

# Politics

## Russell Reviews Campaign

by Deb Lashman

While he was disappointed and certainly hoping to make it into the top six from Chittenden County, Howard Russell felt very positive about his race for one of the seats in the Vermont State Senate. "I knew it would be a tough race because of the number of incumbents and because I had never run before, and in fact, all of the winners had the advantage of being incumbents or having prior experience running. The fact I came so close shows the county is very ready for an openly gay candidate."

Russell was particularly encouraged that he came in first in his home town of Hinesburg. He described it as a real "coming home", saying that while the people in his birthplace certainly knew he was gay before he started campaigning, it was never something he had pushed before. He felt that part of his good showing was due to the

fact that he was born and grew up here in Vermont and was therefore harder to dismiss as just "the gay candidate".

Despite initial fears and nervousness, Russell said he was not gay-baited at all during the campaign. "I really got out there, going door-to-door, standing in front of supermarkets and at the side of the road, and the reaction was very positive."

Russell claimed that he learned several lessons from the experience. An important one was that openly gay candidates can run and win. One of the most essential factors in running as a gay, lesbian, or bisexual candidate, Russell pointed out, is that one's sexuality be acknowledged as positive and as something which brings with it perspective and diversity.

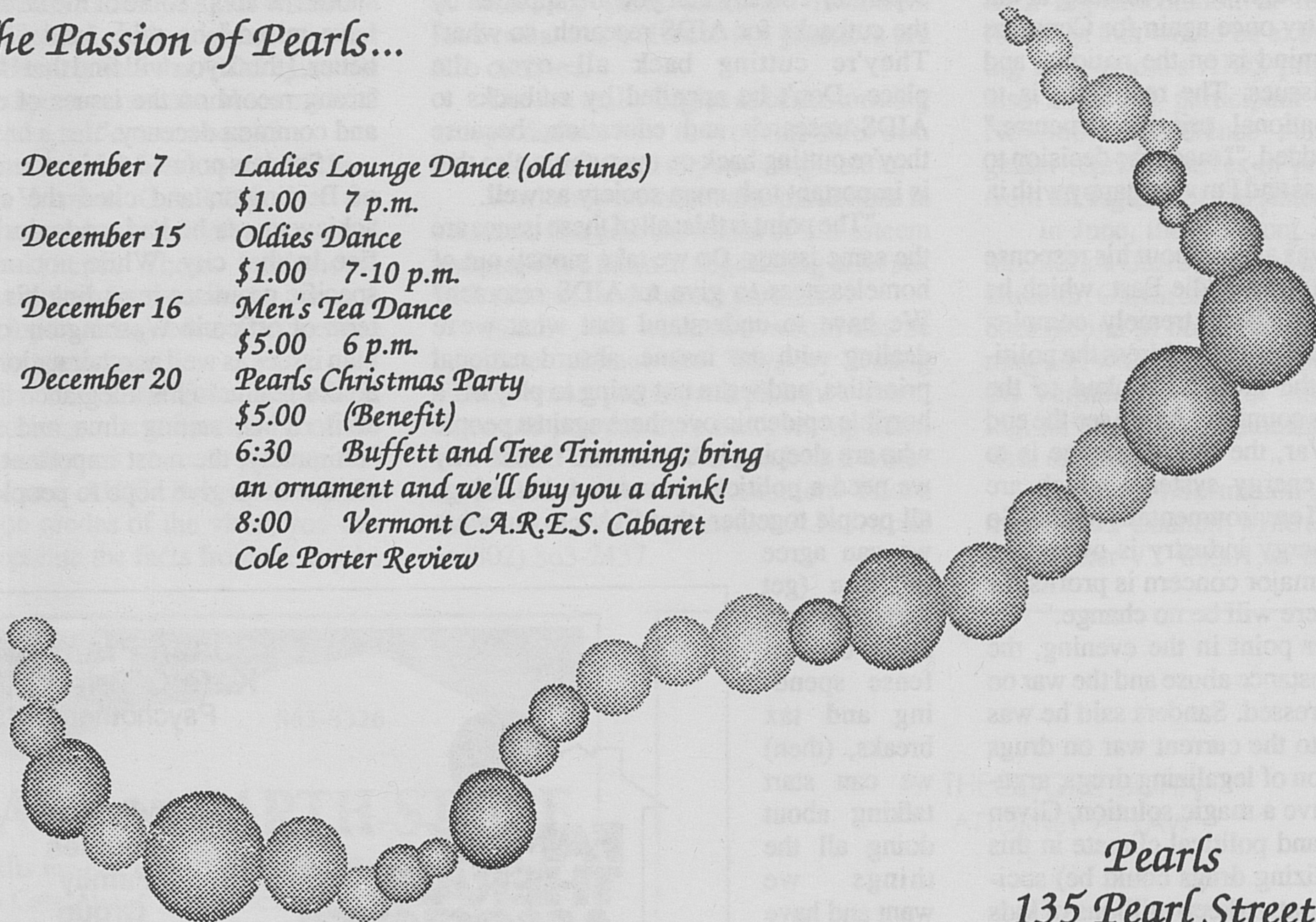
Russell perceives lesbian/gay/bisexual voting power to be on a different level now than it was before this campaign. He

also feels that support for the civil rights bill is much stronger than ever before and that people are finally understanding that we have had it with the way things are. "We have been much too patient," Russell stated. "It's time our issues were attended to, or there will be political fallout".

While he doesn't know yet if he will give it another try, Russell came away from his campaign feeling encouraged about the future of openly lesbian/gay/bisexual candidates in Vermont. He also said he would love to talk to other people who are thinking about it. As he now knows from experience, when you are open and out there in a positive way, many of the fears turn out to be a smokescreen, and winning the race is not nearly as impossible as some people would have you believe.

### *The Passion of Pearls...*

- December 7 Ladies Lounge Dance (old tunes)  
\$1.00 7 p.m.*
- December 15 Oldies Dance  
\$1.00 7-10 p.m.*
- December 16 Men's Tea Dance  
\$5.00 6 p.m.*
- December 20 Pearls Christmas Party  
\$5.00 (Benefit)  
6:30 Buffett and Tree Trimming; bring  
an ornament and we'll buy you a drink!  
8:00 Vermont C.A.R.E.S. Cabaret  
Cole Porter Review*



*Pearls*  
135 Pearl Street  
Burlington, Vermont