

Letters to the Editor

Calling All Lesbians!!!

Do we comprise a community? Are you a part of it? Do you love it? Avoid it? These are the questions I hear a lot of lesbians talking about. We all seem to have an idea of what lesbian community is or means to us, but sometimes disagree beyond our individual experiences. How do we know who we collectively are and where we're going? Do we read *Dykes To Watch Out For*, or trek to Michigan to find out what the hot topics are, or are we living with them in our everyday lives? Everyone else is talking about us, defining us, hating us, envying us -- what does all this mean to us personally and as a group here in Vermont?

I thought it could be fun to have a place in *OITM* where we could talk about our lesbian community/ communities as we live it. Is our experience different in Burlington or Brattleboro, Glover or Fairfield? Let's tell each other our stories about who we are, how we see each other, and how we might belong to that larger intangible and changing thing so many of us declare membership in. So send your ideas, experiences, blessings, gripes or whatever (with your name and location) to *OITM* at P.O. Box 177, Burlington, VT 05402, or via the Internet at OutVermont@aol.com. Let's use this as a place to continue the discourse about ourselves.

Cara Mia
South Burlington
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An OITM Flashback

Congratulations on Volume X, Number 1! The new format looks great. When a small group of us gathered in 1985 to brainstorm and eventually create a newspaper for Vermont's lesbian, gay, and bisexual citizens, who would have known that this paper would still be alive and well ten years later. What better example of grassroots organizing than this! As the anniversary issue demonstrated in the "OITM Flashbacks" article, many individuals have poured in hundreds of hours of volunteerism to cover stories, produce the paper and distribute (it) each month. The sense of purpose that many of us felt while participating in *OITM* was for me an immersion in Vermont's l/g/b community that helped sustain me in good and bad times. And just when (we) thought that the paper was going to collapse in 1990, new people became involved and they continue to keep *OITM* going. Thank you!

Having moved from Vermont last summer, receiving *OITM* helps keep me connected to the l/g/b community in the Green Mountain State. I hope people will find the financial resources, time and determination to continue producing this valuable paper for us all.

Philip Roberts
Boston, MA

The Next To Last Word ...

Not wanting to get embroiled in your current controversy over Bechdel's *Dykes* comic strip, if not in *OITM*, then where? The lesbigay press is for the lesbigay community. If other readers are somewhat upset, so be it. You are in my house.

I never complained to other newspapers about Garfield's penchant for dog abuse. The problem here, again, is the Christian agenda. Best to remember, churches of that ilk tolerate the lesbigay members for their deep pockets, nothing else.

Albert Santerre
Salem, NH

... From The Source's Mouth

It was really touching to read all the wonderful testimonials for *Dykes To Watch Out For* on the letters page in the last three issues of *OITM*. Thank you to everyone who took the trouble to write and defend my work against the accusation of "poor taste." I feel very, very fortunate to have such an enlightened and appreciative audience, and I promise to keep writing about our lives, sex and all, no matter what the Rutland United Methodist Church thinks.

Alison Bechdel
Waterbury ▼

Adoption Reform Bill (S-136) currently in the Vermont Senate. In the Senate Health & Welfare committee, Democrat Leon Graves (Franklin Co.), along with Republicans Judy Bloomer (Rutland Co.) and James Greenwood (Essex/Orleans Co.), introduced a horrible amendment to the 'who may adopt' section of the bill that specifically excluded adoption by same-sex couples. Chair of that committee Helen Riehle (R-Chittenden) and committee member Nancy Chard (D-Windsor) fought against the amendment, but were out-voted. The bill is now in the Senate Judiciary committee where chair Susan Sweetser (R-Chittenden) has worked hard to get the amendment changed. (The bill, including the 'bad' amendment, will proceed to the Senate floor in January. Hopefully, another amendment will be proposed on the floor to change the bad language -- but that's another article.)

Let's also look back to the voting profile of one of the biggest bills to impact our community in recent years: the Civil Rights Law of 1992 that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Can we assume that Democrats in the House and Senate voted in support of this bill, and that Republicans voted against it? If we apply the 'analysis by label' approach, we'd be wrong. In the House of Representatives, the 'Yes' votes in support of the bill included 2 Progressives, 54 Democrats and 19 Republicans. The 'No' votes included 16 Democrats and 53 Republicans. And it is important to note that Rep. Robert Starr (D-Newport), even after voting yes on the bill, then succumbed to great pressure from the radical right and tried to defeat the bill by employing a procedural technicality to call for a highly unusual third vote on the floor, hoping to reverse the bill after it passed on both earlier votes. (Bills usually go through three 'readings' and two votes on the floor.) So much for assuming that all Democrats are our friends! Another important note is that the lead sponsor of the bill in the House was Rep. Vi Luginbuhl (R-South Burlington), who was a tireless champion for the Civil Rights Bill for several years leading up to its eventual passage. So much

for assuming that Republicans can't be our friends! Our champion and lead sponsor in the Senate was Sen. David Wold, (D-Rutland), where the vote also defied the 'label by party' notion: 'No' votes were cast by 1 Democrat and 8 Republicans; and 'Yes' votes included 7 Republicans and 13 Democrats.

Hard to keep track of all this without a scorecard, isn't it? Exactly. That's why we *must* use scorecards as the basis for determining who is with us or who is against us. We must look at the voting records of legislators who vote in Montpelier. We must look at the actions of other elected officials, like the Governor and Lieutenant Governor, who do not vote (except for the Lieutenant Governor) but who influence votes and are leaders of their parties. We must look at their individual records and hold them accountable for what they do or don't do on behalf of protecting the civil rights of all Vermonters. And we should hold them accountable for what they are or are not doing to influence their party platform. But the one-size-fits-all approach to judging individual Republicans and Democrats just doesn't work. It lets off the hook those who are working against us but happen to have a 'friendly' Democrat label; and it fails to acknowledge those who work for us but have the 'unfriendly' Republican tag.

C'mon, we're smarter than that. More than anyone, we should know better than to stereotype a whole group of people based on one commonly-shared characteristic.

Mary Hurlie is Co-Chair of the Vermont Coalition for Lesbian & Gay Rights and submits this article on behalf of the VCLGR Board of Directors.

All readers are encouraged to take their turn at the editorial bat and let their voices be heard on the topic of their choice. Send articles/columns to *Out In The Mountains*, P.O. Box 177, Burlington, VT 05402, or via the Internet at OutVermont@aol.com. ▼

The Hills Are Alive (Cont. from page 1)



Craig Mitchell and Cherie Tart (l-r) at "NYNEX right now" in South Burlington

"This is NYNEX right now." And that about summed up the state of gay and lesbian culture in Vermont today -- smart, irreverent, and sometimes painfully personal.

Drag Queen Cherie Tart not only displayed the best gams of the evening, but also got off the best one-liner. Noting that the South Burlington Interactive TV site is housed in the NYNEX building, Cherie, an aspiring NYNEX spokesperson and Mary Alice Williams wannabe, purred,

The Fourth Friday Series was undertaken by the Vermont Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights as a means of addressing the isolation felt by many members throughout the state. By bringing community members together on a monthly basis to participate in discussions on the rise of the Religious Right in Vermont, the status of current legislative thrusts on "family" issues as they affect same-sex couples (particularly the recent Adoption Bill and conflicts over marriage rights), and contributions made by our community to Vermont culture, VCLGR provided a forum for exchanging information, ideas, and friendship. VCLGR is always looking for ways to serve and engage the community, and will probably be inclined to undertake a similar program in the near future. Louise Brill, VCLGR Treasurer, remarked following this final evening on Interactive Television that "it is obvious from the connections made just tonight that we have been successful." ▼

Out in the Mountains

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