

## EDITORIAL

## Family—It's Not What You Think, Or Is It?

I'll never forget Wednesday, November 18, 1998. I was in the room as history happened. I feel privileged...no, downright lucky to have been there.

I watched and listened eagerly as the ever-eloquent Beth Robinson stood at the lectern and presented our case to the Vermont Supreme Court. (Yes, it is our case, but I'll get back to that issue in a moment.) I wanted to laugh and cheer and cry. However, as another observer put it, this was a Vermont thing.

We were respectful and circumspect, even while sitting and standing inches away from the likes of Jerry Smiley, Craig Benson, and Mary Schroyer. To their credit, our opposition was polite, too.

The calm was shattered when Beth Robinson stood to speak from a different lectern later that day. In the Unitarian Universalist Church down the street from the Courthouse, we were finally able to let go. The spontaneous and unanimous standing ovation was born of love and admiration for Beth and her co-counsel, Sue Murray and Mary Buonato, as well as for the 3 couples who represented us as plaintiffs in this monumental case.

In that place and at that moment, not a soul would have denied that we were a family.

**Family is NOT a Dirty Word, Damn!**

Why has family become such a lightning-rod subject in our community? Is it because so many of us had terrible experiences with our families of origin? Is it backlash from the "Faith and Family" movement? I honestly don't understand.

One of our anthems is the Sister Sledge song "We Are Family." Do we no longer mean that? When we encounter someone who lights up our gaydar systems, we tell friends, "She's family. I just know she is."

The GLBT community is second to no other in its ability to reclaim words. We have adopted "queer" and "dyke" and other words that are far more incendiary and pejorative. Why are so many of us relegating a useful and necessary word like "family" to the junk pile?

At a loss for explanations, I'll explain what I mean when I say "family" and, of course, you will all suddenly understand and agree and we can get on with business.

My family is the group of people without whom I could not get through each day, the people I need in my life for me to be me and be happy about it. An accurate portrait of my immediate family would contain four humans. (We'll leave the cats for another time.) My daughter, my partner, my best friend, and I make up the center of my life. We love and take care of each other instinctively.

I'm fortunate to be able to say that my family of origin is supportive and loving. So, I can include my parents, brothers, sisters-in-law, nieces and nephews in the group that is still my family.

My friends, real friends, are family. They have seen me through

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more trials than any of us care to think about. Without some of them, I wouldn't be alive, let alone happy and healthy. If that isn't family, I don't know what is.

**"My Point, and I Do Have One"**

My point is that we need to examine our definition of the word. We must see each other as family and operate with that attitude in mind. Identify the resources we have in our community and utilize them. As I said at the rally on Wednesday, I wouldn't ask my gay mechanic, eloquent as he may be, to represent me in front of the

Supreme Court. Nor would I ask Beth Robinson to change the oil in my car. But I'm grateful to have each of them in my circle — my family.

I implore each of you to look closely at the people, organizations, and resources we have available to us and to use them. Yes, we still operate on a grass roots level, but we are not at the beginning. We have an impressive structure of leaders and agencies and groups in place and we all need think carefully before rushing out to reinvent the wheel.

The country, the world, is

watching Vermont right now and we must present a united front. That is not to say that we must all agree at all times. That would not only be terribly boring, but completely ineffective. It is in our best interest to air and investigate our internal differences as well as underline our similarities.

For me personally, this means resisting the urge to kill stories and columns that I find distasteful and even detrimental to a cause I believe in from the bottom of my heart. I believe it is my job to facilitate this forum for our family. It is my privilege to add my voice to the cacophony. I believe it is your job to avail yourself of this resource, by reading to inform yourself and possibly contributing your voice or talents.

Get to know this family and get involved.▼

## From the President

### Show Us The Money

In his letter to the editor published in our November issue, Tom Aloisi "implored" Mountain Pride Media "to pay the OITM editor a liveable wage," citing the "need to compensate our editors adequately." Well, simply put, show us the money!

Mountain Pride Media's Board of Directors would like very, very much to be able to compensate the editor at a level that allows him or her to not have to seek other sources of income. It would be great knowing that someone was available to pursue stories of interest to our readers. It would be great if we could be assured that the office was staffed during normal business hours to take calls and follow up on questions and requests, providing the best possible service to our subscribers and advertisers. It would be great if the editor could work without the distraction of wondering how they will make their own mortgage and car payments. But things are not yet great.

It now costs us \$3,300 per issue to produce and distribute *Out in the Mountains*. A full \$2,300 is spent on printing, layout and design expenses, and distribution, all services which are being provided at heavily discounted rates. We've expanded the size of the paper, but at a real dollar cost. We are proud to provide papers at 300 sites all over the state and beyond, but they don't walk there on their own. Many bundles of papers have to be mailed as far away as Washington, D.C., and even at bulk rates for non-profits, the mailing costs add up quickly. And we are fully aware that the limited stipend we pay for layout and design services fairly compensates barely a quarter of the hours put in each month. The other \$1,000 spent each month provides office space, phone service, power, office supplies, and a stipend to the editor.

I would love to report that our advertising revenue covers these expenses, but it doesn't. Most months we are not even able to bill \$3,300. Not only do we continue to struggle with finding people dedicated to developing and maintaining accounts for us (for the standard 20 per cent commission), but a number of our receivables are long overdue. While many of our accounts are stable and provide valued, continued support, other businesses appear and disappear, and with them any trace of the money owed us. We take our commitment to support the community very seriously and have been generous (to a fault) in not tacking on interest expenses on overdue accounts, nor have we ever even considered turning accounts over to collection agencies, but we may not be able to sustain a viable business if we continue to shoulder others' losses.

Which raises the question of what position the community expects us to play. We are heartened by Tom's assessment that OITM is "no longer ... a community newsletter," but unfortunately much of the community continues to treat it as one. We currently print 6,000 copies a month, but only 150 of these are reserved by subscribers. Annual subscriptions are accepted for as little as \$10, at which price the subscription only breaks even. We continue to offer this because it's important to us that the paper reaches its audience, even in the most out-of-the-way places in the state, and we don't want financial issues to be an impediment to keeping in touch with the community. But our income currently earned from subscriptions in a given year pays less than half the costs of producing a single issue of the paper.

We recently secured our 501(c)(3) non-profit status from the Internal Revenue Service,

which helps us attract funds to purchase and maintain computer equipment and software. The MPM Board is undertaking an aggressive grant writing program in hopes of securing start-up money with which to radically expand and update our website, funds to help defray the distribution costs of the paper, and money to invest in more powerful and up-to-the-minute computer equipment. But these funds can't replace community support in ensuring the quality (and, at times, survival) of OITM.

*Out in the Mountains* was founded by volunteers and continues to operate as a fundamentally volunteer organization, dependent on the commitment of individuals (who, for their trouble, are asked to meet our deadlines). All of our writers, photographers, and columnists donate their talents, and maintenance of our website continues to be performed by volunteers. These people have enjoyed rising to the challenging expectations of the paper, but we need the strong financial support of the community to continue to meet and exceed its own needs and expectations.

OITM continues to be a strong, vibrant part of the community. To Tom and the many good-hearted readers like him, we, in turn, implore you to subscribe today, to place an ad in support of your own business, to volunteer to drive the paper to drop off sites in Windham, Bennington, Caledonia, and other counties (without hopes of mileage reimbursement), or to make a tax-deductible donation to *Out in the Mountains* today. Help us support OITM and its editor. It's worth your investment.

Bennett Law, President  
Board of Directors  
Mountain Pride Media

## OUT IN THE MOUNTAINS

Established in 1986

— EDITOR IN CHIEF —  
Barbara Dozetos— ART DIRECTOR —  
Donald Eggert— COPY EDITOR —  
Tina Giangrande— PRODUCTION ASSISTANT —  
Mack Roark— OFFICE MANAGER —  
Jim Petrie— ADVERTISING MANAGER —  
Steven Kopstein— CIRCULATION MANAGER —  
Kevin McAteer

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**Photographers:** Scot Applegate,

MOUNTAIN PRIDE MEDIA  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Cheryl Carmi, Joy Griffith, Bennett Law, Roger Mapes, Kevin McAteer, Rekha Roshia, 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.

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