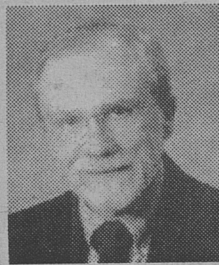


OCTOBER 4, 2002

A DIFFERENT KIND OF WOMYN'S NIGHT

6-8PM: DESSERT BAR

8-10PM: ACOUSTIC PERF./DIANA JONES

10-CL: DJ EV SPINNING ALL NIGHT LONG
CD RELEASE PARTY FOR DIANA KRALL135 PEARL ST. BURLINGTON, VT 05401
863.2343 135PEARL.COM**Joseph Kress, M.A.**Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor
Licensed Alcohol and Drug CounselorIndividual and Couples Counseling
Adults and Adolescents802-895-4993
55 Seymour Lane, Newport, VT**Clifford D. Trott, Jr., Ph.D.**

Licensed Clinical Psychologist - Doctorate

168 Battery Street
Burlington, Vermont 05401
802.862.0836
ctrott@together.net**Feminist Therapy****Leah Wittenberg**

Licensed Mental Health Counselor

Psychotherapy for individuals and couples

82 Church St., Burlington
sliding fee scale

(802)658-9590 ext.4

Susan McKenzie MS.Jungian Psychoanalyst
Licensed Psychologist - Master*Specializing in issues of Gay, Lesbian,
Bi-sexual and Transgendered individuals and couples*Quechee - White River Junction (802) 295-5533
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Crow's Caws: Johnny Appleseed Was Really a Dyke

October is the perfect month to drive through our spectacular Vermont countryside. I'd like to describe a country excursion I took about 23 years ago with a couple of my lesbian feminist buddies who were working on distributing *Commonwoman* newspaper that was in print from about 1978 to 1984 out of Burlington. Last month I talked about production and layout. This month I want to give a flavor of what it was like to plant the seeds of our pioneering lesbian culture in the heartland of Vermont. (The names have been changed to protect my buddies.)

I got involved in distributing the paper to small towns and villages in Vermont. One Saturday afternoon Lara, Dot and I climbed into the Subaru hatchback I had acquired from our marriage, and loaded it up with newspapers. I felt like I was playing with my girlfriends on the block like I used to do as a kid in Hartford. There was always this childlike quality to these grassroots endeavors to spread our opinions throughout the dominant culture. I believed most of what was said, but I really didn't expect anybody to take it seriously. It was safer that way. I tried not to subject myself to segments of society who were blatant in their disapproval.

Vermont has always had a reputation of tolerance - live and let live. People might have condemned us, but they tended to be quiet about it. Maybe we were maligned around the pot-belly stoves of some general stores early in the morning, but we never got to hear about it. Now we decided to make forays into the hinterland and leave our mark on the consciousness of what we considered "country bumpkins." We also served the purpose of giving voice to those isolated countrywomen who may have been trapped in repressive or violent marriages.

Our little distribution committee pulled up to one of those general stores Vermont is famous for. It had a big front porch with a bench to sit on in the summer so you could lick your ice cream cone while watching the flatlanders, who were just passing through, snap photos of this quaint relic thriving in the middle of the K-Mart era. We opened the front door which jiggled a string of bells hanging on the door handle to announce customers. The dusty wooden floors creaked as we walked up the aisle looking for the owner. I adored the nostalgic interior of this old-fashioned Vermont institution. This was not a museum refurbished for the benefit of tourists. This was a

necessary place of commerce for locals, which sold canning jars, ice cream, and hunting licenses along with fishing poles and bubblegum. A part of me always longed to melt forever into a simple rural village right smack dab in the middle of "real Vermont." It felt jarring to disturb such a bucolic scene as a renegade. I let Lara take the lead.

"Hi," Lara said to a middle-aged man in baggy jeans, a black and red plaid shirt and rimless spectacles. "Are you the owner?"

"Yep," he replied continuing to stock shelves with canned baked beans and Spam. Dot and I, who were in the next aisle over, glanced at each other and grinned. This guy was a classic Vermonter. He wasn't about to offer any more information to strangers than was

Radical lesbian feminist politics seemed so arbitrary when plucked from the hotbed of the radical community in Burlington and dropped like a hand grenade in Pleasantville, Vermont.

absolutely necessary. I felt a surge of affection for him and questioned why I was intent on busting his frame of reference. What did he ever do to me? Sure, he may beat his wife and molest his daughters, but I didn't know that. For all I knew, this store had been in his family for five generations, and he was the only son of a respectable family who was stable enough to carry on the tradition. What right did I have - an ex-Air Force wife who neglected her children and cavorted around the state with her girlfriends like some unstable adolescent - to destabilize this hard-working gentleman

who was much more rooted in Vermont than I was?

"Well, I was wondering if you would mind if we put a stack of these newspapers we're trying to distribute by your magazine rack with a collection can on top? We'll come back next month to collect the money and bring the next issue." The storeowner stood up and reached out his hand for a paper, which was folded in half. Dot began to stifle a giggle. The headline article for this issue of *Commonwoman* was written by Vi. She called it "The Politics of Penile Penetration," which spoke to the intrinsically sexist nature of male/female intercourse. For some reason it never occurred to me that our distributors would actually take a look at the paper before letting us display it in their stores. I put my hand over my mouth just like Dot and headed for the door expecting the mother of God to reach down and pick me up by the scruff of my neck for laughing in church. The clash of cultures resounded in my head like cymbals. Radical lesbian feminist politics seemed so arbitrary when plucked from the hotbed of the radical community in Burlington and dropped like a hand grenade in Pleasantville, Vermont.

"Umm," the storeowner said as he briefly flipped through the pages. I saw the centerfold through his eyes - blurry photos of the small Gay Pride March held last month. Maybe he wouldn't notice the two dykes kissing in the bottom left hand corner. I simply wasn't ready to proselytize, and I wasn't ready to admit that to my sisters.

By the time I reached the front door, I felt a trickle down my leg. Now I would have wet pants to add to my embarrassment. Dot and I ducked in the car and burst into guffaws. We felt guilty for deserting Lara, but we wouldn't have been >>