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Special thanks to Alison Bechdel for permission to reprint the February page from her 1995 DTWOF Calendar. Photos of the Highlands Inn by Judith Beckett. Photo of Rev. Troy Perry courtesy of Jim Birkitt of Metropolitan Community Church Communications.

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*Out in the Mountains* was founded in 1986 with start-up money from the Haymarket People's Fund. Mountain Pride Media's current funding sources include the Chicago Resource Center, Green Mountain Fund for Popular Struggle, Gill Foundation, Haymarket People's Fund, Physicians Computer Company, Samara Foundation of Vermont, and individual private donations.

### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of *Out in the Mountains* is to serve as a voice for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgendered people, and our supporters in Vermont. We wish the newspaper to be a source of information, insight, and affirmation. We also see OITM as a vehicle for the celebration of the culture and diversity of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered communities here in Vermont and elsewhere.

### EDITORIAL POLICY

We will consider for publication any material which broadens our understanding of our lifestyles and of each other. Views and opinions appearing in the paper do not necessarily represent those of *Out in the Mountains*. This paper cannot and will not endorse any candidates or actions of public officials on issues of importance to lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered persons. We reserve the right not to publish any material deemed to be overtly racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, ageist, classist, xenophobic, or homophobic. Writers' guidelines are available on request. All materials submitted must include a name and a contact number. However, within the pages of the newspaper, articles may appear anonymously upon request, and strict confidentiality will be observed.

### OUT in the Mountains (ISSN 1081-5562)

is published on the last Thursday of each month by Mountain Pride Media, Inc. It is printed by BD Press, Fairfax VT.

The paper maintains offices at 39 Bridge Street in Richmond, Vermont. The subscription rate is \$29 per year within the United States of America.

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[www.mountainpridemedia.org](http://www.mountainpridemedia.org) is updated to include the current issue of OITM, generally by the 10th of each month.

OITM is available in alternative formats upon request. OITM is printed on recycled newsprint containing 30% post-consumer and using 100% soy-based inks.

# editorial

## What a Long, Strange, Difficult, Rewarding Trip It's Been

**W**ith this issue, *Out in the Mountains* begins its 17th year of publication and I complete my first year as editor. It's been a long journey for the paper, placing us among a rare few GLBTQ publications who have managed to survive discrimination, increasing printing and production costs, the ebbing (and thankfully, the rising) of community involvement to continue to document, celebrate, validate, comfort, and express the lives of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transfolk, and queers.

That we continue to do it in a small rural state without the clusters of gay-centered bars, gyms, commercial party sites whose full-page

In the earliest days, there was no designated editor. "There was a group of us getting articles together," Howdy recalls. In the first 5 years, listing the names of the people involved in the paper was an issue: the group did not want to give credit only to the ones who were "out" or in "safe" jobs, while others doing equally important work for the paper could not have their names listed for fear of losing a job, a housing situation, or even custody of a child.

What was most difficult was the chaos and uncertainty: "People would make commitments for articles and then it wouldn't show up. It was the most challenging thing — well, along with finances."

When the paper was in danger of folding in late 1989, Hugh Coyle was among a collection of community members who responded to a call for help, and he became the first designated editor in June of 1990. This stint lasted a year, as a job took him out of state.

"My fondest OITM memory is also my first," he writes, "the night when dozens of interested folks gathered at the Burlington public library to save the newspaper from disappearing. I was there with

some friends from Middlebury, where we had just launched a small group for gay, lesbian, and bisexual people. OITM became something of a central focus for us. It gave our group a sense of purpose and prepared us well for the political road ahead."

Hugh had a second stint as editor from April of 1996 to May of 1997:

"From the first 'editorial meeting' (when the departing editors threw the keys to the OITM office into the room and shouted 'Good luck!') to the debut of our spiffy new OITM T-shirts on a soaking-wet Pride Day, from the numerous (and joyous) anniversary and holiday parties with the staff to a nearly fatal accident on a wintry day while driv-

ing pages off to the printers, my time with OITM produced some of the most memorable moments of my life. It taught me the true meaning of pride and community service, and how wonderfully the two work together."

Deb Lashman, now an attorney with Schoenberg & Associates in Burlington, was the editor for three of the years (1991-1994) between Hugh Coyle's two terms before heading off to law school.

The most difficult issue she remembers was "dealing with the issue of NAMBLA [the North American Man-Boy Love Association] wanting to place an ad in the classifieds. There were heated differences that were certainly brought to the forefront: were we a newspaper or something else? I came down on the side of our being a newspaper." The whole issue promoted discussion and loud passions, Deb says, and the ad went in afterward.

One of the most awkward issues came up when "I was in the position of having to report on my own case," she recalls. Deb and her partner had petitioned for her right to adopt her partner's biological son as the "second parent." The probate judge denied the petition, and the case went to the state Supreme Court, which handed down a decision in June 1993. Lashman concludes, "I have fond memories of editing the paper with my son (now 11) in my lap in the wee hours of the morning."

Fred Kuhr took over from Deb Lashman and stayed on from 1994 to 1996.

"One of the controversies that I will never forget during my time as editor was the issue that prompted more letters to the editor than any other. Was it about gays in the military, anti-discrimination laws, or same-sex marriage? Nope. It was about how much readers love their 'Dykes To Watch Out For.'" Fred writes. He's now an editor at the Boston-based *In Newsweekly*.

"I printed a letter to the editor from a Rutland area church leader whose church distributed *Out In The Mountains* in its entryway. This reader questioned what she saw as the raciness of some of Alison Bechdel's cartoons and wondered if printing such explicit scenes as lesbians engaged in oral sex was counterproductive to the community's outreach to straight allies.

"The result was an onslaught from readers — both male and female — who went so far as to argue that OITM should never have published the original letter in the first place. The lesson: It's called 'Dykes To Watch Out For' for a reason."

With some fill-in help from Deb Lashman, the paper took on a new editor (or is it the other way around?) — Chris Moes — in July 1997. He ran the paper until October 1998: "I remember seeing rain through my windshield and just feeling so sick of it, it was in May I think and I was doing a great deal of driving and it seemed to rain every day. OITM was, among a hundred other things, an opportunity to explore the state, and discover the incredible places >>



top, Hugh Coyle passes the torch to Deb Lashman in 1991; above, Jason Whipple yields to Euan Bear, April 2002.

ads support (and pad) the pages of larger papers is nothing short of amazing!

I looked back through our archive this month, and talked to, emailed and phoned as many former editors as I could reach for a little perspective on our communities' history in print as they experienced it.

Howdy Russell, of Hinesburg, was involved from the first moment. "I remember us sitting down — Vermonters for Lesbian and Gay Rights, that is — to write a grant to the Haymarket Foundation in David Ryan's apartment in Burlington and trying to figure out what we were going to write the grant for. The idea of a vehicle for communication seemed like the best idea."