

Out in the Mountains
Established in 1986

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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, transgendered people, and our supporters in Vermont. We wish the newspaper to be a source of information, insight, and affirmation. We also see *OITM* as a vehicle for the celebration of the goodness and diversity of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered communities here in Vermont and elsewhere.

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 or actions of public officials on issues of importance to lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered persons.

We reserve the right not to publish any material deemed to be overtly racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, ageist, classist, xenophobic or homophobic.

Writers' guidelines are available on request. All materials submitted must include a name and contact number. However, within the pages of the newspaper, articles may appear anonymously upon request, and strict confidentiality will be observed.

Articles, letters, and artwork should be sent to us by the 15th of the month prior to the month of publication (i.e. February 15th for the March issue). We encourage and implore our readers to do what they can to make *OITM* a paper which truly represents the many voices of our communities.

Materials should be sent to:

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Advertising

If you would like to place an ad in *Out in the Mountains*, please contact us for rates and guidelines. Ad copy should be mailed to the address above or call Hugh Coyle at (802) 388-6503.

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World Wide Web!

<http://members.aol.com/oitm/>

Editorial

A Football Fan Looks to the Sexual Frontier

by Hugh Coyle

It was New Year's Day, 1994, and I'd laid in a good supply of junk food and soft drinks for a marathon session in front of the TV set. Having fussed with the aerial for nearly half an hour, I got a semi-decent picture from a no-cable set in a rural mountain homestead. I hunkered down for a full afternoon and evening of hard-hitting, pad-pounding college football, while downstairs, my partner talked on the phone with another gay friend of ours. It seems neither one could quite comprehend this unusual behavior of mine.

When he came up later to check on me, I had to crane my neck around him to keep an eye on the play. It was fourth and goal with less than a minute to go. He shook his head in disbelief as I jumped up and down and cheered on my team. He worried aloud that I was becoming heterosexual.

I have to admit that sometimes I don't score well on the homo/hetero chart. I don't like the color pink, I hate high fashion, and Broadway shows do nothing to raise my blood pressure. I have never worn a dress, and leather sounds as ecologically questionable to me as any full-length fur coat. When I tell people I'm gay, they sometimes laugh at me. A former secretary persisted for weeks in her disbelief, and I shudder to think what it might have taken to convince her.

Throughout my entire coming out process, I battled against the well-ingrained stereotypes, the same depiction of the "typical" gay man which had kept me in the closet for so many years. ("I don't lisp. I have no desire to put on heels or makeup. I'd rather listen to the Jam than the Bee Gees. Therefore, I must be straight...") When I finally realized that, despite all this, I was still attracted to more men than women, I was ready to make my claim to gayness. Even so, I wasn't sure that the gay movement would want to lay claim to me.

Todd, another gay friend of mine, knows this dilemma all too well. He's a card-carrying Republican, and he makes no bones of the fact that he voted for Reagan...twice. "How can you be gay AND Republican?" our friends would tease him. He has become the butt of many jokes, a patsy for his party, and it irks me to see supposedly open-minded people closing in around him. Despite their attacks, he retains his sense of self-worth and identity — resilience being one trait that all "out" gay people *have* to master.

Members of the gay and lesbian rights movement have fought long and hard against the negative effects of cultural stereotyping, but despite all their best efforts, the battle continues both inside and outside the movement. Most recently, I've heard an incredible number of hurtful and ignorant remarks about bisexuals and transgendered people. Like our conservative straight counterparts, a number of people within the gay and lesbian communities have been quick to dismiss bi and trans people as "confused," "just going through a phase," and even "psychologically sick."

I was reminded of these comments while reading the latest issue of *TRANS*, the newsletter of the Transgender Radical Action, Networking, and Support group. Several of the articles grappled with the complexities of what it meant to be "transgendered" and hoped that continued dialogue on the matter would help to educate others. Even the amusing piece on hair removal spoke volumes about the tension between who we are and who we feel we should be. For those caught "in the middle," either between genders or between orientations, such a tension can be overwhelming.

The disrespect that many people show toward the transgendered movement reveals something of a hypocrisy within the gay and lesbian movements. If a gay man wears women's clothing to affirm his "gay" identity, if he refers to himself as "girl" and "lady," if he speaks in a high voice and chooses Bettè Davis or Judy Garland as his personal role models — is he not crossing traditional gender lines (i.e. being *trans-gender*)? Is his motivation real, or is it intended as a mockery of women, a perpetuation of the harmful and sexist myth that to be gay is to be girlish, that to be lesbian is to be mannish?

As a gay man, I get grief for watching football because women don't watch football. Some rather clueless straight friends insist that since I'm gay, I must like men who act and look like women. As in any spectrum of diversity, there are bound to be examples of polar extremes, but to establish them as an enforceable "norm," either directly or indirectly, pays serious disrespect to those of us in the middle.

Those who believe that the frontier of the gay and lesbian movements lies at the extremes should turn toward the center and pay close attention to the bisexual and transgendered movements. As their names imply, these two communities are working toward rekindling the whole glorious potential of human sexuality and not simply staking out one little end zone of the Kinsey scale. They are challenging many of the mistaken assumptions and stereotypes that straight, gay, and lesbian people have perpetuated for years on end. They are redefining the sexual frontier, and we should accept their generous invitation to explore those new territories with both respect and gratitude. ▼

OITM Web Site Receives Award

CYBERSPACE — The *Out in the Mountains* Web Site recently received a "Speech Friendly" award from Magical Mist Creations, a group which checks Web Sites for user-friendliness to individuals who are blind or visually impaired. The group distributes yellow ribbon graphics to sites which are easy to navigate and which interact well with "screen readers" used to make the Web more accessible to people with disabilities.

OITM site designers Tracy Buttles and Kathie Sawyer began re-designing the pages as part of a Haymarket grant awarded to the paper for increasing outreach to historically disadvantaged communities. They plan to incorporate even more changes in the months ahead to further increase accessibility.

"Your site is wonderful! It was really easy to navigate," said Cathy Murtha of Magical Mist Creations. "Blind people must use screen readers to access the Internet and it is a pleasure to come upon a site that is totally accessible. I like how your stories are on the first page and set up so that the blind and visually impaired can easily navigate through them. I even had to stop and read a few stories. I liked the one about the Christmas present of freedom that the mom gave her son. As a mom of three, it made me think of what I would do."

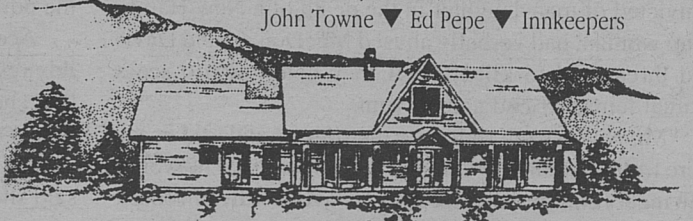
"I hope you will display your speech friendly ribbon award with pride," Murtha wrote. "You have opened the door to information to a community that is extremely grateful!"

For more information about Magical Mist Creations and about increasing Web Site accessibility, visit them at <http://www.wwwwebit.com/magical-mist/ribbon.htm>. ▼

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