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Classifieds

OITM's Classified Section features items for sale, housing opportunities, personals, help wanted and the like. Individuals may place ads at a rate of 50 cents per word with a \$5.00 minimum; businesses may place ads at 75 cents per word with a \$10.00 minimum. **Subscribers are entitled to one free ad (30 words maximum) per calendar year.** You place or respond to ads at your own risk; we cannot screen ads for legitimacy nor assume responsibility for their validity. To be considered for the next issue, ads should reach us by the 15th of the month prior to publication. Mail to: PO Box 177, Burlington VT 05402. **Payment must accompany your ad copy**, and we must have your full name, address, and phone number (these will be kept confidential).

COURSE OFFERING

"Hidden History: Homosexuality in Western Civilization from Stonehenge to Stonewall" will be offered on Tuesday nights at Community College of Vermont beginning in January at the Springfield site. Call CCV for more info.

WANTED

Young Man Wanted by same for loading and unloading. Front and back door deliveries. Hardwick area. Weekends. Long hair, tattoos, goatees, jeans, etc. OK. 1-800-987-8089, 802-533-7425 after 6. (11/96)

Advertising Manager (as well as new writers and artists) to help fill the pages of an ever-growing *Out in the Mountains!* We're always looking for new volunteers, so if you'd like to get involved, drop us a line at PO Box 177, Burlington VT 05402 or call Hugh at 388-6503.

Spirituality

A Marriage in the Ministry

by Reverend Brendan Hadash

I have always been religious. I can only speculate how my gayness may have affected my decision to become a Roman Catholic priest. I was not aware of being gay when I was young. Since I had little interest in women, perhaps I felt I had a calling to the priesthood. After two years in the seminary, I found that I did not agree with Catholic doctrine and left. This was when I discovered sexuality. This was also when I discovered the Unitarian Universalist Church.

I decided to continue my religious calling and become a minister. In 1977 I went to a Unitarian Universalist seminary, Starr King School for the Ministry in Berkeley, California. About one-third of the students at Starr King were openly gay. The Unitarian Universalists had officially come out against discrimination against "gays and bisexuals" in 1970. San Francisco, the gay Mecca of the United States, was just across the Bay. With the support of my school, my denomination, and the nearness of San Francisco, the process of my becoming comfortable with my own gayness was quite easy and uneventful.

When I first came to Vermont, I devoted myself totally to my church. I wanted the church to grow and decided not to create controversy. I tried to stay in the closet. I even told the Executive Director of New Hampshire and Vermont (the UU equivalent of a bishop), Rev. Deane Starr (who knew I was gay), that I was "married to my church". He responded, "That makes a very cold bed!"

I did run a closeted gay men's monthly potluck, where I met the love of my life, Alan. Alan moved into the parsonage in January 1984. In June, 1984, the Unitarian Universalist General Assembly voted to support gay and lesbian marriages (Holy Unions). We immediately asked Rev. Deane Starr to do our ceremony, which we planned for the following spring.

Our ceremony was wonderful. There were about forty people present, about half gay and half straight. I was still closeted, so I spread the rumor that a couple who were living together were getting married in the church. I was pleased when a stranger repeated the rumor to me. I am fairly sure that we were the first church-sanctioned gay male marriage in Vermont.

After the ceremony, one attendee mentioned to a board member how wonderful it was that the church supported their gay minister's "wedding" — not knowing that I was still closeted in the church. The board member was upset and called church authorities to complain. Luckily, she called Rev. Deane Starr, who had done the ceremony. He explained that the Unitarian Universalist church supported gay marriage.

She calmed down, but the ceremony became common knowledge in the church. I know some members were not overly happy about having a gay minister. One surprising response was that several were miffed with me because they were not invited to the wedding. News of my gayness had not spread widely in the community at large at that time.

I considered myself at this time as in the closet with the door open. I decided that if anyone thought it was their business, I would answer any question forthrightly and honestly. There was much soul-searching, however, when a local reporter asked to interview me.

In 1995, I had decided to offer to do a "mass wedding" on Pride Day. The local newspaper wanted to cover the story, and when the reporter asked if I was gay, I told her "yes" and talked about what it was like to be gay in Vermont. It did seem strange to me to be talking about being gay while sitting in pews at my current church in St. Johnsbury.

I was worried about the community response. It made me more comfortable knowing that she had also interviewed Noël, another local gay man, at

the same time. She did an excellent full page article about each of us, complete with pictures. The story was also picked up by AP wires.

I needn't have worried about the community's reaction. Several people in the grocery store came up and congratulated me, including elderly friends of my mother. The only negative comments I personally received were two out-of-state letters. I even got positive calls from Massachusetts. There were a lot of letters to the editor on both sides of the issue.

The only way for gays and lesbians to get full acceptance in this country is to come out. In my experience, coming out has not been as hard as worrying about it. It has been shown that people who know an openly gay person are less prejudiced. Thus, the best way for us to combat prejudice is to come out to those around us. I encourage all people to make the next step in their coming out process.

Now I am one of the most openly gay people in the Northeast Kingdom. I am running for the Vermont House. A reporter called this morning to set up an appointment to interview me. I wonder what he will ask. I know what I will say if he asks about gay/lesbian rights. ▼

Coalition to Elect Board Members at Conference

BRATTLEBORO — The Vermont Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights (VCLGR) seeks candidates for its Board of Directors. Board members will be elected by Coalition members at its 4th Annual Conference and "Our Town Meeting" on November 24, 1996, at Brattleboro High School. The event, subtitled "Politics as (Un)Usual," will run from 9 a.m. until 6 p.m. and feature a number of workshops, panel discussions, caucuses, and the open "town meeting."

VCLGR will elect a total of eleven Board Members and hopes to have both male and female representatives from all regions of the state. The Board will also elect one female and one male Co-chair, along with a female Co-liaison for Governmental Affairs.

Those wishing to run for election must submit a short statement (200 words or less) describing the skills, talents, visions, and viewpoints which they would bring to the organization. These should be sent to Susan Aranoff, PO Box 103, Montpelier VT 05601 by November 15. Those interested in the Co-chair positions should speak directly with Aranoff (229-6648) or with Terje Anderson (862-2361), who also serves on the Election Committee. Nominees must be current VCLGR members.

Since its inception in 1985, the Coalition has been instrumental in advancing the civil rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered Vermonters through community organizing and political advocacy. The group helped bring about the state's anti-HIV discrimination bill in 1988 and the Gay Rights Bill in 1992. Last year, VCLGR's efforts helped remove an anti-gay amendment from the Adoption Reform Act.

This year's VCLGR Statewide Conference and Town Meeting will be keynoted by Beatrice Dohrn, the Legal Director of the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund. A number of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered artists, vendors, craftspeople, and healers will also be on hand for the event. Scheduled workshops range, according to event organizers, "from totally serious to absolutely frivolous" and include presentations on adoption, racism, pet care, and contra dancing.

For pre-registration materials (encouraged, but not required) or more information on the Conference, call Carey Johnson at 258-2826. ▼