

# Out in the Mountains

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## Vermont Lesbians Remember Stonewall

by Carrie Coy

This June is the 20th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots in New York City, considered a watershed in the present day gay civil rights movement. In our brainstorming meeting for this issue of OITM, we puzzled over the best way to commemorate the anniversary in Vermont. Our ideas ranged from interviewing someone who was there, to writing a historical perspective on what happened. Eventually we hit upon the idea of interviewing older Vermont gays and lesbians about where they were in June of 1969, whether they were gay, whether they remember Stonewall as it happened, what gay life was like, and where they are today. Unfortunately, as it turns out, I ended up only interviewing women.

In speaking with the four women I interviewed for this article, most of them relayed their stories almost apologetically, sure that the facts of their lives would not be suitable material for a Stonewall com-

memoration. Whether living in Vermont or the suburbs of Washington, D.C., none of these women was radically out. One was married to a man raising nearly grown children. Another was recovering from a "four year attempt at marriage" to another woman. The third was in a small Vermont town, seven years beyond the death of her partner of seventeen years. The fourth was living in Pennsylvania in a closeted relationship with another woman, working for Bell Telephone.

Anne Peters, who today is retired and 75 years old, moved to southern Vermont from Connecticut after World War II in 1945 to be with another woman. They were together for seventeen years until her partner's death in 1962. The following year, 1963, Anne moved north to the town where she's been ever since. No one in town knew she was a lesbian and she had no more than suspicions about who else might be gay. "In some ways it was easier for women," she



says, "you could live together and people wouldn't necessarily assume anything."

During the years they lived together, Anne didn't work and recalls that in 1969, "I was really just getting back into the workforce." She worked as a purchasing agent for a "major manufacturing concern" in Connecticut during the war, and managed to find employment as an accountant/bookkeeper.

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## "I Believe in Faeries": The Governor's Liaisons Discuss Their Work

by Carrie Coy

Four years ago at the urging of former Vermont CARES Director Terje Anderson, Governor Madeleine Kunin created the position of Liaison from the Gay and Lesbian Community to the Governor. The Governor's action established her as the gay and lesbian community's most prominent supporter at a time when a gay rights bill had yet to be introduced into the legislature.

We spoke recently with the current Governor's Liaisons, Keith Goslant and Holly Perdue, about their thoughts on topics ranging from the legislative battle over gay rights to the difficulties of networking in a rural state.

Goslant and Perdue, by the nature of their work, are among the state's most visible gays. Goslant refers jokingly to himself as "the state faggot." Perdue is more subdued. They readily admit that

their personalities are very different, yet they work closely together.

During the legislative session, Keith spends many hours wandering the Statehouse, cornering legislators to discuss, among many things, AIDS legislation, AZT funding, and gay rights. Holly prefers the behind-the-scenes organizing work. Her voice is the one many of us have heard on phone, arranging testimony for the public hearings, starting phone tree messages, and helping plan Pride Day activities. Together, they are the ones to whom the Governor turns for the gay and lesbian community's opinions and reactions and ideas. Their efforts are entirely volunteer.

Both Goslant and Perdue were encouraged by the Legislature's recent vote and debate on the gay rights bill. When I questioned them about how many surprise votes we received, Perdue replied, "About 22." The morning of the vote, a quick poll by

Rep. Micque Glitman (D-Burl), produced only 32 representatives willing to commit themselves to supporting the bill. 55 eventually did.

Asked to single out a particularly satisfying turnaround vote, Goslant cited Carolyn Yarnell (D-Colchester). "She stood up and said, 'I was driving home and asked myself, why am I really opposing this?' Goslant said, "Once she acknowledged it was her own individual prejudice, this was the way Citizen Yarnell felt, what was Representative Yarnell going to do? She had no other choice. The only way laws work is if you respect the law."

Keith credits Ronnie Bancroft of Montpelier with making it difficult for many legislators to vote no. Bancroft, a well-known, outgoing Statehouse security guard, received statewide media attention after her house was burglarized and life threatened following her testimony on the

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