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LESBIAN NEWS

VANCOUVER ISLAND'S MONTHLY LESBIAN FEMINIST NEWSLETTER

VOL.3 ISSUE 8

MAY 1992



Speaking the unspeakable/writing the unwritable.

There are as many different kinds of relationships as there are people to have them; mothers, sisters, children, cousins, the boss, friends, even enemies. All having some kind of connection, some sort of tie that goes by the one word: relationship. In every case but one Lesbians specify what kind of relationship it is by another term: daughter, son, neighbour, companion, ally. The exception is of course, "the" relationship. I have to confess that when the Lnews editorial collective (which it isn't, but that's what I call it because it isn't anything else either, and collective seems to describe rather well the leaderless disarray so characteristic of our meetings) chose Relationship for this month's topic, the first thing I thought of was the R-word.

It's the new forbidden word. We're sick of not having them, or having them and screwing them up; we just don't want to talk about it any more. There's a cliché about the People of the North having twenty-four words for snow while the People of the South have only one. This puts the People of the South at a disadvantage when they go North, where ignorance is risk. Lesbians in relationship are People of the South. I keep saying it's snowing and you keep saying it's snowing and neither of us can figure out why we can't agree on anything.

It would be so much nicer if we actually had words for that particular kind of bonding we lesbians do. Marriage? It

certainly isn't that, though for most of us that patriarchal property contract is the place we start our modelling from. (Usually in the form: "I'll be damned if I do what my mother did," or the horrified "Oh no! I'm doing what my mother did!") Commitment? Well, if process is for cheese, commitment is for institutions, isn't that how it goes?

There are words with which to speak about relationships, call it relationspeak, but we don't trust jargon; we like words everybody can understand. Except that in the language everybody can understand, we are the invisibles, the ones nobody talks about, doing things that don't get mentioned.

It's something to think about next time somebody asks, "How's your relationship?"

Something else to think about: The June issue is dedicated to Brides, Now and Then. Many of us have been brides of one sort or another. Maybe we've been a party to a trysting or a commitment ceremony, or maybe we just scratched up some dirt down by the stream and spit in it and mixed it up muddy and smeared it on each others' faces and swore to be best friends until they tore down the school. We have such wonderful stories, and our stories are powerful, as the writer of *Insurmountable* in this month's issue will agree.

So write and tell us your story. It just has to be legible, basically, because the editors have these little bleary eyes from squinting at hasty scribbles by the flickering light of one poor candle, etc.

WHO ARE WE?

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Individual copies sell for \$2.50 at Everywomans Books, 641 Johnson Street, Victoria, B.C. V8W 1M7.

Business card ads are \$8 per issue, \$30 for 5 issues, and \$50 for 10 issues. **Display ads** are \$15 for 1/4 page, \$25 for 1/2 page; for larger sizes, please enquire with L.News for costs. Send camera-ready copy with your cheque to our PO Box address. Deadline is the 15th of each month for the following month.

Classified Ads are \$5/month for up to 25 words and 50c for each word thereafter. If you want us to hold and forward replies to Personals, add \$2. We reserve the right to refuse any ad that might create legal difficulties or that offends our highly developed sensibilities (see note below). Ads and payment must be received by the 15th of each month for inclusion the following month.

Submissions are welcome from all lesbians and allies: This is an open community newsletter. Send your letters, questions, comments, stories, poems, articles, ideas, cartoons, drawings, news items, calendar items, and dreams of the week to the PO Box address, typed double spaced, very neatly written, or on IBM-compatible or Mac 3.5" disk. We edit for space and clarity. Please limit submissions to 800 words. We'll print it as long as it's not sexist-racist-homophobic-antisemitic-ageist-dassist-ablebodyist-personal attackist or boringist.

Dear Debby Gregory:

I just read Lesbianews issue May 1991. I found it provocative and informative. I would very much like to read more issues of this newsletter. Would you please sign me up for a one year subscription.

I have also enclosed two stories that I thought might interest you. You see I am a writer, when I need to think I put it down on paper. The first, Insurmountable Part I, I wrote before I read your newsletter and the second one, Insurmountable Part II, I wrote after I read it.

Thank you for the time, energy and creativity you have exerted in producing this newsletter.

Sincerely yours, Elizabeth Heggs

Dear LesbiaNews,

It saddens me to see a lesbian

publication which claims to provide community news, ideas, and an open forum for creative expression reduced to a vehicle for personal vengeance. The content of the April, "Auntie Aytoldu Tso" column further puzzles me in light of your editorial policy, which reportedly excludes "personal attackist" material. That there is no personal name attached to the individual "Auntie" took such pains to insult is no guarantee of anonymity, especially in a community as small and as vocal as this one. Even more surprising, "Auntie" is one of your editors!

I'm sure the hearts of all LesbiaNews readers go out to someone in such obvious pain as "Auntie Ay", regardless of its source. Personally, I consider

support groups and counselling more appropriate contexts in which to resolve such issues. It is unfortunate that "Auntie Ay" has chosen community media to do so. It is also unfortunate that LesbiaNews published it.

However informal the product, it is my view that the producers of LesbiaNews be accountable to their stated premise. Until such time as the publication can consistently enforce their own editorial policies, I withdraw all personal and creative support from LesbiaNews.

Melaney Black

Dear Ms. Black: Auntie Ay's column was never intended as a personal slur. It's only purpose was as a facetious, if cynical comment on love. - Ed.

PART I INSURMOUNTABLE

It hurts so much. I feel like Stephen King is writing my life. I must choose between my children. With no guarantee I can give a good life to either of them. Their father would like to take my youngest, my son. My daughter he excludes from all consideration. If I let their father take my son I will be able to attend college for two years so I can support my eldest, my daughter, without the help of the welfare system and take them to Disneyland for a holiday, buy a car, maybe a house. I could live a normal life. I will still see my son. Occasionally hold him, ruffling his soft blond hair with my breath.

If I fight their father and win I will be trapped, trapped in a system not designed to help those that are willing to help themselves. I would forever destroy my dreams of

writing a book, visiting Australia and maybe just finding a new mate to love.

If only I had never faced that first truth. I would still be complacently relying on their father and covering up my dissatisfaction and unhappiness with work and school. But, I didn't. I let myself admit the truth. I am a lesbian. And now I am paying the price with tears of pain and anguish. Have I done the right thing? Has being honest with myself hurt those I love the most? I will ask myself those questions again in ten years.

PART II OF INSURMOUNTABLE

Alone, I tortured myself with recriminations, guilt and fear. Then I got mad. You see I am a survivor. Always have been. When my parents died I didn't cry in self-pity,

I picked out coffins. When social services adopted me out to a paedophile I fought back and escaped. When at 15 I was homeless and hungry, I found work. The problems always seem insurmountable. The problems may be, but I'm not.

I dug up all the dirt I could on the kids' father and all his support people. I hired a lawyer. We now have joint custody; I have both children 90% of the time. He pays all the daycare cost so I can go to work. And the children are in the same daycare. The situation may be different but I'm not.

Want to know what woke me up and reminded me of who I really am? A newsletter a friend gave me. One issue of a newsletter that was a year out of date. It showed me I can be exactly who I really am and revel in it. It showed me I wasn't alone.

Brain Fever

by Karey Perks

My son has come to visit. He walks into this woman-space with its pampered cats, and stretches, himself like a cat wanting to be fed and scratched behind the ears. He is so tall it seems as if his arms will go through the ceiling. None of the furniture is big enough for him. On the fold-out visitor's bed his sleeping bag is unrolled from corner to corner; otherwise the bed is too short. When we sit at the kitchen table, all the space underneath it is filled with his knees, his legs, his feet.

"How did you get to be so big?" I want to ask him. I'm sure he wasn't this big when he left home. It was all of two years ago. I'm sure I could still carry him then.

"What you need to do," he says, and then proceeds to tell me. We are talking about the car, discussing the counteracting forces of pushrods, valve springs, and pivot nuts. I consider the physics of the problem, making cut-away drawings with F (for force) and T (for torque) and arrows to indicate the direction in which these are exerted. He says, pragmatically, "I say we just tighten them. That's what Chevy does with theirs."

I'm not so sure. He has spent the better part of five years up to his elbows in one engine or another, so I give him credit for a certain amount of expertise, but I myself am not lacking in expertise, and if there's a problem, I'll be left with

it when he gets on the ferry. He has to convince me.

But it's fun, this poking about the engine, testing what we know.

I wasn't always this mellow when he was growing up. Most of the time, like most parents I suspect, I was barely one baby-step ahead of my child's next developmental challenge and a couple of giant steps behind my own. I took parenting courses, read parenting books. We wouldn't have to fight so much. We could do things without yelling. But the trouble with making things better is it's our fault if they're not, so here I am, having a marvellous time

*At least we have a
manual for the car,
if not for our
relationship.*

putting new rocker arms in the car with my son, wondering where I went wrong, that I didn't do this with him when he was living at home.

Then, of course, I was a single parent working full-time. There should be a post-graduate degree in stress for people like me. After he left I had all this extra time and money. I could mellow out on a Sunday afternoon and work on the car. But by that time, my son had moved away, as I moved to a different town when I left home,

for my own reasons.

A thousand years ago people had gods and all their mythic relationships full of love and betrayal, great dramatic stuff, which if it didn't turn out happy at least made life into art. Now what I have is guilt: at least it feels like guilt, a sort of bouillabaisse of emotions about my mother, who raised me in defiance of her upbringing - "I hope you never have to go through what I went through" - and myself as mother - "why didn't I ever, and I wish I'd never, etc."

It's a miracle to me that either of us made it. He has had, after all, an atypical upbringing, having lived at various times with a single father, a re-married father and stepbrother, a single lesbian mother, and a lesbian family with two mothers and a stepbrother. But here we are, smudged and smiling, having come to a decision, and happily cranking the engine and torquing the rockers. Something has shifted between us, now that we live apart. It might be nothing more than both of us being more mature, but it feels like we are working things out, this business of two adults who are also mother and child.

At least we have a manual for the car, if not for our relationship. Between the pictures of the sparkplugs and the carburettor we have hit upon a common language, my son and I. I am very glad.

You'll Never Catch A Dog By Kissing Worms

Rare is the lesbian who, when it's raining cats and dogs, will not run outside with a net. Certainly our longest (sometimes our healthiest) relationships are often with our pets, but myths about pets can be detrimental to good decisions about proper care. For example:

A cat's sense of balance is in its whiskers. Cat's whiskers act as feelers, and their usefulness in this regard is diminished when trimmed, but it is not true that dizziness will result.

Cats always land on their feet. This is a vicious rumour that undoubtedly has brought misery to many cats. The high-rise syndrome, in which cats plunge many stories to their deaths or to severe injury is a common clinical event.

Don't let cats sleep with the baby; they will suck the child's breath away. Of course it's true; ask the dog.

If you feed your dog garlic, it won't get worms. Garlic won't prevent worms, but it surely will cure you of kissing your dog. Also false: kissing your dog will give you worms.

Bones are good for dogs. Wrong. Bones can cause a lot of problems for dogs, such as constipation, impaction of the intestine, laceration of the intestinal walls, and other complications.

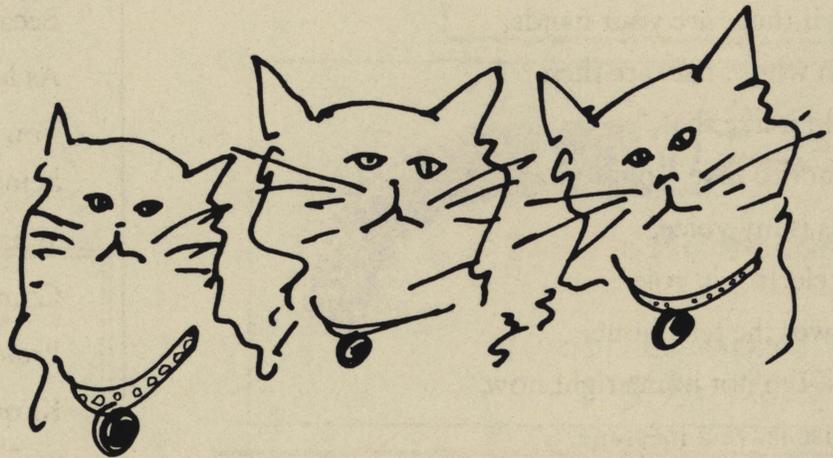
If you feed your kitten or puppy milk, it will get worms. What is this worm fixation? Not all cats need milk, and some may get digestive trouble if they drink too much. Others just get maudlin.

My dog drags its rear end on the floor because it has worms. Again with the worms! Some dogs scoot because of parasites, especially tapeworms, but the action simply means that the dog has an itch. More often, the problem is caused by impacted anal glands.

If a dog's nose is cold, it must be healthy. Not true. A dog may have a wet, cold nose, along with fever and pneumonia!

Pigeons communicate with pigeon English. Actually, only English pigeons use pigeon English.

Excerpted and adulterated without mercy from *Pets Magazine* Vol.8, No.5, Jan/Feb 1992. (The one about the baby isn't really true; but everything else is just like they said in the magazine. They're vets; they should know. The Kitties are reprinted from *What I Love about Lesbian Politics Is Arguing with People I Agree With*, by Kris Covick, pub. by Alyson Publications.)



KITTIES WHO LOVE TOO MUCH.

COMING ISSUES

June: *Brides Then and Now.* Matrimony, ceremony, Shetland pony, no matter how you rhyme it, many of us have pledged our troths with a tryst of the wrist. Would we do it again?

July/August: *Praise For Ourselves.* Your chance to lavish kudos on the person of

your choice, and don't forget to put yourself at the top of the list.

September: *The Poverty Game.* When winners are losers.

October: *Strange Bedmates:* Can lesbian-feminism forge alliances? Or will we end up being one-woman minority groups?

Heroes

by Maureen Peacock

This is the scene,
where one of us gets to play the hero.
You come galloping
into the room,
and I say, "Oh, oh it's you."
I am as big as a mountain.
I am as small as a pebble.
I see your hands,
your white hands, fluttering.
If those are your hands,
then this must be my body.
But if those are your hands,
then whose fists are these?
Hold it like that,
I want to take a photograph.
This is my voice,
my electronic voice;
answer the telephone.
"Hi, I'm not home right now,
please leave a message."
Hold it like that,
I want to take a photograph.
"Hi, I'm not home right now...
Please leave a message, after the beep."
This is the time, this is the place,
this is the scene where one of us
gets to play the hero.
You come galloping into the room,
and I say, "Oh!
Oh, it's you."
And you say, "It takes one..."
And I say, "No,
it takes two."

TO G., HER SINGULAR ROSE

To G., her singular rose,
From A. -the bonds of precious love.
What is my strength, that I should bear it,
That I should have patience in your absence?...
I shed tears as I used to smile,
And my heart is never glad.
When I recall the kisses you gave me,
And how with tender words you caressed my little
breasts,
I want to die
Because I cannot see you...
As long as the world stands
You shall never be removed from the core of my
being.
What more can I say?
Come home, sweet love!
Prolong your trip no longer;
Know that I can bear your absence no longer.
Farewell.
Remember me.

- verse from one woman to another found in a twelfth-century manuscript from a monastery in Bavaria. From Ceremonies of the Heart, Seal Press, Becky Butler, ed.



ADS & NOTICES

VOLUNTEER HELP WANTED ASAP!!

Woman with computer desktop publishing experience and equipment required to produce **LesbiaNews** on a regular basis. Approximately 4-6 hours per issue. Call 592-7546. Ask for Karey.

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LESBIAN DISCUSSION GROUP FOR ♀ 40+

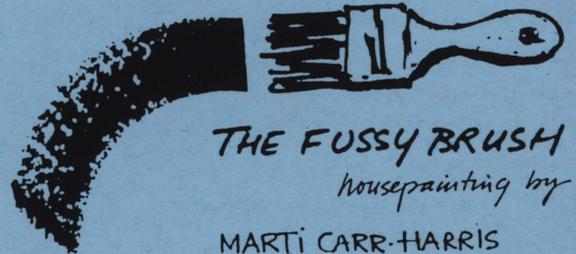
WHERE: AT JANEY AND TONI'S PLACE
#417, 254 GORGE ROAD EAST
PHONE: 360-1047

WHEN: TWO WEDNESDAYS PER MONTH
FIRST MEETING: MAY 27, 1992
STARTING PROMPTLY AT 7 P.M.

THIS WILL BE STRICTLY A DISCUSSION
GROUP, NOT THERAPY

★★★★★★★

TOPICS WILL BE CHOSEN BY CONSENSUS
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GAY PRIDE WHOOPIE!

GAY/LESBIAN PRIDE Fundraising Auction, at Rumours on May 30. For more information about this and other Gay/Lesbian Pride events (like the July 11 pre-picnic party at Rumours, and the July 12 post-party picnic in Beacon Hill Park) phone Pat 370-2964 or Sam 382-0837.

CAMPORAMA! CAMPOREE!

Those boffo lesbians are at it again this year with more bugs in their bedrolls and wood smoke in their eyes. It's bring your own tent pegs and never mind the animals as the amazons congregate at group site #1 in Ruckle Park on savory Salt Spring Island, May 15-18. Campers are reminded: all pets must be kept on leash, including boa constrictors.

GET YOUR MONTHLY CAFFEINE FIX at Hot Flashes Coffee House, Friday May 24, 8-10 PM, at the Unitarian Church, 106 Superior St.

BREAK THE CYCLE/ACROSS CANADA SEXUAL ABUSE AWARENESS AND FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN.

Two women from Canmore, Alberta, Terry Smith and Alyson Lockwood, both survivors of child sexual abuse, will cycle across Canada this summer to increase public awareness of the issue of child sexual abuse and raise funds for the newly established Break The Cycle Foundation. The aim of the Foundation is to help prevent child sexual abuse, and to provide financial support for programs which have suffered from funding cuts. The tour will begin May 14 in St. John's, Newfoundland, and end September 11 in Victoria. Groups or individuals wishing to organise local educational, promotional, or fundraising activities are requested to contact Break the Cycle, Box 697, Canmore, Alberta, TOL 0M0.

CALL TO ARTISTS/WOMEN SURVIVORS OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE

Victoria multimedia artist and survivor, wishes to propose a group show of visual artwork produced by survivors, about the process of healing from sexual abuse. Submissions of 2D, 3D, photography, multimedia, installation, video, film, performance, etc. will be considered. This show will be proposed for Spring 1993, dates and places TBA. Number of participants will be determined by amount and type of work submitted. *Deadline for submissions: June 30, 1992.* Interested women please call 382-0442 for submission information or write: Maureen Peacock, Studio #4, Xchanges Gallery and Studios, 951 North Park St., Victoria, B.C. V8T 1C4.

Starting Next Month:

TONGUES AFIRE

A Radio Talk Show for Lesbians Who'd Rather Be Reading!

This Month's Question: **Are Brides Necessary?**

What is your opinion?

Call 474-7369 and express yourself to the LesbiaNews Tongues Afire HOTline answering machine!

NO KIDDING. We want to hear from you, and to make it easy, we're inviting you to call us and let us know your opinion. The question this month: Are Brides Necessary? If you don't like the question, tell us what you think about the topic of your choice. (No ads, please). And you don't have to leave your name. That number again is 474-7369. See? It really is like radio!

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If you have a purple sticker in this spot then your subscription is up with this issue!