

## Good legal advice can make all the difference.



Langrock Sperry & Wool offers the services of 22 lawyers with over 300 years combined experience in all areas of the law — including two lesbian attorneys with special expertise serving the legal needs of the g/l/b/t/q community.

### SUSAN MURRAY & BETH ROBINSON

With offices in Middlebury and Burlington  
Middlebury (802) 388-6356  
Burlington (802) 864-0217  
smurray@langrock.com brobinson@langrock.com

### Langrock Sperry & Wool, LLP

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

Increase your  
circle of friends.  
Advertise in  
"Out In The Mountains"  
Call today!  
802.434.5237

### Screen continued from page twenty-one

need to preserve, to document the stories. I'll never forget legendary costume designer Miles White telling me he was so glad gay Hollywood was finally being put on the record. "It's time," he said.

You write that the "burden of proof" is much higher for homosexuality than it is for heterosexuality. Can you give me an example of how that could hamper the research?

This is perhaps the most frustrating aspect of writing gay history. You can't just tell the story of the experience the way you can in African-American history or women's history. You're constantly being stopped and asked to justify yourself, to prove how you "know" so-and-so is gay. Of course you have to be precise and responsible in who you embrace in a study like this, but no one's ever asked for "proof" that Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy were lovers. Most people I've interviewed have insisted, in fact, that their relationship was devoted but platonic, at least for most of its duration. But writers have long written about it as a fairy-tale romance. Meanwhile, some still get all bent out of shape if you suggest that Cary Grant and Randolph Scott were lovers. I know over the last few years there has been a spate of unwarranted labeling of historical figures as gay. But too many writers refuse to even consider stories of gay experience in their subjects' lives because there is no "proof." I feel that allowing for the possibility that people have always been multi-faceted human beings with limitless opportunity for experience and identity is the most responsible course for a biographer or historian. For this study, I chose not to try to do the impossible — to prove who had genital contact with whom — and instead I looked at the "homosocial" nature of these people's lives. For, in truth, I was more interested in the wider gay experience in the studios — not whether a certain actor occasionally picked up male hitch hikers for sex.

It must have been both inspiring and harrowing to explore this lesbian and gay cultural history. What did you learn from these contradictions and collaborations that gay people experienced working in Hollywood?

I came away with a real respect for these people. Long before the modern gay movement and before there existed public role models on "how to be gay," these people lived and worked in an extraordinary environment in which they not only helped shaped popular culture but also were creating gay communities for themselves. To say they were doing so consciously or intentionally is to overstate the truth. But still, for the most part, they lived lives that were striking in their authenticity and honesty — especially the behind-the-scenes people, but also some stars, like William Haines and Marlene Dietrich and Clifton Webb. Character players, too, lived far more openly than movie stars of today, people like Patsy Kelly and Franklin Pangborn. Few elsewhere at the time had such freedom. I was also struck by the power of the course of history. We are so much the product of our times. The 1920s allowed for cultural experimentation and challenge, and the World War II years offered a chance for gay people to find each other and begin shaping a public identity. But the 1930s and 1950s were culturally repressive eras, and this is reflected in the stories I tell in the book. My hope is that *Behind the Screen* helps illuminate a very rich and ever-changing history — not only for gay men and lesbians, but for the study of film and popular culture as well.

Tim Miller is a solo performer and the author of *Shirts & Skin*, published by Alyson. He can be reached at <http://hometown.aol.com/millertale/timmiller.html>

### Letters continued from page seven

In the article on the first page of your website, it says, and I quote: "Ani DiFranco looks like Britney Spears next to Olson, a fiercely independent and queer product. It is easy to criticize Ani because she married a man and has achieved high commercial success, but Ani's sell-out is not what makes Alix Olson better or different."

I have nothing against Alix Olson, I'm sure she is making a difference and that is great. I just think that we all need to stop judging people for what they "choose" to do, or how they "choose" to live. Isn't that all we want anyways, for this world to be non-judgmental.

How can we expect others to not judge us if we are still going to judge others?

Sincerely,

Kara  
Via the Internet

### LAST CHANCE TO PURCHASE TICKETS!

December 6-8 • 8PM  
The Shoebox Theatre • 135 Pearl Street  
Burlington, VT

Tickets are \$8 general admission and are available by calling the Flynn Theatre Regional Box Office at (802) 86-FLYNN or by going online at [www.theatreshoe.com](http://www.theatreshoe.com).

# The Eight: Reindeer Monologues

This ain't your Momma's Christmas story!