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LESBIAN NEWS

Victoria's Monthly Lesbian
Feminist Newsletter

VOL. 2 #3
NOVEMBER 1990

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About 30 women sang Happy Birthday to *LesbiaNews* and enjoyed Kelevelyn's great cake. Thanks to Christine and Margot for being such charming hostesses and to Margot for taking candid photos: we've done everybody a favour by not printing them!

We'll be continuing the series of thematic issues in the coming year. December, with its heavy emphasis on food and drink, carries a *Bodies* theme. January seems appropriate for *Money*: having enough, not enough, too much, and the many differences between us; how do we get it, what do we do with it, how do we hang onto it; why

is it a source of distrust and discomfort between us? In February we'll be asking, What is it about Lesbians and Cats? Send in your thoughts and anecdotes about our Feline Friends. The March issue will focus on *Work* and April will feature *Lesbian Humour*.

Send us your ideas, poems, stories, articles, questions, on these or other themes - by the 15th of each month for the following month.

Thanks for your support and enthusiasm - our subscription list went from 15 to 85 in its first year, and it's still climbing. If you don't see what you want in *LNews*, ask for it - or better yet, write it yourself!

Look for *Lesbian Talent Night* in the late Spring and drop us a line if you want to help organise it. More details in December.

Heather Gibson's *BEYOND SISSINGHURST* column is a victim, along with its writer, of a serious attack of food poisoning. Heather is recovering nicely and will be back in form next month.

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

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. Send your letters, questions, comments, stories, poems, articles, ideas, cartoons, drawings, news items, calendar items, grocery lists and doodle-pads to the PO Box address, typed double spaced, very neatly written, or on IBM-compatible disk. We edit for space and clarity. We'll print it as long as it's not sexist-racist-homophobic-antisemitic-ageist-classist-able-bodiedist-personal attackist or boringist.

WHO ARE WE?

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RANCH ROMANCE

in a benefit concert for AIDS Vancouver Island

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 2, 1990, 8 PM
UNIVERSITY CENTRE AUDITORIUM

Tickets: \$14/\$16 available at SWAG and around town.

Women and Men, *Good and Evil*

By Ann O'Nymous

A few months ago, CBC Radio's "Sunday Morning" show did a feature story of feminist pornography. I didn't hear the story, but I did hear the show's producers read from some of the mail they received in response to it. What struck me most were the concerns expressed about the responsibility the letter writers believed women have to be "better" than men, including not playing what one called "a game in which there are no winners," meaning the male-defined value system.

This notion of women being better than men is one I have a lot of trouble with. Not because I reject it; quite the opposite, in fact. Men categorize women as less valuable than men by reason of women's inferior intellect, limited capacity for moral reasoning, etc. That's the rationale; the real reason is quite simply because we're not men. But women are also held responsible for the "goodness" of society: if children turn out badly, it's the mother's fault; if a husband fools around or drinks too much, it's the wife's fault. It's easy for me to see the impossible position women are put in by these kinds of absurdist arguments. What's not so easy is that like the CBC letter writers, I too believe, with all my heart, that women are better than men -- at least, better than the kind of maleness that defines "normal" in our society. And yes, I also believe that because women are better, they do have a responsibility to make the world better.

What amazes me isn't the specific behaviours, which aren't really innovative, but the assumption that all of it is significant in the scheme of things.

I was reminded of the concern about feminist porn and the idea of women being "better" than men when September's *LesbianNews* arrived. What news! S/M dykes and leather dykes (the same women, I assume). A Vancouver photography exhibit entitled "Drawing the Line" which had "lots of leather and metal, even ships, a knife on a nipple, women tied and gagged." The coup de grace (dare I say "piece de resistance"?) was Jannit Rabinovitch's description of "a pretty young woman with pierced nipples and tattoos all over both breasts." Brutalization is defended as eroticism; pain (giving or taking) is okay because it's "Safe, Sane and Consensual," the slogan of S/M men and women.

I realize that pain and violence have been eroticized for some people because of how their sexuality developed. I also realize that the public expression of this pleasure is their political statement about personal freedom. What I don't understand is why they think anyone else would (or should) care about what gives them the biggest and best orgasms, or about their commitment to a lesbian version of "The Story of O." What amazes me isn't the specific behaviours, which aren't really innovative -- men have been doing this stuff for centuries -- but the assumption that all of it is significant in the scheme of things. The posturing, the self-indulgence, the manoeuvring to be the centre of attention: it's all so....male. You want to play the same games as the boys? Go ahead. Just stay out of the way and let some of us get on with trying to make the world better, because every day on this planet millions of women and children endure a lot of pain and violence that isn't safe, sane -- or consensual.

it's all news to me

The Continuing Debate

By Judy Liefschultz

I was raised to believe that Jews were better in every way than gentiles, but still assimilation was best in the long run. So the accents, numbered arms, and Eastern European culture first-generation immigrants brought to St. Paul-Minneapolis were shunned. Of course we second and third-generation Jews shunned the immigrants that wore them as well.

Now it is later, much later. I consider Judaism a patriarchal, misogynist, shame-based religion, like most of its fellow faiths, eastern, western and islamic. Yet there exists in me a place where holidays, family meals, synagogue mystique and my history reside. I search for ways to determine what will nourish these caves. I have tried to disown them, but they won't go away.

I found nothing offensive or patronizing about Lynn Greenhough's article in the August issue. I wanted to be at Tikkum Olam II and her reflections and writing brought me closer to being there in a way that felt honest and open.

Would we subject another lesbian to the exclusion we have felt as lesbians in our Jewish communities and families?

I don't feel Judasim is the property of those who came first. Our history and suffering as a people is not something I would wish upon anyone else as a qualification for entry.

Our own internalized anti-Semitism and homophobia raise their horrible heads at times like these. Would we subject another lesbian to the exclusion we have felt as lesbians in our Jewish communities and families? Will there soon be an entrance exam for straight women wanting to become lesbians? Will they have to prove they never experienced sex with men? Show they know lesbian history? It seems

we admit them gladly, and even temporarily, all the time.

I question whether anyone's anger would be evident if Lynn had a

No one has to suffer or die to be in my club.

heterosexual sister who wanted to study Judaism and perhaps convert. This sister might want to make family with a Jewish man. Happens all the time. But what of a woman wanting to make family with a Jewish woman? We Jewish lesbians with Gentile lovers must think about this. Do we recognize ourselves as families - and if so can we allow ourselves to mark them in the same ways as our straight sisters? Do we deserve the same choices and if not, why not?

No, a person new to a religion or religious study can never have that culture from her birth, any more than I can be a native-born Canadian or a woman of color. But there is plenty to share. I want the blessing and freedom of spiritual choice and the wisdom that goes with cross-cultural learning. No one has to suffer or die to be in my club. We'll be glad of the company if the spirit moves you. PS. Judaism neither encourages nor discourages conversion. It simply accommodates it if someone is interested enough to go through the process. It used to be considered one of the most horrible forms of racism, and one often practices by our parents' generation, to say a converted Jew (almost always a woman, of course) would never be really Jewish no matter how she tried.



on Anti-Semitism

By Florence Brown

I am compelled to write because of the two responses On Anti-Semitism written by Lauri Nerman and Debby Gregory in the September issue, which addressed Lynn Greenhough's report on Tikkun Olam II. As a Jew, I can identify with many of their general feelings and attitudes, but although I must respect that everyone is entitled to their personal perceptions, I believe that Ms Nerman's attack on Lynn was a result of just that. After my consciousness was raised by Lauri's and Debby's comments, I re-read Lynn's article to see what I had missed upon my initial perusal. Granted that, perhaps, she does sound a little naive, I was quite moved by Ms Greenhough's honesty when she told of her past experiences as a non-Jew vis a vis Jews.

As I identified with both Lauri and Debby, having suffered similarly at the hands of ignorant racists, anti-semites, etc, feeling their pain I could not help but resort to an old Jewish axiom, which usually helped to dissipate my anger and soften the hurt: "Es is shver tzu zine a Yid" ["It is hard to be a Jew"]. To be a lesbian Jew is twice as hard, and so let us invoke some humour, pathos, the stuff which helps all oppressed people over their difficult hurdles. Sholem Aleichem, one of the great Jewish humorists, created this new art form while escaping from Russia during the pogroms.

I was not surprised to learn that Lynn was considering conversion, even though I had never spoken to her about this matter. Let my little bit of folklore illustrate my assumption.

Four years ago, while inspecting Lynn's bookshelves, I came upon several books with Jewish content and themes. The Holy One, written by Liz Harris, a New York reporter, was a reportage done on an ultra-Orthodox Jewish family in Brooklyn, New York. I asked why her interest in these Jewish books, especially The Holy One, which described patriarchal and misogynist customs. Without hesitation, Lynn told me that she somehow felt a great affinity for the characters in the book and that she would not be surprised if, somewhere in her ancestry, there were Jews. I left with The Holy One under my arm.

Uncanny as it was, the story took place on the very same streets where I worked, lived, and studied forty years before, in Brooklyn. Furthermore, the experiences described in the book were not unlike some I had lived through in my youth and adulthood. The Jewish nostalgia I felt in an Anglo-Saxon city like Victoria, did, in fact, help me over a very difficult time in my life. I was grateful to have been able to share that experience of tears and laughter with Lynn, a non-Jew, who could empathize with me.

I would try to dissuade Lynn from converting to Judaism, a patriarchal religion, and because "Es ish shver tzu zine a Yid." However, since this is an emotional decision, only she can decide! And, if she favours Judaism, it will be great to have another Jewish feminist lesbian in our ranks.

Editorial comment: I seem to be out on the end of a very long limb, but I feel that Judaism does not exist as a means for Gentiles to work out their spiritual development, and that conversion to Judaism for that reason is just another form of appropriation of an oppressed minority culture by a member of the oppressing majority. As far as making family goes, a Gentile woman wanting to have children with a Jewish man and wanting the children to be Jewish has a reason intrinsic to Judaism to convert. A gentile woman wanting to have children with a Jewish woman doesn't need to convert for that reason, as a child only needs one Jewish mother to be considered Jewish. Do we really have to BECOME one another, take on one another's identities, in order to create close and loving relationships?

Lesbians and History

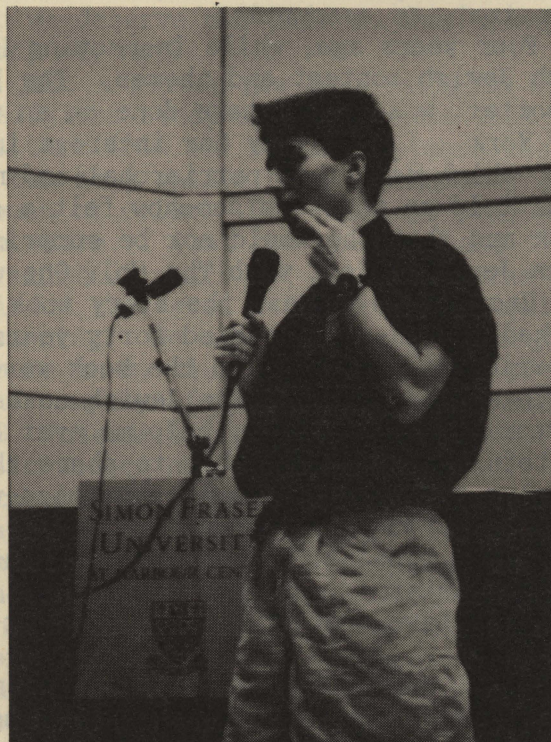
By Christine Morissette

This is the second part of an article on literary events at the Gay Games, continued from September.

"Banning Our Words" focused on censorship, both from the outside world, and from within our own communities. We learn an early lesson as lesbian and gay people: that we are punished for speaking out, and so we keep silent to survive. Toronto writer Dionne Brand said, "Homophobia takes us to the wall so often that it prevents us from being deeply critical", and ultimately prevents us from seeing our own (self) censorship. We are censored by Canada Customs when they seize lesbian and gay literature at the border, and we are censored by granting agencies when we let them determine what and when we will write. Brand called censorship "an aberration of free speech", one that undermines our experience and alters our perceptions. Strategies for dealing with censorship were varied. Jane Rule urged us to support the Writers' Union and the Civil Liberties Association, but not the legal system: "The law is no place for us to go." Brand said we need to make our own culture, rather than fight for inclusion in the dominant culture; this "keeps our integrity [and] secures our humanity." And Sarah Schulman felt challenged by certain kinds of censorship. "To ban a book is to celebrate it," she said, "to ensure its fame."

"A Her/History of Our Own" provided perspectives on self-evaluation and the creation of lesbian archives. If we have been taught, both as women and as lesbians, that our lives are not of value, and that nothing we say is of any importance to anyone, then we do not come easily to the idea of a feminist re-evaluation of history - to herstory. But we need to write ourselves into history in the same way that we have written ourselves into literature. Carol Seajay, publisher

of Feminist Bookstore News in San Francisco, said, "The people who have no history have no future." It isn't enough that we live our history; we must also record it to ensure our survival. Salt Spring Island writer Daphne Marlett reminded us that our current sense of lesbian history has been influenced by this feminist re-evaluation of history as a whole, and that with it has come the recognition of a unique kind of "psychic survival". "The crazy women are the keys to lesbian history," she said. "Recognizing our foremothers is the essence of lesbian history, and it is essential to recognize in ourselves our historical foremothers and our contemporary foremothers."



One woman who is writing our history as we live it is Alison Bechdel of Minneapolis, creator of the comic strip DYKES TO WATCH OUT FOR. Bechdel refers to herself as a lesbian cartoonist. "I can't separate my les-

bian identity from my work," she said. "They're interdependent." She calls herself a "propagandist" and believes it's important to see yourself in the world around you. "Seeing people is incredibly challenging, an act of love," Bechdel explained. She wanted to create loveable women who love other women, so that we could see ourselves, love ourselves as women.

What started this cartoonist on her way to becoming the chronicler of sisterhood soap opera? As a child, Bechdel realized that in cartoons, men were portrayed as people, and women as female people, "other", sexual props for male characters. She was sensitive to this and outraged by the unfairness. As a result, she disassociated herself from being a girl and her drawings only featured male characters. Bechdel says she came to terms with being a woman only after she realized she was a lesbian. And in fact, she apparently drew herself into existence, since until that point she had been unable to draw women from her imagination, unless they were lesbian. It was when she "found it possible to draw a woman," she said, "that it was possible to be a woman."

Bechdel's characters are drawn

from her life, from our community. They are women we have loved, have struggled with, have gossiped about. They are US. And we are lovingly drawn, with all our crises and contradictions. In **DYKES TO WATCH OUT FOR**, text and subtext, conversation and body language fill the page with both the hilarity and the dilemmas of our personal and political lives.

"The people who have no history have no future."

Alison Bechdel began her cartoon career in 1983 with two drawings in *WomanNews*, a New York feminist newspaper. Today her work is carried in 26 lesbian and gay publications in North America. She succeeds in telling our stories with a loving blend of irony and compassion, with a resonance that rings true to our ears. Bechdel is definitely a dyke to watch out for.

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Editorial comment: See Bechdel's **NEW! IMPROVED DYKES TO WATCH OUT FOR** at Everywomans Books.

Alison Bechdel, *More Dykes to Watch Out For*



Who's in Whose Family?

By Kelevelyn Hurley

Who are the people you call "family"? Do they include/exclude blood relations? Friends, pets, lovers, ex-lovers? Characters in books? Does this circle extend to include 'all women' or 'all lesbians'...? Other folks who share your astrological sign?

It seems to me that the way I decide if someone is a "family member" is to see if I feel 'at home' with them. It's important for all of us to choose people around whom it's safe and comfortable to be ourselves, so that we can get to know ourselves and be ourselves in a safe environment. For those of us who didn't have a chance to do this as kids because we were living with alcoholism or addiction or rage or incest or other dangers, we have to find our family now instead. With all those years of protecting ourselves, however, it's hard sometimes to recognize family members. It can also be hard to know how to act, to know what's expected of you.

As a child, I was taught that my mother and father were my family, however unsafe or unaccepted by them I might feel, and that friends, teachers, neighbour's cats and other 'non-family' beings should never be more important to me than my parents. As an only child, always taller than the other kids, and an Army brat who moved every few years, I never had much contact with other kids. I grew up a "loner" who never got too close to anyone or anything, except for schoolwork and stray cats. However, it wasn't all bad - I learned to look after myself, to be independent, to adjust quickly to new surroundings, and I saw most of Europe and Canada by the time I was 12.

I used to long for brothers and sisters, and still do sometimes, espe-

The Dream of th

By Bonnie V

I teach self-defense for women and one of the classes is that attacks happen most often when the attacker is someone you know. The family world for women.

I would like to go on record as being against people who are getting married, having babies, and making their plans for "going home for the holidays" with their families.

Feminists have been critical of the family as a patriarchy, as a prison of oppression for women, as a site of marital rape, battering, and childhood sexual abuse.

And yet the happy family mythology is still so strong that such a thing as a happy family. If we had a world where we wouldn't be in such a mess, having to spend our lives in it.

Lesbians buy into the happy family mythology because of the male role models for their children, lesbian mothers who give their rapist fathers, lesbians who are often abused before them have never managed, they will be the "new man").

Lesbians talk about creating family. We need a different word, to describe a new kind of family.

Because that happy family brainwashing is so strong there could be (or should have been) one of those family motels, family movies, family restaurants (and always want to ask) - everyone seems to be looking for a place to belong.

The women in my self-defense classes who live in family homes are. They're humming that tune.

Those of us who have been or are involved in the family in intimate detail that the happy family reality is a variety of levels. Sonia Johnson is one of the women who tells the truth of her experience: motherhood in patriarchy is a trap for mothers to do the same, to break through it.

Let's stop humming that happily-ever-after tune; be anti-family; start a lesbian revolution.

Bonnie Waterston says: "I moved in July with two other lesbians. Before that I lived in a family home and worked at Vancouver Status of Women.

She'll be writing a column from up-Island. RESPOND! on paper if you RESPOND! emotion or to anything in *LesbiaNews*. That way you respond to you and....the cycle continues.

cially when I see my mother ageing and know that when she goes, it's just me. However, it's been my observation that having siblings doesn't guarantee people automatic friends

I've heard plenty of complaints about sharing rooms and of being treated as the "mixed child" or as the "super-

The Happy Family

Waterstone

of the points I have to emphasize in
ten in the home, and most often the
is the most dangerous place in the

anti-family. At a time when lesbians
perhaps at this time of year thinking of
ays," I feel a need to speak out against

family for decades - as the kingpin of
women, and as the locus for abuse,
ual assault.

everywhere. There is supposed to be
n't all had dysfunctional families, we
money on therapy, etc.

nology, too. Lesbians worrying about
ans working through their anger to for-
e certain they will do what mothers
raise "new" children (a phenomenon akin

To me, the word isn't clean enough. We
recreation.

is insidious. We all seem to believe
here, for us. Family camping, family
is that where they eat families? I
humming the same old tune.

on't want to hear how dangerous their

ved in mothering children know in
ires the sacrifice of the mother on a
other who has spoken out about the
riarchy is hell. She calls on other
he brainwashing.

fter-family-togetherness tune. Dare to

o a 7-acre farm in Coombs that I bought
ved at Sitka Housing Coop (all lesbian)
I'm a radical lesbian feminist."

as the spirit moves her. Please
lly or intellectually to her articles -
u, too, are a writer and others can

nty of com-
having to
d clothes,
tereo-typed
up middle
he "baby" or
responsible

I worked for a while as
a secretary-receptionist at
a counselling centre that
used Family Systems
therapy, and became
intrigued at the idea that
each member of the family

eldest."

group occupies a variety of positions,
each with its own dynamic, within the
system. If one person leaves or some-
how changes her position, all the
other members are affected as well.
And family = change, doesn't it?

I noticed a real change in my
perception of myself and my mother
when my dad died in July - suddenly
the issues that had always existed
between her and me were in much shar-
per focus. And at some level, the
little girl in me that still remembers
being terrorized by him is starting to
feel a little safer. Things that were
kept such a SECRET for so long are
coming up, and I'm feeling anger and
grief and relief alternately/
simultaneously as I recover my Self.

Of course, as I change my
dynamics, I encounter resistance from
other parts of me, and other members
of my family - my mother, my aunts, my
lover. I have to figure out how best
to relate to each person while
preserving my own integrity, and some-
times I'm scared because it seems I
might have to lose even more family
members to hang on to myself.

However, I try to remember that
my family is actually quite big. It
includes the folks in my recovery
groups, the women and men I entrust to
heal me with acupuncture, massage,
bioenergetics, the professors and
staff and students at school, the
birds who mess up my porch all day,
the kind hearts who invite me to
parties and for tea and lunch and din-
ners and walks in the woods, and -
most of all - my self.

If we don't limit ourselves to
blood relations, our potential family
is huge. Within and beyond the
women's community are lots of people
we can really be real with, who (hope-
fully) don't ask us to split ourselves
into fragments, or want us to deny
parts of ourselves. And with so much
variety, we can find someone who'll go
to that science fiction fair with us,
and someone else who builds kites, and
someone who just seems to help you
open up and cry when you need to. So -
who are the people in your family?

Family, Abuse, and the Whole Damn Thing

By Debby Gregory

I want to respond to Beth Trotter's excellent article on childhood sexual abuse in last month's *LesbiaNews*. Although, as far as I can know, I was not subjected to childhood sexual abuse, I strongly identified with some of the characteristics of adult women she mentioned as being typical of survivors. When I heard Sandra Butler speak on the same topic a few years ago, I had the same sensation.

This leads me to surmise that girls' upbringing within misogynistic cultures is essentially abusive, that what we think of as "normal" childhood experience is in fact systematically inflicted damage. No wonder we women, we feminists, we lesbians, we sisters and lovers, colleagues and friends, mothers and daughters, comrades and companions, experience so much disappointment together. As Beth noted, "If both were abused the situation gets even more complex."

I don't mean to dismiss the specific violence of sexual abuse or to collapse it into a vague picture into which anybody could fit. Women suffering sexual abuse would have the generalized underlying abuse plus the added horrors of their particular situation.

If this is the case, then what are we to make of our experience in our family of origin? Because as strongly as I believe that experience to be reflective of patriarchal values, I also believe our parents did the best they could with what they had to work with. At least I believe that of my own mother. [I haven't yet got around to being 'mature' about my father, I think he was a shitpig and I'm glad he's dead and I treasure the little core of anger that animates a lot of my creative energy. Maybe one day that anger will feel like a limitation, and then I'll have to do something about it. I'll probably phone up Beth to make an appointment!]

Our analysis of The Family has to take our specific experiences into account, but we also have to escape being submerged in our experience in order for our analysis to help us create different kinds of experiences in future. We also need to remember that some peoples' struggle is for the right and the means to build families. If we think that being lesbians will automatically help us to build better families, we're in for some rude shocks. And if we think we can live without close-knit ties, the warmth of "knowing" and being "known" by intimates, the sense of giving and receiving love without having always to "deserve" it, we're in for some sparse years. Being lesbians does help us to interrupt patriarchal patterns - if we are attentive to them, and also to the other oppressive patterns established by class dominance, race dominance, and just plain old personal power dominance.

I always have to laugh when people refer to June Cleaver as the perfect mother, because Barbara Billingsley, the actress who played her, lived on our block for a few years in the 1950's. Her two sons went to military academy. We need somehow to let go of the fantasy perfect family so that we can pursue our legitimate needs for family in a context which truly supports those needs instead of subtly subverting and deforming them.

Nobody has written to DEAR GERTRUDE lately and I'm seriously wondering why. Is our community too small for an advice column? Is the column not responsive to the needs of our readers? Are we all 100% satisfied with our lives? Personally, I think Gertrude combines wit, respect for her correspondents, and sensible answers in a distinctive style. [No, she is not me, nor anyone I live with, though we are also pretty groovy.] Do write and let us know if you want something different - or just break down and write that letter to DEAR GERTRUDE.

On Community

Dear Debby

I have read Ann O'Nymous's and your May and June articles several times. I believe you both desire a freedom that will give women the opportunity to fulfill themselves in life. However, whereas Ann O' sees it strictly from a lesbian's point of view, your concern is about all women.

I am a "mature" lesbian - in my seventh decade - and a favourite expression which I now voice repeatedly is, "If I knew then what I know now, I could have been more in control of my life, thus avoiding many pitfalls."

First of all there was no LesbiaNews then; this marvelous feminist newsletter acknowledges that every woman has something valid to say and gives lesbians a medium for expression. However, most significant to me is the fact that it gives 'feminist' lesbians the opportunity to make their statements. In my opinion it is they, and their feminist heterosexual sisters, who consciously bring about changes for women. Since they pose the greatest threat to patriarchy, they in particular are prevented from using the same facilities that are usually made available to men. Therefore, THANKS! LesbiaNews, for being consciously receptive, and for providing an avenue that will allow women's inner thoughts and viewpoints to 'hang out.'

In my former ignorance, I thought 'feminists' were maladjusted lesbians. I was not aware that it was the feminists - lesbians and heterosexual women - who had helped make all the necessary strides in bringing about a better quality of life for women. It was feminist women who fasted, demonstrated, marched on long treks, actively took a stand.

Ann O'Nonymous specifically prefers the 'Lesbian community,' which to her means, "wherever (and whenever) the viewpoint is totally outside any of the meanings and values of the male-identified system." If only that existed!

We who live in a male-oriented, power-structured, patriarchal society, unfortunately absorb, by osmosis, what our "masters" teach us: that "Might is Right," and instead of reaffirming each other gently, we roughly and rudely undermine and alienate one another. We would need a more utopian lesbian society for me to opt out of the mixed women's "community, sisterhood, family, etc" and enter an entirely lesbian "community."

I thought that "feminists" were maladjusted lesbians.

It would be GREAT: if all lesbians were compatible: had the same needs and values, were tuned into the same wavelengths, and could objectively communicate and negotiate with one another; if we could be off on our own "island"/"country": governed by democratically elected progressive lesbians - who had not internalized patriarchal values - who shared with and nurtured each other, a people unto ourselves; if the rest of the world did not present a threat nor boycott us: where we had a proper exchange with the outside world, allowed to import food, articles, materials and ideas, which did not infringe upon our beliefs or traditions, etc, and where we could export our surplus products; if lesbian children from the patriarchal outside world desired to join our lesbian society: they would be welcomed into our Lesbian Immersion Schools and take their place among their sisters. Because my fantasy seems so remote, I will employ a Jewish proverb (and reverse the gender) to invoke this 'impossible dream':

"Ven der Zaida volt gehat ah vulve, vot er geveh a Bobeh" - "If the Grandfather would have a vulva, he would be a Grandmother."

THIS IN FACT WOULD BE AN UTOPIAN WORLD! So, get in line - all you Lesbians:

academics, mothers, radical feminist separatists, bar dykes, etc, for a mass migration to this promised land, where we can really get on with our lives - regardless of our shape, size, dress, looks, occupation, self-esteem - where we can express our individuality, our creative desires, our personal needs, without fear of censure, reproach or danger.

However, until that eventuality, at present, I want to make my small contribution towards your newsletter, in its great effort to bring all women together in an understanding, and in peace; and which helps to keep us informed, on our toes and all a-titter, not a-teeter.

One of my Jewish names is Chiya/Animal or Chi/Life. Since the number 18 represents 'life', I am sending four times \$18 to cover subscription gifts, to renew my own, and to help keep *LesbiaNews* alive and kicking.

In conclusion, and from across the continent, I once again want to express my enjoyment and appreciation for the Western connection. I continue to look forward to *LesbiaNews*' MONTHLY ISSUE, and to the interesting, amusing and provocative writings. HURRAY FOR THE WOMEN!

Affectionately,
Florence Brown

Editorial note: we received this way back in July but haven't had room for it until now. Thank you, Florence, for your verbal and financial encouragement. I also want to thank several of our readers for your generous financial donations.

Spirituality Questionnaire

By Margot Scandrett and Christine Morissette

THIS IS NOT A MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONNAIRE.

PLEASE TAKE A MOMENT TO READ THE ENTIRE QUESTIONNAIRE, AND THEN ANSWER EACH QUESTION WITH THE DETAIL YOU FEEL IS NECESSARY.

1. Do you come from a religious background? If so, what faith?
2. Do you come from a spiritual background? If so, how does this differ from a religious background?
3. Is religion/spirituality an important aspect of your life now?
4. Do you feel the lesbian community accepts your spiritual/religious beliefs? Explain.
5. Do you feel your religious/spiritual community accepts your lesbianism? Explain.
6. Do you see lesbian spirituality as different from the worship or celebration of other communities? If so, how?
7. Can you suggest ways in which the lesbian community might support a more individual and community spiritual life?
8. Do we need to create a new spirituality for lesbians, or is there a way in which women of different religious and spiritual beliefs can unite in a celebration of spirituality?

Hmmm, these are hard ones....you might have to use a separate piece of paper.

Letter from Ontario

Hello!

I found your address in the GAYELLOW PAGES and thought you might be able to help me out...

I am interested in moving to the west coast (but I promise to leave all my bad Toronto-acquired habits at home!), but don't know that much about the lesbian community. As I feel quite at home in my community now, I'd like to find out what type of services and organizations are available before I transplant....I'm sure I'll be homesick for a while, but the thought of a friendly and supportive lesbian community awaiting me will surely help me in my transition.

If there's anyone there who'd like to send along any additional words of advice, please feel free! I am 25, and have loved Victoria since my first visit there in 1985. I hope to be able to continue my career in my new home - I have been a radio announcer (news) since 1983.

I look forward to hearing from you! Thank you for everything.

Be happy,
Leigh-Ann Gerow

Editorial Intervention: Well, Girls [sic: I hope the PC Police have a sense of humour], shall we have a contest? 500 words or less on why Leigh-Ann would/would not be happy here, what kind of community, organizations and services she can expect, how she can find us, etc. All letters will be published unless you indicate otherwise - or unless we are so deluged we couldn't possibly print them all (I can dream, can't I). Oh, yes, "contest" means "prize"; how about 6 months free delivery of *LesbiaNews*? What's that? You were hoping for a free Olivia cruise? Maybe next year, dear, keep hoping - but don't hold yer breath.

Surely there must
be something
for lesbians!

Lesbian Something

We really need
something for
lesbians!

Many of us feel the need to have lesbian-only events, for lesbians only. (Lesbians are not bisexual or heterosexual.)

So, for all of you lesbians out there, we have organized several events. The Scrabble Club isn't meeting right now, but look for a **LESBIAN-ONLY SOCIAL** in mid-December. The **POLITICAL ACTION GROUP** meets every other Thursday to discuss separatism, lesbian ethics, racism and classism amongst lesbians. Phone 248-5596 for location and more info. \$1 to cover refreshments.

So now there are a few Lesbian Somethings -- why not add to the list? Call 248-3402 or 248-5596 with your ideas!!

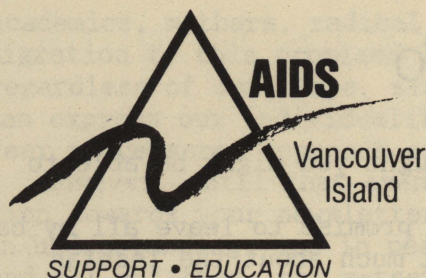
The above was taken from a newsheet put together by Bonnie and Kathryn. They are radical lesbians who are interested in making something happen for and with lesbians.

(No Fascist clothing at any Lesbian Something event, please.)

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Women's HIV+/AIDS Support Group
Confidential, safe place for information, education, support from other women. Call AIDS Vancouver Island, 384-4554, #222-1175 Cook Street



World AIDS Day 1990: Women and Aids

World AIDS Day is an annual day of observance designed to expand and strengthen the worldwide effort to stop AIDS.

December 1, World AIDS Day 1990, will highlight the impact of HIV/AIDS on women around the world. AIDS has a profound impact on women, both as an illness and as a social and economic challenge. Women play a crucial role in preventing infection with HIV and caring for HIV-infected people and people with AIDS. Women's lack of status within the family and society heightens their vulnerability to infection and other consequences of the epidemic. The stigma attached to AIDS can subject women to discrimination, social rejection and other violations of their rights.

Victoria World AIDS Day Events 1990

SUNDAY DECEMBER 2, 2PM, ROXY THEATRE: "COMMON THREADS"

Special Showing of the movie about making the AIDS Memorial Quilt. Benefit for AIDS Vancouver Island.

SUNDAY DECEMBER 2, 8PM, UNIVERSITY CENTRE AUDITORIUM: RANCH ROMANCE Gala evening with the popular country and western all-woman band. Benefit concert for AIDS Vancouver Island.

MONDAY DECEMBER 3, 7:30PM, SARAH SPENCER BUILDING MULTIPURPOSE ROOM: INTERNATIONAL PANEL: WOMEN AND AIDS. Women from Zambia, Thailand, Costa Rica and Canada will describe strategies for education about, and treatment of AIDS/HIV. The Panel will be moderated by Dr. Hilary Wass. The Sarah Spencer Building is at the Health Centre at 1947 Cook Street (at Pembroke).

For more information about these events call Aids Vancouver Island, 384-2366.

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 15: ALL-CANDIDATES MEETING ON WOMEN'S ISSUES. 7pm at the Newcombe Auditorium, for all Victoria Municipal candidates. Come and ask tough questions. Sponsored by SWAG.

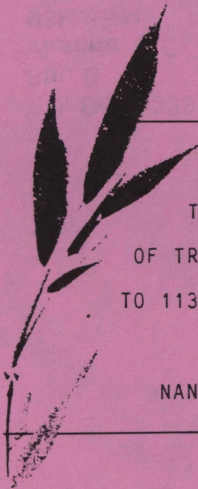
ADVANCE NOTICE: SWAG will sponsor talks on issues of violence against women in early December. 381-1012 for more info. They will also sponsor a **MEMORIAL SERVICE ON THURSDAY DECEMBER 6TH FOR THE WOMEN KILLED LAST YEAR.**

BISEXUAL AND LESBIAN WOMEN INTERESTED in participating in a feminist research project please call Kelevelyn. 386-7197. Confidentiality respected.

EXHIBIT OF COLOUR PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREA LOWE, December 1-31, at the Vancouver Lesbian Connection, 876 Commercial Drive, Vancouver. **SHOW OPENING SATURDAY DECEMBER 1ST 4:30-8:30pm.** (No smoking, no perfume please) Refreshments. Sale of cards, small photos and enlargements. Lovely affordable art for that gift-giving season. For more info call 876-3104 (Vancouver) or 383-8440 (Victoria).

NEXT HOT FLASHES COFFEE HOUSE DATES: November 23rd and December 14th. \$2
106 Superior Street, 8-11pm.

NOTICES & ADS



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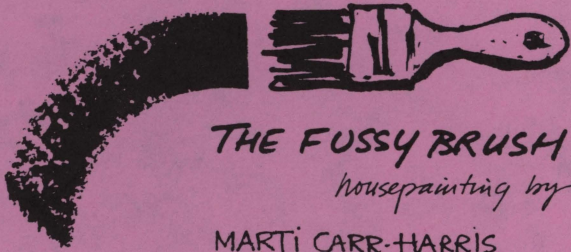
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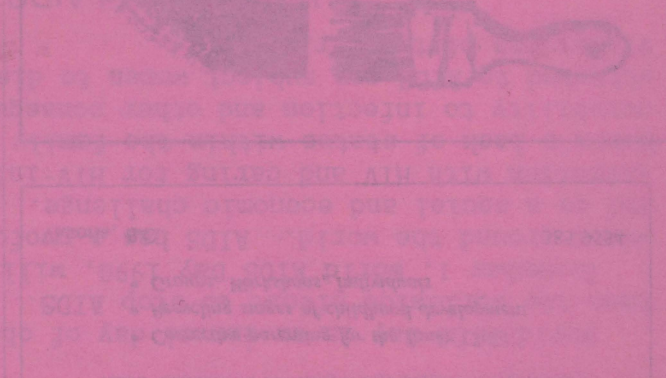
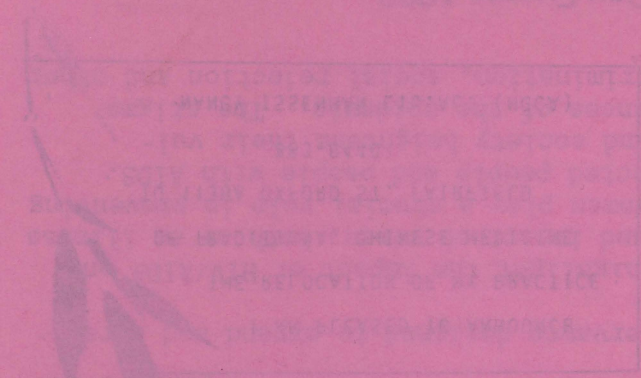
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NOTICES & ADS

World AIDS Day 1990

Women and AIDS

AIDS