

Out in the Mountains
established in 1986

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Out In The Mountains (ISSN 1081-5562) is published monthly except for a combined July/August issue. The newspaper maintains offices at 109 South Winooski Avenue in Burlington. Our mailing address is PO Box 177, Burlington VT 05402. Our e-mail address is OutVermont@aol.com. Bulk rate postage for the mailing of the newspaper is paid in Burlington. The subscription rate is \$20 per year within the United States.

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Statement of Purpose

The purpose of *Out in the Mountains* is to serve as a voice for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and our supporters in Vermont. We wish the newspaper to be a source of information, support and affirmation. We also see *OITM* as a vehicle for celebration of the goodness and diversity of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual communities.

Editorial Policy

We will consider for publication any material which broadens our understanding of our lifestyles and of each other. Views and opinions appearing in the paper do not necessarily represent those of the staff. This paper cannot and will not endorse any candidates and actions of public officials on issues of importance to lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals.

We will not publish any material which is overtly racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, ageist, classist, or homophobic.

All materials submitted must be signed. However, within the pages of the newspaper, articles may appear anonymously, upon request, and strict confidentiality will be observed.

To Submit Articles & 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. Thank you for helping out!

Materials should be sent to:
Out in the Mountains
PO Box 177
Burlington, VT 05402

How to Advertise
If you would like to run an ad in *OITM*, please contact us for rates, sizes, and information. 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.

Read *OITM*
Monthly

**From the Editor:
Bisexuality 101**

Fred Kuhr

WINOOSKI -- Although I have not been a student in a few years, September still means back-to-school to me. The impending fall colors always bring with them the prospect of new knowledge, of opening the mind to new ideas and concepts. Most learning, however, takes place outside the classroom and continues long after those cap and gown processions. And we, as a community, are always trying to educate others about our lives. Well, sometimes we also need to educate ourselves.

This month, *OITM* is debuting what we hope will be a recurring column written by members of the Vermont Bisexual Network, entitled "On The Other Hand." As local representatives of BiNet, the National Bisexual Network, they tell a tale not so different than the one told in the July 17th *Newsweek* cover story -- bisexuals are coming out of the closet and demanding their rightful place in the community and the world. Many gays and lesbians, unfortunately, reject bisexuality as a social, spiritual, and political identity even though our struggle for human rights, equality, and dignity are unmistakably linked.

Cop out ... Yes, it's true. This gay man was guilty of usurping the bisexual label as a bridge in the coming out process. And I know of others, both men and women, who called themselves "bisexual" before fully realizing their homosexuality. Too many gays and lesbians, however, use the "bridge" argument in their opposition to recognizing bisexuality. They say that no one is really bisexual, that it's just a phase or a cop out.

The problem here is a confusion of "orientation" and "self-identification." Even while I self-identified as straight for the first 20 years of my life, and then as bisexual during the following year, my innate "orientation" was gay. We all know that many people self-identify as straight when they are actually gay or lesbian. Does this mean that heterosexuality doesn't exist? Likewise, to say that bisexuality doesn't exist because some gays and lesbians identify as bisexual for part of their lives is illogical at best and ignorant at worst.

Unisexuality ... Even the most militant separatist activist must admit that gays and lesbians have at least one thing in common with the hets. We not only follow the rule of unisexuality alongside straights, but we cherish and hold onto it for dear life. Both homosexuality and heterosexuality are based on the concept that a person can only be sexually and affectionately attracted to one gender. The breaking of this code scares the pants (skirts, overalls, kilts, whatever) off of us. We think it

means giving up all we, as a community, have fought for. Worse, it could mean we are giving in, aiding, and abetting the straight community. Or maybe it just means that gays, lesbians, and straights are not as different as we think. Imagine a world in which the sides weren't hetero vs. homo, but uni vs. bi. What would we think then?

Prejudice is as prejudice does ... "It's just a phase." "You could change if you wanted to." "If you just found the right person." "I don't understand it, so it's wrong." "It's against the natural order of things." "I just don't like it!" We have all heard the lines and myths hurled by straights at gays and lesbians, and we are quick to refute or rebuff them with the latest piece of civil rights activist rhetoric. Too many times, however, we use the same lines when talking to or about bisexuals. Can we, as a community, afford to elevate our battles and victories while ignoring and condemning the one group that is so intrinsically part of our struggle, others can barely tell us apart? After all, if a pack of potential gay bashers see two bisexual women or men kissing, the leader of the pack is not likely to yell, "Let's get them bisexuals!"

A few years ago, a bisexual friend once put me to the test. "What qualities in a mate are important to you?" she asked. Dreamy-eyed, I responded with a list that included smart, affectionate, sense of humor, great smile, and big shoulders. "Does your mate have to be a man?" she continued. I burst out, "Of course!" "That's it!" she exclaimed, "You took it for granted, but the gender of your partner is very important to you. For me, you see, the gender of the person doesn't even make the list."

And so let the learning begin ... ▼

Mr. Anderson

Continued from page 1

leadership that the gay community has exercised, which I think is just astounding and I think we don't get enough credit for it."

In addition to self-identifying as a gay man, Anderson brings other, more unique perspectives to the table. He is, as far as he knows, the only former injection drug user in the group. He is also the only state AIDS Director in the country who also serves as a member of the Democratic National Committee and, moreover, the only "government person on this body."

Perhaps most important of all is Anderson's ability to advocate for rural-specific needs created by the epidemic. Considered nationally to be a leading force in rural AIDS issues, Anderson was for this -- and many other -- reasons a natural choice for the council. He hopes to bring some tough questions to the agenda. "How do we work together to build the case for putting together the kind of resources we need for rural America as our epidemic grows? How do we make people on the national level understand how different our needs are?" A concentration of research in New York, San Francisco and other AIDS epicenters has left many of these sorts of questions unanswered thus far. Anderson sees his inclusion on the council, and that of others with first hand experience in various localities, as an encouraging step toward filling in the blanks.

While Anderson's participation in the Presidential Council won't directly bring money and resources into Vermont, he admits that it can be an important part of what is ultimately a very human process. "Getting to be there and know the people making decisions means that you have their ear and they understand more than if you're not there." Anderson's previous work in Washington has helped to raise the minimum grant amount available to Vermont and other non-urban areas from the (recently reauthorized) Ryan White CARE Act.

In addition to working with national leaders, Anderson also urges efforts on a regional, local and individual level. "It's going to depend continually on contributions from the community no matter how much federal money we bring in," he says. He also emphasizes the importance of talking about AIDS, in as many settings as possible, with as many people as possible. Anderson is personally pushing for the President to include AIDS when he speaks about the issues facing this country, to bring public attention back to a growing epidemic, which has become the number one cause of death in Americans between the ages of 25 and 44. He would like to see the first family in public service announcements, major policy speeches by Clinton on HIV and AIDS, and Presidential attention to such events as World AIDS Day on December 1st each year.

He also extends these ideas to the power of each person's ability to know the facts and to discuss HIV and AIDS issues, both within and outside of their own communities. That includes talking to state legislators and other policy makers. "It's amazing what one or two phone calls can do in the state of Vermont," he says. Lastly, Anderson points out the need for individuals to take care of themselves, through safer sex, attention to personal health, and concern for partners and friends. "It sounds real pedestrian almost to say, but it really is an important message ... We're the first line of defense in this epidemic." ▼

OUTSPOKEN:

OITM's Quote of the Month

"I am not like that. Don't say that about me. I don't go that way. No, no, it's completely the other way. Now, shut up!"

Little Richard, after an audience member at a Dollywood concert yelled, "You go on, girl!" ▼

Where to find *OITM*

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- Bennington**
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Bennington Library
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Everyone's Books
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Burlington College
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Planned Parenthood
- Castleton**
STEP Learning Center

- Chester**
Misty Valley Books Chester
- Craftsbury**
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Gay/Lesbian Connection
- East Dover**
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Greenhope Farm
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- Montpelier**
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Woman Centered
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- Newfane**
Moore Free Library
- New York City**
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Putney Library

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