

VOICES

FROM THE

MOUNTAINS

**A Call For Action**

Thank you Lois, Holly, Stan, Peter, Nina, and Stacy for filing a lawsuit against the State of Vermont seeking the right to marry. Thank you Beth, Susan, and Mary for representing the three couples. Thank you members of the Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force for the hard work that has been done over the last two years educating Vermonters on the issue of same-gender marriage.

The main purpose of this letter is to ask all members and friends of our community to become involved. During the course of this lawsuit our community could come under attack by those who do not know us and fear us. There are different ways to be active. You could join the Freedom to Marry Task Force, organize a forum in your community, watch your newspapers, write letters to the editor, talk to your friends, call your representatives and senators and let them know who you are and that you support same-gender marriages. Not everyone agrees with the institution of marriage, but I do believe that everyone believes in the ability to choose. The freedom to marry is an individual personal choice that should not be denied to same-gender couples.

Virginia Renfrew, Warren, VT

**Dykebaiting and Heterosexism at the Women's Council**

BY PEGGY LUHRS

"From the beginning of the women's movement to the present day, a significant number of homosexual women assumed the leadership in the numerous struggles and... through their energy awakened...the average woman to an awareness of their human dignity and rights. Considering the contributions made to the women's movement by lesbians for decades, it is amazing that the large and influential organizations of the movement have never lifted a finger to improve the civil rights and social standing of their numerous (lesbian) sisters," [1904].

Like the undead or Elm Street's nightmare, the specter of homophobia has risen from the grave to find new life at the Burlington Women's Council. The lavender menace, something I thought the women's movement had finally buried, is alive and well along with other anachronisms at the Burlington Women's Council. I was director of the Council for 10 years and a member for at least two years before that. As director, I worked with a majority of heterosexual women as would be expected in any women's organization. In all that time, we didn't even

have a discussion about sexual orientation. We worked together in an egalitarian and democratic way to create programs that addressed real issues in women's lives.

What's going on at the BWC these days? It'd be hard to tell from Peter Freyne's column or Jennifer Matthews' pieces in *Gossip* or the *Free Press*. Her letter in *Seven Days* of July 30th does show Matthews' feelings about those on the Council who disagree with her. She claims longtime Council members "have been sent in from the outside to disrupt...with lies, ...and gutter sniping" and calls her opposition vultures and hyenas, bragging that she, the lioness, will vanquish them. The outside agents are all long time members of the BWC such as myself, Ginny Winn, Gretchen Bailey, Liz Curry, Oak LoGalbo and others. Most of the group is heterosexual. But Jennifer has focused on sexual orientation to discredit the legitimate concerns of this group which are about Matthews' attempts to subvert Council process and her practice of changing decisions made at Council meetings to suit her own and Sandy Baird's political agenda.

For over a year now, Matthews has been unresponsive to members' concerns

about decision making and Council structure. Matthews claims that BWC's structure is the source of its problems. That structure worked for 14 years with a variety of women at the Council and numbers that sometimes were two dozen women at meetings and in later years had become about

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half that. The Council functioned well and used (as its mission statement calls for) consensual decision making. Matthews is a top down type who calls for parity of power for women but refuses to practice power sharing at the Council.

I hired Jennifer Matthews in good faith believing she would relocate here as she had given me her word she would

DYKEBAITING, p17

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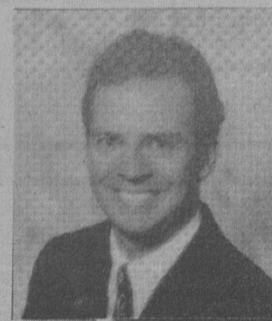
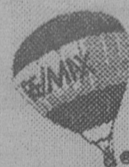


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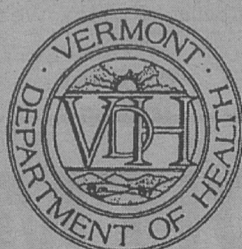
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