

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 1st of the previous month. Thank you for helping out!

KEEP US POSTED!

Please let us know of any events that you feel should be on our calendar so that we can share them with all our readers. Send your group's listings or other information to: *OITM*, PO Box Box 177, Burlington VT 05402. Materials must be received by the 1st of the month prior to publication in order to be assured of appearing in print.

Editorial

Dear Mr. President:

During the weekend of April 24 - 25 there will be a great gathering of Americans in Washington, DC. It will be the third March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay and Bi Equal Rights. It will be a celebration unlike any the Capital has ever seen. People of all backgrounds will be there, all national origins, all races, all religions and non-religions, all ages all genders and those who transcend gender, HIV positive and negative, and of course, all sexual orientations. We will be together in a great gathering to rejoice in our experiences, similar and different. We will be together in hope and in anger, in determination and in despair.

In 1979, when I was in Washington for the first L/G/B March, the city was deserted for the weekend. There was only us and the police. The only recognition I received from someone outside those who had travelled to DC was when I was heading home with a carload of tired friends, from a toll collector, who saw the placard in my car window and answered his own question: "So that's why there is so much traffic on a Sunday night." There was little coverage in the press. Very few of the gay men and lesbians I knew went, estimates for total attendance were in the tens of thousands, maybe one hundred thousand. We proved to ourselves that we could do it. It was a long way from the Stonewall Riots of 1969.

In 1987, we filled the city. Same sex couples and groups of friends roamed the city and asked strangers to take their pictures in front of the statue of Lincoln overlooking the Mall. We were tourists, not at a gay resort but at the nation's capital. I was surprised who was there that weekend; in addition to some of the same people I had shared my car with a decade earlier, were some of the most conservative and closeted men I knew; total attendance was estimated in the hundreds of thousands, maybe as many as half a million. The Names Project Quilt was spread out on the Mall for the first time. Waves of people walked among the panels, stooping to touch the fabric, to touch an embroidered object of a loved one, to stand in silence with tears streaming down our cheeks for those who had died, for those who had yet to die, for those who had yet to become infected and for our frustration at the slowness of change. Woopie Goldberg asked the question on all our minds "How long, Mr President?" How much longer must this go on? How many more must die? How much longer will we be

treated as less than human? The President was never to answer those questions.

It was a time of joy and sorrow. There was a wedding for thousands of us who cannot legally marry in front of the IRS building. People wept at the Vietnam Memorial and at a memorial for Harvey Milk. There was dancing and great celebrating from sunrise to sunrise. The weekend was the most positive, self-affirming time in my life. My face ached from smiling so much. When the plane lifted off from National Airport and circled over the city with its monuments lit in the rosy glow of sunset, cheers and applause filled the plane. We had come as individuals, not knowing what we would find and left as a large and growing clan, taking home with us a pride and dignity that would not tolerate the lack of press coverage, that would push through state gay equal rights legislation (in seven states now), that would work for benefits for our lovers, that would work in coalitions and not maintain the silence of the past, that would help elect the 42nd President of the United States.

In 1993, the crowd will be even larger. Almost everyone I know who is gay or lesbian identified is talking about going. With expectations of a million people, this will be a weekend without precedent. There is much to celebrate, there is much still to accomplish. Undoing the past 12 years is no small task, but it is too easy an answer to lay it all on the doorstep of the past two administrations; the ban on gays in the military, for example, is fifty years old. We are tired of being convenient scapegoats, of being talked about as though we weren't part of every family in this nation. We are wary of good words and good intentions. Wasn't it the good intentions of the medical community to label us ill and then offer to cure us that was the rationalization for much of the institutional discrimination we face? Don't the churches which fan the fire of hatred toward us also preach to love thy neighbor?

Our sheer numbers will speak for themselves, but numbers are only a small part of our story. Come and join us on Sunday as we gather by state and march through the streets, the organized groups and the multitudes of individuals. Come into the crowd and speak with us, one on one. Hear our stories. Overhear what we share among ourselves. Experience the grit and color of our daily lives. Come with your staff and survey the crowd for yourself. The media will provide the