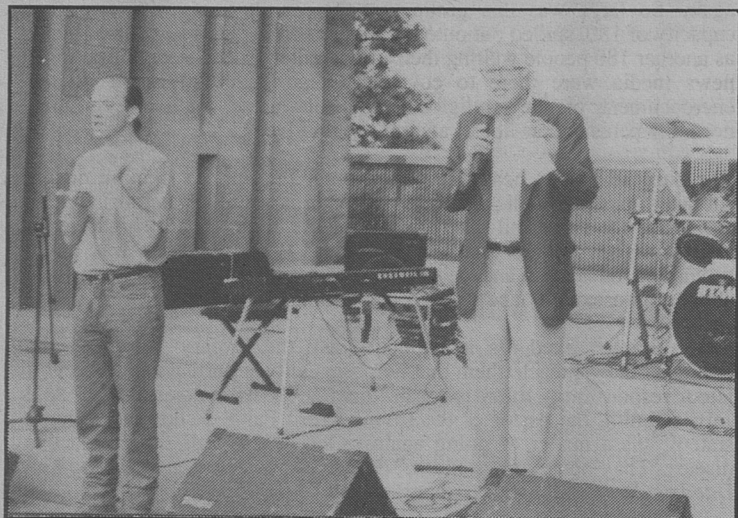


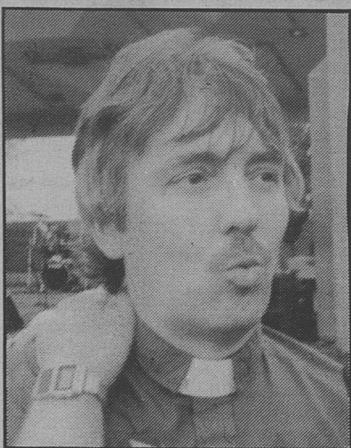
Queers and Friends Fight The Rain:

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The controversy surrounding this year's Pride theme, the disinvitation of Barbara Snelling to speak at the rally (which some marchers noted by donning homemade "Where's Barbara Snelling?" stickers), and the rain may have contributed to the relatively low turnout. *The Burlington Free Press* reported only over 800 marchers, compared to 950 in 1993 and 1,500 in 1994. Here is what some of those Pride participants had to say:

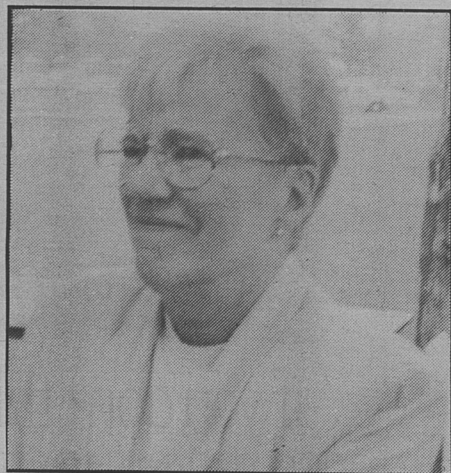


U.S. Representative Bernie Sanders (I - Vermont): "Whether we are gay or straight, or black or white, or young or old, the most important reality to understand in terms of what is happening in America today, is that this country for the vast majority of its people is becoming a poorer and poorer country ... As a result of that, a lot of people are angry, scared, and worried about what will happen to their children ... They are nervous, they are upset. Within that context, demagoguery has a field day. Instead of pointing a finger of blame at the largest corporations in America who are taking our jobs to China and Mexico, instead of talking about corporate America which refuses to raise the minimum wage, instead of talking about agribusiness which is forcing our family farmers off the land, what these demagogues are saying is (that) the fault, the cause of our problems are minorities, are gays, are blacks, are Jews. And what they are doing is, instead of addressing the real issues facing America, they are finding scapegoats. And at the highest level of scapegoatery is the gay community ... The solution is that we not allow Gingrich and his friends to divide America between black and white, gay and straight, young and old. The solution is that all people have got to come together in mutual respect, that we must end all forms of discrimination in this country, and that all of us have got to stand together to make sure that every American ... has a decent life and a decent standard of living."



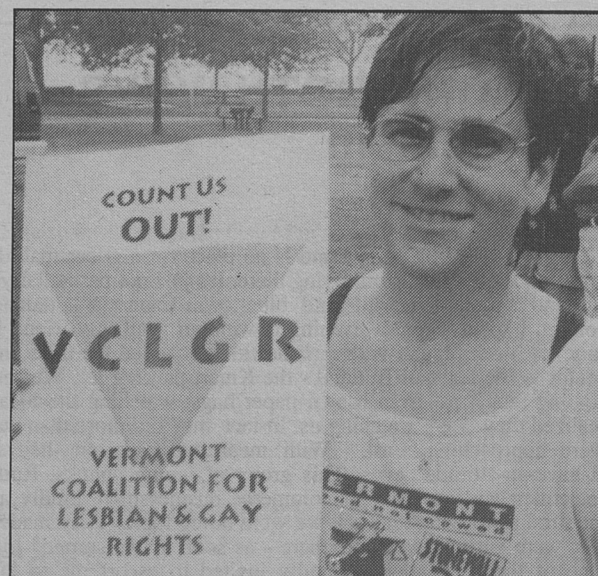
Rev. Brendan Hadash, Unitarian Minister: "My two key points (on the issue of same-sex marriage) are love and justice. There are just so many ways that we are discriminated against as gays and lesbians that if we could get legally married, that would wipe out a whole host of ... discrimination. That's the political end of it. The religious end of it is love, and if we love one another, why can't we celebrate that?"

Judy Murphy, State Coordinator for VT NOW: "NOW is totally in favor of gay and lesbian rights, has been since 1971, and events like (Pride Day) are very important to us. NOW recognized the double oppression of women as lesbians very early on in our organization and organized so that those members would have full rights ... Collectively, I think we have to work on all kinds of legislation ... We will be working in coalition to make sure that the adoption bill does not have any restrictions, to make sure the Human Rights Commission gets strong and independent, and to make sure that we don't have any ballot initiatives in Vermont. That would be deadly here."



(Photos: Kip M. Roberson)

Susan Aranoff, VCLGR Co-Liaison to the Governor and State Legislature: "This shows our true resilience. Years and years of oppression have made us a truly resilient people. Who else would be standing out in the rain but hundreds of queers? We are a tough people ... The hatred that has spread across our country ... is in the mouths of people when they call (U.S. Representative from Massachusetts) Barney Frank "Barney Fag", and it's in our State Legislature when they try to repeal what we've gained through the courts in the area of adoption, and it's in the people of Vermont when they send out bomb threats to Flirtations concerts (at the Barre Opera House) and burn down the (Vermont) CARES building. So it's everywhere, and we've got to combat it everywhere. Here in Vermont we are fortunate to have some strong leadership out there speaking for us like the Governor. But we really have to speak up for ourselves and not just relax given the fact that we have so many protections here, but work hard to protect them."

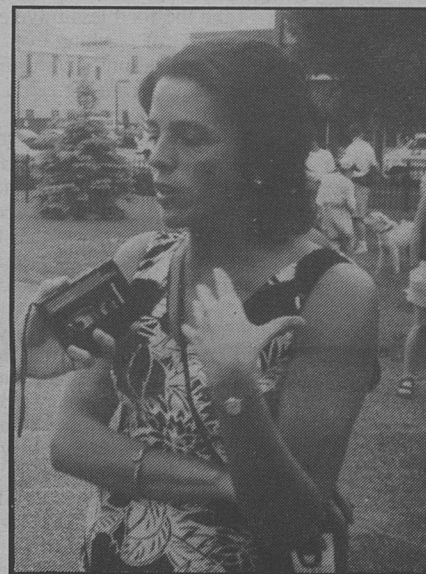


Noel, female illusionist: "(Pride Day) is fabulous. It's gotten so much publicity. In the face of adversity it seemed at times that it wasn't going to come off with a big bang, but it sure did ... I think it is important for people to know that we are out there. We're not just a statistic that people hear about, we are living, breathing human beings. We all eat, we all sleep, we all go to the bathroom, and we march in parades. Boy, that's a great quote, isn't it! But they get to see us in person, then some of the fear dissipates, when they know somebody who is gay, or bisexual, or lesbian, or transsexual, or whatever. It's important, we can't give up."



Sen. Elizabeth Ready (D - Addison County): "I think (Pride Day) is a day when all of us can celebrate equal rights for everybody. I just think it's important. Right now in our country there are so many assaults on people's rights and freedoms, and there are (assaults) right here in Vermont ... It's always upsetting when you see any group or individual trying to interfere with anybody's individual rights. So I think (Pride Day) is a great idea. I think it's a chance to celebrate diversity and celebrate that everyone should have the same kind of rights in our society ... Nowadays, we have this awareness that when the rights of a few people are being taken, it threatens all of our rights."

Rep. Bill Lippert, (D - Hinesburg), not pictured: "We need to speak out more than we ever have. The forces of oppression, the forces that would have us not be here, not be part of society, are rearing their heads more than they ever have. I think it's more important than ever that we claim our place as part of the full community here in Vermont and nationally ... The nature of the gay and lesbian oppression still allows us ... to feel isolated and to not make the connections and for our allies to not feel able to make the connections because the risk is great for them as well. They will be targeted for showing their support for us."



Who do you think made it possible for you to have a queer paper to write to? Who do you think fought at Stonewall? If it weren't for those "fringe types" taking the world's abuse for their natural visibility, you wouldn't have a political pot to piss in.

Learn some gratitude. Learn some history. Then we'll talk.

Dear Auntie Pearl: I hope you'll run this letter, even though I'm not looking for advice.

I was visiting my son recently, when I was in his town for business. We haven't seen much of each other since he moved far from where his sisters and I live. He and his friends are a great bunch of guys, and they showed me the town. On the last day of my visit, I was in his apartment, and I found a copy of a newspaper in which your column appears. I have suspected that he is gay for some time, but I haven't said anything. I didn't know for sure, and I thought that if he wanted me to know, he would tell me.

I don't know if the newspaper is my son's or one of his roommates'. But I'm hoping whomever it belongs to will see this letter. I want my son to know that I'm proud of him. No matter what. I want him to know that if he is a homosexual, he can come to me. Thank you for considering running this letter.

A Dad Who Loves His Son

Dear Dad: Of course Auntie will run your letter. She will also give her misty eyes one last dab of the hanky before continuing.

Now, as you may not know, Auntie will give advice whether she is asked or not. So, darling Dad, while your tactic is very creative, Auntie invites you to take a more direct approach. Talk to your son. Either he is gay, or he's living with someone who is. Or both. In any case, he can handle this discussion. Auntie wishes she could be there for the joyous sobfest after your chat. Thank you for writing, and for warming Auntie's heart. ▼

Dear Auntie Pearl: I have had it up to here, and I'm glad you're out there, because maybe people will see my letter and learn something. I hope you'll print this even though it's not a question. I am sick of cringing every time I see news coverage of gay events. All we see are drag queens and dykes on motorcycles.

I'm no prude, and they've got a right to do what they want, but none of these fringe types represents me or my friends, and I'm sick of them making the rest of us look abnormal. I'm proud of my sexuality, but I look straight naturally. I know that people learn more from somebody they can relate to, like me, instead of somebody who pushes it in their face.

I know I'm not alone in this opinion. I hope you'll put in your two cents about how to put our best face forward to people who would just as soon hate us as anything. Thanks for listening.

An Average Citizen

Dear Average: Auntie would put in her two cents, but it wouldn't come close to covering the cost of your education. Get on your naturally straight-looking knees this instant and pay homage to the queens and butches who gave their blood and lives so that you can quietly gain acceptability for who you are.