

# Out in the Mountains

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## Wet, Loud, and PROUD!

### Vermont Pride Day Revelers Defy Downpour to Rally for Bisexual, Lesbian, and Gay Rights

by Gene Barfield

Howard Russell, candidate for the State Senate (D-Chittenden), set the tone best when he said no one could call the 1990 Pride Day celebrants a "fair-weather crowd." As Pride Day organizers and a drenching series of thunderstorms arrived in Montpelier simultaneously on Saturday, June 23, speculation began as to whether anyone would show up for the annual event. To the amazement of Pride committee members (and, apparently, the Montpelier Police Department), within an hour a large and cheerful crowd of gay, lesbian, bisexual people and their supporters from across the state gathered under the portico of the State House to celebrate Vermont's eighth annual Pride Day.

With estimates ranging from 200 (*Times-Argus*) to 600 (WPTZ-TV), an enthusiastic throng best estimated at 350 people remained in spite of rain, high winds, and disrupted plans for the State House rally. Organizers quickly scrapped plans for displays, speeches, and other events on the Capitol lawn. Following an unsuccessful attempt (with help from State Senator Sally Conrad, D-Chittenden) at gaining admission to the State House (scheduled to be closed for the day), event leaders moved directly to the annual march through Montpelier.

As city police warned the crowd about lightning, a remarkably enthusiastic gathering of people, banners, and pets set out to bring the message of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Pride to the streets of the capitol city. Despite torrential rains that washed out streets in other parts of Montpelier, the crowd moved loudly and proudly along State, Main, and River Streets, astonishing onlookers with their cheerful and very vocal presence. Many marchers noted that

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## Russelling Up the Votes

Howard Russell's bid to become the first openly gay legislator in Vermont is well underway. Campaign manager Terje Anderson reports that the campaign is on pace toward its first hurdle, the September 11 primary.

OITM recently talked with the 36-year-old Hinesburg native about his impressions of the race thus far. Following are excerpts from that conversation.

OITM: What's the significance of your candidacy? What kind of ground do you see yourself breaking?

RUSSELL: Many things are significant about this candidacy. I'm choosing to run as an openly gay man – that's something that grabs people and makes them listen. I'm also choosing to do this in a different way. There aren't a lot of models, either in Vermont or even in the country, for running a campaign like this without apology. By that I mean, for saying not only is my being gay

an important issue, but I will bring it into my campaign whenever it feels relevant. It's a piece of experience I bring that's a plus, something that people should consider.

In the same way that the experience that a woman brings from having grown up in this culture is an asset, my growing up as a gay man, as an outsider, gives me an important different perspective.

OITM: Has there been a positive consequence of choosing to run as an openly gay man?

HR: Integrity is a key quality that people are looking for in people they want to lead. Over and above the issues, people want to be able to trust when a candidate says this is where I stand, that it's true. Being honest about who I am, and sharing it in a way that people can hear, has helped to reinforce that sense of trust and integrity. And courage.

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