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

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The Steph Pappas Experience *not on the map* -- CD Released



by Joy D. Griffith

It is exhilarating to take a trip across country with Steph. She's always on the way, but has a place here to stay! Vermont is where we can listen to that big, Big, BIG voice as this woman works her guitar into a technical frenzy rendering hot soul, blues, rock and even some of her greek heritage.

A few chords taught to Steph by a loving uncle ignited a child's fantasy and this self-taught, self-realizing and self-DOING musician grew into a guitar goddess whose double jointed voice commands the listener to experience each soulful moment. "I just had to come by the radio station and see who that big voice was I just heard on the car radio. Do you mind if I ask you for your autograph?" said Odetta.

As Steph's performances carve an arc completely around the country we soon realize that the meaning of "not on the map" is referring to her mind expansive lyrics pulling us while her guitar dynamics send us soaring above the ground. I especially like *Do I Dare (in part) - ...the devil was last seen in New Orleans* where her incredible guitar technique becomes ecstatically unending and *The Lombard Street Rendition* is a delightful storytelling jazz phenomenon.

Whether Steph is driving trucks, riding a Greyhound Bus, landscaping around town or cooking at the Last Elm Cafe, her mind, senses and emotions are 'tuning' for that next song. San Francisco, Atlanta, Boston, New York City, Portland, all the clubs in Austin, and more, we can celebrate that we have that hard hittin' womyn livin' on our turf!

At this printing, you might have missed the May 27th Steph Experience at Club Metronome in Burlington, but you can catch her act at the Last Elm Cafe on June 11th and join in with the masses on Gay Pride Day, June 21st to watch her cowboy hat bobbin' and those leather fringes swingin' from her black jacket, while she swivels those tight jeans hips to her phenomenal rhythms.

If you can't wait for her date, phone (802) 660-0826 or write to The S. P. E., P.O. Box 5664, Burlington, VT 05402 to order *The Steph Pappas Experience not on the map* CD (with Matt Nerbakis backing on the drums). ▼

The Steph Pappas Experience is not to be missed! Catch her at the Last Elm June 11th or at Pride on June 21st.

Steve Howard Joins the Ranks of Out Vermont Politicians

On May 3, Steve Howard joined the ranks of openly gay Vermont politicians. Other out officials include former State Representatives Ron Squires and Tom Fleury, current State Representative Bill Lippert, and current State Auditor Ed Flanagan.

Howard, State Representative from Rutland and head of the Vermont Democratic Party, credits Ed Flanagan for giving him the support and encouragement to "stop living a lie". Flanagan's example last year, along with discussions over the past few months, led Howard to make the decision. When asked what made him decide to come out when he did, Howard replied, "If I waited one more day I was going to explode. I didn't want to keep feeling ashamed." In addition to his personal reasons, Howard wanted to encourage more lesbian and gay Vermonters to be active in politics and felt that coming out would show people that it was possible to be out and get elected. He also wanted to show other people who were feeling trapped and scared that it was possible to be open about their sexual orientation.

The response to his announcement is described by Howard as "almost

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Civil Rights Victories

Maine and New Hampshire Join the Rest of New England

In an exciting week for civil rights activists in New England, both Maine and New Hampshire passed legislation preventing discrimination against individuals based on their sexual orientation. Both the New Hampshire and Maine bills outlaw discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations and education.

In Maine, a twenty year battle was won on May 9th when the Maine House of Representatives voted 84-61 to approve the bill following a three hour debate. The Senate had voted favorably the previous day by 28-5. Governor Angus King signed the bill one week later, saying it was not about special rights, but "the most basic rights that all of us take for granted." With the signing, Maine becomes the tenth state with a civil rights bill. Opponents have threatened to seek a referendum either to block it from taking effect or to overturn it in a ballot measure next year. King urged opponents to focus on Maine's real enemies, "poverty, disease, ignorance, not gay people." Maine's legislature first passed a civil rights bill four years ago but it was vetoed by then Governor John McKernan. Then in 1995 opponents, led by Concerned Maine Families, put a question on Maine's ballot restricting civil rights protections for gays. Following months of hard work by a broad coalition of groups, Maine voters rejected that referendum 53 percent to 47 percent. "Freedom is a long time coming," said State Treasurer Dale McCormick, longtime lesbian activist and former Democratic legislator, as she hugged Governor King after the signing.

The New Hampshire House passed its bill in March by a vote of 205-125, and the Senate, by a vote of 13-9 agreed on May 6th. Governor Jeanne Shaheen (D), who voted for an earlier version of the bill when she was a state Senator, is expected to sign the bill into law. A broad coalition of groups supported the bill, including almost every labor organization in the state and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Manchester, which had opposed a similar bill four years ago. Referring to New Hampshire one of the nation's most conservative states, gay civil rights leaders called passage of the legislation an important breakthrough. Matt Coles, director of the American Civil Liberties Union's Lesbian and Gay Rights Project called the victory "critically important," noting that "If the legislature of the state of New Hampshire can do this, the legislatures of many other states can do it too."

With Maine and New Hampshire joining the fold, every state in New England now prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation. The total count of states rises to eleven plus the District of Columbia. The other states are California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wisconsin. ▼

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