

community groups

Golden Threads



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Lesbian Women over 50,
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Outright Vermont,
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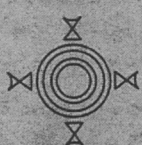
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Baker vs. State

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Peter: And find out how it works and really experience a natural give and take. We have a freedom; we've been liberated from that traditional model so we're able to figure out what works for us.

Stan: I think we have a lot to teach the community at large about relationships. We get to define in that marriage or commitment what the roles are going to be, so it's not based on any old pattern of domination or oppression. It's based on equality and flexibility, and love and desire and choice.

OITM: How has this compared with other coming out experiences for you?

Stan: I see it very much as an extension of coming out. Because when we come out, we're saying our truth. I think seeking the right for marriage for same gender couples is also expanding that truth. It says to the world, we are a couple, a married couple, and we want this right. This also lands our pictures in multiple papers and stuff, so it really is a broader coming out. For instance, in Peter's family, we're now talking about subjects we never talked about before. They were accepting, we just didn't talk about it. Now they're accepting and we talk about it.

Peter: For me it's much more concentrated. I first came out to myself when I was nineteen. I've had seventeen years to do the rest, and we've done this in twelve months. So it's been enormously emotional.

Stan: I came out later in life. Interestingly, I've had to face more repercussions from this than from my first coming out. At work I've lost one client family over this. They were very respectful in their leaving, but they did. And I have a family member who didn't agree at all and that part's been painful. That didn't happen with my original coming out. When you come out and say I'm gay, and it's not in the newspaper, that's one thing. But when it's actually out there, and people have to face it as a public thing that other people have to know, then they sometimes need to say things that they didn't before, or didn't choose to say. [But] the positives so outweigh the negatives, in terms of living the truth, that there's no question that it's what we should do.

OITM: What other responses have you gotten from friends and families?:

Peter: On the morning our picture was on the cover of the paper, [something happened with] our neighbor who I've only met and said hello to a couple of times. We were sitting having breakfast and this little grey head ran across the kitchen window. There was a

bang on the door and she yelled out "I come in peace!" We went to the door and she had the newspaper. She was giving us her copy in case we wanted an extra, and she had written "Go for it!" across the top. It was a wonderful surprise.

Stan: Just today I got three cards at work. People I didn't know were gay are coming up to me and coming out to me; people that are not gay but are supportive are doing things. Other than the client I lost and the one family member, the response has been remarkable.

OITM: What about your family Peter?

Peter: My family has been great. We included them in the decision, and they told us that they'd support us in whatever we decided. It's been really gratifying, the whole thing. We were out one day with my mother shopping. A shopkeeper had gotten the two of us confused, and my mother pointed [to Stan] and said, "no that's not Peter, that's Peter's partner," and she had never used that word before. My father went and got five or six books on gay and lesbian issues out of the library, and he'd never done that before. I came out to my parents in 1988. This has really accelerated an opportunity to come together around this.

OITM: We hear a lot about the conservative double standard — that homophobes criticize us for not conforming and then balk at actually letting it happen. Any responses to that?

Stan: Well I think we've called their bluff. I think it is a Catch-

22 and think this says to them: you can't have it both ways.

OITM: What are your plans pending a victory?

Stan: I'm sure it will be lovely and tasteful. [Laughter.] Our plans are to get married. We'll have a legal marriage ceremony and invite lots of people and have it exactly the way we want it to be.

Peter: There will also be spiritual aspects to it, although it will probably not be in a church. We think beyond the legal limits or possibilities of our relationship to the emotional and spiritual ones, and I think we'll go through a process just like any other couple to figure out what they want.

OITM: Knowing that this is for OITM, is there anything in particular you'd like to say to the Vermont GLBT community?

Stan: I want to thank people for their support. We've been getting tremendous support. I would also just bullet some of the things I've already said: about this contributing to diversity, and being a re-definition of marriage not an assimilation thing or support for a patriarchal institution.

Peter: A lot of the people who support me are single people, and [I'd like] to say that even if you're not in a relationship right now, any action like this is going to reduce homophobia and make Vermont a safer and happier place for gay lesbian people. I think it's really important.

Stan: It's really about choice. It's not trying to force anybody into a particular mode of action.

Out in the Mountains

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

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