

The problem of the uniform

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«Yes, Mum'll have it ready for me about now. She knows I often go out early on the bike.»

«And how many more eggs this time?»

«Oh two, I should think.»

«*Five* eggs for breakfast today?»

«Oh yes, I like eating. Doesn't do you any harm at all.» He put his **silver** helmet on again, flashed me one last dazzling, impudent smile, and mounted the Triumph again. «Be seeing you round the garage again soon, I expect?»

«Yes, Harry.»

And that was that.

THE PROBLEM OF THE UNIFORM

The problem of the uniform puzzled me for many years, and for a long time I could not understand its appeal nor the reason for its attractiveness. To a certain degree, most uniforms make the bodies beneath them more exciting—some in greater degree than others. For me, and perhaps for a majority of others like me, the sailor's uniform topped the list. There was a time that I thought its beguiling quality was caused mostly by its cut, for it is true that it fits so close that it adds a strange and sexual darkness to the shape of the body beneath it, almost like a coat of black mysterious paint. It is designed to make its wearer **more** desired, from the sharp contrasts of white piping on the collar and sleeves to the tight clutch of the dark wool upon the buttocks, and the inward curling of the crease down the sides of the revealing trousers with their romantic tradition of the bridge with thirteen buttons and the odd cross-lacing at the back. (Alas, that in the newer American uniforms the bridge and cross-lacing have disappeared! Has the Navy no heart at all?) The function of the sailor's uniform is more to adorn and decorate the wearer than to prove useful to him in combat, just as Genet says that the function of the French Navy is more to ornament the coast of France than to defend it.

At last, from much thinking about uniforms, I became aware that there was more to their appeal than their cut—a kind of psychic pull which did not exist in the case of every uniform. Why, for instance, did a mailman's grey seem dull and commonplace? Why did not a railroad conductor's clothes make him more glamorous? Or most bus-drivers' uniforms increase their wearers' magnetism? The sailor's dress-blues tantalized, the air force's neat powder-blue tempted—even the khaki of the soldier was persuasive—and the brilliant red and blue and yellow splash of the marines carried you captive away.

The problem worried me for many years, unsolved and tickling my subconscious. And then a little light began to show. The sailor's uniform, I decided, is glamorous because it represents a way of life that most of us can never know. The sailor knows far suns and seas, the bamboo huts of savages, the stone lace-work of Indian castles, crystal pools and sands in Persia, white columns against dark blue Greek skies, the golden suns and fountains of redwalled Rome. His background is romantic, dark, and strange. He fights for us who are left at home in the dull round of living. And then—then when he takes us in his strong young arms, we feel that beneath the rough wool there beats a heart more brave and gallant than any we have ever known, that his thighs have known the cares-

ses of mermaids beneath the sea, and that his lips have tasted the brown sweet flavor of Arabian throats.

It was all hog-wash and nonsense, of course. A sailor's body is formed like any other; his mind functions in the same commonplace way our own do. He is frightened and delighted by the things which terrify and please the stay-at-homes, But the uniform surrounds him with the shimmering glitter of an illusion, and we are frozen into our positions of adoration and desire. The uniform is the psychic link—the gazing-glass through which we look into another world.

(From an unpublished novel)

by John McAndrews

„The Circle in which we move“

by PAUL PETERS

It has been said that «East is East, and West is West, and never the Twain shall meet.» Far too many of our members live out their lives following this creed—they are homosexual and so they only want to mix socially with others of their kind. They want to have no part of «normal» society, of belonging to clubs—sports clubs, social clubs, etc.—and mixing freely with their fellow men.

I take them to task, and I go so far as to say that by their behaviour they make the task of creating greater tolerance and understanding of our «problem» all the greater. Let me draw a parallel which will be more readily understood. It is a known fact that many members of the Jewish faith (I am one of them) tend to be unassimilatable because wherever they go they will only join exclusively Jewish Clubs and mix socially with other members of their religion. The result is that many people who never get a chance to «get to know» them and consequently have no personal experience by which to judge them, condemn them as a class or a group—they lump them all together in one category, and apply their possible dislike of individuals to the whole group.

Years ago I joined a social-sports club where quite a fair percentage of the members are members of the Jewish faith. There is less anti-Semitism in the club than in many others I know where there are no Jewish members at all. The answer is simple. Sam X is a very decent chap, so is Abe Y, and the members generally like them; Ike Z is an outsider, mean and possessing no commendable qualities. Because of Sam and Abe, Ike is disliked as an individual and *not* simply because he is Jewish. By Sam and Abe belonging to this club, they are convincing a group of people that being a member of the Jewish faith does not make a person any less agreeable as a social companion or fellow member of a sports club.

I will most readily agree that there is one big difference between Sam the Jew und Sam the homosexuel. Sam the Jew can openly acknowledge his religion whereas Sam the homosexual can hardly broadcast the fact and expect to remain a member of the club. Nevertheless, Sam the homosexual can fight the battle for greater tolerance in another way.

Some months ago there appeared in the local press a report on a case in which two adult homosexuals were involved, and the fact was reported in court. A third person—also an adult was involved. The matter came up in conversation at the club one evening. After someone had passed a remark about «these pansies», I was surprised to hear one of the members pass the remark: «For good-