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When a Circle Isn't...

By Barbara McLauchlin

A lesbian's diverse method of expression and off-the-wall approach to that expression, particularly through art, transcends traditional form, shape, expression and reason. Our standards are our own and our traditions are quicksilver.

Artist Rebecca Van Skyver gives life to that idea in a body of work that can be described as mercurial geometry. The artist's body interacts with stretch nylon and spandex, balls, hoops, even video and people. Fabric is wall, floor, cube. The people help to interact and complete a work that defies ordinary verbal expression. One is left with a strong sense that defining – form, thought, idea, expression, work, people, or ourselves – is a waste of time. A square is not. A circle isn't. Walls aren't. Any form is something to be transcended. Away from Rebecca, we consider ourselves free to move within the fabric of our existence – exposed, yes. But we don't try to leave that fabric. Her work pushes against our sense of perception and reality. It defies our sense of rhythm, shape and form.

"It's not my intention to make my work say anything", Rebecca is adamant. "I don't have an explanation for the pieces. The work is totally a visual experience. It has to be seen and allowed to express within the viewer".

Maybe that's why I like it. I can, dyke-like, push this inner view of the work onto a world of form that leaves me laughing – *with* the work – and *at* the world. Under Rebecca's palette of cloth and shape, colour and viewpoint, the hidebound gods of ritual and geometry take flight. It's free-soul and fragile and light.

The beautiful, but hard thing, about Rebecca's work is that it must be seen. It cannot be articulated in mere words. There's too much to sense and to feel. It reminds me of a show called *Sensory Perceptions* which opened in my home town in the late sixties. The show was designed for the blind – it was meant to be felt, got into, rolled around in and imagined. Ideal for the blind.

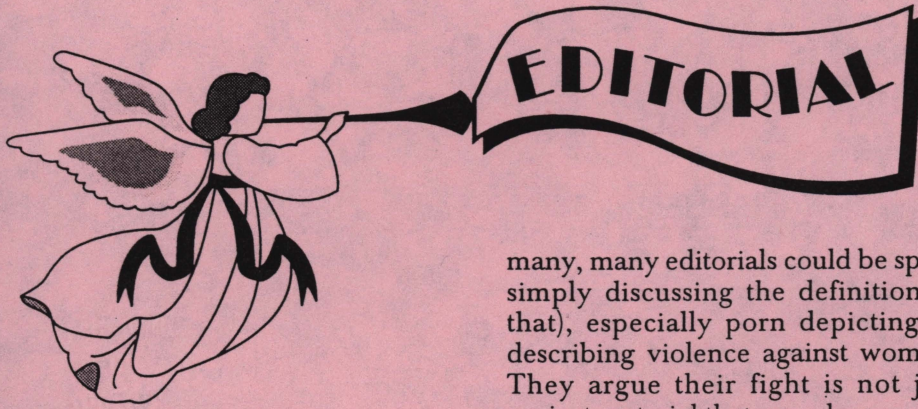


Disorienting for the sighted. The concept or idea in *Perceptions* fits here because so much has to be left behind to enjoy Rebecca's work. In almost all ways we have to abandon the way we view what we think we know.

I interviewed Rebecca shortly after her return from Ontario where she took part in a show called *Common Ground, Still Moves*, a collaborative installation & performance with Sarah Link, Haruko Okano and Joan Van Damme, at the Burlington Art Centre. Was the time, the show—a success?

"It was valuable because I got to see people in relationship to my work. I hadn't performed my work for

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Assassination is the extreme form of censorship. George Bernard Shaw

Censorship. It is a complex act with far reaching ramifications ... not the least of which affects the lives of Lesbians. In its simplest form, censorship involves the deletion, removal, obliteration, erasure of words, sounds and images which the censor deems objectionable on moral, political, religious, military or other grounds. In its extreme form it means murder, assassination and genocide.

Lesbians have been subjected to both forms of censorship and to all its shades of grey between. We have been burned at the stake, sent to gas chambers, beaten and raped. We have been denied access to publishing houses and the press, our stories never printed. Books, magazines and films which we have funded have been destroyed. We have been forced deep into the closet by the courts, the government, the education system, the health care system. We have been denied employment, homes and basic human rights. We have been made invisible, told to shut up, hide and pretend or suffer the consequences. For some it goes beyond even that – Queen Victoria didn't even bother making us illegal ... what isn't seen to exist is not worth censoring.

But, of course that's only one side of the issue. The censor believes his or her duty is a noble one – the protection of others against morally and ethically damaging material. Some feminists have advocated greater power to the censor in order to protect women and children. Their primary target is pornography (and

many, many editorials could be spent simply discussing the definition of that), especially porn depicting or describing violence against women. They argue their fight is not just against material that may damage the moral fibre of humanity, but against attitudes reinforced and perpetuated in written and visual material which view women as commodities – things to be used and, eventually, thrown away. Pornography, they argue, is directly linked to murder, battering, rape and child abuse. Censoring pornography, obscenity and violent images becomes nothing less than life saving.

Andrea Dworkin, one of the anti-pornography movement's most eloquent and forceful speakers, writes that censorship is not understood in North America. Here, she writes, "it gets used to mean unpleasant, even angry frowns of disapproval or critiques delivered in harsh tones; it means social disapproval or small retaliations by outraged citizens where the book is still available and the writer is entirely unharmed." To her, censorship is not an abstract idea but an act; an act of police brutality, of state imprisonment, of murder.

But, the two ends of the spectrum are connected and censorship cuts both ways. "Social disapproval or critiques delivered in harsh tones" can and do lead to violence – dyke jokes and queer baiting are not that far from gay bashing. Denying Lesbians a voice in the media keeps us invisible and allows others to think we do not exist and, therefore, have no need for human rights. Every year hundreds of Lesbian teens commit suicide because of social disapproval.

So, where do we draw the line? When does protection and life saving become erasure and murder. Who decides what's immoral, vulgar, obscene, harmful? Who decides who

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LesbiaNews was founded September 1988. It is staffed entirely by volunteers as follows:

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Lesbian crime writer serves weak brew at mystery tea

By Shelagh Plunkett

It was a dark and stormy night. Outside, rain slashed at the windows. Inside, more than 200 people sipped tea and chatted while chamber music filled the background. On stage the authors waited to begin.

I had come to the Vancouver Writers Festival "Mystery Tea," to hear Lesbian crime writer Eve Zaremba read from her latest novel, *The Butterfly Effect*.

Zaremba, billed in the program notes as "one of the first authors of detective fiction to introduce a lesbian heroine," was the only out Lesbian among 54 writers at the festival. During his introduction, the event's MC described her as inventing "the Lesbian private-eye and said this sub-genre of crime fiction is now "one of the hottest."

I was anticipating a pleasant hour. But, as Zaremba read, my anticipation evaporated like the rain on my hat, then turned to frustration and annoyance during the question period that followed.

Zaremba is not a good reader. Some writers should hire others to vocalize their work. Her reading was stilted and clumsy, she stumbled over her own words frequently and twice apologized for having lost her place on the page.

But, although a shame, that was not the source of my disappointment. Despite the build-up, Zaremba chose to read a passage in which Helen Keremos, the Lesbian protagonist,

was barely there, let alone out. A male character dominated the passage, the dialogue being 85 per cent his words – typical, but not expected here. The only hint at Keremos's Lesbianism, a coy and very subtle one at that, came in the final lines. The male character says, "I fuck only beautiful young broads....Hey! No offence!" Keremos answers, "No offence taken. I wouldn't fuck you even you were young and beautiful."

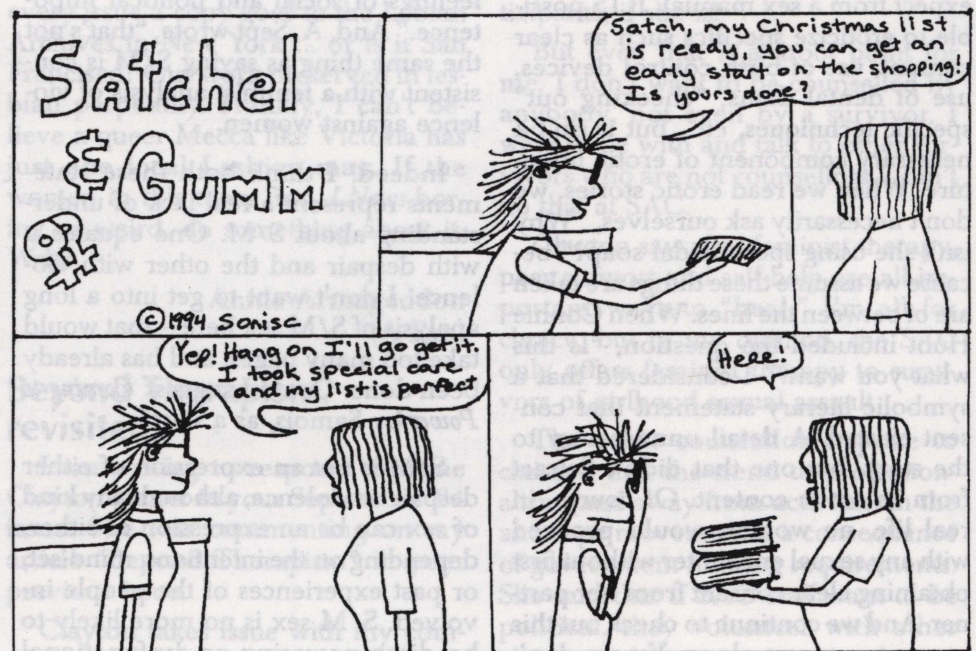
Pretty subtle.

When asked how she placed her Lesbian character in the tradition of the genre – very male dominated – particularly with reference to the sub-genre of female spinster sleuths, Zaremba paused long, looked at the writer next to her and said, "times have changed." Sure, but that doesn't

address the question.

Later, as I leave's dropped (no pun intended) I heard Zaremba say she didn't think her character, Helen Keremos, needed to "remind people she's a Lesbian because it's enough for her to just act like a Lesbian." Since I was leave's dropping I couldn't jump up and ask, "But what does that mean to you?"

Perhaps it isn't fair to expect Lesbian writers (or Lesbian whatever) like Zaremba to place their Lesbianism in the foreground of their public persona. However, if (as Zaremba did at this event) they use the fact of their Lesbianism as grounds for praise they should at least honour us with some indication of it. Too bad Zaremba didn't live up to her book blurbs and program notes.



The Thirteenth Opinion

Lesbian S/M ... and the beat goes on

I commend your magazine for having the courage to broach the issue of lesbian S/M and would like to contribute a few words to this important dialogue. I enjoyed the story "The Heat of the Island Sun" because I read it for what it was – an erotic fantasy. I'd like to address some of the issues raised in subsequent letters.

First, the issue of consent, I think we all agree that ANY non-consensual sex is rape – it doesn't matter if it's vanilla, S/M, lesbian, straight or whatever. Yet we don't insist, in erotic writings about non-S/M sex, that this consent be explicitly stated. It is a convention in erotic literature, and we seem able to accept it elsewhere, that the erotic acts described don't need to contain every detail that we would expect from a sex manual. It IS possible to eroticize specifics such as clear consent, use of birth control devices, use of dental dams, "checking out" specific techniques, etc., but it isn't a necessary component of erotic literature. When we read erotic stories, we don't necessarily ask ourselves, "Why isn't she using spermicidal soap?" because we assume these things are taken care of between the lines. When Connie Hunt included the question, "Is this what you want?" I considered that a symbolic literary statement that consent existed. A detail unnecessary to the story, but one that didn't detract from its erotic content. Of course, in real life, no woman would proceed with any sexual encounter without first obtaining clear consent from her partner. And we continue to check out this consent as we go along. Yet we don't

get upset if this ongoing discussion is omitted from vanilla erotica. "Do you like penetration?" "Are your breasts sensitive?" "Will you go down on me?" If every consent asked for and given – and there are MANY in every sexual encounter – were included in an erotic piece, I think I'd be yawning with boredom before I reached the climax, so to speak!

So PLEASE, let's examine our expectations of erotic literature, and if we insist on only politically correct, clinically accurate erotica, let's apply that standard consistently to ALL erotic literature, not just S/M.

Which brings me to my second point – that some of the objections to Ms. Hunt's piece were based on more than the issue of consent. Margot K. Louis stated: "In my view machocism is the expression in sexual terms of our feelings of social and political impotence." And, A. Sept wrote, "that's not the same thing as saying S/M is consistent with a feminist analysis of violence against women."

Indeed! I think both these statements represent a real lack of understanding about S/M. One equates it with despair and the other with violence. I don't want to get into a long analysis of S/M sex here – that would take too many pages, and has already been done. Could I suggest *Coming to Power* by Samois, as a start?

S/M is not an expression of either despair or violence, although any kind of sex can be an expression of either, depending on the intentions, mind-set, or past experiences of the people involved. S/M sex is no more likely to be disempowering or dysfunctional

than any other kind of sexual practice. Some would argue less so. S/M sex has been part of the human repertoire of sexual activity for as long as we have been enjoying the pleasures of sex, and has reflected as many different cultural and political realities as vanilla sex. Also, the line between S/M and non-S/M sex is not a clearly defined boundary. There are degrees of S/M in many sexual encounters.

To judge some kinds of sexual activity as anti-feminist, or even as merely "transitional" (presumably on the road to a higher level of sexual awareness) is, to me, a profoundly anti-feminist stance. Any sexual activity, between or among consenting adults, that gives pleasure to the participants, is something that feminists should support. To do less than recognize the right of women to make our own choices about our own bodies is to undermine one of the basic principles of feminism. We can say that this or that isn't our personal choice. We can even say that we don't understand a woman's particular choice, but we have no right to judge our sisters as misled, wrong, or unenlightened because of the choices they make. Such arrogance!

I'm sorry if I sound angry, but I am! I've heard this all before – when lesbianism has been judged, when prostitution has been judged, when every free choice a woman makes about her own body has been judged. Just because the judgment is being made in the name of "feminism" doesn't reduce my outrage.

To speak of the experience of sexual assault in the same breath as S/M sex is like talking about pederasty in the

same context as homosexuality. It is a connection based on fear and prejudice, not on reality. Of course we must speak out about our experiences of sexual assault. We must also talk about the disturbing feelings we might have when these experiences seem to be mirrored in erotic literature. But let's not make the mistake of equating the two. If I was forcibly penetrated in my life, I might find erotic representations of vaginal penetration disturbing. But that doesn't make vaginal penetration a bad thing! (I know Ms. Sept was speaking on the issue of consent when she made this connection. But she also had previously implied that S/M sex was about violence against women, which blurred her argument.)

Why is it that erotic representations of S/M sex push all our moral buttons? If a woman can imagine whipping or being whipped as an erotic experience, why is it so difficult for us to accept that? I applaud Ms. Hunt for daring to expose her eroticism to a feminist audience. Clearly it's an exercise that is still needed, judging by the responses. It wasn't very long ago that lesbian erotica was examined and judged under the harsh light of misunderstanding and moral outrage. We were held accountable for every preconceived idea that straight feminists held about lesbian sex and we persisted. We came out of the closet with pride; we told our sisters that if they were uncomfortable with our sexual realities, it was their problem. And our straight sisters gradually learned to overcome their discomfort, to examine their prejudices, and that was political! Not two women in bed together, but our affirmation that two women in bed together is a personal choice, that our right to choose is something that we expect all feminists to not only accept but to actively defend.

So here I am, actively defending the right of women to do whatever they choose sexually, because this is my understanding of feminism. Let's begin the dialogue about S/M from this position. Let's start from the principle that any sexual activity (between consenting adults, etc.) is a "sufficient and valid sexual end in itself."

In Sisterhood,
Judith Quinlan.

Campout

In response to the campout capers: It's really easy to lay blame but more difficult to take responsibility for the ways in which we choose to live our lives.

There's no point in slamming Pat and Lee. If not for their efforts there would be no Lesbian Campouts and no reduced rates for women on lower incomes. They have subsidized women in the past and are always willing to share their tarp to keep women dry, their tea or anything else.

Pat and Lee do not set the park rules – but when the rules get broken, they get the flak from the Park Ranger because they are the ones who took the trouble to set up the camp and to be responsible for the group. If you "uppity" dykes are so keen to camp at a provincial campground, in a group campsite, then go ahead and organize one for yourselves that meets your needs. Let people know your agenda so that we can have the choice of whether to attend or camp elsewhere!

Reva Hutkin
Liz G.

Fan Mail

Who knows why more lesbians don't write in or contribute their work to *LNews*. I've been reading it since it surfaced. Cool little rag. Full of profound, bizarre, sensitive stuff! Is it true, every issue a copy goes to the Lesbian Archives in New York ... or is it San Francisco? Our work preserved in lesbian perpetuity. Frankly, I can't believe a queer Mecca like Victoria has just one local Lesbian mag. If the women in this town find *LNews* boring or weird, do something about it. Write.

Annie Armageddon
(A Fan)

Beyond Therapism, revisited

I am writing to respond to Anne Clayton's letter in your September '94 issue. She was commenting on my article "Beyond Therapism" in your previous issue.

Clayton takes issue with my complaint that there are self-support

groups, no drop-ins, no peer network and no programs run specifically by survivors at the Victoria Women's Sexual Assault Centre. Clayton says there is a drop-in for survivors of recent sexual assault. However, I was speaking as a survivor of girlhood sexual assault, for which there is no comparable service.

Clayton contends that their drop-in is "definitely a self-help group, although there is a counsellor who facilitates." As far as I'm concerned, "self-help" means there are no professionals facilitating or guiding the group. Counsellors should not be appropriating the language of the self-help movement

Clayton says that crisis counsellors provide peer support. I consider peer support to be support from another survivor, who identifies herself as one and speaks from that experience.

Clayton takes issue with my point that there are no services run by survivors for survivors. She argues that given the statistics on violence against (girls and) women, there would be survivors among SAC volunteers and therapists. Of that I have no doubt. However, when I spoke to a crisis counsellor in June, I was told that counsellors who are survivors would not necessarily disclose this to clients. That's about as helpful as a lesbian support group run by a woman who might or might not be a lesbian and might or might not "come out" to participants, if she is!

But even that is a moot point for me. I don't want to be counselled by anybody, not even by a survivor. I want to be with and talk to other survivors who are not counsellors. I can't do that at SAC.

Clayton says that feminist therapy, peer support and self-help are all important ways to "heal." I'm all for choice, but in my opinion, the SAC only offers feminist therapy to survivors of girlhood sexual assault

The crisis counsellor I spoke to claimed that the trend to professionalism (and away from activism) in the anti-rape movement is a consequence of government funding requirements. She said that if SAC staff want to be political, they volunteer with other

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Out Of The Closet – Dyke Fashion

by Rosalita Weltanschauung

Each year Victoria's mad, gay social whirl starts off with the Gala at Crystal Garden. This year's event once again combined dinner entertainment - a live band dubbed by some as "The Depressants" - with a chance to dance, to renew old acquaintances, or to cruise the flea-market of new and used relationships in search of bargain treasures.

Over the years the Gala has become a tradition, a seasonal destination where dykes who are all dressed up with noplacement to go finally discover a sense of purpose and direction. *LesbiaNews* asked Gala-goers at this year's celebration to describe what they were wearing. Here are a few of the answers:

- These are rubber pants and yes, they are hot. Very hot.
- I would call this Boy-Femme. I like the mixture of genders. It's like cross dressing. It turns me on.
- I have on a blue silk jacket and pants. Feel this. Ooo! I had forty-five minutes to shop and this was the first thing I found in the store.
- This is a butt plug for Barbie.
- It's a tie with art. These are brushes and paints, and this is a palette. My good friend Riva Hutkin – you know, the oldest dyke in Victoria! – bought it for me for Christmas last year and I've been saving it for this night.
- It's aerated. It gives me enough room to spread my legs, because I'm dancing in a place where steam keeps coming out of the walls.
- I made it myself. It's Thai silk, in a kind of lemon yellow. It has a mid-calf skirt and a peplum jacket, meaning it has a little flare around the hips and the bust, to show that um...I've got enough!
- I would describe this as stroke-able.
- I was on Saltspring, feeling like I've just got off my horse, so...the farm thing. It's an authentic shirt. And the feathers are very much a part of my spiritual symbol, so I have to wear my feathers.
- Well, it's comfortable, that's the criterion.
- Since I don't smoke, it's a dinner jacket. It's a bright paisley pattern, electric blue and electric green. I wore it tonight because the opportunities to be able to wear something like this are few and far between.
- It's a little more revealing than I first anticipated. Usually I wear something that covers up my body more and this time I thought I'd try to be a little more daring and see how it felt. I actually changed in the car on the way here. Before, I was in a black leather mini-skirt.
- I'm wearing this because my girlfriend likes it.

Oldtimers Dance



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LITTLE LEZZIE FLASHES



What an exciting time to be home from holidays! There's so much coming up, a poor dyke can barely take a breath! Had a chance to talk with Blind Date Productions. Really excited that **Cate Friesen** is coming. This lesbian sings stuff even Joe Blake calls art and her fans at Blind Date call her the Alice Munro of folk music. Well, her press would indicate the gals, **Jane-Orion**

Bonanza for Essayists

After much long deliberation *LesbiaNews* staff have made up their minds. We have chosen a winner(s) of our first essay contest. We have picked all three essay submissions for first place — there was no second or third.

The winners are: Jennifer Waelti-Walters, for "Pre-literate Food Gatherers of the Loire Valley"; Milnor Alexander, for "Two Women I'd Like to Have Met!" and Lahl SarDyke, for "my erotic friendship." Winners will each receive a \$25 gift certificate to Everywoman's Books. Happy reading!

Smith, Wendy Gordon, Nancy Poole, Odette Rouillard, Gwynneth Powell, Lou Lefebvre and Lee Boychuk, are right on. Can hardly wait to get a ticket. Can hardly wait to do a bit of a feature on Blind Date for next issue. Then there's the film night, a couple of dances, a crafts show, a Musica concert. At least as a 50-up I can join the old-timers dance Nov. 19. Check the notices page. Hey, There's a Lesbian Senior's Care Society starting up. First meeting is March 1. Being run under the auspices of SWAG. More later. Purple Moon Sisters, WIN and Blind Date are hosting a couple of fund-raisers for a couple who are being kept apart by that word "couple" — one is in England, the other here and Canada doesn't recognize them as "spouse". So, rather than use the sponsor route open to any other couple, there's fund-raisers planned — a coffee house (see back page) and a possible rummage sale Nov. 26. Save your rummage just in case. And bring your wallets to the Nov. 5 coffee House. **Lisa Lander** is the new co-ordinator for Uvic's Lesbian Gay Bisexual Association (LGBA). Lisa was the major force behind the Out Loud conference at Douglas College last year. Before I went on holidays, **Nancy Poole** and the inimitable **Jan Trainor** canned a body-piercing

demonstration in favor of a musical presentation illustrating the "phenomena" of Michigan (women's folk festival) calling it a *post Michigan Discourse on the bifurcation of the Lesbian community as seen through the eyes of the bifocussed set.* (What you have to do to qualify these days! Anyway, the party was great, the music mostly wonderful — especially the part when Nancy needed to get into the Michigan mood and doffed her top." I'm getting cold," she said, at last. "We noticed" was Little Lezzie's admiring response. Then there was Rebecca's 50th held after the fact, but home where her heart is. This Lesbian Leo had to spend her birthday in Burlington with heterosexual women. "We're (dykes) not always nice to each other, but we relate and we care for one another" Becca told me soon after she got back. Crowd favorite gift was a pack of 52 naked women. Cards, that is. Bridge, anyone? 'Til next time. BMcL

A hot flash ps just in from Elizabeth Duff: Someone, hopefully unintentionally, walked home from the Gala wearing her jacket. Please call her at 384-1787. We know it was dark and you probably mistook the navy blue silk (Jones, New York) for your black cotton jacket. It was likely on a chair at the singles table. Make a person's day!

Susan Slatkoff, M.A.

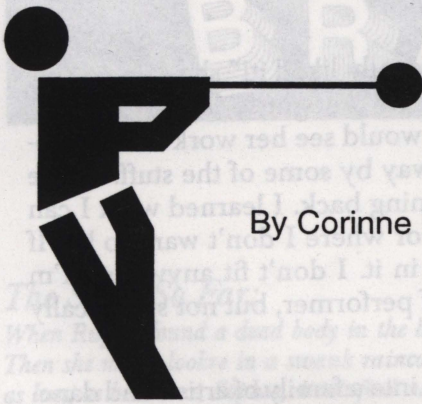
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SPORTS DYKE GOES LITERARY



By Corinne Devison

A Tongue-In-Helmet Look at Dykes in the Field

Finally a book after my own heart. No longer do I have to satisfy my literary needs solely from the "Girl Jock" zine. *Sports Dykes: Stories from off the Field* explores, defines and celebrates the lesbian sport experience. Edited by Susan Fox Rogers, the book provides readers with a mix of serious investigative journalism and lyrical fiction. The 31 pieces reveal how sweat can merge with desire, how humour can enhance serious discussion about the struggles and the pleasures of women known as jocks, women who push their bodies to win new ground for all of us. These women use sport as a means to remove culturally imposed barriers and myths that inhibit our actions and beliefs.

No longer must we transfer literary knowledge about heterosexuals or gay men to the lesbian sport experience. *Sports Dykes*, by and for lesbians, covers the politics of

sports, the homophobia of many collegiate and elite teams, the personal empowerment women have achieved through sports, the sheer joy of the game, the zest of competition and the steamy eroticism that lesbian sports can generate.

Included are passages by syndicated journalist Victoria Brownworth, former basketball star Maria Burton Nelson, coach Pat Griffin, "Girl Jock" founder Roxxie, erotic novelist Robbi Sommers and cartoonist Kris Kovich. *Sports Dykes*, looks at sports from volleyball to softball, from ice hockey to Martina (in interview and fantasy). Yes, pro tennis and golf, collegiate basketball and recreational softball are but a few sports that have become central to the lesbian social and cultural life. The playing fields, rinks and courts have become a place where lesbians can meet, socialize and express who we are.

I must agree with Susan Fox Rogers, the book is a tough, funny, unique and sexy account of the

lives of girls jocks and sports dykes everywhere. I hope the book comes to a bookstore or library near you. (Sorry, my copy's from P-Town.) I personally give *Sports Dykes* a big "Even Cow Girls Get the Blues" two thumbs up.



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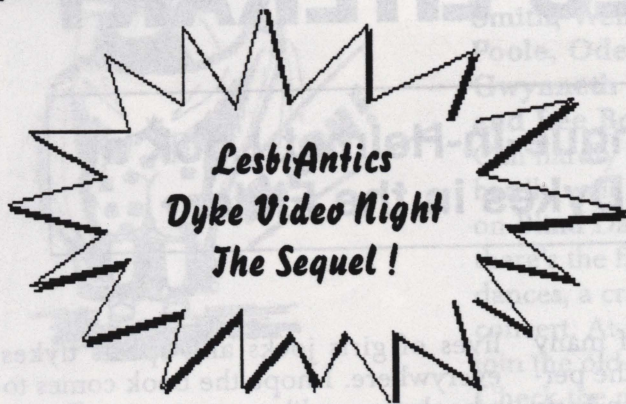


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When a Circle Isn't...

Continued from page 1

seven years. People really liked it!" she said, as tho' surprised. "My work is brought to life by people." Those same people would see her work and run towards it - "blown away by some of the stuff. Those who came, kept coming back. I learned what I can do, what I can't do or where I don't want to be. If there's a crack, I'm in it. I don't fit anywhere. I'm sort of visual, sort of performer, but not specifically either."

Becca was born into a family of artists and dancers, so she pursued the family history and was graduated with a bachelor of arts with specialty in modern dance and a Masters in Interdisciplinary Studies from University of Oregon. The programme for the Common Ground show tells us she has exhibited in galleries in Canada and the U.S. since 1970.

She has been active in dance; as a performer, choreographer and teacher. In 1977 she began to integrate performance, movement and fabric in a collaboration with Monte Floyd of the U. of Saskatchewan Music Department.

It was after a two-year stint as artist in residence in the Saskatchewan public schools that she was able to make full use of her devotion to open, collaborative processes and mixed media work. She worked with children and in the theatre until 1992, when she earned a Canada Council Explorations Grant to develop a body of personal work combining fabric art and human body movement.

Becca explained to me that she uses video as a third partner in some of her work. One installation, called Housewares and Family Relations, shows how women (homemakers) and household fixtures have become confused with each other. The screen on which the video tape of the performance plays, is part of the Houseware's installation. "The video acts as a mirror in my process of working; it is my resume, and it is way of storing my work. Of course, equal and important, it becomes a work of art."

As she describes her self in a work that uses both her and a series of mannequin Becca's, one has to argue that the work, this so-called performance art, has to be seen to be understood. Rebecca is the work as much as she is partner of Lahl and mother of two grown children. She's a feeling person, a visual person, who operates her work and her life experience, from the gut. And she's fifty, funny and feverishly committed to being exactly who she is.

BRAIN FEVER

By Karey Perks

The Story So Far:

When Rupert found a dead body in the bathroom at Barnum's, all Mal cared about was keeping the drag queens out of the Ladies' room. Then she met a lookre in a swank raincoat who made looking for a dead body in a dark hallway seem like it might be a fun thing to do, as long as her lover, Sophie, didn't find out about it...

"It's back here," Mal said, aware of Sam's closeness behind her as she led the way. The rear exit was an ordinary fire door, an altogether mundane and unlikely-looking route of escape for a dead body. Suddenly it banged open with a gasp of wind and rain, and a woman stepped inside and shut the door. She was wearing an expensive-looking raincoat identical to Sam's, only wetter.

"Hi, Sherl." Sam said. "This is Mal Hogan. She's one of the owners."

"Hi," Sherl said. "Sam, I didn't find anything in the parking lot." Her wet raincoat steamed with the smell of perfume and fallen leaves. Secret agents, Mal thought. The kind that made you want to pull the smoking cigarette from your lip and grind it under your shoe and walk away.

Sam offered Mal a card and said, "Sherl's my business partner." Mal didn't read it. She was looking from Sam to Sherl and from Sherl to Sam, thinking it would be hard to tell them apart when they dried off. Then she heard their names being crooned and looked up to see Rupert floating in their direction. Overtaking him from behind was Sophie.

Hastily Mal ducked through the nearest door, which happened to be the one to the men's room. Oh shit, she thought. On the floor was

a pair of legs in stained jeans sticking out of the cabinet under the sink. Sophie was after her, and here was Rupert's dead body after all.

The door behind her opened, filling the bathroom with the sound of four people trying to come in at the same time. The legs kicked. A thud and a cry of pain came from under the sink. The dead body scrambled to its feet, rubbing its head and glaring angrily at the intruders. "So where," it said, "is the damn' fire?"

Mal dropped her eyes to the floor where water pooled, rippled by the drip, drip of wet raincoats. Too much water. It all added up. Mal looked up and said, "Here's your dead body, Rupert: Nancy, the plumber."

"Just a minute." Sam said. She still had the scrap of paper from the ladies' room. "You're suggesting Rupert saw Nancy on the floor and mistook her for a dead body?" At this, Nancy looked dubiously at Rupert, who was leaning against a urinal like a defensive mozzarella cheese in a cocktail dress. "She could have gotten up and come into the men's during the five minutes when Rupert's back was turned," Sam continued. "But that doesn't explain the warning about the trap."

Nancy took one look at the paper in Sam's hand and burst out

Heres Your Dead Body, Rupert: Nancy, the plumber.

laughing. "The P-trap under the sink! It leaks. That's where all this water came from. I can fix it if everybody will get out of here."

Rupert pirouetted away from the urinal and danced away ahead of Sam and Sherl, who followed him sheepishly. In the doorway Sophie stopped, raised her eyebrows at Mal, and said, "Who are those girls?"

"Some friends of Rupert's," Mal said. It could easily be true, and anyway, Sophie wouldn't understand about cigarette butts and secret agents. Mal reached in her pocket for the card Sam had given her. It read: Sam and Sherl, The Detective Collective. Mal winced and dropped it in the puddle made by the leaky sink. It floated gently on the surface of the water, like a fallen leaf. Mal forgave it for not being a cigarette butt, and then she put her foot in the puddle and ground the card into a soggy pulp with the heel of her shoe and walked away.

Editorial

Continued from page 2

speaks and who remains silent? Who decides if an image is empowering or if it is threatening?

In Vancouver the owners of Little Sisters book store are asking these questions. After years of battling Canada Customs, enduring the arbitrary seizure of magazines and books (arbitrary because everything from Lesbian erotica to a book chronicalling the fate of gay men in Nazi concentration camps has been stopped at the border), they are getting their day in court. They are challenging a section of the Customs Act that empowers inspectors to detain books and magazines to determine if they violate the Criminal Code's definition of obscenity. Jim Deva, co-owner of the store, equates Customs' seizures (surely an act of censorship) with discrimination - if the book described above had been about Polish women it probably would not have been seized - and he believes Customs inspectors should not be given the power to decide what other Canadians can and cannot read.

In *LesbiaNews* we've had a barrage of letters about Connie Hunt's story "The Heat of the Island Sun," a story which includes one scene involving mild S/M. Readers have expressed their anger, concern, support and enjoyment on reading the story. Some wrote that the story

is an extension of patriarchal attitudes of violence against women and others described it as a courageous example of Lesbians speaking out and taking control of their bodies. Would there have been consensus if the "dominant" character in the story had been male? Would the scene have then been a clear case of rape or of violence rather than a celebration of Lesbian erotic bravado? The editors of *LesbiaNews* chose not to censor Hunt's story. Would the editorial staff have made the same decision if the story had been accompanied by photographs? Does it make a difference that the story is just that - a story, a work of fiction? Should warnings be run before stories involving S/M imagery if they are not run before stories involving other types of sexual imagery?

I think that before these can be answered we will have to ask hundreds of more questions. We will have to examine our motives and our reasons for making decisions, we will have to look carefully at how we censor each other and ourselves. We will have to decide who makes the final decision on whether to censor or not and what it means to give or to have that power. We will have to examine whether there are better or other ways to achieve the same goal as the censor. We will have to decide if silence is the right choice.

SP

13th Opinion

Continued from page 5

groups (like SWAG's Court Monitoring Program). Personally I can't see how SAC can take political action out of its organization and still call itself feminist. Rape *is* political!

When I first got involved in the anti-rape movement in the 70s we talked of injustice and collective action. The centres were run by working class women, survivors and activists. These women organized demos and led marches for social change. Personal support was available from other "out" survivors and activists, whether staff, volunteers or other women using the service. Now we talk about "healing" and individual therapy is provided in a soothing atmosphere by a soothing professional who has a master's (sic) degree in psychology, counselling or social work. The SAC might think this is a step up from the old days.

I d'ont.

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ZORYA'S ASTRO PANORAMA



Concentrated Scorpio energy fuels irresistible processes of change through November, filling our lives with metaphoric themes of rebirth. This starts at the Nov. 3 new Moon, a time of beginnings all the more powerful since Moon eclipses Sun. Internal forces demand evolution of subconscious drives to conscious awareness, building to culmination/harvest at the eclipsed full Moon on Nov. 17. Fortunately, Mercury's latest retro' phase, which skewed thought/communication processes through October, is over. And Saturn, appropriately, ends its retro' phase Nov. 9, bringing opportunity to apply what we've learned from the reality lessons the Lord of Karma made us revisit since late June.

By Zorya Alexandra Plaskin



ARIES can use new Moon energy for meditation on psychological rebirth. Full Moon's harvest offers new directions/attitudes on material issues, values, self-worth: sudden changes in financial structures may manifest as learning experiences.



TAURUS has opportunity at the new Moon to study normally hidden parts of the psyche: beware emotional vulnerability which makes it easy for others to manipulate, especially by blinding you with your own anger. Full Moon brings potential birth of a new self-identity. Look for opportunities after the 9th to express Self in communal ways rather than individualistically.



GEMINI faces changes around the new Moon in areas of work and responsibility: related subconscious drives are illuminated at the full Moon. With balance, constraints on achievement dissolve after the 9th: balance is tested Nov. 1-13 through challenges to the public structures of life.



CANCER has opportunities for transformation through creativity and self-expression. This momentum is aimed at a full Moon harvest of adjusted ambition, new ways of being part of community. Some events of the past four months challenged belief systems: opportunity to rebuild begins Nov. 9.



LEO needs to reconstruct personal foundations around the new Moon: full Moon illuminates image, structures of authority. Warlike reactions this month indicate lack of understanding, hint at areas which need work. From the 9th onward, start integrating recent reality lessons about shared resources, others values.



VIRGO can re-pattern thought processes around the new Moon, working toward creating new philosophical boundaries and spiritual directions by the full Moon: intense consideration of what are normally considered routine events helps. From Nov. 9, intimate and one-to-one relationships measure what you've learned from related reality lessons since June.



LIBRA may experience material shifts around the new Moon, but the patterns are designed to inspire much deeper changes in basic values

and attitudes toward materialism: full Moon brings tests affecting shared resources, financial obligations. Concepts of Service and patterns of work and responsibility have been subject to reality lessons since mid-summer: the Nov. 9 Saturn shift brings opportunity to integrate changes.



SCORPIO needs to apply November's energy to matters of Self: watch for hints around the new Moon about possible personality shifts, and Cosmic measure of evolution at the full Moon through the quality of one-to-one relations. Opportunities to test new patterns of self-expression abound after the 9th.



SAGITTARIUS can use new Moon energy to plumb subconscious depths: intense therapies, introspective meditations or vision quests help. The full Moon illuminates matters of Service, your space within the collectivity. The Saturn shift impacts on domestic or parental issues, and the personal psychological foundations of your world.



CAPRICORN can use November's patterns to reconsider ambition and adjust long-range plans: events immediately after the new Moon give you inspiration, or unavoidable cause for changes. The full Moon energizes creativity, illuminates the quality of self-expression. With balance, opportunities for achievement improve after Nov. 9's Saturn shift.



AQUARIUS needs to apply new Moon energies to adjusting image and status: power struggles Nov. 4 highlight aspects which need further work. After Nov. 9, financial security measures how well you've learned recent lessons about materialism. Full Moon energy focuses on domestic matters, personal life structures.



PISCES is encouraged around the new Moon to reset philosophical boundaries, working toward new ways of thinking by the full Moon: crises may manifest to demonstrate the invalidity of old ideals. Watch for opportunities from the 9th onward to jettison aspects of your world which Saturn has spent the past four months hinting are not needed.

Zorya practices astrology in Victoria from a basis of karmic patterns and spiritual interpretations. For a personal consultation call 380-2960.

Menopause and Premarin

- A pause for consideration.

by Theresa Newhouse

Who is Profiting from Premarin?

When profit is weighed against the lives of women and animals it seems profit always wins. The latest information about the hormone replacement drug Premarin is certainly no exception.

Premarin is the most commonly proscribed estrogen replacement treatment. Increasingly women are being pushed to consider use of Premarin to prevent osteoporosis and ease menopause and there is talk it may soon also be used to treat Alzheimers patients.

More and more people are realizing Premarin may not be safe either for horses or humans.

Premarin is produced from pregnant mare's urine (PMU). The name of the drug is a shortening of this phrase. Its mass production requires mares be kept pregnant year after year through artificial insemination. Urine collection is made easier by confining the horse to a small stall.

Tens of thousands of horses are kept this way: in the dark, immobilized and often poorly fed and watered. There are few laws governing PMU production and less enforcement. Little is really known about the numbers of horses currently used for PMU production or their conditions.

Animal rights groups report numerous deaths due to bad conditions. In response, the industry has rushed to introduce regulations but even these are inadequate. For example, a minimum stall size of six feet is established yet most draft horses, such as those used, are eight to nine feet long. No regulation addresses the concern of animal rights groups that water is withheld from some mares so the urine produced is less diluted.

As well, the vast numbers of baby horses born each year are treated as mere by-products. At 120 days they are separated from their mothers, packed tightly in trucks and often sent to slaughter houses.

Another growing concern is the effect of PMU production on the environment. In Brandon, Ayerst was required to build a dumping station for animal feces and ammonia wastes. The dumping station, however, threatens to overload Brandon's sewage system and poses a health risk to the drinking water of the Assiniboine River. Manitoba Legislative Assembly member, Marianne Cerilli, is calling for an immediate federal environmental assessment.

Cerilli also expressed alarm about potential health hazards facing women. She is not alone in wondering what the long-term effects of Premarin will be on women's bodies.

Synthetic estrogen has been listed as a possible health risk to women. In the 1960s, estrogen was extolled as a wonder drug. The drug is now a known carcinogen, linked to endometrial cancer. In the 80's doctors co-prescribed progesteron to counteract some of the carcinogenic effects, recent findings suggest this actually increases risk. Currently nothing is co-prescribed.

The drug also has other side effects. The question is: have the full long term effects of Premarin been fully investigated. The data currently used is based on tests conducted by Ayerst Organics, the multi-national pharmaceutical producing Premarin. The company has been making huge investments in Premarin manufacturing as the baby boom generation reaches menopause and promises a gold mine in synthetic hormone production. Ayerst spent over \$100 million on its Brandon plant, which is estimated to have paid out over \$44 million for urine in 1992 alone. PMU production has been hailed as agriculture's newest success stories.

If you are concerned about the ethics or health risks of Premarin it is hard to find substitutes. Few doctors are willing to prescribe other drugs or therapies but alternatives do exist.

Other synthetic estrogen drugs made in the laboratory include Estraderm and Ogen and have recently been approved by the FDA. These, however, are comparatively quite expensive.

The second most popular hormone replacement drug (after Premarin), Estrace, is derived from soybeans and Mexican yams and the price is comparable.

Naturopaths recommend a vegetarian diet high in calcium to protect against osteoporosis and with plenty of soy products to reduce menopausal symptoms.

Information for this article taken from articles appearing in the New York Post, Ms Magazine and the Edmonton Journal.

**ATTENTION LESBIAN COUPLES
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ALLIES IN HEALING

NOV. 26-NOV. 27

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ADS AND NOTICES

Items for this column must be submitted by the 15th of the month to appear in the following month's issue. Items may be mailed to us at P.O. Box 5339, Station B, Victoria, V8R 6S4 or submitted by phone to Barbara at 479-2445.

CALENDAR

LESBIAN BOWLING LEAGUE-
Fridays, 6:30 to 8:30, Town and Country Lanes. Spares needed. Beginners Welcome. Call Dawn, 384-2061. You're spared. It's 5-pin!

LESBIANTICS COMMITTEE-
Monday, Nov. 14, 3rd Floor, 2994 Douglas St.(PSAC), at 7 p.m. Phone Lahl, 383-0777, for information. New members welcome anytime. Planning film night for Dec. 3. Ideas wanted for future events.

MUSAIC-presents a concert to honour Day Without Art at Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, **Thursday Dec. 1**, approx. 7 p.m. Victoria's 65-member lesbian, gay and allies chorus, meets **Wednesdays** at Church of Truth, end of Superior Street. If you love to sing, come join us. Right after a concert is best. No musical background or audition required. For further info, call Helen, 383-8613.

Lesbians Writing on Lesbians-
Small, informal group playing with writing. No experience necessary: simply the desire to explore through writing. Weekly meeting,

Thursday evenings. For more info call Kim, 385-8292.

The Status of Women Action Group's **Lesbian and Bisexual Women's Issues Committee** meets every other **Friday at 1 PM** at the SWAG Office. Call 381-1012 to confirm dates and times.

SERIOUS DYKE WRITERS WANTED—For writer's group. Call Lahl at 383-0777. Meeting date to be determined by group.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/ADS

GWF - 50 plus seeks same to share 2 bedroom, (1 bdrm unfurnished) 2 bath apt. N/S,N/P. \$350/month includes utilities and cable. Available Nov. 30 Phone, 384-9784.

NOT JUST ANOTHER COFFEE HOUSE-A joint effort with Purple Moon, Blind Date Productions & Women In Need (WIN) under the heading of, and a benefit for, *Love Is Not A Crime*. **Nov. 5** at Fernwood Community Centre. Doors open 7 p.m. Show starts 7:30 and there is a cover charge of \$5. Limited Seating. For the same good cause we suggest you watch for Rummage Sale at a location TBA, Nov. 26.

BLIND DATE PRODUCTIONS- presents Cate Friesen (Lesbian Mennonite) with Sawagi Taiko (drumming) **Sat. Nov. 12** 8 p.m. Oak Bay High School Theatre, 2101 Cadboro Bay Road. Tickets, \$13 advance, Everywomans and Nanaimo's Women's Work on Wallace, or \$15 at door. See ad this issue.

GIFTS FOR MYSELF AND OTHERS — LESBIAN CRAFTSPERSONSHIP from artists Gloro Levitt and Paula Ring. Theirs is Papier Mache Art, includes glasswares, pottery, clothing in work offered by 40 artists in all. Leonardo Da Vinci Centre, Bay Street **Nov. 11, 12, 13** Friday 1 to 8 p.m. Sat/Sun 10 a.m. to 4:30. Admission \$2.50. Early Christmas shopping?

OLD-TIMERS DANCE—Music of the 40s, 50s & 60s sponsored by Lesbian Seniors Care Society and SWAG, Nov. 19th. Tickets, \$10. Call, 381-1012, for details. At James Bay Community Centre, 9 p.m.

FLYGIRL-presents a party/dance at Leonardo da Vinci Centre, 195 Bay Street, Fri. Nov. 25 from 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. Advance Tickets on sale at Everywomans \$8, or pay \$10 at the door. Be 19 or older.

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ZORYA ALEXANDRA PLASKIN

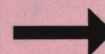
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HOT FLASHES-a POETRY NIGHT at Norway House, Nov. 25 at 8 p.m. Bring your best work, best girl and have a party! Call Wendy for details, 642-6092

ALLIES IN HEALING-two-day workshop for lesbian couples dealing with survivor issues Nov. 26 and Nov. 27. \$125 per woman. Facilitated by Beth Trotter, M.A. 598-9411.

LESBIAN FILM NIGHT- LesbiAntics starts a new year of events Sat. Dec. 3, 1994, 7:30 p.m. at David Lam Theatre, MacLaurin Building, University of Victoria. Tickets available after Nov. 19 at Everywomans Books. Phone Lahl, 383-0777, for further info.

LESBIAN HOUSEMATE WANTED-n/s, no more pets (I have cat, dog). Your share of rent \$450/month plus utilities. Bright 2 bedroom. Available Nov.1 or Dec. 1. Call Sally, 598-4571.

SERVICES

Here is list of some of the services we offer each other.

You can help us complete, update, keep up this list. When it is complete we can make sure that it is available everywhere we go! Write our box # or call Barbara at 479-2445.

University of Victoria — Jenny Waelti Waters is with Women's Studies. She can arrange meeting rooms under banner of Women's Studies. Call the secretary, 721-6157.

Very Nice Dykes — April, 381-6585

Non-Violent Civil Disobedience Trainers — Alison Anderson, 598-8184

Lesbian/Gay Provincial Employees Assoc.- or funding via Women's Equality Ministry. Anne R., 953-4511.

Unitarian Church- welcomes openly gay/lesbian. Call Lisa at 388-4910

SWAG- Status of Women Action Group has a lesbian issues committee. Call, 381-1012

Lesbian Dog Walkers, Dogs Day Out - Marsha, 721-4194, or Frankie, 642-2030

LesbiaNews- P.O. Box 5339 Station B, Victoria. V8R 6S4

P-FLAG- Information # is 642-5171 for those who are interested in Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays.

BOWLING-Dawn H., 384-2061

BLIND DATE PRODUCTIONS- Gwyneth Powell, 598-2327

****Note**—SWAG is setting up a special calendar of events, a list of granting agencies and women and dyke services - a more inclusive list than above. Please let them know what's up. Next meeting Nov. 12 at 4:30 at 620 View St. offices.

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