



by Jane van Buren

One hot summer day in July of 1991, my partner Deb came home from work and announced that her employer had removed our son from her health insurance policy. I was paying for my own single coverage (domestic partner benefits were rarer nine years ago), but our two-year-old son had been covered under Deb. We looked at each other and decided it was time to do something about adoption.

Living in Maryland shortly after Ben's birth, we had talked to lawyers about second-parent adoption. We could be the test case for Maryland — no thanks. But now we could no longer ignore the personal and

economic realities that second-class citizenship was forcing on us.

We didn't know whom to call. Deb suggested this guy named David Curtis, because he advertised in and provided legal advice to *Out in the Mountains*.

So, I called him. I still remember clearly our first phone conversation. I introduced myself and said my partner and I wanted to explore the possibility of same-gender second-parent adoption.

"Sure, no problem," was his reply.

"Is this guy for real?" I thought. "Maybe he's just pretending to be a lawyer."

"It's never been done in Vermont, or on a state-wide basis before," I said.

"Yes, I know," David replied, "but we can do it."

That was the beginning of a long ride with David and Julie Frame, his colleague and the lawyer who became lead attorney. It was highlighted by many wonderful shared moments and many frustrating hurdles.

One story in particular that comes to mind happened in front of Judge Belcher in the Washington County District Court. Judge Belcher pointed out that Deb and I were not married and, therefore, he reasoned, Deb could not adopt.

"Well, Judge" said David, "I'm sure my clients would be more than happy to get married right now if you'd perform the ceremony."

We celebrated two years later, after a visit to the Supreme Court, when victory was finally ours. David was right, we could do it, and we did.

David's optimism and can-do attitude made a huge difference in my life, in Deb's life and in the lives of our sons. We feel, along with so many others, the hole his death leaves in our community. But thanks to his life, we are all better able to see the hole and step around it rather than go tumbling in. ▼

by Keith Goslant

It seems strange to be talking about David in the past tense. He was one of the people you always expected to be around because he always was.

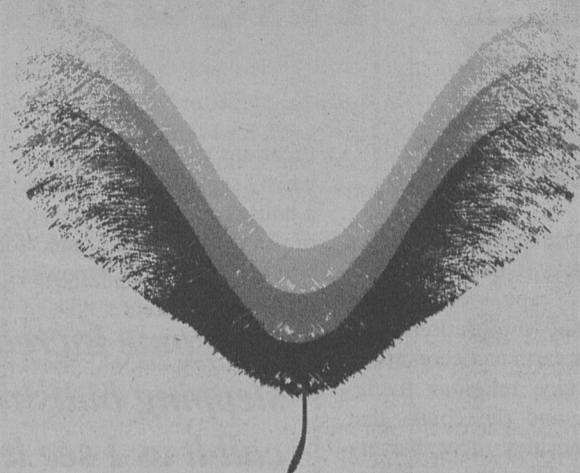
When we first started talking about how to have an impact on state government and how to become actively involved in the mainstream political process, David was one of the first people we turned to. David already had relationships with legislators and policy makers because he was one himself. As Defender General under Gov. Madeline Kunin, he was an openly gay official before we even began our effort to gain full protection under Vermont laws.

He was the person who helped open doors for the rest of our community, helped us to develop the relationships we would need as we have continued our work, and worked at the forefront of advocating on behalf of our community before it was fashionable or necessarily safe.

David knew resources, people who could get things done, or how to approach a situation in a way that got you the greatest advantage even if you didn't always win. David was one of those rare people who was able to create connections between organizations and causes that should be working toward a common good but are not always good at communicating with each other.

He seemed tireless and fearsome in his efforts. He could be gentle and supportive but also direct and confrontational. He did not shy away from a fight or remain silent because that was easier.

David had strong beliefs and did not compromise them. He showed us what could be possible if we are willing to fight for it. ▼



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