

NETWORK NEWS

The Newsletter of the Maine Rural Network



Volume 4, No. 4
Winter 2001

Living in the Woods

Name withheld by request

The following are excerpts from a longer interview taken by Madeleine Winterfalcon in 1998.

...I'm living on 70 acres, the nearest house cannot be seen but can be heard, roughly a quarter of a mile away...my home is off the grid and I do create all of my own electricity.... Other than the phone hookup, I am totally independent.

...I knew I needed to be in a rural space by the time I was three. ...I grew up outside of Philadelphia in a suburb where if you hollered, they knew at least three blocks away and that felt very claustrophobic to me and always has. Well, at the age of 5, because of polio epidemics in Philadelphia, I was sent to my uncle's farm in Virginia... I thrived, I mean that was my speed, I hated coming home in the fall, so rural has been my milieu from the very beginning. It would not matter whether I was straight, bi or lezzie, it doesn't matter...I am not comfortable in cities...here, whether I advertise it or not, I mean, I don't lock the doors, I know exactly where the keys to my car are, they're in the ignition. You know, I don't have to worry about whether I drop them here, there or someplace else. So it just feels comfortable. When I was 12 we came up to visit my cousin who lived up the road and there was absolutely no question, call it psychic paranormal, whatever you want, but we turned on the road and I just said to everyone, "I've come home. I have some other things to do but this is where I live, this is where I belong." And then in '67 an elderly chap down the road, [who

the interviewee took care of]... said, "You want my woodlot?" I said, "Oh, I'd love to have your woodlot but I can't afford it." "What have you got?" I told him. He said, "If you can afford the transfer fees, it's yours." So, for a little over \$800, I got 70 acres.

So, it was a gift and I knew I needed to use it that way, but he knew his children would put it into a housing development, because that's where the best money was. And this piece of woods would not handle that, I mean septic system-wise it just would not. And it's too wet, there's too much rock ledge, there are only very few places that you can get a well and septic system. ...And I said, "Someday I'll live on it." And he said, "That's fine," but he said, "at least you'll look after it and my children would get rid of it." He died three months later. ...

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Interviewer: Do you find much lesbian community in this area?

Locally? Amazing, in the beginning, well, ok, let's [go] back to where things were. When I was growing up you didn't talk about lesbians. ...But I was 45 before I really looked at it and said, "Whoops, wait a minute, you are a lesbian!" ...The reason that I say I am a little more cautious about making my name public, I mean if someone asks, I don't lie. If they don't ask, I don't tell. It's that kind of thing. But there's a real, strong, fundamentalist, Baptist - we are right and you are wrong! kind of community in the area. And so, yes, I know who the other lesbians are and if I really

need to do something with someone or contact someone I can, um, but I don't publicize....

Interviewer: I just wonder do you feel a real difference in lesbian culture between rural and urban?

Well the rural are more into animals and organic gardening and learning about herbs and perennials, tend to be more ecologically aware. The city people know all of the latest shows, you know, where you can get the best deal at which discount house. They know all the latest things as far as computer stuff is concerned. ...And yet the more rural lesbians, I find, tend to be more at ease with themselves, more at home with their surroundings. Almost don't have to prove yourself as much as the city people do.

...One of the real blessings that happened, oh, it'll be three years ago in February for me, but January in reality, SOLO began. ...we meet once a month and we have a potluck. And, well, we were meeting in private homes and now we're meeting in the Quaker Meeting House in Durham. ...In the summer, we don't have many people, but, let me tell you, come winter, there are times we'll have 40 and 50 people that will show up. The criteria being that you are single, older is your own description, but more or less 40-ish or better, ...we charge \$2, \$1 for the room and \$1 for paper goods, etc. And \$10 a year for a newsletter. So we've tried to keep it really cheap, our program is usually quite spontaneous.

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Mission Statement

The mission of the Maine Rural Network is to promote visibility and security for lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender people living in rural Maine, and to work for social, educational and economic justice for all Maine people. The Maine Rural Network seeks to accomplish this by empowering individuals living in rural Maine to organize, establish and support autonomous groups locally and to create a network statewide.

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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Letter to the Editors:

I was distressed to read of the dreadful experiences of "Transgendered in Rural Maine". As described that was clearly a hate crime - a violation of the Maine Civil Rights Act. The Attorney General's office investigates and acts on such events when reported, even if local police will not. They also train local police and want to know when training is needed, as the story suggests it is in that town.

Because the addition of sexual orientation to the Human Rights Act - which has to do with access to such things as jobs and housing - has not yet been accomplished, people may forget that sexual orientation IS part of the Civil Rights Act, having to do with violence and threats.

I urge the writer of that chilling story to contact the Attorney General's office by calling 626-8800 and saying she has a hate crime to report. Anyone who is targeted for violence or threat based on sexual orientation bias is entitled to protection. When calling local police ask for the Civil Rights Officer (the person most likely to have been trained). Of course if the danger is immediate, as was the case in the story, any officer is better than none at first, but then ask for the Civil Rights Officer. If the response is not satisfactory it is time to call the attorney General's office. They will take you seriously!

Peter Rees



Ongoing Oral History Training

If you missed the MRN oral history training workshop on September 22, or if you live outside of the Portland area, we may be able to offer you the chance to learn directly from our oral historian by helping to plan and by observing an interview. In exchange, we ask that you record a minimum of two oral histories for the Rural Lives Project. For more information please contact Naomi 642-2015 or nomad@psouth.net.

Standish, ME 04084
51 Shore Road



**Maine
Rural
Network**



Maine Rural Network is dedicated to the belief that we can speak with one voice in opposition to discrimination whatever our background, wherever we live. We have it in our hands to create safety and justice for all people of Maine, from those living in the most populated areas to those living in the most remote regions.

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Here's what I can do to help the Maine Rural Network:

I have the following skills I can contribute:

The issues that concern me the most are:

- ☐ Civil rights for all ☐ Living wages, better jobs
☐ Hate Crimes in Maine ☐ Support of organized labor
☐ Defending a woman's right to choose
☐ Safe schools ☐ Universal health care
☐ Access to secondary education
☐ Influence of radical/religious right
☐ Other _____

I believe that social justice is the right of every person.

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

Individual

☐ \$20

Household

☐ \$35

Activist

☐ \$50

Organizer

☐ \$100

Visionary

☐ \$250

☐ \$ _____

Name _____

Street _____

E-mail _____

Phone: day _____ evening _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Your contribution is tax-deductible



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December 1, 2001

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Dear MRN Members and Friends,

I opened the back door to listen if it was a coyote pack. After a brief silence I heard a voice out across the field, "You bitch, get your fucking face out of the door so I can kill you." Then a group of other voices joined in a chorus of "You faggot." At the same time there were lots of loud banging sounds. It sounded like they were hitting the chain link fence with baseball bats. (*excerpted from "Transgendered in Rural Maine: An Act of Courage," Network News, Fall 2001.*)

The above is an excerpt is from a story solicited for Maine Rural Network's Rural Lives Project. This is one of many stories that people across Maine should be familiar with, because these events happen to people in Maine every day. However, It is clear from polling data that most Mainers are unaware that violence and threats targeting minority populations happen in their own communities all the time.

Polling data also illustrates that an overwhelming majority of Mainers are opposed to discrimination against anyone. But in spite of this fact, the polls also show that similar numbers of Mainers do not believe that there is discrimination in Maine. It is time that this story, along with many others relating the realities of life of minority populations in rural Maine, be recognized by the rest of Maine.

We are gathering the stories of all minority groups who live or have lived in rural Maine, whether we are racial or sexual minorities, live with a disability or have any trait that makes us different from the majority of people living in rural areas. We have begun this project in an effort to depict a wide variety of experiences and to find the common threads that connect our lives.

Maine Rural Network continues to:

- Serve as a voice for rural issues in the progressive community.
- Work on creating Safe Schools in Maine
- Help create more tolerance and understanding of minority groups in rural communities.
- Build understanding between members of minority communities.
- Make connections between people in rural Maine and the media or for individuals seeking information about particular communities.

Please help to fund MRN us accomplish these goals by becoming a member or by renewing our membership in MRN if you have not done so this year. All donations are tax deductible.

Further, If you would like to participate in the important work MRN is doing, we need help in reaching a wide variety of people throughout the state in order to record their stories. Also, please consider submitting your own story or becoming an interviewer. If you would like to volunteer for this project or would just like further information, please contact Naomi at 642-2015 or nomad@psouth.net

Thank you in advance for your continued support of the Maine Rural Network.

Sincerely,



Naomi Winterfalcon, Director
Maine Rural Network

Community Bulletin Board

Sat. 12/1 - Women & AIDS: A Community Forum, 10 am to Noon, Rumford Public Library 58 Rumford Avenue.

Sat. 12/1 - Ladies of the Lake, four of Maine's leading musicians from the Celtic tradition present this Irish Manor House style soiree inspired by the deep roots of Irish and Scottish music. Saco River Grange Hall, \$10; \$8/students & seniors. 929-6472 for reservations and directions.

Sat. 12/7 - The Angel Band, a celtic ensemble plays Irish ballads, jigs and reels. Includes performance by Scottish dancer Laura Scott. Saco River Grange Hall, \$10; \$8/students & seniors. 929-6472 for reservations and directions.

Sat. 12/8 - Women & AIDS: A Community Forum; 9 to 11 am Fare Share Commons, Main Street, Norway

These community forums are a chance for open discussions about women and HIV/AIDS. Community members who attend will learn about HIV/AIDS in Ox-

ford County, especially as it impacts women's lives. Attendees will also have a chance to take part in a discussion about HIV prevention efforts in the county. The forums are sponsored by PreventionWorks Harm Reduction Services (formerly the AIDS Coalition of Lewiston-Auburn) and are free and open to the public. For more information contact Nancy Bullett by calling PreventionWorks HRS at 743-9507 or by e-mail at pwhrs@zwi.net.

Fri. 12/14 - Jennifer Porter and Friends all request concert. Saco River Grange Hall, \$10; \$8/students & seniors. 929-6472 for reservations and directions.

Sat. 12/15 - Schooner Fare Holiday Concert with special guests: Edward Little High School Chamber Singers 8pm, Bates College Chapel, Lewiston. Tickets: \$15 adults/\$10 seniors and children under 12. For tickets contact PreventionWorks Harm Reduction Services at 743-9507. A benefit for PreventionWorks.

(Continued from page 1)

...I am aware by being self-employed and being rural, that I probably would be able to make twice the money living in the city. It is my choice not to. But you know, who can beat getting up in the morning and seeing three deer grazing in the back and drive down the road to get your mail and having wild turkeys cross the road. Um, or partridge. I mean it's like... I really think I have the best of all of it except, that yes, economically you end up probably having to have more expenses just by virtue that it's further and that you've got to do more traveling and exert yourself more.



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.

Individual <input type="checkbox"/> \$20	Household <input type="checkbox"/> \$35	Activist <input type="checkbox"/> \$50	Organizer <input type="checkbox"/> \$100	Visionary <input type="checkbox"/> \$250	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____
Name _____					
Street _____					
E-mail: _____					
Phone: day _____ evening: _____					
Town _____ State _____ Zip _____					

Your contribution for our educational efforts is tax-deductible. Please make checks payable to MRN..

Maine Rural Network 51 Shore Rd. Standish, ME 04084

Networking

Maine Rural Network has its own list serv. If you would like to be part of this growing list where you can start a discussion, post an event, receive information about current events, and more, just e-mail MRN at nomad@psouth.net and we will add you to the list.

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!

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?

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. We believe that this perception is applied across the board to other minority populations as well. Therefore, MRN is requesting stories about the life experiences of any minority group that lives in rural Maine. Our goal is to provide people in Maine with a greater understanding of what it is like to live in a rural area as a member of a minority community.

We are requesting your stories either written or on tape. To request that your oral history be recorded by an MRN representative, please use the contact information below. Written consent forms must be signed and returned to MRN in order for you to participate in the project. You may request that your name be withheld from publication, but the stories must be available for publication, archival donation, research and/or educational purposes.

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