

EDITORIAL

Stand Together or Fall Apart

A gay student murdered in Wyoming, a death threat against a bisexual Vermont woman exposed, the VCLGR conference and town meeting: what a month for my first at the helm of *Out in the Mountains*.

It was twenty years ago this month that Harvey Milk was martyred, gunned down at the hands of a man who disliked him for his political stance and sexual orientation. The brutal torture and murder of Matthew Shepard makes me wonder what we have accomplished since then. With all the strides we have made as a community — all the protection we have garnered and rights we have secured — how could such a horrendous thing still happen? This month's issue is full of differing reactions to Matt Shepard's death as well as varied calls for response and action.

Right here in Vermont — where there are more laws on the books protecting GLBTs and their rights than in any other state — a bisexual woman went to work one recent morning to find a prominently displayed death threat waiting for her. This happened, not in the comparative anonymity of our biggest city, but in our tiniest town. Something about us is still sending a message to some members of the straight community that this kind of thing is permissible.

Yes, something about us. We can't point solely at them when looking for someone to blame for either of these incidents. We must look within our own ranks, and at our own attitudes first. It is partially our complacency, apathy and in-fighting that leave us unprotected against the actions of minds like those of Matt's killers and Ilene's tormentor.

What a pitiful reflection on us it is that within the span of four months, Vermont's GLBT community has managed to break two

attendance records. Our numbers were the highest ever at our yearly party, the Pride festivities in June, and the lowest for our annual strategy session, the Coalition conference and town meeting.

I'm not saying that we shouldn't come together to celebrate and have a good time. Nor

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am I saying that Pride is nothing more than a party or that there is no fun to be had at the VCLGR conference. A rural and widely scattered community like ours has to mix business with pleasure most anytime we gather together. However, the prevailing attitude that we can only unite with people whose opinions and goals we totally agree with is going to be our downfall.

Unless we get involved and give of our time and talents, we have no right to criticize the structure and content of our events. We must not forget that a majority of the movers and shakers amongst us are volunteers. Connect, even if it is just by subscribing to the new email discussion list or taking a picture for *OITM* or stuffing an envelope for the Brattleboro AIDS Project. Do something. We simply must stop the destructive and petty back-biting. Proactivity is crucial.

We are sub-dividing ourselves, just when we need to stand together, no matter what. Sure, we can disagree, but we must use those differences of opinion to forge a stronger front to present to the rest of the world. A town meeting, whether it be the one that occurs in March by state law, or at the VCLGR conference by our own mandate, is a forum for airing our

differences, examining them, and embracing them. They are pointless if no one offers challenges to the status quo. We must acknowledge our internal differences, celebrate them, even harness them and present a unified front or our future is grim.

Our internal diversity is our strongest weapon. Used correctly, it will lead us to victory in battles with the unenlightened. Unfortunately, it is just as powerful in misuse. Turned upon ourselves, it will leave us badly maimed at the very least. We have to inventory our arsenal of talent, ability and attitude and fire each where it is most appropriate and most effective.

STEPPING OFF THE SOAPBOX AND KNEELING IN GRATITUDE

The past two months have been at once stressful and exciting. I have, as Mountain Pride Media Board President Bennett Law put it in the last issue, acquired my dream job, but not without many hours of lost sleep.

I can't thank Chris Moes enough for the work he did on *OITM*. His dedication and vision has left me with a newspaper full of promise for the future. His faith in my abilities to move forward with his work staggers me when I think about it, so I try not to think about it.

I am grateful beyond words for the MPM board's confidence in and support for me. The transition from board member to editor could have been very difficult, but I am working for a terrific group of people who are both highly professional and big-hearted. Their devotion, as a group, to this newspaper is awe-inspiring.

My thanks, and that of the board, go out to everyone who helped us move to our new office space in Richmond. What could have been a nightmarish ordeal turned into a fun and productive

weekend. If I try to produce a list of names, I'll leave off someone important, so please consider yourselves acknowledged and appreciated.

Betsy Bott and the employees of the Daily Bread, our new neighbors, have been welcoming and wonderful. I'm positive we will all gain a great deal of weight due to their influence, but what a way to go.

Speaking of neighbors, we miss Tage and Tami and the Outright gang and wish them well in their growth. They were terribly tolerant of us when we shared their space and patient while we searched for a new home.

I started sleeping a lot better when Mack Roark and Jim Petrie walked into my life. They have jumped in and helped out with everything from office management and graphic design to rescuing me from the side of the road when my car drew its last breath last week.

Don Eggert, our layout and design god, has been amazing. His talent and devotion are evident in the pages you hold in your hands. We are very lucky to have him.

I must admit, my biggest worry in taking over this position was how I'd be received by the community. However, the support I am experiencing is delightful. Every time I turn around, I receive another virtual pat on the back or vote of confidence. I'll do my best to live up to your high expectations.

Finally, I have to thank my daughter, Courtney, and my partner, Tina. At the risk of sounding like I'm accepting an Academy Award, I must mention their patience and tolerance and assistance. They pitch in and help at every turn and sacrifice a lot of normal life to make it possible for me to give *OITM* most of my free time.

Enough, already. Read on and please let us know what you are thinking. ▼

OUT IN THE MOUNTAINS

Established in 1986

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Donald Eggert— PRODUCTION ASSISTANT —
Mack Roark— OFFICE MANAGER —
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Cheryl Carmi, Joy Griffith, Steven Kopstein, Bennett Law, Roger Mapes, Kevin McAteer, Rekha Rosha, Larry Rudiger, Joseph Ryan, Chuck Starr

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 culture 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 *Out in the Mountains*. 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 a 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.

Out in the Mountains (ISSN 1081-5562) is published monthly by Mountain Pride Media, Inc. The newspaper maintains offices on Bridge Street in Richmond, Vermont. The subscription rate is \$20 per year within the United States of America.

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Out in the Mountains

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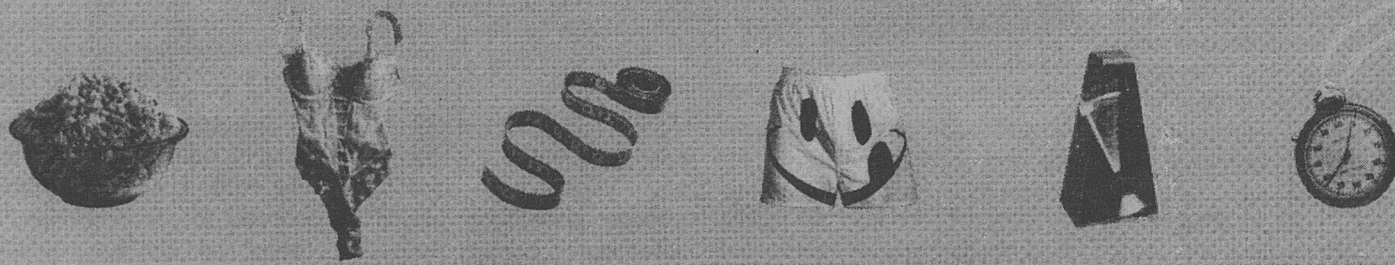
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What do you take to bed?



Whatever you take along for pleasure, consider this:
We may feel safe in Vermont, but we're not immune
to AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

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