrats like himself.

For at least a year before their arrests he had been hearing about Rep. Jon Hinson and Rep. Robert Bauman at the gay parties. Hinson, a conservative Mississippi Republican, was said to cruise the roughneck bars, and Bauman was said to have been picking up "chickens" (young male hustlers) for many years outside a gay bar called the Chesapeake House. The tawdry aspects of the sex did not bother Bradley, since he took them for granted as a consequence of life in the closet. Congressmen, he assumed, might avoid even the baths for fear of being recognized.

What bothered Bradley was the politics, particularly Bauman's. A married Roman Catholic with four children, Bauman was a founder and former national chairman of Young Americans for Freedom. He was also co-founder and national chairman of the American Conservative Union. In the House, he was widely considered the most intelligent, promising leader of the New Right—a crusader against busing, abortion, deficit spending, communism, and homosexuality. Bradley had heard the rumors about J. Edgar Hoover and others who were said to have expressed their self-hatred on a grand scale in politics, but he could not quite understand how anyone could strive for leadership of a movement that sought to persecute his own kind. Yet both Hinson and Bauman were arrested in 1980 for precisely the kinds of homosexual solicitations that the gay grapevine had ascribed to them.

The Reagan administration took power in 1981 on a pledge to abolish the Legal Services Corporation. Bradley sent up the emergency battle flags once again and tried to rally support in Congress. Ironically, to Bradley's utter mortification, the first test came on an amendment proposed by Rep. Larry McDonald of Georgia to bar Legal Services lawyers from cases involving discrimination against homosexuals. Numerous liberal congressmen told Bradley that they would have to vote with McDonald against their principles. They spoke of political suicide and asked his understanding. Bradley kept nodding, but he knew that more than a dozen of these liberals were themselves closeted homosexuals. He second-guessed their motives, and then his own. It seemed impossible for closeted people to separate political interests from personal ones. The McDonald Amendment passed the House in June 1981 but failed in the Senate.

Bradley raged against the hypocrisy that he saw in his own second thoughts and in the defections of the gay congressmen. They were working against themselves. Ominously, the threat to Legal Services and to gay rights in general seemed to be growing, and Bradley thought that some of the very congressmen leading McDonald's movement were themselves closeted homosexuals. This he could not fathom, except to believe that it all came from the insidious workings of the closet. Having finally isolated the closet as the archenemy in his private life, Bradley now faced it in politics as well.

VII.

The Homosexual Wars

Homosexuality has long been associated with the political Left. After Sen. Joseph McCarthy made sensational news with his long lists of alleged "communists" in the government, few people noted that most of the government employees actually sacked in the witch-hunt were classified as "perverts." At the height of the McCarthy era, the word
"subversive" was commonly used as a synonym for "pervert," "deviate," and "communist" alike. "I don't say every homosexual is a subversive, and I don't say every subversive is a homosexual," conceded Sen. Kenneth Wherry of Nebraska in 1950. But "man of low morality is a menace in the government, whatever he is, and they are all tied up together."

This attitude survived the Cold War. When Walter Jenkins, President Johnson's closest aide, was arrested for homosexual acts in 1964, commentators expressed the utmost shock that the malady had afflicted someone from the mainstream of American politics. It was a novel development, but at least Jenkins was a Democrat in a liberal administration.

In the 1970s, Judge G. Harrold Carswell, who had been President Nixon's Supreme Court nominee, was arrested in a public rest room for homosexual acts, and so was Gen. Edwin Walker, the flamboyant John Bircher who had "commanded" the white students during the 1962 Ole Miss riots. They were dismissed as kooks who had been unable to make it in the "real world" of Washington politics.

Then, in 1978 and 1979, stories broke about the arrests of two certified Washingtonians—Reps. Fred Richmond and Joseph P. Wyatt. In 1980, an underground Washington newspaper alleged that Rep. William Moorhead had been having an extra-marital affair with a male/female "hermaphrodite" named Terri Hall, who had taken grievances against the congressman to lawyers and the press. Moorhead did not seek reelection in 1980, and has become a political consultant. These three were mainstream politicians—but at least they were Democrats. Finally, with the arrests of Hinson and Bauman, political homosexuality seemed to have spread across the entire political spectrum.

If this trend has dismayed the previously immune Republican stalwarts, it has brought surprisingly little joy to homosexual activists, many of whom had grown fond of their leftist political connections. They thought of their enemy as the system, represented by conservative, capitalist Republicans. Now they found themselves with a conundrum: if gay liberation is the antithesis of capitalism values, why is it that the burgeoning homosexual subculture of the last decade has manifested itself largely in crass, commercial hedonism—in an explosion of discos, hotels, nightclubs, and gay bars, all designed for maximum luxury and the ten-minute sexual affair?

In Washington and other large cities, the most active, visible members of the homosexual community tend to be affluent white professionals, whose sexual identity is their only claim to oppressed status. Highly privileged otherwise, they agitate for entrepreneurial freedom and a stable currency, like good Republicans.

As sexual solidarity diminishes and political antagonism grows, homosexuals tend to behave more like traditional grasping politicians, who will use any weapon at their command. The most dangerous weapon available to both sides is the closet. As a political issue, the closet raises explosive psychological forces of hatred and self-hatred. Closeted homosexuals have been lining up on both sides of an impending war. Right-wing activists, including many closeted homosexuals, have sought to drive homosexuals from public life. Before the 1980 elections, the National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC) and allied groups targeted House and Senate liberals for defeat partly because of their tolerance of homosexuality. The Reagan administration supported the McDonald Amendment to prohibit the representation of homosexuals by the Legal Services Corporation. In September 1981, the Rev. Jerry Falwell held a press conference on the steps of the Capitol, urging Congress to veto a revision of the District of Columbia legal code that would have legalized all forms of sexual activity between consenting adults. Falwell sent out a nationwide funding appeal, headlined: SOMODY AND BESITYA WILL BE LEGAL IN OUR NATION'S CAPITAL UNLESS YOU ACT NOW! Congress vetoed the revision in October (the only time it has ever overridden the District's home-rule powers on a matter unrelated to the prerogatives of the federal government), and Falwell's campaign received such enthusiastic support that he sent out more appeals for money. "If this gay conspiracy succeeds," he wrote, "it will be just one more step downward for America, towards moral decadence."

In February 1982, Falwell promised his followers that he would turn over a list of the "gay conspirators" to Congress. (Ironically, the "page scandal" broke not long thereafter, indicating once again that many of the gay conspirators may be in Congress.) Meanwhile, editors from the Spotlight, journal of the far-Right Liberty Lobby, began publishing a scandal sheet called Deep Backgrounder, naming more than a dozen allegedly homosexual members of Congress in the first issue. And on a spy front, word leaked out about HOMEX (Homosexual Extortion), the FBI's twenty-year operation to identify prominent homosexuals in Washington, ostensibly to prevent their being compromised by the Russians. Columnists quoted unnamed investigators to the effect that the Russian KGB had been actively recruiting homosexuals in the capital.

Thus the pressure builds on the Right, and if President Reagan continues to be "Carterized" into vacillating impotence on the economy and the Russians, the chance of a scapegoating crusade increases. No one is more aware of this possibility than homosexual activists themselves, and they have been engaged in a lively debate over how to respond.
Handicapped, as always, by the fact that every one of their influential officials in Washington is closeted, they have tended to the traditional posture, which means lying low, hoping that the attack will not be severe, and trusting in the power of the civil libertarians and their own hidden numbers. There is, however, a minority school of thought that disparages this posture as similar to that of some Europeans before the Holocaust. The militants want to fight fire with fire by exposing the closeted homosexual leaders of the Republican Party and the New Right. They propose to deprive the homosexual question of its political luster by giving unfriendly politicians a shove toward the closet door. This tactic of enforced honesty is called "outrage."

Perry Deane Young will strike the first major blow for "outrage" this November, when his new book God's Bullies will be published, naming NCPAC president Terry Dolan as a closeted homosexual. Young, an openly gay Washington writer who is the co-author of Dave Kopay's best-selling book about homosexuality in professional football, believes that the paramount issue is hypocrisy. Dolan, he says, forfeited his right to privacy by advocating political measures inimical to the rights of his fellow closeted homosexuals.

Young says that Terry Dolan is a more important figure than Robert Bauman, his former colleague on the staff of the Young Americans for Freedom. As the man in control of the wealthiest political-action committee in the far Right, Dolan meets regularly with members of Reagan's staff and has breakfast once a week with Jerry Falwell. But at night, says Young, he goes to bars, including a popular "leather bar" called the Eagle. In his book, Young describes one of Dolan's evenings that began in the Eagle and ended in bed with a man named Richard Anderson, from whom Young has a supporting affidavit.

Young says that the closeted subculture in Washington is so large that its members have adopted the traditional habits of the capital, in which political enemies often roast each other on the job and then fraternize that evening. As a result, antihomosexual homosexuals like Robert Bauman and (allegedly) Terry Dolan are frequently encountered by their political opponents, who are sometimes friends or lovers. "I know of at least ten other prominent leaders of the Republican Right who have either had sex with friends of mine or gone to gay parties with them," Young writes. Dan Bradley has had similar experiences. So has Larry Bush, a gay reporter for the Advocate. And so have their friends.

Other gay activists are collecting affidavits, too. If there were a war of outrage, they say, its victims would include members of the elected Republican leadership in Congress, some of the leaders who pushed the McDonald Amendment, and also some of the principal supporters of the Hyde Amendment, which prohibits federally funded abortions. The Reagan administration would not be spared, they say, as the president has associated with closeted homosexuals before and since the scandal that cost him a couple of aides when he was governor of California. The target list includes at least one member of his White House staff and several of his earliest political supporters, now lobbyists and political consultants in Washington. One of the latter group is a master of style at parties and is known casually in the closet as "Reagan's Capote."

As for recent political history, the outrage searchlight seems to be hovering over Sen. Joseph McCarthy and the famous men who helped him find subversives. Gay activists and historians are collecting rumors and affidavits on those leaders, hoping to be able to prove soon that some of them flew broomsticks to the witch-hunt. If true, the news would add a new dimension of travesty to that era.

Like the Jewish member of the Nazi Party, the homosexual in antihomosexual organizations surfaces from time to time, and the world pays little interest. In July of this year, a veteran reporter of the Liberty Lobby's Spotlight told a gay newspaper in Washington that he had been fired because of his homosexuality.

Joel Passinault says he violated one of the cardinal rules of the closet by allowing himself to take phone calls at the office from his lover, who was (and is) dying of cancer at Bethesda Naval Hospital. "He was frightened," says Passinault. "So I talked to him. I couldn't not talk to him under those circumstances. And somebody at the Spotlight overheard me say 'I love you' to him several times, and that was that. They fired me."

Anyone unfamiliar with the hidden recesses of the closet may find it astonishing that Passinault wants to go back to the Spotlight. He winces when he says that his best friend at the Spotlight wrote the most violent antihomosexual diatribes, but he takes solace from the memory of a "common ground" between them. "We shared a belief about the direction the country should be taking," he says. "We both want more spending for national defense and less for wasteful social programs."

The central issue of closet politics is self-denial or self-hatred. It lies beneath the charges of hypocrisy and the differences between liberals and conservatives. Perry Deane Young and the gay activists contemplating acts of outrage against right-wing activists would be the first to condemn the identical acts when committed against someone else. They hate the closet passionately, but they respect almost anyone's right to choose the time and place of exit. The exception—the only sin that could induce them to violate the protective code among homosexuals—comes from Robert Bauman.
and people like him, whom the activists describe as “classic, self-hating, schizophrenic, closeted gays.” Bauman and his ilk do more than threaten political warfare against homosexuals. By absorbing, intensifying, and projecting antigay values from positions of leadership, they give the most vivid conceivable demonstrations of self-hatred as a motivation for staying in the closet. The demonstrations threaten all homosexuals, among most of whom it is an article of faith that the closet is a prison justified only by prudent, reasoned fear of oppression by the straight world. Almost everyone in the closet wants to believe that it is legitimate fear that keeps him there, not self-loathing. As the outside world grows more tolerant, many have found it more difficult to tolerate Bauman-like reminders of the power of self-loathing to produce psychological contortions.

The heterosexual world remains generally oblivious to the possibility that the pro- and antigay sexual forces, both led by homosexuals, may start a war by lobbing napalm at each other. Indeed, the established order has taken little notice of stirrings about and among gays. The official position of establishment Washington is that homosexuality per se is not objectionable in public life, but that the closet is bad because it introduces a susceptibility to blackmail. This is the rationale behind the FBI’s Homosex operation, which is further predicated on the assumption that the best way to protect against possible espionage in this area is, first, to identify all homosexuals in public life, especially in Washington. Conveniently, the strategy justifies the existence of numerous FBI specialists, but it is probably not the most economical way of proceeding. The scarcity of blackmail-related homosexual espionage and the FBI’s failure to invite troubled homosexuals to make disclosures with immunity both suggest that the bureau has a surpassing interest in homosexuality itself.

The CIA operates under a stated public position similar to the FBI’s. Recently, an agency technician challenged the sincerity of the policy by filing a lawsuit, claiming that he took the security-risk rationale at face value and decided to confess his homosexuality to his CIA boss—thereby removing leverage against him as a blackmail target—but that the CIA fired him anyway. The technician charges that the security-risk rationale is a fraud behind which the agency hides its dislike of homosexuals.

Most major organs of the American media take the official position, declaring editorially that sexual preference should not be held against a citizen in public life. Still, no television or radio network, major newspaper, or national magazine has an openly homosexual reporter among its employees—with a single exception, the San Francisco Chronicle—which has one. The homosexuals who already work for major media organs have given evidence by their unambiguous behavior that they believe they would suffer if they declared themselves. They are all deeply closeted.

“My reporter friends at the Washington Post always shy away from me after lunch when we get near the Post building,” says Larry Bush. “They are more uptight than any closeted people I deal with, except possibly military officers in uniform.”

Most newspapers are skittish about gay stories. Columnist Dave Anderson of the New York Times says that in his long career the Times editors killed only one sports column, which was about Dave Kopay and homosexuality in professional football. Roger Wilkins, formerly of the Times editorial page, has said that his bosses stopped only three of his editorials, two of which were about gay issues.

By all evidence, the newspapers and other media organs would simply prefer to avoid the issue. Perhaps this has something to do with congenital machismo among journalists and writers, who frequently betray the worry that they are mere typists or observers of those who make real decisions, perform real work, and really deserve their Miller Time. More likely, the avoidance comes from the fact that homosexuals live in their own closet, hiding from homosexuals while homosexuals hide from them. It hasn’t occurred to them to inquire. Or they don’t want to inquire because they know it will be a big mess. Or perhaps they sense that questions about the nature and causes of homosexuality will lead inevitably to the same questions about heterosexuality, which is unnerving.

Whatever the reason, avoidance is less becoming to journalists than to other professional groups. Its practical effect has been to ignore one of the most explosive social changes of the past decade. If the “war of outrage” comes, and readers suddenly look up to find a homosexual on every street corner and a prominent official coming out of every closet, journalists will more than likely join in a panic they could have helped avoid.

VIII.

Out of the Closet

AN BRADLEY often discussed the politics of the closet with his gay friends in Congress. They agreed that it would serve the public interest for them to declare themselves. To do so would fulfill their obligations of honesty to the voters and to themselves, and possibly would prepare the way for less fear in politics. Two liberal Democrats told Bradley they planned to “come out” if they survived the 1980 elections, but after winning they returned to the usual talk of “political suicide” and decided to postpone the announcement once again. Bradley’s conclusion was that no one fights his way out of the closet for reasons of political idealism.

One Sunday afternoon, in May 1981, he ate a
sandwich in a bookstore near Dupont Circle and began walking home to watch “60 Minutes.” It was then that he saw, sitting on the fender of a car, the young blond man of his dreams. “I heard trumpets blaring and angels singing,” he recalls. He backtracked past the car and then turned around, groping for a plan. Finally, he struck up a conversation with Richard,* who turned out to be the son of a Secret Service agent on the White House detail. “I fell in love for the first time,” says Bradley. “That was the beginning of my downfall.”

Richard was the first time Bradley had ever felt any emotion in his sex life. “There were emotions I didn’t even know I had,” he says. Within a few weeks, Richard was spending most of his nights at Bradley’s house, and Bradley was rushing home early from the office in the hope of greeting him. Soon he was making plans to leave government service and make a life with his new lover. When his psychiatrist suggested caution, observing that Richard was a construction worker with a high school education twenty years Bradley’s junior, Bradley scoffed at the difficulties. “I didn’t give a damn if I had to go out and drive a taxi,” he says.

As a couple, they learned to accommodate two closets instead of one. They made it a rule never to venture into Virginia, as Richard knew too many people there, and they coached each other on how to behave in a crisis. Once, in Georgetown, Richard gave the signal between clenched teeth, saying, “Dan! Keep walking.” and Bradley tried to look normal as he circled the block, giving Richard enough time to talk with a girlfriend. Another time in Georgetown there was no time to separate, and Bradley used the backup plan, introducing Richard to a White House aide as a man who was hired to build a patio in Bradley’s backyard. Richard tried to look like a sullen employee. Still another time, standing in line with Richard for a movie, Bradley saw Sen. Alan Cranston and his wife walk up behind them. Bradley abandoned Richard in the line without a word or sign of explanation. After chatting amiably with the Cranstons about President Reagan’s threat to abolish the Legal Services Corporation, Bradley went back to the end of the line and then stealthily located Richard’s seat in the theater, keeping an eye on the Cranstons to make sure they did not notice where he was sitting.

These denials took a greater toll on Bradley than any of his previous misadventures in the closet. “I wanted to tell everybody that Richard was the man I loved,” he says. “I was proud of him, but the closet made me treat him like a leper. That hurt, and it hurt when he did the same thing to me.”

One night a woman called Bradley at home and identified herself as Richard’s mother. “How well do you know my son, Mr. Bradley?” she asked, and Bradley mumbled an answer, suppressing tears. He had visions that Secret Service agents would kick in his door. “Finally, she asked me if he was a good worker on the patio,” says Bradley, “and I realized that she had bought his whole cover story.”

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* A pseudonym.
he liked to watch all these terrible television programs. And whenever we talked about going to the movies, he always wanted to see Clint Eastwood. Things like that. I began to realize that we had nothing in common except love, and we couldn’t stay in bed and be in love twenty-four hours a day.”

One afternoon, Richard appeared in Bradley’s office, wanting to borrow his car. He seemed uncomprehending and unapologetic when Bradley explained the trouble this visit was causing him. Not long after, Bradley told him that he would be moving to Florida alone. A long period of guilt and recrimination ensued, during which Bradley tried to explain that he still loved Richard even though he did not want to live with him forever.

Both the good and bad aspects of the love affair convinced Bradley that he would come out of the closet sooner or later. “I was determined that I would never again panic when my lover dropped by the office,” he says. “And I wouldn’t walk down the street with him like a fugitive criminal, always on the lookout for people who might recognize me.”

By December 1981, Bradley and the poverty-law supporters in Congress had beaten back President Reagan’s attempt to kill the corporation. They celebrated the victory again, even though they knew that the administration would soon out all the incum- bents. Bradley, ever conscious of legal detail, resolved to save the existing program for yet another year if he could. He did so by spending $260 million in two weeks, before the new board could take power and stop him. Bradley stayed up late many nights signing checks and cover letters, personally dropping packets into the mail for programs all over the country. When he mailed the last checks on December 15, there was not a dime left in the next year’s budget. He was in Miami on New Year’s Eve when the news flashed that Reagan had appointed eleven new board members and that the board had posted legal notices on Bradley’s home and office doors, ordering him not to sign another check or letter. But it was too late, as Bradley would soon inform them.

Personally, he lapsed into another deep depression. Several lucrative job offers were pending, including one as president of Hialeah Race Track, but Bradley realized that every one of them required him to stay in the closet. His noble intentions dis- solved into dreams. His professional desires demanded that he stay in the closet, but his insides demanded that he come out.

Bradley knew that the closet had limitless powers of deception. Numerous friends claimed to be out, only to have embarrassing circumstances make them admit that they wanted to keep the news from certain old friends, or relatives, or from strangers, or from newspapers and the general public. Bradley decided that he would have to force himself out, so he began announcing his intentions to friends who already knew he was gay. One of them, fatefully, was his old girlfriend Sally. “Richard caused my downfall,” Bradley says, laughing, “but Sally was there to help it along.”

This time she did so by passing the news along to her friend Phil Gailey, a reporter for The New York Times. Gailey, of course, wanted to write a story, and Bradley found himself trapped by his own bravado. He refused Gailey and pretended to scold Sally. However, he decided to write personal letters to twenty-five friends—fellow poverty law- yers, old teachers from Mercer, clergymen from the Baptist Church. He cried all day while writing them. Then he submitted to Gailey’s interview, as a clean break, and then he went to Washington’s main post office to mail the letters. He walked, half back and forth, but he could not bring himself to drop them through the slot. It was too irrevocable.

A chagrined Phil Gailey called a few days later to say that the story was ready but that his Times editors refused to use the word “gay” in headlines or the body of the text—only in direct quotation. Did Bradley mind being called a homosexual?

“Who, I am a homosexual,” he said. “I don’t care what the Times wants to call it.”

Bradley mailed the letters, and the Times story ran on March 31, 1981, his last day as president of Legal Services.

Since then, Bradley has become a national celebrity among gay people, traveling the country for the Gay Rights National Lobby. All the leading Democratic presidential contenders, including his old boss Reubin Askew, have asked him to talk with them about gay issues. In Miami, he addressed a large crowd on Gay Pride Day, which he calls “our Fourth of July.” But what he remembers best are the countless nervous people who have come up to him after his speeches, from Oregon to Ten- nessee. They have talked to him about their children, their jobs, their friends who have committed suicide. Always it is the closet. Now, whenever Bradley looks out an audience, he is burdened by the thought of all the cover stories that make that au- dience possible—of those who tell the lies and those who believe them, or pretend to.

Romantically, he wishes he could start over at college age—the age of all his gay lovers—when he first knew he was homosexual. Now that a life’s weight of denial is suddenly lifted, he has a sense of being unbalanced almost as badly as when he was carrying the weight. He hopes to adjust and to catch up, but he does not even know what is possible in gay relationships. Homosexuality, he seems, sets an exquisite table but is usually no picnic.

“But at least I don’t have to lie anymore,” he says. “Nobody who hasn’t come out of the closet can ever know what a blessing that is.”