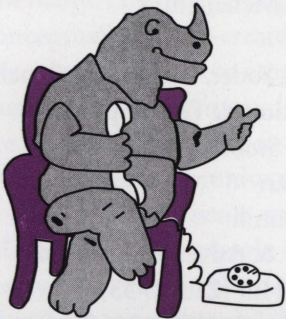


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LAVENDER RHINOCEROS



Victoria's Premiere Lesbian & Gay Magazine
Volume One Number Three
April 1999
\$4.00

— In This Issue —

**How Does Community
Fit In Your Life? What
Is It, Anyway? Rowan
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Teaches at
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Being Fat and Sassy

**Maddie Aramis
Checks out Magic in
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**Visiting Spinstervale
and Creating A
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**VYPS Kicks Butt ..
And so do the Seniors**

And more...



Photo by Heather Brown

**Joe Carlson as Ana Bolic. See story Fat,
Sassy and Gorgeous, page 12**

Between the Notes

A musician friend of mine said she'd learned that music is what happens in the space between the notes. For composers and musicians that's the place where the ideas happen—the place where composer, performer and listener meet. For me, because it is an intangible place

the meaning is completely mine: the thoughts, the feelings and the ideas. It can become a tenuous and ultimately dangerous place to be.

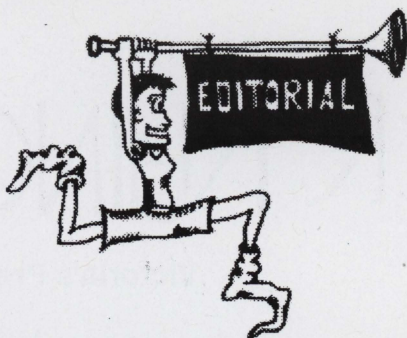
Ideas, like thoughts expressed aloud, can be dangerous things. They are not solid and they are intensely personal; they are not collective and they can be threatening. Sometimes we don't express ideas lest we be wrong. Is it ever really safe to express our ideas, even amongst "our own"?

In a broader context, we employ the idea that our relationships must be viewed as equal to those of straight people, even though straight people don't view their own relationships as equal. We want more rights, we want to be equal in society. Yet we continue to shout loudly about our differences. Have we homogenized our 'community' into an amorphous mass of "queer" (and now we've tossed in "questioning" as a category unto itself)? Our collective ideas have become a blank mangle of political correctness and we do not challenge ourselves. In the "queer" movement there is no distinct flavour from gay men to lesbians to bi-sexual men and women to transgendered persons. There is no space between the notes anymore. We have removed that clear and present danger. We have hidden our individual ideas away, and lean on an unclear objective that we think someone else (much more clever than I) has dreamt up.

I wonder what would happen for people (not just lesbigaytransquest-ed people) if we actually started to think for ourselves—no collective thought, no confusing issues about how we all have to be like Wonder Bread (squishy and bland with little nutritional value), no wanting to be included in the messy heterosexually-based land o' weddings, and no risk of reprisal if we, any of us, step out of line with a thought that doesn't support the majority (of queers). We might create glorious chaos if we weren't afraid that our own fragile ideas might be damaged by someone, and that each glimmering notion we hold would really (REALLY) be celebrated in its diversity. If that were to happen perhaps it would be chaos - glorious chaos.

It took a lot of very brave and free-thinking pioneers to bring us to the place we are now. This place where we have the voices we do and the place where we challenge "the system" to challenge itself. But I doubt that those pioneers would be pleased to see that the free-thinking and flow of ideas has become a trickle, that we're comfortable viewing our uniqueness with stringent blinders, and we shit on each other when we don't use the "right" words, or sympathize with the "right" issues.

The young gay men, and young lesbian women and the young bisexual people and the young transgendered people (the questioning ones need to make up their minds), are the vanguard for the next wave of free-thinking. I hope. If they continue to wallow in the "establishment" of the politically safe (within and without "the movement"), then we are doomed to remain with no ideas, and no color, and no life. There will continue to be no space between the notes and the din of our own griping, and in-fighting and politics and intolerance will drown out the few remaining ideas that remain. But if these youth can grasp the idea that being different is the very reason we are here, that in fact the only thing we have in common is that we are unique, and that it is the variety of opinion and orientation and self-challenge and intensely held political identity, perhaps then the wonderfully dangerous spaces between the notes will become, once again, the place where we dwell and from which we change the world. *Michael*



Lavender Rhinoceros was founded
February 1999

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While the Lavender Rhinoceros is a lesbian/gay publication it should not be assumed that all advertisers, contributors, letter writers are gay/lesbian. All may be assumed to be allies.

Lavender Rhino is a division of the Lesbian Community Connections Foundation. The LCC mandate is to provide a monthly written forum that celebrates all aspects of queer lives, to promote a healthy visible community by giving voice to and honoring diverse and common interests and to promote dialogue on such issues as class, culture, racial differences and diversity.

Lavender Rhino is sold individually at Bolen Books and Munro's for \$4.00 per issue. A subscription is \$25 per year. Cheques are payable to LNews. Mailing address is PO Box 5339, Stn B, Victoria, BC V8R 6S4

So, What *IS* Community?

by Rowan J. Percy

Community can seem more like an abstract concept than a reality for many. The tricky thing is that it *is* a concept: one that we re-conceptualise and re-create according to mood, need and experience. It is a concept in constant flux, an expression of its constituents, their creativity and their relative personal power.

Where is The Community to be found? What is *The Community*? Does The Community dictate values or favour certain lifestyle choices? These issues around the idea of community are implicit when I hear people say things like, "The gay male community only exists in the bars" or "In this community it is not OK to be a couple/single". Notice the difference between "community" as a thing in flux and "The Community" as if it were one entity, which it is not. When The Community is perceived as exclusive, monolithic and authoritarian, those who think this way are dis-empowered.

There are many for whom community is "family", a grouping of friendship networks, organisations, events, newsletters, Internet users who stay in touch, support one another, play together, do political work, generate conflict and culture etc. For some it is essential: the only time to be oneself, the one way to come out with any safety.

For those, like myself, who have been in this lesbian community for many years, it may, on some days, seem like a huge, loving, extended family and on others a many-headed monster one prefers to avoid by staying at home.

To me all these different perspectives are valid - for the simple reason that the lesbian, gay male, bisexual and transgendered

transsexual communities are as multi-faceted as the thousands of individuals that make up the umbrella community. How community is individually experienced depends on: which individuals of the community anybody knows, an individual's current level of vulnerability—or anxiety that they don't belong,

a person's background and level of cultural privilege or oppression, whether a person thinks in terms of "community as fluid concept" or "The Community as authoritarian entity", whether a person claims their own power or gives it away to others.

If we compare the lesbian and gay communities, the practical reality is that the lesbian community does have more avenues of access. It has been organised since the mid-70s in Victoria. Lesbians and bisexual women have the G Spot, the Lesbian Senior Care Society, the UVic Women's Centre, SWAG etc. Even though the gay male population in Victoria is large, it has little organisation of its own outside of AIDS-related organisations and other groups that also include lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered/transsexual people, such as Musica or the Pride committee. Many gay men complain that making non-sexual, non-alcohol related connections, let alone good friends, is often problematic.

While transsexuals, transgendered or bisexuals constitute communities within the larger communities, individuals often feel like outsiders, especially when they find themselves the only one representing their group at any event. Despite Zenith, a group for transsexuals and the LGBA (which welcomes bisexuals) many minorities within our lesbian and gay majorities (e.g., people with disabilities, people of colour) still feel very marginalised and that often reflects real prejudice or ignorance in our communities.

Although we would all probably benefit from more structures for connecting, it is individuals who make community an inclusive or hostile experience. Each one of us is responsible for creating our community, whether we have been in it for decades or are just entering it.

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A Memorial Garden – An Affirmation of Life

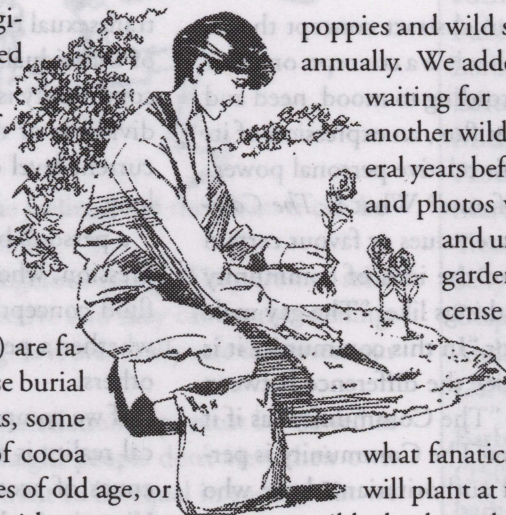
By *Sunshine Goldstream*

Memorial gardening brings together two magical events. The incantation? Bury a withered bulb in a pot of dirt and put in the sunniest window. Contemplate on hope and the cycle of life. One morning, a green shoot is a sudden surprise. Water occasionally, and soon a fragrant bloom of color bursts forth. Voila! We are becoming "the Changer and the Changed" (Meg Christian)

Those of us with kids and cats (or memories) are familiar with the treats of dead mice and the mouse burial grounds in our backyards. A ring of little rocks, some flowers, a few tears and songs, maybe a cup of cocoa after our ceremony. Eventually, even the cat dies of old age, or one mouse too many; the cat, too, is buried with ceremony and a catnip plant is added to the memory garden. We may move away and forget that particular backyard garden (you can be sure the neighborhood cats won't), but we can call upon the child's wonder, the spontaneity, the ceremonies that encapsulate the downgoing and upwelling of life.

The year that a friend died of AIDS-related disease, an elderly friend and I pondered what to do with our grief and love. Her husband had died some years earlier and she had mentioned several times how difficult it was to deal with his death as he had not wanted any ceremony. She still kept expecting him to walk through the door one day since she had last seen him alive in the hospital.

We decided to plant a tree for our mutual friend. The biggest decision was what to plant that would remind us best of his nature. These conversations gave us great laughs as we discussed various fruit and nut trees; we eventually settled on a monkeytree which amused us most. This we planted in her front yard where she could see it from her favorite chair. A few years ago my elderly friend died, too, and, again, there were long discussions of what to plant. Thus began a "wild garden" where daisies,



poppies and wild sea roses grow and re-seed themselves annually. We added a pot of wild lilies which had been waiting for a spot since they had been dug from another wild garden of an elder who had died several years before. Small signs with the elder's names and photos were engraved by my now adult son and urathaned onto the signs. This memory garden has remained a spot where an incense burner and candlestick sit ready for prayers to rise at times when our hearts yearn to touch the spirits.

Since then, I have gotten somewhat fanatical about memory gardening. Now I will plant at the slightest call: when I hear some of some terrible death on the radio I plant in honor of the life cut short and for that person's family and friends; when I hear that an unmarked grave full of bodies was found in Yugoslavia, I planted irises; when a friend began his slow crawl towards death last year, I planted a lemonade sumac for "what will be" At his death, months later, the bush was already springing with vitality.

Conjuring up a time when the atom bomb will no longer be a threat, I planted trees when India and Pakistan detonated holes into the ground and atmosphere. All my horror was poured into envisioning the tree's future canopies spreading shelter over the earth's beings. The magic continues to amplify; whenever a bomb is mentioned I superimpose the life-giving trees. Days ago, a treaty was signed between India and Pakistan. Under the infant trees I planted periwinkle.

Memory gardening can be done for joyful events as well as to bring life and honor to those or whom we grieve. A new relationship certainly deserves some small kernel of hope and expectation. Be imaginative! Use humour!

Sunshine lives on the land in Spinstervale in Coombs.

Alison Campbell

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Can a queer community change?

by John Trueman

It seems that some things never change.

I was kicked out of my first gay event for being underage. I was 17, in first year at UVic, and left with no support and no services in the very community that was supposed to help me deal with the fact that I was gay.

It would be two years before I could legally get into gay bars, and that thought was hardly exciting, even then. I contemplated my alternatives: we didn't have a youth group then, and the only gay places I knew were the bathhouse and Beacon Hill Park. I contemplated another alternative: suicide. Few people knew how close I was during those first few months.

I've spent the two years since that time working to improve the status of queer youth in Victoria. We now have an LGBTQ youth group that runs two days a week, an active program of anti-homophobia outreach to high schools, and growing awareness that gay youth exist and their lives do matter.

Some said it couldn't be done. I can't count how many people have tried to tell me that gay youth don't exist in Victoria. But in our first twenty months, more than 105 distinct people have come to VYPS more than 1224 times. That's not bad for a population that doesn't exist.

Many of those people are UVic students. But for the third year in a row, the powers that be behind the university's Valentine's Day dance for people of alternative sexual orientations decided to exclude underage youth. It's a matter of finance, they tell me. Selling booze means bucks. So does investing in Macmillan Bloedel, but you hardly see the Sierra Club lining up to buy shares.

It's only one event, they say. But it's one of the only queer dances of the year — in some years, the only dance — and one of the very few events in this community to take place outside of the bars.

Now the Pride Society is planning this year's event and festival, and I fear that the dance again won't be all ages. Considering the amount of press that gay youth issues have received in the past two years, and considering the ever-increasing societal awareness of the issues we face, it's almost as if a conscious decision to exclude youth is being made. Less than a quarter of pride events are held outside bars. We need to do better.

As always, VYPS is told that we are more than welcome to organise our own event. Not good enough, I say. That type of thinking continues to exclude and stigmatise gay youth; to divide their peer groups between overage and underage people; to contribute to the distrust and fear that gay youth, particu-

larly males, have towards older community members; and sends the message to young people that they are unwanted and unwelcome in our community. More fundamentally, we don't have the resources to make up for the shortcomings of the rest of the community. VYPS cannot — and should not be expected to — shoulder the burden of Victoria's gay youth issues alone.

People are coming out younger and younger — the national average age for groups like VYPS is somewhere around 16 — and our community is going to have to change to accommodate this reality.

I say it's time for the Pride Society, and all the other members of our community, to take a stand. The Pride Society and other groups go to great lengths to ensure that events are held in wheelchair accessible locations, that events are affordable, and that interpreters are available for the deaf and hard of hearing. It's time for us to go to equal lengths for the young people in our community — the ones who have the least support, the fewest dollars, and the smallest voice.

I have said this before. Sadly, I'll probably have to say it again. How can we, as the queer community, expect to be accepted by society if we are not accepting and accommodating of our own diversity? And who do we expect to carry on the movement when we treat our young people so? How many gay youth will move away? How many will become isolated in the youth community and come to see older gay men only as predatory and threatening? How many will become disillusioned with our community and stop trying to make a difference? And how many gay youth will end this all and commit suicide?

Will we start listening then? If not, when will we?

John Trueman is chair of the Victoria Youth Pride Society, the capital's group for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, two-spirited, and questioning youth. He turned 19 last year, but sometimes feels ashamed to admit it.

“How can we, as the queer community, expect to be accepted by society if we are not accepting and accommodating of our own diversity?”

Rowan J. Percy M.A.

(formerly Rowena Hunnisett)

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VARCS Looks At Future of AIDS Care

By Zorya Plaskin

Wasn't there a movie once, called *What If They Gave A War and Nobody Came?* Or a book? Or something? That question crossed my mind on a recent February eve, though only because I was already thinking of a potential headline: *What If They Held A Forum and Nobody Cared?* Well, maybe they did care; but they didn't come to the meeting.

The meeting was, as I understood it, supposed to revolve around the unveiling of the proposed new service model for the Victoria AIDS Respite Care Society. About all I knew (confession) about VARCS, before that rainy night, was what I'd read in Xtra West. [At VARCS' AGM last fall, VARCS took a risk and allowed Azimuth Consulting's Maryann Alto to unveil a model for change for VARCS. The board made a commitment to its public and those it serves to respond to those recommendations. Hence this meeting.]

There was, among the offerings on the literature table, an executive summary of the draft proposal. The summary skirted over the background: Changes. All sorts of changes. Better volunteers. Better drugs. Fewer clients. Different clients—fewer what VARCS Programs Coordinator, Michael Yoder of VARCS called, "gay middle-class white guys," and more street people, sex trade workers, IV users, urban First Nations youth, released prisoners...

The handout used the other half of its page to summarize VARCS's draft proposal for dealing with the changes. The main focus involves finding ways to connect HIV-positive street people with the mosaic of resources available in the region. Part of that requires development of a respite model for street people, ideally with volunteers from the street community. A large part of the process, too, is to educate those who work at existing street agencies, about AIDS and related issues. The street agencies haven't done a lot in that area because—even though

they have come to realize that many of their clients are HIV-positive—the agencies were set up to address different issues.

Board chair Art Holbrook Yoder spent some time speaking to the 15 or so people present about the draft proposal. But even so, the possible future for VARCS retained a significant nebulous quality.

"I don't think you have a clue" about what the real issues are, said the first audience member to respond to the presentation. The speaker did not wish to be identified outside the meeting. Besides commenting on how vague the proposal was, the speaker also questioned how VARCS intended to make connections with its new target client group. "There's not one street-involved PWA here at this meeting."

Holbrook admitted a certain vagueness. "What do I know about street people?" The first step, he said, is to get out there, on the street, and then learn how to change VARCS's services to meet street needs.

"We don't have any magic answers," Holbrook said. "What we do have is a process to go out there and find those answers."

Ruthann Tucker, executive director of AIDS Vancouver Island, was concerned that what VARCS seems to be proposing amounts to a duplication of services among the various agencies with HIV. For example, she noted, "AVI's Street Outreach program is already involved with street people." Tucker's comments elicited a formidable and sometimes spirited defence from VARCS board members and respite volunteers. [It is important to note and to remember that VARCS is concerned with care-giving to the sick. AVI is concerned with information and prevention.]

The vagueness of the VARCS presentation did not bother Charlotte Kinzei, executive director of the Victoria Persons With AIDS Society. Kinzei noted that

the real draft proposal was much longer and more detailed than the executive summary released at the February 24 public meeting, and she was inclined to withhold her comments until the next evening when it would be discussed at an inter-agency meeting. [VPWAS is concerned with providing compassionate peer support and information to those with HIV/AIDS.]

After the meeting, Yoder admitted there's a certain vagueness about the future because VARCS is plotting a course for uncharted waters. But it does know what the goal is. "The what hasn't changed," Yoder said. "The how has changed." The specifics will evolve as VARCS moves to the street—if the Capital Health Region agrees to fund the new course.

One way or another, things will settle down by the end of this month. Yoder expected a final draft of the VARCS proposal to be ready for the C.H.R. by the end of February. "It has to be," he noted. "March is fiscal year end and talks are on-going with representatives from the CHR about specifics."



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Quotes & Queeries:

News & views from the lesbian & gay press, and queer cyberspace

By Mary Lasovich

Tom Ammiano, a San Francisco supervisor, quipped — in response to demands by Martin Mawyer, president of the Christian Action Network, for HC (homosexual content) warnings on TV programs: “Maybe we should have a warning about people like this.” Mawyer complained to the Federal Communications Commission about 25 “homosexual characters” on primetime TV, saying “there are parents across the country that are sick and tired of having their living rooms invaded by homosexual characters and activities on their television.” Another sad case of “twisted values,” notes Ammiano, who is gay. “The message is: ‘What’s coming up is evil.’” Mawyer is distressed that queers are creeping into commercials as well. “These commercials are called ‘gay vague’ because homosexuals understand the advertisements are directed toward them,” he said. “But the straight community just can’t figure it out.”

Barbara Kahn, who has been writing plays about openly lesbian characters and winning accolades and grants from U.S. foundations for some 20 years, says getting plays written by women produced is difficult enough, but getting the work of a lesbian playwright on stage is even tougher. “The rule of thumb,” she jokes, “is someone went to see a lesbian play years ago...and it was terrible [and] doesn’t want to see another.” Kahn’s work frequently explores the position of women in Judaism and the experiences of Jewish immigrant women. “Even in my comedies, justice prevails—or there is a sense that it should.” Perhaps Kahn and Samantha Gellar will work together one day. Gellar is a 17-year-old whose play, *Love Versus the Paperback Romance*, was among five winners in the Charlotte Young Playwrights Festival. The four others were performed recently at Children’s Theatre of Charlotte, but Gellar’s was excluded because its two characters are lesbians. The ban sparked media interviews (including the BBC) and offers of money to produce the play elsewhere in town.

Stephen Brady, the Australian ambassador to Sweden, recently introduced his gay partner, Peter Stevens, to Queen Margrethe of Denmark—a diplomatic first in the Scandinavian country. No word on the royal response to the queens, but Australian Senator Bob Brown cheered the gesture: “It’s terrific the Australian ambassador took his partner with him to present his credentials to the Queen. He has put Australia on the map in Scandinavia and certainly throughout Europe.”

Tonda Hughes of the University of Illinois has received a four-year grant to conduct the first government-funded study on lesbians and alcohol. “Myths and stereotypes of lesbians as alcoholics and heavy drinkers are largely based on studies conducted in the 1970s that recruited most of their samples from gay bars,” said Dr. Hughes, who will explore patterns of drink-

ing and risk factors among 400 lesbians in the Chicago area. The award coincides with the release of a groundbreaking report by the respected U.S. Institute of Medicine, *Lesbian Health: Current assessment and directions for the future.* Jocelyn White, a past-president of the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association called the report “a landmark day” for lesbian health: “Within the medical arena, lesbians have been an overlooked and understudied population. This report’s recommendations not only speak to that oversight, but will help guide the research community as it develops a comprehensive research agenda for lesbian health over the next decade.”

David Speakman, an editor at Bay TV in San Francisco, joined the chorus of complaints about a front-page article in the San Francisco Chronicle (1/29/99) headlined, *Russian Roulette’ Sex Parties: Rise in gay fringe group’s unsafe practices alarms AIDS experts.* Speakman and others have trashed the report for “journalistic laziness” and sensationalism. “In what should be a health story, the writer uses lurid language and unattributed opinion,” he said. “What does the writer’s phrase ‘erotic thrill of communion’ and a feature story about an article in the magazine POZ have to do with a news health alert by the federal government?” Staff writer Sabin Russell, who was not pleased with the headline by his editor, said he “did not go into this story cavalierly... I think that any way you cut it, this was an upsetting piece to read, but I disagree with people who say it was voyeuristic.” As for reports that a hate group is quoting the story to further its attacks on gays, Russell expressed his disgust but notes that “no journalist has any control over what some asshole is going to do with his story... I’ve written about AIDS for 12 years for the Chronicle and this was an important story because AIDS has been dropping off the radar screen in recent years.”

Liz Friedman, the wunderkid coproducer of *Xena: Warrior Princess*, promises that fans can look forward to lots of gal-pal action featuring Xena (Lucy Lawless) and her faithful sidekick Gabrielle (Renee O’Connor). “They’re just such a perfect little butch-femme couple. What they do between episodes, I don’t know,” laughs Friedman, who is among the most visible members of Hollywood’s queer community. “We’ve already shot one episode where Gabrielle almost dies and Xena give her mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Lucy did an unbelievably great job with the scene.” Despite disclaimers and hints of a future male love interest, the show’s writers regularly insert sapphic double entendres into scripts. And Xena mania has spread to the high seas. Judy Dlugacz, founder of Olivia Cruises, reports that “the first Xena group came aboard for a cruise in June. They brought costumes, jackets, everything they needed for a week of crazed warrior-princess behaviour.”

What's A Word's Worth?

By Maddy Aramis



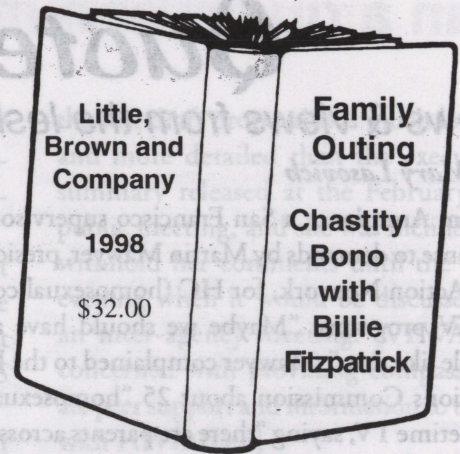
It's hard to review a collection of short stories by different authors. Each piece stands alone and each is worthy of its own review. Lawrence Schimel is the editor of *Things Invisible to See*, short stories loosely grouped within the genre of 'magic realism.' In the introduction Schimel explains "the term is used to describe a kind of literary fantasy that shows the contemporary world as we know it (this is the "Realism" half of the term) which verges off into the realms of supernatural or fable (the "Magic" half) when something inexplicable and fantastical happens..."

In each story, writers take gay and lesbian characters into rather extraordinary places and situations. The stories are most successful when the characters are complex and believable. *The Vision of Men*, by Michelle

Sagara West, for example, is a thoughtful depiction of two men exploring the possibility of a future together. Complete with all the fears and anxieties brought on by contemplating the blending of two lives together, she skillfully weaves the magical images of crystal balls into this charming story. *Shayna Maidel*, by Laura Antoniou draws on traditional storytelling techniques to sketch a grimly amusing portrait of a Jewish lesbian vampire.

Taken as a whole, does the collection work? Basically, yes. If you can suspend your ties to the real world and the comfort of cold logic (otherwise you just won't get the story where an angel gets tangled up in Patrick's clothesline or the one where Ann wakes up with a penis), there is much to be enjoyed in *Things Invisible to See*. There are no earth-shattering pieces here, no gems you are likely to remember fifty years hence, but there's certainly an entertaining afternoon's worth of reading.

Maddy Aramis is a freelance writer living in Victoria.



Coming out stories. We all have them. *Family Outing* not only tells Chastity Bono's coming out story, but also the experiences of a number of gay and lesbians from a variety of family backgrounds. The first part of the book focuses on the experiences of the "outees" while the second half relates comments from parents of gay children.

Accessible and chatty in style, Bono's book gives us a look at the perils of celebrity status (Bono was publicly outed by the tabloids in 1990—after which she retreated deep into the closet) and a frank peek inside her family. Though her father was very accepting of her revelation, Cher was initially hurt and angry. She has since become one of her daughter's biggest supporters, but for a time the relationship between mother and daughter was strained and uncomfortable.

In 1995, Chastity Bono put miles between herself and the closet by coming out on the cover of the Advocate. Working as an activist and very public spokesperson for gay and lesbian rights ever since, she extolls the virtues of standing up and being counted, a position that ultimately makes this book positive and hopeful.

Useful for the newly out, those who might be considering being more publicly out, and the families of gays and lesbians, *Family Outing* is a gently inspiring read. Never losing sight of the reality that society at times welcomes non-straight members less than enthusiastically, the book offers lots of incentive for living openly and with integrity.

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Telling Real Stories

Dealing With Impending Death

By Barb McLaughlin

Film maker Dan Curtis knows that real people tell real stories. And real stories help real people to deal with things: in this case, death. For this reason he is seeking gay and lesbian couples who might be dealing with the impending death of one partner, mate, spouse, lover due to terminal illness.

Over coffee we talked of lots of reasons for lots of things and chiefly why this subject for a film maker who has completed works on Canadian artists, politics and caregiving.

"I'm of an age, 54, where I realize I am not going to live forever. I've had friends and family who have died—it makes me aware of my mortality, though not in a morbid sense.

"One of the things I wanted to do was be able to understand what dying is all about. In some ways it helps me person-

ally. If we live long enough something'll kill us. I want to know about care giving for my mother. (One reason Dan returned to Victoria with his partner was to be with his aging mother.) In a way I'm wanting to make sure I'm an advocate for her should she be stricken.

Dan admits to an insatiable desire to know things, to have his eyes open to what others might want to know. What their stories are and how those stories of experiences can be used to help other people.

What Dan wants readers and possible story tellers from our community to know is that he is a guy one can trust. His film will be one of practical teaching, neither didactic nor prescriptive, but informative.

The title of his project, sponsored by National Film Board, is *Bearing Witness*. Dan's proposal explains: "It will take a

stylistic approach similar to my previous work, *Caregivers* and *Labour of Love*. It will be intimate, unvarnished, respectful, and hopeful. Those who are dying will be at the heart of the series. It will be about their struggle, their choices, their wisdom, their passage through the thorny tendrils of disease.

"It will bring us to the bedsides and the homes of the dying, recording events and situations as they are happening. *Bearing Witness* will be compassionate without becoming sentimental and serious without turning humourless.

"Its a series for people who are dying; who want to understand and approach death constructively, without illusions; who expect control over their care, without condescension; who desire humane treatment, without futile technological procedures, his proposal reads. It's also a series for families of those who are dying, families who want to know ways in which their loved ones can be made more comfortable and who want knowledge about the realities of deadly illness.

As well it's a series for medical practitioners, policy makers who need to direct more resources to the support and expansion of hospice palliative care. Ultimately, it's a series for all of us who, as we grow older, become more keenly aware of our mortality and want some assurance that in our dying we are not abandoned, that a long and agonizing death is not inevitable, and that the period of dying holds the promise of reconciliation and spiritual awakening.

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Now for Later:

Collaborative living arrangements among older women

by Maria Brenton

Planning for aging before you get old may seem a gloomy prospect for many people—one you would rather not think about until you get there—but taking hold of the future now could give your life a wonderful, new, positive thrust and energy, a sense of staying in control. Is it a familiar after dinner topic among you and your friends—as it is among many women reaching their fifties in the UK—‘shall we do something together in our old age—our own old dykes’ home or something?’

‘What a great idea!’ it goes. ‘We could do this. We could do that—but not yet; maybe in ten or twenty years time, when

years I have been researching older women’s collaborative living arrangements and a report of the study, called *Choice, autonomy and mutual support in old age* will be published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in England in early 1999. In the course of this study I travelled to New Mexico, Arizona, Vancouver, Toronto and throughout the Netherlands, visiting older women’s living groups, looking for a model that I could take home.

Let me take you on a brief tour of what I found. I was interested in formal and informal living arrangements where women over 50 years or so had set up

run the park themselves and, besides a wide range of social activities, there are strong elements of communal support. In the year before my visit, they had run a rotation system to support two terminally ill women right to the end, and were looking for ways to create a regular support system for people who got sick, had surgery etc.. “If I have to get sick anywhere”, one said to me, “I want it to be here, with my sisters to support me”. This park and its sister are prime examples of women in the early years of retirement putting energy and dynamism into making a supportive community happen and not just talking about it.

In Vancouver I visited and interviewed participants in two older women’s housing co-operatives, and in Toronto, I talked to women who were involved in bringing to fruition a 152 unit co-operative which opened in July 1997 after nine years of organising and lobbying. What impressed me most was the drive and energy and far sightedness shown by older women in getting these schemes off the ground and making available affordable housing to women who are at a disadvantage in the housing market. How far a cooperative equates to ‘a community’ is variable because that is not necessarily its original intention nor is it helped by its physical design.

The model I found most amenable to replication in Britain is the Dutch older people’s Co-Housing Community—an intentional community founded and run by its members, each of whom have their own apartment but also share communal space. There is also one such community in Victoria—mixed sex and all ages: the Cardiff Place community on Fairfield. In the Netherlands, nearly 200 groups have set themselves up, with an average age of 70 years and an average size of 24 to 30 people. There are at least seven women-only Co-Housing Communities in Amsterdam operating as le-

(Cont’d page 11)

“The sad reality is that there are a lot of lonely old people out there, particularly older lesbians, for whom making a positive choice of living arrangements is no longer an option. ‘Not yet’ has become ‘too late’.

we are old’. Always ‘not yet’. The sad reality is that there are a lot of lonely old people out there, particularly older lesbians, for whom making a positive choice of living arrangements is no longer an option. ‘Not yet’ has become ‘too late’.

Let me tell you about work I have been doing to investigate the choices that some women are making to start congenial living arrangements now for later. I know that in Victoria a Senior Care agency has been set up for older lesbians, that it has tried to get a sense of older lesbians’ needs and that it is very active in fund-raising activities. I know of nothing so organised in the UK where I live and where I am trying to encourage women in the Older Lesbian Networks to think ahead and imaginatively about living arrangements in old age. For two

groups of three or more, sharing resources and support. An essential criterion was that they had formed some kind of intentional community where they were in charge of their own lives and their environment—which would rule out retirement homes, most condominiums, etc. I also restricted myself to models which I thought could be readily replicated in the UK—so, although interested in the Lesbian Land developments in the USA, I decided not to focus on them.

One exception I made to this rule was to spend some time in an RV park in Arizona where several hundred ‘snow birds’ migrate for a number of months a year and have formed their own transient community. Here, older lesbians with a range of income levels find, as one of them told me ‘heaven on earth, where we can be ourselves’. They finance and

Now for Later

(Cont'd from page 10)

gally constituted groups, sharing as much or as little communal activity as they decide and committing themselves to a degree of mutual support in times of need. I have recently published a report on Dutch Co-Housing Communities of older people called, *We're In Charge*, and have just won funding to start working with a group of older women in London to help them develop a Co-Housing Community—a concept relatively unfamiliar in Britain. It will be a challenging project.

A group of lesbians in Amsterdam called "Now For Later" are planning a Co-Housing Community for 50+ women of all cultures who want a congenial living and working environment together. They are meeting regularly to explore the financial and legal aspects of such a project and to build a sense of communal involvement in the process. Living even within a loosely knit group can sometimes be difficult, but Co-Housing schemes, with a reasonable size and built-in age range and recruitment methods, offer advantages of variety and renewability. Personal space is safeguarded, yet companionship and joint activities are on offer from people you have chosen to live with. Doesn't it make sense to make this choice now rather than wait for a time when you can't choose anymore?

Maria Brenton is a social researcher, in her early fifties, working as a visiting research fellow at the School for Policy Studies, Bristol University, England.

E-mail address: MariaBrenton@compuserve.com Maria and I met for coffee while she was visiting in December/January. BMCL

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Vancouver Cheers VLSCS in Song and Funds

The Victoria Lesbian Seniors Care Society is more than being alive and kicking! It's more than host to some rather wonderful dances and parties and lecture series. It's making history!

Even Vancouver argues it knows of no other ground-breaker like our stalwart band of dykes who persist in trying to get us interested in our own futures. Vancouver is so impressed the Unison '99 concert of Vancouver Women's Chorus, The Rainbow Concert Band, Rain7y City Gay Men's Chorus and the Vancouver Lesbian 7 Gay Choir and the Vancouver Men's Chorus are donating proceeds to the Victoria Lesbian Seniors Care Society in honour of the UN's International Year of the Senior.

Hailing the Victoria group as an inspiration for other pioneer groups, the concert organizers urge attendance at the concert at Vancouver's Christ Church Cathedral. Tickets are available through Lesbian Senior Care Society members. Or, if you are in Vancouver, you can get them at Little Sisters. Cost is \$15. Concert date is April 10 at 8 p.m.

Seniors Group Hustles for The Old Dykes Home

It's a hardy little band with the usual problems of finding volunteers and finding enough board members with the time required to focus on fund-raising and membership drives. But the Victoria Lesbian Seniors Care Society is making headway and slowly inviting enthusiasm for its work.

The group may not yet be ready to open what Jan Trainor calls Lavender Acres—but it has identified some of our needs via questionnaire. It would appear that a lot of what we need is transportation, errand running, readers, home visits. On a major utopian level we all want Lavender Acres, too. That will come if we are willing to throw our bucks and our backs into supporting this worthwhile group. Those 20 and older (or younger) are welcome.

The Society is particularly looking for membership recruiters, persons to look after the membership drives and maintaining the membership list. Old Timer's Dances are a ball for all ages. Volunteer help is useful in this area, too. And I might point out that the gorgeous decor for the New Year's Dance was executed by a much younger than I dyke. Those mad keen to plan are needed to stand as directors.

If, as my nearing 50 friend Jan says, you want to be wheeled around town in your wheel chair to wink at the cute straight or gay women in your path, it's time to plan now. It won't cost you any money. Just some time.

Also, if you have money and no time—many of us are in that position—why not throw a few bucks in the Society's path and help them to get on with building Lavender Acres.

And keep watch for those wonderful annual events now sponsored regularly by VLSCS. BMCL

Fat, Sassy, Gorgeous

by Barbara McLauchlin

Sherry Antonishen's film *Big Dance* celebrated big women and turned a lot of us on to the problems and realities of living large in a society that reveres petite, the tight bunned, or curves sharply defined. Oddly enough the film was shown in the very theatre that caused so much grief for the production manager for the 1996 *Wild Tongue*, Leslie Robinson, a self-identified fat woman who actually moved to Victoria to join *Big Dance* three years ago.

Our favorite Queen Victoria, Joe Carlson, is also a person of size. Padding for 'Victoria' is limited if non-existent. Together Leslie and Joe make quite a pair. Time restraints kept me from interviewing them together but I did ask the same questions and the answers were quite wonderful.

In 1993 the New England Journal of Medicine found that fat women are 20 per cent less likely to be married, make



Photo by Heather Brown

there is no difference in self-esteem for fat men or fat women and thinner people. Okay, these are American stats but it does interest me that some pretty big awareness' must be going on in the interiors of big or fat or people of size.

Joe sees himself today as "an evolving human being and as a spiritual person having a physical experience. And, oh so pretty!" He loves to dress up and play before us all as Victoria, as Santa Claus or as Ana Bolic his female alter-ego

make and some challenges to meet. But, he has more acceptance of himself today than he did as a male model and super stud.

"I don't think I feel sensitive or awkward about my size. Nothing like [self-esteem] comes from outside. I know a lot of fat and fit people. When I was modelling and had a modicum of notoriety—I was told I had it all. I didn't feel like that. Now, I don't have the body, prestige, or money but I *feel* a lot more comfortable, a lot happier. I like looking at people who look like me; people who like me are older; if they are older than I am they can be whatever they want," he adds underscoring his passion for the older man.

And Leslie feels a lot better about herself as a sensuous woman as well. "I have always felt sensuous in water. I float, I swim. Partly it's (water) a place where I have something better [than the average]. I'm a flotation tank. Water takes away the impacts of gravity which are kind of harsh. I see other fat women as sensuous; it helps me to see myself that way. I'm fit!" she underscores. "Part of the experience of losing senses is in learning to disassociate from my body."

Physical exercise, yoga, biking, swimming and dance classes with *Big Dance*, puts her in touch with herself. "I can't

ing out as lesbian. Her self-image has changed over time and she's now closer to seeing herself as she really is—sexy, attractive, fun and self-accepting.

Even though Leslie was a fat and chubby child, she lost 75 pounds when she was 14 and again when she was 21, it didn't mean she had time to get used to it. Joe, who came into his big-ness as an adult still had some adjustments to

For Leslie coming out of the closet and identifying as fat has been tougher than coming out as lesbian. Her self-image has changed over time and she's now closer to seeing herself as she really is—sexy, attractive, fun and self-accepting.

dragged out, as it were, for the recent Groovefest fund-raiser. He participates in life with all five senses and "Oh, do I have fun!" Believing that all men are capable of sensuousness he "trains them until eventually they come around." I didn't ask, but I was presuming he meant those with whom he wants to be sensuous.

Leslie identifies as a fat woman. For her coming out of the closet and identifying as fat has been tougher than com-

at least \$6, 700 less per year, complete fewer years of college, and are 10 per cent more likely to have household incomes below the poverty line.

Fat men are 11 per cent less likely to marry but earning powers and studies match those of thinner men. Shorter men however, are more likely to live in poverty, and make less than \$3,000 per year than their counterparts.

What surprised the researchers, given the levels of discrimination, was that

(Cont'd page 13)

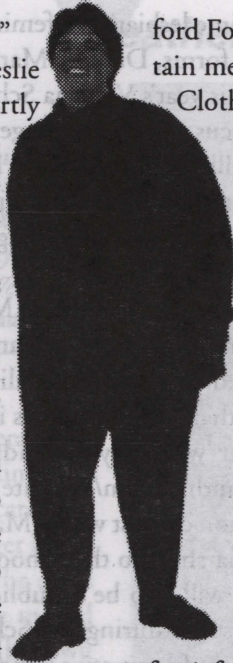
Fat, Sassy, Gorgeous

(Cont'd from page 12)

feel sensuous until I feel. Period.”

That's not to say Joe and Leslie don't face challenges. Joe's are partly health related. He has adult on-set diabetes and he should watch his diet. He knows if he lost weight he'd feel more comfortable. But on a day-to-day basis what is more of a problem is "getting pants that really look good. I can find tops that look great, and jackets and coats."

Pants to fit Joe's tall and broad frame cost a minimum \$5 to \$600. He wears a lot of parachute pants which flow and mould to his frame. And then there's the trouble of restaurants. Sitting in booths is hard. His height is a problem in most cars. Unless the seat adjusts he can't get out without throwing one knee over his ears and it's worse if the car pulls up right at the curb. Level landings are tough. "And, if I get any bigger the Ox-



ford Foods Check Out line won't contain me.”

Clothes are a problem for Leslie too. Shopping for them here means one store and the one second-hand store on Oak Bay Avenue that caters to women of size. She had started a directory here which listed mail orders, stores and sources, products, services and events for Women of Size in Canada. To ward off other financial considerations—you can guess what they were or are—she refunded ad money and closed the business for now.

Leslie's knees give her a lot of grief and she takes care when she dances. But her big problem, although she rides her bicycle everywhere, is public transport. "I feel so awkward sitting on a bus when I know no one can sit next to me; there's no room." Airlines

provide impossible seats. And theatres. The Roxy has double seats at the back, but most auditoria are unlikely to cater to people of size. "Sometimes, when I know I'm not going to fit in a chair, (at other people's homes or anywhere) it hurts". I struggle all the time with wanting to hide myself. Especially when I am the only fat person in a group.

"That's why Big Dance is so wonderful. Finally I am not different for my size."

For Leslie being dressed or nude, playing in water, dancing, or discussing issues with other big women is the best way she knows of to celebrate. For Joe its deep exploratory work and spirituality and drumming. Learning to be in the moment.

Personally, I think these two have a lot to teach us of the importance of relationship within and with others.

"Most of the time we stand with our backs to our own Light, looking into the shadows."

Swami Radha

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Letter to the Editors



Dear Barb,

Thanks for the great info in the last Rhino. Here's some follow up:

Women for Women in Afghanistan Victoria Chapter is organizing for awareness, action and fundraising for women in Afghanistan.

Goals for Women For Women in Afghanistan Victoria: to support the empowerment efforts of women and children in Afghanistan and in the refugee camps in Pakistan; to raise awareness in Canada to the human rights violations in Afghanistan; to press for Canadian government positions and actions in support of human rights for women and children in Afghanistan.

The current focus is awareness and fundraising activities linked with Prevention of Violence Against Women Week, April 19-25.

Next meeting is at SWAG, 130-645 Fort Street, Call for date & time. Contact Women For Women in Afghanistan - Victoria at email: hdurie@islandnet.com mail: c/o PO Box 8613, Victoria, V8W 3S2, phone (250) 361-4144

Anne Richmond

Daphne Marlatt Lectures

Longtime lesbian and feminist writer and ground breaker in fictional forms, Daphne Marlatt, is one of the fiction instructors at this year's Victoria School of Writing.

Her focus will be how to generate alternatives to action plots which still sustain narrative interest. As in all six workshops, the writing of participants will be a focus for class discussions. A short manuscript (3-10 pages) is part of the registration process.

Other instructors include Margaret Dymont, Patricia Young, Mark Jarman, Tom Henry and Terence Young. All faculty are chosen not only for the quality of their published writing, but also for their accessibility as instructors. July 20-23. Contact: Registrar writeawy@islandnet.com More info at <http://www.islandnet.com/vicwrite>, including info about the post-card fiction contest with a May 1 deadline, the prizes for which are scholarships to the School.

There will also be a public lecture series and also a public reading series during the School. The lecture series is called *Maps to the Imaginative Landscape* and Daphne's lecture will be *Looping and Breaking Narrative Time*.

Looking for an endorsement? Debby Yaffe writes: "Anyone working with her (Marlatt) will have access to one of the biggest minds and hearts working on literature in Canada today. She's really special. She is an amazing teacher, a luminous thinker and a wonderful person."

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The Business Block

Heather Brown Photography

By Barb McLaughlin

Continuing our profiles on Gay/Lesbian Business we interviewed Heather Brown who has started her own home-based business. We are interested in yours. We are interested in any tips and suggestions you may have. Write to us. We want to help and we want to expose as many kinds of gay/lesbian etc business' in our community—and not just in Victoria.

Heather Brown got her first camera when she was eight years old. By the time she was 16 she knew she wanted a career in photography. Things appeared to get in the way of realizing that dream, but the skills she developed along the way have moved her to fulfillment of the dream and her own business, Heather Brown photography.

Why go home to work? "I want to do photography not develop other people's pictures. I'm happy doing what I want to do and I'm working toward goals that are mine. I have an incredibly supportive partner and an awesome apartment."

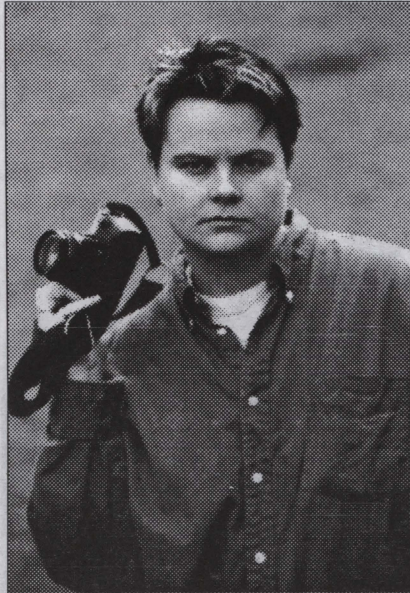
Is there room for Heather, her things and a lover? Ah, but the pack rat in Heather has flown to other pastures. "I don't need to hold onto things like I used to. I've learned when I create a void I welcome new things into my life.

"I want to do photography. It helps pay the bills. I wanted to make a go of it. I do portraits and other photography and I'm doing well. I'm getting more and more clients. It's like raising a kid. Mostly, I'm doing what I want to do. I'm helping people to be seen."

Heather points out that being successful at a home-based business is not something that just happens. She's part of an on-going mentoring programming and taking classes from Business Victoria for which she gets some provincial subsidy. She's developed some market research skills, a business plan, attends trade shows, reads *The Business Examiner* and is an active member of a home office Support Team sponsored by The Chamber of Commerce.

"It's like having a bucket for catching success," she said.

Heather got her training and some needed peripheral skills at Kwantlen College, a fine arts school in Surrey, took some psychology and sociology courses at Camosun College and studied photography at Western Academy of Photography here. With Su Hallett she started Fiddleheads Restaurant and Heather, Su and Sheralynn Pearce started the Women's Creative Network and the subsequent G-Spot. All have helped Heather to develop the basic skills required to run a successful business and to hone her craft.



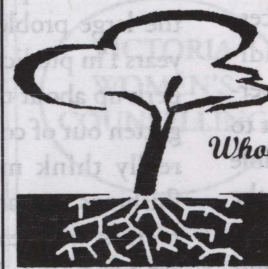
Networking is key to a successful entrepreneur. Personality is pretty key to developing a business. Establish your identity. You can't just place an ad and sit back. Service is important. The product is important. But you have to let people know who you are: be seen; be active in community. Put a photo in your ads. Take courses and learn the fundamentals. "A good business plan will make you figure pretty quickly whether or not you need to change something. One degree off can make a difference. It's basic groundwork.

ASK FOR SUCCESS. "If you actually say 'I want to make money', you will. Have a venue where people can reach you. I was selling my art cards at UVic and I suddenly realized I was doing a brisk business because

people could get to me. I needed the business plan to sort out how much I should charge for the cards and for my hourly rate as a photographer. I need to look at value for services, cost of the product and my skill level. And I need to determine, via research, what the market value for my product is. What do other's charge?"

She credits business coach Michael Losier whom she describes as "awesome" with kickstarting her toward her goals. From him she learned accountability, the value of support and finding it. She learned the value of continuing her self-teaching. She reads, attends all trade shows. And her support team works *The Artists Way*. Some of the books, by the way, include handling the blocks we create for ourselves around money. Success has to be added into the component.

If you want to book Heather for photographic assignments you can call her at her home-based business 388-0754. Start with your business cards, entrepreneurs.



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Working and Living The Land

by *Sunshine Goldstream*

Nestled between Arrowsmith Mountain and Qualicum Beach is a fertile river valley where most of the local farming is done. Coombs has always had a hillbilly reputation, so Spinstervale doesn't stick out much with its rustic cabins, herd of goats and homemade sign advertising herbs, eggs and rabbits (in season). Local people often refer the traveling woman with a backpack to "the girl's farm". With no official local advertising on our part it seems well known that we will provide bed/board to travelers for a few hours physical work. Thanks to international programs like WWOOF (Willing Workers on Organic Farms) and the lesbian Country Connections, hundreds of women have shared our sometimes peaceful life at Spinstervale.

A dozen years ago, a few of us local gals and our teenagers moved to the 14 acres on the French Creek. Over time, we have built our seven cabins, barn and greenhouses, mostly from wood milled on the property. Liberty and I are the resident "gatekeepers" since we presently are the legal owners of the land. Two other women currently rent cabins and a third rents trailer space. Warm weather brings the migration of travelers up the Spinstervale driveway to stay at the "View", "Circle" and "Web" cabins. For \$7.50/night, a woman will get a small cabin with privy, running water from a good well, a wee kitchen, access to the common bathhouse and her bed all made up! And, many women choose the work-exchange mode for a few days or a few months. Only one cabin is fully accessible for elderly or physically handicapped women; it is nearly always permanently occupied. In time, we want to make more of the womenspace accessible and "uptown". This coming summer, the big project is a new common bathhouse with attached greenhouse that will process sewage for four of the homes. If we get the pad laid and new bathhouse functional I will be happy since I am the lo-



Sunshine (front) and Liberty

cal plumber and love a beautiful, comfortable bath after a mucky day in the field (come on, gals, who wants to learn plumbing? Or, wiring?). And, we are meditating on a glass greenhouse, way more energetic a task than the plastic ones that get knocked up on a weekend. We want to address this environmental issue "at home", especially since a spawning creek runs around the property and we have dug fish ponds for our own dinner trout. (we wont even mention the mergansers, grebes and heron that help themselves daily!).

It's true, folks, that personal is political. We are all responsible for our shit. I feel pretty lucky to be able to test out some of the pretty simple solutions to the large problems. Over the next few years I'm predicting a lot more folks will perk up about these situations that have gotten out of control (like, folks, did we really think moving Victoria's toilet flushings out another couple thousand meters was really the idyllic way to modify Clover Point and the local seascape?). Maybe I am a little obsessive about this shit, but I'm blessed to have a sweetie who would ride the train all the

way to the east coast, and instead of going to Peggy's Cove we immediately head off to visit the Bear River greenhouse where they have been recycling a whole town's flushings since '95. Poor, dear, she kept saying, "I know it's going to be smelly" under her breath and looking just a little green, but she did the tour anyway. We both came away pleasantly surprised that it wasn't smelly in that greenhouse! Now, there's one of those greenhouses servicing a trailer court just down the road, in Errington, so we wont get to be the first in the neighborhood to have another lovely greenhouse to hang out in when it's raining outdoors. A friend from the southern US lived in one of our greenhouses for a whole coastal winter because the rain was so disgusting here, but I'll save my rave about the fantastic fun we can have in our climate winter gardening under plastic for another column!

As the aging gatekeepers at Spinstervale, Liberty and I intend to live here until our individual deaths. And, even then, my ashes can join with the earth under some wild rose tangle on the Spinstervaleland. When we bought this land, we did so with a vision of many women developing their lives throughout time in this clean, safe, productive spot. Growing of food, careful harvesting and planting of the forests, accessibility for women without lots of bucks to clean, quiet air—these are the visions we want to enjoy and pass on. We are looking for help in this as there aren't very many models or legal tools in Canada for this planning. Although it's not the place for everyone, it could be for many, and we are searching for the appropriate tools to ensure whatever perpetuity is possible on this earth.

As an example of what we've already experienced here, we called a workparty to build the "Circle" cabin and got all the materials ready. A few days before the event no one had yet said they were coming, so we prepared for a disappointing turnout. The very day of the work party several groups of young women from
(Cont'd page 20)

Spotlight on the Spot

By Barbara McLaughlin

The longer I live as an older lesbian the more I realize that I place a high value on some things. I can blame history, acquired knowledge and a sense of impermanence and mortality, cheerfully owned, on what I see happening in my world—especially my lesbian world.

For one thing, I am aware how much we take for granted the things that we now have that were totally missing in my young lesbian days. Well, we can start with the fact that I was missing in my young lesbian days. By that I mean, I would have acknowledged my lesbianism at age 13 and celebrated what I had known and feared since I was five.

More than that, I am aware that today we are not only much more visible (we still have a long way to go) but also we have freedom to move about and be together that we didn't have in the 50s and 60s when I wanted and needed what we have today.

Please note here that I don't think it's any easier to come out today. There are still attitudes and guilt and fears about homosexuality that are fostered by and maintained by newspaper coverage of the religious right and by churches in general and today's parents. But, many things are better and easier.

One of the things I fear we take most for granted is our little clubhouse—The G-Spot. I come from a generation of lesbians that found ourselves and our kind in the bars. We drank against our guilt and our feelings and our confusion—and with others who sought solace against similar miseries. We drank to be gay in every sense of its meaning. It's astonishing the number of older lesbians I know who are reformed alcoholics—myself included. We shared our miseries in a big way.

Now we don't have to. We meet at dances and events and there's always so much going on for lesbians—and it appears from sales tallies that even at New Year's the bar at the dance is not the profit-maker it once was.

One of the great places to meet is our own clubhouse. It is free of any outside influences—totally lesbian. Men are invited in but they are invited to share womenspace. Usually, it's the other way around. There's coffee talk and yoga nights and medi-



Jannit Rabinovitch and Joyce Pate beading bracelets for the Big Blue Goddess.

tation nights and games nights and writers' group and the very popular Salon nights. The G-Spot is where women and lesbians go to talk, to meet and to share.

On a given Friday or Saturday night there aren't women dancing at the Spot. After a writers' group sharing, Loose Tongues, Saturday February 20, the assembled crowd tottered off to home, to BJs or off with friends. Few stayed to mingle. I felt unaccountably sad. Are we going to lose the G-Spot to the bars after all? Or, conversely, can we scrap the bar at the G-Spot and just make it a coffee and yummys place—our own Moka House? Keep the coffee and the soft drinks happening—keep it open all day—keep the games going and the conversation. We love to talk. We love to meet on scheduled time for bull sessions and to write.

It's my feeling that the G-Spot is hallowed, yeah, sacred ground that we can easily lose unless we redefine what it is we want it for. What's its purpose? Not to me. To you.

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Coming Out and Still Believing

by Iris Gray

My name is Iris, and I came out as a lesbian at age 25, then later as bisexual at age 30. I've been a Christian my entire life, starting when my parents took me to church as an infant.

I grew up in a very rigid fundamentalist church. I always viewed God as some judge up in the sky who was just waiting for me to do something wrong so that he could punish me.

When I came out, it was because I had fallen in love with a woman. I looked up "homosexuality" in the Bible and what I found was not very positive. When my relationship broke up I was certain that God was punishing me. I wondered if I should try to go back to being heterosexual. But I didn't want to. I had found a community where I finally felt like I belonged. But how could I reconcile my faith with being a lesbian? Fortunately, I found a group of gay and lesbian religious folk who invited me to a dinner they were having. Through this group I found the church I now attend, the United Church. I discovered that there were actually other Christians who were lesbians. The pastor of my church gave me some reading material on sexuality and spirituality, and I discovered that the passages in the Bible that supposedly relate to homosexuality have been translated and re-translated and mistranslated. There was no word meaning "homosexual" when the Bible was written. I began to examine everything that I ever thought was true about Christianity, because if the tradition I had been raised in was wrong about homosexuality, who knew what else they were "wrong" about? I ended up rejecting a lot of the doctrine I learned as a child.

There was a time in my life, before I discovered a gay-and-lesbian supportive church, that I explored alternate spiritual

paths. And while I decided to stick with Christianity, I believe I gained something from each path I tried: insight and knowledge of alternate ways to connect with the Divine.

I looked up "homosexuality" in the Bible and what I found was not very positive. When my relationship broke up I was certain that God was punishing me.

I no longer believe in a straight, white, male God. I believe in God, but the God I believe in does not have a physical form and certainly does not have a gender. I

no longer believe that God is somewhere "up there" waiting to punish me if I do wrong. I believe that God is all around me, in the grass, the trees, the ocean, the sky, the mountains.

And that if I do make a mistake, if I stumble in my walk with God, then God will be there by my side, waiting to help me up, brush me off and help me back on my way.

If anyone wishes to discuss this article with me, I can be reached via email at wy236@victoria.tc.ca

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A Dish For Any Palate

By Gary Murphy



ECADENCE Bakery Café

Eclectic is the word I would use to describe this delightful little restaurant downtown across from the Bay. The decor has a Mediterranean look with thoughtful use of space and colour. Ceramic tiled floor with original art on the walls. It seats about 50 with a small terrace when and if the spring and summer should arrive. Doug and Debbie Harding are the owners of the café which has been operating at the present location since December 1994. Doug and Debbie came from Alberta 10 or so years ago and opened a catering business that developed into a catering and café business. Debbie is the Master Chef having studied in a Cordon Bleu École Gastronomique in England at the Sabine de Merbeck in Litlington, south of London.

I use the word eclectic because the whole restaurant, from decor to menu, is a melange of distinct and diverse styles of furniture, art and cuisine and it works well. The atmosphere is warm and friendly. In our case it was the young Scott who was looking after our needs. He was both professional and personable.

I cannot tell you how pleased I was to see that the menu was one page and not

five. I have been presented with menus in some restaurants that by the time I have reached page four I have forgotten most of what I have read. It would be easier in those cases to have the menu on the wall in big print and be supplied with a dart and where that dart sticks is what you order. This menu is well planned. It has burgers served on homemade Kaiser rolls (there is an in house baker) with fillings that run the gamut from Halibut, Mushroom or Beef to Chicken, Turkey or Vegetarian and none of them are of the unremarkable type that you might expect to find at a burger house.

The entrées again reflect the eclectic, Chicken Satay, Mediterranean Vegetable Pie or perhaps a taste of British cuisine with a Steak and Mushroom Pie. There is absolutely a dish to please any particular palate. The food is authentically pre-

pared by Debbie with the freshest of ingredients and artfully presented. Entrees range in price from \$6.95 to \$9.95. Portions are a perfect size and daily specials are available. Two people could dine quite well for under \$30.00.

The Catering end of the business can accommodate private parties, off-site up to approximately 150 people. It is best to make reservations, especially if you have a large group or need to be able to eat leisurely and still make the theater.

I recommend this restaurant highly, so give it a try. I had the chicken enchilada with tomatillo sauce and feta, piquant and served with a savory blend of long grained and wild rice my dining companion raved over his Ginger-Garlic Stirfry with prawns. Again I had to take away my dessert, the Chocolate Lover's Torte (triple layers of rich moist chocolate cake surrounding Belgian chocolate mousse and iced with white chocolate cream frosting), I never seem to have room for dessert so soon after my meal.

Hours are: Mon. 9am-4:30pm; Tues-Fri 9am-9pm; Sat 5pm-9pm. Starting March 19 and every Friday after there will be music featuring the Two Swinging Bachelors (from the group Five Swinging Bachelors) with piano & guitar Jazz, Blues, and Swing with excellent vocals.

If you know of a restaurant that you think is unique in this city of restaurants, give me a call at (250) 386-3458 or e-mail me at gmurphy52@home.com and perhaps I'll make a reservation on your recommendation

Bon Appetite until next time....Enjoy.



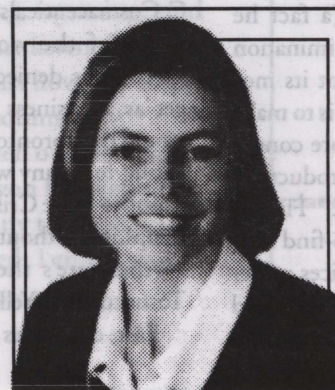
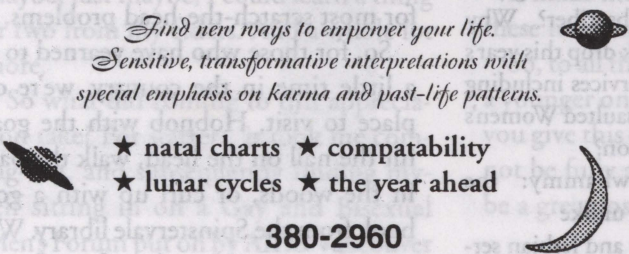
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Pissing on The Yellow Pages?

By Michele Landsberg from *The Toronto Star*

Let your fingers do the walking and you'll find everything you need in the daffodil-coloured Yellow Pages unless you are a gay youth in despair, or a woman in some kind of crisis and you happen to live in the huge swath of Toronto that lies east of Avenue Road. I know that doesn't seem to make much sense, but neither does the train of events I'm about to describe.

Toronto, it seems, has several versions of the Yellow Pages. The ones that concern us are Toronto Central West and Toronto Central East. They are, believe or not, ideologically different and distinct.

Business is supposed to be hard-nosed and all about the bottom line, but don't kid yourself. Business has its reasons that reason knows not of.

The story begins with Bob Metcalfe, a counsellor/psychotherapist in private practice in Toronto. In 1996, he asked Tele-Direct, the Bell subsidiary that runs the Yellow Pages, to list his business phone under a new heading of Gay and Lesbian Services in Toronto East. Wham! Tele-Direct must have hit the rewind button in its panic, because, while fobbing Metcalfe off with a series of lame excuses for not running a Gay and Lesbian Services heading, it went into reverse at high speed. Instead of agreeing to become more inclusive, Tele-Direct began, in its next edition, to remove all the headings for other groups: Deaf, Disabled, Women's, Men's and Seniors' Services.

Uh no, fellas. You don't cover your backside by discriminating against everyone equally.

Bob Metcalfe's complaint to the Ontario Human Rights Commission will go to its first mediation session this week. Through its lawyer, Richard Charney, Tele-Direct is arguing that it didn't discriminate because it didn't know Metcalfe was gay (a fact he strongly disputes and anyway, discrimination is judged in law by its impact, not its motive). It also insists that its purpose is to make the book less confusing, to be more consistent, and to restrict headings to products or services, and not to "client groups." Finally, having agreed to include a hard-to-find sub-heading of Gay and Lesbian Services under a massive new category called Social and Human Service Organization, it demanded

that Metcalfe pay extra to list his services there, because he's not a non-profit.

Not one of the arguments stands up on closer examination. The TeleDirect decision can't really have much to do with ease of use.

Test it out for yourself. Take a Toronto East yellow pages and follow the excruciatingly simple advice offered on the inside cover: "THINK of the product or service you need. LOOK in the index." Okay. I'm a woman who needs help, fast. I go to the alphabetical index: Nothing but "Women's Apparel." I go to the subject index. Nothing. "Assaulted," "battering," "shelters," "hostels," "Women's centres?" Nothing. Would I think of looking under "Social and Human?" Get real.

Does it matter? I asked Karen Fraser, who first tried to list her company, Women Like Me, in 1973. When Bell Yellow Pages asked her what category she wanted for her training and entrepreneurship consultancy, Fraser said "Women's Services." No way, said Bell. Although it had always carried a long list of Men's Fraternal Organizations, it insisted that Fraser would have to get permission from every woman in Canada before it created a heading for "Women." It took another eight years before Fraser won the battle.

"Before they created the separate Women's Services heading, I used to get tons and tons of calls from frantic women looking for help," Fraser said in an interview, chortling richly at the latest Bell follies. "They were the kind of women who had no contacts with women's groups. Then, when a crisis hit, they had nowhere to turn but the phone book."

Fraser is now bracing herself for a new wave of misdirected calls.

Why would TeleDirect have separate highlighted headings for Smokers and Nudists but not for gays or women? Why does "Cellex-C Cosmeceuticals Inc." get a listing in the midst of the women's non-profits, but Metcalfe is denied the one free listing you get as a business phone subscriber? Why would the Toronto East book drop this year's listing for many women's services including Toronto Rape Crisis and Assaulted Women's HelpLine without notification?

And here's the double whammy: the Toronto West Yellow Pages, unlike East, continues to list gay and lesbian ser-

vices in the index. Women's services are also in the index, and have a separate highlighted heading right where you'd naturally look, under "W." Are we who live west of Avenue Road so much more sophisticated?

Tele-Direct has recently morphed into Bell ActiMedia, whose director of marketing, André D'Avignon, eventually phoned me to explain it's all been a mistake. Mistake? Yes. By June, the Toronto West directory will lose its separate Women's heading to make it consistent with Toronto East. More rapid rewind!

D'Avignon said that he knew nothing about the Metcalfe human rights complaint. And he says that women and gays will at least be listed in the index in future.

Whatever happens, the Yellow Pages kerfuffle has been a weird little lesson: it's not just the personal that's political, baby. Everything's political, even the phone book.

Michele Landsberg writes for the Toronto Star on Weekends. She is married to Stephen Lewis and has published books for both adults and children. This story is off the Net from Jeanne Rioux

Working and Living The Land

From page 16

Ontario arrived with no skills in construction. But, with a good forewoman, everyone's cooperative effort, some music and food, the roof was on the building by the end of the weekend. The cabin rivaled the local Jehovah's Witness's church-with-the-roof-in-a-weekend of the previous year, although there are some oddities of construction methods that would beat out that church any day! "We can work with it" was the motto for most scratch-the-head problems.

So, for those who have yearned to try a little time in the country, we're one place to visit. Hobnob with the goats, hit the nail on the head, walk the paths in the woods, or curl up with a good book from the Spinstervale library. Winter or summer, it's a place for reflection and change.

Equality Is About Liberation – Not Sameness

By Theresa Newhouse

For Gwen Brodsky, the fight for rights for gays and lesbians is about more than just equality, it is about liberation.

Brodsky is a Vancouver lawyer who has been involved in leading lesbian and gay rights cases in the Supreme Court. She came to Victoria February 27th and spoke to the UVic Law School.

She had strong words on the subject of the direction the gay and lesbian movement should take on equality issues.

Brodsky is not an advocate of what she calls the formal equality trap.

In defending gay and lesbian rights she believes the line of argument, sometimes adopted, which sets out to prove how much gay and lesbian couples look like heterosexual couples simply reinforces

inequalities present in the current system. It also requires gay and lesbian couples to prove they are more straight than the straights with some kind of Leave it to Beaver home life.

She said this reinforces “a false idealization of heterosexual couples and a bizarre conceptualization of what we are.”

Brodsky said, especially since the Vriend decision, the courts have acknowledged gay and lesbian couples have rights and the question now is one of implementation. She called for “a more nuanced approach, asking hard questions about whether a more radical rewriting [of the social safety net] is required.”

“For many lesbians and gays our goal is substantive equality and that doesn't mean joining the spousal club but challenging the ... hierarchy ... including leg-

islative schemes that make it seem as though heterosexual relationships are the only relationships that matter,” said Brodsky.

In particular, Brodsky noted the negative effects spousal rules have had on poorer gays and lesbians who have seen welfare benefits cut when their spousal relationship is recognized. She also cited the importance of recognizing other kinds of relationships when it comes to handing out such things as bereavement leave and medical coverage.

She challenged the audience to remember we are engaged in a liberation struggle and that requires we think “why are we going after reading in definitions [of gay and lesbian relationships] which are false and include detriments.”

“In Praise of Older Men”

Um, no, I don't mean in bed, although I'm sure they're great. What I mean is that there are, in our community, dozens of middle-aged gay and bi men who have to offer a great deal of wisdom to the youth (and well, just everyone) of this city.

Of course as a teenager I didn't appreciate the wisdom of anyone, let alone those older than I. Any attempt to impart some sort of knowledge was largely wasted on me, as sure as I was that I understood the world perfectly, thank you very much. It took me a few more years to come to the point of recognizing that maybe, just maybe, I could learn a thing or two from my elders. And a whole lot more.

So what did coming to this appreciation take? For starters, it took me coming out, and subsequently finding myself sitting in on a Gay and Bisexual Men's Forum put on by AIDS Vancouver

Island a couple of months ago. There, over a hundred men of all ages gathered to talk about relationships.

Here, they shared their rich experiences and insights that their ages afforded: stories of coming out at a time when gays and lesbians were treated as mentally ill, monogamy, non-monogamy, AIDS, love and loss.

One man spoke of the importance of having painful experiences because they force us to grow as individuals. Another spoke of love as a spiritual experience. I found myself listening, agreeing, and wondering why I hadn't listened before.

It made me realize just how important these men are to the community.

So, to all the older men out there, from a younger one, thank you for everything you give this community that you might not be fully appreciated, I think, would be a great loss. ML

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Nancy Nigro

Psychotherapist • M.S.W.



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Little Lezzie Flashes



Dropped in on Ms Romance for a quick update on the sex toy industry. (Well, really, I was leaving her some Rhinos). Anyway, she told me she had booked ads on Roger's Cable TV in which she said, in her own voice, "amazing and fun sex toys." It was too much for whoever called in aggrieved. Roger's changed the ad—that's one thing. The fact they changed the ad without telling Ms Romance—that's something else. The fact they redid the ad with another voice... We do live in an uptight world where one or more callers can set the standards for everyone. Right, Mr. Falwell? Think well before going with Rogers... On a lighter side, we tramped down to the G-Spot to find Jannit Rabinovitch on the couch—not unusual in itself—but she was beading. No, that's not a new kind of sex toy but a great way to cover up a torn ankle in the big blue lady who lives at the Spot. Before long there were several dykes sitting around beading anklets for the lady... More than 50 women showed up to hear the Thursday night writer's group's first reading. It was a great success. Attending was Sheri-D Wilson who was in town to teach a class in performance poetry at UVic. In addition to three books of poetry released by Arsenal Pulp Press, including *Girl's Guide to Giving Head*, Sheri-D is best known for saying "Fuck" on Peter

Gzowski's *Morningside*. Over coffee she told Jill Goodacre, Lyn Davis and me, that Preston Manning was scheduled to be on before her that fateful morning. Alas, Manning was held up. Sheri-D delivered her poetry to a rapt audience of, well, Manning fans, including her own father. Gzowski was furious. We're still laughing! The poem in question is about being in potential danger in New York and she tried to explain to an irate Gzowski, when she later confronted him with his double standards showing, "did you expect me to f the bad guy? and maybe die? You can't scare anybody with an "f". G, I think she's got a point. **Monica Turner** did a fab job of emceeing the event and showed she could write poetry as well. As well as whom we are not sure. For the writer's group comes this from **Molly Kobalinski**: A hungry lion was roaming through the jungle looking for something to eat. He came across two men. One was sitting under a tree reading a book; the other was typing away on his typewriter. The lion quickly pounced on the man reading the book and devoured him. Even the king of the jungle knows that readers digest, and writers cramp... **Lee Ker** just had a root canal. For her Molly sends: Did you hear about the Buddhist who refused his dentist's Novocain during root canal work? He wanted to transcend dental medication... Had a marvellous time gawking at paintings at Artinside Gallery and **Phyllis Serota** had another bonanza Valentines sale at her home... **David Swan** is new chair of AVI... AVI did a search, seek and wonder at the G-Spot in an effort to find out what we need to know about safe sex. As **Heather Brown** says: we were a very generous audience... Talented photographer that she is, Heather has opened her own business... **Les Chan** has just sent his cook book off

to the publisher in Vancouver. The title ought to get some sales: *Don't Stir Fry in The Nude*. I'm sure Molly would have something to say about that, but I'm forestalled ... From Russia with love. **Albina Solonin** is looking for pen pals. Email: albin:a.solonin@members.gayweb.com. Her snail mail address is Zhulebinsky Boulevard, 28-1-210 Moscow 109153 Russia. She has a wonderful resume if you would like to know more, call me... Good news, **Colleen Farrell** is hosting Wednesday morning Coffee Talk. Finally, **Karen Wreggitt** proved she's more than a pretty face. Those of us aching and paining at the G-Spot Coffee Talk were hefted and cured by the massage therapist. Well, I was lifted. So were my spirits... Next time, dears. BMcL



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TWO SUITES FOR RENT: April 1 - 3 bedroom main floor in character Esquimalt house, large yard, 5 appliances, rent \$1,000 all inclusive.

June 1 - one-bedroom basement in same house, aboveground, bright, \$450 all inclusive. Looking for quiet tenants seeking long term lease. Cats and children welcome. Call Anne at 384-3619.

ONE BEDROOM: Fairfield upper. Bright, quiet, beautiful yard. \$595 includes utilities, cable, laundry. Cat OK. Perfect for one person. Lots of storage and bike space. Available May 1. 598-6034

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AVAILABLE IMMEDIATELY. Get-away in Port Renfrew. Rent by night or week - three bedroom house, fully equipped, beach view, near Botanical Beach and West Coast Trail. Reasonable rates: 388-0754 Website: <http://www.islandnet.com/~gspot/wvr/>

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SPINSTERVALE IN COOMBS: Offers rustic cabins at \$7.50 per woman per night, larger cabin sleeps 4 to 6. \$30 per weekend. Inquire about farm-hand position or work exchange. (3-hrs per day equals room and board. Call (250) 248-8809. E-mail Sunshine@macn.bc.ca

TRAVELLING TO TOFINO? Suite or Bed and Brkfst. Reserve 1-250-725-4427 gguppy@tofina-bc.com or www.tofino-bc.com/gaytofino

COMMUNITY NOTES & HAPPENINGS

CHECK YOUR BOOTY: Youth Health Conference—for gays and lesbian, transgendered, transsexual bisexual, Two-Spirited and Questioning youth May 22,23 1999 at University of Victoria. If you can sponsor a youth send \$145 to Check Your Booty, Youth Health Conference, 94 Linden Avenue, Victoria, BC V8V 4C8 381-4766. E-mail gossan@coastnet.com Plan to attend this important event.

DEROGATORY TREATMENT: Have you had a woman verbally mistreat you or be derogatory in any way. Angela is doing an art project on women's/lesbians "bad" behaviour. If you would like to add your experience please respond email: vaschmon@bc.sympatico.ca or write A. Montani, 495 Leaside Drive, Victoria, V82 6M6. If you're interested in an evening at the G-Spot to discuss this call Angela at (250) 881-1269 by May 1

SAVE THE SURVEY! Fund-raising draw to complete the first national survey of lesbians, gays and bisexuals in Canada. Win a weekend at the The Blue EWE on Saltspring Island. Tickets from Barbara ((598-6490) \$10.

INTERACTIVE WORKSHOP Series for lesbian/transqueerwomen from AVI women's outreach. April 16 on negotiating desire; April 23 on FTDs and Safer Sex. Interested call Katrina at AVI 384-2366

MELANEY BLACK: is giving her graduation recital May 14 at 8 pm in the recital hall at 907 Pandora, otherwise known as the Met. (former Metropolitan Church). The recital hall is the small chapel to the left of the main building as you face it on Pandora Street.

OUTDOORS CLUB: Taylor, Kanaice and Sherry held the first meeting of the Women's Outdoor and Activities Club. This is a new club and we are looking for fellow members who enjoy a variety of activities, such as hiking, kayaking, pool, camping, even Bowling. If you are interested and have some ideas on what activities you enjoy the most, come join us at the G-Spot. If you have any questions, contact us by email norie@bc.sympatico.com or phone, (250)812-5751

SALT SPRING ISLAND Gays/Lesbians/Allies: meet on the third Sunday of the month, 2-4 p m, at the Seniors for Seniors Building, 379 Lower Ganges Road (across from GVM). Plan social events; get involved in education, exploration and visibility projects. For more information call 537-2227 or e-mail caffyn@saltspring.com.

HELP OTHERS: Anyone interested in supporting the one and only (struggling) lesbian centre in India please contact Judy Lightwater, 598-6034. Ideas include twinning with the GSpot, books, money, magazines, travel exchanges.

CPOW: The Canadian party of Women meets last Friday of every month at 7:30 p.m. Call Betty, 598-6379 or e-mail Jannit,jrabino@ampsc.com

CHINATOWN TOUR: During Pride Week join Les Chan on a tour of our historical Chinatown with proceeds over expenses going to AVI. \$10 includes lunch. Call Les at 383-7317

(Ads cont'd next page)

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QUEER ARTISTS GUILD: Sponsored by the Lesbian Art Collective, this is a club for queer artists (**ALL GENDERS**). Regular monthly meetings are 7 to 9 p.m. at the G-Spot 3rd Friday of every month. Join and have your work displayed in Queer Art Show. For slide show info, details and mbshp fees call Rebecca at 386-2550. \$3 non-mbrs.

OLD LESBIANS: 2ND Annual International Gathering By and For Old Lesbians in San Francisco at S.F. State U. August 12-15, 1999. For someone 60 or older. Mail to Old Lesbians Organizing for Change P.O. Box 980422, Houston, TX 77098

PERSONAL

LAVENDER RHINO: Seeks Advertising Sales Person Lesbian/Gay or Straight. Call 598-6490. Salary based on experience.

URGENT PLEA: for a pitcher(s) needed for BJ'S Woman's Fastball Club. Semi-competitive with a flair for FUN!!! 480-3990 Chris

RUNNING GROUP: For gays and lesbians to run. Gar Fisher @ 658-1613. All levels.

TENNIS FOR GUYS: Call David 388-0393 or Jim at 382-2970

PHOTOS: All photographic needs—wedding, butch/femme/ display/ pride/ Call Heather 388-0754.

BRIDGE BEGINNERS: Looking for others to play friendly game and exercise our minds. Call Betty or Nance at 480-0080.

ENERGY AND AURA READINGS: Jane will tune your chakra, too. Fee, \$15 for 15 minutes. Wednesday mornings at the G-Spot. Come for coffee and tune in. Call 652-9245 for home visits or to book a reading.

HEY, IT'S SPRING! Darn cute lesbian, early 50s, living painfully wholesome life, looking for—let's face it—romance. I love the outdoors, embrace many interests, have creative tastes and way too much energy. Did I mention a silly sense of humour? Want to play? If all else fails it could be platonic! Reply LR personal #19 c/o PO Box 5339 Station B, Victoria, BC V8R 6S4.

LOVE OR FRIENDSHIP: I am lesbian, aged 34, looking for friendship and/or love. Age doesn't matter. I have a mental challenge, am 5 feet 11 inches. Huggable and looking for friends and conversation. Respond LNews personal #17.

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SERVICES, ACTIVITIES & CONTACTS

Dyke Dimensions Radio Show: Mondays, 8:00 to 9:00 p.m. FM CFUV 104.3 Cable FM 101.9

This Way Out Radio: CFUV 101.9 FM Mondays 1:00 to 1:30 p.m.

Queer & Present Danger: CFUV Radio 8:30-9:00 p.m. 101.9 or 104.3 cable

AA for GLBs etc: Front Runners Group meets Tuesdays 383-7744

AIDS VANCOUVER ISLAND: 384-2366 304-733 Johnson St. V8W 3C7

The G-Spot: Club for Women, Lesbians, Trannies 382-7768

Camosun College Lesbian Collective. Alt Weeks. 370-3484

Lesbian Seniors Care Society: Milnor, 360-2779

Karaoke Night: With Stacey at BJs Mondays 9 p.m.

Champagne Brunch: at Dorothy's Sundays 11-4 p.m.

Mosaic: Lesbian & Gay Choir. Box 8533 Victoria, BC V8W 3S1, 360-1966

Pink Umbrella, Pink Pages: New Address Box 5231 St. B, Victoria V8R 1HO

P-Flag: Information, 642-5171.

Queer Art Guild: Rebecca 386-2550 (all-genders)

The Victoria Status of Women Action Group: Services available include: free use of computers, an extensive resource library; lots of info on local events and organizations that work with and for women. Monday through Friday, 9:30 to 1:30. Call 383-7322. 130-645 Fort St. Victoria. (Yarrows Bldg). Email swag@pacificcoast.net Fax 388-0100

VYPS: Victoria Youth Pride (14-25) 472-4393 vyps@writeme.com

"You Oughta be in Pictures!"

Ever wonder how socially committed, relevant and challenging documentary films get made? Well, in these times of cut-backs to the arts and social programs, it's getting harder and harder to find support for films and television programs that provide a space for marginalized voices, experiences and points of view. Here's how *you* can make a difference - how *you* can help ensure that other stories, other voices are heard ...

Who we are ...

PRAIRIE GIRL FILMS is an Aboriginal women's film production company dedicated to bringing Aboriginal women's stories to the screen.

Metis filmmaker **Christine Welsh** has been producing, writing and directing documentary films for more than twenty-five years and is one of Canada's most respected Aboriginal filmmakers. Her films have been broadcast widely on public, private and educational television networks and have won numerous awards. Her credits include: *Women in the Shadows*, winner of the Best Documentary award at the 1992 Vancouver International Film Festival and nominee for the 1993 Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television Gemini award for Best Documentary; *Keepers of the Fire*, winner of the prestigious Kathleen Shannon award as well as the Alanis Obomsawin award for outstanding contribution to the Canadian Aboriginal film industry; and *Kuper Island: Return to the Healing Circle*, a film about the survivors of the Kuper Island Indian Residential School which has been featured at film festivals in Montreal, Portland, San Francisco and Santa Fe.

Metis producer **Colleen Craig** is a two-spirit woman from Manitoba with strong ties to both the Aboriginal and lesbian arts and business communities. In addition to providing family support services to Victoria's Aboriginal community for many years, Colleen has an eclectic background as an artist, businesswoman and entrepreneur. She is currently producing a one-hour television documentary on the Coast Salish woolworkers of southern Vancouver Island.

What we want to do ...

PRAIRIE GIRL FILMS is developing a one-hour documentary film called *Two-Spirit Women* -- "two-spirit" being the name given to Aboriginal lesbian, gay and transgendered people.

In this ground-breaking documentary, two-spirit women from across Canada and the United States will take us inside their world -- a world of "warrior women" who are exploring, redefining and pushing the boundaries of what it means to be an Aboriginal woman now, as we approach a new millenium. It will feature two-spirit women from all walks of life and a wide range of tribal affiliations, backgrounds and experience, including internationally acclaimed Menominee poet **Chrystos**, Ojibway AIDS activist **Sharon Day**, Lakota spiritual teacher **Beverly Little Thunder**, Mohawk writer and storyteller **Beth Brant**, New York comic and playwright **Muriel Miguel**, Toronto musician **Donna Marchand** and West Coast artist **Francis Dick**. The film will explore the respected role of two-spirit women in traditional Aboriginal cultures as well the issues that are at the heart of contemporary two-spirit women's experience. It will be both celebratory and thought-provoking -- a film that celebrates the complexity, richness and diversity of contemporary Aboriginal women's experience and opens up a conversation on how we go about building a truly inclusive and pluralistic society.

Why we need you ...

Mainstream film and television production operates on the maxim that "time is money" and it is rare that filmmakers are given the funding to support the kind of in-depth, community-based research this film needs. Once we have completed the necessary research we have no doubt that we will be able to raise *production* funding for this film through conventional film funding sources, but in the meantime we need to find creative ways to finance the *research and development* of the film. That's where *you* come in.

How you can help ...

We need to raise \$40,000.00 to develop *Two-Spirit Women*. These funds will be used to cover the direct costs of research and development, including travel to meet and interview two-spirit women in communities throughout Canada and the United States as well as the cost of a filming a three-day "pre-shoot" at the annual women's sundance, an important spiritual gathering for two-spirit women that will be held in July.

We know that there is a great deal of support and excitement for this project in the community and we'd like to give you an opportunity to demonstrate that support in a real and tangible way. We're requesting donations toward the development of this film from individuals like *you* -- \$100, \$400, \$1,000, whatever you feel you can afford. If 400 people donate \$100 -- or 100 people donate \$400, etc. -- we can make this film happen. It's important to realize that this is a donation, not an investment: social issue films aren't hot commercial properties, and it's virtually unheard-of for films like this make a profit or even re-coup the cost of making them. Your donation won't be tax deductible, but in return for your generous support you'll see *your name in lights* as a thank-you credit on the film and you'll know that you've played a big part in bringing this important story to the screen. Send us your mailing address and e-mail along with your cheque so we can provide you with regular updates on our progress, and you'll have the vicarious pleasure of participating in the making of major documentary film.

**To make a donation to *Two-Spirit Women*,
please send your cheques payable to PRAIRIE GIRL FILMS to:**

**PRAIRIE GIRL FILMS
"Two-Spirit Women"
Suite #679, 185 - 911 Yates Street
Victoria, B.C. V8V 4Y9 Canada**

**If you need more information, please call:
(250)370-0499 or (250)598-3127**

***Individuals and community can make a difference!
Together we can make this film happen!***

Upcoming Special Events Drag King Show

Saturday, April 10th, 9pm
Details tba...

check the message at 382-SPOT

A Forum on the Diversity in our Community...

Friday, April 9th at 7 pm

(dogless) Dyke Campout and Beaver Feaver Dance on Saltspring...

Victoria Day long weekend in May at
Ruckles Park Provincial Campground

sponsored by the Women's cReative Network and
the Victoria Queer Art Guild

more details to available at the GSpot or through the Queer Arrt Guild

TATTOOED WOMEN

Is anyone interested in being part of a tattoo expose/fashion show/
exhibition special event to be held at the G-Spot in May or June.
Please call Karen at 386-9530 or e-mail karenwre@islandnet.com
This may include a photo essay/collage.

Regular Events Information Weekends:

Due to a lack of committed volunteers we are no longer able to be open every friday and saturday night for GSpot bar nights. The Spot will still be open for a variety of Regular and Sepcial Events such as Wise Women's Night, '80's Retro Night, Queer Art Guild Meetings and Slide Shows, Jannit's Film Night, Drag King Shows, Girl Punk Bands amd Art Openings.
Please check calendars carefully for upcoming events and details...

volunteers

desperately needed to keep the GSpot open on the week-ends... if you like have a women-only space to party with your friends help out and keep it running.

Victoria Women's Outdoor and Activity Club:

The first Sunday of each month, starting March 7th, Victoria Women's Outdoor and Activity Club (VWOAC) meets at the Spot 11a.m.-1p.m. call 812-5751 or e-mail vwoac@yahoo.com for more information.info on the web @
<http://www3.bc.sympatico.ca/VicWomensOutdoorClub/>

1910 store street, victoria, bc, v8t 4r4,
<http://victoria.tc.ca/Community/WCN/>
wcn_spot@yahoo.com, 382-SPOT(7768)

we apologize that the Spot is not fully accessible to women with disabilities, we are working on this problem

april@thespot

event information

see reverse for special events

april@thespot

women's creative network

it's small but if you can find it you can come...

tuesday

wednesday

thursday

friday

saturday

coffee talk:
10:30am-2pm wednesdays
\$2 for coffee
a friendly time to drop-in and chat, tarot and aura readings with Melissa and Jane

afternoon delight:
3-6pm thursday with Andrea, herbal teas and conversation
\$2 for tea

meditation:
7:30-9pm wednesdays
call Maria at 595-0997 for more information

queer art guild meeting & slide show
~~8-11pm~~ 3rd friday, hosted by Rebecca 386-2550
\$3 for non-members

writers' group:
a new group is forming, if interested call Margaret at 592-0976
\$3 for non-members

comfy cozy
6-9pm, 3rd tuesday with Pip, \$5 for a bowl of vegetarian soup and a movie, \$4 for members

sappho's salon:
7:30-9pm 2nd and 4th thursdays with Jannit, Betty and Bobby...
bring a hot topic for discussion
\$3 for non-members

1
coffee talk
10:30am-2pm
meditation
7:30-9:00pm

2
afternoon delight
3-6pm

3
The Spot
retro night
with Kathryn, Christina and DJ K-LA, all genders licensed

4
The Spot
with Jannit and the visiting OWLS
8:30pm - 1am, licensed

6
coffee talk
10:30am-2pm
meditation
7:30-9:00pm

7
coffee talk
10:30am-2pm
meditation
7:30-9:00pm

8
afternoon delight
3-6pm
sappho's salon
7:30-9pm

9
The Spot
Forum on the Diversity in our Community
7pm-9pm

10
The Spot
Drag King Show

13
comfy cozy
6-9pm, \$5 soup and a movie

14
coffee talk
10:30am-2pm
meditation
7:30-9:00pm

15
afternoon delight
3-6pm

16
Queer Art Guild
slide show and meeting
7:30-10pm

17
The Spot
games night with karen

20
coffee talk
10:30am-2pm
meditation
7:30-9:00pm

21
coffee talk
10:30am-2pm
meditation
7:30-9:00pm

22
afternoon delight
3-6pm
sappho's salon
7:30-9pm

23
Closed

24
The Spot
wise women over 40

27
coffee talk
10:30am-2pm
meditation
7:30-9:00pm

28
coffee talk
10:30am-2pm
meditation
7:30-9:00pm

29
afternoon delight
3-6pm

30
Girl Punk Show
all genders, license
8:30pm - 1am

may 1
Closed

The Spot

see reverse for details of changes to weekend programming

Further information and events on reverse

all events are women-only unless indicated this policy includes and welcomes transgendered and transsexual people

up-to-date information always available @ 382-SPOT (7760)
1910 store street
(just past Capital Iron)
wcn_spot@yahoo.com
<http://victoria.tc.ca/Community/WCN/>

7:30 - 10:00