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Lesbians at Beijing

By Helen Durie

(LNews Non-Governmental Organizations Correspondent)

Recollections and reflections on the lesbian presence at the NGO Forum and UN Conference.

The lesbian connections began even before we arrived in Beijing. I was a member of the Canadian 'NGO team', and on leaving Vancouver, found myself on a flight with 12 or so other members of the team, including Vancouver lesbians Shelagh Day (representing Equality for Gays and Lesbians Everywhere), and Fatima Jaffer (long-time regular writer for Kinesis). We stayed overnight in Hong Kong, and were joined by another dozen or so of the team, including at least one lesbian, for the flight to Beijing.

Over the next two days, before the Forum got underway, we settled into a comfortable hotel on the north-eastern outskirts of Beijing, took some time to play tourist, and began to meet some of the other 800 or so women also staying at the hotel. Word was already out that a certain bar in Beijing was the lesbian hangout on Wednesday

evenings. We had the name of the bar in Chinese script, but no one knew just where we were headed.

We were dropped off down a



back street, where a small crowd of women was filling the sidewalk. There was excitement and celebration in the air – the thrill of being in Beijing, the anticipation of the next day's start of formal activities at the Forum but mostly, for me, the charge from being openly with lesbians from around the world, in a country where homosexuality is officially condemned and socially feared and invisible (see September LNews).

As it turned out, women there were predominantly from North

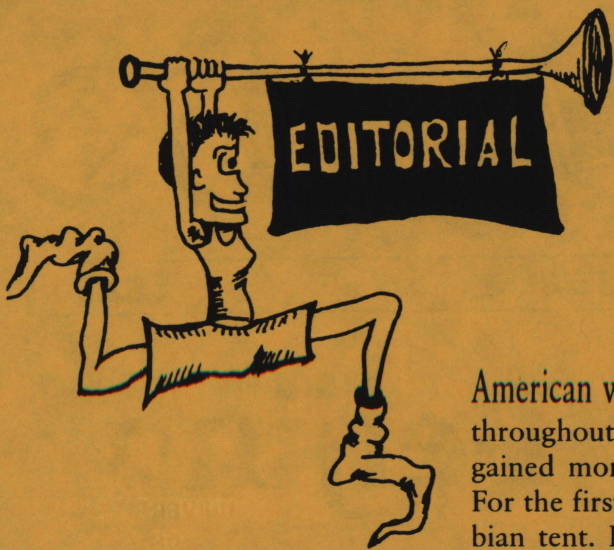
America and Western Europe, but even so there was an international feel to the gathering, and I was particularly thrilled to meet up with a lesbian friend from Australia. I didn't meet any Chinese lesbians that night, although I was told that some were in the bar (I never made it past the sidewalk), but I did meet Gary, who was introduced as 'the Chinese Gay and Lesbian Rights Movement', and most of us bought tickets for a benefit for the Chinese movement, to be held at a disco the following

weekend.

Sunday evening at the *Night-woman* disco was alone worth the trip to Beijing. Again we set out by taxi with the adrenalin running high – a combination of slight anxiety over what was ahead, and the thrill of being out on the town and heading for a lesbian event in Beijing.

My anxiety picked up at the sight of a double column of security police lining the entrance, but we walked through without a slip

...more on page 12, 13



Thank you to all the lesbians who took the risk to attend the UN and NGO conference on Women in Beijing and Huairou. And special thanks to Helen Durie, who spent considerable hours before and after to give us a Victoria Lesbian's perspective and first-hand account of the NGO conference. It was hard to find daily in-depth reports either on TV or in print. WTN and Channel 24 offered samplings of the conference with greater studies on the women themselves in their own settings. Well, great, but I think we have the background, guys; we know the problems. We want to know what the processes are for dealing with the problems. All in all, despite the before and after and during problems, on which, as usual, the media and Phillip Ney felt obliged to concentrate, the results were wonderful. However, as Jennifer Waelti-Walters says in this month's issue of LNews, we must remain vigilant. The wins at conferences don't always, and certainly don't universally, translate into homegrown legislation. We must keep pushing and pressing government and province to maintain and to build upon what we have and what the conference voted we all should have – not white middle class North

American women, but all women throughout the world. Lesbians gained more than what appears. For the first time, there was a lesbian tent. For the first time, lesbian issues were on the platforms for action. Next time, (my wishes, affirmations) we'll have more knowledge, better preparation, better attendance ('cause it won't be so hard to get to the next conference), receptive, open response to the lesbian presence, and, ultimately, inclusion of sexual orientation as a basic human right. Among what the Canadian Press called the big losses: The deletion of Canada's initiative to acknowledge that women face discrimination based on sexual orientation and the deletion of the European Union's initiative to have discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation banned.

In 1976 Alice Ages and I shared an office space so small we developed an intimacy that I shall always treasure. I envied her anger on behalf of women. I couldn't find it in myself. (At that time I couldn't find myself.) It was later, as I found my lesbian outrage, that I began to understand. I must be growing up, Alice, I am in outrage now for both and able to handle it. Now I understand. Thanks for letting me walk with you as you explored your own.

Finally, in the Oops! department, we apologize to Karey for running the same Brainfever two months in a row.

LesbiaNews was founded September 1988.

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Letters to the editor may be edited for space and clarity. Letters and submissions must be accompanied by name and telephone #. Only under extraordinary circumstances, discussed with you, will we print letters that are unsigned.

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HOLLYWOOD NORTHWEST

MOVIES TO WATCH - AND WATCH OUT FOR

By Karey Parks

We saw *How to Make an American Quilt* the other day. Maybe it was just the mood I was in, or perhaps it was because the rain was falling and the leaves were blowing around, or maybe it was because the score was so mellow and soft, but I cried and cried. If you like a good 3-kleenex weeper, this is the film for you. **Winona Ryder** sleep-walks through it but the rest of the cast is wonderful. It could be that **Win** with her same old blend of waif and wacky didn't stand much of a chance next to such greats as **Maya Angelou**, **Anne Bancroft**, **Kate Nelligan** and **Alfre Woodard**, whose beautiful faces and characters' lives are so intriguing. If you want to gaze at what the "Older Woman" is made of or if you want to take your mom to a movie she'll relate to, check this one out.

Last night it was a combination of *The Buccaneers* and the ballet *Giselle*. Strange combination, perhaps, but thematically consistent.

The TV series focused on the fairly broad dissatisfaction with marriage as experienced by four American heiresses who had each taken an English husband; **Giselle** danced herself into madness and death because the man she thought loved her was actually going to marry someone else. With all the man-bashing going on in popular mainstream culture, it's a wonder that lesbians get the bad rap for being down on the male of the species and the institution of heterosexual marriage, eh?

Watched *Milk Money* on video the other day - stereotypically consistent stuff: the scatty scientist who lives to rescue the last bit of bird sanctuary near his house meets a prostitute with the usual heart of gold. Thrown together by his son (all boys need a mother so they don't live on TV dinners the rest of their lives, didn't you know?) and pursued by a "Bad Guy," sweet-tart **Melanie Griffiths** eventually ex-

changes her skin-tight mini dress for suburban drag, buys **Senor Test-tube** his wetlands and settles down into the illustrious career of town hairdresser. Awww.

Much less cutesy was the slightly weird and funny western *The Quick and the Dead* with **Sharon Stone** in town to avenge the death of her dad. If you like lady gunslingers, Stone is gritty, grotty and as always, sexy. However, the story wasn't really very exciting - perhaps it should have been called *Shooting for Bread*. On TV, check out *Xena, Warrior Woman*. Nice thews, Xena. A flic that will make you wish you'd been able to be out in highschool was on at Cinecenta recently - if you missed *The Incredibly Wonderful Adventures of Two Girls in Love*, check it out next time it comes around. If you think you'd like to try your talents at solving a movie trivia quiz, write to me care of **LesbiaNews** with your suggestions and requests. See ya on the screen. - Kelevelyn

Cheryl McGarrigle

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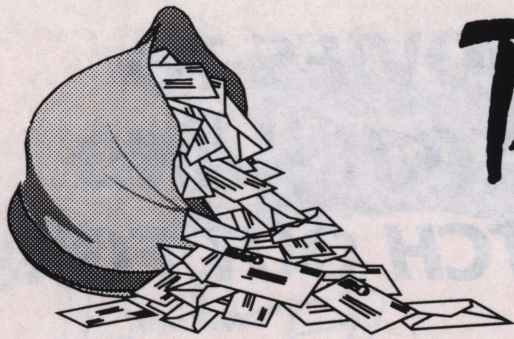
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The thirteenth opinion

Wants High School Experience

I am a graduate student at UVic currently working on my Master's thesis. My research is focusing on the experiences of self-identified lesbians who are attending high school. There has been little attention paid to the school culture and its impact on lesbians. Most of the research carried out in the area of gay and lesbian adolescents has been done on adult males reflecting on their experience. Again, as with most social science research the male experience is often taken as the norm. Lesbian adolescents are under represented in the literature on homosexual youth. There has been a small amount of work done on females and their experiences during adolescence, but, again, most of this either is reflective in nature or is accessed through the use of questionnaires. This research will be qualitative. The importance of qualitative research is that the experience of the participants is quoted directly and the researcher is not the sole interpreter for the reader. From the research carried out to date, it is hard to find the voice of lesbians even though researchers have entered schools, hung out on street corners, studied youth services, and surveyed work places.

With this research I want to give self-identified lesbians a voice to show how the school system is experienced by them. Through the listening to their classroom/school experiences, I want to raise awareness and increase sensitivity of teachers to the fact that not all their students are heterosexual. Teachers need to examine their role in a system that recreates the dominant ideology, an ideology that is based on universalizations and stereotypes. From my experience as a junior high school teacher and as an adolescent who struggled with her homosexuality, I was acutely aware of the transmission of heterosexism through the process of omission; homosexual relationships are given little to no discussion inside classrooms.

With this research I hope to explore how school is being experienced today by a sample of lesbians. What are their thoughts and feelings about homosexuality and its intersection with school.

If you want to participate, contact me at 391-0921. I would like to interview the participants over the course

of the school year (a total of three interviews). I anticipate that they will be more like conversations than a question and answer session. Anonymity will be of utmost importance. The participants will be able to review the material in order to comment or make changes.

The more we can educate school personnel and the general public, the quicker damaging and false stereotypes will be replaced with a more complete picture of who we are.

Phyllis MacLeod

Bare Thanks

Dear Lnews:

I'm writing to thank you for including Sue Ondre's story about baring her breasts. I was left feeling empowered. What can I say except: Way to go!

My story is similar to Sue's. One difference: I was never able to grow a mustache, but if I could, I would. A week ago or so, a Gal asked me if I ever shaved my legs or pits, or if I ever wore a bra. When I said no, she looked at me like I was the strange one and said, 'Why?'

"Well," I asked her, "do you always shave your legs and pits, do you always wear a bra?" She replied, "yes". I asked her why. No one is right or wrong, we are different, hopefully these differences will some day be respected and not judged. In the last couple of months, I've been questioned about baring my breasts. I found myself, once again, internalizing the shame I was taught as a child. I put my shirt on. Guess what? I read Sue's story and I asked myself, "Why Brenda, why? My shirt is coming off again. Thank you Sue and Lnews.

In Sisterhood, Brenda Stebner, Parksville, B.C.

Lips Sync

Dear Barb:

We raffled off LNews at the last dance. It seemed to go over quite well. This wasn't one of our best turnouts, but after paying for the subscription we made a few bucks. I hope in the future to do better, once we get more womyn aware of the newsletter (LNews). I'm hoping to get something in LNews concerning membership for VI LIPS but I'll have to be sure of all the details. Thanks.

Brenda Coutts, Nanaimo

BRAIN FEVER

By Karey Perks

(Continued from last month. Did you think Sam was flirting with Mal? Well, read on....)

Of course there was an explanation for the temporary closing of Sophie's kitchen, starting from the fact that Sophie was subject to periodic absences and this was one of them. Sophie herself was miles away, so Mal saw no point in invoking her presence by discussing it. Especially since she was thinking about lifting Sam onto the table, placing herself in the circle of Sam's legs, and kissing Sam deeply while working one or two fingers past the zipper of her slacks and under the elastic of her underpants.

Her chances of pulling it off - so to speak - being poor to not, Mal just said, "It's a long story," and excused herself before the others came back and ruined the fantasy. She slipped behind the bar, imagining the explanation she would give Sam if they were alone somewhere. Sophie works too hard, she would say, she expects too much from people and they let her down, especially me. She could find somebody else. She'd rather find herself, she says.

She took the phone book from the shelf above the phone and began the chore of lining up another replacement cook. Unlike Sophie, Mal liked to lose herself. Books, movies, an affair sometimes. Sophie knew - didn't like it - but she knew. It was her choice to stay, even though there were times when Mal did wonder if she was going to change her mind.

A stream of new arrivals kept Mal busy. After a while she noticed someone with Sam, a tanned, athletic woman wearing a sporty shirt patterned abstractly on one half. A woman with a not-going-home-alone-tonight look that prompted Mal to check, from time to time, to see if Sam was still there. Sam was returning her looks. Sport Shirt caught on, finally. She looked like somebody had let the air out of all four tires.

Technically Mal wasn't cutting in. Who Sam went home with was up to Sam. But there was no law against looking, and Mal kept wanting to make that connection again, two antennas bouncing a beam back and forth. By last call Sport Shirt had gone home, along with almost everybody else, and Sam was sitting by herself in front of a lot of bottles, scratching off labels with her fingernail.

Mal brought a tray over. "How are you doing, O.K.?"

"You haven't told me about the kitchen," Sam said.

"Can you drive?"

"If I say no will you drive me home?"

"Depends on what kind of car you got," Mal said, teasing. After she closed out the till she locked the cash in the freezer. She might recall how to add by morning, but at the

moment she was having trouble operating a simple lock. The front door alone had three. With the last click she felt like she had locked the door on all of her problems: no replacement cook, a growing pile of bills, the mess with Sophie. Until tomorrow she was in another life.

Sam gave her an address and promptly fell asleep Mal's shoulder. She was flushed and embarrassed when she woke up. She refused Mal's arm, but stumbled ahead down the dark path alongside the sleeping house.

Mal still had the keys. "Which one?"

"How can I tell? There's no light."

"I can see that."

Sam laughed, balancing against Mal who got the door open and felt for the light switch. "Oh-h-h," Sam said. She buried her face in Mal's denim jacket in a state of incipient hangover. Mal switched off the light and kissed her in the darkness. It was her first offer, of strength and tenderness, but not one she couldn't rescind without much effort.

Sam reached for the switch. "I want to see you. Come inside." Blinking in the light.

"I don't want to explain about the kitchen."

"Fine. I'd rather not talk at all." The living room had skylights. Mal took off her shoes, copying Sam. The carpet felt expensive, but she didn't wait for the rest of the tour. She pulled Sam close and kissed her again.

Sam began tearing her clothes off as if they were full of bees. Mal felt a voraciousness take hold of her, down deep in her pockets, and thought it was too late to pull out of the negotiations. Demons were stirring, that had lain dormant for years, although these days nobody talked about demons. They talked about inner children but that was a lot of crap, considering the parts of her life that were still in shreds, clearly the work of teeth and claws, not some kid with blunt-nosed scissors.

Entirely naked, Sam twisted her fist in the thin jersey of Mal's sleeveless undershirt, yanked her up the narrow stairs to the loft with her fly open and her belt trailing from her jeans, and pulled her down onto the bed. Mal struggled to get on top and stay there. It was coming to an end, Mal was pouring out of herself, way too fast. Tears clogged her throat, loss and ecstasy and relief all howling to get out at once. They sprawled together, exhausted.

"You a' right?" Sam mumbled.

Mal grabbed a corner of blanket and wiped the feelings off her face. "I'm always all right," she said, swallowing back the rest.

Weaving the Fabric and Finding The Threads

September 21st marked the official opening of the Victoria Women's Movement Archives in room 024 of the McPherson Library at University of Victoria.

Sue Moger had been storing meeting info and newsletters in her basement for years. Debby Yaffe has filing cabinets and boxes that don't quit.

And yet, when it came time for a student to do a history of Transition House, or for Debby to find anything about 20 years ago and Everywoman's Books....the info was....well, where? Who has it? Where is it?

So Sue called Debby who called Uvic archivist Jane Turner who found some space and... presto! And LesbiaNews was there with boxes of info from the University (of Victoria) Women's Club wrapped in red ribbon.

From Jane's opening remarks and paraphrasing Edna St. Vincent Millay it was obvious that women here and everywhere else are producing a meteoric shower of facts and no loom to weave it into fabric. So, rather than building on our written histories we tend to start from what's in the others, rather than the evidence of things readily seen - even if we knew where to look.

Think of what will be there for us all: Status of Women, Everywoman's Books, Society for Women's Economic Survival, University Women's Club, LesbiaNews, Women's Studies at UVic, Ministry of Women's Equality, Transition House, Women's Downtown

Building Project, Employment Orientation for Women, Real Women of Victoria, Women's Building phases one and two and..., Women's Sexual Assault Centre. That's just to name a few, and more than a few of those have had and do have strong lesbian support, foundation and backing.

There's a glitch. All this herstory, not so safely stored in your house, needs proper housing in the Archives for life-long preservation. Your donation of \$25 will be used to purchase the prop-

erly preserved cabinets. T-Shirts with logo are also available as fund-raisers for \$20 or \$25.

The archivists want from you and your organization your personal history, original records: minutes, correspondence, reports, newsletters, diaries, logs, photographs and audio/visual tapes. Call Jane Turner at UVic 721-8258. Send cheques to UVic Archives, Box 1800, Victoria, B.C. and mark your donation to Victoria Women's Movement Archives. BMCL

music review

Streeter Music

1995 STCD-1001

A Love Worth Waiting For

by Judy Bell

This is a truly wonderful CD: "A celebration of gay and lesbian singers and songwriters." This is my tribe. These are my sisters and brothers; my shining examples. The gift of their music feels like gold-plated parenting. Always gentle, it consoles my hurts and pain, helps me forgive myself, my personal history, my weakness. It teaches me values. It calls forth my truth and my passion; gives me the strength to live; encourages me to keep on keeping on, and surrounds me with unconditional love. Wow!

Crafting it over three years, producer Mitchell Gallob has given us an impeccable recording of gentle urgency. Two of the artists on this CD have died since recording their contributions Michael Callen (title track) and composer Tom Brown ("John Wesley Oliver, Jr.")

These are songs to be listened to with respect.

Although their presentation is clean and simple, the messages are profound. Lesbian artists include Jess Hawk Oakenstar, Pam Hall, Laura Love, Ann Reed, Ani diFranco, Chris Williamson, Janis Ian, Holly Near and Marsha Malamet. The gay male artists also include Bill McKinley, Gary Bankston, Grant King, the Flirtations, Dan Martin and Michael Biello. Collectively they keep you company throughout life's lessons, then wrap you up and put you back together.

Acoustically the CD is rich, crystal clear, musically mature, poetically thoughtful. Nuff said. It's a big winner.

Ed Note: Producer Mitch Gallob is trying to get his distributor to cover Victoria. At the moment, try Little Sisters or write Mitch c/o Streeter Productions, Inc. P.O. Box 1118, Ansonia Station, New York City, NY 10023. Or call him, (212) 595-8932. He moves those CDs fast. And you may want to order the new Christmas album.

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Feel the Effects

by Rowena Hunnisett

I have this problem. I have this commitment to healing homophobia in myself and in our community — to doing the emotional healing work. I know that to heal we need to feel what has happened to us: name it, grieve it, get mad about it, move on. The trouble is: oppression eventually numbs us. We can all analyze our oppression just fine — intellectually. But do we really feel the effects of what has happened to us? If I don't really let myself feel the effects how can I help others heal? Let me tell you this incident to illustrate.

It was like this:

Sue and Rachel have been good friends for years. Sue's a lesbian and Rachel is heterosexual. Sue tells Rachel this story: Sue and Alice were living together and were lovers. But they thought this was bad so they both dated men. Their lives were like a double exposure; the men superimposed on the real love. They never said they were lesbians, not even to each other.

They were friends with Elly and Fig who also lived together and were lovers. None of them talked about it. For years.

When Rachel heard this story she felt a lot of pain for Sue's experience and for how it must have been for all those women. She was struck by their aloneness, the pain of not being able to name their love or support each other to come out; most of all it was the unnecessary suffering that got to her. Sue's story struck such a deep chord inside her that she had to grieve for her friend's hurts. Rachel tried to talk to Sue about the depth of her reaction, and Sue still had a struggle to feel much about how terrible those years of her life were.

When Rachel told me the story about Sue and her friends she cried all over again. I thought: I know tons of people with stories like that. I realized that I was numb to the pain in the story. I tried feeling bad about it, but I

couldn't get up the energy.

I got Rachel to tell my partner the story. She was moved by how upset Rachel was on account of lesbian hurts. But she couldn't feel it as deeply as Rachel did because of her own emotional numbness about her pain as a lesbian.

I asked Rachel and Sue if I could tell the story and they both said yes (I changed the names of course). When I talked to Sue we agreed that it was amazing to think about how upset Rachel had been and how not upset we were. This made Sue wonder about what connections were missing inside her thoughts and emotions.

I know Rachel's reactions are the healthy ones. I know they are possible because she is heterosexual. I am frustrated with my own lack of feeling. I believe we need to get our lesbian hearts out of the deep freeze. I wonder how many of us are like Sue and her friends: groping around a mental-emotional prison still struggling to talk with our own people.

Do you get the problem? What feelings have we all lost? How do we get them back so we can begin to heal?

Rowena Hunnisett M.A.

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The Victoria Women's Sexual Assault Centre wishes to acknowledge with gratitude, the generous bequest of \$20,000 left to the Centre by Jude Lalanne. The bequest is an indication of Jude's commitment during her life, to the right of all women to live full and joyous lives free from fear and violence. The bequest has been set aside for special projects designed to prevent violence against women and to assist women who are survivors of assault. Thank you sister.

A Not-So-Retired

by Barbara McLauchlin

When, at 26, Jennifer Waelti-Walters arrived in Canada, she thought she had fallen off the end of the world. The summer of 1968, Jennifer had just completed her doctorate in French, plopped herself into the student uprisings in Paris (she was teaching at the Sorbonne) and was in Prague three weeks before the Russian tanks rolled in.

"I spent the Labour Day weekend at the Glensheil Hotel, a residence for old folks. For three days I saw nobody under age 80."

Jennifer's wonderful sense of humour almost belies her 27-page resume of academic and literary accomplishments. She's written books, chapters and monographs, most of which criticize and analyze the work of others. And most of which are written in French.

She brought the tag ends of revolution with her. In 1979, and as chair of French, she joined co-founders Dr. Connie Rooke of the English Department, and the History Department's Dr. Patricia Tsurumi to begin the Women's Studies Programme. Including these profs, the instruction team was five. It wasn't easy keeping things going. Each year saw a drop in the numbers of teachers, for example. Today, Jennifer has completed her term as co-ordinator of Women's Studies. She now teaches as part of a team in a growing Department which is headed by a Chair. Quite an accomplishment for 16 years of dedication.

Why a Women's Studies Course? "To change the world, Barb," she laughs. She explained that some students, even today, can go through university without ever having a woman prof and, very likely, without ever seeing the word woman. So putting together a women's studies programme at a university was revolutionary. No matter how egalitarian the university may become, Jennifer thinks there will always be a need for women's studies. "It's a specialist study answering specific needs

and goals for all the kinds of women in Canada. It's purpose is to make heard all the different voices in the Canadian mosaic, all of whom are currently exploring their various perspectives on feminism. This is of use not only to academics, but also to commerce and industry."

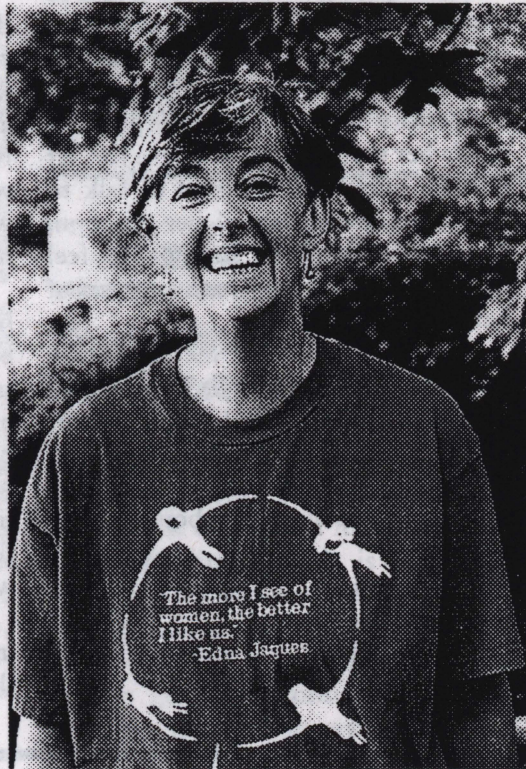
As a reader and an author Jennifer admits to a passion for very complicated contemporary French writers. "I love the layers of complicated books."

She has a particular interest in lesbian writers and the construction of the lesbian as a character in French novels from 1890 to now. "Sexologists like Havelock Ellis pathologized homosexuality at the same time women were getting their first wave of emancipation. In France the form it (emancipation) took was quite funny. You needed a teaching certificate, a bicycle and the fact that you smoked. The teaching certificate meant you could earn your living as teaching paid enough to support a woman alone; that meant you didn't have to have a partner; a bicycle because you can't be

chaperoned on a bicycle: If you're on a bike and she's on a bike and you're 20 years younger, you nip down two corners and up an alley....you're on your own.

"And so the new woman was conceived of and was depicted immediately by cartoonists and so on as quite masculine. You needed a divided skirt to ride a bike; smoking was banned. So lesbian was written into French Lit (written by men, of course,) to warn bourgeoisie girls what would happen to you if you started to get emancipated.

What is a feminist today? "That depends where you're coming from. I don't think you can say a feminist is... I know I get called one when I do anything that distinguishes me from a doormat. A basic definition might be, a doormat that stands up is a feminist, to quote Rebecca West (1913).



Revolutionary

"I think there are as many different feminists as there are active women who consider themselves wholly human, although they wouldn't call themselves feminists. There's a great deal of difference between what a feminist is and a woman who calls herself a feminist. I hear people say I am not a feminist *but* and then put out a radical feminist platform. We try to train people to say I am a feminist *and*.

"Any woman who believes she's got a right to be a whole human being and make choices about all the various things that concern her life is a feminist. Some have agendas: get more women into parliament; get feminist content into the school curriculum.

"People tend to equate lesbianism and feminism and that's really not the case. A lot of lesbians don't consider themselves feminists and, indeed, who hesitate to be seen as feminists. If they're closeted, it's because they are afraid of being pulled out of the closet, for example. They would like to do stuff for women but they are afraid of what the results might be. I say to anyone who asks me: You don't have to be brave every day. Take on the battles you can win. Then have a rest."

Is it a luxury to be a whole person? "No, I think we think of it as a right. It is still not easy. And it's easily taken away, the gains we have made. What is that quote? 'Vigilance is the price of freedom?'"

The personal Jennifer has a passion for singing. She

spent a week this summer in a study course with Ysaye Barnwell of Sweet Honey In The Rock. She sings soprano with Musaic and Philomela, a university women's choir. Art is another passion. Her playroom walls are covered with pastels depicting many facets and ages of a life lived fully. The work is full of movement - sweeping arcs depicting skating, belly dancing, sledding, young Jennifer with her parents. And there's a gorgeous rounded cat, looking every inch her own cat, Cleo.

This playroom offers repose for a woman who keeps her feet on the ground, who uses her head in a particular kind of way. "I hope I teach people skills and strengths which enable them to survive." And now? For Jennifer?

"I'm about to write my 12th book. I've been an administrator for 15 years. I'm tired. I'm going to take some thinking space."



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Advocate Report Shows

This column doesn't yet know what it wants to be when she grows up, but for today I'll go back to my reporter's voice. You are about to find out what 2,525 women recently had to say about sex and all its parts. They are the sample pool (let your mind wander) in The Advocate's first Lesbian Sex Survey. The August 22/95 issue reports on the survey in an article by Janet Lever, dressed up with colorful graphs and sidebars on Who Responded, When did you first.... Coming Out, Relationships, Bisexuality. And more. Nearly 9 in 10 (89%) of the women who completed questionnaires think of themselves as lesbian.

Not surprisingly, women who took the trouble to write to the U.S. magazine definitely enjoy sex and an array of sex activities. Personally, I don't think of them as "respondents" but as women I'd like to get to know.

The bad news is that there's loads of anecdotal evidence of "lesbian bed death" — the idea that lesbian couples have less sex than other couples. Comparison with a national study suggests that after only two years together, lesbians have sex less frequently than married heterosexual couples do after 10 years.

Lesbians surveyed have a high rate of sexual activity during the first year (1 in 3 couples have sex three or more times a week), but it falls off a bit during the second year (1 in 5 couples have sex that often), then plunges precipitously (1 in 10 couples have sex that often after the second year).

The good news (if you're the type to see the glass as half full rather than half empty) is that no matter how much sex survey respondents are getting, most want more. And there's admirable enthusiasm for variety in their sex lives. There's a definite relationship between age and going beyond the basics: women in their teens and 20s and some in their 30s are more experimental — with group sex, strap-on dildos, or bondage and discipline. Here's what our sisters have been busy doing:

- 43% Using a hand-held dildo with a partner
- 35% Using food as part of having sex
- 27% Using a strap-on dildo with a partner
- 25% Bondage and discipline
- 14% Fisting
- 14% Three-way sex
- 10% Using a double-ended dildo with a partner
- 7% Sado-masochism
- 6% Using nipple clamps
- 4% Water sports
- 26% None of these

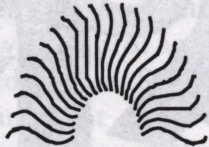
Respondents made it known that the list of activities provided in the survey didn't begin to exhaust the repertoire of possibilities. I'll admit I felt that I may be in over my head by the time I got to "water sports" and, suddenly, my mind flashed on a recent bridge table conversation about how trendy pissing on the rug may have become in my absence — but that really is another story, so.....

The average number of female sex partners was ten. Just under 1% said they've had sex with more than 100 different women, which means they've been very, very busy. The average age of respondents was 34. One quarter were under age 29, and another quarter were 40 or older. Only 2 in 10 reported having children — their own or their partner's. The overwhelming majority are white (86%) and educated (nearly two thirds have at least a college degree) and have personal income, on average, of \$32,000. Six in 10 said they are mostly or completely out of the closet.

Long periods of celibacy are common. Close to 4 in 10 women reported a period of one year or longer within the

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Lesbians Definitely Enjoy Sex

past five when they had gone without sex with another woman. And 1 in 20 have gone without sex for all five years.

More women enjoy caressing another woman's breasts (82%) and sucking her nipples (80%) than they enjoy receiving such attention (68%). Giving is not considered better than receiving when it comes to oral sex (70% and 75%, respectively, "love it").

53% reported giving oral sex to their partner and 48% receiving it during the most recent sexual encounter; least favourite activity was anal stimulation (more than half will neither perform nor receive anilingus, and almost as many express dislike of anal penetration).

33% said they love pinching or biting nipples.

25% said they love using a vibrator or dildo with their partner.

Regardless of the chosen activities, 83% of lesbians surveyed had at least one orgasm and 32% had more than one (three more often than two). Alas, 3% did not know if they climaxed. A common complaint is wishing that one's partner would initiate sex more often.

The clear majority of respondents are in relationships. Most women (54%) live with a partner, 14% have a primary partner but not a shared residence, 7% date one woman only, 5% are dating more than one person, and 20% are single and not dating at all.

The most common meeting ground was at a party or through a friend, followed by school or work, then at bars and clubs. Few ever start a dating relationship with someone they had met through "the personal ads, in rap groups or 12-step programs, or at bookstores, coffeehouses or health clubs."

As for "butch on the streets, femme in the sheets?" The survey found "very little evidence that images of masculinity or femininity relate to who takes the role of sexual aggressor within relationships. Who does the cooking is also unrelated to butch-femme ratings, but there is a strong correspondence to who does more driving. Even being just somewhat more masculine than a partner puts the woman behind the wheel far more often."

Bisexual women's responses shatter several stereotypes. One common belief is that bisexuals want the pleasures of lesbian sex without paying the price of societal disapproval. Nearly half of the women who identified as bisexual said they are mostly or complete out of the closet about their sexual orientation. Four in 10 lesbians and 8 in 10 bisexuals strongly agreed with the statement "Lesbians should be more accepting of bisexual women."

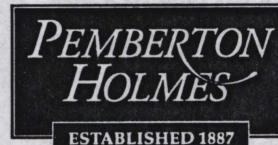
And I'll leave you, as The Advocate does, with some of the suggestions women made for future surveys: "Ask more questions about lesbians' relationships with our friends — are we attracted to them sexually or romantically? And what about sex with your ex?"; "Ask more questions about how we seduce, crushes on unavailable women, how soon after we meet do we have sex, and one-night stands"; and "Is it possible for dog dykes and cat dykes to have successful long-term relationships with each other?"



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Report from Beijing

(continued from page one)

in stride, and found ourselves in a multi-storied disco bar jammed with women and men. Strobe lights flashed through the darkness, and the noise matched some from home. Once we adjusted to the darkness, we could pick out security police dotted throughout, in ones and twos. While they undoubtedly served their purpose, they didn't seem to be interfering in any obvious manner. We eventually joined the packed dance floor, where the majority appeared to be mixed couples. When we left around midnight, I still didn't have much of a sense of just how many lesbians and gays were in the crowd.

My first day at Huairou (an hour's shuttle bus ride from our hotel) was mostly taken up with finding my way around some of the very large and very makeshift site. I had diligently examined the Schedule of Activities and selected a couple of workshops, but the workshop leader didn't appear for either of them – probably for lack of a visa. There were up to 150 workshops offered in each time slot, along with a long line-up of other activities, listed in a separate book, including plenaries on the 'major issues' all day every day, with big-name speakers. By the second day, along with most others, I had abandoned my Schedule. Instead, other than a couple of plenaries, I went to whatever captured my interest of the various demonstrations and workshops advertised by flyer when I arrived each day, interspersed with many spontaneous chats with women along the way.

The lesbian tent was one of seven 'diversity tents' in a back but well-travelled corner of the site. The first ever lesbian tent at such an event, it was coordinated by lesbians from different regions of the world, although San Francisco's International Lesbian and Gay Human Rights Commission seemed to be most visible. The tent was used as a meeting place, lesbian workshops and

video showings, an information exchange, and a hang-out for lesbians. A meeting was held daily at 5 p.m., with announcements of newly-organized lesbian activities, updates on the status of 'sexual orientation' in the UN Platform for Action, calls for solidarity with other events, lesbians from around the world making their



presence visible, and discussion of the latest security run-ins.

Not surprisingly, the tent was a high point of interest for many participants, and even more so to the Chinese security men, who were liberally present throughout the site. They had the tent under close scrutiny in the early days of the Forum, standing around the edges of the tent, taking photos, and generally imposing their presence. When asked not to take photos, they moved to neighbouring tents and used telephoto lens. To my knowledge, it was never established whether the supply of Chinese-language lesbian material that disappeared was removed by security or another hostile party.

Weekend Workshop for Lesbian Couples

where one or both of you were sexually abused in childhood. An opportunity to explore issues of trust, intimacy, anger, sexuality and hope together.

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A Book for Seekers

By Mayne Ellis

The Feminine Face of God -

the unfolding of the sacred in women by Sherry Ruth Anderson and Patricia Hopkins, published by Bantam in paperback in 1992.

The Feminine Face of God came into my life the way important books so often do for women. It was loaned to me by another woman — my mother. Reading her copy was itself a deeply spiritual experience. Her underlinings and yellow highlights became a silent conversation between us. I finished the book in a week - savouring, pondering, occasionally crying — then went to Everywomans Books to get my own copy.

“We need to bring our dreams and visions down to earth and put them into our lives. In my country we can’t just stagger around in our visions — the rattlesnake teaches us that. We need to be awake and pay attention to where we place our feet.” (First Nations teacher, name not given)

One of the reasons lesbians so often long for a deeper spirituality comes, I think, because our own existence poses powerful questions for us. We struggle to discern our own truths. For me, being a dyke means valuing the spirits as well as the bodies of all women. The real revolution of human spirituality is that women are now asking the questions that we used to only ponder in silence. The Feminine Face of God is full of our questions. How do female children understand the sacred? Is “leaving home” a truthful option for women? What

nourishes us in our quest? How do we envision the spiritual life? Do we integrate our experiences and our relationships into our journey, or discard them? What part do traditional practices play in our growth? What does it mean to be sexual and spiritual? What is prayer? What do we imagine God to be for us as women?

“I was waking up...with so little life and goodwill that I would even cross to the other side of the street to avoid saying hello... [then] I fell in love with a woman. It was the most holy and important thing that had ever happened to me...”

Sherry Ruth Anderson and Patricia Hopkins begin their quest where traditional ways end. (Which is often the point where women leave their church, synagogue, temple or community.) Their quest goes directly to the heart of what really happens to women in their lives - the joy and the despair. Nuns leave convents, wives leave marriages, saints sin, prostitutes heal. One of the things I treasure about this book is that every woman’s life is prized, every woman’s spirituality has meaning. I can only describe the authors’ approach as one of fascinated love, which for me is unique proof of the spirit of the mothering God.

“...what is it that keeps the door of consciousness open? ...having a practice helps...so does an environment...that reflects your inner self. But ultimately, I think you need to have the courage to follow what unfolds from within and leads you. The feminine path. The spontaneous way.” (Vijali, Zen Buddhist, artist)

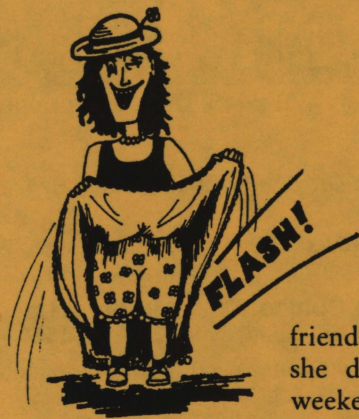
The emotional and spiritual breadth of this book is astonishing. Its discoveries are new and yet familiar. Our spirituality is reflective, integrative, empowering: even the most horrible experiences are food, tools, inspirations for the growth of the soul - Pandora redeemed, as the authors say. This elegant and diverse choir of women’s voices accompanies me on my journey as a spiritual woman. It has given me hope and strength to connect my seeking with that of others, into what the Lakota Sioux call the Wakan Tanka, the Supreme Mystery.



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LITTLE LEZZIE FLASHES

Of sexual matters and things that matter! Like being handed a bunch of grapes, in the midst of a library tour, from a dear friend who knew that I knew what she did with grapes on a dirty weekend with her new love. "Eat these at lunch and think of me with every bite!" I did, Denise, I did. Slowly. Then there's Jan Trainor's account of her first visit to a lesbian sex shop in Seattle, partner Nancy Poole in attendance. Jan's constant "pssst, what's this for? Where would you put it?" resulted in her dismissal (by Nancy) from the store. Grapes, tattoos, sex toys, two-way vibrators? I recommend you read Mary Lasovich's column on the Advocate's Sex Survey and find out we're exploding and exploring like we've never done before—publicly. The girls are out! Speaking of friends, sex and otherwise, Marion Stoodley has moved into fine new digs. Her bedroom is big enough for two. Or three. A small party? Might be a good place for the intimate after book signing party at Everywomans October 29 to launch Marsha

Mildon's book, *Fighting for Air*. Jane Rule has written the book is "An intelligent, psychologically sound, fast paced mystery directing a sharp blow to the political funny bone." High praise, indeed! You can meet Marsha and get an autographed copy, of the first Cal Meredith mystery, October 29, 2 p.m. at the bookstore. It's been a very quiet fall. Mary, can we have a Lesbiantics? Please? Diane Smith is back home from Texas and eager to start Belly Dancing and Yoga again before she leaves for Tibet. Liz Gibson has moved to California to be with her Inter-netted lover, Betsy. We wish her every success and happiness. Stefan Carson's first art show was huge success. Wonderful, moving work and much sold. And, speaking of art, the Lesbian Art Collective has been awarded a \$7,000 Explorations Grant from the Canada Council. One of the last of the explorations grants. To end on a happy note: The university anti-harassment officer's report has exonerated Michelle Pujol and the Women's Studies Department at UVic regarding Kathleen Westergaard's complaint of sexual harassment about the now-famous lesbian walk. Good sense prevailed. The Times-Colonist, in our view, gave this fair coverage, Oct. 7. Until next time. BMcL

Hints from Hell, Louise

by Helloise Bell

(a maybe regular feature. But we hope not...)

Ever wonder what to do with that old Persian cat you've had lying around the house for the last 8 years? Well, at 9:00 p.m. or so, whenever she finally wakes up and shows that annoying tendency to gallop around the house demanding to go OUT (instead of toddling obediently off to beddy-byes so that her people can relax...) put all that once-a-day energy to good use by rolling up the scatter rugs on the wood floors (you could let her do this) and toss a catnip mouse onto the affected area (floor). That way, while she rolls and rushes around, she's mopping the floor, and when she gets covered in dust and the floor is spotless, you can actually encourage her to go outside, taking all that nasty dust with her. She will then self-clean, ready for the next night's frolic, no more vacuum bags to empty, or mops to shake out.

Caution: Do not try to use Kitty to apply wax to the floor. This tends to mat the fur and damage the duster effect. Besides, you don't want to risk the inconvenience of the mop running away from home.

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NOTICES

Disney Daze Dance: Oct. 27, DaVinci Centre 9 to 2 p.m. Gays and Lesbians. Midnite buffet, fabulous (\$500 up) prizes. Benefits Transition House, Les,Bi, Gay Youth Group. A worthy cause and a grand time. Call Rob of Pink Umbrella for details. 479-1129

BOOK LAUNCH PARTY: Everywomans Books helps launch Marsha Mildon's new mystery, *Fighting For Air*, Sunday October 29, 1995 at 2 p.m.

Gay-Lesbian Hotline Toll Free: Province-Wide Resource Mon.-Fri. 1-4 p.m. 1-800-566-1170

NEWS FROM UP THE ISLAND (NANAIMO): Women's Dance Nov. 18 at 8 p.m. Wellington Hall, 3992 Coruna off Island Hwy at Norwell, past Country Club Mall. **Coffee Houses,** Wed. nites at Erington Hall.

DYKE DIMENSIONS RADIO SCHEDULE: Nov. 6 Poetry: Nov.13, News: Nov. 20, Friends: Nov. 27, Public Sex: Dec. 4, Where to Meet Dykes.

CELEBRATE: Press Gang's 20th birthday with a double reading at Everywomans Books Friday, November 17, at 8 p.m. at the store, 635 Johnson St. Larissa Lai and Marion Douglas reading from *When Fox is a Thousand and Bending* at the Bow respectively. Lotsa lesbian content. Lotsa schmoozing with the authors.

ADOPTED women support group for those who have found their birth parents. Contact Trish Sharp at 389-1517.

HOT FLASHES CAFE: Meets Nov. 24 & Dec. 29 at St. Albans Church. 1468 Ryan St. (1 block S. of Hillside at Belmont. Fridays 8 to 11 p.m. \$2.00.

BASKETBALL: Sundays 5:45 to 6:45 at Fernwood Community Centre. All levels welcome. Adults only. Call Rebecca 595-7179 or J 360-0385.

BOWLING: Starts again! Fridays 6:30-8:30, Town and Country Lanes. Dawn 595-7179.

CLASSIFIED ADS

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WEEKEND WORKSHOP: For lesbian couples where one or both of you were sexually abused in childhood. An opportunity to explore issues of trust, intimacy, anger, sexuality and hope, together. Nov. 4 & 5,9:30 to 4:30. Facilitator, Beth Trotter, M.A. Cost \$150 per lesbian. Call 598-9411.

BLIND DATE PRODUCTIONS presents: Singer/songwriter Susan Crowe at St. Alban's Church Friday Nov. 24. Watch for details in Dec. LNews!

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Art Show Contact: Updates, donations, info Rebecca 595-7179 or Margot 380-6617.

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Blind Date Productions: Gwyneth Powell, 598-2327

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LesbiaNews: P.O. Box 5339, Station B, Victoria, V8R 6S4 Barbara, 479-2445

Lesbian Outdoor Club: Meets 1st Thurs. every month 7 p.m. Lynn Kirk, 480-1560

Lesbian Seniors Housing: Jacquie Denage, 386-8380

Lesbian 12-Step Group: All recoveries. Tues. 7:30 Cindy, 370-1289

Lesbian Social Group: Mary, 361-9568 or Iris, 389-6772 (was Very Nice Dykes)

Musaic: Lesbian and Gay Choir: Contact Toni, 474-1054

P-FLAG: Information , 642-5171

SWAG: Lesbian Issues Committee, Feminist activist Network for event planning. Call 383-7322 for calendar info.

University of Victoria: Jenny Waelti-Walters of Women's Studies can arrange meeting rooms under department. Call her, 721-6157

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