

NETWORK NEWS

The Newsletter of the Maine Rural Network



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Recovery and Realization — *excerpted from an interview with Sheila*

Everett

...there's not much to tell. I was born in Fort Fairfield, Maine. Ah, where the sign, the entrance sign coming in from Canada and coming in from Caribou, used to say "Welcome to Friendly Fort Fairfield" and I always believed that because it was a friendly town. I was born and raised there and graduated in 1967. Moved, made the big move to Presque Isle, to go to the University of Maine, Presque Isle. Majored in physical education and health. I went on the seven year program, not the four year program. I got one of those letters from the Dean, don't call us we'll call you. I finally ended up getting my degree, my B.S. in health and physical education and was fortunate enough to get a job before I was done with my student teaching, right there in Presque Isle, at the Cunningham Middle School. I stayed there and lived in Presque Isle for twenty years, and at the end of twenty years I had some important discoveries made about my life. Had a major burn out, breakdown whatever you want to call it and uh, uh I was told that if I wanted to stay alive and live a healthy productive life that uh I might need to do something about my drinking. And which I never addressed, I never knew, I thought everyone drank quite a few but obviously, as I found out, that they didn't. I had a problem and chose to do

something about it. I've been sober for ten and a half years, ten and a half years clean and sober and starting to grow up and live responsibly. I also, during that recovery phase, I think it was two years after being clean and sober, I'm into therapy, intense therapy, to deal with why I drank like I did. Why I did the things in my past I did, that I wasn't proud of, they were mistakes and it wasn't me it was the alcohol, that helped me do the things, the things I shouldn't have done. Hurt a lot of people along the way, but I'm in the process of making amends on a daily basis now. I also, like I said it was two, two and a half years into my sobriety, dealing with a very special therapist out of AMAC in Presque Isle, smart gal, wouldn't let me get away with a thing because being an alcoholic you learn so many ways to cope and skirt issues and not deal with painful things. But she wouldn't let me, it was very intense and finally on July 4th, ironic, on July 4, 1994, I was in the process of helping another recovering alcoholic, who was just two days sober. And got an emergency call, "please take me to a meeting", "I don't want to drink" and all of that stuff and I thought "Yeah, I can do that." In the process of her telling me her story on the initial call uh she said, when you're scared you blurt it all out, in the process she told me

that she was a lesbian and I never thought anything of it. Uh because I've never been judgmental or discriminating, I've been discriminated against, but I've never discriminated against others. I just take everybody as they are, come what may and spent the evening, I took her to a meeting and then we went to Limestone, 4th of July, because she needed to be with somebody the whole time, during the course of the evening. And we went to the fireworks, I just kept things light and what not, when we got back to my place where her car was, it was late she had to get up and go to work the next morning and I said "Now are you going to be okay for the rest of the night? And she said "Yes, I think I will be up so you can call me whenever you want." She looked up at me, she was a short gal, and she said "Are you receptive to hugs?" I said, "Oh yes, I love hugs, the stronger the better, the more the better." So she gave me a hug, hers was a hug of desperation and thank you all combined into one. And it seemed like forever that we were standing down on my front porch and hugging but in the process, I found myself feeling differently with this hug. It felt good, it felt right it felt natural and I guess probably unconsciously me knowing that she was a lesbian, it jus — there was some-

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Mission Statement

The mission of the Maine Rural Network is to promote safety and quality of life for lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender people living in rural Maine through education, networking, and coalition building in order to transform our communities

Publication Information

Network News is published quarterly in March, June, September and December. If you would like to contribute a calendar item or short article please send it to us by the 15th of the month prior to the quarterly publication date.

Maine Rural Network
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NEW STAFF MEMBER ADDED

This October Maine Rural Network welcomes Nancy Audet to our staff as a co-director. Naomi Winterfalcon has gone back to school (*almost* full time!) and will be working part-time as co-director with Nancy. Nancy has an impressive record of doing social justice work, including introducing some of the first Safe School programs in Maine into the Lewiston and Auburn school system. The Oxford Hills High School Safe School project in which MRN participated, was also directed by Nancy. She has played an integral part in establishing Lewiston/Auburn Outright. We are pleased to have Nancy join MRN — her background as a grassroots organizer and active, enthusiastic ally of the LGBT community will be very valuable to MRN.

**SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL
 NEWSLETTER**

With increases in postage and printing costs, MRN is asking the *Network News* readership who have not done so already, to become members at the rate of \$15 per year (more if you can, less if you can't). If you are unable to pay this amount then pay what you can. No one will be taken off the mailing list for lack of payment.

Have You Moved?

If you receive your newsletter by mail, please notify us of any address change or seasonal mail stoppage. We are charged for every newsletter that is returned. Thanks!

Community Bulletin Board

Fri., Oct. 11— National Coming Out Day. Contact your local GLBT organization for planned events.

Sat. Oct. 19 — 7 pm. Political Discussion Group meets. Are you feeling isolated in your political opinions? Would you like to share your ideas, frustrations, concerns with others? Then please join other like-minded people. For further information and location call 642-2015.

Is your car properly attired for this campaign season? If not, we have just the bumper sticker for you. Our inventory includes:

- Doing My Part to Piss off the Religious Right
- Re-elect Gore in 2004
- The Last Time We Mixed Politics with Religion, People Got Burned at the Stake.
- Witches Parking, All Others will be Toad
- Question Gender
- Sorry I Missed Church, I've Been Busy Practicing

Witchcraft and Becoming a Lesbian

- Lord, Help Me Be the Person My Dog Thinks I Am
- Don't Pray in My School and I Won't Think in Your Church
- Militant Agnostic—I Don't Know and You Don't Either

Bumper stickers are \$2 each plus \$.50/shipping. Please make check payable to Maine Rural Network and mail to MRN, 51 Shore Rd., Standish, ME 04084.

THANKS RESIST!

Maine Rural Network would like to thank RESIST! for their continued support of our work. RESIST! was one of the first foundations to fund MRN and continues to support other local, grassroots organizations that do not have access to traditional funding sources. You can contact RESIST! at: 259 Elm St., Suite 201, Somerville, MA 02144. (617) 623-5110. Or on the web at: www.resistinc.org



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thing inside that unhooked and turned on, it turned on, that my hug turned into a woman hugging a woman and feeling the sexual, emotional feelings inside that you feel when you hug someone you love and from that day on I have not stopped. I came out to myself that night. The following day, I saw my therapist — I came out to her. Anybody that I knew I came out to, it was the most freeing, at forty-two years old, forty-four I guess I was at that time. The most freeing and liberating time of my life, I was forty-four but I was just beginning. And the growing process of growing up, being responsible for my actions, being responsible and caring about others in a true sense rather than just the work ethic. The feelings, the emotions, I'm seeing life even now, everyday there is something new that I

learn about Sheila or I learn about other people around me or just life in general. Seeing a rose bush for the first time and actually seeing it, acknowledging it. I mean, I'm fifty-two almost fifty-three now, but chronologically that's my age, emotionally, spiritually I'm about twenty maybe twenty-two now and that period of growing up for the last ten years from the age of twelve to twenty-two has been one hell of an adventure. Its been a roller coaster ride up and down, up and down.

MW: That's a wonderful description.

SE: I did beat myself up because I, my first priority next to my faith is to stay sober and I realize that I am an alcoholic, I am an alcoholic in recovery and I need to stay away from the drink,

because you know, one was never enough and twenty was too many, I realize that. I beat myself up, because of... I threw myself into AA so deeply, so completely, that they have a thirteenth step, even though it's a twelve step program, a thirteenth step its so you don't take advantage of the younger people in the program, as far as men looking for a woman, or whatever or me, who had just discovered her own sexuality and here I was feeling these feelings to a poor kid who was just starting out trying to be sober. I beat myself up, what a terrible person I was just for feeling the feelings. I had to tell her my self-discovery and the feelings. It worked out great. To this day I think she's sober and I've been part of her recovery and she's been part of my growth.



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