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## Real World' star Danny Roberts kicks off Pride Week

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# 'Real World' star Danny Roberts kicks off Pride Week

By Angela Fiandaca  
Staff Reporter

Approximately 250 University of Maine students and community members got a taste of what it's like to be "Out in the Real World" Monday night in 101 Neville Hall.

As part of the University of Maine's Pride Week, MTV Real World's 2000 New Orleans cast member Danny Roberts spoke a little about his Real World experience and more about what it's like being gay in the military.

"I'm almost embarrassed to have taken part in it [The Real World] now when I watch the new ones," Roberts said.

Roberts came out to his friends during his four years of college at the University of Georgia.

"I could've been vegetarian for all they cared," Roberts said. "They were really supportive."

Coming out to his parents was another story.

"I wanted this catalyst to come out to my family," Roberts said.

The catalyst was that he was going to be leaving for the Real World tapings in two weeks. He told his parents that he was gay Christmas Eve night. His mother was supportive. His father had a hard time accepting it. His brothers reacted as his friends did, as if it was not a big deal.

"I think [my parents are] proud of me in the end," Roberts said. "They respect me and they support me, because I am living my life the way I want to and I have the courage to do that."

Roberts met his current partner of five years, Paul, the week

before Real World tapings began. It was not the typical dating scene, Paul was an officer in the U.S. Army and the military does not permit gays to serve. With Roberts on the Real World and his every moment being taped, the risk of Paul losing his position in the military was high. It was a difficult start to a relationship, according to Roberts.

Paul's face was blurred when he visited Roberts in New Orleans. When the couple went to movies they'd sit several seats apart. At grocery stores, they would stand in separate checkout lines. For more than a year, they barely went out in public together for fear of someone recognizing Paul and putting two and two together: That he was gay and in the military, according to Roberts.

"...which is completely insane in this day and age," Roberts said. "We're bringing the freedom to Iraq and our military has these policies."

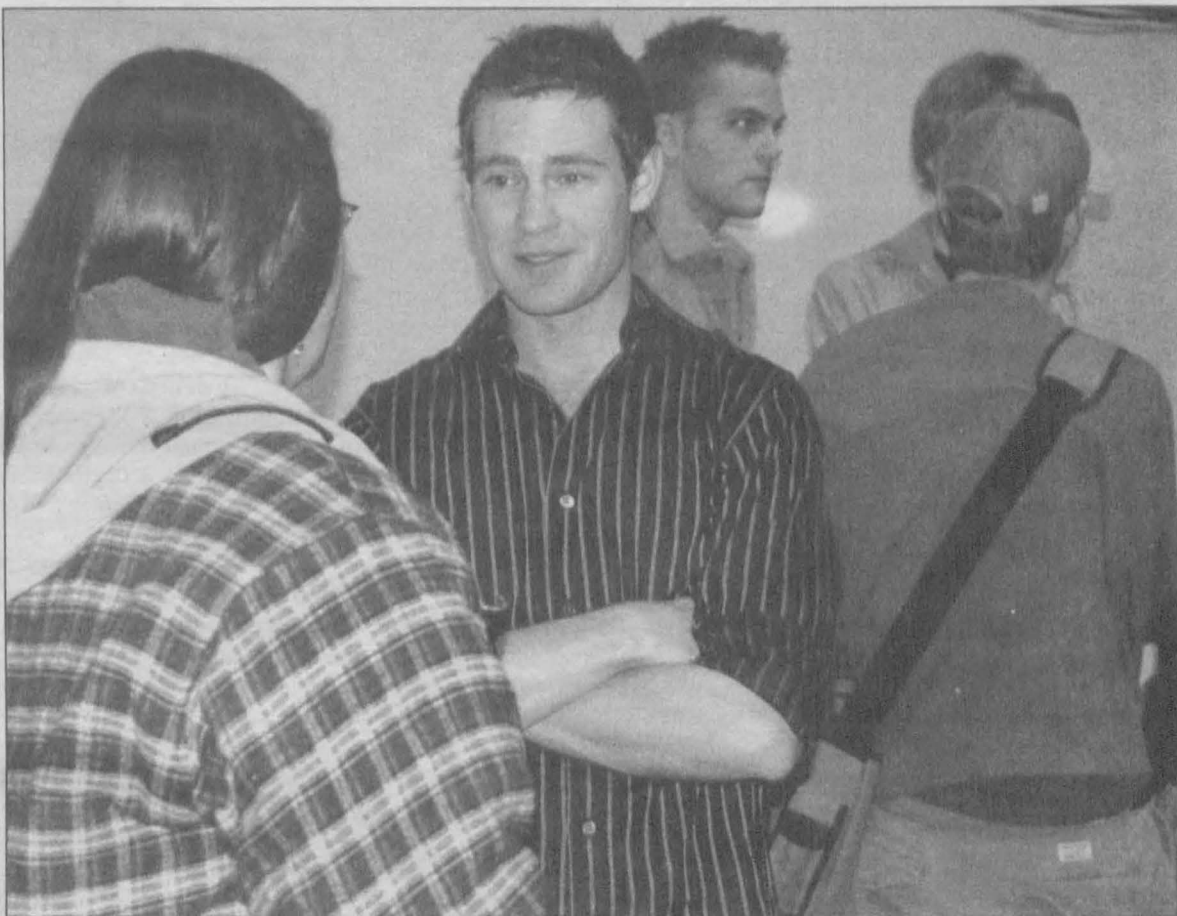
The secrecy reached a point where Paul would refer to Roberts as "Daniella," and when attending military dances he'd take a girl friend and pretend to be engaged to her, according to Roberts.

"That's how ridiculous it got. That's how scary it got," Roberts said.

Approximately two years after the show, Paul left the military. Life for the couple has since been a lot easier, according to Roberts.

"It's very, very un-American to give a right to one group and not to another. We're good at doing that," Roberts said.

Roberts encouraged the audi-



CAMPUS PHOTO BY EMMA POPE WELCH

HAVE PRIDE — Danny Roberts, a cast member from MTV's "Real World-New Orleans," spoke to students Monday night about issues concerning gays. He focused mainly on the struggles faced by gays in the military.

ence to ask questions and to offer differing opinions, because that is the way everyone will learn, he said.

"I think it's very important for us to talk about these issues," Roberts said.

Roberts also discussed gay marriage — something he doesn't agree is the right thing for gays to be fighting for at this time, he said.

"You basically have no human rights in America if you're gay. You can be fired if you're gay," Roberts said. "It's not the right time to bring up gay marriage."

While he thinks it's not the ideal time to fight for gay marriage rights, he said since the issue has been brought forth there is no turning back. While he personally doesn't believe in marriage, he

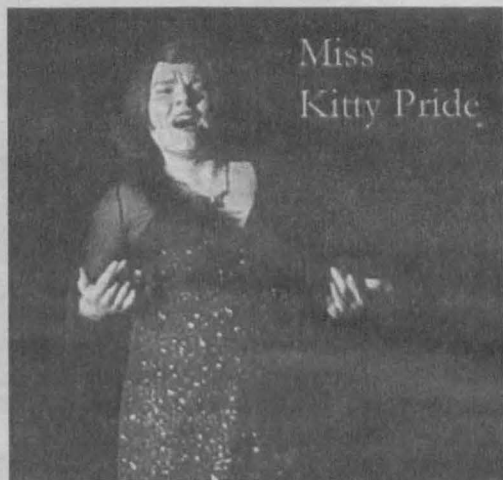
believes it should be a right granted to all individuals, and he doesn't understand why those opposed to gay marriage feel so strongly about it, he said. "What is the big fear? Please, I have to this day to understand. If [marriage is] so sacred, why's the divorce rate at 70 percent? What are gays going to

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**Ends Saturday!**

**UMaine PRIDE WEEK**

**All are welcome.**



Miss Kitty Pride

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[www.umaine.edu/glbtc](http://www.umaine.edu/glbtc)

TODAY

**Wilde Stein Alliance Open House**  
7-9pm. Walker Room, Memorial Union.

FRIDAY

**Date Auction Fundraiser**  
6:30pm. FFA Room, Memorial Union.

SATURDAY

**Pride Dance & Drag Show**  
hosted by Miss Kitty Pride  
8pm-12am. Stodder Commons.



**For more information, call (207) 581-1439**

UMaine Pride Week is sponsored by Wilde Stein Alliance, Guest Lecture Series, Student Government, Program Fund, GLBT & Allies Council, and Women in the Curriculum.

# PRIDE

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do to it? What is it that's going to happen to marriage?"

Audience members provided the possible reasons of religion, the government and the issue of raising children.

Roberts referred to his friend who was raised by two mothers and claimed that while it's a tough childhood it's not far off from what children go through when raised by straight families.

"I know for a fact that a person can turn out just fine being raised by two moms or two dads," Roberts said.

Gays are misrepresented almost everywhere, but mostly among the media, according to Roberts.

Roberts became a "token character" on the Real World New Orleans. He was the "typical gay guy," which helped him realize the power of TV and media, he said.

"That show really glamorizes the bad things that young people do," Roberts said. "They take a person and turn you into 5 percent of what you are. How much reality can you get from 5 percent of a person?"

Roberts said he does not regret the experience because he learned from it, and enjoyed the opportunity to teach others.

"For the first time, people watching the show could relate to me and others who are gay," Roberts said.

He received a lot of mail from people who changed their views about gays, and even some from church leaders who saw something positive in him and helped them re-think their opinions, according to Roberts.

Changing views is mostly what he hopes to accomplish by talking at universities, he said.

"It's about talking about the misconceptions and clearing them out," Roberts said. "This is just a place to talk about these issues – put our opinions out there, discuss them and learn from them."

To educate the UMaine community was the purpose behind this talk, sponsored by Wilde Stein Alliance, Guest Lecture Series, Student Government, Program Fund, GLBT & Allies Council and

Women in the Curriculum.

"The hope is to offer the University of Maine community some opportunities they don't otherwise have," said Matthew Small, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) Liaison to the Deans of Students.

"It was important for the community to learn a lot of the same messages that Wilde Stein is trying to get out from somebody who the straight community is open to," said Shannon Perro, Wilde Stein president and first-year biology and psychology student.

"This is the same message that many of us here at the university deliver every day, but we don't have that celebrity status," Small said.

Perro said that this was the perfect event to kick off Pride Week.

"With someone who's not as popular and famous it's easier to ignore," Perro said. "When it's unavoidably visible it almost forces people to recognize that there are gay people and they are people."

As Roberts opened his talk with the statement that probably 95 percent of the audience members were females, Small agrees there most likely were people who attended just to see a celebrity.

"I'm OK with that, because my hope is that those people who came to see Danny Roberts because he's a celebrity are the ones more apt to listen to his message," Small said.

Changing views and celebrating people's individuality is what Pride Week is all about, according to Small.

"It's saying, 'We're not going to remain silent anymore, and we're not going to continue to let people marginalize us.' Pride represents that shift in philosophy," Small said. "It allows the GLBT people to say that we're here and we're part of society."

Remaining Pride Week events include: Wilde Stein Alliance Open House Thursday April 7 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. in the Walker Room of Memorial Union; a Date Auction Fundraiser Friday April 8 at 6:30 p.m. in the FFA Room of Memorial Union; and a Pride Dance and Drag Show Saturday April 9 from 8 p.m. to 12 a.m. in Stodder Commons. For more information visit [www.umaine.edu/glbtc](http://www.umaine.edu/glbtc).