

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 10th of the previous month. **Thank you** for helping out!

Editorial

The Pride Inside

by Hugh Coyle

It's something like those glorious days we've been enjoying in Vermont this spring: it shouldn't be eighty degrees out there yet but it is, and you're already shedding those layers of winter-weather-wear and basking in the sun, thinking that true balance is attained only when you shine out as many rays as you soak in, feeling once and for all that you're a vital part of the natural world just by being out there in it...

This is close to what it's like on Pride Day, when we can tear down the facades that we often wear in our daily lives and show the world (or Burlington, in our local case) who we really are. Surrounded by friends and supporters, we latch on to a kind of pride that shines far brighter than the individual lights which comprise it.

That pride doesn't have to evaporate when the clock strikes midnight on June 22. Cars won't turn back into pumpkins, nor will horses turn to mice, and you just might find yourself heading home with Prince Charming rather than running from the palace ball.

The key to Pride Day is to bring it all inside where it can work like a battery that's been charged and hooked up to the spirit. That energy can then be channelled into other tasks, whether that means lobbying the legislature, caring for people with AIDS, or writing for your local g/l/b newspaper. This is *our* power, generated by us and directed toward the projects we feel need to be realized.

French philosopher (and fellow gay man) Michel Foucault once wrote that power was a neutral concept until it was utilized in some way. Pride Day gives us the opportunity to throw a distinctively positive spin on the power latent in the gay men's and women's communities. We're not battling our oppressors (at least not directly); we're celebrating ourselves, setting aside our angers and frustrations to focus on the strength of our love.

As I prepare to leave these mountains behind and head off to distant parts, I am hopeful that part of that strength will travel with me. Pride Day '90, also known as "The Great OUTpouring" given the weather at the time, sparked a new era in my life and provided a good part of the impetus behind the work which went into the continuation of this newspaper. It gave members of the staff and me a chance to meet and appreciate the community we serve, leading us to push onward to new heights with the pub-

lication. (And you thought we expanded to 24 pages last fall because there were size queens on the staff...shame!)

One of the major lessons I've learned in working on *Out in the Mountains* over the past year is that things don't happen in the gay and lesbian communities because of *what* we are - they happen because of *who* we are.

The "what" of us is like the list of ingredients on the breakfast cereal box; it's the tag that chafes at the neck on that new cotton shirt; it's the collection of labels others use to focus on the parts and ignore the whole. It's mistaking the recipe on the index card for the prize-winning cake itself. It's taking the label "gay" and saying that's all we are.

The "who" of us goes beyond such analysis and considers the whole. It discounts labels in favor of definitions, words which acknowledge and support the fullness and richness of our experience. It accepts our sheer presence and existence in the world and doesn't seek to pinpoint the heart of the mystery. In our case, the heart *is* the mystery.

I've spent the last year living with and learning from that mystery, engaged in the undertaking because of the joy, compassion, and love that I felt emanating all around me at events like Pride Day 1990. For me, the parts of whole had yet to come together, though I had a better sense of them than ever before.

Last year I celebrated what I was as an adjective, as though the one word - gay - could ever fully stand for the depth and diversity of those I would march alongside in the rain-soaked streets of Montpelier. This year I celebrate *who* I am and *who* we are, connected by that common adjective, yet needful and appreciative of the various other adjectives and nouns which accompany "gay" to give us a richer understanding of our culture.

This year, too, I will be saying goodbye for a while to some of the most wonderful people and best friends I've ever known, and it will be a difficult leave-taking. This state itself will cause many nights of homesickness, but there's a positive message behind all of this: Vermont is a powerfully special place, and it's home to one of the most impressive gay, lesbian, and bisexual populations in the country. That in and of itself is something to be proud of and celebrate on June 22 in Burlington.

See you there...