

Commentary

If I Were a Homophobe

by Clove

Some people want OITM to be a tool for cultivating allies. That got me thinking. If I were homophobic, but willing to be won over (ignorant and scared, but not hateful), I think I would most want to know that lesbians and gays were just like me. I'd want to read about the lesbian store clerk as the extra friendly one in town - who better not get fired; a gay dairy farmer as just another farmer - who better not be denied insurance; the older lesbian nurse at the hospital - who better not get evicted from her apartment; the gay student who plays tennis with my son - who better not get beat up by bigots.

After all that sunk in, I'd like some reassuring answers like: "I don't know why I'm gay; I've always had women friends, but I've only fallen in love with men." "My family was pretty shocked at first, but after they talked to an accepting minister and they noticed that I was the same person, it stopped being an issue." "Oh, I don't like making a big deal about what should be a private matter, but until we have the same basic job security as everybody else, I need

to educate people that they won't catch queerness or even AIDS, from being on a town committee with me."

Then I'd like to get used to being around out lesbians and gay men. That would probably be enough to calm my fears about civil rights. If more questions came up, I'd know where to get answers.

But I'm not a homophobe; I'm a dyke. Not since I was a teenager coming out as the only lesbian I knew, have I needed the simple reassurances that we're regular folks.

Now what I want from Vermont's (only) Newspaper for Lesbians and Gay Men is information. I want to know what's happening in the legislature, the media, and the rest of the straight world that affects me specifically as a queer. I want to know what lesbian events are happening and what groups are meeting. I also want a place to dialogue about issues within our communities. Simply having the paper be a "source of information" and a forum for discussion, gives me "support and affirmation" as a lesbian, gives me a "vehicle for celebration of the goodness and diversity of the lesbian

and gay community." (The quotes are from the published OITM purpose statement).

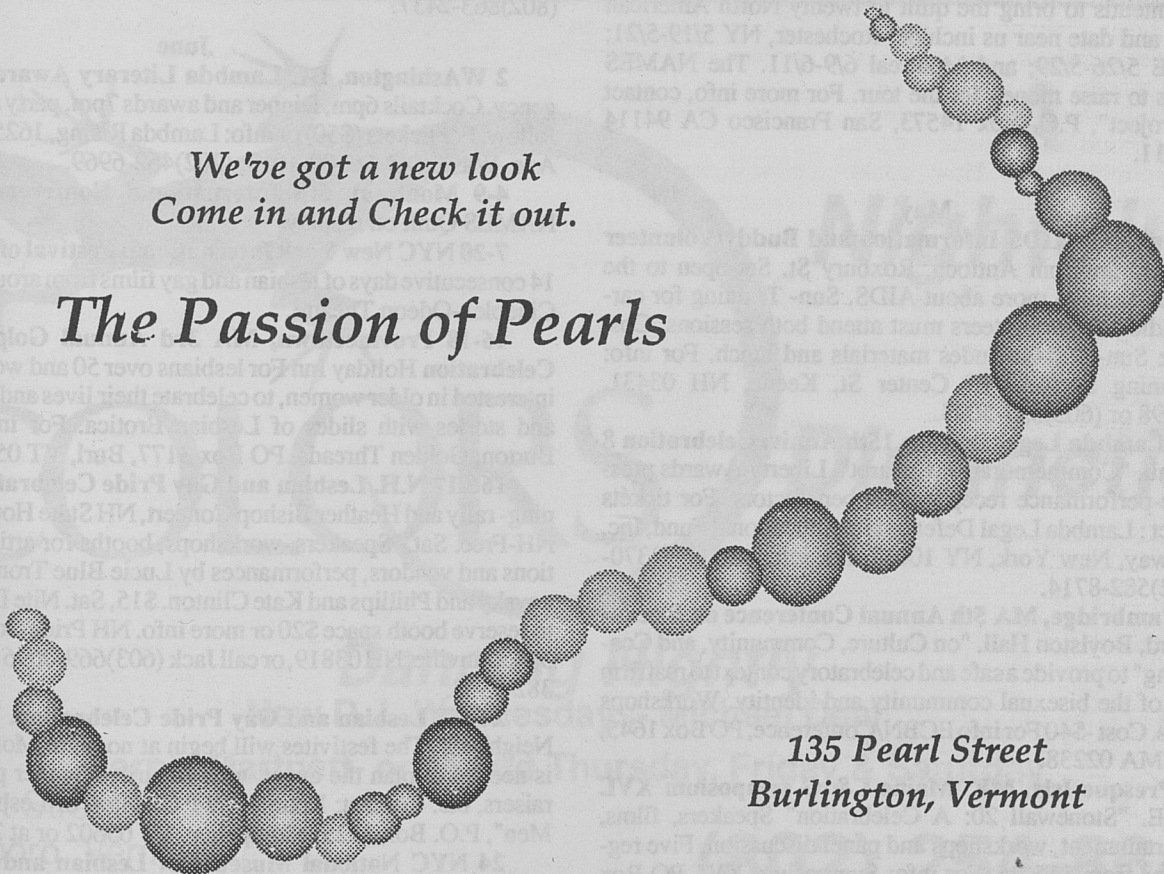
Some readers want to keep sex out of this paper. I don't think erotica, or fiction of any kind, belongs in OITM, but keeping discussion of sexuality out of the paper takes away "a source of information, support and affirmation"; it does not honor "diversity." Sure, open discussion of our sexuality can be used against us, so can open discussion of lesbian battering, alcoholism, custody battles. In a discussion of community-building that probably any OITM reader would find appropriate for these pages, are we supposed to ignore the effects non-monogamy has on our networks, simply because some homophobe might twist that idea into a sexual perversion? If we let their fear of our sexuality define what is acceptable for us to write about, look like, do, we may be a lesbian and gay community, but we're not a human liberation movement.

When I'm trying to convince a straight person to support a civil rights law, I stress what's similar between us. (I don't talk

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