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LESBIAN NEWS

Victoria's Monthly Lesbian
Feminist Newsletter

Vol. 1, Issue 7
March 1990

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INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S DAY

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Waltzing Down Memory Lane With Reva

by Reva Hutkin

My fifty-fourth birthday party was winding down. We were coming off our sugar high, just a few women now, sitting around chewing the fat as it were. One thing led to another and before we knew it, I was recounting a short herstory of the dyke movement in Victoria. Everyone seemed to think it important that I share these stories with the readers of *LesbiaNews*, so here I am at the typewriter.

Everyone knows what a terrible memory I have and anyway, everyone experiences life differently so what follows is a series of my own recollections. I hope women will feel free to write in and add their own memories of a very exciting time here, or correct me if I'm blatantly in error.

Thirteen years ago I, along with my daughter and a lover called Margaret, landed in Victoria from Montreal via one and a half years at a lighthouse and weather station on the West Coast. Soon enough we discovered a woman's bookstore in Oak Bay, just a wee place, and a Women's Center that hosted Thursday night dances. The Mustard Seed now resides in our old center. At one point the front left side contained a woman's craft shop and I still have the pottery honey pot Margaret bought for my birthday.

The Women's Center was a going concern when we first became involved with it. Energies and money ran out eventually so the equivalent of town meetings were held to see where the energy was and what to do with any left-over capital and chattels. The first meeting was attended by close to 100 women, the second by about 50 and clearly the third by the lesbian community. It seemed the dykes had energy and desire to continue on as an entity so that is what happened.

The birth pangs were relatively mild and F.L.A.G. was born, fully the



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Display Ads are \$5/month for business card size and \$5/month each for additional chunk of business card-size space. Send camera-ready copy with your cheque to our PO Box address. Deadline is the 15th of each month for the following month.

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Submissions are welcome. Send your letters, questions, comments, stories, poems, articles, ideas, cartoons, drawings, news items, calendar items, grocery lists and doodle-pads to the PO Box address, typed double spaced, very neatly written, or on IBM-compatible disk. We edit for space and clarity. We'll print it as long as it's not sexist-racist-homophobic-antisemitic-ageist-classist-able-bodiedist-personal attackist or boringist.

WHO ARE WE?

Editor & Maker of Typos: *Debby Gregory*

Layout & Paste-Up Artistes:
Lisette Cook, Nancy Issenman & Wynke

Data Entry Whiz & Official Accordionist:
Wynke

Contributors This Issue:

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Christine Morissette

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*With Special Thanks to Marianne Alto and the
IWD Committee for Calendar Events
Cover Drawing: Lou-ann Glendale*

COMING NEXT MONTH

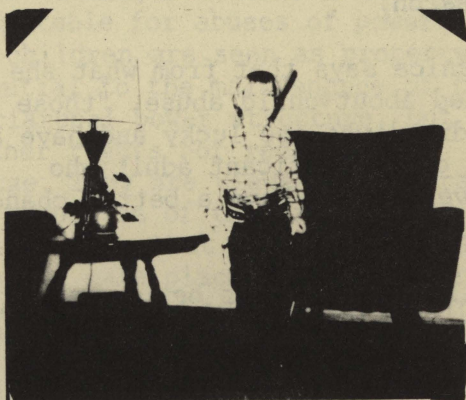
SEND US A CHILDHOOD PHOTO BY MARCH 15th AND WE'LL INCLUDE IT IN OUR DYKETTE DAYS COLLAGE (NO NAMES MENTIONED) — IF YOU WANT YOUR PHOTO RETURNED, PLEASE INCLUDE SELF-ADDRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE.



Feminist Lesbian Action Group. We held weekly meetings to discuss political issues; we decided Victoria is too small for factions and major dissent and that we had to stick together as one group; we had major battles over cigarette smoke at meetings; there were many children in our extended family and during dances they all got babysat in one house close to the dance by our teenaged daughters; new women were welcomed into our community with a home visit to break the ice (a sort of welcome-wagon); we were listed with the NEED Crisis line in case any lesbian was in crisis; we tried to be all things to all women and sometimes we were successful and sometimes we failed miserably but at least we always tried.

During this heyday of lesbian activism B.C. had an umbrella group for all women's organizations in B.C. called the B.C.F.W. (B.C. Federation of Women) and FLAG was a member group and a member of the sub-committee ROLS (Rights of Lesbians). We sent delegates to the A.G.M., were full participants and contributors to the organization and were a respected group member.

FLAG was such a going concern we decided to publish a newsletter and we called it WAVES. WAVES was an immediate success. It contained poetry, art, humour, stories and political discussion. One could see in the layout and quality of contents how much love went into its production. We managed to put out two issues before our money began to dwindle. Just about this time, the BCFW AGM was again being convened and we took our plight to ROLS.



ROLS had been talking about putting out a publication and we already had a going concern so a decision was taken that WAVES continue to be published in Victoria as a joint venture with ROLS, and the sub-committee appointed three Vancouver women to liaison and work with us. This exercise proved to be rather difficult in several aspects. Three women arrived to go over the contents to make sure it followed ROLS guidelines. Well, horror of horrors, the issue contained humour! I mean, can you believe serious, politically motivated lesbians would stoop so low? They were

*We tried to be all
things to all women
and sometimes we were successful*

mightily upset and it took a lot of diplomacy to smooth that one over. We promised to try and control these baser impulses for the next issue, although we did argue in favour of humour. Somehow we managed to produce two issues as a joint venture but it was always difficult, FLAG wanting to maintain a playful side and ROLS being typically big city politicians.

Our lesbian community was the proud producer of two variety shows. We packed the house with women who came to see us dance, act, sing, play musical instruments and generally entertain. The second year I was proud to be the emcee of the show. Some women will swear that they saw me, naked from the waist up, cavorting across the stage at the finale. Margaret presented me with a rose.

The lesbian picnic goes back a long way. The first time we headed out to East Sooke Park, got lost in droves, finally found the beach, and managed to clear a wide swath around us, allowing us to be our outrageous selves. I put my bathing suit on as dykes held up towels around me. The laughter and joy still is fresh in my mind.

Continued next month: do please supplement Reva's marvelous memories with some of your own.

DON'T: A WOMAN'S WORD

by Christine Morissette

How do you find a childhood that has been lost for almost 40 years? How do you rediscover the self you used to dream about, but who was terrorized into hiding when she was four years old? And if you do find that child, how will you know her?

Elly Danica has embarked on just such a journey of self-discovery. Her autobiography, *Dont: A Woman's Word*, documents the relentless devastation of a child's trust by physical, psychological, and sexual abuse. Like many victims of child sexual abuse, Danica survived by dissociation in her childhood, resulting in amnesia in her adulthood. Consequently, almost 40 years passed before she was able to begin piecing together the fragments of her life.

I recently spoke with Elly Danica in Victoria, one stop on an extensive cross-country tour to promote and read from her book. I was worried about probing into an obviously personal and painful past, but Danica spoke openly about her life and her healing process.

"We must look into our past. It affects everything we do, and until we come to terms with it, it controls our lives and our being."

To come to terms with her own past, Danica spent 13 years writing her journal, and six weeks turning that journal into her book. The reading and speaking she does are as cathartic for her as the writing was. Her personal process continues in a public context, and though the retelling of her story is no less painful each time, she has "a commitment to stay in [her] body, even though the pattern of survival in the past has been to dissociate." Danica is wary of formulas for survival; she does not consider her time now as recovery, but rather her healing as "a process, a dynamic process."

Danica wrote the book that she needed to read. Most literature on child sexual abuse deals with the incidence of abuse, and with the sociological factors. Danica wrote about the pain of sexual abuse, as experienced by the child. To do this, she had to go back into the room with her abusers, she had to return as a little girl with her father. Because she was often taken from her sleep, these memories were difficult to access.

"What you wind up with as an adult [are] very vague memories that are difficult to define because you came out of sleep into this context, and then had its horror, and then went back to your bed."

One memory that remained clear for Danica throughout the years of horror was that when she was first abused, her grandmother believed her and wanted to help her. As a child, Danica remembers "asking if the moon that shone through my window was the [same] light my grandmother would see." Thereafter, she told the moon what she could not tell her absent grandmother, and its light endured through much of the abuse she experienced.

Soul. A tiny light. If he doesn't know about it I can keep it. My secret. My soul. A self. A star. Millions of light years away. I search.

Danica says that from what she has learned about child abuse, "those [children] who are lucky and have at least one significant adult who believes [them] have a better chance of survival."

Elly Danica tells her story on a very personal level, but sees it as a reflection of patriarchal society, and the abuses of power that this society

encourages. Danica's life was under strict patriarchal control from the beginning. Her father manipulated her with threats based on his position:

I'm your father, they'll believe me. They'll never believe you.

The Catholic Church, as represented by her teachers and her priest, further supported this:

You are subject to your father in all things. He is your lord as Jesus is your lord...Think about what you owe your father and your heavenly father.

Danica's escape through marriage ironically left her in the same prison but with a different jailer:

All I had to do was obey in silence and my husband was happy.

And psychiatry, unable to deal with the root causes of Danica's unhappiness, or the power issues involved, only reinforced patriarchal expectations:

The shrink can fix you up so you'll be normal and a good wife and mother...We're trying to help you. Spread your legs. Did you take your pills today? Then why are you crying again?

With attitudes such as these, Danica is not surprised there is such widespread acceptance of violence against women and children. She says "we live in a society which gives power to men, but doesn't hold them accountable for abuses of power. Women and children are seen as property, essential to the maintenance of the patriarchal power structure, but with neither rights nor recourse for change. They are viewed as central to the structure of the family, but Danica holds that "the nuclear family is not a safe place, and it never was a safe haven." She maintains that if there is no guarantee for the personal survival of children, there will be no

survival of the human species.

Danica believes that child sexual abuse "continues because we remain silent," that denial creates "a society which turns a blind eye to the abuse of children." How can this situation be resolved? For Danica, the answer lies in public awareness. Though she wrote her book to be done with its content, every three or four days she reads publicly from it. She says her reading grounds her anger and rage, and enables her to live the rest of her life more fully. It also helps other people see the realities of child sexual abuse, the irrevocable crossing of boundaries, on a personal level, and this is where public awareness begins.

When Elly Danica was nine years old, she made a promise to a statue of the Virgin Mary that her grandmother had sent her, that she would one day write a book about what was happening to her. *Don't: a Woman's Word* is the fulfillment of that promise. She kept faith with herself, and this spring her promise will come full circle. Her book is to be published in Dutch, the language of her grandmother. Danica will return to Holland and hopefully meet with her grandmother for the first time in 38 years.

Beginning. Always. From a secret place. Soul dwelling: found. Self: found. Heart: found. Life: found. Wisdom: found. Hope, once lost: found. Process: never lost.

This is a severely abridged version of Christine's article which appears in full in *Kinesis* March 1990, reprinted here by her permission. Citations with quotation marks are from conversations with Elly Danica; citations without quotes are from the book. I recommend you read the complete article, and also highly recommend the book.

Don't: A Women's Word
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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 1990 CA

FRIDAY MARCH 2: NETWORKING DINNER/TALK ON GLOBAL FEMINISM 6:30pm no host bar, 7pm dinner Speaker Julia Goulden, who works with the BCTF and CIDA on Global Education issues. Oak Bay Beach Hotel \$22/\$20 Childcare on advance request. Sponsor: Sooke Teachers Association, Status of Women Committee

SATURDAY MARCH 3: LUCIE BLUE TREMBLAY AND JENNIFER BEREZAN IN CONCERT!!!** 8pm, UVic University Centre \$9/\$8 students, tickets from McPherson, Hillside ticket centre, UVic Box Office and SUB office. Sponsor: SUB Productions

SUNDAY MARCH 4: THIRD ANNUAL IWD MARCH 2pm Congregate at Centennial Square, Victoria City Hall to hear a variety of speakers and entertainers before the march begins. Sponsor: IWD Committee. Women and children welcome.

MONDAY MARCH 5: POETRY READINGS 7:30 - 9:30 pm, 106 Superior Street Susan Musgrave, Marlene Cookshaw, Patricia Young, Linda Rogers and Elizabeth Woods read from their own works. Sponsor: IWD Committee. Free, donations welcome.

MONDAY - THURSDAY MARCH 5 - 8: UVIC FILM FESTIVAL Approximately 7 & 9pm Films may include: The Sorceress, A Question of Silence, I heard the Mermaid Singing. Place/Sponsor: UVic Cinecenta, \$3-\$5

MONDAY - FRIDAY MARCH 5 - 9: WOMEN'S MOVIES Daytimes, UVic Cinecenta and SUB Upper Lounge. Entertaining and educational women's movies and videos showing daily. Watch for details at UVic or phone SWAG. Sponsor: UVic Women's Centre

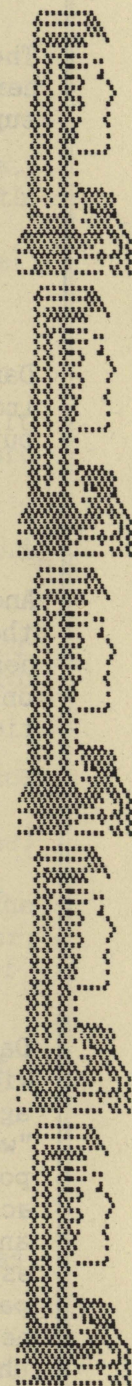
TUESDAY MARCH 6: INDIGENOUS CULTURES AND WOMEN 8pm UVic Begbie Building Room 159 With speakers Anne Cameron, Patricia Keyes, and Lavina White Sponsor: Environmental Studies Department

WEDNESDAY MARCH 7: NATIVE DINNER AND STORYTELLING EVENING 6-9pm, BC Provincial Museum grounds, SW corner of Douglas and Belleville. An evening of salmon, bannock and storytelling around the firepit at the Long House, featuring local and up-island storytellers. Sponsor: The Native Friendship Centre and IWD Committee.

THURSDAY MARCH 8: BREAKFAST PRESENTATION 8-9:30 am, UVic Faculty Club, \$8/\$6. Gwen Brodsky speaks on "The Canadian Charter Equal Rights For Women, One Step Forward, Two Steps Back" after breakfast. For tickets call 384-4705, 380-6533. Sponsor: National Association of Women and the Law, UVic.

THURSDAY MARCH 8: INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY POTLUCK DINNER 6 - 10pm, St. John's Church Hall, 1611 Quadra (at Balmoral). Entertainment, artistic and other displays, music, Raging Grannies, and the good fun women have when we get together. Bring something yummy to eat!! Coffee and tea supplied. Childcare available, bring toys for the tots. No alcohol, no smoking. Women and children welcome. Sponsor: IWD Committee

THURSDAY MARCH 8: RADIO PLAY "GETTING WITH BABY" 10pm, CFUV 102fm Newly formed A.B.A.C.U.S. (Anything But A Collective Us) Theatre Group will be presenting Karey Perks' play on CFUV Playhouse 30.



All events
chair access
Call SWAG 3
to confirm

LENDAR OF EVENTS

THURSDAY MARCH 8: WOMEN'S RADIO PROGRAMMING CFUV 102 FM UVic's radio broadcasts special women's programming all day.

FRIDAY MARCH 9: COFFEE HOUSE/TALENT NIGHT 7:30 pm, "The Cove", 1923 Fernwood (at Gladstone). Coffee house/open microphone talent night. Join us and read a poem or story, try a stand-up comedy routine or play a song on your favourite instrument! Sponsor: IWD Committee.

SATURDAY MARCH 10: EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS Afternoon, check details with SWAG.

1) "Women, Creativity and Political Change", Terry Padgham (Voice of Women)

2) "Kathie Kollwitz" a slide/tape show about this social activist's life, Beth Hill (Voice Of Women)

3) A men's workshop organized by and for men to discuss their role in feminism and healing the planet...and more!!

SATURDAY MARCH 10: WOMEN'S DANCE 8pm
Boogie with your friends and loved ones to the music of Keychange. Cedar Hill Recreation Centre, 3220 Cedar Hill Road. Limited admission - get your tickets early. Cash bar. Tickets \$7/\$10 at SWAG, VIDEA, Everywomans Books, UVic SUB General Office. Sponsor: IWD Committee.

FRIDAY MARCH 16: DINNER-THEATRE 6pm
Vegetarian dinner with brown rice and...! Entertainment: a dramatic poetry reading by Dorothy Livesay and friends, a puppet show called "The Day They Parachuted Cats on Borneo", and the World Premiere of the Raving Beauties Theatre. 106 Superior Street, \$12/\$10 Sponsor: Voice of Women (VOW)

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY COMMITTEE SPONSORS:

Victoria International Development Education Association (VIDEA)
Action Committee for Women in El Salvador
Victoria Status of Women Action Group (SWAG)
Greater Victoria Disarmament Group (GVDG)
Lynn Hunter, MP - Constituency Office
Women for Economic Survival (WES)
Victoria Voice of Women (VOW)

THANKS TO THE IWD COMMITTEE FOR ALL THEIR HARD WORK!!

Bonnie Robinson
Catherine Joyce
Hallie Walsh
Joanne Fox
Kathleen MacKinnon
Kathryn Fairfield
Lisa Eccles
Maria Abbott
Marianne Alto
Susan Albion
Van Buchanan

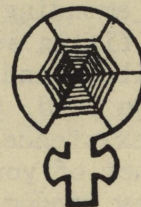
IWD SHIRTS FOR SALE

Don't forget to purchase a Commemorative International Women's Day 1990 t-shirt, sweatshirt, or cotton crinkle shirt, for sale at the SWAG Office and at some IWD events. They bear the IWD 1990 logo gracing our cover, designed by Lou-ann Glendale, and come in black, red, and white. T-shirt \$15

Sweatshirt \$30

Cotton Crinkle \$24

Available in Large and Extra Large
All shirts are 100% cotton



SUPPORT VICTORIA STATUS OF WOMEN

SWAG is selling t-shirts. The shirts come in Large and Extra Large and are available in five delicious colours: Teal Blue, Black, White, Fuschia, and Ecru. T-shirts bear the Victoria Status of Women logo and cost \$13 each

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etails.



Beyond Sissinghurst

by Heather Gibson, Dipl.T.

AN ODE TO SOIL

If it weren't for this good earth beneath my feet, perhaps I would have continued to do things "economically viable" with my life's work. One of my dear friends used to remark that I should have been a rocket scientist (when I was tutoring calculus students). Others have snidely suggested that horticulture isn't really a very becoming occupation for "...a woman... of your age...an intelligent personetc." Becoming or not, there are those of us who have such a passion that reason must inevitably yield. I have an affinity with the soil that is quite beyond the bounds of reason. Fellow gardening nuts unite! You know what I'm talking about.

This column is not a "how to..." It's not about amending your soil, fertilizing or fixing stuff up. It is a miniature tribute and appreciation to and about the land, the soil, the basis for our existence. I hope you can find a corner of your heart to appreciate a few random musings.

An early childhood memory floats in from near Brandon, Manitoba. My father was transferred to Winnipeg from Montreal for 5 years. In my life, these were ages from 5 to 10. Family outings were the order of the weekend, and I recall a sweet moment with my

sister, wheat and dirt. En route to Brandon to visit farm friends in July, the car stopped. Val, my sister, and I had to pee. We were dispensed to a wheat field while the rest of the family waited semi-patiently in the car. My sister and I were close, and we squatted side-by-side some 10 rows into the wheat field. We joked our crazy kid jokes and I landed face down laughing in the field, my nose in full contact with prairie dirt. I remember scraping my hand into the earth as if to imprint the moment and hold it fast. I brought that handful of soil to my face. It was dry and dusty, crumbly and loose. To me it was the sweetest fragrance, full of the moment, full of promise, branded on my memory.

Back in Montreal at the age of 11 or 12, I enjoyed a summer of unique freedom with a friend. Our family home bordered a wilderness of undeveloped lots, to us a forest. Bobby Webber, my pal of the day, and I set about to "landscape" the lot behind our house. We both had the bug - the love for soil, moving it, shaping it, appreciating it. We built terraces by moving great stones one at a time with a barrow. We constructed barbecue pits, tetherball courts, tree and ground forts. Using the worst tools

imaginable we hacked out our little design. Finally we hand-picked stones from our terraces, pooled our allowances and bought grass seed. I can see us now, beautiful in our ineptness, scattering seed and oh so gently packing it down, watering it and waiting for a miracle - growth.

We played games: stand-o, hide and seek, statues, simon says, red rover. We peeked at the terraces for days, imploring growth. I can easily recall the morning when I actually saw the soil give up the seed. It was a brownish green cast over the carefully raked terraces. I rushed out, brushed my hand above the earth and knew! WE GREW GRASS! The soil was heaving great wafts of humidity into the misty air and I was in heaven. I ran over to Bobby Webber's but he was embroiled in A.M. radio tunes. I was alone to jump around and enjoy my grass, the terraces, the forts, the tetherball courts. I went back, put my butt in the barbeque pit and admired the "grounds". We had created, in my eyes, a wonderful thing.

It's the smell, isn't it. That unmistakable odor that brings all the wonder of spring, brings all the promise of summer. Nothing else has that potency.

West coast, Vancouver Island 1976.

Tugwell Creek. Living beside a creek which was intermittently connected with the ocean threw all garden concepts into doubt. In the first year my seeds were swept away by a high tide forcing its way up the mouth of the creek in July. The second year was slightly better, but in August a freak storm tossed my beets, chard and soil up on the back porch as the waves washed in. When the weather calmed I was heir to the smell of salt, beetroot and soil baking in the sun. Now, when I think of that home, those smells come back so easily.

Now, to my dismay, I can recognize things in the soil I'd rather not see. I can recognize poor structure created by years of inorganic fertilizer use and roto-tilling. I can recognize plant indicators of acidic or alkaline soils. I know the stench of poor drainage and the gritty air of excessively good drainage. Perhaps I sense too much.

Yet, my spirit anticipates another spring. Another chance to remember and cherish the memories of dirt past and gone. I await glistening cobwebs on dew-covered grass, steam lifting from the vegetable garden, young sprouts shooting up and warm mornings. Gardeners take heart, it's not far off.

NEXT MONTH: A NEW CONTEST

Our heat
begins quietly

Our love
remains tranquil

Our kisses
define harmony

Our friction
rekindles pleasure

Our thoughts
embrace distance

Our hearts
cautiously yielding

And I fill with the wonder of it all
Gently, gently does my soul whisper to thine



Wynke

NOTICES AND ADS

VICTORY METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH

Founded for and by lesbians
gays and allies

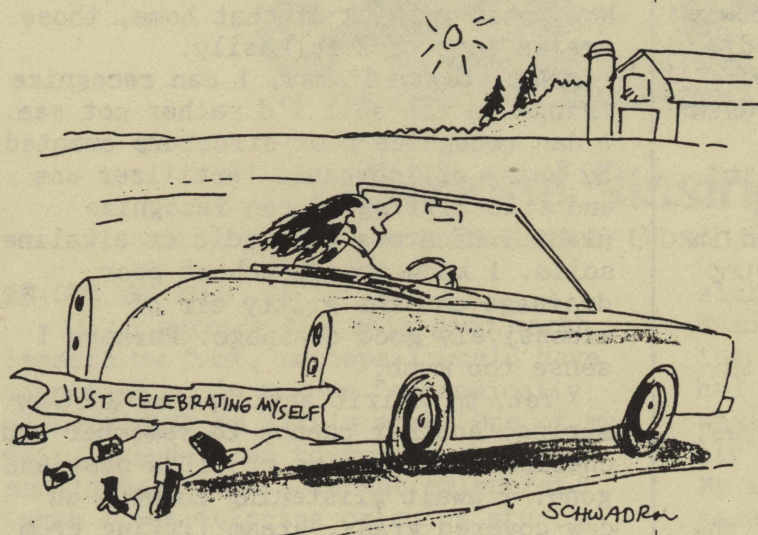
Sunday service 2:15pm

James Bay Community School

140 Oswego

Worship coordinator Steph Ozard

Information 386-5078



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FRIDAY MARCH 23RD

MEET YOUR FAVOURITE WOMEN
AND YOUR FAVOURITE DESSERTS
8PM \$3 106 SUPERIOR STREET

Nobody wrote to DEAR GERTRUDE this month - are we all fully content in Paradise or what?

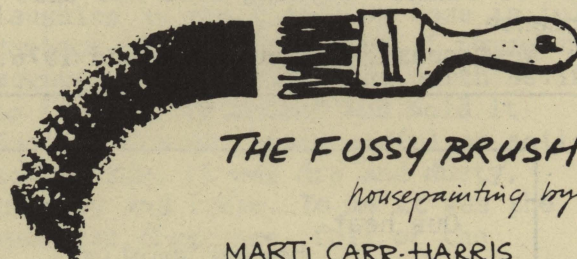
Send us YOUR queries on the fine points of Lesbian living and loving. No problem is too big or too small for our Gert's concern.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE ISLAND GAY SOCIETY (IGS) VICTORIA BRANCH

Attention Editor:

Please be aware that we need and want greater input from Women and assistance in giving the Victoria Branch a sense of direction and contribute to our community (Lesbian and Gay) on the whole. [sic]

As newly delegated President of the Victoria Chapter I cannot move forward without the Voice Of Women and would appreciate hearing from you by telephone 381-4035 or by using the P.O. Box 695, Station E, Victoria, B.C. V8W 2P9.

I also personally welcome you to the Coffee House held on Friday evenings from 8pm to 10pm at the James Bay Community Center. The address is 140 Oswego Street.

Thank you for your attention and co-operation. Hope to see you there.

Yours sincerely,
Mr. Gordon M.K. de Frane
Victoria Branch President,
Island Gay Society

Subscription Form

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