

## Squires Speaks *(from preceding page)*

or shoveling manure or working in the sugarbush with someone – they know me from that perspective, and when they have to deal with the fact that I am also a gay man, it automatically changes the perception that they had built up over the years of the stereotyped presentation of gay men.

"I think people feel threatened by non-traditional things, especially relationships. Vermont particularly was a state of homogenous communities. I mean, everybody was the same. They all had names like Smith and Clark and Franklin and Squires, and they were all white, and they all worked with the same type of organizations, like the Grange, the Volunteer Fire Department, etc. They had their farms. Though every town was different, they had pretty much the same type of community. They had the same networking going on in those communities, the same social structures – and that was for two hundred years. You don't change that type of situation in the fifteen or twenty years that gay people have been open and active in Vermont, and it's only been a small portion of those fifteen to twenty years when we've been effective or been visible in terms of being involved in community things rather than just being visible because we had gay bars in a couple of towns in the state.

"Certainly it's changed more in Burlington, a more urban area, with the University and a lot higher percentage of the people being new to the area. But there are other communities, like Brattleboro, in

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***"There are more and more of us who are willing to do it - to run for office and to be open about it. It really smashes people's stereotypes about who we are."***

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which it's really amazing what's happened. That area has been fairly open and accepting of difference. There are two functioning gay bars in Brattleboro – the town has 11,000 people. Really, things are changing, but it's not going to happen overnight.

What will be exciting for me to try to do is to take some of the actual legal changes that have been attempted in places like San Francisco and New York in terms of partnerships or insurance benefits and find ways to help allow those changes to occur in Vermont. There may be other ways to do it. We have to be careful not to just take the language of the legislation or the

approach that's been taken in urban areas and just try to transpose them onto the system here in Vermont.

"Clearly my first allegiance has to be to the constituents that elected me, but that doesn't mean that I can't be true to myself and the community that I come from. It just means that at times I'll have to work on a bridge when I'd rather be getting funding for the Health Department.

"People really ought to begin to develop relationships with their legislators from their districts on a variety of issues, not just the issues that directly relate to the fact that we're gay men or lesbians. If they're involved with other issues with their legislators and say, 'I want you to vote for the Gay Rights Bill,' there's going to be a lot better chance that the type of communication is going to occur to let that legislator vote for that bill. Legislators need to be supported as well as threatened when it comes to those types of bills. It's not easy for someone who's never dealt with that kind of issue to sit in Montpelier and vote for it knowing that they are going to go back to Coventry or Halifax or Searsburg and people in that community are going to say, 'What the fuck are you voting for those queers for? Have you lost your marbles up there in Montpelier? Have you been away from home too long?'"

## The Kid's Alright

Pete Townshend, the energetic ex-guitarist of the rock band The Who, recently revealed that he "had a gay life, and understood what gay sex was about." The statement comes from a book of interviews gathered together by the music critic Timothy White in his book *Rock Lives: Profiles and Interviews*.

Townsend referred to one song in particular, "Rough Boys" from his solo album "Empty Glass," as "a coming out" song. "It was a real acknowledgement of the fact that I'd been surrounded by people that I really adored – and was actually sexually attracted to – who were men."

Townsend credits his success among a female audience in part to his ability to understand "how it feels to be a woman" along with "being honest about the fact that I understand how gay people feel, and I identify." The musician currently lives with his wife Karen Astley and their three children.

Townsend joins the ever-growing list of artists and musicians who are feeling more comfortable discussing their sexuality in the public forum. Our ongoing question remains, "Who's next?"

Announcing  
the formation of a ten-week  
therapy group for the

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Were Sexually Abused  
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