

## RECLAIMING OUR PRIDE

← CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

afraid to take a stance against the illegal, immoral invasion and occupation of Iraq because the insider wisdom in Washington says they can't.

Guess what? Insider wisdom means to protect insiders. It is its working. The rich are getting richer; insider wisdom is about preserving power for those who have some. It's not about liberation. The Democrats are getting more like the Republicans and the LGBTQ movement with its roots in women's liberation and gay liberation, a movement for sexual liberation, is becoming the marriage movement.

It is not that we shouldn't have equality in access to marriage with its privileged status.

It's the price of working to be acceptable. Acceptable to whom? Winning over your enemies isn't a bad idea. But if you sacrifice your allies to acceptability it is both a betrayal of the community and it makes the political mistake of alienating the base.

Let us be proud to be part of a liberation movement that means expanding our rights and the expansion of human rights for everyone including those in Islamic countries who are murdered for being queer or independent women.

We've been fighting for our right to love. That's a much bigger word than marriage.

We can't achieve liberation in a corrupt culture of domination. Our full acceptance is tied to our fully

accepting our responsibility to be part of the human community by working for peace and expanding human rights for all.

This is the speech I gave on Pride Day 2006. I want to correct the part that says "Like those whose main goal is marriage wanting to keep the Queer Liberation Army from participating in a demonstration for the Gender Identity Bill." I have subsequently been informed that the QLA was not discouraged from attending, but that the entire TransAction group, not just marriage advocates, wanted to ensure QLA Cheerleaders were not present because it was felt that would take the focus off of Governor Douglas's being the first Vermont Governor to veto expanding rights for Vermonters. WCAX used this part of the speech to say that there is a division in the community. This is the first time in 24 years that WCAX broadcast any part of my speeches. So the media likes to promote conflict. I think we need a movement that appreciates all the folks who contribute to it. We should applaud anyone or any group working to increase our rights. My main point here was to warn against the idea that any group has the answer for all of us and to call for a much broader and braver response to the backlash we have been suffering from for so long now. ▼

➔ Peggy Luhrs is a longtime activist from Burlington.

## CLOUDS AND SILVER LININGS

← CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

morality and . . . bias against homosexuals." More good news.

July 12th provided more reason for hope, and for indignation. The Massachusetts Legislature adjourned until November the constitutional convention regarding a proposed amendment to write discrimination in marriage into that state's constitution. Cooler heads prevailed.

In the meantime, a trial court in Connecticut was not so thoughtful. The Superior Court judge upheld that state's refusal to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples because that state's "civil union" law provided them with the tangible state law benefits of marriage. The trial court's decision contradicted the conclusion of the Massachusetts Supreme Court, which concluded in 2004 that relegating gay couples to a separate category like "civil union" is unconstitutional. The Connecticut court dismissed the official legal separation of gay and straight relationships as a matter of mere "rhetoric," and concluded that the institution of marriage no longer has social significance, so gay couples weren't missing anything. The Connecticut plaintiffs will no doubt appeal.

Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force Field Director Robyn Maguire responded to the Connecticut and New York decisions with ire.

"These decisions are a call to action," Maguire said. "We're long past the time when courts in this country can trample the civil rights of GLBT people on the basis of flimsy legal argument that ignores the lives of real people and the undisputed evidence from impartial research."

Urging all Vermonters to join the struggle, Maguire balanced her reaction with hopefulness.

"The question on the table is not whether or not we all like marriage; it's whether each and every one of us - whether or not we would choose to marry - will continue to be excluded and marginalized by Vermont's laws. Vermonters, and Americans, are fundamentally fair people. If we do the work - if we organize, educate, and share our stories - they will ultimately treat us fairly." ▼

➔ Beth Robinson was co-counsel to the plaintiffs in Baker v. Vermont and currently serves as Chair of the Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force.

## FIRST PERSON

## Shirley

BY LYNN MARTIN

We were tenement kids, Shirley and I. We lived in a world of concrete, narrow alleys, and no back yards. What we had was imagination. We replayed Saturday movies over and over. Shirley was always a boy. I was sometimes a boy, sometimes a girl. We acted out Hollywood romances. Shirley taught me how to kiss. Now we knew enough not to do that where our parents could see us. We kissed under the bed. I can still feel her arms around me in that warm, dark space far from adult eyes.

That was one of the monologues I did as part of the recent production of *Gay & Grey: Conversations with Our Elders*. It was done to the music of Phoebe Snow, singing "Teach Me Tonight." Very sexy. Never mind that it happened when I was ten and I'm now seventy. For each performance I conjured up both Shirley and I under that bed.

Fast forward to about twenty years ago. I met someone who knew her, and got an address. I wrote. She wrote back. It didn't surprise me that Shirley was lesbian also.

"Where did you go when we were teens?" I asked. She went to Greenwich Village. Shirley might have been younger, but she was always way brighter than me. It took me more than twenty years to follow her example. I didn't come out in Greenwich Village, but in Vermont. Until May of this year, we continued to call and write. But somehow we never managed to actually meet again.

In April, just when I was getting involved in *Gay & Grey*, Shirley called to tell me she had cancer and was dying. You would think with all the years I've spent in the AIDS epidemic, with all my knowledge of hospice, with all the family and friends I've lost, I would have

heard her. No. Instant denial set in. How could she die? She was my oldest friend. I had to meet her again someday. So I said something perfectly inane, like "oh, I'm so sorry," and went on to talk of other things. But she really was dying. In May, I called her again. The phone was disconnected. I called the police in the town where she lived. They gave me the number of her landlord. They confirmed it. Shirley had died. I blew it. She had given me the chance to say a proper good-bye, and I didn't do it.

It never gets any easier. Saying good-bye is not a skill I've gotten better at through the years. Death, for me, is always a one-time thing. It is always painful. And, at least for me, always contains some form of "if only."

I know that lesbians in Asbury Park lost a good friend in Shirley Headman. I know there was a memorial service. I know they all said good-bye. I know there had to be a lot of laughter. Shirley was a great comedian. When we were kids she was always imitating Jonathon Winters. I know she was very loyal and loving. Keeping in touch with me was, I am sure, only one example of this.

I wanted to say good-bye, Shirley. I will truly miss you. You were my first mentor in love. Someday I will follow you and, hopefully, you will hold out your hand, kiss me, and be there to teach me about death. And this time, I will listen. ▼

➔ Lynn Martin lives and writes in Brattleboro.

Photos: Shirley (left) and Lynn Martin (right)

## MOOD AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE DISORDERS

← CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

and their accompanying receptors. Useful therapies include homeopathy, herbal remedies, and nutritional supplements.

Specific amino acid supplements provide the building blocks to many neurotransmitters and when used in appropriate dosages provide symptom relief. Combining amino acids with adrenal supportive and nourishing herbs, including ashwaganda and oatstraw, provides deeper healing. Repairing any underlying digestive disturbance is crucial to treating depression and substance abuse disorders. Whole-body health requires proper digestion and absorption. Successful treatment requires

an integrative approach using psychotherapy, nutritional and lifestyle counseling, improved sleep and digestive health, and neurotransmitter rebalancing. Diet is crucial to one's overall health. Nutrients in food provide the basic building blocks for all facets of our body and our health. Essential dietary changes include decreasing or avoiding caffeine, sugar, alcohol, simple carbohydrates and sweets. Without proper nutrition, healthy neurotransmitter levels cannot be achieved or maintained.

Finally, in order to achieve a true healing, the underlying cause must be treated. This cause may include deep emo-

tional trauma from childhood, a more recent event, and traumas associated with being gay in our society. If not adequately healed, the neurotransmitter levels will likely become imbalanced again in the future. ▼

➔ Dr. Renee Lang is a licensed naturopathic physician practicing at The Healing Way clinic in Brattleboro. To learn more, visit her website at thehealingway.net or call 802-254-4369. If you have a specific health concern or issue that you would like to see presented in a future article, please email Dr. Lang at dr.lang@thehealingway.net.