

FROM THE EDITOR

An Introduction

I was very nervous about this issue, my first issue. I expected that I would screw everything up and have a thousand fingers pointing at my inadequacies, but oddly enough, to my surprise, I actually feel like I know what I'm doing to some degree (well, sometimes at least.)

Introducing myself obviously exceeds this page, this week, this month. For those who haven't met me already, I am not easy fare. I am blunt, honest, and intense at times, perhaps because I know the devastating effects of denial, perhaps because I am an artist.

I have only been sitting here at this desk and answering this phone for a month now and already my life has started to change as a result. Before I took over last month, I was constantly asked, "Do you really know what you're getting into?" Actually, I had no clear idea of what my job really was, but I sensed that the challenges it would present were a necessary step for me to grow as a person. So, here I am, worried that I might make no sense, that it was a mistake that I was offered this position.

I was raised in a military family, so yes, I am quite screwy in the head. I've lived on a treeless Alaskan island, the Tornadoland known as Western Tennessee, and explored the back roads of the Northeast Kingdom. Yet, I've never really had the chance to be part of any community. I tried to

settle into each place, but my efforts always failed because I would be thrown into something new from each move, forced to find a safe place inside myself. So, it is with a very eager heart that I say I've decided to make Vermont the community in which I break those old patterns, so I can comfortably say without hesitation, "This is my home."

I have been living in Vermont for seven years. I am a recent graduate of the University of Vermont. I spent four long years trying to get out of the place and only recently succeeded. Instead of spending time in class, I walked around campus watching other students study, wondered where I would be when I left school, wondered if I would ever be able to write down every beautiful thing I saw before I died.

In college, I came out to my parents and friends. And after filling in the missing elements in me, I fell into a place as comfortable as today, where I can finally write and know that this is what I'm supposed to be doing.

I have met some extraordinary people so far on this new journey. Ever since I came to *Out in the Mountains* with the intention of expanding my writing skills, I have come across endless names and faces. At a recent celebration, I found myself lost within the crowd; I knew for sure that they knew my name, yet I could not even begin

to put names to faces. Their smiles were welcoming though; their humor and poise moved me.

Repeatedly, I am asked: How is everything? What are you going to be doing with the paper? How will you change it? These questions are difficult to answer because I have only just been dropped into these rough waters, still on a frenzy of introductions, and figuring out how to use the damn postage machine. So, I usually avoid the question and say that I am still thinking about those directions that I see the paper going in. What I do know is that I like a good challenge. I plan on approaching the paper as I approach my life: without limitations, without titles, and without expectations.

As I develop my interests and begin to implement them onto the future pages that you'll be reading, I want to be open to new ideas and new ways of seeing things. I am committed to being honest and willing to listen to every person. My approach to the paper will not be a traditional one, but I believe it will be a necessary one; in this journey I have already started, I intend to challenge every person that reads this. A large part of that is dependent on you, on raising your voice to a point where everyone can hear it, especially at this point in Vermont's history where the spark of change is strong enough to lift the hairs of my beard on end.

For me, there is no difference between communication and survival. I am not trained in this profession even though my heart fell here one day. I am a writer, no more, no less. I do not pretend to know more than I do. I would not be here today if I had not gone to hell and back to find the voice that now gives me life on this page.

There are a few pieces in this issue that hint at the direction I would like to go in the months ahead. *The Fag Hag Manifesto* was written by my closest friend, who, unfortunately, is off to explore her own life in Boston. She will appear again in these pages one day I'm sure. So, I write my goodbye here for everyone to see, for the people that read this during February, for those who find this issue tucked away in a drawer in twenty years. And perhaps I will have the chance to say hello again to my dear friend in California. Or come home tonight to friends that I have been so lucky to find in the last few months. Or continue to welcome new relationships that I can easily say will last a lifetime. Seek me out as I seek you out too. Perhaps we can meet at a place somewhere inbetween.

Out in the Mountains is an entity created by you, by the words you choose to use and by the things you do each day. I am just the man who cuts and pastes those words together.



Don't forget to send us your favorite photos from the Drag Ball to include in next month's issue!

send photos to:
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