

## Fred's Corner

(a monthly sorta thing):

Bombs and raids and demonstrations, oh my...they all come out on a warm winter day

Fred Kuhr

On Saturday, February 19, my lover and I decided to take a day trip to Montreal. 'Twas a sunny, bright, warm, and breezy fifty-degree day after many weeks of subzero frost heaves and Mt. Mansfield sized snow drifts. Finally, the snow was melting and our premature Spring Fever led us to cross the border for a day of city walking and shopping, and an evening of dining and dancing. But not so fast...

That morning, at an *Out In The Mountains* meeting, a friend told us of a bar in Montreal, K.O.X., that had been raided earlier in the week. He said many were arrested, no specific number, and a demonstration was planned for that evening outside the bar on Rue St. Catherine. (That's St. Catherine Street for us unilingual folk.)

Part of me was a little excited by this, I must admit - the thrill of witnessing an actual, angry demonstration, in a foreign country even. But then a reality hit me - "Wait a minute? A gay bar was raided? This is the '90's!" I thought raiding went out with Reaganism (kind of like Members Only jackets). And in Montreal? Sin City of North America, as my lover jokes. After all, this is the city that proudly displays Club Super Sex next to its upscale department stores. (And if you have not seen the ad on TV, or have not had the opportunity to witness the facade itself, yes "Super Sex" is written like "Superman".) This is the city that just the other day loaded gay men out of a bar and into paddy wagons?

We decided we would take our chances - the weather and our sense of adventure won. We were determined to go to Montreal and were determined to go to K.O.X. And maybe we would even take part in the rally!

After an afternoon of crowded, slushy streets, we chose to skip the rally and go to dinner (bad activists, but good queens). We settled upon a Montreal landmark for our dining pleasure, Ben's Deli, for its famous smoked meat. (Nah, the joke's too easy.) The restaurant is located downtown so we were unintentionally far and away from any demonstration related hubbub. We were so far removed, in fact, that I was even apprehensive about thumbing through *Fugues*, *The Mirror*, and any other gay or alternative newspapers we had picked up along the way. As my lover not-so-apprehensively thumbed through bar ads, one of Ben's waiters looked over his shoulder. "Uh-oh," I thought. The waiter then stopped, leaned over, and asked if we were from out of town. We reluctantly said, "Yes". He then asked us if we had heard what happened at K.O.X. He was there!

A light went on inside of me. What happened? Why did it happen? From the little I could understand through his accent, I figured out the following...1) gay men were "treated like animals", 2) the raid had something to do with the owner being a lawyer and possibly becoming a judge, but owning a bar would be a conflict of interest (is this true? or just good political activist gossip?), and 3) a rumor was running rampant that K.O.X. would be raided again that night! He strongly recommended that we not go.

Our paranoia got the best of us; if we couldn't feel safe in "Sin City", we could at least return to our cozy Vermont home less than two hours away and enjoy the passion of Pearl's. Tucked cozily between the calm of the Green Mountains and the...um...calm of Lake Champlain lies Northern Vermont's only gay bar, a safe space in a safe city in a safe state. But not so fast...

Just before the clock struck midnight, the carriage turned into a pumpkin. The music stopped, the lights came up, and the cigarette smoke, no, that remained. But the DJ did announce that Pearl's had just received a bomb threat. The police were on their way; we were all to leave the bar. "What? A bomb scare at Pearl's? Our safe little bar nestled inside a wealth of progressive politics and pastoral pastures?" But it happened.

The police did arrive, searched the bar, and quickly left. (Weren't the police the ones who raided the bar in Montreal?) The bomb threat turned out to be a hoax, and the bar reopened half an hour later. A collective sigh of relief! The management even bought a free round of drinks for everyone (maybe we should have bomb threats more often).

We enjoyed our February thaw, but I couldn't help but roll this coincidence around in my head. A gay bar raided in Sin City and a bomb threat in the Queen City. No matter how safe we may feel at times, a great deal of work still needs to be done. After all, everyone comes out to play on a warm February day. ▼

### Partners in Growth & Recovery, Inc. Family Therapists

Erica Marks, M.A., S.A.C., A.C.H.  
Giita Clark, M.A.  
Sherry Hunt, M.A., A.C.H.

State Certified Addictions Specialist on Staff  
Sliding Fee Scale

182 Main Street, Burlington, VT 05401 • 865-2403

*integrative massage*

©      ▽      ☾  
*body mind breath*

Aimée S. Green

(802) 660-9238