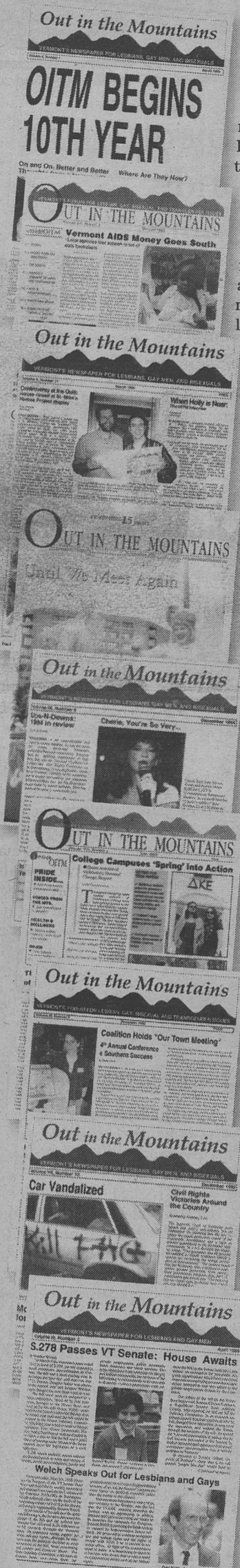


OITM SAYS GOOD-BYE, CELEBRATING 20 YEARS!
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Celebrating 21 years

Out in the Mountains was created because politicians weren't listening.

After Vermont's first Pride march, according to Howdy Russell, an *OITM* founder, the organization Vermonters for Lesbian and Gay Rights formed. A forerunner to today's Equality Vermont, VLGR tried to talk with legislators about equal rights and protections for all Vermonters. But candidates and legislators did not respond to surveys, nor would they talk with group representatives.

"What emerged pretty quickly was we weren't going to have any clout unless we had a way to inform the voters the way we wanted to inform them," Russell said. "As soon as we had a vehicle to spread the word among people who wanted to hear, we got a different response from politicians."

Russell said he believes the paper has added to the sense that "this is a community to be reckoned with" in Vermont.

"When I look at what did *OITM* achieve, I look at what did *we* achieve," Russell said. "I think they're pretty inseparable over the course of the last 20-plus years. And I think there's a lot — civil rights bill, adoption, hate crimes, HIV non-discrimination, civil unions, everything."

Five years into the paper, early collective member Carrie Coy called it "exciting" to work on the paper: gathering as a group to read and edit, laying out the paper by hand, collating it, and getting it ready to distribute to the few dozen subscribers and to locations in Burlington, Montpelier, and Brattleboro [see *OITM* story from February 1991 on page 8].

Barb Dozetos was editor when *OITM* turned 13. During her two-plus years, she saw the creation of R.U.1.2? Community Center and the Samara Foundation. *OITM* got its own office. But what changed her most was her front-row seat in the legislative debate around

civil unions. She was there more than some of the lobbyists, she said; legislators knew who she was and who she represented.

"It was important to be a visible presence there all the time, just like the *Associated Press* and every news camera," Dozetos said. "I know it made a difference."

Dozetos said she still thinks about the day the House Judiciary Committee voted aloud on whether to support civil unions or full marriage.

"At least half the committee afterwards came up to me personally and apologized, some of them in tears, because they knew they had to do something politically, but in their hearts knew it wasn't right," she said.

"It was a phenomenal place to be," Dozetos added. "It was exhausting. But I wouldn't trade it for anything. I knew I was watching history being made."

Euan Bear said the big issues during her four years as editor included the 2003 U.S. Supreme Court ruling striking down the criminal prohibition of sodomy in Texas. The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled that denying marriage licenses to same-sex couples violated the state's Equal Protection Clause. The groundwork was laid for a gender identity bill that would have protected the employment rights of transgender people.

What she is most proud of, however, are the community profiles she started to help inform people how Vermonters were living; the Youth Zone that gave voice to teens; and giving space to Vermont cartoonists.

"There's a lot of talent here," Bear said of the paper's many contributors. "We wanted to be a showcase for that talent. And I think we did a pretty good job."

The future

Out in the Mountains has had ups and downs over the years, supporters say. The paper ceased publication more than once. And it always came back.

"The strongest role the paper had in the community," Bear said, "was letting us feel connected."

Some people have expressed concern about how people will stay connected — and informed — without the paper. Some have talked about the possibility of an online edition. Some have talked about listservs and blogs.

"I think the community will come together in the not-too-distant future and find a way to provide a voice for our community," Cote said. ▼

➔ Kim Howard is Secretary of the Mountain Pride Media Board.



There are dozens, if not hundreds, of people whose voices we'd love to have heard in this farewell: former board members, contributors, photographers, donors, and readers we simply could not reach by our print deadline. We'd still love to hear how *Out in the Mountains* made a difference in your lives. Please send an email to voices@mountainpridemedia.org. We will post responses on our Web site at www.mountainpridemedia.org.

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