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NT'S VOICE FOR THE LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY

# OUT IN THE MOUNTAINS

FREE

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BY RICHARD HUNT

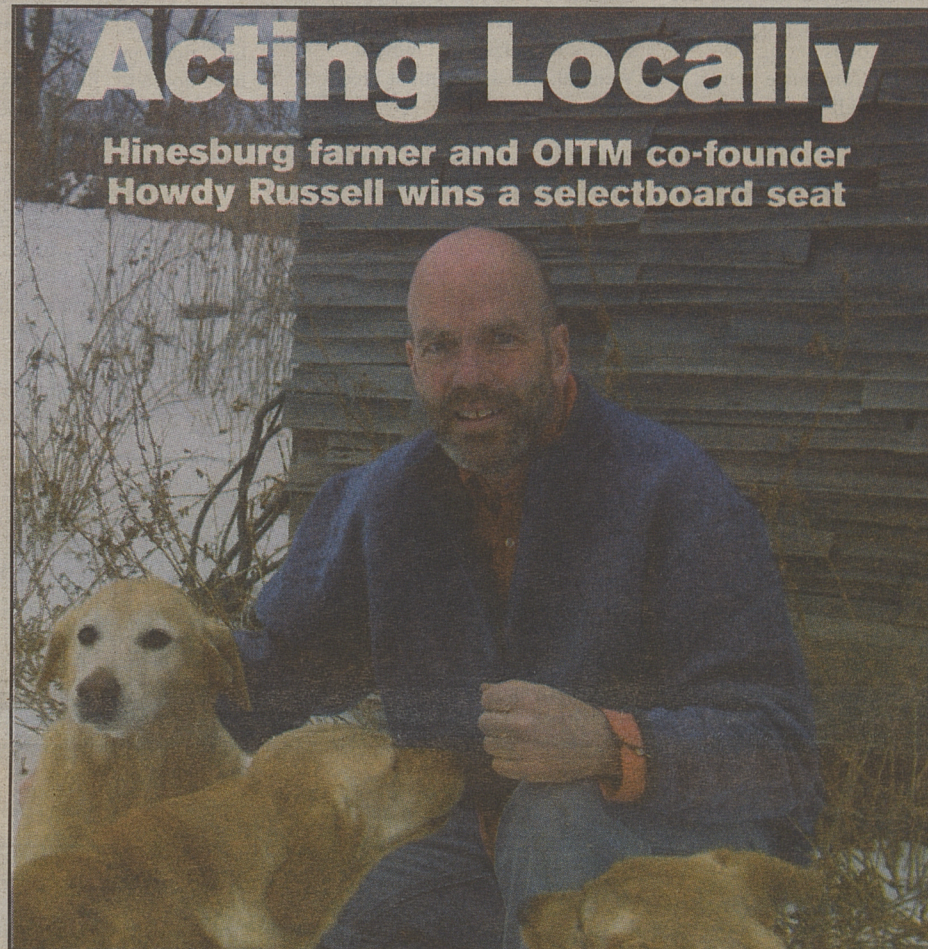
**H**owdy (Howard) Russell woke on Tuesday morning, March 1, 2005, knowing that this Town Meeting day was going to be the final lap in his race to unseat a 21-year Republican incumbent and chairman of the Hinesburg's Selectboard. There was a winter storm warning and a forecast of six inches of snow and wind.

Howdy and his brother, Harry, started the day like any another day, feeding the animals and doing the barn chores, but it quickly turned into a test of endurance as he put on extra layers of clothing and went across the street from his home to Town Hall. He wanted to be there before 7 a.m., when the polls opened. He would stand there for the next 12 hours showing that he was taking his candidacy seriously. Then the campaigning would be over.

As Howdy stood in the snowstorm next to the man he was challenging, he could look over at the house his family has called home for over 150 years.

He had run unsuccessfully for the Vermont Senate in 1990 and again in 1992. He was a co-founder of *Out In The Mountains*, Outright Vermont, and the Samara Foundation. He was an early board member of Vermont Cares and helped start the Vermont Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights.

Even though Howdy has traced his family roots in Hinesburg back to some of the founders of the town, there have been no other politicians in the Russell family, as far as he knows. He had come out to his family in 1977, but the senate race brought his family out since he ran as "Howard Russell, an openly gay man for state senate." Howdy thought he could help statewide organizations by being an openly gay man in a leadership position. He remembered how proud he was that, even



though he did not win his senate races, he was the top vote getter in his hometown.

Fifteen years ago in those senate races, his being gay was only talked about two percent of the time, but it was still a big issue. Now, running for the Selectboard, it was still talked about two percent of the time, but was only a two percent issue.

A big motivator for Howdy to run for Selectboard was the election in November.

He felt that the time for complacency was gone.

As he stood in that Town Meeting Day snow storm last month, Howdy reflected on how even the civil union issue of 2000 was far less of an issue today. Poll results had shown him that in 2000, 49 percent were in favor of civil unions and 49 percent opposed. This year, poll results showed 80 percent supported full marriage rights or civil unions and

only 20 percent opposed either, a huge shift in a few short years.

Howdy was touched by how many people supported him with letters to the local paper, by making phone calls to local voters, and by standing with him at the polls. As an openly gay man he couldn't be absolutely sure that even his family of five brothers and a sister, as well as his extended family of uncles, cousins, and nephews would welcome his being more visible in the local community. But, even his uncles – in their eighties and with health issues – made it to the polls to support him.

For a town race, Howdy felt that he had worked very hard on the campaign. He hoped that the results would not be close. If it was close and he won, would people think it was a fluke? And if he lost, would he be plagued with second-guessing his campaign and what more he could have done? He knew that if the outcome was decisive and he lost, he would feel that his positions of preserving Hinesburg's rural character, saving open space and viable agricultural land, creating a trail network for the town, and longer term planning of community services, had been rejected by his fellow citizens.

As Howdy stood there in the cold and snow for most of the day, he felt that the vote was dead even. It wasn't until about four p.m. that it felt like a big swing was taking place when nine out of ten voters were supporting him. When the polls closed at 7 p.m. and counting started, Howdy was getting ready to take his existing seat on the Hinesburg Development Review Board. Before the DRB's meeting started at 7:30 the word came out: he had won the race by 24 percent, 567 to 350. Now he knew that the hard work had just begun. ▼

*Richard Hunt lives in Hinesburg. This is his first article for Out in the Mountains.*

## Sticks and Stones May Break My Bones: Lesbian Baiting Around the World

BY SUSAN McMILLAN  
& LYNN MACNICOL

Remember the ageless schoolyard tease – sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me? Women all over the

world would argue against the truth of that statement. Globally, in developed and developing countries, women are targeted for physical, verbal, and emotional attack because of their work in public leadership and human rights. This abuse often takes the form of accusations around real or perceived sexual

orientation, or "lesbian-baiting." The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) and the Center for Women's Global Leadership recently released *Written Out: How Sexuality is Used to Attack Women's Organizations (2005)* documenting this harsh reality.

In a world where religious, political, and social fundamentalism is on the rise and the heavy pall of homophobia lingers, women and women's rights organizations are increasingly at risk of attack for the work they do that threatens these fundamentalist move-

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"Pastor" Fred is coming to Plattsburgh for the Mayor's Cup in July. Watch for creative responses!

▼ **Homo Harassers** p. 8.

Free speech or hate speech? Some are worried enough about violence to begin taking names.

▼ **Gender Clarity Is**

**Multiple** p. 10. Eli Clare flies kites and ponders translating identities in a moving and eloquent address.

▼ **Howling for Spa**

**Treatment** p. 22. Merle Exit visits Coyote Moon Resort and sends back a howler of a tale. Think dry.

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