

# Views: Finding Two Nickels and a Home

**F**inding a location for retail space in southern Vermont is difficult enough given the state's sparse population, but finding a retail space *and* a place to enjoy a high quality of life as a gay single parent is quite another.

My girlfriend Tracy and I started a retail catalog on the Internet to add to our retail shop, located in a village of approximately 700 people in southern Vermont. We are a vibrant nest of color and ethnicity in a sea of old Vermont. While the contrast is a good one, for Tracy and me it is lonely.

Ultimately we have come to the conclusion that living in a heavy per-capita gay town is what we want, both for business and for our personal lives. When I moved to Jamaica (for the geographically impaired, it is in Windham County, about 25 curvy, mountainous miles up state route 30 northwest of Brattleboro) from Cambridge, MA, six years ago I never thought like this. I believed we all belonged everywhere, because being gay is just our sexuality. "Why box yourself in?" I probably would have said.

Now, with hindsight as my guide, I've changed my mind. For many of us, being around people like ourselves is empowering. Provincetown, Key West, San Francisco, Brattleboro? Why not?

When Tracy and I discuss such ideas it becomes clear that try as we might, in the end we do not feel a deep sense of place within heterosexual society. Or certainly not as deep as many of us without extended blood families desire to have in the communities we live, work, and send our children to school in.

So two weeks ago, I put a 'For Sale' in front of my house and shop.

Tracy and I plan to pack up the toasters from Paris, acupuncture heads from China, Weya tribe tin sculptures, holistic pet shampoos, and all the rest and move them. Where? We don't know yet.

Slogging our way back and forth and around the decision of where to move causes us to ask ourselves questions most heterosexuals don't even think

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about. Imagine a heterosexual couple discussing whether or not their new community might be 'tolerant' of them.

The usual compass a gay couple might employ in their search for a good place to put their gay business loses its magnetic ability to point north. Communities can be known by their general store bulletin boards. Ours has notices posted like, "WOOD: green- you stack?" "Housewatcher available" "Lost Dog..." "Chainsaw & Small Engines Repair" and "Taxidermist..."

Six years ago this would have meant very little to me aside from the fact I was in a rural community. But now I have seen the light. We are looking to live in a place where, as in Putney, the Coop bulletin board signs read, "Lecture on Green Sustainable Living..." "Wolves, a film at town hall, guest speaker and Naturalists" - that sort of thing.

And although we are looking for a gay-friendly community, it's a term I have always felt a little shy of. Like the word 'tolerance' there is something in it pointing out that I am in some way different, possibly even questionable.

I mean it's very nice to see, "We're Gay Friendly!" I'm not ungrateful. However it seems to prove the point that once you are out as a queer then you lose the multidimensional identity most people enjoy. You become 'Gay' first and foremost. It's an age-old argument in the gay community, but I really prefer people not blend my sexuality with my identity quite so much.

The ideal would be finding something more than a gay-friendly community, a community where your sexuality isn't

even an issue.

When I was young my family used to go to Provincetown in the summers. We watched as one gay business moved in, then another, and another, and so on. This is my hope: that like Joshua and the walls of Jericho, the walls come tumbling down, and in come masses of rainbow flags and people for whom 'diversity' is among the greatest aspects of their community.

We want to find a place in southern Vermont where we can get Chinese food, buy books and music while we are tooling around, have a cup of dark-roast organic coffee, go to the cinema, purchase broccoli rabe for the evening meal, be among same-sex couples, and oh yes, find two nickels to rub together.

Fickle as it may be, I'm heading to where there are more people again. Weary of my impulses, I think of something Gertrude Stein once said: "When they are alone they want to be with others, and when they are with others they want to be alone. After all, human beings are like that."

To which I then recall, Starhawk, an American activist, writer and witch, who said, "We are all longing to go home to some place we have never been - a place half-remembered and half-envisioned we can only catch glimpses of from time to time. Community. Somewhere, there are people to whom we can speak with passion without having the words catch in our throats. Somewhere a circle of hands will open to receive us, eyes will light up as we enter, voices will celebrate with us whenever we come into our own power. Community means strength that joins our strength to do the work that needs to be done. Arms to hold us when we falter. A circle of friends. Someplace where we can be free." ▼

*Julia Genatossio is the co-owner of Monsoon Marketplace, mother of 13-year-old Dakota, a yoga devotee, and a project consultant for a group of scavengers in Indonesia who craft wallets and bags from trash.*

## WINTER IS A DRAG BALL XI

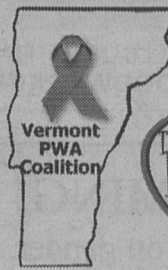
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