

BAKER CONTINUED FROM P 1

town clerk for a marriage license in 1997. "But we hope the majority of Vermonters will see for themselves that everyone gains when our families are stronger."

"Our children and families have the same needs for security and legal protection as other families," said Nina Beck and Stacy Jolles, another plaintiff couple. "The civil union law will give us peace of mind for ourselves and our son, which we've never had before."

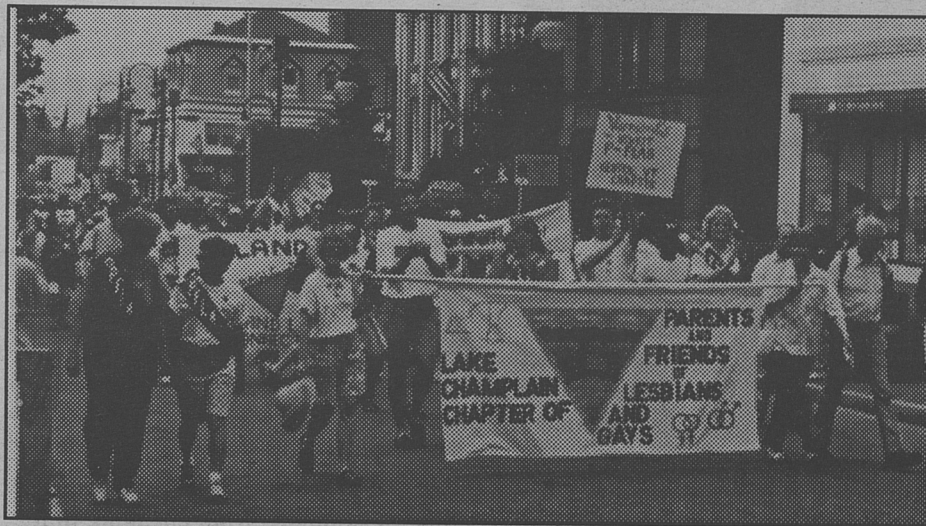
Stan Baker, whose surname is now synonymous with the movement for gay and lesbian marriage, said although the civil union law is not marriage, it will provide he and his partner, Peter Harrigan, and other couples a wide array of rights and protections. "It is exciting to think into the future about what may happen in other states and nationally in the next decade," said Baker. "Our hard work will continue to pay off."

"As we continue discussing equality for gay and lesbian couples through inclusion in the marriage laws," said Robinson, "Vermont will be able to draw on its actual experience, rather than conjecture."

"Like any family, same-sex couples need assurance that their family status is protected when they travel with them from state to state," said Mary Bonauto, another of the couple's attorneys at the New England-based Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders. "We hope some states and private parties will respect civil unions formed in Vermont. In other instances, litigation will be necessary to settle the question of whether a civil union or some part of it is valid outside Vermont, regardless of the existence of an anti-gay and anti-marriage law."

"The legal and legislative actions in Vermont are a turning point in our country," said Bonauto, acknowledging both the euphoria and disappointment about developments in Vermont. "One state has now recognized the existence and value of gay and lesbian people and same-sex families. But securing full equality involves a long-term civil rights struggle." She called for people in other states to look at the Vermont model and pick up where the Vermont left off.

Effective July 1, same-sex couples from any state who are at least 18 years of age and not closely related by blood may apply to Vermont town clerks for civil union licenses, have those licenses "certified" by a justice of the peace or member of the clergy, and receive a civil union certificate.



PFLAG
1993
photo: Joya Beattie



Heather Babcock
1998
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