

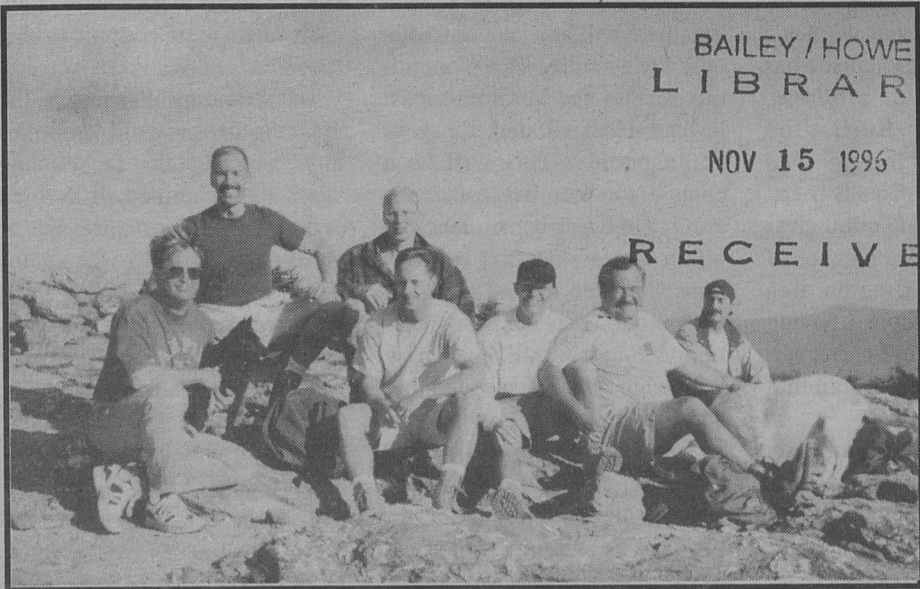
Out in the Mountains

VERMONT'S FORUM FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER ISSUES

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FREE



Chiltern Club Literally *OUT* in the Mountains

Over twenty people (and a quartet of canines) hiked a portion of the Long Trail late last September with the newly-formed Vermont chapter of the Chiltern Mountain Club. A potluck dinner followed the outing. For more details on how to contact the club, check the Resource Guide listing on the back page. (photo by Hugh Coyle)

Surveys Focus on Same-Sex Marriage and Values

MONTPELIER — Hot on the heels of the passage of the so-called "Defense of Marriage Act," a poll conducted for the *Rutland Herald*, the *Barre-Montpelier Times Argus*, and WPTZ showed Vermonters currently are slightly opposed to the idea of same-sex marriages.

54% of those questioned said that the state should not recognize such unions, while 35% believed they should be recognized. The remaining eleven percent expressed no strong opinion either way.

The poll was conducted by Mason Dixon Political Research, Inc., a firm based in Columbia, Maryland. The company based its results on the responses of 635 politically active Vermont residents.

In the same poll, subjects were asked whether they favored federal prohibition of employment discrimination against gay and lesbian people. Here, a majority (59%) expressed their support for such a ban, with only 33% opposed.

The Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), which would have provided such governmental safeguards, was recently defeated by one vote in the U.S. Senate. The bill was co-sponsored by Republican Senator James Jeffords of Vermont.

Both Jeffords and his Senatorial counterpart, Democrat Patrick Leahy, voted in favor of ENDA. However, both also voted to uphold the one-man/one-woman definition of marriage by supporting DOMA on the Senate floor.

Meanwhile, three other recent polls took the pulse of the nation on diverse issues and showed either forward movement or indifference toward gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered issues.

The Chicago-based National Opinion Research Center (NORC) questioned nearly 3,000 people in its annual survey and asked, among other things, whether respondents believed that homosexuality was wrong. Sixty-one percent answered in the affirmative, a number that has dwindled by more than 10% in the past twenty years.

Another poll of college students showed that our nation's young academics aren't much interested in gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered issues at all. Only 3.2% described civil rights for gay and lesbian people as an "important issue."

A similarly small number, 8.4%, saw minority rights as an important issue in the poll, which was sponsored by the shoe company Converse. Highest ratings in the poll went to education and the economy. Nearly 1200 students from 25 colleges nationwide were included in the poll.

A survey sponsored by the National Parenting Association found that not one of the 500 mothers and fathers questioned raised homosexuality as a major family concern in their households. A summary of the poll found the parents "noticeably disinterested in the so-called 'family values' agenda." ▼

Activist Torie Osborn Comes "Home" to Vermont

by Paul Olsen

BURLINGTON — Torie Osborn recently came home to Vermont to promote her new book *Coming Home to America: A Roadmap to Gay & Lesbian Empowerment*. Osborn is a graduate of Middlebury College and the former Executive Director of both the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. An activist for more than thirty years, Osborn has also been a columnist for *The Advocate* and currently works as a management consultant, trainer, and writer based in Washington, D.C.

In *Coming Home to America*, Osborn discusses the American journey of gay men and lesbians from deep in the closet to increased visibility resulting from the AIDS crisis and, most recently, national debates about gays in the military and gay marriage. Effectively integrating personal stories drawn from her years as a leader in the struggle for gay and lesbian civil rights, Osborn highlights the courage, commitment, social responsibility and family values exhibited by gay men and lesbians nationwide.

Individuals profiled in the book include AIDS activist and singer Michael Callen, California state assembly member Sheila James Kuehl, a sixteen-year-old named Ben who was thrown out of his parent's home for being gay, and countless other g/l/b/t activists and allies making a difference in their respective communities. Other issues covered in the book include the historical split between gay men and lesbians ("We thought gay men were elitist and obsessed with sex; they thought we were humorless and anti-sex"), the positive influence the AIDS pandemic has had on gay men and lesbians working together politically ("Today, lesbians can chortle with pleasure at the campy drag antics in 'Priscilla: Queen of the Desert,' and gay men can appreciate raunchy lesbian comedians and powerful lesbian leaders"), the national g/l/b "gaby boom," the importance of gay and lesbian community centers and coalition building, and the role of gay men and lesbians in America's future.

Osborn concludes *Coming Home to America* arguing that gay men and lesbians can teach America new positive values and a vision needed in the next century. "Together, gay men and lesbians have camp, creativity, gentleness, great courage, and a passion for social reform," Osborn writes. "America needs to heed our example and learn from us if this country is truly to begin a much-needed, widespread process of repairing its broken spirit."

Osborn met with *Out in the Mountains* to discuss *Coming Home to America* and her Vermont visit. Here are some excerpts from the interview:

OITM: How does it feel to be back in Vermont?

Osborn: It really has been fun. There have been a number of things that have been particularly touching. Since 1976 I've only been back to Vermont three times. On this trip everything kind of came together because at both my reading in Burlington and at my lecture at Middlebury there were straight people and gay people from different parts of my time in Vermont. My time in Vermont spanned my coming out and a period of time when I was closeted. So there was this tremendous sense of continuity and coming together of pieces of my Vermont life. There will never be any better place than the place you came out; there's always a sense of homecoming. It has felt too short, really wonderful, and very gratifying.

(continued on page 6)



Activist and Former Vermont resident Torie Osborn appeared in Middlebury and Burlington as part of a nationwide tour to promote her new book, *Coming Home to America: A Roadmap to Gay and Lesbian Empowerment*. (Photo by Judy G. Rolfe)