lavished attention on me, and I loved it. But after a few times together, he seemed to lose interest in me; the next week, I saw him with another guy who looked even younger than me.

I found it difficult to enter into a long-term relationship with other men. One time I asked a group of gay friends, "Don't you think it's a little strange that all we talk about and think about is sex? Is that what the average heterosexual is like?" No one responded, but I knew that what we were experiencing wasn't right.

Tom and his wife, Donna: "We want to minister the same freedom to others that God has given us."

One night I was shocked to see my younger brother at the club. We had both experienced many of the same things in our lives and we shared a close friendship until his death eight years later in a tragic car accident.

I saw my brother in a seemingly healthy gay relationship and thought, *Maybe it can work after all.* But then I watched the relationship deteriorate to a violent end, and I lost hope for a long-term gay relationship. From the age of 19 until I was 26, I had 300–400 sexual partners. Depression set in; I began to drink and use cocaine to deaden the loneliness.

One night, in total despair, I decided to end my life. I took a large amount of painkillers and a fifth of vodka. I awoke the next day feeling like I had been run over by a truck. I was alive—but still miserable.

Soon after, I met a woman at work named Rosie who constantly talked about a personal relationship with Jesus. When I brought up some of my New Age beliefs, she always responded in love—and never condemned me as a homosexual. One night she said, "My husband and I will be praying for you."

I was shocked. "You pray for me?"

"Yes," she said. "We pray for you every night."

As she was leaving, she added, "Tom, I love you." Something broke inside; the love of God reached out through Rosie and touched my heart. I hid my head under a counter, pretending to clean, while I wept.

Within a few weeks, I asked Rosie if I could attend church with her. That Sunday, I sensed something different. People hugged one another and sang with such love to Jesus. At the end of the service, I went forward to receive Jesus Christ into my life.

I began telling people of my life before Christ and asking for their prayers. Then I met Donna, a former lesbian, at a prayer meeting and we began a prayer partnership. After two years of studying the Bible and praying together, I knew my feelings for her were more than friendship.

One day Donna came to visit me at work. For the first time, I noticed her well-endowed figure and felt strongly attracted to her. I realized that, at age 26, I was experiencing something most boys go through at puberty. Soon Donna and I were dating. Three months later, we were married.

Our first year of marriage was torture as my insecurities poured out. I began to seek solace in phone sex with men. Then I heard a broadcast on homosexuality, featuring an interview with Dr. Elizabeth Moberly. As she spoke about same-gender deficits, I realized that I had many close female friends in my life, but no significant male friendships. I asked God to send me two men with whom I could share my struggles. The Lord was faithful and sent two men within the next year. They were gentle and compassionate, and held me accountable.

God also sent me another friend to whom I would have been strongly attracted back in my gay life. I was nervous and uneasy as we attended a weekend conference together. I decided to share my insecurities with him and said I was afraid of getting close to other men.

He responded with wisdom and gentle love. "Just because I've never struggled with homosexuality doesn't mean that I don't fear intimacy." Then he explained that men often talk about weather or sports to avoid discussing their feelings and what is really happening in their lives. I was shocked and relieved. Slowly I was learning that I could be intimate with a man without being sexual with him.

When my wife gave birth to our first child, I asked God, "How do I raise a son?" I sensed His response in my heart: "Just love him." Today Isaac is 100 percent all boy. Shortly after him came another son, then two daughters. My children are one of life's greatest joys.

As my wife and I both found freedom from a gay past, we began to minister to others seeking the same experience. Four years ago, we joined the board of directors of *Reconciliation,* our local Exodus ministry in Detroit. Two years later, I became the director.

Today our vision is to help Christians who long for change in their homosexual desires. We don't force our beliefs on anyone, but seek to display the compassion of Jesus Christ to anyone who is interested. I know His love can draw others out of despair, just as He did for me. ◆

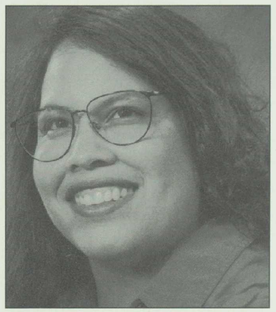
Copyright © 1998 by Tom Cole. All rights reserved.

NATIONAL NEWS

Shoot-out Occurs in Fresno Ministry Office

FRESNO, CA—An estranged married couple who came for counseling to *New Creation Ministries* pulled out loaded guns and began firing shots at each other. Both were wounded, but not killed, in the April 22 incident.

According to a front-page story in the local newspaper, *The Fresno Bee,* the husband showed up with a beer in his hand and fired the first shot when his wife started to leave. Bleeding from a body wound, the wife grabbed a gun from her purse and shot back, hitting her husband in the chin. The two were taken to University Medical Center, where both were reported in fair condition. A detective said that both of them would be arrested on charges of attempting homicide. At least five shots were fired in the incident, according to the newspaper report.



Donna Hopkins: having a hard time forgetting the gun pointed at her face.

"It was a wonder more people weren't shot," said director Bud Searcy. According to Bud, staff counselor Donna René Hopkins exited her office to see what the commotion was all about and the man pointed his gun at her face.

"I praise God that none of the staff was shot," Bud said. "It could easily have happened. The Lord's protection was apparent."

Donna plans to take some time off after her immediate ministry commitments are done. "I'm having a hard time getting the memory of what happened out of my mind," she told Cheryl at the Exodus office.

Please pray for all of the *New Creation* staff who were affected by this terrifying incident. •

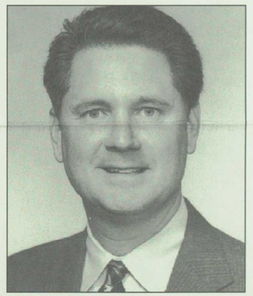
Ex-Gay Leader Sues Former Employer for Discrimination

RALEIGH, NC—Tim Wilkins, executive director of *CROSS Ministry* (an Exodus applicant), has initiated a lawsuit against his former employer for discrimination. Tim says he was unlawfully fired after his views on homosexuality, including disclosure of his own homosexual past, were published in the *Raleigh News & Observer,* the local newspaper where Tim worked as a marketing supervisor.

The religion reporter had approached Tim for the story after Tim initiated a motion at the Southern Baptist Convention last June, urging their North American mission board to conduct a study of homosexuality and aggressively promote healing for those struggling with homosexual issues.

The *News & Observer* article generated a "significant response," Tim said, including a dozen letters to the editor and a local radio interview. "Unfortunately," Tim added, "the article also generated a hostile working environment."

Less than three weeks later, the newspaper's circulation director suspended Tim for three days, citing "total lack of respect for management, insubordination, and failure to take responsibility." Tim says that prior to this suspension, his work performance had never been called into question.



Tim Wilkins: fired for "preposterous" reasons.

"The day I returned for work [after the suspension], I was questioned by the circulation director for almost two hours and repeatedly pressured to resign," Tim said. "When I would not resign, I was fired."

Two days later, Tim met with the director of human resources for an exit interview. "He repeatedly tried to persuade me to resign," Tim said. "I declined and asked that he state the reason for my termination." After several minutes of silence, the director wrote on Tim's termination report, "Failure to perform job duties at required level."

Tim has filed a formal charge of discrimination with the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. He has retained the religious legal defense organization, Liberty Counsel.

Following his dismissal, Tim was unemployed for four months before securing another job. •

CALENDAR

- ***June 6/Scranton, PA.*** "Restoring Sexual Wholeness" seminar, featuring Barney Swihart. Sponsored by Harvest USA. Info: 717/823-7880.

- ***June 27–July 2/Seattle.*** Exodus North American conference, featuring Jeffrey Satinover, Dan Allender, Les & Leslie Parrott, & over 60 workshops. Info: 206/784-7799.

- ***July 26–Aug. 14/Amsterdam.*** Youth With A Mission is sponsoring a special evangelistic outreach during the International Gay Games. Opportunities in drama, intercession, counseling, administrative assistance. Info: Rebeca Balderas, YWAM, Kadijksplein 18, 1018 AC Amsterdam, Netherlands; (fax) 31-20-6221451; (e-mail) <rebecab@jmeo.nl>

- ***July 30–Aug 2/Worcester, MA.*** 10th annual Courage conference (Roman Catholic). Features Rev. John Harvey, Joe Dallas, Peter LaBarbera, and others. Info: 212/421-0426.

- ***Aug. 7–9/Minneapolis.*** Exodus Regional Conference, hosted by Outpost. Special speaker: Sy Rogers. Details: Outpost, 612/904-5571.

- ***Aug 28–29/San Rafael, CA.*** Family & Friends Weekend sponsored by New Hope Ministries. Featuring John and Anne Paulk and others. Info: 415/453-6475.

- ***Oct. 25–30/Virginia Beach.*** "Living Waters" training conference, sponsored by Desert Stream. Info: 714/779-6899. (applications due by July 10)