

**INCLUDE YOURSELF
IN THE 2ND EDITION
OF NH/VT
GAY LIFELINE**

As you may have heard, the Gay Info Line of NH and *Out in the Mountains*, Vermont's monthly lg/b/t newspaper, will soon publish a NH/VT directory of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender social, religious and political groups; meeting places; community services; and professionals sensitive to the needs of our community. We are particularly looking for physicians, realtors, contractors, mediators, and resources in the most rural areas of VT and NH.

This second edition of *Gay Lifeline* will be distributed through the GIL and OITM to listed resources and to lg/b/t communities and organizations. We'd like your help to make this edition even better than the first.

There is no fee for inclusion in the *Gay Lifeline*, but you can reserve your copy of our directory now by making a minimum \$25 donation to the Gay Info Line. Any person or group who donates \$50 or more will also be listed in the directory as a sponsor. Thanks for your help.

Please give us the information requested at right to be included in the directory. Feel free to print out this form and share it with other individuals or organizations who think should be included.

NAME (or contact person)

ORGANIZATION

ADDRESS

CITY STATE

ZIP

LOCATION
(if different than mailing address)

TEL

FAX

EMAIL

WWW

Type of Service Organization:

Do You Have Meetings?

How Often?

Do You Publish a Newsletter?

How Often?

Attach a Short Description
(of your service/organization/
specialty-30 words max, please)

L/G/B/T-Owned/Identified?
(indicated by a small lambda icon beside
your listing)

Whom can we contact if we have
questions regarding your listing?

Thanks for your help and prompt
return of this form. If you have
questions please feel free to call the
Gay Info Line at 603-224-1686 or
email us at gayinfo@atol.com

Return to: 26 S. Main St., Box
181, Concord, NH 03301



'SKEETER BITES

By Skeeter Sanders

Island Pond Sect Anti-Gay — But Too Weird to Worry About

It was bound to happen eventually. And at the 19th annual Bread & Puppet Circus in Glover last month, it finally did.

No, I'm not talking about the fatal assault in a campground near the Bread & Puppet amphitheater. Nor the flood of hard-core Phishheads who were on their way to Phish's third annual summer blowout in Maine. Nor the Rainbow Family folks who were en route to a New England regional gathering in southern Vermont.

Not even the full moon that lit up the night sky during the festival, and was yet another contributor to all the weirdness that went on.

Most of you who read the reports in the mainstream newspapers about the craziness that went on at Bread & Puppet this year already know about those details. But there was another discordant incident in Glover that weekend that the mainstream media left unreported.

A group of GLBT activists staged a noisy and at times heated protest in front of the Common Ground Cafe booth in the vendors' area, urging festival-goers not to patronize it.

The reason? The cafe was operated by members of The Community, a highly-controversial religious sect whose views on homosexuality, the role of women and child raising puts it far out of the American religious mainstream — So

far out, in fact, that The Community is routinely branded by its critics as a cult.

Still known to many Vermonters as the "Island Ponders," after a highly-publicized police raid on its Island Pond enclave several years back, members of The Community — a direct descendant of the hippie "Jesus Freaks" of the late '60s and early '70s — believe that homosexuality is a sin. They also believe that it is the role of men to be leaders and providers and for women to submit to men's authority, staying home and raising children.

As an eyewitness to the confrontation between the Island Ponders and the GLBT activists at Bread & Puppet, it was pretty clear to me that such a confrontation was inevitable, for I had my own personal clash with The Community four years ago.

It was at the ill-fated "Vermont Jam" rock festival in Johnson (That festival was a colossal flop because it was held on the same weekend as the Woodstock '94 25th-anniversary bash in Saugerties, NY). Having moved to Burlington from San Francisco just one week prior to Vermont Jam, I spotted the Island Ponders' psychedelically painted bus that was parked near the main stage.

I knew nothing about The Community or had even heard of it. So, assuming that these were fellow survivors of the "flower power" culture (a

culture which, after 30 years, still holds a very special place in my heart), I accepted their invitation to come into their bus.

Within minutes, however, I noticed some uncomfortably telltale signs that these folks were neither Deadheads, Rainbow Family, Phishheads nor neo-Pagans. Rather, I could see red flags flash in my mind that this was in fact a religious group — but not your average country church group by any means.

While I, an unabashed neo-Pagan who is openly bisexual, was perfectly willing to engage in an inter-religious dialogue, the conversation soon grew heated when the topic turned to homosexuality.

As the Island Ponders I spoke with insisted that being gay meant living a "destructive, promiscuous lifestyle," I countered with equal insistence that my own experience — which included a 12-year-long relationship (now defunct) with a French-Canadian man who lived in Montreal — proved the wrongness of their views.

Of course, I knew from previous arguments with Christian fundamentalists on the same subject — as well as from my own past membership in the Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church in the late 1970s — that there was no way I was going to convince them. But I made it clear that there was no way the Island Ponders were going to change

my views, either. And they sure as hell weren't going to convert me.

Yet for all of its anti-gay and blatantly sexist attitudes, The Community has an even deeper aversion to politics. Unlike the Christian Coalition and other religious-right groups (which I prefer to call theocrats) you couldn't get the Island Ponders to get involved in a political campaign if your life depended on it. And for a good reason.

The Community is passionately hated by what would otherwise be their natural allies in the religious right because its members tenaciously cling to a neo-hippie lifestyle — albeit a very puritanical version of it. I have learned since my first encounter with the Island Ponders that they have been a fixture at Rainbow Gatherings and Grateful Dead concerts for more years than I care to count.

The State of Vermont isn't fond of them, either. Several years ago, law-enforcement and Social and Rehabilitative Services agents raided The Community's Island Pond enclave amid highly-publicized accusations that sect members were psychologically and physically abusing their children. The resulting scandal made the sect a pariah among many Vermonters ever since.

Yes, The Community is homophobic and sexist. But because its members nonetheless live an unconventional lifestyle, avoid politics like the plague and for the most part keep to themselves, I've left them alone. I suggest that the GLBT community do the same. They're just not worth getting all worked up in a lather over.

Skeeter Sanders, OITM's newest columnist, also hosts a weekly radio program of smooth jazz and soft R&B on WGDR-FM (91.1) in Plainfield. The station simulcasts live on the Internet at www.goddard.edu/wgdr.

THE CHOSEN FAMILY

by Noreen Stevens

