

# Commentary

## Swine Before Pearls

by F. Dane Warden

R.F.D. #1, Homophobic, VT 05819 was where I was born and reared, and if you check a map, you'll see that it's so remote that a drive to Burlington leads the traveler to inquire what the exchange rate is.

For those of us who occasionally lament having "missed the train," please know that many of us living outside of "The Queen City" didn't even know there WAS a train. In other words, I was 37 before I was made aware that there was a gay bar within the confines of the Vermont borders.

I hope you can grasp the significance of the "culture shock" involved in trading in a slop bucket for a silver dildo. The difference can be equated to Mark Twain's observation that there is a considerable difference between lightning and a lightning bug.

Determined to BE GAY, I "took the bull by the horns" as it were and did what was for me a bold and courageous step toward that end. I placed what was to be the very first gay ad in the very first edition of the Burlington Free Press's "Personals,"

then published in the T.V. guide section. (It was later moved to the Weekend section after a flood of complaints were sent in over my use of the phrase "HOT summer nights.") Through the ad, I was most fortunate to meet a hell of a nice guy who offered to take me to Pearls. (Thanks, Steve. I've never forgotten you, or the experience.)

Anticipation...my heart raced out of control for days! I was not only "taking a trip," I was BEING GAY, meeting a GAY guy, fantasizing about doing other GAY stuff, without looking over my shoulder. I was in hog heaven, man!

Gotta get new threads...those black jeans oughta show off the bulge OK...\$60 for those damned sneakers? Are you SURE, ma'am? So when did you raise the price of a haircut to four bucks, Walt?

Approaching Pearls, I was struck by the...plainness of it. Certainly not the bejeweled den of GAYNESS, as seen in my fantasy world high on Burke Mountain.

Nevertheless, I remember how dry my throat was as we entered, like somebody had just dumped a load of gravel in my mouth. There was so much yelling going on, I thought that maybe there was a serious fight in progress, and then realized that because of the decibel level of the music,

yelling and body language were the only two forms of communication being used.

I had other concerns on my mind, such as being in a bar for the first time since I began recovering from alcoholism one and a half years earlier.

Luckily, I was suddenly so caught up in the excitement of the moment, my concerns vanished as I was introduced to a really attractive guy in drag, along with seeing all the other guys there, checking out the other guys, making their moves - some subtle, some more direct - but always interacting, making moves.

It was terribly exciting, and in its own way represented a whole way of life to some of the guys there (or so it seemed; while I've only been back twice, I saw and remembered some of the same people, still making moves, and for them the excitement was still there. For me, it was gone.)

It was, I guess, the sameness of it all that finally prompted me to conclude (and not insultingly so) that a pig with a new hairdo was still a pig.

There is no great moral or overwhelmingly powerful point to this script, only a glimpse of what it was like for someone to discover what "being gay" meant to someone else.

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Have a Howlin'  
Good Time as

**OUT  
IN THE  
MOUNTAINS**

celebrates its

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ANNIVERSARY**

with

**VIRGINIA  
AND THE  
WOLVES**

at

**PEARLS**

details in the  
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