

Recruitment Reconsidered

Dear OITM:

I am writing in response to the "recruitment" issue (Editorial, May 1996). It seems by using that word at the conference I spawned off something. I should've clarified myself at the conference and regret not doing so. My usage of "recruitment" was misinterpreted.

First, the issue was fresh in my mind since my mother confronted me earlier with that in mind, claiming my gay friends sucked me in leading me to self-identify. Of course I told her how insane that is, and that my being gay is as much a part of me as the fact that I am 5'9". The only difference is when I am 70, I'll probably be around 5'7".

Secondly, when I said recruitment, I didn't mean a lesbian walked up to me and hooked on. I meant it towards the point that I am now openly gay. I had come out to my family two weeks prior to the conference. It was my way of saying, "I am no longer in the closet."

After the conference, I wished I'd put everything a different way. Unable to go back in time, I'll put it here in this letter. The most important I've learned since coming out, and that which I took from the conference, is that I am a lesbian and a human being, and you can't separate the two.

Sincerely,
Heather Babcock
(Support group workshop and youth panel)

Island Pond Back in Action

Dear OITM,

Several years ago, I recall, you covered a gay picket of Burlington's "Strictly Vermont" store due to the blatant homophobia preached by the Island Pond-based cult that owned and operated it. (Is it still in business? My mother would occasionally shop at their Lancaster NH store. I sent her a copy of your article. That store has long since folded, though that may have more to do with the depressed economy in the North Country.) Anyway, the Island Pond people are at it again in Boston's Dorchester section (a neighborhood with a large gay population).

Thanks to your coverage, I got to see the "Flaming Senses" exhibit last weekend in Montpelier. My mother lives in Lunenburg near St. Johnsbury, but

I don't get over to that side of the state as often as I'd like. I did get to Burlington's Gay Pride three years ago, but this will be the first time since then that I expect to get there again.

Keep up the good work.

Love,
John Kyper
Roxbury MA ▼

Groups Announce Web Sites

CYBERSPACE -- *Out in the Mountains* is now available on the World Wide Web, and features some stories and photographs not included in the newsstand version. In addition, there are Web Sites for Outright Vermont (an organization supporting gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered youth) and Mountain Pride Media, Inc., which publishes OITM.

The Web Sites offer greater access to the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered communities, and allow more up-to-date information to be posted and distributed. For example, when news of the recent murders in Virginia became available, OITM posted an immediate press release, with updates as various community responses were scheduled.

Links to other home pages and Web Sites have already begun, including a major calendar link from the front page of the Burlington Web Site, according to Kathie Sawyer and her daughter Tracy Buttles, who designed the pages. Together, the two women comprise PaperWork Solutions, a local business involved in Web Site creation and design, typing, proofreading, resume design, and related tasks.

Until they find more permanent homes on the World Wide Web, the pages can be found directly at the following URL's:
Out in the Mountains and Mountain Pride Media, Inc.: <http://members.aol.com/oitm/>
Outright Vermont: <http://members.aol.com/outrightvt/>

OUTside Track:

Desperately Seeking Susan

Commentary by Paul Olsen

Now I know how Michael Moore felt.

In his documentary film, "Roger & Me," Moore spent weeks trying to arrange a meeting with General Motors (GM) Chairman Roger Smith to discuss the social and economic impact of GM's downsizing on Moore's hometown, Flint Michigan. Throughout the film, Smith refused to meet with Moore.

Like Moore, I have been unsuccessful in my ongoing attempts to schedule a meeting with U.S. House candidate Susan Sweetser (R-Chittenden) to talk to her about issues of concern to the readers of *Out in the Mountains*.

Sweetser's campaign literature describes her as "fiercely independent," "tough enough to stand up to the special interests in Washington," and states that she "won't be pushed around." Based on these bold claims and Sweetser's public criticism of Congressman Bernie Sanders for refusing to answer questions from the press following his campaign announcement, I was sure that Sweetser would agree to a meeting in spite of my outspoken and vocal criticism of her record in the Vermont State Senate.

Like Michael Moore, I was disappointed. Initially Sweetser's campaign manager, Darcie Johnson, indicated that Sweetser would be available for a meeting. Later, Johnson said that Sweetser felt "vulnerable," and that she would not meet.

Hmm, does Sweetser's "fierce independence" only apply to Washington, I wondered. Is Sweetser tough enough to stand up to the NRA, AMA and AARP, but not tough enough to meet with ME? Did she feel she was being "pushed around? Nah; according to her campaign literature, Sweetser "won't be pushed around."

Recognizing that a personal meeting was not going to happen, I offered to mail Sweetser my questions so she could respond in writing. Sweetser's campaign agreed and I sent them. After receiving the questions, Darcie Johnson indicated that Sweetser would not get back to me.

Did Sweetser have a problem with the questions? Johnson replied no; Sweetser was concerned about my objectivity. Would Sweetser have raised the same concern if I had publicly supported her, I asked. Sweetser's campaign manager wouldn't answer. Is Sweetser going to decline interviews with WCAX because that TV station's owner has contributed money to her campaign? "That's different...you're not comparing apples to apples" Johnson replied.

Susan Sweetser was right to question my objectivity. As a volunteer reporter at a community-based newspaper by and for Vermont's gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered community, I am not objective. I wanted to talk with Sweetser about civil rights for gay men and lesbians, the Employment Nondiscrimination Act (ENDA), Vermont's adoption reform bill, her support of Senator Bob Dole, funding for the Ryan White CARE Act, her support of mandatory HIV testing, her opposition to Vermont's Human Rights Commission, gay marriage, the discharge of HIV-positive soldiers and the military ban.

Could I separate my personal opinion from my interview with Sweetser? In large part yes, as I have, I believe, kept my personal feelings out of interviews with Lt. Governor Barbara Snelling, Governor Howard Dean and Congressman Bernie Sanders. However, like Michael Moore, I bring a certain perspective to events that I cover. I approach each story and interview as a politically active gay man who is committed to social change for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered Americans. As such, I am not objective. However, my self-proclaimed lack of objectivity has not created a problem in the past. Since it did pose a problem for Republican U.S. House candidate Susan Sweetser, I am still desperately seeking Susan. ▼

Out and About

Paula Baker, Director of the Rutland Free Library, was awarded this year's Sarah C. Hagar Award for outstanding service and significant contribution to the field of librarianship. ... IBM in Burlington recently included its first gay and lesbian information table during a diversity awareness day. ...Vermont CARES opened its Montpelier office in March and hired Cricket La Strada to serve as its part-time staff person. ...Thelma Stoult recently received her M.A. in Counseling Psychology from Antioch College. ... Representative William Lippert (D-Hinesburg) resigned from his position as Executive Director of the Counseling Service of Addison County in June in order to pursue his political career full-time.

If you have news you'd like to include in our new monthly "Out and About" column (weddings, anniversaries, births, deaths, awards, promotions, etc.), please send them in to us at PO Box 177, Burlington VT 05402 or e-mail us at oitm@aol.com.

Out in the Mountains

VERMONT'S NEWSPAPER FOR LESBIANS, GAY MEN, AND BISEXUALS

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