

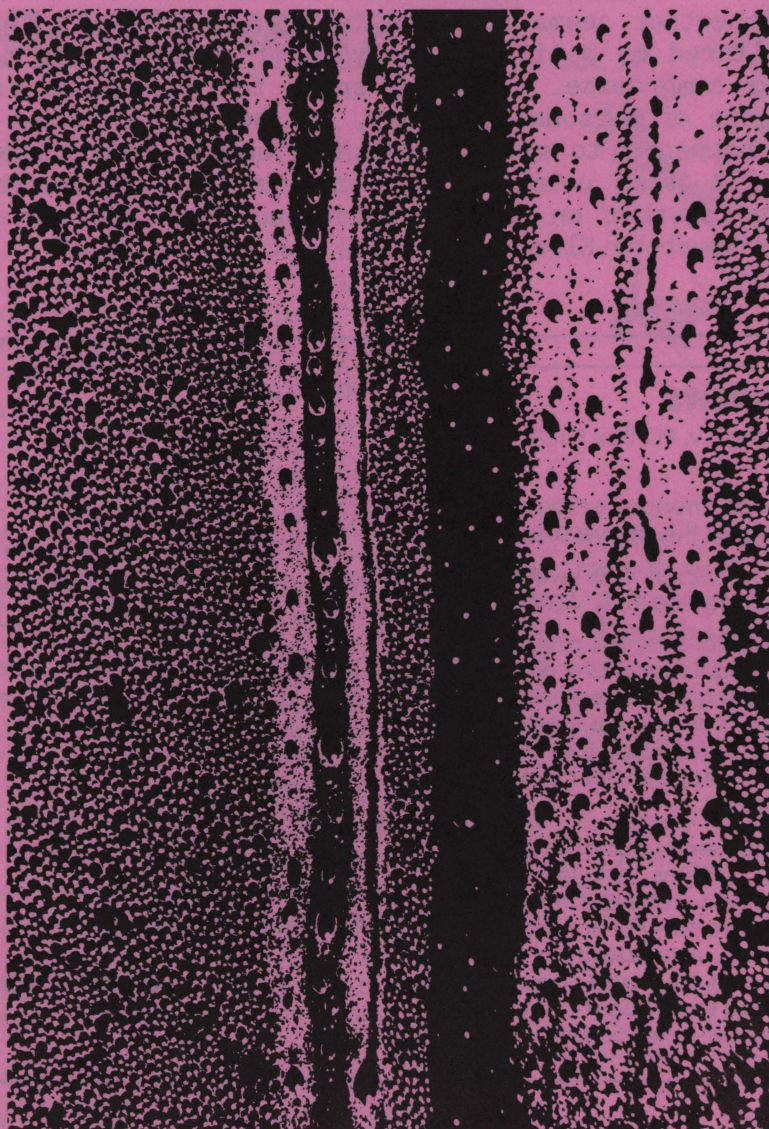
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LESBIAN NEWS

Victoria's Monthly Lesbian
Feminist Newsletter

November 1989

Vol. 1, Issue 3
\$2.00



Musings

By Debby Gregory

By the time this issue hits the streets, Donna and I will have made the big move - into a home of our own. After more than seven years of being blissful but fiercely independent lovers, we have decided to live together and have gone right over the deep end into buying a house. What started out as a need for personal autonomy became just a weary packing and repacking of overnight bags, endless decisions about where we were going to sleep, and what we needed for work three days hence. The plan is to remain blissful but fiercely independent lovers.

When we met we were both living with other people and both needed time on our own. I'd actually been married for over 20 years, and I really needed to have my own space. It took us about 3 years of each living alone to come to our decision, and it hasn't happened without recurring panic attacks. Were we spoiling a perfect relationship by mixing romance and real estate? Could we reconcile our different internal clocks and thermostats so that one wouldn't freeze while the other suffocated?

Buying a house together seems like the lesbian equivalent of getting married. I haven't really altered my political analysis of marriage and monogamy, and do feel I am making a compromise. (I won't speak for how Donna feels.) I worry about losing a measure of personal autonomy, and somewhere in the back of my mind I wonder whatever happened to my appetite for nonmonogamous sexual adventures. On the other hand, it seems pointless to deny myself the undeniable comforts and pleasures of living together on the dim off-chance that some day I might want to play overnight with Somebody Else.



LESBIANEWS

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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. (We haven't yet figured out a system for classified ads, but we're working on it.)

Submissions are welcome. Send your letters, questions, comments, stories, poems, articles, ideas, cartoons, drawing, news items, calendar items, grocery list 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-ablebodyist-personal attackist or boringist.

WHO ARE WE?

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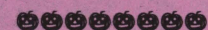
Alisa Gordaneer

Judy Liefschultz

Andrea Lowe

Grandma Stef

With thanks to Marianne Alto for Calendar Notices.



Cover photograph "Fabric Window", 1988, by Andrea Lowe. Her work will be shown at the Hot Flashes Craft Fair November 24. See our Calendar section for details.

And of course, lesbians living together really isn't the same as heterosexual marriage. It just doesn't have the same social or legal support. In fact, I've had a few good laughs lately. Although I've made it clear to all concerned that I'm moving in with my lover, as soon as they find it's two women, their response is, "Oh, how lovely and sensible. Two single women pooling their [meagrel] resources to live together." They are pleased for us, but they don't see us as a couple. They just don't seem to have a concept of two women being lovers.

Now why am I telling you all this personal stuff? Partly to share our happiness - I think we should let people know when lesbians have good times. Partly to indulge myself in the pleasure of being able to write about things that reflect the realities of lesbian life without worrying about offending non-lesbians' sensibilities. And partly to encourage all of you to send in your thoughts on this or other topics that involve the day-to-day details of living as lesbians. Let's develop the thoughtful public dimension of our lives that comes with careful and caring discussion.

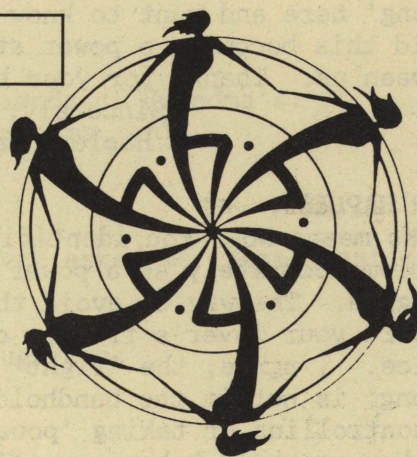
GOOD NEWS

MONTREAL (CUP)-Concordia University will make history next semester when it offers the first accredited lesbian studies course in Canada. About 30 students will be taking professor Sharon Stone's "Lesbians in Society." The course will deal with the experiences of and the issues affecting lesbians.

"Our current educational system is based on the assumptions of heterosexuality," says Shari Clark, a member of the Lesbian Studies Coalition of Concordia, a student group that lobbied for the course. She hopes this course will pave the way for a multidisciplinary lesbian studies program. "This course finally acknowledges lesbianism as a legitimate area of study," she says.

Concordia's Simone de Beauvoir Institute for women's studies decided to offer the course this year after the English and sociology departments refused. But they made no promises for next year. "We hope that by virtue of popular demand they will have to continue to offer it," says Clarke.

Do you know of any events you think all the lesbians in town should hear about? You tell us and we'll tell them. Send all calendar info to *LesbiaNews*, POB 5339, Station B, Victoria V8R 6S4. Deadline is the 15th of each month for the following month's issue.



UVic Women's Studies logo

The course so far has received a strong response from both Concordia students and the outside lesbian community. Enrollment and a waiting list filled up soon after registration began last Spring. Several non-students have asked to audit the course as well.

Thanks to Mary C. for sending this clipping from The Martlett, September 14th. Wouldn't it be lovely to have a lesbian studies course at UVic? The women's studies programme is such a resounding success, maybe lesbian studies isn't far behind, or am I dreaming an impossible dream.....

Dear Gertrude

DEAR GERTRUDE,

I'm a naturally affectionate woman who likes to hold my lover's hand when we walk down the street. She's afraid someone will notice. I want people to notice - after all, we're young and in love, and Victoria doesn't usually feel too threatening to me, especially during the daytime. She's too embarrassed. She feels hassled when I try to hold hands on the street, I feel rejected when she won't. I know there's no objective 'right' and 'wrong' here and want to know how to avoid this becoming a power struggle between us. Thanks for your help.

Sincerely,
Hapless Handholder

DEAR HAPLESS,

No means No. You identified the problem accurately as a power struggle. The way to avoid that is to support your lover's freedom of choice. I agree, the 'right' or 'wrong' is not in the handholding but in controlling or taking 'power over' another person's behavior. I'm sure this seems a harsh response to a question on hand holding. However, I feel that principles must apply consistently and everyday situations give us an opportunity to 'practice what we preach' on major issues.

With sincere affection,
Gertrude

DEAR GERTRUDE,

My words have come to haunt me. I've often been critical of those who jump into a new relationship without closure on the old one. My lover of many years and I are breaking up. The difficulties have been truly our own but now I find myself strongly attracted to someone else. My ex is furious and hurt, I'm uncertain and not a little embarrassed. These new feelings are complicating my break-up. How could this happen? To me of all people!?

Caught By Surprise

DEAR CAUGHT,

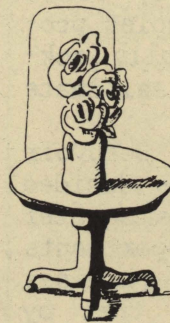
Sometimes it does feel like our emotions are out of our control. I believe, however, that we choose our emotions based on what we need and we can choose any behavioral response to our emotions.

As you consider your behavior options, stay in touch with what you want and need for fulfillment and happiness. If you base your choice on someone else's need or emotion you have given her your power. Intense displays of emotion or need can be manipulative, as in, "Only an uncaring, unfeeling person could reject my appeal." Following your heart is not a rejection of the other but an affirmation of the self. An affirmation of the self will include self respect, personal power and ethical honesty....So, considering all that,

Welcome to the human race.

Your friend,
"Go for it Gertrude"

Send YOUR queries on the fine points of lesbian living and loving to DEAR GERTRUDE. No worry is too big or too small for our Gertrude's concern.



CHECK YOUR GENES

Is there a history.
Oh yes, I nod, of course.

Granny Fraser drank her tea
from the saucer

with fingers bent
in the opposite direction
than they were meant to go.

Hazel Beech
1989

COMMENTS FROM 15-YEAR OLD GRANDDAUGHTER TO 51-YEAR OLD GRANDMOTHER
ONE MONTH AFTER LEARNING GRANDMA IS A LESBIAN

By Grandma Stef

"Gee, Grandma, I'm sure glad I approve of you again!"

Response: "Figured the love would get you eventually."

"Grandma, don't you like men?"

Response: "Yes, some are okay. I just don't want to sleep with them."

"Grandma, doesn't it gross you out making love to a woman?"

Response: "No. Does it gross you out making love to a boy?"

"Grandma, how many women lovers have you had?"

Response: "Ummmm."

"Grandma, what about sex? What do you do?"

Response: "I'll buy you a book."

Comment of granddaughter upon meeting 2 lesbian friends of Grandma's:

"So, I guess you guys are lesbians just like my grandma, eh?"

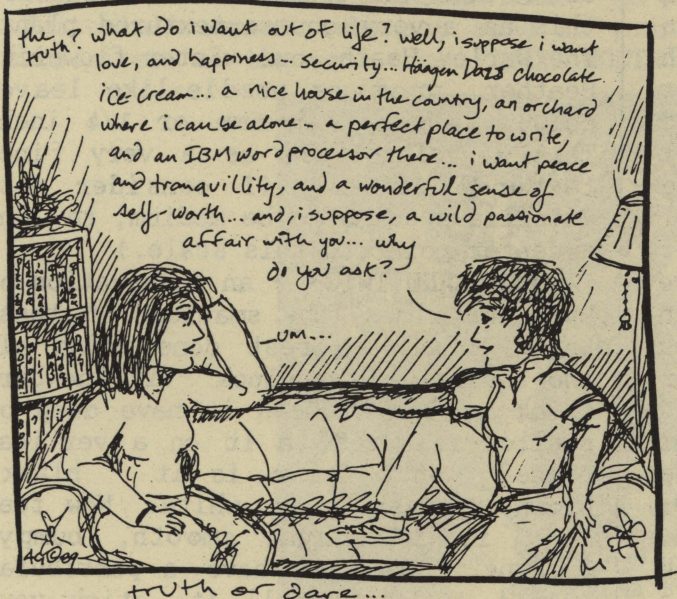
Response: "Gulp."

Thoughts of Grandma to self: "God, her mother never asked me these questions.
What are kids today coming to?"

Grandma's comment to Lavendar Lillies with granddaughters:

"Prepare!"

P O R T R A I T S O F P A N I C
By Alisa Gordaneer





Linda Macfarlane

Beyond Sissinghurst

by Heather Gibson, Dipl.T.

For the gardener, plant identification (I.D.) has value above and beyond the satisfaction of curiosity. Accurate identification can assure you of being able to get the specific plant you want into your garden.

Plant I.D. need not be an impossible task given a horticulturist to take your observations to, or failing that, some good reference books. Your powers of observation, a ruler and sketch paper are all you require in addition to this simplified checklist. The list outlines the major foci of your observations in the great outdoors. It suggests categories of notations that will aid another woman or a text to guide you to I.D. at least at the genus level.

CLIP FOR REFERENCE

HABIT - is a term used to describe the branching pattern and branch density of a plant. This description goes hand in hand with **FORM** - which describes the plant's silhouette. For instance, an Alberta Spruce (*Picea glauca* cv. *Conica*) has a pyramidal or conical silhouette, as the name suggests. Its habit is horizontal branching, very twiggy and dense.

TEXTURE - refers to the relative coarseness or fineness of the plant in full leaf. In the case of deciduous plants, many botanists also consider the relative texture of the defoliated plant, but let's leave that aside for the moment. In order to determine the upper and lower reaches of the course-fine scale let's consider 2 plants. *Gunnera* species are enormous-leaved plants. Resembling a rhubarb leaf, a

single *Gunnera* leaf can grow to 1.2M or 4 feet in diameter! I classify this as a very course-textured plant. The Darley Heath, our winter flowering Heather, produces needle-like leaves seldom longer than 6mm or 1/4 inch. This is classified as a very fine-textured plant. (I consider most *Camellia* species to be medium, to lend a center point to this scale.)

BARK AND TWIGS - an observation of bark and limbs, the smallest of these being twigs, is best done using all the senses. First look - is the bark thick or thin? Does it have deep or shallow fissures in it on a vertical plane? What color is it - black, brown, reddish, grey, white? Now feel it - is it rough, smooth, bumpy, flaking? Does it have a particular aroma? Go on, smell it, stick your

nose right up there. Do you smell resins, dust or a strong perfume? Don't taste though, unless you are familiar with resins; many plants are poisonous.

FLOWERS AND FRUIT - INCLUDING CONES - are often the most distinctive I.D. cues. Rather than detail the variety of flower and fruit types I suggest that you make detailed sketches of the flower or inflorescence (group of flowers). Using the sunflower as an example I'd be careful to note: the outer petal shapes vs. the inner petal shapes; the size of the flower head; the shape of the flower head. Distinguish where the seeds (fruit) develop, and how they look, when they mature.

On a more general note, please observe when the plant blooms or fruits and for what duration. In some plants this makes a huge difference.

Rhododendron species are relatively easily I.D.'d in this way. Note fragrances as well, not only for I.D. but for the pleasure of your nose in future.

EXPOSURE - is really a synonym for environmental conditions. I realize that us hort. types use this as a misnomer, because exposure should refer only to the relative sunniness or shadiness a plant enjoys. So - under this category consider the following: Shady vs. sunny or partial shade conditions. Seaside or salty and rocky conditions. Boggy, dry, well drained or humic (heavy with organic matter).

LEAVES-TYPES-SHAPES-COLORS - Do sketches of leaves for I.D. purposes, but an entire column is the space required for an adequate discussion of this topic. That I'll leave for the next *Lesbianews*.

Finally, as a wrap-up of the information I've shared with you, consider a description and then try an identification.

"This tree grows in a tortured and irregular **FORM** with a sparse and thick branching **HABIT**, except for semi-tufted branch termini. The tree has a medium to medium-coarse **TEXTURE** year round. The bark is smooth, reddish and exfoliating (peeling off). Twigs are reddish. **FLOWERS** appear in April-May and are shaped like upside-down urns, white to pink in color in clusters. **FRUITS** are red to orange berries, round and about 1/2 inch in diameter, appearing in Sept-Oct."

NOW - you guess the tree! SEND YOUR GUESS TO LESBIANNEWS P.O. BOX 5339, STATION B, VICTORIA V8R 6S4, BY NOVEMBER 15, 1989. The earliest dated correct answer wins the **HARROWSMITH PERENNIAL BOOK** - no professional gardeners, please.

(Editorial comment: why not send in your subscription, if you're not already a subscriber, at the same time.) NEXT MONTH: Leaves, Leaves, Leaves.



PATRICIA TOBACCO FORRESTER (b. 1940). *Moonlight Birches*, 1986.

FEMINIST POLITICS SIZZLE IN SEATTLE

By Judy Liefschultz

"We must approach our political work with full hearts, open hearts...." This statement by a workshop leader at the Regional Lesbian Feminist Conference in Seattle (Sept. 22 - 24) summed up the conference quite well. Going to the Excited States always charges me with new ideas for at least 6 months. Workshops on "Cross-Class Relationships", "Lesbian Erotic Identities" and "Women Writers and Our Political Obligations" reflect the diversity and excitement of the conference.

About 350 women attended the two-day conference, which was held at the University of Washington in Seattle. Like their Canadian sisters, American lesbian/feminists no longer use basements. Many of the 75 workshops were recorded and we made full use of the beautiful lecture halls and Fall weather to meet and talk.

The workshops, as I defined and tallied them, showed 44 on politics of race, class, animal rights or organizing of a thousand kinds, 22 delving into personal growth, 6 on lesbian sexuality and 3 on parenting. I attended an equal number on politics and personal growth, which was an interesting thermometer of where my priorities lie at the moment.

For me the constant challenge is to keep going when any effort seems so miniscule compared to the problem.

"What do Perestroika and Glasnost Mean to Us?" centered around a recent trip to the Soviet Union by the workshop facilitators. They brought home posters, conversations and many more questions. It seems women's rights is not a favorite topic of seemingly liberal Gorbachev. The workshop leaders quoted his new book. There he lauds the time, soon to come, when women can return to the home. This tune, a familiar one to all of

us, is reminiscent of North America's post-war media and policy manipulation of women's right to work. Gorbachev's statements spring from rising unemployment in the Soviet Union, where feminists do not consider him supportive of women's rights. [Editorial comment: According to an article in The New Internationalist, they have recently started organizing beauty contests for Soviet women. Objectifying women as sex objects goes nicely with keeping us at home.]

On other fronts, abortion is legal and often used because of poor education and access to birth control in the USSR. Busy with recent peace initiatives, economic setbacks, and cultural demands from Georgia and Ukraine residents, the Soviet Union has little priority for the concerns of feminists or lesbians. There is an underground feminist journal now being published, but lesbianism is not mentioned, organized or visible even in the major cities.

So much happens when women so diverse in class, colour and interests come together.

Interestingly, 95% of manual and technical labor in the USSR is done by women. A high ratio of women are also doctors and scientists. These figures must be related to the millions of Soviet men who were killed in World War II. It's interesting to note the way women are used as the economy needs us, wherever we may be.

The other workshops I attended focussed on empowering ourselves in the face of despair. This despair could be from environmental problems, violence against women and children, nuclear wastes, the threat of nuclear war - or whatever causes your nightmares and worst fears. For me the constant challenge is to keep going when any effort seems so miniscule compared to the problem. The guided visualizations and exercises helped me get over what Helen Caldicott calls "psychic numbing" in yet another way.

The conference plenaries excited me, too. That felt different, as plenaries usually rehash the workshops. One Chicana speaker happily reported that for the first conference in her memory no one said: 1) white women and women of color can never work together; 2) white women are the enemy; or 3) we can't move on 'til racism is removed from the women's movement. She saw this as progress indeed and hoped we would continue to focus on the real foes - who are not ourselves.

Native women spoke on land claims, reiterating the fact that environmentalists depend on the native groups to protect endangered lands. We must all be aware of this as it occurs so often in Canada, in BC and on Vancouver Island. Right now many old growth trees are being saved because they occupy native land, not

because the original environmental concern resulted in long-term legal protection. We must see the connection between native rights and the environment just as we do women's rights and the environment.

All in all it was wonderful, including the party on Saturday night. I enjoyed eating Jewish food at my favorite restaurant, Matzo Momma's. As always, once I make the big move to get off the Island there's lots more I want to see and do in the Big City. So much happens when women so diverse in class, color and interests come together. It reminds me again that lesbians are the vanguard of the women's movement in all its faces, anti-racism, peace, recovery from chemical dependency, preventing violence against women, rights for disabled women, gay rights in the workplace. You name it and we're there.



NEW LESBIAN TITLES FROM EVERYWOMANS BOOKS

Bingo, Rita Mae Brown, \$5.95
All The Muscle You Need: An Eliza
Pirex Mystery, Diana McRae, \$11.65
After The Fire, Jane Rule, \$12.95
Lovers, Tee Corinne, \$9.95
Wildfire, Sonia Johnson, \$14.30

The Riverhouse Stories: How Pubah S.
Queen and Lazy LaRue Save the World,
Andrea Carlisle, \$9.95
The Pied Piper, Lesbian Feminist Fic-
tion from Onlywomen Press, \$11.25

WATCH FOR OUR GREAT SELECTION OF
BOOKS, CALENDARS, POSTERS, AND OTHER
GIFTS FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

COMING NEXT MONTH:

We want to carry accounts of how lesbians cope with the holiday season. What do you do about weathering big family Christmases or Chanukas - with or without a lover? What do you do for Solstice? Let us have your heartwarming sagas of wonderful lesbian-alternative holiday celebrations as well as your heartbreaking tales of rejection amidst the ice and sleet. DON'T FORGET OUR RIGID DEADLINE NOVEMBER 15TH FOR THE DECEMBER ISSUE.

COMING IN JANUARY:

An unfortunate but unavoidable increase in subscription rates to \$18. Subscribe in '89 and save \$3 next year.

Calendar

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 4: WORKSHOPS "OF INTEREST TO WOMEN", 10:30am - 3pm
Sponsored by Junior Service League, with workshops by SWAG Coordinating Committee, at Camosun College, info from SWAG 381-1012, programmes @ SWAG & Everywomans Books.

TUESDAY NOVEMBER 7TH: IWD '90 PLANNING MEETING, 5:30 PM
SWAG Office #320 - 620 View Street
ALL WOMEN WELCOME.

WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 8: COALITION FOR CHOICE PLANNING MEETING, 5:30PM
SWAG Office

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 24TH: WOMEN'S CRAFT FAIR, 8 - 11PM, \$2.00 ADMISSION
HOT FLASHES WOMEN'S CAFE, 106 SUPERIOR
Quality original hand-crafted works by some of BC's most talented women artisans.

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 25: SALE OF SMALL AFFORDABLE PAINTINGS AND PRINTS, hand-crafted christmas cards and original designs on cotton t-shirts by SHEILA NORGATE. 10am - 5pm, 590 Toronto (upstairs), 382-4406.

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 25: DYKE RADIO MAKES ITS DEBUT, 5pm, CFUV FM 102
With your Host Marianne Alto. Our first show talks to and about Campus Lesbians.

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 25: SWAG PRESENTS SONIA JOHNSON
The author of From Housewife to Heretic, Going Out of Our Minds, and Wildfire speaking to a general audience, 8PM, Venue TBA.
More info from SWAG 381-1012.

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 26: WOMEN-ONLY WORKSHOP WITH SONIA JOHNSON
1:30pm, Venue TBA.
More info from SWAG 381-1012.

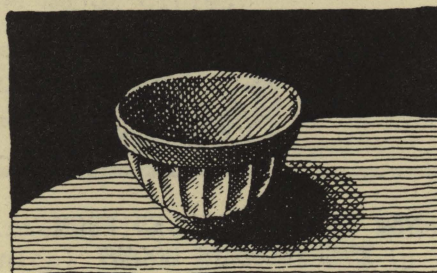
Sonia Johnson is a great speaker who was once a Mormon housewife and is now a New Age radical lesbian feminist

WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 29: SWAG GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING, 7pm, venue TBA

Voting on a constitutional change, semi-annual reports, tea, coffee, munchies and a chance to meet the folks who spend your membership dollars!!
Info from SWAG 381-1012. All members welcome.

FRIDAY DECEMBER 1 -

SUNDAY DECEMBER 3: LESBIAN LOVE
An opportunity for Lesbian women to join together in: removing barriers to self love, acceptance, and success/celebrating self and others/deepening friendships/ experiencing more joy, harmony and commitment in intimate partnerships/creating family connections and community.
Facilitator: Sara Joy David, registered psychologist, 17 years experience
Fee: sliding scale \$150 - \$250
Venue: #308 - 733 Johnson Street
To register: phone 383-8998



ARE YOU REALLY READY TO QUIT?

Join a women's stop-smoking program. This will include acupuncture, addictions counselling [info + skills] and emotional support. 11 sessions starting the 2nd week in November. \$225 for the whole program, limited to 8 participants. To register or for more info, call Janet 595-2459 or Nancy 383-8440.

VICTORY METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH

Founded for and by lesbians, gays and allies
Sunday service 4:15pm
James Bay Community School
140 Oswego
Worship coordinator Steph Ozard
Information 386-5078



**IMAGES OF THE
• GODDESS •
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