

letters

OITM Ad Gets Results: A Love Story

In January 2002 I placed an ad in the personals column of *Out in the Mountains*.

Having tried all the traditional methods of finding a life partner I thought I would give the personal ads a chance. So I placed my ad, "Lesbian 47 looking for the love of her life. Are you smart? Are you funny? Are you kind? Can you stand in your life and still share mine?" and then I waited.

I got a few responses to the ad, and among them was an email from a woman (Mitch) in Londonderry, VT saying yes she is smart, funny and kind, and she may well be the love of my life but she was really looking for a good friend. I got no response to my email reply and had almost written her off as a flake when I discovered that something was up with my system that day, and all the e-mails I sent ended up in cyber limbo! So I took a chance and re-emailed Mitch.

Meanwhile Mitch had decided that I was not interested in being friends, and she had written me off as a flake. But when she got my second email, she called me. We had a long chat and met for dinner the following Monday, February 4th 2002. We met at the restaurant at 6:00 — at 9:00 the staff was vacuuming around us and giving us looks that meant it was time for them to close. Anyway it didn't take us long to become much more than "Just Friends"!

Four months later I asked Mitch to marry me (another long story for another time), and on February 13th of this year we were joined together in a civil union ceremony on the shores of Silver Lake in Barnard, VT. It was a beautiful private ceremony outside under the stars with a full moon, bon fire, and candles to light up the night. Oh, did I mention that it was 30 below zero that night??

Also during the year from when I met Mitch to when we were Civil Unioned we bought a house in Royalton, VT and became Grandmothers to a beautiful girl — the only bad thing about that is that the Grandgirl and her parents (Mitch's daughter and son-in-law) live too far away in Portland, Oregon (like they never heard of Portland Maine??). Fortunately Mitch's son lives near by in Vermont so we do get to spend time with him.

So for the price of a free ad I got the most wonderful woman in the world, a great house that with Mitch's touch has become a warm and inviting home, and a great family that although geographically scattered is close at heart.

I ask you how lucky can one woman get????

Anne Beck
Royalton

Reveling in History

Earlier this month, I spent over an hour

going through issue after issue in the online Archive of *OITM* issues on the Mountain Pride Media website. What a treat! What a walk down memory lane! Does anyone remember Howdy Russell as he bravely held a Statehouse press conference in March, 1987 announcing the introduction of our community's first Lesbian/Gay Anti-discrimination legislation? Check out the picture. Hard to believe that in 1987, *OITM* was only in its second year of publication!

Thank you to all of the volunteers who have worked to make so much of our recent Vermont LGBT community history so easily accessible through these archived *OITMs*. What fun, what memories, if you lived it, like I did! I bet it would be a lot of fun too to be reading it all for the first time!

OITM has played a central part in building and preserving the Vermont LGBT communities we all enjoy today. Seventeen years of publishing *OITM*! Go to the MPM/*OITM* Archives and appreciate our past. But let's also work together today to insure a vibrant next seventeen years for *OITM*!

Thank you to MPM/*OITM* staff, board and volunteers for a fabulous newspaper and website,

Bill Lippert

(wearing no particular hat today)
Hinesburg

Voter Advice

I just want to wish Governor Howard Dean the best as he launches his campaign for President of the United States. However there was one sign at the rally that I want the people to completely ignore: "VOTE GREEN NOT DEAN."

Please do not waste your vote by voting Green. Not only [does] their leader, Ralph Nader, [have] a few loose screws, Nader divides the Democrats' vote and allows the far right to win. There is nothing "green" about that party. They allowed George Bush to win in 2000 and now he has declared war on the environment. Thanks alot Ralphie! Remember people — Vote Dean NOT Nutty Green!

Michael S. Luna
Fletcher

Maybe We Deserve It

My first introduction to gay nightlife was so depressing it almost pushed me back in the closet. The establishment, once a renowned and popular club, was literally falling down around you. During a rainstorm, you were well advised to use an umbrella — inside. The gay community supported this business for many years just because it was the only show in town. The "Yacht Club" ended up like the "Titanic" — sinking out of business. But as I've come to learn, some things never change.

Being in the civil union state, my partner and I naturally assumed there

would be clubs and perhaps a restaurant or two, which catered to the gay community. Of course, we were disappointed to discover that only one gay bar existed in the whole state.

We knew we weren't going to a classy establishment, nonetheless, we wanted to be around other gays and lesbians to celebrate our "Pride." Unfortunately we didn't witness much to feel proud about.

First, the cover charge: I shouldn't have been surprised about the \$10 cover charge — after all, on an evening with no entertainment or theme, there's an unreasonable \$5 cover for the privilege of sitting in a 'dank, depressing hole in the wall,' as others in our community have described it to me.

Secondly: The behavior on the dance floor was downright deplorable. I've seen Gay Pride Parades in NYC and am no prude. But what we witnessed was exactly what the straight community sees us as — a bunch of over-sexed, out-of-control perverts without an ounce of self-respect.

Thirdly: The music was awful. The entire room was filled, but only two couples were actually on the dance floor — not dancing, maybe saving money on the hourly rental of a hotel room. We requested dance music that we know others would have enjoyed, yet we were flatly and rudely refused. Isn't it a DJ's job to make sure the majority of the people are out on the dance floor having a good time?

What will it take for the gay community to stand up and say, "We deserve better"? We deserve a place that is cheerful, classy, bright, and welcoming. We deserve a place where people can have fun, but are also expected to behave within reasonable limits. We deserve not to get ripped off by being forced to pay a cover charge just to walk in the door. We deserve the same as straight customers demand and receive in their clubs.

Or do we?

As long as we continue to support places like this, they will exist ... and thrive. When we demand so little, that is exactly what we get in return. It is a shame that those who own such businesses take advantage of our lack of self-esteem and agree with us that we don't deserve better. We offer them no incentive to provide it.

As for my partner and I, we'll take a trip into Montreal from now on whenever we feel the urge to dance.

Jill Van Tuyt
So. Burlington

Queerness on the Air

Have you heard the Samara Foundation sponsorship spots on Vermont Public Radio during June and July? This program is sponsored by the Vermont Community Foundation — celebrating Samara Foundation's support of lesbian,

gay, bisexual and transgendered Vermonters through grantmaking and endowment building."

An anonymous donor to the Vermont Community Foundation supported VPR — and our LGBT community — by buying a year's worth of sponsorship spots, six times per week, and generously donated two months — June and July — to Samara Foundation.

As one listener put it, "It has been a thrill to hear those Samara sponsorship spots on Vermont Public Radio. Just to hear them say 'gay and lesbian' out loud on the air at long last makes my heart go pitter pat."

Another supporter called from her car phone, "I never use my cell phone in the car, but I just HAD to call I was so excited!" Stopping me on Church Street, one person commented, "I listened closely to see if ALL of the LGBT words were used! I was glad to hear all of them!" One of our board members noted, "The announcer seemed a little awkward at first — saying the LGBT words — but got more and more comfortable as the weeks went by and by! The words began to just roll off of his tongue."

A veteran member of our Vermont LGBT community shared a story, "I've been around long enough to remember when a group of gay guys got together during a VPR fundraiser and made the winning bid on a lunch date with whoever the governor was then. They wanted to have the credit line for the purchase read something like, 'congratulating VPR and all its gay friends,' and VPR refused to read the line and might even have refunded the money. They said it was 'too controversial.'"

This long-time community member continued, "I think that the airing of the Samara spot is one of the benefits of the trauma we went through with civil unions — there was a nondiscrimination law before that, but no one forced VPR to comply. But with the exposure of the kind of naked bigotry we faced, more and more people are getting it that their silence, their erasure and exclusion of us as a constituency, contributed to an atmosphere of hate. They are changing (with significant help from us) because they don't want to see themselves as aligned with the bigoted and hateful.

"It's terrific, Bill. Bravo!"

Hearing our "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered" communities named so completely respectfully on VPR, with a tone of appreciation and as a part of Vermont's full community has been fabulous. And, for Samara Foundation to receive such broad, statewide exposure for our work, provides new opportunities to broaden our reach to new supporters.

If you heard the Samara/LGBT spots on VPR and have a reaction or story to share, please email me at bill@samarafoundation.org.

Wouldn't you like to keep

hearing LGBT-positive Samara spots on VPR or Vermont Public Television? Want to help? Give me a call at 860-6236! I look forward to hearing from you.

Bill Lippert

Executive Director
Samara Foundation of Vermont

Thanks from the South

The AIDS Project of Southern Vermont would like to thank the following for their support in our efforts to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS in Bennington through Mayfest and our 6th Annual AIDS Walk. Thank you to the following local businesses who gave openheartedly a donation of a raffle item for our raffle: Evan's News, Panache, Flower Works, Ann Marie's Pizza, Knapp's Pet Shop, Armstrong Jewelers, Willy's Variety, VT Video Stop, Benn. Bagel Shop, Benn. Bookshop, Black Swann, Alldays & Onions, Oldcastle Theater, and Rattlesnake Café.

Thank you to Sunshine Wohl from the Chrysalis Community for her opening statement at our AIDS Walk, which was beautiful. Thank you to Merriam Graves for the helium and to Dan Lucey and students from S. A.D.D. (Students Against Destructive Decisions).

A special thanks to the following volunteers who helped make these events happen: Burt Lucier, Dan Tift, Hilda Outwater, Ashley Washburn, Anna Krawczyk, Maureen Gassaway, Alice Mazur, Merybeth Merriam, and Gina Mentiply. Thanks for the wonderful entertainment that was provided by the band known as "Remember Sammy Jenkins": guitarist Rich Ellis, bass Ryan Presault, and on the drums David Kane.

Thanks everyone and it is great knowing that there are awesome people like yourselves who feel that our work with the HIV/AIDS population is as important to you as it is to us.

I would like to take this time to congratulate Ashley Washburn, Hilda Outwater, and Dani Tift for graduating from Mount Anthony Senior High School this June, and we wish them the best of luck in their new lives. You will be sadly missed but never forgotten here at the AIDS Project of Southern Vermont.

Rose Rahilly

Program Associate, Bennington
AIDS Project of Southern Vermont