

# GLAD Chat



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## Proposed Change to GLAD Constitution

The GLAD Executive Board approved a motion to bring to the GLAD membership a proposal to change the by-laws to state that an annual membership fee of \$12.00 be collected at the GLAD Social in Oct each year.

### April GLAD Social

The April GLAD social will be held April 11<sup>th</sup> at Unity Church of Decatur. The Unity Center for Inspired Living is located at 317 W Decatur St 62522. The doors open at 6:00; we must be off the premises by 9:00. The program will be Penny Harris, Executive Director of Fifth Street Renaissance/SARA Center. She will discuss the activities of the Center, and will also be offering free hepatitis and HIV testing.

### Invitation to Staged Reading of *Beebo Brinker Comes to Town*

You are invited to attend a staged reading of a new play, *Beebo Brinker Comes to Town*, written by Paula Ressler and directed by Duane Boutté, who are both professors at Illinois State University. The play is based on Ann Bannon's 1962 lesbian pulp fiction novel *Beebo Brinker*, about the delights and hazards of lesbian life in the 1950s, during the time of the Cold War, the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement, and with the Women's and Gay Liberation Movements on the horizon.

Paula Ressler, Dept. of English faculty, has taught this play alongside other lesbian and transgender texts representing similar and different eras. These texts have helped her students make sense of a rich LGBTQ cultural past, and how the events and ideas they depict continue to influence today's world. She is the author of several original plays, a number of dramatic literary adaptations, and an award-winning book, *Dramatic Changes*, which addresses incorporating LGBTQ issues into teacher education through drama. She has appeared locally in a reading of Irene Taylor's play *Tapestries* at New Route Theatre and a staged reading of *Dear Harvey* by Patricia Loughrey sponsored by Prairie Pride Coalition.

Duane Boutté, an actor/director with New York City professional roots, is a faculty member in ISU's School of Theatre and Dance. He has appeared in the films *Stonewall*, and *Brother to Brother*, and was in the original Broadway companies of *Parade* and the 1994 revival of *Carousel*. He portrayed the gay Civil Rights activist Bayard Rustin in the play *Civil Sex*, produced at New York City's Public Theatre and other theatres across the country. Boutté reprised his role in *Civil Sex* in a staged reading of the play at ISU in the fall of 2013. Most recently he directed the ISU production of *Cabaret* and Prairie Pride Coalition's staged reading of Peter Macklin's gay-themed play, *A Different Time*.

Come and enjoy the humor and warmth of Ann Bannon's characters as they come to life on stage.

By Barb Dallinger Illinois State University

### UPCOMING EVENTS

April 11 6:00 PM  
GLAD Social. Unity Center 317 W. Decatur St. Decatur

April 24  
Sticky in the Sticks. Firehouse Pizza 107 E. Beaufort St. Normal, IL

April 25 6:00 PM  
Art Auction Benefitting Fifth Street Renaissance/SARA Center Programs Ansar Temple in Springfield.

April 29 6:00 PM  
GLAD Board Meeting  
DMH Cafeteria

## Martha [*Lesbian*] Living Bittersweet

Over the spring break and since then I've been catching up on my reading. Last semester I had such a heavy class load that I rarely had time for much else. *The New Yorkers* stacked up. I like the magazine for the long articles on books and writers, especially biographies where I learn the details about the lives of writers from the past. Sometimes the reviews are so thorough that I don't even have to read the books. I recently finished an article on Langston Hughes. A new book of his letters has come out. The author of the review commented that black and gay biographers' are often vexed as they try to document the fact that Hughes was gay. Even James Baldwin, the author of the exquisite *Giovanni's Room*, who knew several of the writers from the Harlem Renaissance, saw Hughes as a disappointment because he hid his sexual preference so thoroughly. Then this morning I found an article about Sappho, whose poetry was as well-known and celebrated as Homer's, whose work goes back to seventh century BC, and whose verse comes down to us only in fragments.

In 1955, when Denys Page published "Sappho and Alcaeus," a definitive study of the two poets, he declared, "There is not at present any reason to expect that we shall ever possess much more of the poetry of [the two]." Yet there have been several more fragments of Sappho's poetry discovered. Most recently, in 2012, at Christie's auction, an antique dealer acquired a piece a paper-mache-like plaster that was used by ancient Egyptians and Greeks for mummy cases and book binding. When he soaked the layers apart to free up bits of papyrus, he found fragments that when pieced together was a sapphic stanza that has since been named "Brothers Poem."

Some consider Sappho the female counterpart to Homer. She introduced the notion and the word bittersweet to Western Literature.

*He seems to me an equal of the gods—  
whoever gets to sit across from you  
and listen to the sound of your sweet*

*speech so close to him.*

*to your beguiling laughter: O it makes my  
panicked heart go fluttering in my chest,  
for a moment I catch sight of you there's*

*no speech left in me.*

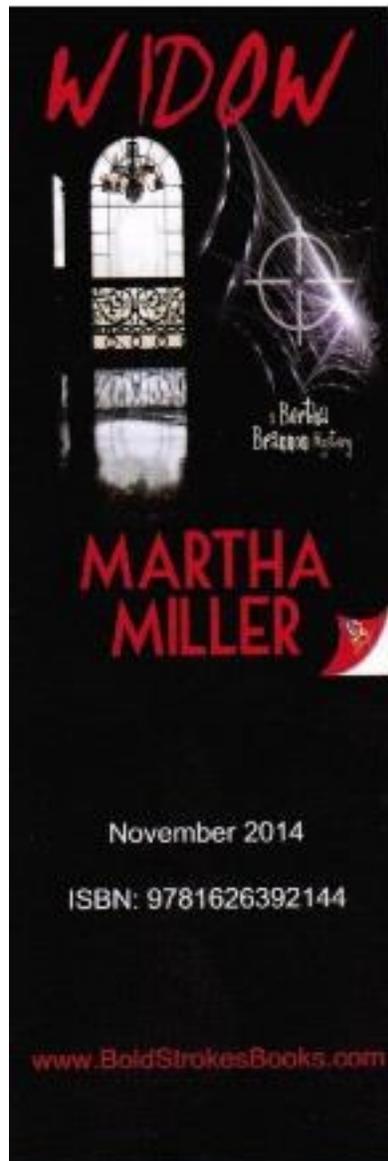
The men whose writing we have from fifth century BC, whose philosophy and theories still are meaningful to us: Plato and Aristotle know little of bittersweet in connection with lovers. In those times, it was accepted that young men had older male lovers and at a certain phase the young men would find wives and father children. As older men they then seduced and kept younger men. Some didn't participate, usually because they couldn't afford such arrangements. It certainly wasn't gay life that we know today. When I explain this to students, they listen quietly, their brows furrowed. Ten years ago the same information would have caused squirming and giggles in the classroom. But even now, I ask for questions and no one asks anything. To be honest, I'm not sure I have the answers. I can see they are troubled. Perhaps they see straight and gay as opposites on a continuum. Even allowing for shades of gray, how can one person climb back and forth across the fence? How can that person have loving and satisfying relationships on both sides? I find myself wondering if Sappho had similar affairs. The thing we want to know the most about Sappho, her personal life, is still beyond our knowledge. What we know is that she lived on the Isle of Lesbos. We take the word Lesbian, for gay women from that knowledge. But her sexuality, which for modern readers is the most famous thing about her, some experts find uncertain. What comes to us from two-hundred years before The Academy are beautiful fragments of poems by a Greek woman who knows of love and desire "you have forgotten me / you love someone else more" as unrequited, as bittersweet.

--Martha Miller

## John Poling Makes Good

Our own John Poling has had his play, *Seavin*, selected to be performed at the April 2015 edition of *Sticky in the Sticks*, a monthly bonanza of bar plays and live music, at Firehouse Pizza in Uptown Normal. The magic happens on April 24th. You can find Firehouse Pizza at 107 E. Beaufort St., Normal, IL.

Be there or be square.



### WIDOW by Martha Miller

County Judge Bertha Brannon's life blows up when her partner of twelve years, police sergeant Toni Matulis, the love of her life, is killed during a domestic violence call gone bad. Bertha is still trying to accept what's happened when she gets the first of several threatening phone calls. This is followed by one dangerous incident after the next, one dead body after the last. The police are no help, so Bertha starts her own investigation and learns that Toni was working on a case that no one wanted her to solve, a case of corruption that goes all the way to the top.



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