



Tobias, Andrew (b. 1947)

by Linda Rapp

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Andrew Tobias.
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Courtesy Andrew Tobias.

Andrew Tobias became well known as an astute businessman and a writer of best-selling books on investing and banking. Only in 1995 did he reveal that he was also the author of the classic coming out autobiographical work *The Best Little Boy in the World*, which he published in 1973 under the pseudonym John Reid.

Young Andrew Tobias had a privileged life. Born April 20, 1947 in New York City, he lived on Fifth Avenue, and on weekends his family retired to their country house in Westchester County. Despite this financial security, Tobias was emotionally troubled: having realized at the age of eleven that he was gay, he embarked on a prodigious effort to remain "the best little boy in the world" in the eyes of his parents and society at large, which involved, among other things, keeping his sexuality a closely guarded secret.

After graduating from Horace Mann High School in 1964, Tobias entered Harvard, where he majored in Slavic Languages and Literature, but spent most of his time running Harvard's student business conglomerate that publishes *Let's Go: The Student Guide to Europe*. An excellent student, he earned his B. A. *cum laude* in 1968, the same year that he published his first book, *The Ivy League Guidebook*, co-written with Arnold Bortz and Caspar Weinberger. Tobias returned to Harvard to study in its prestigious business school, from which he received a master's degree in 1972.

The first of his books about business, *The Funny Money Game*, came out in 1971, and his next, *Fire and Ice: The Story of Charles Revson*, was published in 1974.

Tobias had written another book in the meanwhile, but his groundbreaking memoir, *The Best Little Boy in the World* (1973), appeared under the pseudonym John Reid.

The chronicle of Tobias's struggle with his sexual orientation and his eventual coming out as a gay man has an important place in glbtq literature because of its candor and because of the moment in history at which it appeared, a few years after Stonewall, when the modern American gay rights movement was beginning to gather momentum. Tobias's moving coming out story, in which he progresses from fear of discovery and the pain of loneliness to a somewhat uneasy acceptance of his identity, was embraced by glbtq readers who could relate to his experience and take hope from his message.

The journey to self-acceptance was not an easy one for the young Tobias. Paul Robinson refers to the "uniquely grim account of the closet" in *The Best Little Boy in the World*, adding that "no other biographer describes such a massive blackout of desire, and none tells a more rending story of the determination to repress every conceivable evidence of his sexual identity." So great were the psychological barriers that Tobias faced that even after he had come to terms with his gayness emotionally--and indeed was eager to come out to friends--he continued to find physical expression difficult for a considerable time.

That Tobias felt the need to publish the memoir under a pen name bespeaks the homophobia that remained pervasive in American society. Moreover, although the character in the book is able at last to come out to

his parents, in reality it was not until several years after the work had been published that Tobias revealed his sexual orientation to his own family.

Tobias went on to have an extremely successful career as a financial writer. *Fire and Ice* was a best-seller, as was *The Only Investment Guide You'll Ever Need* (1977, revised and updated in 1996 and 1998). He has since written books on banking, insurance, and finance, as well as numerous articles for such publications as *New York Magazine*, *Esquire*, *Fortune*, and *Playboy*. In addition, he served as a contributing editor for *New York Magazine* from 1972 to 1976 and for *Esquire* from 1977 through 1984.

Tobias's software program *Managing Your Money* dominated the personal finance market for several years in the early 1990s. In 1997, he co-hosted an eight-part PBS documentary, *Beyond Wall Street*. He has made numerous appearances on television news and public affairs programs.

Although Tobias had acknowledged his homosexuality to family and friends in the 1970s, it was only in the early 1990s that he came out at large. In a speech at the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association convention in 1995 he publicly claimed authorship of *The Best Little Boy in the World*. In 1998 the book was reissued with Tobias's own name as the writer.

In the same year Tobias published a sequel, *The Best Little Boy Grows Up*. Although it received polite reviews, it did not achieve the impact of his earlier work.

Tobias cited the presence of Bill and Hillary Clinton in the White House as "a huge catalyst" in his decision to come out publicly.

Tobias was a vigorous fundraiser for Clinton and other Democrats. Many of his efforts were centered on enlisting support from the glbtq community.

Tobias was elected treasurer of the Democratic National Committee in 1999 and continues to hold the post. He is the first openly gay person to fill a leadership position in a major American political party. Having amassed a considerable personal fortune, he agreed to serve as the Democratic party treasurer for a salary of one dollar per year.

Tobias has been in a committed relationship since 1994 with fashion designer Charles Nolan. Nolan, also strongly dedicated to working for glbtq rights, quit his job to become an unpaid volunteer with the campaign of former Vermont governor Howard Dean for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2004.

Since coming out, Tobias has worked for the dignity of glbtq people. He has traveled to Russia with the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission and there helped in the effort to repeal Rule 121, a law against sexual relations between gay men. He also serves on the Human Rights Campaign's Board of Directors and participated in their "endorsement project," urging major corporations to adopt policies banning discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

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About the Author

Linda Rapp teaches French and Spanish at the University of Michigan-Dearborn. She freelances as a writer, tutor, and translator. She is Assistant to the General Editor of www.glbtc.com.