

## Out in the Mountains

established in 1986

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## To Submit Articles and Letters

We encourage and implore our readers to do what they can to make OITM a paper both for and by gay, lesbian, and bisexual Vermonters. Please assist us by typing your articles and letters double-spaced and including your name and phone number in case we have any questions. Your submission should be received by OITM no later than the 7th of the previous month. Thank you for helping out!

## Editorial

### Holding Forth for Truth

by Hugh Coyle

It wasn't until I was sitting there in Burlington's Universalist Unitarian Church caught up in Rita Mae Brown's talk about language being "a contract of truth between and among people" that I began to understand a few more of the reasons why being gay is such a wonderful thing and why we need to continue to voice that feeling to the rest of the world.

First of all, it feels great to be honest about innermost feelings with friends who really care and understand. That may be a new sensation for someone who hasn't spent much time in the gay community, and I hope it's an effective sales pitch for anyone who is "out" but not "in" the community to consider becoming a member. The conversations I've had with fellow gays and lesbians just over the past two weeks has done more to further affirm and validate my own sense of self than any amount of time spent on the psychoanalyst's couch could ever achieve.

Secondly, Rita Mae helped me appreciate the qualities Howdy Russell brought to his campaign for State Senate even more. It is rare that anyone running for political office can so successfully and honestly translate his or her personal experiences and feelings into a believable and workable platform. Howdy has shown that we can maintain our true voices as gay and lesbian people even within the world of politics, where untrustworthy rhetorical strategies are often favored over candid expression.

Thirdly, her words restored my faith in my own experiences, and in my ability to tell of those experiences in my own writing and speaking. This "contract of truth" of which Rita Mae spoke is not only something to be initiated with others; it is a pact we must make with ourselves as well in

order to inspire and elicit honest expression. For me this has brought about an increased sense of affirmation and validation, my two personal buzzwords for the fall.

Coming out takes on a whole new significance when viewed in the context of Rita Mae's words, for it signals a return to humanity for many of us, a positive reconnection to the world at large which can only be achieved through honesty and trust. You can see it as political activism if you want, but for me, coming out will always remain a spiritual rebirth, an acceptance of an ability to love given from a Higher Source than ourselves. That may sound New Age to you, but it's been around for a while and has been rediscovered time and again through all the ages.

Lastly, such a "contract of truth" speaks to issues of censorship in ways that few phrases can. No self-proclaimed "free" society should abide censorship, nor should it abide those who abuse the freedom of speech guaranteed by documents such as the Bill of Rights. When language is viewed as a "contract of truth," there is an implicit responsibility both to speak and to listen with respect for what is true. That's no small challenge, but it does urge us to consider all viewpoints and to work toward understanding the necessity for those various perspectives.

As members of the gay, lesbian, and bisexual communities, we know what it is like to have others deny truths about us and in so doing block a more comprehensive understanding of basic emotions such as love and affection. By affirming the validity of our own experiences and expressions, we work toward the benefit of all society by restoring our common language to a state of wholeness and inclusiveness.

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