

Out in the Mountains

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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.

Marching in Our Own Backyard

Rachel Lurie

**Saturday, June 26th,
Burlington. Pride Day.**

Vermonters love their privacy. If there are any characteristics we share, at least in our common mythology, it's our desire to lead quiet lives and be left alone. Winding dirt roads lead to our individual homes, stamped with our uniqueness, where only our chosen friends and family ever see the art we hang or the design of our flower beds.

That's the theory anyway, much belied by how how many of us live—either in crowded Chittenden county or shut in by the gossip and cold stares of our neighbors. To paraphrase Audre Lorde, our privacy, like our silence, will not protect us. After the hype — and excitement — of the March on Washington, it's the Year of the Queer, and it's time to bring that pride home.

**Saturday, June 26th,
Burlington. Be there.**

Gay and Lesbian Vermonters are still reeling from the disastrous results of the mayoral race in Burlington, symbolic of much more than a taxpayers revolt. It wasn't just the Domestic Partners Benefits package up there on the town meeting block, it was the notion of our right to exist. The vitriolic sideshow we witnessed at the City Council meetings was chilling enough—the fact that the right was able to back up its threat of “we will vote you out” is even more frightening. And the lack of solid support from straight progressive circles, (“the timing is bad”), leaves us even more isolated; the defeat leaves us open to believing that maybe we *did* ask for too much.

**Saturday, June 26th,
Burlington. Organize.**

It's no time to wonder if our rights and our lives are worth fighting for. The Christian Right, no longer able to pull Communists from every closet, has targeted homosexuals as the threat of the next century. Pat Robertson's wealthy Christian Coalition has hundreds of candidates in local elections across the country and has vowed to bankroll Colorado-like amendments in every state. Vermont, for all its self-perception of being different and more progressive than the rest of middle America, is hardly free from this backlash movement. We can't afford to cower in fear from this movement, nor can we afford to ignore it.

**Saturday, June 26th,
Burlington. Be Proud.**

What we can do is show our strength as a community right here. Many of the gay, lesbian and bisexual Vermonters who traveled to Washington D.C. for the March are less than enthusiastic about parading up the Church Street Marketplace. But that feeling of real freedom — to be totally out and not judged for it — we shared in Washington remains only a fantasy if I can't hold my lover's hand where I live. Of course it's a harder struggle and the stakes are different. But by being pro-active — by setting our own course and defining our own rules — we begin to shape the community in which we live; we take it back, and make it ours too. And we send out a message, to ourselves as much as to our neighbors, that we belong here on our own terms.

**Saturday, June 26th,
Burlington. Come out.**

Coming out at home makes all the difference because our neighbors, who knew us all along, suddenly have to look at their own fears and prejudice through the lens of their own judgment. Hey, they liked us before, maybe queers are okay. Our bravery is often rewarded. Many credit the late Ron Squires' act of speaking on the Statehouse floor as a gay man the turning point for the passage of Vermont's Gay Rights Bill. His fellow legislators had to step back and humanize both him and the struggle he was fighting for. I felt the power of overthrowing stereotypes myself when my 68-year-old neighbor, a lifelong Vermonters with pro-life bumper stickers, praised my post-March op-ed piece in the *Vermont Times*, where I came out as a “butch dyke” She literally thanked me for writing it; I'm still in shock.

**Saturday, June 26th,
Burlington. Party.**

All this political ideology aside, Pride Day just wouldn't be Gay if we didn't have fun. Bring a contingent to the march to shock and to entertain. Bring your motorcycle and join Dykes on Bikes. Farmers, bring your livestock. For ultimate safety and confusion value, bring a straight friend and carry a sign “Guess which one of us is gay.” Ask that cute girl (or boy) to dance. Make your home your own!

The Pride Committee is sponsoring buses from around the state to get people here for Pride Day. Call 655-6312 or 223-3557 for info. See insert in this issue for a march and rally guide. ▼