

BILLY TIMES

— September 2007 —

The mission of the Billy Club is to foster community, intimacy, and personal exploration among gay, bi, and queer men through shared values and heart-centered brotherhood.



Letter From Board President Jim Burke

“So...what do you guys do at these board meetings anyway??”

I get that question a lot, and it surprises me a little every time. I never thought of our board meetings as all that mysterious. After all, we’re just a group of Billy volunteers filling a particular job the organization needs to get done, much like the dish dude or the housekeeping queen does at a gathering.

Even so, explaining what the Billy Board does isn’t a short, easy answer, because we do a lot of things on behalf of the Billy Foundation, which is the legal, nonprofit umbrella encompassing the Billy Club.

I would definitely describe us as a working board. Some boards of directors are largely ceremonial, in that they meet occasionally, smile for the cameras (if there are any), but have very little power. We’re pretty much the opposite, especially the camera part. With the exception of our indispensable resource coordinator Marcus Borgman in the Billy Office, we’re entirely a volunteer organization, and our volunteers are spread the length and breadth of northern California and beyond. This means that it’s very difficult to get groups of Billys together to do anything outside of specific tasks at gatherings, because that’s the only time we get together as a community. What’s my point here? Namely, that if work needs to be done for the organization beyond the day-to-day work of Marcus and the day-to-day workings of a gathering, the board is usually responsible for it.

Now, we do have a few standing committees, called portfolios, to handle some things such as scheduling gatherings and running the Billy Boutique, to name a couple. But given the logistical and scheduling difficulties of our Billy brethren, it’s difficult to get such committees together and get them to work quickly, so we don’t have a huge number of portfolios. An occasional ad hoc committee is formed to meet a particular short-term need (such as rewriting our gathering scholarship policy), but because of these same logistical and scheduling problems, such committees are few and far between. This means that most stuff needed to keep the Billy Foundation running falls into the board’s lap.

This isn’t as bad as it sounds—it actually can be (do I dare say it?) fun sometimes. Yes, there is some work that’s more tedious and routine in nature, such as hammering out our annual budget—always a perennial favorite. But there’s also a lot of brainstorming and intense discussion going on much of the time as well, as we attempt to plot the strategic long-term direction of the foundation, based on our own insights and, more importantly, on input from community members like you.

Recently, we’ve explored such issues as what kind of gathering themes we should look at for the coming year. One idea being seriously discussed is a “youth gathering,” perhaps early next year. At the next board meeting, we’re going to kick around the question of how to expand the Billy Club website, to include things such as photos from gatherings for the first time. The website is a classic example of an issue the board has grappled with for a long time. We’ve come a long way from the days when we were debating whether a website for the organization was even a good idea at all. Now it has become a vital communication link between the board and the Billy community as well as with the outside world. Increasingly, new Billys are coming to their first gatherings as a result of finding our website and liking what they see.

Another question I get asked a lot is how we make decisions at board meetings. A lot of Billys seem to think that we decide most matters by majority vote. That was the case many years ago, but back in the early nineties we switched to deciding matters by consensus. It was felt at the time that a heart-centered community such as ours should have a board that encouraged as much inclusiveness as possible in its decision-making process.

What exactly is consensus? I suspect if you asked every current and past board member this question, you’d get a slightly different answer from each. To me, true consensus on the Billy Board is sometimes more of a goal than a reality, but when it is achieved to the fullest extent possible, it is a meeting of our minds and our hearts. The purpose of consensus is not to paper over differences, or to silence minority opinions, but is instead an effort to find a way to make decisions that all can fundamentally support.

Of course, this being a less than perfect world, it doesn’t always work out this way. Sometimes we reach a consensus as the result of considerable compromising, and reservations

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Poems Read in the Labor Day Rituals

Love After Love

Derek Walcott

The time will come
when, with elation
you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door, in your own mirror
and each will smile at the other's welcome,

and say, sit here. Eat.
You will love again the stranger who was your self.
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you

all your life, whom you ignored
for another, who knows you by heart.
Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,

the photographs, the desperate notes,
peel your own image from the mirror.
Sit. Feast on your life.

Pied Beauty

Gerard Manley Hopkins

Glory be to God for dappled things—
For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that
swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow,
and plough;
And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him. ~

Have you come across a passage in your reading that you'd like to share? Please send it to the editor at dbrin@2davids.com.

The Billy Office Wish List

The Billy Foundation office needs your help!

In order to make the nerve center of Billyland a more comfortable and functional place, the Billy Office is seeking donations of equipment, furniture, and volunteer time. Specifically, we're looking for the following.

Equipment & Furniture

- Comfortable sofa for board meeting room (est. \$500+ new, used okay)
- Chairs for board meeting room (four upholstered, used okay)

Volunteers

- Office assistant—minimum: filing, reception, etc.; maximum: filling in for resource coordinator when sick, on vacation, etc.
- Librarian for Billy Library
- Interior designer for board meeting room (nothing extensive required)
- Interior designer for shared office bathroom (nothing extensive required)

If you think you can help out with any of these, please contact Marcus Borgman at the Billy Foundation office at 707-462-0766 or office@billyclub.org. ~

THE BILLY TIMES

is published five times per year and is included with gathering calls. To receive gathering information by regular mail, send a \$25 (sliding scale) yearly subscription fee. Short on cash? Send what you can afford. Your renewal date is noted on your address label. Getting on the email list is free. Contact us at

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211 West Standley Street
Ukiah, CA 95482

Voice 707-462-0766 Fax 707-462-1164
office@billyclub.org

Resource coordinator: Marcus Borgman
Editor: David Brin Design: Scott Marley

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are still felt by some members. I call this a "soft" consensus. If a board member has enough reservations that they don't feel they can be a part of the consensus, they can "stand aside" from the decision. This means that, while they're not stopping the proposal from moving ahead, they don't feel supportive enough to play a role in the consensus process in this case. "Stand asides" aren't regular occurrences, but they do happen sometimes, especially when controversial decisions are being made.

If a board member fundamentally disagrees with the proposal on the floor, they can also issue a "block," which stops the proposal until it can be reworked to deal with the board member's reservations. Believe it or not, this is a very, very rare occurrence, and in my four years on the board, I have never witnessed a block in a meeting, although I know they have happened from time to time in the past. Usually, if a member has a strong disagreement with a proposal, it's dealt with before the meeting, and the proposal is either reworked or withdrawn before it comes to a vote.

Needless to say, for this kind of intense decision making to happen, board members need to treat each other with respect and compassion. To help us do this, the board has a series of working agreements to guide us in our deliberations. Personal attacks are not allowed, and we attempt to deal with serious friction quickly before it becomes a problem. This kind of environment helps build a strong sense

Billy Club Board of Directors

Board meetings are open to all Billys and Billykin on the third Sunday of each month. Meeting locations rotate among Ukiah, Sonoma County, and San Francisco. Call the Billy Office for location details.

Board of Directors

Jim Burke, *president*
 Bill Blackburn, *vice president*
 Paul Mueller, *treasurer*
 VACANT, *secretary*
 Jim Gilson
 Mark Hoffheimer
 Steve Rockwell

Ongoing Board Portfolios

Billy Emergency Support Fund
 Wil Gonzales, Paul Mueller, Bob Kuder
BillyFon, Jason Bellecci-Serinus
Billy Times, David Brin, Scott Marley
Fundraising, Jim Gilson
Gatherings, Steve Rockwell
Grant writing, Les Wright
Website, Joe Kukulka

of camaraderie among board members, making it easier for people who disagree on a particular issue not to take it personally, but to respect differences and attempt to understand where others are coming from. As I've already indicated, this process doesn't always work flawlessly by any means, but it's a goal we constantly aspire to.

I could go on in even more excruciating detail, but I will spare you all. Such is today's lesson in Billy Board 101. For those of you who didn't understand how our meetings worked, I hope this helped. If you want to know more, you have a standing invitation to come to any one of our monthly board meetings. They are held every third Sunday at 1 PM, and they are always open to the public. The meetings rotate among San Francisco, Sonoma County, and the Billy Office in Ukiah. Non-board members can participate in all aspects of the meeting except the voting part. Input from the community is always wanted and needed to help us do our jobs better as board members. If you think you might be interested in coming to a board meeting and want meeting location information or have additional questions, call Marcus Borgman at the Billy Office at 707-462-0766, or email him at office@billyclub.org. Also, general meeting information is posted on our website at www.billyclub.org (username "billy", password "heartspace").

Finally, on a different subject, I want to take a minute to thank all of you Billy volunteers who helped to make our July gathering, "The Billy Reunion Rendezvous", such a huge success. This is the first July gathering in several years where we had a major uptick in attendance. The wonderful spirit and energy generated from those six magical days is still being felt in Billyland. In particular, I want to thank the gathering coordinators Steve Rockwell and Mark Hoffheimer, as well as all the subcoordinators and key people who made the gathering run so smoothly day to day: Andy "Aspen" Schwartz (afternoon tea), Bill "Blackie" Blackburn (community ritual), Brent Calderwood (heart circle), Brian Friedman (safety/first aid), Burt Cohen (cook extraordinaire), David "Davie G" Grossblat (ride share), Decker Smith (site restoration), Doug von Koss (chanting celebration), Ezra Cole (welcome & support), Fred Fishman (welcome & support), Greg Rowe (site fluffing), Guy "Mistletoe" Albert (sweat lodge), Hector Palma (pool party), Jay Egger (Billy Boutique), Jim "Dancing Sage" Gilson (community circle & housekeeping), Jim Hughson (workshops), JM Rodriguez (pool party), John Cwiakala (Billy 101), John Ellis (art show), John "Big Franny" Foley (morning coffee), John Mark "Elfstone" Eggerton (afternoon tea), Juan Villarreal (welcome & support), Kevin Callahan (dish dude), Lanz Lowen (Wednesday disco dance), Marcus Borgman (office resource coordinator), Norman "Normie" Hawker (snacks & beverages), Peter David Gilbert (housing), Peter Little (pool party), Rick Hansen (talent/no talent show), Roland "Dancing Deer" Hulstein (sweat lodge), Ruven Hannah (opening ritual), Stephen O'Connell (auction), Tad "Tadpole 2" Crandall (site fluffing), Walter Reiman (registration), William Stewart (kitchen queen), and Wingate Greathouse (talent/no talent show). And my apologies in advance to any people whose names I unintentionally omitted! ♪

2007 Gathering Schedule

Halloween

Calling to Spirits/Calling Two-Spirits
Billys only

Coordinators: Tom Devine

(twdevine@sbcglobal.net) &

Stefen (stefen@stefenart.com)

Saratoga Springs, Lake County, Calif.

Thurs., Oct. 25, to Sun., Oct. 28

New Year's

Refresh & Renew: Winter's Eve

Billys and Billykin welcome

Coordinators: George Anthony

(george_anthony@elumessence.net)

& Jamie Vermillion

(jamiev5@hotmail.com)

Wellspring Renewal Center,

Mendocino County, Calif.

Thurs., Dec. 27, to Tues., Jan. 1

*Email a gathering's coordinators to
volunteer to help!*

The Billy Office

The Billy Foundation

211 W. Standley Street

Ukiah, CA 95482

Phone: 707-462-0766

Fax: 707-462-1164

Email: office@billyclub.org

Office hours: Wednesday through
Friday 10 AM to 1 PM and other un-
scheduled times. Call for informa-
tion. Resource coordinator: Marcus
Borgman.

Billy Lunch

Wednesdays from 12:45 to 2 PM. Meet
at the Billy Office to dine out.

Visit Our Website

<http://www.billyclub.org>

login: billy

password: heartspace

Local Socials

are unofficial get-togethers that take place monthly and usually include schmoozing, a potluck meal, and a heart circle. Here are contact information and attendance policies. Some socials welcome Billykin.

East Bay Potlucks

Contact Alan Oakley at 510-436-3330 or alanoakley-oakley@sbcglobal.net.

Mendocino Potlucks

Coordinator needed! Call Billy office.

San Francisco Potlucks

Alternates between men only and open to all. Contact G-Fry at 415-558-0469 or gregthebarbersf@yahoo.com.

SonoMen

Men only. Contact Robert Cline at 707-573-9466 or sonomenpotluck@hotmail.com.

South San Francisco & Santa Cruz

Coordinator needed! Contact Lou Ceci at 650-969-9556 or ceci_lga@yahoo.com.

BillyFon

The BillyFon 24-hour message service offers current information on Board meetings, potluck, heart circles, hikes, and gatherings. Call (415) 289-2080 or (707) 583-2330.

Billy Emails

Billy Board minutes, agendas and other "official" information are available via email, separate from the gathering list. If you're interested in receiving them, email office@billyclub.org.

