

FOCUS

— The ReMarker Magazine —

THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT OF OUR TIME.

The Supreme Court's decision in June 2015 changed the lives of thousands of Americans all across the country. And here at 10600 Preston Road.



OCTOBER 30, 2015

PEOPLE WERE CHEERING ALL AROUND THE NATION.

With the Supreme Court's ruling this June that granted same-sex couples the right to marry nationwide, we knew history had been made. And we knew we had a story to tell.

Looking for that story, we searched far and wide. We talked to students, alumni, administrators and Dallas's most iconic gay couple. We talked to these people and learned of the varied trajectories of their lives. We listened, then we told their stories.

Yet, some may say these stories should not be told. We respectfully

disagree. The gay rights movement is, most definitely, the civil rights movement of our time — and someone must tell those stories. We feel that is our right — and our responsibility.

It's not easy for us to sum up the message of this magazine in a few, snappy words. But on the cover, that's what we tried to do. Gay rights are the defining social issue of this generation.

And for many students here at 10600 Preston Road, it's hard to even imagine a world where gay and lesbian Americans were not thought of as equals.

For those of us who have never known a world where a person could not safely express his or her identity, the gay rights movement isn't a gay movement at all. It's a matter of human rights.

Many disagree with that comparison, and by our own admission, it's not entirely accurate. What it does demonstrate, however, is the indelible mark that the fight by gay

people and their loved ones for full equality under the law has left on our generation.

The Supreme Court's decision in the case *Obergefell v. Hodges* was the culmination of a decades-long struggle for marriage equality. For gay people, for civil rights activists, for students, marriage equality was the end-game.

And thus, the Supreme Court ruling penned by Justice Anthony Kennedy marked the end of an era. An era of hate, an era of fear, an era where gay rights were thought of as separate from human rights.

Now, with full marriage equality for gay couples, a new era has begun, in our country, in our city and in our community

— where people will no longer fear for their lives — or be fearful for sharing their partners with society. An era where people can live the life most meaningful to them. An era where people aren't defined by their sexual identity.

Human rights are inalienable, not to be qualified or denied on the basis of race or gender, religion or ethnic origin, sexual or gender identity.

We found that by telling these stories — of varied generations and across many decades — there is a common thread that connects people:

Gay or straight, the search for identity and the acknowledgement of who we are is a universal one.

One we are happy to tell.



CELEBRATING THE SUPREME COURT RULING JUNE 26, 2015.

FOCUS

The ReMarker Magazine

Focus, a twice-yearly magazine supplement to *The ReMarker* focusing on a single topic, is a student publication of St. Mark's School of Texas, 10600 Preston Road, Dallas, TX. 75230

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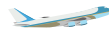
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TOGETHER FIFTY-TWO YEARS,
DALLAS' MOST NOTED GAY COUPLE
FINALLY PUT A RING ON IT.

ICONS OF DALLAS, GEORGE HARRIS (LEFT) AND JACK EVANS STAND IN FRONT OF THE CITY THEY CALL HOME.

STORY DAVIS MARSH | PHOTOS ARNO GOETZ



n June 26, 2015, America changed — fundamentally.

With a 74-page majority opinion released by Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy, gay couples won the right to marry the people

they loved.

More than 1000 miles away from the nation's capital, George Harris rushed home from a doctor's appointment and went with his partner of 52 years, Jack Evans, to the Dallas County courthouse.

In a waiting room filled to the brim with couples seeking their marriage licenses, the clerk asked for Jack and George by name.

"Are Jack and George here? Y'all are gonna be first."

But this day of celebration was haunted by the more sobering memories of the past half-century the pair have spent together. When Jack and George were fired from their jobs in the 50s, just because they were gay. When their friends were rounded up like animals by the police in the 60s, shamed in the newspapers and forced into hiding. When they lost so many dear friends in the 80s to the vicious outbreak of the HIV/AIDS virus.

Yet, despite all the tragedy and pain, there Jack and George remained, standing hand-in-hand, a newlywed couple — 52 years together.

Jack grew up in a small town south of Wichita Falls while George is from what he describes as “the backwoods” of Mississippi. The pair hail from a time and place unlike the gay-friendly world of 21st century America.

“[Young people] don’t realize that they couldn’t always walk down Cedar Springs holding hands,” Evans said. “The generation that’s coming takes things for granted. And they need to remember so that they got some appreciation to what happened before.”

One of the freedoms gay people now enjoy that was not always available is job security. Harris and Evans both lost their jobs in the Eisenhower-era.

“In the ‘50s, when I got out of the military,” Evans said. “I went to work for [a department store] in its first store outside the city of Dallas. I became the manager of the men’s shop. And I loved the work, loved the people. Until they found out I was gay, and they let me go, didn’t fire me, but they let me go because ‘I could be blackmailed into stealing from the company.’”

Society was different. Same-sex couplings were not even accepted as an “alternative” lifestyle.

“Well, when we got together,

THROUGH FIVE DECADES, THE COUPLE HAS SEEN IT ALL. FROM THE AIDS OUTBREAK TO THE LEGALIZATION OF GAY MARRIAGE.

two men, and certainly not two women, couldn’t be on the same mortgage,” Evans said. “You couldn’t buy a car together. Look how far we’ve come. This is 1961 I’m talking about.”

Back when they met each other, Dallas itself was a far different place, and not the gay-friendly city it is today. Months after the Stonewall Riot in New York, a frightening and tragic event took place in Dallas.

“The [undercover police] went to a gay bar and started taking people to an after hours party,” Evans said. “The bars always closed at twelve o’clock, and nobody was ready go home, so it was not uncommon for someone to grab a six pack and say come on over for a couple hours.”

The police had set up a fake party in East Dallas, attracting 79 gay men. The police then rounded up 29 of them on anti-sodomy charges, and those 29 men’s lives were devastated.

“They all left their jobs,” Evans said. “They had to leave town. One of them was a doctor and had to go to Canada to practice medicine.

And Evans says these actions ruined lives.

“See now, they ruined a lot of lives. Not only the guys, but their families,” Evans said.

After living through an Inquisition-type period in Dallas’s history, Evans and Harris witnessed the horrors of the AIDS crisis.

“It brought us together because there was so much desperation, and boys were being disowned,” Harris said. “And [GLBT community leader] Don Mason started [a shelter] in Oak Cliff where they could go. There was an organization called H-Resources and the purpose of it was to feed, clothe and take care of those who had contracted AIDS.”

And out of the trials Dallas’s gay community has faced, resources have emerged for those in need of help.

“They have a lot of places for help,” Evans said. “I mean, Youth First Texas is a great organization. It’s being run now by the resource center of Dallas. It’s amazing what they do.”

But beyond their having witnessed immense change in Dallas, Evans and Harris are best known for their own story. Over the course of their 52 years, they have contributed to Dallas in many ways, including as real estate agents.

“George and I worked together for 38 years,” Evans said. “We were in residential real estate and opened our own office together.”

During a downturn in the real estate market, Evans and Harris approached a large, Preston Center-based firm to see if they would be interested in opening a satellite branch.

“They were very polite,” Evans said. “They said ‘No, but if you would like to join us we would take your license.’ And I said, ‘I want you to know for sure that George and I have been together for 34 years.’ And she said, ‘I don’t think I’ve had a woman in my office that’s been with the same man for 34 years.’”

Evans and Harris also give back to the community. They started

the GLBT Chamber of Commerce, and have partnered with University of North Texas to archive their mementos to further the ongoing study of GLBT history.

“Our focus has always been to serve in one capacity or another and to encourage,” Evans said. “Ten years ago, nobody came out, everybody was in the closet. We just want to tell the young people that it gets better and we want to give them hope.”

And the couple also has advice for longevity in a relationship.

“It hasn’t been easy but it hasn’t been tough,” Evans said of his relationship with Harris. “One thing that we have always maintained is never go to bed angry. Do not argue, because nobody wins in an argument. There are no winners, everybody’s a loser.”

“That’s my line, since you always like to stir up something and I won’t argue,” Harris said. “Years ago, when we’d fight over something, we would decide that when we could come in from work, we’d have a martini. We’d sit down and work it out. Thank the lord we didn’t become alcoholic.”

The two are very active in the congregation at Northaven United Methodist Church. Their religious affiliation did play a part in their decision as to when and where to get married.

“We have chosen to attend Northaven United Methodist Church because it’s what’s called a reconciling congregation,” Harris said. “It’s a congregation that welcomes everybody, gay, straight, homosexual, black, white, whatever without reservation.”

And not long after, the two went to another church for a religious marriage, not a civil ceremony.

“On March 1st of last year, we got married in Midway Hills Christian Church,” Evans said. “We couldn’t get married in the Methodist church. But, after the ceremony, we went back to our church for

the reception.”

As far as the state of Texas was concerned, these two men, dedicated to each other for half a century, had no right to wed. Until June 26. The two describe that day:

“A man gets up and says we are about to begin, and he had not heard from the attorney general,” Harris said. “‘First,’ he said, ‘is Jack and George here?’ We raised our hands and he said, ‘Well ya’ll are going to be first.’”

Evans says that the crowd there hollered when the man said the pair would be first. And later, they were crying.

“We all wound up crying,” Harris said, “and people around us were crying.”

“We had made history,” Evans said.

From *D Magazine* to the *Jerusalem Post*, the world celebrated the pair’s historic wedding. Even President Obama showed his support.

“We got a dear Jack and George letter from the President,” Evans said. “It said congratulations. We’re having it framed.”

Perhaps most importantly, all the positive attention and press lauded on the couple has reassured them that the world is moving in the right direction.

“We have been blessed by this recent publicity because it gives us an opportunity to establish roles and to reach out,” Evans said. “There’s hope now that never has been.”



A portrait from their earlier years (above) contrasts with the images of the couple from a summer 2015 *Dallas Morning News* story about their marriage, the first gay union in Dallas.

'I'M AN ODDITY'

HAVING COME TO GRIPS WITH HIS SEXUAL IDENTITY, MICHAEL ROGERS SAYS IT WASN'T EASY BEING GAY IN THE 1980S.



STORY DAVIS MARSH | PHOTOS COURTESY MICHAEL ROGERS

Michael Rogers always knew he was different. He wore cardigan sweaters. He never went to "victory parties." He was a C student. He never felt that he could open up to his classmates. Yet he felt immense pressure to thrive at 10600 Preston Road. His grandfather, Ralph B. Rogers, was a major benefactor of the school. And Michael's father was an alumnus. Not only did Michael feel isolated. Not only did he have so much trouble socializing that he consulted a therapist. As if the rest weren't enough, Michael Rogers '85, was gay. And at St. Mark's in the 80's, well, they skipped that chapter of the sex-ed book.

Put lightly, Rogers struggled at St. Mark's, not only in academics but also in finding his niche.

"I didn't feel like I fit in and I didn't," Rogers said. "I wasn't the jock, I wasn't going to parties, I didn't drink, I don't smoke — I'm an oddity, you know, from that standpoint. And I also did not have the experience of making out or having sex with a woman."

Rogers says that tenth grade was one of his hardest times at 10600 Preston Road.

"I felt like I did not have any friends," Rogers said. "I felt very alone. I had applied and gotten into ESD. At that time, my advisor, Kenneth Owens, said, 'Michael, you can't wear cardigan sweaters, and not go to victory parties, be a loner and feel like you're going to fit in. Why don't you get out of your little

closet (so to speak) and get to know people and make friends. It will make a difference.' My answer was yes. It did make a difference."

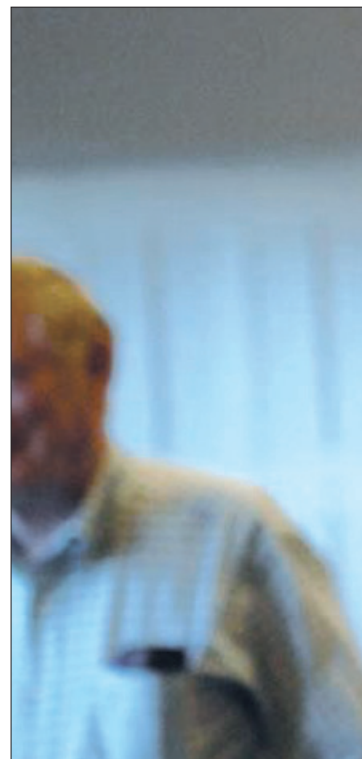
And for Rogers, things did get better. He went on to Guilford College in Greensboro, North Carolina upon his graduation.

"Unbeknownst to me, I lived in the 'gay dorm' for two years," Rogers said. "Lots of gay guys lived in that dorm. I didn't know this until I had been there for four or five months. The best thing for me was what mother and father told me when I was a junior looking at schools: 'You can go to any school that we can afford, but it has to be at least 5 hours' drive from Dallas. You will not be driving back and forth for the weekend to do your laundry. You need a different experi-

ence after 12 years of St. Marks.'"

After college, Rogers began to "come out" of his shell and get a better understanding of who he was.

"It was not until after college," Rogers said, "when I was working for Belk, in about 1990, when I came out to myself in Greensboro. And then I moved back to Dallas, where I was glad to be more anonymous, because everyone in a smaller town in the gay community knows your business: they



MICHAEL ROGERS



ROGERS (LEFT) CELEBRATES HIS MARRIAGE TO LONG-TIME PARTNER WILL WATSON.

know who you're dating, they know who you've been with, they know everything. So when I came back to Dallas, I was dating someone, and I had to wrestle with and make the decision that I had to come out. Period."

Rogers's family had mixed reactions to his coming out. "[My sister Katherine] was really supportive," Rogers said. "Mother and Father had never known anybody other than a distant relative who was gay, and they didn't socialize with anyone who was gay. That, I think, was a big deal. My grandfather could deal with it. My grandmother had a very difficult time with it."

Rogers sees his coming out as a "cutting point" in his relationship with his grandmother.

"I had been close to her forever," Rogers said, "and as soon as I made that statement she pretty much shut me out, and it was obvious. It was painful. That's just the way they were. It's not like I wasn't invited to family gatherings, but it was just an obvious change for her to

be able to acknowledge that herself and be able to deal with it."

Rogers's parents, however, have welcomed him and his husband, Will Watson, since Rogers's coming out in the 90s. In December 2013, after Rogers and Watson attended Rogers's parents' 50th anniversary cruise, the pair announced their intentions to get married.

"It was interesting because dad's first answer was 'I'm sure there's paperwork you could have where you wouldn't have to get married,'" Rogers said. "There was not one thing said 'Oh, that's very nice,' and lying about it or not being happy about it. His answer was 'I'm sure there's paperwork, which you could have.'"

But, as Rogers puts it, he and Will already had that paperwork for years. They wanted to get married, and so they did, in their now-home state of New Mexico.

"Will and I have been together 18, or 19 years that we kind of talked about getting married," Rogers said, "but I said to Will, 'If we ever got married, I want to be married in the state in which we live in, I want it to be legal in that state. I don't want to get married in Vancouver, I don't want to get married in Massachusetts. I want to get married where we are living.'"

After his own wedding in 2014, Rogers looked on with glee as, state by

state, court case by court case, marriage equality became the law of the land, especially in his home state of Texas.

"With all the stuff with the Supreme Court, I was thrilled," Rogers said. "I never thought Texas would ever come to grips with it, and it wouldn't have easily without the Supreme Court."

With all the changes in his life, Rogers has not often felt the need to remain involved with his alma mater.

"I had not been to any of my reunions since I had absolutely no desire until five years ago. I went to 25 and had an absolute ball," Rogers said. "And it was funny because Katherine heard a day or two later, 'Can you believe your brother, he was just being the social butterfly, catching up with everybody.'"

Although Rogers does not feel the need to return to campus or relive his high school days, he cherishes the role his alma mater played in shaping his life.

"I feel extremely loved," Rogers said, "I have gone through my trials and tribulations like everybody does—straight or gay. But I do not feel like that and I do not feel like an outcast from my family."

"It's just interesting to hear the different viewpoints that different people have, and I feel very thankful to have the friends that I have from St. Mark's. I love the connections I have from St. Mark's."

WITH ALL THE STUFF WITH THE SUPREME COURT, I WAS THRILLED. I NEVER THOUGHT TEXAS WOULD EVER COME TO GRIPS WITH IT, AND IT WOULDN'T HAVE EASILY WITHOUT THE SUPREME COURT.

WHAT'S RIGHT WITH ME.

SWAPPING
BASEBALL FOR
INVESTMENTS, THIS
ALUM IS NOW IN THE
EPICENTER OF POWER AND
INFLUENCE IN THE COMPETITIVE
WORLD OF FINANCE AND INDUSTRY

STORY BRADFORD BECK | PHOTOS COURTESY RYAN COTTON

Less than a year ago, he gave a Cum Laude speech about his philosophies on life, about things he wished he had known as a young adult, about the kind of man he had become. He had been chosen to talk for many reasons. Because of his academic success. Because of experience in Major League Baseball. Because of his success as a venture capitalist.

From Princeton and Stanford, to Major League Baseball, to Bain capital and everything in between, his speech made an impact.

But when the speech was over, no one was talking about his lessons, his past or his public speaking. They were talking about one word.

A word that was casually dropped toward the end of his speech. One that stuck with the students long after his speech ended.

That word? "Boyfriend."

Continued, next page

COTTON, PICTURED LEFT IN PHOTOS WITH HIS BOYFRIEND MIKE BASKOWSKI, HAS SEEN FIRST HAND MANY CULTURAL SHIFTS SINCE HIS DAYS AS A STUDENT AT 10600 PRESTON ROAD.



Ryan Cotton '97 grew up just down the street from 10600 Preston Road, deep in the heart of Texas. But for Cotton, Dallas wasn't a good place. School wasn't a good place. It was a place that did not look kindly on differences. Different was wrong, thus making it a place where a 15-year old Cotton did not feel free to be who he was.

"St. Mark's was not and to some extent still is not a place that nurtures and supports that kind of diversity," Cotton said. "I would've been treated as very, very different. The narrative would have been 'What's wrong with you?' not 'What's right with you?' A very important distinction that is still blatant in the way we think and talk about this issue in Texas and St. Mark's today."

Cotton's experiences have led him to believe that the school can improve its atmosphere and attitude toward gay students.

ST. MARKS IS GOING TO BE THE KIND OF SCHOOL IT WANTS TO BE, AND IF IT WANTS TO BE AT A LEVEL THAT IS ONE OF THE MOST ELITE SCHOOLS IN AMERICA, WE NEED TO BE A LEADER ON THIS ISSUE AND NOT A FOLLOWER — AND RIGHT NOW WE'RE NEITHER.

"You'll notice that St. Mark's doesn't have an LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) kind of community," Cotton said. "It doesn't have an organization that says it's okay to be that. For years the response of the school was that 'We have a school counselor'. I don't need counseling. There is nothing wrong with me. I just need you to know that there is nothing wrong with me."

Cotton felt he had no one in his dugout, no support if he tried to be himself.

"We had, at the time, two, three, four teachers we knew were gay but all of them lied about it," Cotton said. "And so who's going to support me? And what are the examples that are being set by the 'adults' that I'm supposed to be learning from. The example I was learning, the behavior I was supposed to model from the adults around was 'Good God, don't tell anyone about this.' Lie, repress, act like it's not a thing, hide it, hide

who you are."

But to be fair, Texas was not the only place where this model was set. Cotton has seen it everywhere, and sees parallels in professional sports. Even though professional sports had been leading the charge on civil rights movements with people like Jackie Robinson, Cotton believes they are on the other side of gay rights. Cotton had a brief stint in the Major League Baseball front office before he saw the writing on the ball — that professional sports was a place where he could not be open.

"Sports have been pretty progressive," Cotton said. "Sports teams make pretty powerful statements about things. Yet this issue for some reason is one that they want to run very very very far away from. That is just strange to me."

For the country and professional sports to change, Cotton believes that the June 2015 Supreme Court case, which granted same-sex couples the right to get married, will not be enough.

"I don't think this case has any bearing on that," Cotton said. "It's a much more powerful emerita of silence and lying that has become the social norm that it's going to take a pretty daring act of courage to buck that trend. I think it's kinda sad that those people have to lie about who they are, live a double life, and can't be a full-functioning, fully participating, open, honest member of society. Having said that, I think the first super-star athlete that just says 'Screw it I'm gay.' I think it's going to be unbelievably powerful socially."

Cotton sees how much the country has changed and believes that the pieces have been set for an athlete to be open about who he or she is.

"For some people that is kind of scary, they're kind like 'I don't want to be that guy,'" Cotton said. "But I think to the one who is courageous enough to do it, it's going to be pretty game-changing. All of the money in America is lined up on the right side of this issue. All of the progressive institutions, corporations and people are lined up on the right side of this issue. The same sort of celebration would follow the first major athlete that had the guts to do that. But for

NOW A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES, COTTON WANTS ACCEPTANCE FOR THE MOVEMENT.



whatever reason we haven't seen it yet, and that is kind of amazing to me."

But Cotton understands the difficulty of breaking barriers.

"There's a normative culture of expectations that weighs on everybody in that world," Cotton said. "And it's a self-propagating culture of normative expectations because, you know, it's what everybody else around you is acting like is normal. And that creates this unbelievable culture of should and pressure and expectation that's very, very hard to stop. And so I think that's pretty powerful evidence of how powerful this culture really is."

Cotton says more and more of the country is getting behind the gay rights movement. He feels St. Mark's is at a point where it can become a leader in the issue.

"St. Marks is going to be the kind of school it wants to be," he said, "and if it wants to be at a level that is one of the most elite schools in America we need to be a leader on this issue and not a follower and right now were neither.

For the country to change, Cotton believes places like St. Mark's must lead the way. And he believes his chapel conversation

was a step in the right direction even though many people focused on the one line where he revealed his orientation.

"I suspect I was the first person to stand up in the chapel and say those words [boyfriend]," Cotton said. "I knew it was important. It was important to me to say it, and it was important for the school to hear it."

"I wasn't terribly afraid," Cotton said. "Headmaster Dini is one of the greatest people I know and I knew he had my back a 100 percent. In some small way, I think he is smart enough that he invited me because he wanted this very conversation."

Eugene McDermott Headmaster Dini invited Cotton — not because of his sexuality — but, rather, because of the person he had become.

"There wasn't an agenda in asking him to speak, but I'm very proud of who he is," Dini said. "I'm proud he was here that day and proud of what he said."

And as America and St. Mark's continue to move forward, Cotton hopes that one casual word — boyfriend — will still be a significant part of his speech, just not the defining one.



UP IN THE AIR

BEING
GAY
HASN'T
STOPPED
NED PRICE
FROM
BEING
IN THE
MOST
ELITE OF
POLITICAL
CIRCLES—
THAT OF
PRESIDENT
OBAMA.

PRICE ABOUT TO BOARD OF AIR FORCE ONE.

STORY PHILIP SMART | PHOTOS COURTESY NED PRICE



IF YOU MANAGE TO GET THROUGH THE METAL DETECTORS, MAKE IT PAST THE GUARDS' SEARCHES, WALK BY THE SITUATION ROOM, RIGHT ACROSS FROM THE HOMELAND SECURITY ADVISER'S OFFICE, YOU'LL FIND A SMALL DOOR WITH NO LABELS OR PLAQUES SUGGESTING ITS IMPORTANCE.

BEHIND THE DOOR SITS THE SPOKESPERSON FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL (NSC) — IT'S OCCUPANT? A MARKSMEN WHO ONCE SAT BEHIND THE DESKS IN DAVIS HALL. HIS NAME? NED PRICE '01.

His office is nothing special, he insists. Sometimes mosquitos fly around. It's hot in the summer and chilly in the winter.

"It's not glamorous by any means," he repeats.

But there is something special about his office. It's on the first floor of the West Wing — a mere 100 feet from the Oval Office. In his cramped work space, Price's phone buzzes with an email. It's one of his White House colleagues. "Did you mean to include that reporter on the email?" it reads.

Seconds later, Price's phone buzzes.

It's a reporter. Continued, next page

"We're after some information that has just been released..." the reporter starts.

Price realizes what he's done. He checks his sent emails and sees that he included the dozen or so people in the White House he was supposed to, but then there's an extra name on the list. Someone outside the White House who shouldn't have gotten the email.

Maybe I should just pack up and leave, Price thinks.

Maybe it started with Cuba.

The summer before his senior year here, Price headed to that country that Americans hardly travel to.

He spent some time in Havana, and when he came back to America, he's ready to do his senior exhibition on Cuba — and, of course, it's on politics.

"Part of the thrust of my senior exhibition was the failure of our embargo on Cuba," Price said. "It was something the U.S. instituted in 1959, and actually President Obama, about six months ago, started to dismantle elements of it."

Or maybe it started with Amnesty International Club.

As club president, Price's affinity for politics strengthens the club's foundation. The faculty sponsor at the time, former Spanish instructor [Anne Marie] Weiss, introduces Price to Alberto, a 30 year-old Cuban refugee who is trying to get a green card. Price is there to help him.

And eventually, Alberto comes to the school and speaks at the club's chapter meetings.

Or, maybe it was yearbook. Outside the Publications Suite hangs a breadboard listing names of *Marksmen* editors. His name is on that list.

He remembers those times as the start of him working late into the night — just like he does now. The yearbook he edited sits on his shelf today; its theme was "Building On Our Foundations."

Whatever it was that inspired Price's desire for politics and to dedicate himself to public service, it all contributes to the work he does now.

Fifteen years after his senior exhibition on Cuba, his interactions with Alberto and his tan yearbook with Nearburg's

window paneling on the cover, he sits in that cramped office, waiting to hear back from his colleagues, thinking about packing up from his job at the White House.

"It wasn't anything that I plotted out from A to Z," Price said of his career. "And I think that's how it works out for most people. You sort of have a general direction that you go in, and hopefully you find captivating things along the way."

For Price, those captivating things involve politics, and most of the time, that means working directly with President Obama. Now, as the NSC's spokesperson, Price hasn't had a completely free day in years.

S Sure, he took a vacation — a couple days off — in July to meet up with some friends, but he still worked "a few hours" on those days.

He hasn't had time to decorate his office. He hopes to put some pictures of family and friends up "in the next couple of months," but until then, there aren't many personal touches.

On his desk are his credentials from international affairs — one from the NATO summit, one from the G7 summit and others from trips he's been on.

Every time the President travels out of the country on Air Force One, Price is there on the same plane.

Essentially, Price and the other members of the NSC, discuss all things foreign policy.

It's what Price has directed his life toward. At Georgetown's

School of Foreign Service, he did his senior thesis on Libya's abandonment of its weapons of mass destruction program. And now, Price can help keep the President in the loop.

Price has continued working since that day in June when he sent that email and thought about packing up. He's gone to Kenya. He's helped with the Ebola crisis. He's been involved with the Iran deal. All with the President.

Now, he only packs his things up when the President does.

It's 11 a.m. and the White House is buzzing.

Two hours earlier, the Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage. People are gathering. Price has never seen this many people gather for a media announcement. Those who work on the domestic side of the White House, White House staffers, the National Security Advisor — they're all there.

He's there as a member of the White House team. He's also there as a gay man.

The White House Rose Garden is jammed with reporters, lawyers, lobbyists, activists, all sorts of Washington insider, waiting for the President, for the announcement — for equality Price has longed for.

Eventually, the President arrives.

"This ruling is a victory for America," Obama said. "This decision affirms what millions of Americans already believe in their hearts: when all Americans are treated as equal we are all more free."

As Price watched the President deliver this speech, he thought it supported American ideals.

"He [Obama] talked about how at the very core of our national identity, much of what we try and do is make the union a little more perfect," Price said. "When you see an injustice, you try and right it. When America is not living up to her ideals, as Americans, we fight to correct that."

FROM THE WHITE HOUSE TO KENYA, EASTERN EUROPE TO ALASKA, NED PRICE IS ALWAYS ON THE MOVE. ONE PERSON IS ALWAYS WITH HIM: THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

And for Price, the speech Obama gave that day has improved the foundation of his nation.

"For many people in most states, there was not equality under the law," Price said. "The President was harkening back to that theme which I thought was especially relevant to that day."

And as one of those people, Price now lives in a nation where same-sex marriage is the law.

"The ruling was meaningful because it was another endorsement of the simple principle of equality under the law," Price said. "It's something I talk about a lot in the foreign policy context, and to see it enshrined on this issue here at home was pretty special."



PRICE (RIGHT) MEETS WITH PRESIDENT OBAMA AND OTHER WHITE HOUSE STAFFERS.

LET'S TALK

BROTHERS STUART AND BLAKE MONTGOMERY HAVE MORE IN COMMON THAN A LAST NAME. BOTH ARE GAY — BUT THE BROTHERS HAVE DIFFERENT STORIES. FOCUS EDITOR BRADFORD BECK SITS DOWN WITH THEM FOR A CANDID CONVERSATION.

STORY BY BRADFORD BECK | PHOTOS COURTESY STUART AND BLAKE MONTGOMERY

STUART MONTGOMERY '15

ON COMING OUT

I guess not that much different because I didn't really change much the way I acted. I was still doing jazz hands down the hallways. I guess I kinda got, like sometimes people would do a double take because I wasn't like lying about it anymore.

When people asked me I would be like, 'yes', but in general, pretty much without any to do. Again, like I said, it was kind of an open secret and everyone knew about it.

THE SUPREME COURT CASE MEANING

It actually turned out to be a lot more meaningful than I thought it was going to be. Before it was passed I was like 'uh, this is just

kinda like a bandaid issue" But I think it's actually pretty special. You know you see like all these buzzfeed articles about like these people got married after like 40 years and that was really nice. It's not like the pinnacle of everything, it's just like a very nice thing to do. It's a good first step I think.

AS IT [GAY MARRIAGE] BECOMES MORE NORMALIZED, BEING GAY I MEAN, PEOPLE WILL SEE IT AS A NONISSUE.

ADVICE FOR COMING OUT

No one cares as much as you

think they do. If you live with your parents still, which you probably do, it might be a hotspot. I don't know. This is really cliché but, don't worry about it. I spent a lot of time having a lot of anxiety about what people were going to think.

I worked extra hard or something to like prove myself. I made a lot of good friends at St. Mark's and I really value that. I think people were past homophobia.

WHAT THE COMMUNITY CAN DO

I think just time helps. Like every year it decreases a little bit. I think gay marriage really brings it to the forefront. As it becomes more normalized, being gay I mean, people will see it as a nonissue. Like another thing that makes a person.

WHAT'S FUN ABOUT BEING GAY

Freedom of expression. I actually think about this a lot. Like you occupy this weird space in between genders which people don't really view you as, like not all the way male but not female.

I think you can pick and choose what you want from the stereotypical genders. So I think freedom of expression is the best.

DOES SEXUALITY DEFINE YOU

I know I'm supposed to say no but, honestly, yes — in kind of the way everyone's does, but not really. It's just people often ask me

'Would you do X behavior if you weren't gay' and I don't know because it's just a baseline part of who I am.

Like I am from Dallas. I am a Montgomery. I am gay. It's like coded into my DNA so, yeah, I would say it sometimes defines who I am.

WHAT STEREOTYPES ARE ACCURATE OR FUNNY

First off all of them are funny. Like if you play a stereotype right, classic humor. That being said they can be damaging. Like a lot of people tell me the gay voice doesn't exist and I'm like of course the gay voice exists.

Exhibits A-Z are right in front of you. I don't know I think all stereotypes have a little bit of truth in them.

PERKS OF BEING GAY

I think a lot of people see it as being kind of disarming. Like when I talk to people, they automatically think not a threat. Don't gotta worry about. And that is sometimes nice ya know it happens sometimes.

THREE THINGS EVERY GAY SHOULD KNOW

It is different. These are so hard. Number one is to not internalize homophobia. There is a huge thing in the gay community when people refer to themselves as 'masc' which

is short of masculine because it's terrible to be feminine.

Don't internalize homophobia meaning don't value masculinity. Both are valuable in their own right. Stop groping people and feeling like it's ok. That is annoying and stupid. That is such a big one. The last one is 'you are enough.' Do not feel like you have to compensate.

HOW THE SUPREME COURT WILL CHANGE THINGS

Not a lot. I think it's a part of a series of things. Everything building up to it has been the road to acceptance.

I think it was a major milestone and things will go up from here.

HIS EXPERIENCE VS. BLAKE'S

I think it was easier honestly. That five years time difference made a huge difference. A lot can happen in five years I think.

I think it was easier because Blake worked harder in school than I did. I just kind relaxed in that department a little too much.

People were harder on him than they were on me. I think that is because of the time difference. I think I was kind of aware of it and trying to make up for it.

It was a lot harder for him. He didn't have the same support system. I drank from the wells that I didn't dig.



ABOUT IT

BLAKE MONTGOMERY '10

ADVICE FOR COMING OUT

I would say do everything to find other people like you because then you'll be able to give in to these feelings.

There's an LGBT center in Dallas which I didn't know existed and there are gay youth groups which I really wish I had covertly taken advantage of when I was a student because then I could have met people who were interested in talking about gay stuff, dating stuff like that.

Find a community outside of St Mark's if that community is not hospitable to you.

ON AGING AS A GAY

Especially, growing older, being out is not the be all end all. You want to lead a happy, productive life and the things that make me really happy are crazy gay people that are like out of control, like flaming all over the place trailing glitter wherever they go.

I hope that those people always exist and I hope that the supreme court ruling makes it easier for those people to exist as well as for like the gay quarter-backs to exist.

WHAT STEREOTYPES DO GAY'S FACE

The essentializing of gay people as one type of thing is wrong.

That is true of minority group. I think the world should allow gay people to exist as they want to define themselves.

There are the crazy ones who are the mastheads of the big gay ship. You know those are the men that are dressed as women and are covered in glitter and immediately conservative and bigoted people think of gay people like that.

This is so important as a figurehead. All of the stereotypes are real. They come from real people. They are all right in a sense but they aren't all right for every person. No one gay person fits the stereotypes.

REACTION TO SUPREME COURT RULING

It's a very powerful symbol and more than that it has ignited debate about the legitimacy of not only gay marriage but also queer identity and those conversations will eventually change people's minds.

HE [HIS BROTHER STUART] WAS NOMINATED FOR HOMECOMING KING AND I WAS LIKE 'WHAT, HAS IT CHANGED THAT MUCH?'

There are going to have to be some bold straight boys who are like yeah it's okay, it's fine. A lot

of it also takes the really insanely gay people who just know immediately and exude this confidence.

Those people really inspired me to come out and I was like you are living this proud flamingo life and it is amazing. Like cool, I look like really boring and gay compared to you but I'm really happy you exist.

ADDRESSING THE OTHER SIDE

When people say that gay people shouldn't be able to get married because of religious reasons, then I think we should divorce religious and state marriages. There should be either complete separation of church and state or just allow everybody access.

One thing I care a lot about is employment non-discrimination. I personally think employment non-discrimination is more important than marriage, but marriage is a very important symbol.

Everybody needs a job but not everybody needs to get married. But I was really happy when the Supreme Court gave us the right to get married.

ON BROTHERLY SUPPORT

I'm so thankful and happy that my brother is gay. It's amazing. For a little bit, I didn't want him to be gay because I didn't want him to go through the things that

I went through. I didn't want him to face hardships, I love him. That definitely indicated that I was ashamed of being gay.

I knew for a very long time that my brother was gay. He's very flamboyant and wonderful. He has to a greater extent been out at St. Mark's. It boggles my mind because I didn't think it was possible to be out and be so well liked. He was nominated for Homecoming king and I was like what, has it changed that much?

It kind of made me wonder if St. Mark's had changed a lot in five years or if I just had this perception that it was a much harsher community than it was. That made me confused and kind of regretful that I didn't come out established with a sense of self worth and confidence back then.

WHAT'S FUN ABOUT BEING GAY

Since I'm different in this one way, it allows me to imagine how else can I be different if I really want to. It allows me to imagine my life in the way that I want to conceptualize it, and it's a lot of work but it's also so rewarding that I get to sculpt my life.

It gives me access to all this slang, and this new language and these mannerisms that just feel right for my body and for how I conceptualize myself.

Breaking the mold

AFTER YEARS
OF HIDING,
DAVID MUÑOZ
'12 CAME TO
GRIPS WITH HIS
SEXUALITY —
STARTING WITH
HOMECOMING.



STORY RISH BASU | PHOTO COURTESY DAVID MUNOZ

June 26th, 2015.
David Muñoz '12 stares at the rainbow-colored Empire State Building thinking that this day would never come. Celebrating the Supreme Court ruling of nationwide recognition of same-sex marriage, he couldn't believe that his day had come so fast.

Just three years years before, Muñoz was listening to his parents telling him to not take a boy to Homecoming.

He couldn't sleep. His grades were dropping. He was devastated.

Until his junior year, Muñoz lived in solitude. As he continued to live his life in the closet, Muñoz felt like he was living a lie.

Every day, Muñoz felt the vibe that being gay was the ultimate loss, the worst possible situation.

"Back then, I thought my parents were going to hate me if I came out," Muñoz said. "I didn't want to be social. I didn't want to have people over to my house because I was afraid that if I came out, they would think I would start hitting on them, and they would get weirded out by that. In my head, there were all these things. So it was really kind of holding me back from so much."

Muñoz quickly figured out that his current environment was not helping his cause.

"It's funny," Muñoz said. "When you get older in high school, especially at an all boys school, there's kind of a structure, like a game that we play where you have to be cool and act like a bro and all those things. It's like everyone kind of deviates from that in their own way as you get older."

But after his junior year when he decided to officially come out of the closet and take a boy to Homecoming his senior year, Muñoz finally began to display his identity.

"I kind of figured everything out, really independently by kind of setting my own terms with things and learning who I am and what I can be," Muñoz said. "I went behind my parents' back and kind of did my own thing, but it was the only way for me to grow as a person just because of the circumstances. It was really devastating every day right until the day I came out."

Muñoz initially suspected that being the only openly gay student here would provide a countless number of problems, but his expectations were met with surprise.

"Every high-schooler is so impressive, but I never had a single confrontation about it," Muñoz said. "Maybe people made fun of me but I never knew because I never heard any of it. I was kind of waiting for someone to make fun of me, but it didn't happen because no one had any reason to. I got along with everyone."

Throughout Middle School and the beginning of high school, Muñoz never felt like there was a tense environment regarding his sexuality. He suspected that his own classmates would talk about his sexuality, so he guesses that at some point, everybody just figured it out.

"I had a lot in the back of my mind going into thinking about coming out, and I just had no idea what to expect," Muñoz said. "But a lot of things were changing at St. Mark's at the time, and no one from the administration and none of my peers confronted me about anything. It was just like a total non-issue."

With a new chaplain, head of Upper School and the brand new construction of the Centennial Hall, Muñoz felt like everything was breathing differently on campus he knew as home.



NOW A SENIOR AT NEW YORK UNIVERSITY WHERE HE WORKS IN THE SCULPTURE STUDIO, MUÑOZ WAS THE FIRST MARKSMAN TO BRING A SAME-SEX DATE TO HOMECOMING.

MUÑOZ IN THE SCULPTURE STUDIO AT NEW YORK UNIVERSITY.

People were ready for some change.

After his announcement, Muñoz started to become more optimistic about his future. He thought about his career after college. The possibility of a marriage in Texas. A world where people would stop telling gay people that they can't do everything what straight people can do.

Ultimately, Muñoz realized that being gay did not hold him back from pursuing goals that were important to him.

"You know what it's like being at an all boy school," Muñoz said. "It's like when you get older, you can hold onto the things you like and change the other ways you act. It doesn't have to be an all or nothing situation. I could still do sports, be a class clown and I could still do everything I wanted to do."

Muñoz was aware of the impact his announcement had on the entire school community. Involved in many extracurricular activities, Muñoz realized his open status could inspire other high school students to follow his path.

"I was the only one out, but of course there were a lot of other gay students at St Mark's," Muñoz said. "I was really active in sports and art and I was good at school. And some gay person could be any kind of student."

Muñoz believes being gay at a community like St. Mark's might be difficult for many students to cope with. After years of conceal-

ing his entire identity, Muñoz can only hope that gay students do not go through the same experience he did.

"It would be harder for someone who's more reserved as a person or gets picked on for other reasons, and to also be gay on top of that," Muñoz said. "That's another thing I was thinking about: wow I really should come out so that it's easier for everyone else in the future."

After Muñoz's journey ended as high schooler, the college application process marked a meaningful landmark in his life. Writing his college application to the New York University, Muñoz felt hesitant writing his college essay about painting. Although painting and the arts were a passion that has stuck with Muñoz throughout his entire life, he realized that not many people would appreciate the intricacies of the activity.

As a result, Muñoz made a last minute decision.

Two hours before the midnight deadline on New Years Day for his application, Muñoz rewrote his entire college essay about taking a boy to Homecoming.

"After I changed my essay, I ended up getting a huge scholarship so it pays to be yourself," Muñoz said. "It seems like you can just live for yourself. I don't know if being gay is what got me my scholarship; I had a pretty good application other than that, but I remember I was like 'I've already made it this far,

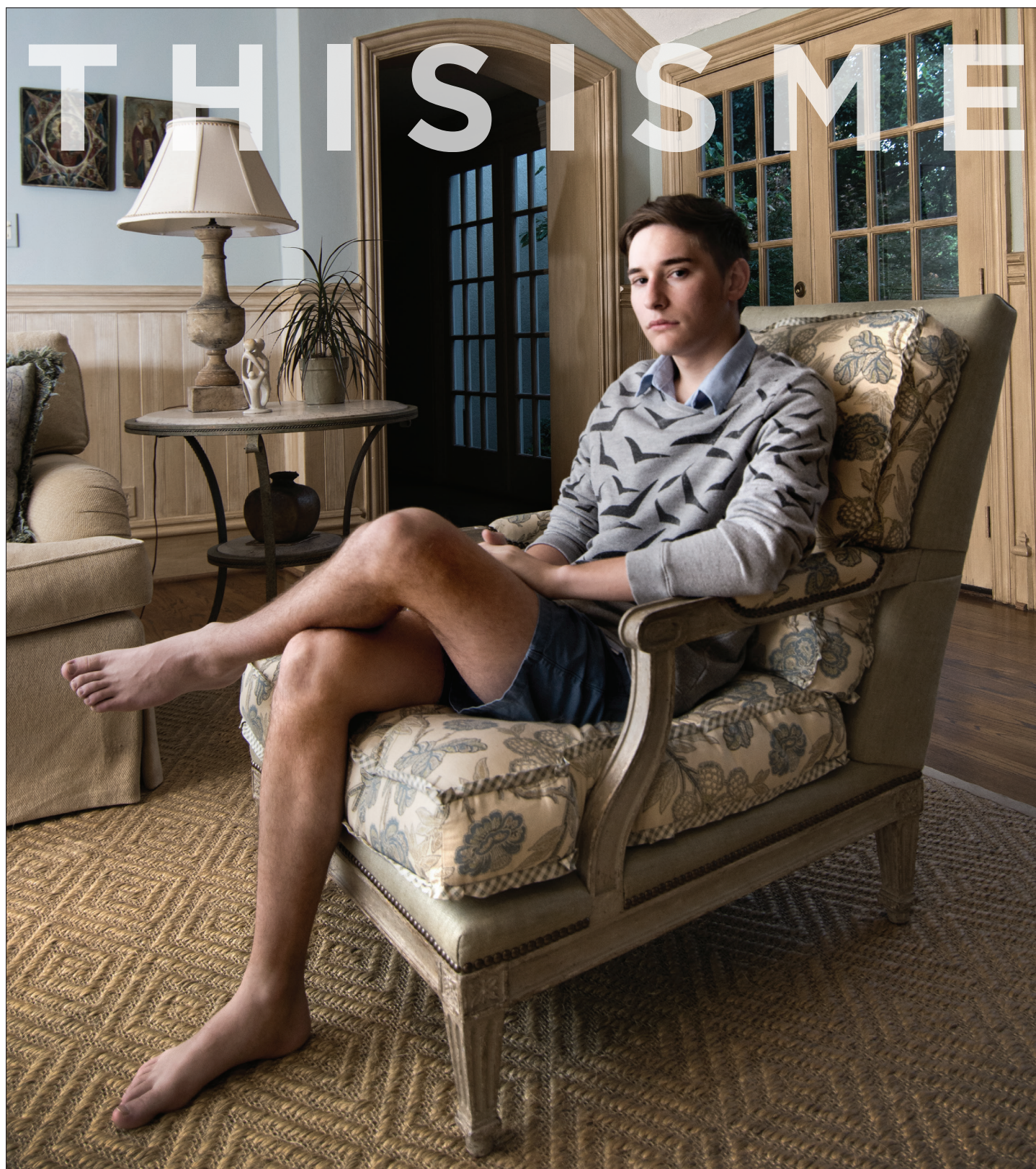
why not throw everything up to the wind.'"

After receiving his scholarship, Muñoz's life took a turn for the good. By beginning a new part of his life without concealing his sexuality, Muñoz made sure he had a different experience than his first years as a high school student here. A new environment has given Muñoz the opportunity to seek new relationships and ambitions.

"People here don't even think about the difference of being gay," Muñoz said. "The Supreme Court ruling still hasn't hit me because I remember growing up in high school and thinking that I could never get married. This really made me feel bad. I was always kind of really political. I always figured that eventually we could, but I didn't think it would come this fast."

The Supreme Court ruling not only gave Muñoz and other gay people a whole new world of opportunities, but it also changed the perception of many important people in Muñoz's life.

"My parents came to visit me in New York the weekend of Gay Pride in NYC so it was really funny," Muñoz said. "I brought my parents here to show them what my life was like up here. I took them to a cool celebration. To think that a couple years ago I was depressed and they were telling me to not to take a boy to Homecoming. And now we're up on a penthouse balcony looking at the Empire State Building."



STORY AVERY POWELL | PHOTO ARNO GOETZ

THE OTHER BOYS MADE FUN OF HIM.
MADE HIM SIT AT THE GIRLS' TABLE.
WILL GARDEN WAS DIFFERENT.
BUT THEY KNEW BEFORE HE DID.

People thought I was gay before I knew it," Will Garden said. "I was bullied a lot during Middle School and was called every name in the book."

As an elementary school student, the senior struggled with ADHD and behavioral issues before settling into First Baptist Academy in the fourth grade.

"Because I was a really annoying kid, I kissed everybody," Garden said. "I didn't think about my sexuality at all until fifth, sixth and seventh grade because I always knew I was weird and different."

While at First Baptist Academy, Garden was soon ostracized by other fifth graders for being "different."

"Being called faggot down the halls was not fun. It wasn't fun at all," Garden said. "I wasn't beat up or anything, but it wasn't fun. The hatred was just really low-key."

Eventually, the other male students refused to let Garden eat lunch with him, making him sit with girls instead of with other boys his age.

"None of the guys liked me, so they made me sit at the girls' table," Garden said, "So for the entire year and the years following, I sat with the girls. I didn't have any guy friends, and I still feel like I don't have many guy friends."

During his time at First Baptist, Garden soon began his first long-term romantic relationship. With a girl.

"I dated a girl for a long time," Garden said. "The attraction to her wasn't fake, so I was basically like 'I'm dating this girl so I can't be gay.'"

Although many — if not most — students at his previous school took part in the name-calling and exclusion, Garden feels welcome at St. Mark's.

"People that I didn't know called me gay, but that was at a different school," Garden said. "People don't realize that at St. Mark's, bullying doesn't happen like it does at other schools. Fourth through sixth grade at First Baptist, that bullying was bad, but I have never really gotten made fun of at St. Mark's."

After switching schools, the bullying and aggression faded, but for Garden, another issue always lingered: isolation.

"While there hasn't been any specific moment [of aggression], there has been some isolation," Garden said. "I didn't feel like I had any friends until eighth or ninth grade. Even now I feel like people are scared of me."

Although many gay students, like Stuart Montgomery '15, came before him, Garden does not automatically consider them role models by sexuality alone.

"Nobody was my St. Mark's gay icon because nobody was trying to educate people," Garden said. "I had people that were gay that I liked because they were cool. With Stuart, I just loved Stuart, everyone loved Stuart. He has a great personality, he is really fun, but I didn't look up to him like he was my gay savior."

And while he appreciates his time and experiences here, Garden hopes things continue to improve though the years, in addition to current progress like the amendment of *Lion Tracks* in 2011 that allowed students to bring male dates to school dances.

"That was a great thing that happened, that they let people bring guys, but they kind of gassed it up and made it seem like the biggest thing ever," Garden said. "Is that all we're going to talk about?"

The importance of conversation is not lost on Garden. With many avoiding the subject altogether, he feels the school could be more accepting if sexuality were a more open topic of discussion, not one to ignore.

"It's less of what has been said to me, it's more of what hasn't been said," Garden said. "It's more a refusal to talk about anything, or ask me. It's not like people didn't ask me — it was just weird. It was, I

think, that no one cared enough or I just got that vibe. Honestly, just no one cared, but my experience at St. Mark's has been awesome."

Over the years, Garden became more confident with himself and his sexuality.

But as he learned more about gay issues — both national and personal — he realized others might not understand what it means to be gay.

It wasn't of hate, and it wasn't because of stupidity.

It was because no one talked about it.

Garden faced silence at home and silence at school. There was no one talking about who he was.

Who they were.

For Garden, the first step away from isolation is conversation.

"The only issues that we talk about in class are pretty much gender and race issues," Garden said. "I've only ever talked about gay issues outside of classes."

Garden believes discussion many issues, such as safety for gay students or transgender issues, have their place in an intellectual environment.

"We literally don't talk about it," Garden said. "The books that we read don't have gay characters. The history books have some sections, but it's one stanza about Harvey Milk or one stanza about Stonewall [riots in New York in the 1960s]. We talk about it for two seconds and then it's, 'Oh, next.'"

While classroom conversation may facilitate learning about current social issues, Garden also understands that what people can continue to learn outside of a school setting.

"You can do that on your own time too," Garden said. "You can educate yourself."

Many of Garden's more heated debates occur over social media, but Garden stresses the importance of people not shying away from publicly stating their opinions.

"People start deleting their tweets because they don't want it to seem like they're misogynistic or homophobic," Garden said. "You're not homophobic, it's just a

learning experience for everyone. I'm still learning, everyone is still learning."

Whether in-person or through social media, Garden wants both parties to understand productive benefits of arguments about cultural issues, however heated they may be. But in those debates, respect comes first.

"When you are respectful of my opinion, I will be respectful of yours," Garden said. "We may not agree, but that doesn't mean we have to hate each other. If you don't have mutual respect, then the conversation doesn't happen. It's just two people yelling at each other."

At the end of his junior year, Garden was granted the Rochester University Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass Award, which is awarded to somebody who has taken rigorous humanities courses and has shown interest and involvement about social issues.

"I think I was awarded that because nobody else talks about it," Garden said. "I could have done more this past year, but I feel as though nobody else says anything. I did say a lot, but I think it was really that I said something as opposed to nothing."

Garden believes "saying nothing" about gay issues — or any social issue, relating to any student — is neither productive nor progressive.

"Nothing is perfect," Garden said. "Nothing is going to be perfect for a student, but I'm a very opinionated person. When somebody asks for my opinion I'll give it. When somebody doesn't ask for my opinion, I'll still probably still give it."

Although Garden offers his opinions publicly, he wishes other students would realize the benefits of simply speaking their mind on the subject.

"When people don't get vocal, I think you're destroying the issue," Garden said. "Some people are afraid to get vocal because they don't want to start any drama. It's really not 'drama.' It's an argument or a debate."

IT'S LESS OF WHAT HAS BEEN SAID TO ME, IT'S MORE OF WHAT HASN'T BEEN SAID. IT'S MORE A REFUSAL TO TALK ABOUT ANYTHING

RESPECT AND VALUE

WHERE

ARE AT THE CORE

WE

OF THE SCHOOL'S

ARE

ACCEPTANCE OF

NOW.

LGBT STUDENTS

STORY BRADFORD BECK, DAVIS MARSH
ILLUSTRATION ABHI THUMMALA

TRUE OR FALSE: GAY RIGHTS IS AN EXPLOSIVE ISSUE AT 10600 PRESTON ROAD.

TRUE OR FALSE: GAY RIGHTS HERE CAME ABOUT ONLY THROUGH COURT ORDER.

TRUE OR FALSE: THE SCHOOL TAKES NO STANCE ON RESPECT AND DIGNITY OF GAY STUDENTS.

The answer to all these questions — as anyone here can attest — is false. No agenda is pushed. No judgments are issued.

The school's message of "courage and honor" is carried out to every person, and certainly not selectively decreed by one's sexual identity.

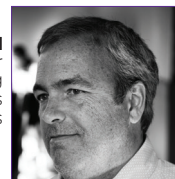
That's the message Headmaster David Dini and Interim Upper School Head Scott Gonzalez sent — loud and clear — in a *ReMarker* interview focusing on the school's policies of LGBT students.

They affirm the school's stance on homosexual individuals stems from a respect for all people — not from a political agenda. Dini feels philosophies of respect and inclusiveness are paramount to having a gay-friendly community.

"The whole belief and the philosophy that the school is about respecting the individual for who they are," Dini said. "That's a prevailing sentiment in the fabric of the institution of the school. That transcends everything we do — who you are and what you believe and what you bring to the equation at St. Mark's. I want every student on this campus to feel valued and respected."

Gonzalez also feels a person's sexual orientation does not change his intrinsic value within the community and that all

DAVID DINI
Headmaster
wants a feeling
of inclusiveness
on campus



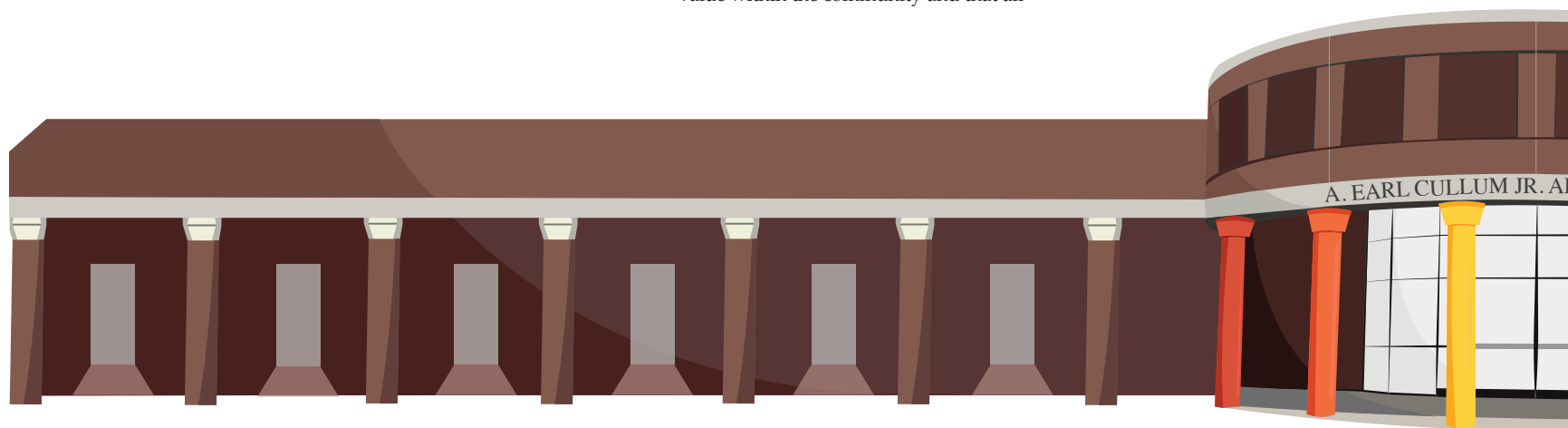
adults should uphold this idea of respect.

"I think that if we can get past the idea of people's sex lives and to accept them as loving and caring members of our community and loving and caring parents, who cares?" Gonzalez said. "And there are some people who care. The thing to understand is that it's one thing to support gay rights, it's another thing to be against it. And I think that what they need to understand is that if they don't support the equality of gays or lesbians on our campus, there's nothing they can do about it because the community supports that."

Gonzalez also assures that gay students should never be subjected to derogatory terms or bullying, and that such actions would be treated in a similar manner to a disciplinary issue.

"[Students] cannot engage in any kind of behavior that is detrimental to those individuals, and there will be a price to pay," Gonzalez said. "It's somewhat similar to having people of different religious backgrounds. If you are of one strong religious background and you believe that everybody else is wrong, you can continue to believe that and stay quiet, but you can't go around telling other people that. That's just totally unacceptable."

While Gonzalez understands gay students deal with tough situations, he believes a gay affinity group cannot solve all issues.



"People your age are in a tough spot anyway," Gonzalez said. "We have this idea that if we were to have a Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN) group that everything would be great, I'm not saying that it wouldn't be better but I think to assume that if we had a gay group or a GSA group that then boys who were gay could just come out and admit to it. First off, not everybody's comfortable with that, second off some of their families aren't ready for that, so that assumes all kinds of things. It's not somebith-

SCOTT GONZALEZ
Upper School head has seen a big shift in acceptance



ing that happens overnight."

Dini feels the school is charged with encouraging productive dialogue.

"The most important thing we can do is to provide a supportive environment for every student and provide lots of forums for respectful dialogue, open discussion, and reinforce that respecting other people and developing an appreciation for other people, classmates, peers, fellow Marksmen," Dini said.

Creating the appropriate framework and culture is important, Dini says.

"Creating the framework

and the culture and reinforcing the fundamental philosophy of the school is where we need to invest the most energy," Dini said. "The school's job is to create the right kind of environment, the right kind of ethos that should transcend every aspect of individual students and their being."

The ethos of acceptance did not happen overnight, however, and certain policies have been put in place here to address these issues.

"We do list partners (in the faculty directory) and that was something we didn't do for a long time," Gonzalez said. "We now have it on the books that boys can bring male dates with them to Homecoming and the Marksmen Ball and stuff like that. That would have been unheard of when I first started here for a lot of reasons."

However, as societal acceptances change, more challenges emerge — one of which is that which has been in the forefront of public discussion: transgenderism.

Dini confirms that this issue has been broached in conversations, but also says that no official decision of the school is ready to be released.

"Obviously the issue of transgender students or transgender individuals is much more on the landscape than it has been historically," Dini said. "In terms of how it applies to St. Mark's, it's been an issue that we've certainly

had a lot of conversation about here and we have thought carefully about how it could impact the school in the future if it were an issue we were to encounter with a student. I would simply say that in a word we would, like in any other case, think through that issue carefully and intentionally and deliberately and thoughtfully."

Gonzalez has also noted a shift in students' attitudes during his tenure at the school. He believes that as students became more confident in themselves, they began to accept differences as well.

"There was a turning point in '03 or '04," Gonzalez said. "Our guys went to play a volleyball game or a basketball game, but the boys came out of the gym and all these people were chanting, 'Homos or gays' or something like that and our guys were like okay, so they put their arms around each other and said, 'Yeah' and it was kind of poking fun back at it but also they were like so, what's the big deal? Whereas I think earlier than that the boys at the school would have been verbally aggressive and denying. And I think they finally said okay what's the big deal? I think that was a real turning point."

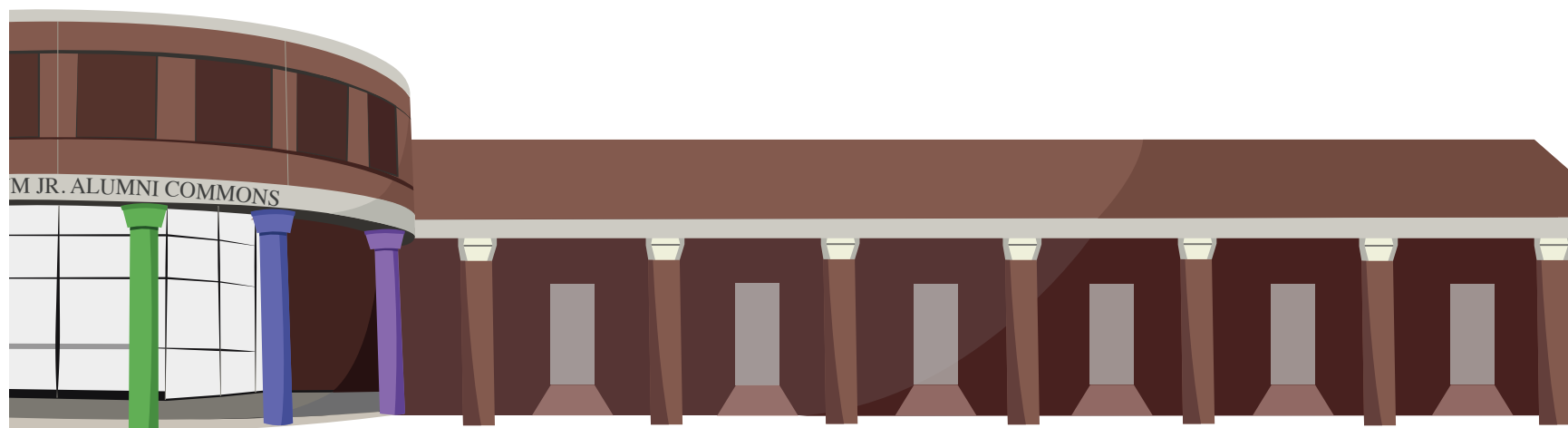
Gonzalez also believes that any adult who wrongfully discriminates against a group of people does not belong in the community.

"The issue is that if I bring an individual into this community who is an adult who cannot treat all our students, all the kids equitably as human beings deserving of love and respect and support, then they don't need to be part of this community as far as I'm concerned," Gonzalez said.

And the school hopes to continue to be a place of strong community that focuses more on character than beliefs.

"It's important to keep in mind that we're a school," Dini said, "and our mission here is to give boys preparation for life and make sure they feel valued and supported. When they're ten or twenty years removed from the school, they felt supported and accepted and valued when they were at St. Mark's. I hope that improves more and more over time. That's something that we just have to work hard on."

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PLACE THAN
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AND CODE
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