

## Ed Flanagan Comes Out

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wrongly accepted the presumption that gay and lesbian people are somehow inherently noncompetitive, nonathletic, undisciplined and so forth. Maybe my story effectively rebuts much of that prejudice. It's too early to tell if I've accomplished it ... a lot of the answer remains to be seen. The answer has in part to do with my, and our, being able to live as the individuals that we are in a dignified way.

**OITM:** What has been the public's reaction?

**Flanagan:** Very positive ... I've gotten dozens of letters and calls and they've all been positive. The only twists were from "Christian types" who really just offered help ... (laughing) They weren't altogether clear but I always appreciate people who are praying for me and I'm happy to pray for them as well.

**OITM:** Has your sexual orientation ever come up as a political issue?

**Flanagan:** Starting in 1988 there were many discreet and respectful media inquiries that were made. They were discreet in the sense that nobody printed anything. I'm not aware of my opposition raising it.

**OITM:** During your publicized riff with former State Treasurer Paul Ruse, Ruse said something to the effect of "I know what he is and what he is isn't good for Vermont." Do you think he was talking about your sexuality?

**Flanagan:** I have no idea and I frankly wouldn't choose to stoop to the possibility that he may have been talking about my sexuality.

**OITM:** How have leaders in the Democratic party greeted your disclosure?

**Flanagan:** I got many calls from legislators, the party chair, party activists, and the administration, all of which were supportive and positive.

**OITM:** Will you run for State Auditor in 1996?

**Flanagan:** I have no idea. I enjoy my job and it is very satisfying. For now I'm going to work hard at this job and make choices when it is time to make choices.

**OITM:** Do you think your opposition will raise your sexuality as an issue now that it is public?

**Flanagan:** I doubt it, but I cannot know for sure. I don't flinch at the prospect because I have an abiding trust in Vermonters' respect for privacy. Nationally it is a different issue and different question ... but that doesn't really affect me politically.

**OITM:** Do you think an openly gay man or lesbian could be elected governor in Vermont?

**Flanagan:** Yes. I think Vermonters will make a judgement about an individual's ability, character, and performance and those will be the pivotal issues.

**OITM:** What is your view of the direction of Vermont's gay, lesbian and bisexual community?

**Flanagan:** It is remarkable in many ways. We've been beneficiaries of a long and rich tradition of human rights in Vermont. But also the recent and current gay and lesbian activists have been very wise, politically pragmatic, and effectively strategic. The political leaders have offered an impressive blend of principle and tactic.

**OITM:** Do you see yourself now as a leader of Vermont's g/l/b community?

**Flanagan:** I suppose that is largely the community's choice. I'm very interested in being the individual Ed Flanagan ... To an extent that fits the political initiative of Vermont's gay and lesbian community, I look forward to cooperating and working with the community. In the end my particular role is a decision of the community. ▼

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