

Zeitschrift: Der Kreis : eine Monatsschrift = Le Cercle : revue mensuelle
Band: 23 (1955)
Heft: 1: Die Homoerotik in den amerikanischen Ländern

Artikel: America's first and only homosexual magazine
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-567664>

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America's First and Only Homosexual Magazine

By William Lambert

Friends and foes each make the publishing of ONE a daily challenge. Back in 1952 when the magazine was proposed they said, «It can't be done. You will all go to jail.» Others reluctantly admitted, «It is a good idea,» but feared that, «no one would dare to subscribe, because of their jobs, their families and the police.» The cynics scoffed, saying, «why do it? Who would want to read a magazine about homosexuality anyway.»

So far as any of the staff-members knew there was no American precedent to use for a pattern, while the European homophile publications each existed by virtue of such special circumstances as to afford little help either. Yet, since that day, and much to everyone's surprise, over 100,000 copies of the magazine have gone out to its readers.

The basic problems have been financial, adequate staff, editorial and legal. ONE had no capital, aside from a check for ten dollars. It has had no large gifts or subsidies and has no wealthy friends. It has kept going by virtue of the loyal support of its many readers. Today, perhaps the greatest financial problem is to increase the advertising income, which is the very lifeblood of most publications. While at present there are few business firms ready to purchase space in ONE's columns it is hoped that as circulation grows more of them will overcome their prejudices in expectation of making sales of their products.

Editorial problems have been many. So many poorly-written manuscripts come to the editors that one must conclude few writers ever ask themselves what kind of articles and stories would be useful, or how they should be written. Now that the magazine is becoming better-known there is some improvement, as more experienced writers submit their work.

However, merely having a good manuscript by no means solves the problems, for there are complex postal regulations and the laws governing publishing to consider. It sometimes happens that a fine article has to be so altered to fit these requirements that its best qualities are lost in the editing.

Despite the glaringly apparent inconsistencies arising from America's Puritan traditions. ONE's European friends should understand that there are basic American rights regarding publishing which are part of the Constitution and so afford a solid legal foundation quite without parallel. The fact is that, in spite of superficial impressions to the contrary, neither police officials, municipal authorities, legislatures, or even Congress itself can lightly tamper with publications. Because of this ONE does not hesitate to tread on official toes, or to challenge statements and actions, whatever their sources. This has quite pained and shocked those (including some of ONE's own readers) who did not believe that homosexual American men and women would ever demand and claim their basic rights as citizens. It is expected that as time goes on their voice will become ever more powerful and respected.

Today ONE is found in large libraries and universities. It is openly sold from newsstands in cities across the entire continent and read by

subscribers in every state and virtually every country of the civilized world.

A bit of information which would spare much letter-writing: no American publication (ONE, or any other) is at present permitted to carry «PERSONAL» advertisements, such as appear in many European homophile magazines. Nor can ONE secure correspondents for its readers, exchange letters between them or in any way act as a clearing-house of that type. Also, many pictures such as are commonly published in European homophile magazines would in America be considered erotically stimulating. As published in a periodical devoted to homosexuality this would give the postal authorities cause for barring a publication from the mails, despite the fact that quite similar pictures appear in other magazines not devoted to such a subject. For this reason all photographs and illustrations in ONE must be carefully designed to avoid such objections.

Biggest obstacle of all to the success of ONE has been the homosexual himself, or rather his largely dormant sense of his own rights and duties. For, centuries of religious and legal persecution, social ostracism and «scientific» misinformation have so nearly convinced most homosexuals that they are in fact as bad as they have been painted, that a vast apathy seems to weigh them down. The few more independent spirits found tend to be so undisciplined, so lacking in group experience as to find it most difficult to work together in any cooperative undertaking.

In addition, social pressures have often made it so hard merely to keep a good job and work out some measure of domestic stability that there are few who have the energy left to undertake any philanthropic labors.

Having faced and to some degree overcome these various obstacles ONE has now completed its first two years, and is growing sturdily. Each forward step still comes a something of a surprise to its friends, and confounds its enemies. A doctor expressed this well, saying, «Each time the postman brings my copy I pick it up and say to myself, This can't happen in America . . . But it HAS!»

In Defense of Swish

by James Barr

A growing malady among American homosexuals today, as we are forced into a more closely united group, seems to be a particularly irrational snobbery directed against our more effeminate members. The accusations begin with, «It's because of these obvious, limp-wristed types who congregate at bars to scream at one another that the rest of us are finding social acceptance so difficult,» and usually end with, «I suppose they *do* have a right to live, but I simply can't stand to be around them!» Every time I hear this sort of criticism, I am tempted to quote Gertrude Stein's overworked but pithy verse about a rose being a rose being a rose,