

TWENTY **20.s** SOMETHING

# If Mr. Blackwell Shows Up at Pride, You Know Who Called Him

BY THOMAS HENNING

**P**umpkins, let the season begin! That is right, it is Pride and that means the kickoff of the official social season. It also means a wardrobe blitz for all of us image queens who need to have just the right white T-shirt for every party, parade, and perversion.

Now, I need to point out that I understand that Pride is more than a narcissistic display of capitalistic consumption. This being the 30th anniversary of Pride, it is more important than ever to take a step back and look whence we came.

I was an infant in the '70s and a teenager in the '80s, born to straight parents, no less, and never heard stories of what that era was like for the LGBT movement. What I do know is that people sacrificed their lives, families, and jobs so that we could have a better future.

I know that some have scars that will never heal because of those sacrifices. These sacrifices gave me the opportunity to live a life where I can shout that I am gay and proud; that I am what I am, dammit, and what I am is fabulous. It is not perfect out there, but it is a hell of a lot better than what it was.

To all of you who carry that piece of history, who lifted just one finger to make a difference then or now, thank you. Thank you for having the strength, vision, and courage to make this a better place for all of us. Thank you for your sacrifices, your gains, your laughter, and your losses. Thank you for believing that we have the right to live a life that includes being proud of who we are and whom we love.

Five years ago, I couldn't pick up an issue of *Out in the Mountains* because I was so scared and ashamed of who I was. Now, five years later, I am a columnist for that same paper that so terrified me. I owe that progress to all of you.

What I am most proud of is not the fact that I am gay. In my opinion I had no choice in that matter. What I am proud of most is that I have such amazing role models in my community. People who give without needing to take and lead by walking behind. I am proud of my community and want to say thank you for leading the fight.

Now, with that said, I need to go back to the narcissistic display of capitalistic consumption that is, in part, Pride. You all know what I am talking about.

Come June, every queer worth his or her weight in hair products has purchased all the accessories to complete the perfect Pride image to which they aspire. There's the Daisy Duke cut-offs that ride an ass like the Lone Ranger rode Trigger; the tight little tee with a quaint gay phrase; the extra piercing to show off to new friends; the puppy to attract attention; the new partner to cart around like a show pony at an auction.

I mean, really, pumpkins; it is like this hybrid of a JonBenet pageant and a festival of Dionysus with a brief pause for a word from our political sponsors. For weeks before the event, half the gay men I know are running around like Cinderella's stepsisters fighting over who can wear the prettiest dress — and I am not even talk-

ing about the drag queens. People lament over tans or work on finding out just how short those hoochie shorts can be. Pumpkins, please; if I wanted to see that much ass hanging out, I would visit a petting zoo.

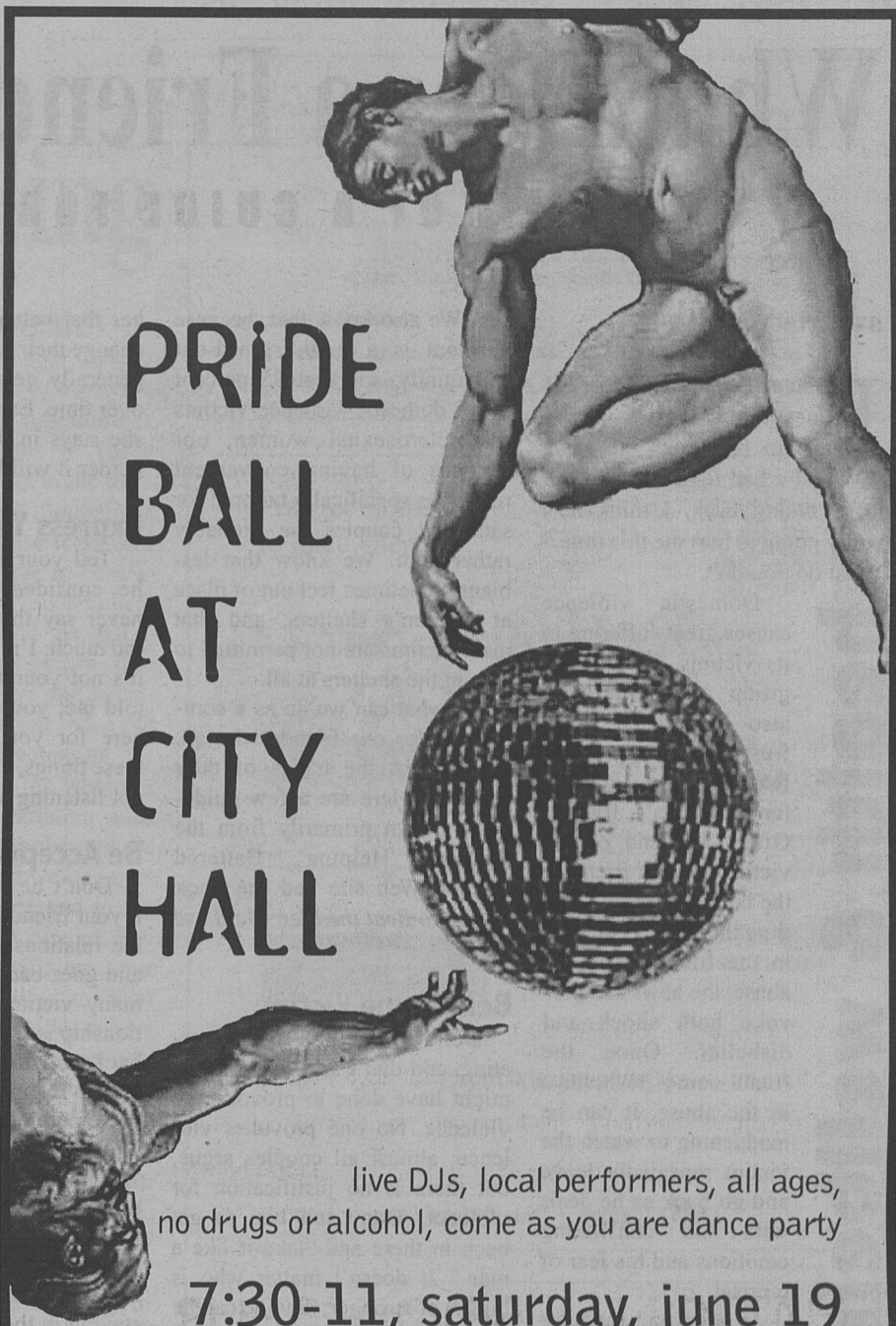
Half the time at Pride, I am most proud of the fact that I had the good sense not to make the fashion choice the poor bastard beside me did. Honestly, when did it suddenly become hip to look like Homer Simpson at a Village People rave? If I can impart just two pieces of advice to all you gay men out there: don't drink and dress, and it's no longer about the South Beach Guido look.

In the end, it all boils down to this. When Pride rolls around, I will be the first one out with my socialite cap on. I will spend the appropriate time strategizing my wardrobe and planning the perfect Pride BBQ event for my friends, but I will also remember that Pride is more than gym queens and hoochie shorts. It's more than parties and tricks. It is about celebrating the past and paying respect to the ground that we have made while acknowledge the ground still left to cover.

That's my time, pumpkins. Have fun, and may the camera be kind.▼

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PRIDE  
BALL  
AT  
CITY  
HALL



live DJs, local performers, all ages, no drugs or alcohol, come as you are dance party

7:30-11, saturday, june 19  
contois auditorium  
\$5 donation.

sponsored by Outright Vermont,  
Burlington R.U.1.2? Community Center  
and Men's Health Project



R.U.1.2?  
COFFEEHOUSE  
EVENING

kick off pride month with good food and live performances by your GLBTQA friends and 'family' — open mike with special guests  
saturday, june 5  
7:30-11pm,  
\$5 donation  
Penny Cluse Cafe

(corner of cherry & s.winooski)  
sponsored by Outright Vermont,  
Mountain Pride Media, Men's Health Project of Vermont CARES & Burlington R.U.1.2? Community Center

1ST ANNUAL  
GAY PRIDE  
CONCERT

a Samadhi Singers concert to benefit Outright Vermont  
sunday, june 6  
3pm, \$7-10  
St Pauls Cathedral  
(2 cherry street)

