

CROW'S



C A W S

BY CROW COHEN

Leap Before You Look

Life is unpredictable. That may be stating the obvious, but to understand it on a gut level is no small feat in a global culture that promotes control over our very existence by means of electronics and chemicals.

Take my life, for instance. In my youth, there was no way that I could have predicted I would be a lesbian. At 10, I was vying for the attention of Stevie Silver, who, for some ridiculous reason, was considered hot stuff on his two-wheeler. At 20, I married my high school sweetheart — partly because I was terrified of dating and figured that by getting married, I could take myself out of the arena of sexual competition, which I still hate to this day. At 30, I was nagging at that sweetheart to get the hell out of the Air Force so I could start to have a life. At 35, I found a life, but to our dismay, discovered he really couldn't be a part of it, because I came out as a dyke.

Then there are more recent events. Because it was such hard work for me to be a single parent, I could never envision life past 18 for my daughters, let alone

seeing them give birth to sons within three weeks of each other, which just happened in February.

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leadership and compassionate vision of the Amazon Nation. I was wrong. These days, I can hardly keep myself from envisioning the exact opposite — namely, that 20 years from now we will all go up in flames in some nuclear holocaust with one or two filthy rich white men pushing the buttons.

So how does a political activist passionately attached to

fantasies of a clean environment full of peace-loving humans who have no desire to dominate each other to death hold onto the concept that life is totally unpredictable and not get depressed? Political awareness and depression are very close cousins, I find.

But I'd like to share a dream I had recently that may help me to reconcile this dilemma (at least for 10 minutes). I love to put trust in my dreams, because they send me messages from deep inside my vulnerable, undefended, beyond-rational self where I'm not trying to impress anybody, including myself.

In this dream I am falling

down a deep, cement-lined shaft — falling and falling toward almost certain death or maiming. I was terrified. Then I remembered that people who are drunk are sometimes not hurt when they fall, because their bodies are so limp. So, while I'm falling, I decide to let my muscles go limp — even though this goes against my instinct to brace myself, stiffen up, and resist. I change my mind mid-fall and do stiffen up for a few seconds (this is a long fall the likes of which only happen in dreams), but then in a panic I talk myself back into "relaxing" again, because I know it's my only hope of survival. I never reach bottom.

Although the dream was teetering on the ragged edge of a nightmare, I'm choosing to interpret it as a spiritual gift. Here was a graphic image that I experienced on a gut level, sending me the message that despite my doubts and fears for my own survival, my only hope is to "relax" into the process, to surrender, to let go, not to focus on results. (Since our dreams are often maps of our soul work, not only is this stance a hope, but it must also be what I am already doing on a

number of levels and for a variety of reasons.)

Does that mean we give up on our visions to overturn the power imbalances in our world? Does that mean we stop doing the footwork? Does that mean we cease to confront those who are evil and greedy? I don't think so. Otherwise, how will we ever effect change?

I believe in doing this work. However, we need to keep the focus on process and be prepared to modify our visions. We need to respond to feedback from our communities, trusted friends, and helpers — especially if our allies are sending us a strong message that we are power-tripping, or bulldozing, or behaving in a rigid, obsessive manner.

Most of all, it means that we maintain an attitude of willingness as opposed to willfulness. During that dream, I definitely willed my muscles to go limp. In other words, I was willing to be willing, and that's as far as I can go sometimes. The rest is faith. Only then can I come close to radical self-acceptance, a state in which falling has a chance to feel like flying some day — flying in the face of all those doubts. ▼

SKEETER



BITES

BY SKEETER SANDERS

Right-Wing Vultures Circling Over Vermont

You've heard the old cliché, "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned?"

Well, thanks to at least 42 Republicans in the Vermont House of Representatives, I can revise it to read, "Hell hath no fury like a columnist made to look like a fool by politicians."

That's exactly what those 42 GOPers in the House have done. They've made a fool out of me. They did it by introducing a bill to define marriage as that between a man and a woman only. Should the bill become law, it will effectively outlaw same-gender marriages in Vermont.

Only last month, I wrote that Vermont Republicans "have a reputation of being considerably more socially libertarian" than their fellow Republicans in the rest of the country.

But on March 9, Rep. George Schiavone (R-Shelburne) introduced H.479, an amendment to an existing law that prohibits rel-

atives from marrying each other.

As reported in the March 11 edition of the *Burlington Free Press*, 41 other Republicans, 14 Democrats and one independent have signed on to the bill as co-sponsors.

Thanks a lot, folks. That's the last time I'll do you any favors.

H.479 now sits in the House Judiciary Committee, and while no legislative action is expected on the bill any time soon, the Vermont Supreme Court can at any time trigger such action if it rules that same-gender couples cannot be barred from marrying.

By now, you know where I stand on the marriage issue. The legal institution of marriage is the backbone of heterosexism and patriarchy, without which it cannot survive and will stop at nothing to protect. We would all be better off if the legal institution was abolished altogether.

You also know that I believe very firmly that the bond of matrimony itself is a religious sacrament, as well as a deep personal commitment. The government

has absolutely no right to determine who is or isn't eligible to partake in that sacrament. The Defense of Marriage Act and all similar state laws therefore violate the free-exercise-of-religion clause of the First Amendment.

But looking at the big picture, the introduction of H.479 — and a similar bill introduced in 1997 by Rep. Nancy Sheltra (R-East Derby) that died in committee — sounds the alarm that excessive influence of social right-wingers within the GOP at the national level has begun to infect Vermont Republicans.

As I wrote in this space last month, the social right-wingers — many of whom are millennial fundamentalists obsessed with visions of the apocalypse and Armageddon — are, like a wild animal that's been backed into a corner, going on an all-out offensive as the new millennium inches ever-closer to our doorstep.

Don't think for a New York minute that the social right-wingers aren't circling over Vermont like vultures circling

over a dying prey, waiting to pounce on it the moment it gives up the ghost.

Barring a delay or a big sur-

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prise, as soon as the news breaks that the Vermont Supreme Court has ruled that same-gender couples can marry, these vultures will invade Vermont with the fury of the Martians in H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds*.

I can already envision noisy demonstrations outside the State House in Montpelier by Bible-toting fundamentalists from out-

side Vermont, demanding that the Legislature pass H.479 and oust the Supreme Court justices who voted to extend marriage to same-gender couples.

I can also envision Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell and other religious right figures issuing a clarion call to their followers to launch a crusade to "rescue and cleanse" Vermont of what they will surely see as a "dangerous plunge into moral depravity."

And knowing Vermonters' longstanding dislike of being told what to do by outsiders, I hesitate to think how we would react to this intrusion into our affairs.

It is something for all of us to really think about. Nothing in life occurs without consequences. We may be ready for the Y2K computer bug — but are we prepared for the Y2K political and religious storm that's about to hit us? ▼