

# Gay Murders in Montreal

Paul Olsen

As evidenced by the gruesome death of Canadian Robert Panchaud on January 28, 1993, violence against gay men is hardly an America phenomenon. Panchaud's death brings the number of gay men killed in Montreal since 1989 to at least thirteen. Eight of the murders were committed in the victims' apartments, one in a hotel, and the remaining four men were killed in Montreal area parks. While the police investigate the unsolved cases, many members of Montreal's gay community feel unsafe. Police investigators have not ruled out the possibility of a serial killer which the Montreal media have named "The Predator".

The stabbing of 28 year old Robert Gallant in his downtown Village apartment on March 19, 1989 marked the beginning of this series of murders and the heightened concern of the gay community in Montreal. While many of the cases have been similar (all of the victims have either been brutally stabbed 15-40 times or viciously beaten to death) police have had few leads over the past four years. Police speculate that the two most recent cases may be related as the victims appear to have met their killer at the same bar in Montreal's Gay Village. Investigators have not found matching finger prints at any of the crime scenes.

The police investigation into the murders in Montreal has not been without controversy. Leaders of Montreal's gay community cited homophobia as the reason for the slow response to the seriousness of the situation and the initial refusal of the police to label the murders as bias related. Activists have also been critical of the police inference that these murders may have been the result of casual sexual encounters which they suggest perpetuates stereotypes about gay men and is not factual given the circumstances of each murder. Since this initial conflict, gay community groups and the police have joined forces to educate the gay and lesbian community about issues of safety and to share information that may help solve the cases.

Vermonters may feel that they are immune from the violence of the big city. However, the murder of thirteen gay men in Montreal is in Vermont's proverbial "own backyard". With the hard work of the Montreal police and the gay community, these murders may be solved. Whether at home or when visiting Montreal, visitors should heed the advice of the police and gay activists and be careful out there. ▼

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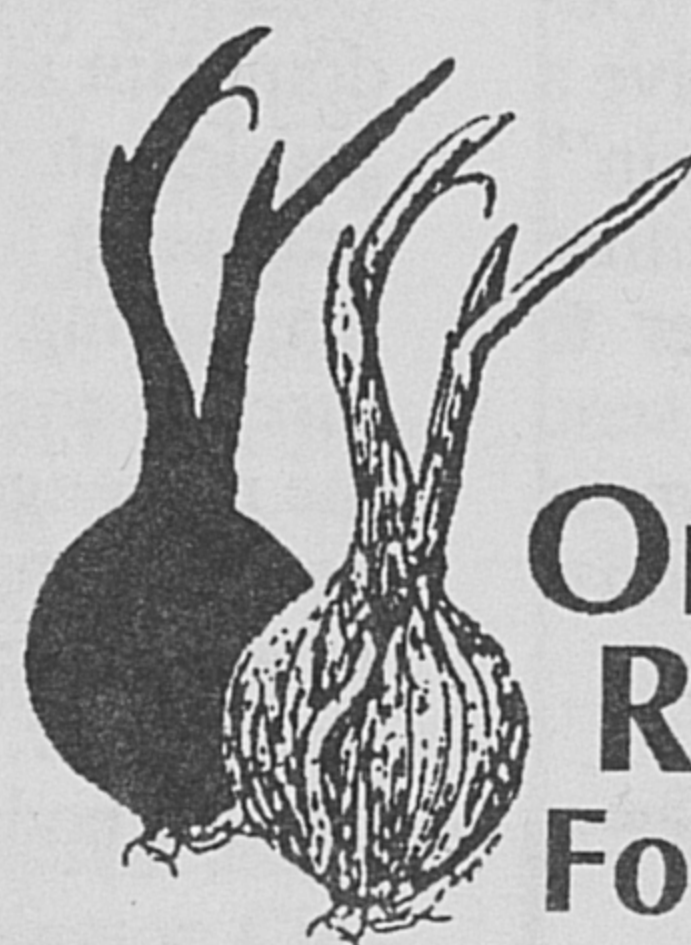
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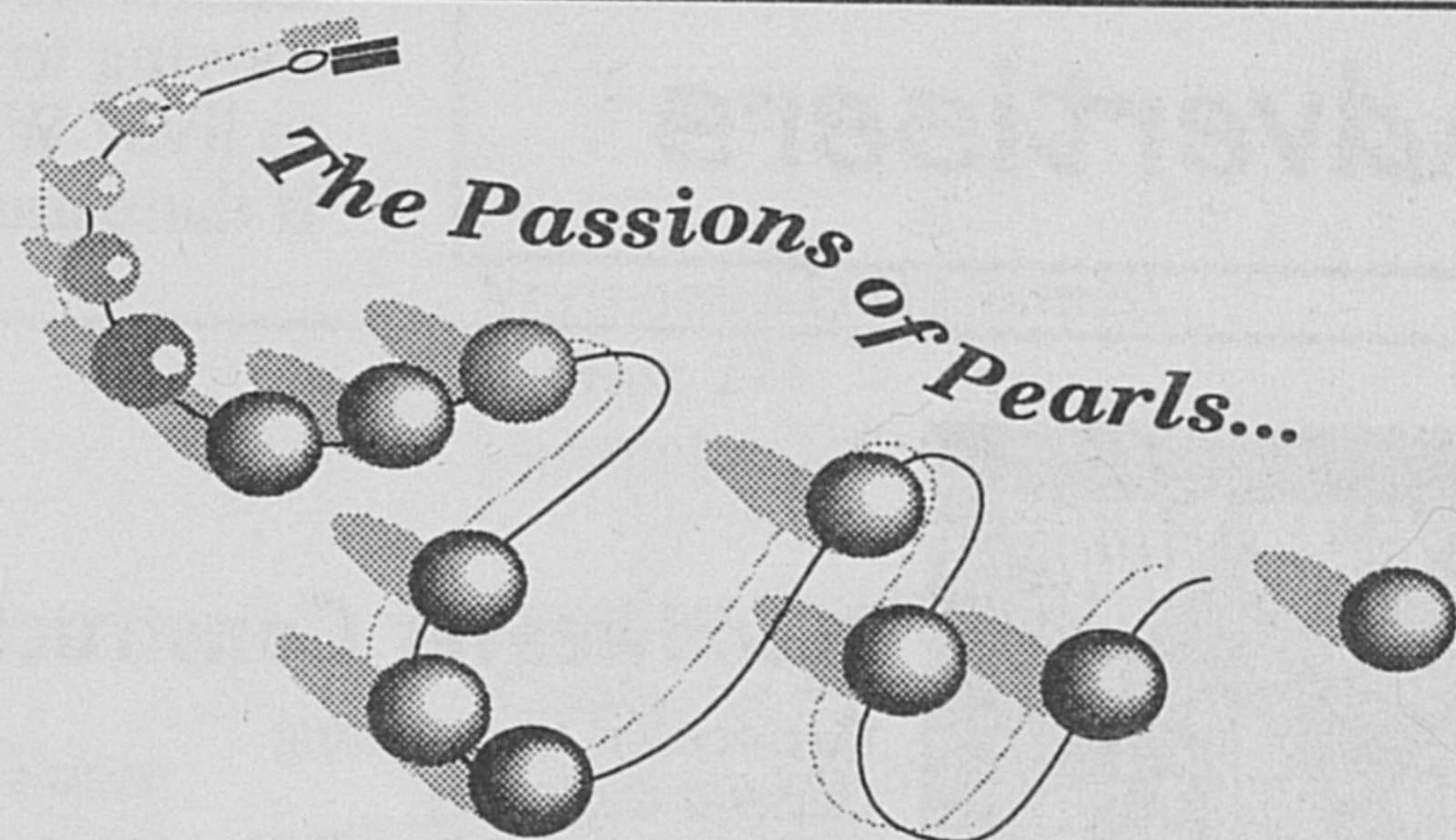
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