Summer 2001

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Maine Rural Network

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Out In the Foothills of Western Maine

The following are excerpts from an interview with Paul Alpert of Lovell for the Rural Lives Project. For more information about the project, see page 3.

David and I just had our tenth anniversary Friday, so we went out to dinner at a local restaurant. This man walked in, his name is Phil. He's a fundamentalist. This fellow, Phil, we've known for a number of years, we talk to him — he and his wife, he knows we're gay and all and it's usually just pleasantries back and forth. I've worked at the strawberry shortcake booth with him at a local gathering, and a few years ago his wife died and we sent him a condolence card and the next time we saw him he thanked us very much for the card, you know, that type of thing. Last year we invited him to our "Yes on 6" party and we got a nice note back from him that as much as he'd like to be our friend, that he just cannot support that cause. And we certainly understood that. When a referendum came up, I mean I knew wholeheartedly that [two employees] were behind me. In their paychecks I would always put a little note "remember to vote" or one of the flyers or something and I remember when we lost, one of them called me and said "God damn it we lost again!"

Paul and his partner, David, have been very active through each of the referendums since 1995. [Working on the campaigns] went well — I thought it went too well. We did a lot of calling...from a list that the campaign [1998] gave us and there were mostly Democratic women who were very friendly to us. I mean there were a few who weren't friendly but the majority were very friendly. We did some door-to-door solicitation in Fryeburg and we didn't get too many people who actually answered the doorbell, but we left brochures. I think we had, well I guess we didn't have more support in town because we lost, but those who were vocal with us supported us much more. And whatever church they [religious right] all go to you know, they're very active, they're there every Sunday...[To go back a few years, the first time they had the citizen's veto...David and I were in Hallowell verifying the signatures, and we happened to find the one for Lovell and for Bridgton and on the Lovell one we saw the name of a man who worked for the contractor that did some work on the house, and I said, "I will never have him working at this house again." Also, the postmistress signed so the next time I went to the post office I was...

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BOOKKEEPER/TREASURER NEEDED

Maine Rural Network is looking for an individual to join our Board of Directors as Treasurer. This person would also be required to perform simple, uncomplicated bookkeeping tasks. The present treasurer is retiring but will train his replacement. Attendance at monthly Board meetings required. In exchange you will have the satisfaction of helping a grassroots, rural project help bring Maine forward. Please contact Naomi at nomad@watchic.net or 642-2015.
THE RURAL LIVES PROJECT
Leave your tracks in history

Everyone has stories to tell about their lives:

- What does it mean to be a Native American or African-American growing up in a small town in Maine?
- What does it mean to be a gay mill worker,
- or a migrant blueberry picker,
- or a native Mainer growing up in rural Maine facing questions of racism and sexuality alone?
- What does it mean to grow up “different” in coastal Maine or the islands?
- What does it mean to be a single, gay parent living in a remote area?

We are requesting submissions of stories about the life experiences of any minority group that live in rural Maine. Maine will benefit from a greater understanding of what it is like to live in rural areas as a member of a minority community.

We are also collecting the stories of sexual minority populations. From the work done on the referendums for lesbian and gay civil rights, it has become clear that there is a perception that gay people in Maine do not suffer discrimination. One of the purposes of this project is to collect stories of discrimination,* as told by the people who experience it. If you have such a story, whether you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or an ally, you can be a part of dispelling the myth that Maine does not discriminate against people who are perceived to be gay.

*We welcome any story whether or not it includes accounts of discrimination.

We need the stories to be in writing or on tape. To request that your oral history be recorded by an MRN representative, please use the contact information below. Your name will be withheld on request, but the stories must be available for publication, archival donation, research and/or educational purposes.

For more information about this project, please contact Naomi Winterfalcon,
Maine Rural Network, 51 Shore Rd., Standish, ME 04084
phone: 207/642-2015 e-mail: nomad@watchic.net
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thinking, "Well, what do I say to her?" So...I told her I was reviewing the signatures and I said, "I was disappointed when I saw your name on that list." She said, "What list?" And I said, "To repeal the civil rights law." She said, "Oh, I don't remember signing anything like that." She wouldn't confront the issue. So it becomes a non-issue when someone won't confront it. We were doing the Bridgton one and we noticed our dentist on there. And this is a man we both thought quite highly of and a very capable dentist, I've run with him in races and such. And we confronted him with that. And he said, "Well, I have nothing against you guys or anything but I don't think you should have any special rights...". And we said, "Well, if that's the way you feel, then we wouldn't feel comfortable going to you any longer." And we stopped going to him. [So], we felt that was certainly activism in town. We were able to confront people who we knew were opposed to having...the status quo changed. Coming back to the first man I mentioned who had done some work here. I called his boss and I said, "Phil, if ever you do work for me again, I don't want [that man] working here." And he said, "I understand that." And this man who lives down a ways a little...every time there's a...referendum or something, he says, "Give me a bumper sticker because I just want to get everyone mad." And he always puts up a lawn sign so, we know the people who our friends are and we know who our enemies are. And then there are some that we don't know. There's one woman who writes a column for the local paper, she's active in the library and we see her around all the time. And we've given her rides places and she tells us all about her - either her son-in-law or her daughter-in-law who's Jewish, and you know, how wonderful they all get along and everything and we've never really... gotten her to state which side of the fence she's on, but, we're in there pushing all the time. She knows where we stand, I don't know where she stands, but...I think it's important to be in there all of the time.

The interviewer asked Paul to relate a story about the Librarian and her husband.

Well, he's the code enforcement officer in town and...he's another one we really didn't have any feeling for one way or the other. You don't know with these people because they're very closed mouthed. And the librarian is a very liberal person...and we always got along very well with her and we asked her about a sign. And she said, "Well, I don't know if [he] would let me put one up - I'm not going to get involved." But then somewhere along in the campaign, [her husband] called us up and said, "I'm sick and tired of those people. Bring a sign for me to put up." I think again, coming back to what we were originally talking about, people know you're there and they know that they have these resources and they know where to go when they want to do something. And I think it's important.

Sometimes people ask us why we do all these things and I really think I do them because I want to make it easier for the next generation. When I was growing up, I didn't really know what gay people were. I just thought they were either hairdressers or ballerinas and I started realizing, well, you know, they're just ordinary people - some are good looking, some aren't so good looking and all sizes and shapes and all my stereotypes were just shattered - I still have stereotypes which, I look at someone and say "what, he can't be gay, not looking like that" and I think anything I can do to make it easier for kids to be able to accept themselves at an early age and to feel good about themselves and not get kicked out of their houses. And that's why I do it.
Community Bulletin Board

Thursday 7/12, 8/9, 9/13 - Aroostook County - Northern Lambda Nord's monthly meeting, the 2nd Thursday each month at 6:30 pm at the GLBT Community Services Center of Northern ME, 658 So. Main St., Caribou, across from Nylander Museum. 498-2088 or 800-468-2088. All interested persons are invited to attend.

Thursday-Sat. 7/19-7/21 & 7/26-7/28 - "Always...Patsy Cline" a tribute to Country Music's greatest female singer, with the Bodaçious Bobcats Swing Band. Performances begin at 7:30 pm. Saco River Grange, Bar Mills. FMI/reservations 929-5412.

Wednesday 7/25, 8/22, 9/26 - Brunswick PFLAG chapter meets 7-9 pm in the Pilgrim House of First Parish Church, 9 Cleaveland St., Brunswick. 725-6390 (Sidney), 725-9895 (Harriet), or email Margaret at marg@ime.net.

Saturday, 9/15 - Turkey Hollow, acoustic roots music (bluegrass, folk and country with dashes of blues, Cajun and Celtic. Showtime 7:30pm, Saco River Grange, Bar Mills. FMI 929-6472.


Saturday 9/22 - Pro-choice conference at USM sponsored by Planned Parenthood Northern New England. FMI contact Sarah Stanaford sarahs@ppnne.org

Coastal Outright is a safe and confidential space for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and questioning young people, 15-22, who live in Knox, Lincoln, or Waldo counties. Social support group meets on 2nd and 4th Friday evenings of the month. Movie nights, talk/hang out, plan trips, and learn about GLBTQ issues. Young people who would like more information or who would like to join: call (800) 207-4064 ask for the Coastal Outright Coordinator or email coastaloutright@yahoo.com. Coastal Outright also utilizes adult advisors who may be gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered. Adult volunteers attend meetings, provide transportation, offer support, and role model for Coastal Outright youth. Please call (800) 207-4064 for more info. A program of the Coastal AIDS Network, in Belfast, ME.

Outright/Lewiston-Auburn provides safe environments for GLBTQ young people. Drop-in for youth 22 & under every Friday from 6 to 8:30 pm at our drop-in space, 145 Lisbon Street, Lewiston. APEX, a monthly drop-in group for young adults ages 20-26 is the 1st Monday of each month, from 6-8:30 pm, same location. FMI contact Penny Sargent by phone at 786-2717 or e-mail at outright_la@hotmail.com

Heart Circles for Gay/Bi/Questioning Men is a support/discussion group. Meetings are the 1st Wed. of each month in Norway and the 2nd & 4th Wed. of each month in Lewiston. For more info contact Sean Douglas by phone: 786-4697 or by e-mail at acla@gwi.net

I want Maine Rural Network to bring that message to all parts of Maine.

□ I'd like to join a local social justice group. Please contact me.

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Contact Naomi @ 642-2015 or nomad@watchic.net

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