

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!

How to Advertise

If you would like to run an ad in *OITM*, please contact us for rates, sizes, and information. Ad copy must be received by the 1st of the month to be included in the next month's issue. Copy can be mailed to: *OITM*, P.O. Box 177, Burlington, VT 05402, or call Ellen at (802) 860-1922 Steven West at (802) 864-6399 or Bruce at BMH graphic design at (802) 658-1556.

From the Editor: The Month of Love ... Debate on Marriage

Fred Kuhr

WINOOSKI -- February is usually described as the month of Love; so named not for its unique brevity (though I am sure some of the un-Valentined are thankful for a mere 28 days), but for St. Valentine's Day which occurs smack dab in the middle. Although I try to steer clear of heart-shaped boxes full of chocolates (OK, maybe just one vanilla creme), I cannot help but be reminded of what for many, straight and gay alike, is the next logical step after Love -- Marriage.

Same sex marriage is not currently a legal option, but many gay and lesbian couples are choosing to declare their love and commitment in front of many friends and family. 1995 may be a pivotal year in this legal battle; the state of Hawaii may very well become the first state to legally recognize same sex marriages while a long fought court battle in Washington, D.C., may yield a similar result for our nation's capitol. What will Vermont do once the issue reaches our courts? The courts will have a tough time deciding if our own community is not decided on the issue. Here are some thoughts...

Livin' like hets ... First, let us get all the negatives out of the way. Same sex marriage is the most extreme form of cultural assimilation gays and lesbians will ever know. Marriage is based upon a patriarchal structure that is anti-woman and therefore anti-lesbian. And marriage never solves anything anyway when 50% of all marriages end in divorce. Besides, we should not want the government telling us what kind of relationships we should have. And we should not want the government involved in telling us how we should break up either. All same sex marriage would do is show the hets that we are giving in to mainstream (read "straight") society.

Feel better? ... Now, let us give it some thought. Same sex marriages, historians such as John Boswell have discovered, were practiced in Europe long before the good ol' U.S. of A. was even a gleam in Christopher Columbus' eye. Marriage, over time, did fall victim to a patriarchal society, and a week of Ricki Lake and Oprah will prove that marriage is still misunderstood and misused by many heterosexual people. The point is that marriage in and of itself is not a bad thing; it is what you make of it, "for better or worse," just like any relationship.

Legal, Schmegal ... No matter how many Holy Unions and Commitment Ceremonies we have, we are still not legally protected. Straight people take so many laws for granted because they come signed, sealed, and delivered to their door on their wedding day. The time and expense of wills, durable powers of attorney, and cohabitation contracts are a concern because many gays and lesbians do not have the time and money to legally protect themselves. What happens when a same sex spouse dies unexpectedly? The remaining spouse has no legal relationship other than "roommate". The situation gets uglier when the parents of the deceased, who may not have even known the nature of the relationship, come in to claim what is legally theirs as next of kin.

The Youth of Today ... In a story that *Out* magazine ran last year about gay and lesbian youth, a 15 year old gay male, while discussing the need to address gay youth issues, said, "People don't kill themselves over domestic partnership." While this simple statement may be true, a relationship does exist. Gay and lesbian teens commit suicide at a higher rate than straight teens. This is partially due to the feeling of never being able to lead a "normal" life, a feeling that he or she is doomed to a loveless and lonely life. If same sex marriage were legally recognized, teens would know of one more way in which they are not as different as they think they are, that a "normal" life is possible if they want it.

Pro-choice ... Probably the most important aspect of this debate for us to remember as individuals in a community is that getting married should be a matter of choice. Even if same sex couples could legally marry, you and your partner could opt not to. Gays, lesbians, bisexuals, straights, transgenders, everybody should have the choice of whether or not to get married. Straight people have that choice and we do not. That is not only unfair, but degrading.

Families are the building blocks of our society, whoever you consider your family to be. The government and the law have a moral obligation to recognize us, our relationships, and our families. We are all human beings and we all need to be treated with dignity. And if a difference does exist between same sex and variant sex couples, the difference is we can do it better. ▼