

Letters Home

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So how does a Jewish revolutionary cope with "yankee-land" up here in Northern New England? How does it feel to be consistently told I'm too loud, too pushy, too opinionated and too domineering especially at meetings where I'm often accused of not giving other people a chance to express themselves? Well, for the first several months I felt isolated, depressed and withdrawn. Since then I ran a workshop on "Jewish Revolution" in March on International Women's Day, one in June on "Judaism and Homosexuality" at the Conference for Rural Jews in Lyndonville, I've found two or three Israeli women to befriend tucked away in small towns, was hired as a Hebrew teacher at the reform synagogue in Burlington, went to a Jewish culture festival at that same synagogue, attended a Yiddish film festival in Montpelier, spoke at a Middle-Eastern study group in Burlington, am about to join the new Vermont chapter of New Jewish Agenda which already adopted a gay and lesbian rights platform, plan to publish a book next year with a chapter on being Jewish, and am writing this article for Out in the Mountains.

One more thing. A group of us are planning a Shabbat gathering and overnight campout on HOWL (Huntington Open Women's Land) for Jewish women only on September 19-20. There will be rituals, workshops, singing, dancing and hopefully a lively celebration of being Jewish. For directions to the land and more information call Lynda Siegel at 658-0199. Hope to see you there. Shalom, shalom.

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VLGR

It was suggested to Snelling by those present that he could further understanding of lesbian/gay concerns to the general population if he would be supportive of lesbian/gay rights. Snelling indicated this would not be a priority during the campaign or if elected senator.

Although members of VLGR did not feel the meeting with former Governor Snelling was highly productive, lesbians and gay men realize the importance of establishing better communications with candidates and elected officials of Vermont. It is the desire of VLGR to meet in the near future with Representative Jeffords and Senator Leahy to ascertain their positions concerning lesbian/gay issues.

OITM Tribute

The staff of Out in the Mountains would like to pay tribute to Scott Mahoney, who died recently. Scott was an outspoken leader in the Vermont gay community. His commitment and energy and wit will long be remembered and appreciated.

Dear Mom and Dad:

With so many miles apart, it is sometimes difficult to let you know how things are going here in Vermont. There are so many things I would like to talk with you about face to face, but that isn't possible right at this moment.

As I have sat here in my apartment I have thought about writing this letter to you over and over again but I just haven't been able to get up the courage to do so. You see, there is a significant part of me which you know very little about. I want you to know that I'm gay... I know that this information is not going to be easy on you but I love you both so very much that I'm tired of hiding this fact any longer.

I have known since my early youth (age 12 or 13) that I was different from others, but I was convinced that it would pass. It took a long time to accept this in myself. I felt lonely and guilty for something which I had no control over.

Believe me, you both have done an incredible and beautiful job in raising 8 kids. You should not feel that you are in any way responsible for my being gay. Homosexuality is not a choice but rather a discovery. Some experts feel that it is determined during a child's first few years.

I have prayed to God many times in the past to change me. Because it was so difficult to deal with. After much contemplation, I have realized that his answer to me was to accept who I am because He created me this way and loves me as I am.

For the first time in a long while I am happy with who I am and

Dear Michael:

After your visit I want to express, somehow, my feelings since your letter. First the utter shock, then the questioning, the grief (oh the grief!), then the feelings of trying to understand (and we are trying, Michael - really we are), and finally although we cannot approve or agree with some of the aspects of this revelation you've made known to us, we accept you because of our great love for you and because you are ours, Michael. Remember you were born out of love.

We want you to know we always had and continue to have a special place in our hearts for you. Your accomplishments are such that any parent would be proud to say "that's my son." We especially feel you are much to be admired because of your own personal anguish at the time you were trying to achieve these accomplishments.

Michael - as long as you are happy, that makes us happy. You must follow your own road. After all is said and done, it is your life. We tried to

adjusting well. This sense of peace has only begun to come once I opened my heart and "came out" to those I love. Over the past two years I have met some wonderful people who have helped me along the way. I am now in a support group of five men who are dealing with a variety of issues, our gayness being just one. I also play volleyball every Sunday evening with many other of my gay friends.

As I mentioned earlier, I have wanted to tell you for some time in the hope that will come to fully understand, accept, and grow with me. You both mean so very much to me. Thank you for all you've done.

Believe me when I say there are many of us around (one out of every 10 people). I have come to see that the stereotypes that the media sometimes portray are the few. There are many like myself who are gay.

I know that this revelation isn't something you will fully understand or accept right away. Please give it time. I have not changed, I am still the same son you have known for 26 years. The only real difference is that I have chosen to share with you who I really am.

Mom, Dad, I need your love and support more than ever. I'm tired of hiding the truth from you. I will close now, even though there seems so much more to say. This letter has been difficult for me to write as I'm sure it has been for you to read.

Once you have had a chance to digest this a bit, call me at home. I would like to come home March 1st so that we can talk face to face. My thoughts and prayers are with you. I love you Mom. I love you Dad.

Your son, Michael.

raise all our children the very best we could and the best we knew how. I think you know this, as you have told us so many times. We believe we accomplished this and are happy to have such a great and loving family. We are happy you have shared your feelings with us and that we really got to know you. It is too bad it took so long but maybe now is the time.

I pray that God helps us all through this period of life and especially that you have a peace you've never had before. We read the book "Coming Out to Parents" and derived some help from it. Maybe we'll explore a little more later.

Michael, I feel especially close to you now. Please remember I love you so very much as does Dad. It has been hard on him but he is trying to understand. We will be okay so don't worry. You know us, we think things through and try to understand.

Stay in touch and call if you feel like it at any time. We are looking forward to seeing you at Easter. God be with you always.

Lovingly, Mom.