

letters

Mautner Project Wins

We are so psyched!!! The Gay Coffee Company just called to tell us the Mautner Project was chosen to be the beneficiary of their special Pink Ribbon Roast blend this year. She said the contest was neck and neck until a month ago – which is right when *OITM* ran a story telling readers we were in the running. I can only assume that thanks to your excellent coverage (which we also emailed to our friends), lots of folks emailed the company to vote for us.

So thank you and all your readers for the wonderful show of support. We will put the proceeds to good use fighting breast cancer in our community.

Kathleen DeBold, Executive Director
The Mautner Project
Washington, DC

Glad we could be of service. It was really only a small news item originating with the Gay Coffee Company, but one thing I love about our community is the power of its press. Given access to information, our readers will act. – EB

Exporting Civil Union

In 1965, my wife and I were married three times in one month. Our first wedding was a civil ceremony in Manhattan Borough Hall. We then started our honeymoon, first to Frankfurt. With my father-in-law of Cologne, we went to a bilingual lawyer who wrote an affidavit that we were married under New York law. After our honeymoon, a town clerk who performed a civil union in Cologne based on the affidavit. Finally, we had our third and last wedding in church, which the German clergy had no authority to perform without a civil union certificate. It did

not make a lot of sense to me then, but it does now.

Marriage is a civil contract concerning assets and children. Divorce is a termination of contract with division of assets and liabilities and children. A church wedding alone makes no more sense than a church divorce. The Catholic Church does not recognize the civil right to divorce, and priests would be particularly unsuitable for allocating assets, liabilities, and children.

If elected, I will introduce legislation not to recognize a church-only marriage as legally binding. Only CU partners would qualify to file joint tax returns; give children the biological father's surname; and receive "spousal" health insurance. I am annoyed every April when the Vermont Act 60 tax rebate forms requires the signature of "Spouse or CU Partner." Only CU partners should qualify for rebates. Spouses without CU partner standing should not.

To help Vermont's economy, I have proposed a Civil Union Tourism (CUT) industry to Governor Douglas. Las Vegas is the quickie-divorce and instant-marriage capital, and Vermont should become the CUT capital, to benefit hotels, restaurants, and officials performing civil unions. My proposal would *not* require a civil union, but with only a religious wedding, couples would lose some valuable civil rights. My legislation would weaken some high-profile clerics who invoke the Almighty and wield inordinate and unwholesome power over believers. In Vermont, civil union is a non-issue, but it is in too many other jurisdictions. High time we export Vermont's advanced standing in the separation of church and crotch.

Peter Moss
Fairfax

Peter Moss is a Republican candidate for the US Senate in 2004, hoping to unseat current Democratic Senator Patrick Leahy.

No Bean Counting

Regarding Alan Curtis's bean-counting letter, which concludes with the suggestion that *OITM* be divided into gender-segregated sections so that, god forbid, gay men won't have to trouble themselves with women's issues, or vice versa: At first I thought Mr. Curtis's letter was a parody of narrow-mindedness (if so, bravo!), but unfortunately I fear his motivations were sincere. One can only hope that he doesn't – as he suggests – speak for the majority.

Because I, as a gay man, am not particularly interested in having sex with lesbians, should it necessarily follow that I have no interest in lesbians as human beings? Or, because I myself am not transgender, should that exclude me from pondering, for the minimal time it takes to read an article, what it might be like to walk in a transgender person's shoes? Admittedly, segregation has a place in pornography: we all tend to be narrow-minded when the goal is getting off. But, last I checked, this isn't *OITM's* purpose, despite what Nancy Sheltra might think.

Since *OITM* has been under Euan's editorial stewardship, I've not noticed a particular lesbian slant. What I have noticed is a consistently high level of journalistic professionalism and an open-minded willingness to explore the wide range of issues affecting Vermont's non-straight community. Sure, not every article is of equal interest to me, but gender is rarely the determining factor for whether I read on or turn the page.

As an *OITM* writer, I would neither want nor allow my work to be

slotted into rigidly defined – and, to my mind, arbitrary – gender categories. If I happen to be writing about a novel with lesbian themes, I expect to see it in the arts section, period. The main reason I write for *OITM* (besides the glamour and enormous pay check) is, ideally, to spark at least one reader's interest in something previously off his or her radar screen.

One of the nice things about calling Vermont home is that it's generally possible (and perhaps essential) to lead queer lives independent of the sort of urban ghetto mentality that confines people to a tiny stripe along the LGBT spectrum. *OITM* currently reflects our independence and our communality, as it should.

Ernie McLeod
Middlebury

Say No To Back to the Future

Over the years I've seen plenty in newspaper publishing. Now retired from a nearly 25 years grind at daily newspaper marketing in the trenches, I was somewhat surprised by a recent letter that was published on these pages. In 2003, the writer suggests the ghettoizing of *OITM*. About 30 years ago commercial dailies relegated the so-called Women's Pages to the junk heap, some were euphemistically described as Society Pages (!). Alan Curtis wants to return to that nonsense. Back to the future. It would be funny if it wasn't so damn serious. Males for males, females for females.

Some years back, I was invited to your first *OITM* planning session at the venerable Hotel Coolidge in white River Junction. I've since read most, if not all editions, as a subscriber or otherwise. This ghetto "idea" is the dumbest with a capital D, as the song would have it, to hit *OITM*

among many controversies over the years. Curtis can't deign to cast his eyes on a female writer as he peruses your pages. What about the non-gender-specific Euan Bear? Since he fancies himself a writer, he should know that reading is more intelligent than cruising the local saloon. ...

Al Santerre
Salem, NH

My gender is quite specific, thank you, as an out proud lesbian with 30 years of herstory in New Hampshire and Vermont. And as you may read below, Alan has repented his suggestion while acknowledging a certain nostalgia that prompted it. We'll assume that your acerbic letter was motivated by your admiration for the informative, entertaining, and impassioned writing, regardless of the gender of the scribe, that has graced our pages for 16 years. We appreciate the support. – EB

Pining for the Old Days

I stand corrected! Of course you're right – what was I thinking? I never stopped to try and figure out what you'd do with any articles which had content for everyone. Thank God I don't have your job, anyhow!

But I still think it's time for *The Advocate* to publish a strictly lesbian mag ... maybe I'm just pining for the old days when it was still a newspaper (I knew the editor) and completely for the guys.

Alan Curtis
Morrisville

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