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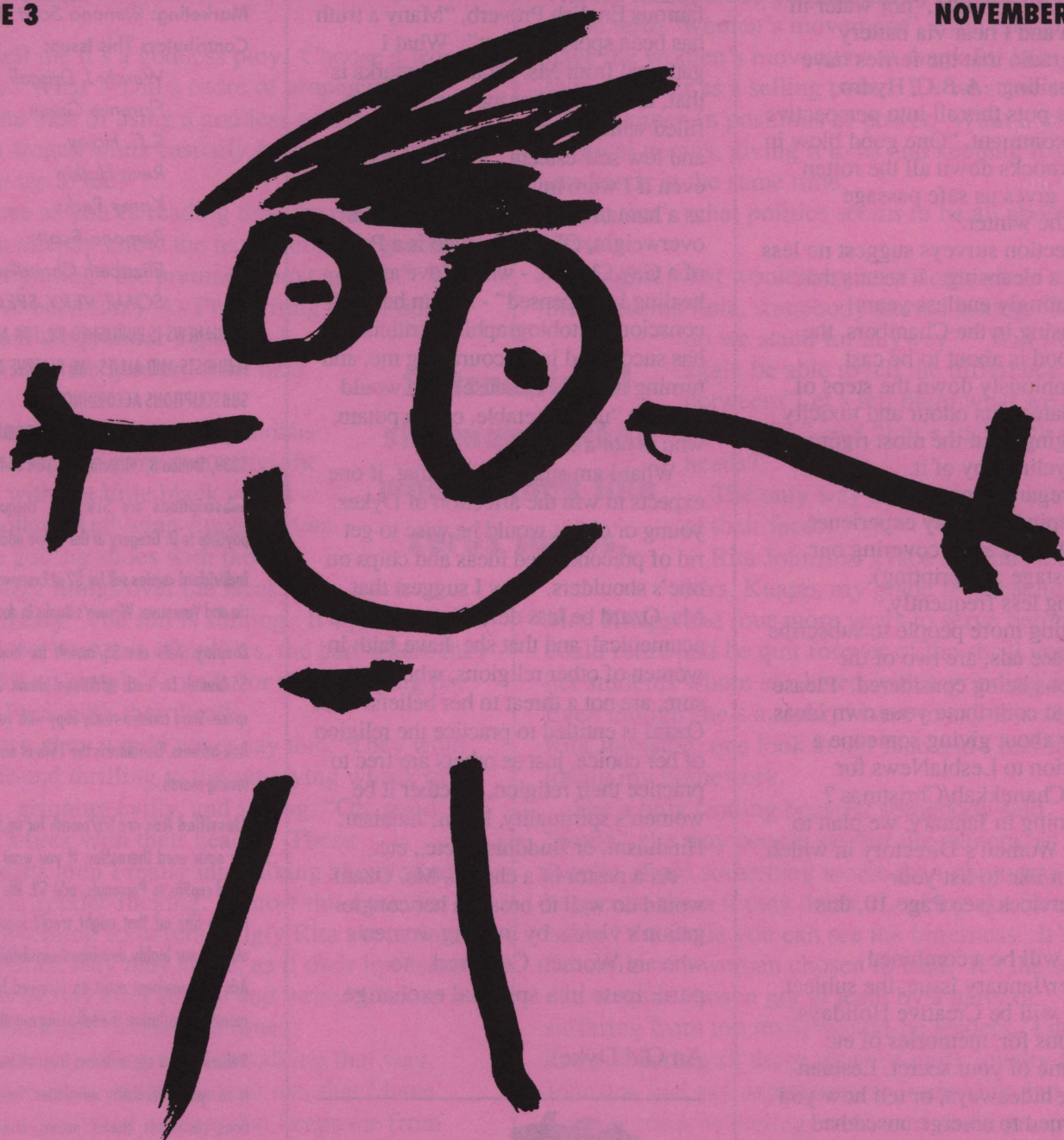
LESBIAN NEWS

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VANCOUVER ISLAND'S MONTHLY LESBIAN FEMINIST NEWSLETTER

VOL.3 ISSUE 3

NOVEMBER 1991



SPECIAL **KIDS** ISSUE

DRAWING BY MISCHA S.

EDITORIAL

BY JOAN GARCIA

As I write this, on the eve of the Provincial Election, gale-force winds rage overhead and the tops of massive Douglas Fir trees whip back and forth as if they were feather mops. There's neither heat 'nor light, 'nor water in my cabin and I hear via battery powered radio that the ferries have stopped sailing. A B.C. Hydro employee puts this all into perspective with the comment, "One good blow in the Fall knocks down all the rotten trees and gives us safe passage through the winter."

Pre-election surveys suggest no less dramatic a cleansing. It seems that after seemingly endless years decomposing in the Chambers, the rotten wood is about to be cast unceremoniously down the steps of the legislature, its odour and toxicity discouraging even the most rigorous from recycling any of it.

With regard to our own housekeeping, we may experience some difficulty soon covering our costs (postage and printing). Publishing less frequently, encouraging more people to subscribe and or place ads, are two of the suggestions being considered. Please feel free to contribute your own ideas. And how about giving someone a subscription to *LesbiaNews* for Solstice/Chanukkah/Christmas?

Beginning in January, we plan to feature a Women's Directory in which you might like to list your talents/services (see Page 10, this issue).

There will be a combined December/January issue, the subject of which will be Creative Holidays: suggestions for, memories of etc. Share some of your secret, Lesbian-affirming hideaways, or tell how you have learned to emerge unscathed with your lover, from the minefield of "Family" gatherings. Suggested theme for the February issue is Religion, and for the March issue, Women at Work.

Au revoir

LETTERS

Dear Editor,

Since Steph Ozard - in her October letter to the editor - asked for feedback, I am taking the liberty of responding to her personal observations and questions as delicately as possible.

First of all, I would like to quote a famous English Proverb, "Many a truth has been spoken in jest". What I gathered from Ms. Ozard's remarks is that, underlying her jocularly, she is filled with a deep sense of insecurity and low self-esteem. That is to say, even if I were initially interested in her as a human being and as a "Christian, overweight, Old Dyke, who is a Pastor of a Gay Church, - where love and healing is dispensed" - she, in her self-conscious autobiographical criticism, has succeeded in discouraging me, and turning me off. Because, who would want an "unmarketable, couch potato, who is not a catch"?

What I am suggesting is that, if one expects to win the affection of Dykes, young or old, it would be wise to get rid of preconceived ideas and chips on one's shoulders. May I suggest that Ms. Ozard be less defensive and more ecumenical, and that she have faith in women of other religions, who, I am sure, are not a threat to her beliefs. Ms. Ozard is entitled to practice the religion of her choice, just as others are free to practice their religion, whether it be women's spirituality, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, or Buddhism, etc., etc..

As a pastor of a church, Ms. Ozard would do well to broaden her congregation's vision, by inviting women - who are Women Centered - to participate in a spiritual exchange.

An Old Dyke!



"This is me."

HANNAH R.

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SOME VERY SPECIAL KIDS

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Display Ads are \$5/month for business card size and \$5/month for each additional chunk of business card-size space. Send camera-ready copy with your cheque to our PO Box address. Deadline is the 15th of each month for the following month.

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

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

B•R•A•I•N F•E•V•E•R

BY KAREY PERKS

Don't tell me it's a goddess ploy. Choose a woman who leads. What? Did a cadre of propagandists cook up the idea of using a goddess archetype as a campaign slogan while casually guiding their golf-carts from tee to tee?

Of course as you're reading this, the election's over. You already know the next premier's gender. (I thought of putting "the premier's next gender." That would have been fun.) As I'm writing this, I don't. Know about the premier's gender, I mean. I mean, the gender of the next premier.

I imagine the golfing propagandists are all wearing the same sort of bright wool suit with the little black velvet hunting collar. And wing-tipped brown and white golfing shoes with those fringy leather things over the laces. They are merry. The sun is shining. It's just the kind of day for the best part of politics, the part where they get to make up people's minds for them. Swing the election. Fuck with their heads.

Of course, they would never say that. They would never be found thrilling to the satisfying whack of a three iron, grinning evilly, and saying, "Oh, good shot. Let's fuck with their heads." These propagandists aren't really into talking about mind-fucking and gender-fucking. I know this because there is something so unremittingly Rita about them: it's the pinched way they smile, as if their lips have been made to stay after school and write "Choose a woman who leads" a hundred times.

At least I can't imagine them talking that way. Maybe that says something about me, that I have some kind of political naivete that keeps me from noticing where Canadian political cynacism comes from. After all, what could be more cynical than naming as the first Canadian woman premiere a Social Credit party hack who's so traditional she makes REAL women look like xerox copies.

"Choose a woman who leads" was a cruel joke, a

vicious masquerade perpetrated by people who cringe at the term "women's movement", even though they have the women's movement to thank for being able to use gender as a selling point. It's what we wanted, more women in positions of power. What a stroke of political genius, giving it to us and keeping it out of our hands at the same time.

But that's what politics seems to be all about these days.

Imagine what would happen if somewhere around the sixteenth hole, somebody started asking: "What do we stand for anyway?" Will I ever again be able to tell the difference between "Let's tell them what we believe in," and "Let's fuck with their heads?"

The only way I can think of is to look at their faces.

Rita Johnston's face reminds me of Mrs. Knapp, my grade five teacher.

Mrs. Knapp had four more years to serve before she could retire and be quit forever of the shrill voices of her students whom she hated with a grinding fervor. Even though she's a sister, I have to say this about Rita Johnston: one look at her face and I feel like losing my homework.

She's only smiling because somebody said "smile", the way people say for the camera, as if they're afraid something worse than photography will happen to them if they don't. Leaking out from behind the smile you can see the bitterness. It's not the smile of a woman chosen to lead. It's the smile of a woman chosen not to lead, by a party of suffering from too many would-be leaders. I don't know if during all those years of party loyalty Rita Johnston had any aspirations to leadership, but if she did, she must be feeling, well, as if she'd grasped what she wanted only to feel it slip out of her hands.

And a stroke of political genius leaves yet another victim.

Me, I long for the day when we really can choose a woman who leads. And we don't have to put that in the slogan.

**So traditional
she makes REAL
women look like
xerox copies.**

The Wonder of Children

FLORENCE GREEN

"Abcdefg, *hijklmnop, qrs and tuv,* wxy and z, now I've said my ABC, tell me what you think of me ?" "Lovely", you acknowledge. "Smart!" you exclaim. Only fourteen months old, you think, and already this little tot is an individual. It doesn't matter if the child has learned the alphabet by rote, and maybe much more, you can only marvel at how quickly a human being can absorb. At least, that is how I feel when I look at my neices and nephews and all the little children who pass my threshold and path; young creatures who are creative, bright, talented, quiet but wise, sensitive, reticent, etc. I have always consciously loved and appreciated children, even as a child.

My favourite ages are between birth and six years old, although I have enjoyed some who were seven through eleven. Oh, I will admit that I have found some whom I thought were obnoxious, and whom I even considered as monsters, but they were few and far between. For the most part, I have truly enjoyed young people. What I have especially observed is that children like to imitate adults or their peers. Thoroughly receptive, they like to sing, dance, and "make believe" games. If only adults would take the time to nourish them, and stimulate their needs and curiosity!

Recently I had the good fortune to visit with a friend who chooses to care for children while their parents go off to work. At the same time, Jen has three of her own children, two of whom are at school, while the third stays home with her. All in all, during the day, while I was visiting, there were three children, kids, who awakened me with the beautiful sounds of their voices; their "screaming and crying". When I

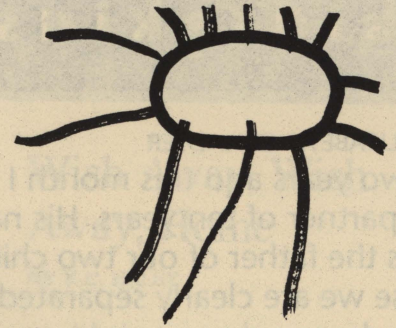
realized that any attempt to sleep was a futile exercise and that I was fated to get up early, I dressed myself and joined the "party". In fact, I was delighted when the three children greeted me with smiles, and demands.

Ian (two years old) - after learning that I sang and played the guitar - each morning, after what he thought was a polite interval, motioned to the instrument, while prompting me to join him in a chorus of Ee I, Ee I, OH! He was so adorable, and had such good pitch; how could I refuse him ?

Then there was Chelsea, who was not quite two. She wanted to help Jen, or me, unload the dishwasher while she kept a running dialogue, as well as a running nose and stomach. I must admit that she made more sense than some of our politicians !!!

Sarah, four years old, was self-sufficient. She played by herself, unless she chose to include the others, or participate in the sing-song. What amazed me is that she did not try to dominate nor control the two younger children, but would comfort them if they were upset or hurt themselves. While watching these youngsters, I hoped that, as they grew into adulthood, they would retain their individual personalities, and realize their full potential. I hoped that their parents would continue to grow too, as mature people and be strong role models for their children. I hoped that there would be peace in the world, and that our planet would be in tact for these children, our future generation.

All we can do for them, as adults, is to take responsibility and "cry out" whenever and wherever others are destroying our ecology, our forests, our waters, our atmosphere, our life upon this planet.



Hannah's octopus

Don't Call Me Mama

By REVA HUTKIN

When I was a little girl I absolutely hated playing with dolls and never enjoyed playing house where I would be "Mother". Once I got to the adult phase of life, it wasn't a particular ambition of mine to have a child. So when, in my 30's, I found myself pregnant, it was not immediately cause for celebration.

After nine months of physical discomfort, I was rewarded with a tiny female being, completely dependent on me for EVERYTHING. Suddenly, it was time for me to really grow up. Babies bring responsibility, a need to think before acting, a need to plan before executing. Gone was the foot-loose and fancy-free me.

Somehow, I survived early childhood, teen-aged rebellion, a

rocky road through highschool and the onset of her adulthood. Today we are close friends, buddies, a mother/daughter team, open and loving, accepting and supportive of one another. We are often told we are a unique duo and we are both saddened by the thought that we are a rare find and not a common garden variety flower.

So, after all that, I got to missing having a child in my life again. The universe heard me and I found myself a lover with a four year old boy. It was interesting being the "other" Mother and as time went by we were really bonding and falling in love as a Mother/Son team.

Not all relationships are made in Heaven and ours died a sudden death after nine months. Included

in this ending was my relationship with my "Son". I have not seen or spoken with him for almost five months on the insistence of his Mother. I miss him a lot and feel really sad about this ending.

Will Lesbians ever have the freedom to go to court and ask for visitation privileges? This makes me feel that I will never again take on this role because there are no rights, no shared power, no legal recourse. So I have put away my desire to have a child in my life. Children deserve our all and don't deserve to have people yanked out of their lives. What has this lesson taught him? What does this child understand, think, feel, know about my sudden disappearance from his life? What has he been told and how can I let him know I never stopped loving him?

BY ELIZABETH CHANDLER

Two years ago this month I separated from my partner of ten years. His name is Eric, and he is the father of our two children. In one sense we are clearly separated - pursuing new dreams, hopes and loves. In another we are not, for as co-parents of Danica and Ben we are, willingly or not, lifetime partners.

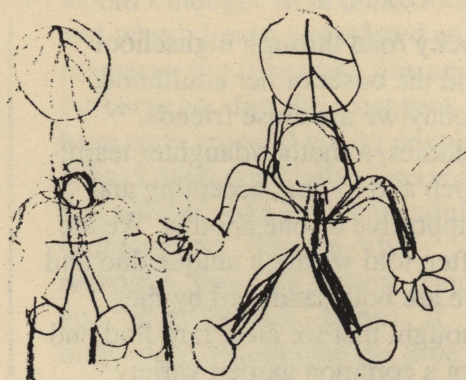
On good days I call him "Eric the Ex" with humour and even love. Some days I don't even think about him. On bad days he is "King Jerk Of The Universe", and I cry, rage, despair, reach out to friends and check in with my children. We struggle with visitation schedules, allergy diets, Nintendo/T.V. watching, schools, and whose turn it is to stay home from work when Ben is puking at 7 a.m. We struggle about money most of all. Would that I were independently wealthy!

There's been pain in our house this anniversary month as old feelings of grief, despair, rage and abandonment return, seemingly full force. I try to stay afloat and resist the guilt, trusting that what we have now is healthier for my children than what was. I try to give my children room and acceptance for their feelings and do the same for myself. It's hard work. Perhaps we will have a ritual to end this month (besides Hallowe'en!). A time to honour the loss, to look forward with hope and to affirm our love for one another.

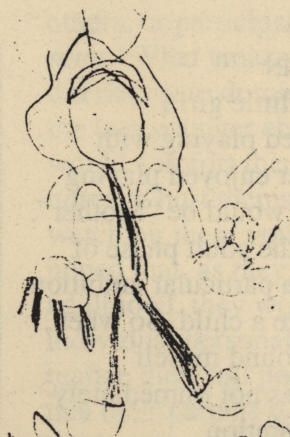
I am hopeful. Stepping back a bit I see a healthy loving family. I have hope too, about Eric's and my journey as parents. I have a vision of us being in a place of clarity and peace, sharing the joy of watching our children grow.



Ben



Danica



Mom

my family Ex Ben

By Danica Chandler

What I think of a lesbian

Well there's nothing ~~from~~ wrong
with lesbian's they just like women
a little better then men. You see
my mother is a lesbian but that does
not bother me it might bother my
friends but it does not bother me.

Lik I said before, lesbians are just
regular people exept they like women
a little better then men.

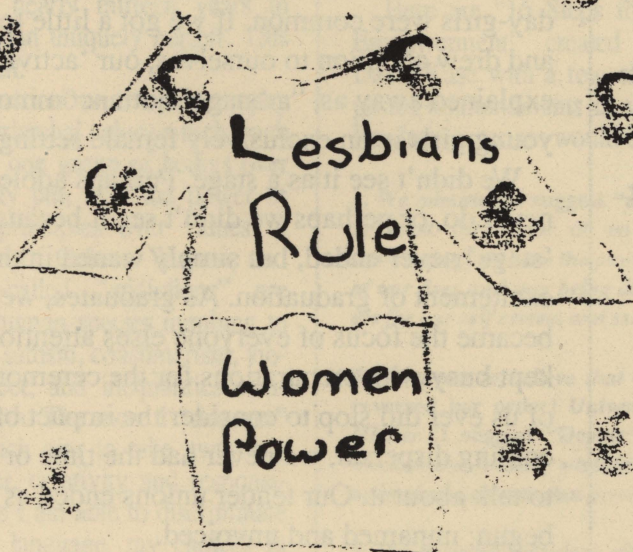
So what I say to women is

Let's go
lesbians
let's go

Yeah lesbians

Go Lesbians Go

way to go
women



Wish Away, Wish Away, Home

By K.C. HALEY

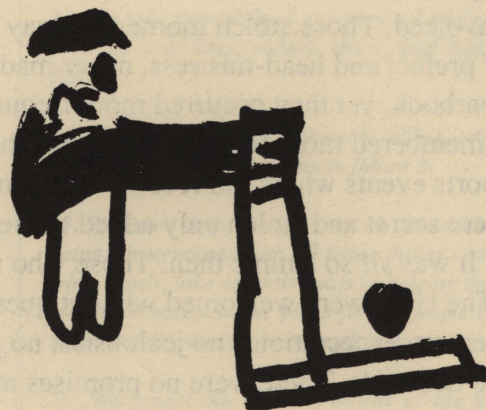
There is a secret wonderland
I as a child did roam
Where all I did was close my eyes
And I was far from home.

A place where I could traipse down
lanes
That left home's frightening din
And came and went without a care
To where I should have been.

It was a place of wonderlust
Of sunshine, smiles and fame
Nothing like the life I lived
Of anger, tears and shame.

The only place of sanctitiy
For this wretched little waif
Who struggled so to find a way
That she could just feel safe.

Now gone the way of childhhod
dreams
My wonderland of old
For now that I've reached adulthood
I can't go back, I'm told.



MISCHA S.

Excerpt from 1978 Journal

By WENDY J. DRISCOLL

Netherwood-School for Girls: *Dance of the Grass Angels*

High on hills overlooking the white-capped Kennebecasis, young, ruddy-cheeked girls tumble and leap, dancing hand-in-hand, green tunics flying free. Hair tangled with bits of meadow grass and leaf.... Laughter echoes out over the reservoir as they dart between the tall white birches standing sentinel along the shore. The lengthening sun catches glimpses of them as they slip naked from the shadow of one tree beneath whose branches breathless school-girls seek rest and comfort in each other's arms.... They lie quietly hidden in the tall meadow grasses; wind-bent grasses which sensuously sweep their summer-bronzed bodies raising a touch of ecstasy.... They recline into the warmth of each other, the crush of green velvet mosses receiving them, the imprint of their passion left pressed in the grasses beneath them¹.... These are special and secret times, and this is a special and secret place, a safe place, a place where they feel loved and their concerns are listened to, a place amid the chaos of life where they can find respite, a place to call their own.

We didn't call ourselves lesbian then. We didn't call ourselves gay either. As a matter of fact, we were careful and, in retrospect, wise, not to label ourselves at all. Our dances, our skinny dipping, our tender explorations of each other, remained unnamed and unvoiced. Those stolen moments, away from the sight of prefect and head-mistress, never made it into our yearbook, yet they occurred more frequently and are remembered more fondly than any of the fetes or sports events which did receive mention. That they were secret and stolen only added to their excitement.

It was all so simple then. Those who showed up on "The Hill" were welcomed without question. There were no expectations, no jealousies, no judgements. No demands. There were no promises made to be broken. Each girl was free to take the hand of any other and disappear into the receptive nooks and

crannies of the soft green hill. What happened on the hill, stayed on the hill. And for us, those special few who found our way there, a sense of family developed, a feeling of belonging and fitting in that we had been unable to foster anywhere else.

Netherwood, the School for Girls, was itself a little like being on some different planet; far removed. It was a community within a community, whose members were readily identified as outsiders by the strange uniforms they wore. The larger community of Rothesay did its best to dismiss our existence and in ignoring us, inadvertently afforded us special privileges. We were expected to be different and we could get away with a lot. People turned a blind eye to the girls-in-green who walked hand-in-hand, danced cheek-to-cheek, or tumbled together in the autumn leaves and waltzed around them on skates in winter, arms linked about waists.

Behind the school's gates, sympathetic housemothers saw only lonely children, estranged from family and in need of comfort. Even bed sharing was accepted as comfort they reasoned could best be given by the girls themselves. They saw it as safer to be out with the girls than a boy and rules were relaxed for such occasions. Overnight stays of boarders with day-girls were common. If we got a little too brazen and drew attention to ourselves, our 'activities' were explained away as, "a 'stage' not uncommon for young girls in an exclusively female setting."

We didn't see it as a stage. Perhaps adolescents never do, or perhaps we didn't see it because for us the 'stage' never ended, but simply waned in the excitement of graduation. As graduates, we suddenly became the focus of everyone else's attention and were kept busy with preparations for the ceremony. If any of us ever did stop to consider the impact of our coming dispersal, we never had the time or the privacy to talk about it. Our tender unions ended as they had begun: unnamed and unvoiced.

¹ Hence the name grass angels...

A Response to the July/August Issue on "Recovery"

By RAMONA SCOTT

I read with interest Christine Morissette's article in LNews. I want to add personal experience to the very important points she makes, particularly regarding getting stuck in recovery/-personal growth.

While attending hundreds of AA meetings, I found community among alcoholics who talked about the same low self-esteem and feelings as mine. I no longer felt isolated or "crazy" for being unable to stop drinking destructively; I heard thousands of personal stories from both women and men with which I could identify. However there was one statement I repeated often, that I seldom heard from the others, and that is "I have always felt this way. I don't know what I am recovering from." "To Recover" means "To regain something that has been lost" and I don't remember ever feeling dignity, self-respect, self-esteem, balance, safety, healthy ego, and self-love. Drinking alcohol, smoking, over-eating, over-dependence on a primary relationship were all ways I tried to nurture myself in a society which gave me messages from the day I was born about how I should look, act, talk, who I should marry, what work is worthy, and how I should be in a relationship. I have been unlearning these messages for nearly thirteen years to become a woman uniquely herself. This is the right of all.

The "dysfunction" on the planet today is rooted in patriarchal values which teach domination of one group of beings over another. Simply put, it is the power of White Male principles over values in Nature, People of Colour, Women, and Children. So-called "addictions" are symptoms in human species numbing to the pain of the sadism, consumerism, violence, disrespect, and inequalities rampant in the earth. The more I "uncover" the forces which aim to take away my personal power, creativity and responsibility, the more I am able to discriminate in my use of language, my choices in relationships, my priorities for expanding energy in work, play and service.

In my opinion, one cannot separate personal growth from political awareness

- neither is more important than the other. From my own experience, reaching out to others with whom one has something in common is the most effective way to change isolation, fears and unconsciousness. By sharing ourselves personally and deeply with others we become more ourselves and better allies to others. We need safe, nurturing places to develop courage and convictions to engage in the political/social transformation work that we all contribute to in many ways.

AA groups have been powerful places of learning for me. However, I realize in hindsight that, despite my beginning confusion and lack of awareness, intuition pushed me to search in many places outside AA to make sense of my questions, emotions and behaviours. Now, I wonder how my last thirteen years of "awakening" would have been different if the "12 steps" and "The Big Book" were written to include women's experience and spirituality. Can the *status quo* mentality of AA ever be replaced to encompass inclusive language and feminist principles? Are we growing out of AA and 12 step programs? Does there have to be different programs for women and men? for different "addictions"? Can AA have "opinions on outside issues" and still be effective in its primary purpose: "to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety"? Have we evolved enough to trust that our sobriety is not so fragile that we can't change the steps? Do we need Steps?

Here are "16 Steps for Healing and Empowerment" created by Charlotte Davis Kase with a few of my own suggested amendments in square brackets. Readers responses would be appreciated.

1. We admitted [I suggest "acknowledged" - at least for those of us with Catholic upbringing] we have the power to take charge of our lives and stop being dependent on others for our self esteem and security.

2. We came to believe that Goddess/God/ [I reversed her order] Universe/Great Spirit/Higher [I suggest "Deeper"] Power would awaken the healing wisdom within us if we opened ourselves to that power.

3. We declared ourselves willing to hear the Universe speak its truths into our spirits, to listen and to act based upon these truths.

4. We examined our beliefs, addictions, and

dependent behaviour in the context of living in a hierarchical, patriarchal culture.

5. We shared with others and the universe the ways we have harmed ourselves and others, working to forgive ourselves and to change our behaviour.

6. We admitted to [again I suggest "acknowledged"] our strengths, talents, accomplishments and intelligence, promising not to hide these qualities to protect other's egos.

7. We became willing to let go of shame, guilt and any behaviour that prevents us from taking control of our lives and loving ourselves and others.

8. We made a list of all people we have harmed and a list of people who have harmed us, and when appropriate, took steps to clear out negative feelings by making amends and sharing our grievances in a respectful way.

9. We made a list of all people who have been kind or loving to us, and took steps to thank them.

10. We continue to trust our reality and daily affirm that we see what we see, we know what we know and we feel what we feel. When we are right we promptly admit ["acknowledge"] it and refuse to back down.

11. We promptly admit ["acknowledge"] mistakes and make amends when appropriate, but we do not say we are sorry for things we have not done and we do not take responsibility for, analyse, or cover up the shortcomings of others.

12. We seek out situations, jobs, and people that affirm our intelligence, perceptions and self-worth and avoid situations or people who are hurtful, harmful or demeaning to us.

13. We take steps to heal our physical bodies, organize our lives, reduce stress, and have fun.

14. We seek to find our inward calling, and develop the will and wisdom to follow it.

15. We grow in awareness that we are sacred beings, interrelated with all living things and, when ready, take an active part in helping the planet become a better place for all people [I suggest "all people, plants, and animals"].

16. We accept the ups and downs of life as natural events that give us lessons for our growth [or perhaps "opportunities for our growth"?]

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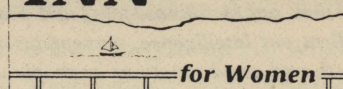


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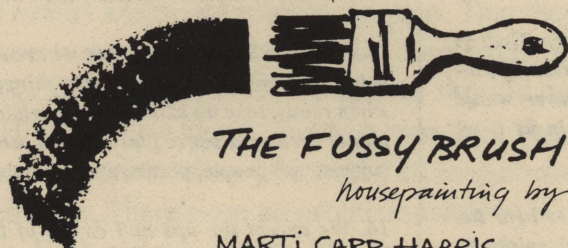
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