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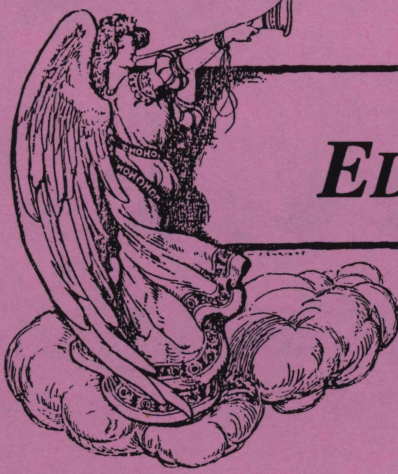
Vancouver Island's Monthly Lesbian Newsletter

VOL. 1 ISSUE 2

Mostly

MARCH 1993





EDITORIAL

Last month I invited readers to write about how Audre Lorde (1934 - November 1992) affected their lives. I had intended to summon up my own memories of her participation in the 3rd International Feminist Book Fair in Montreal in 1988, to write about my experience of her there, and to review, briefly, some of her books. I find, though, that it is very difficult to be brief about Audre Lorde.

There is so much to learn from her, but perhaps I was most in admiration of her sensitivity to the conflicting concerns of lesbians, Black women and White women, feminists, and mothers of male children. She was thoughtful and inclusive, but she did not compromise her own beliefs. She called herself a "warrior," yet she believed "None of us can do it alone. . . Do not let the differences pull you apart. Use them - that is empowerment."¹

As for her books, who can review "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action" (from *Sister/Outsider*, pub. 1977)? I have a compelling need to quote the entire essay; in fact, I wish I could learn it from memory, remind myself of it when I am afraid of censure, and recite parts of it to myself before sleep - like

a mantra, so that I wake up ready for any circumstance that might tempt me to remain silent when I should not.

This week I read her cancer journals (written in 1980) for the first time. Why had I not read it before? Fear of the subject, perhaps; as if not knowing about it would make it go away. Alice Walker said *The Cancer Journals* have "taken away some of my fear of cancer, my fear of incompleteness, my fear of difference." Let me encourage you to read these journals; they will make you strong, they will enrage and empower you and, finally, they will make you want to demand that the cancer establishment be made to answer, in part, for the continued existence of this disease.

What a powerful woman she was!
And what courage she had!

On the subject of speaking out, I wish to thank Ruth Simkin for her letter to "Used to be LesbiaNews" (see Letters to the Editor). For those of us who struggle to affirm who we are, Ruth's letter comes as a gift, reminding us of our commitment and responsibility. For the time being, since we have gone over this name business at great length, we will try the new one. (Actually, it wasn't the word "lesbian" that seemed to inhibit so many, it was the word "feminist" - something that I find even more distressing.) We have introduced the column, *shOUT about it*, by way of encouragement and hope, indeed, that the word lesbian appears on every page. J.G.

¹ from speech given at "I Am Your Sister" Conference, 1990

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ellenews IS A COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER PRIMARILY SERVING VANCOUVER ISLAND AND THE GULF ISLANDS. ITS AIM IS TO PROVIDE CONTENT THAT INSPIRES, EMPOWERS, AND PROMOTES LESBIANS. IT IS PUBLISHED BY, FOR AND ABOUT LESBIANS, BI-SEXUAL WOMEN AND THEIR ALLIES. WE RESERVE THE RIGHT TO EDIT ACCORDINGLY.
P.O. Box 5339,
Station B, Victoria, B.C. V8R 6S4

Subscriptions are \$20/year, cheque or money order payable to S. Hamill at the above address.

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

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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 3.5" disk. We edit for space and clarity. Please limit submissions to 900 words.

Please note the increase in advertising rates effective March 1993.

MOVE OVER THELMA AND LOUISE--ITS "HOTHEAD PAISAN"

Magazine Review By Jahnet Hewsick

(Jahnet is a member of Everywoman's Books Collective).

"I wonder what would happen if say, some lesbian really checked out for lunch, you know, like say her brain just totally shit the bed one day, and she starts believing everything she sees on T.V. So like, while she's going about her daily queer routine, all this T.V. crap is seeping in and she's getting psychotic, and like, she needs therapy really bad, but she doesn't know it? I bet her boundaries would be really fuzzy. I bet she'd be lots of fun to be around. I bet she'd be a real....."

So begins our introduction to Issue #1 of "Hothead Paisan" (pronounced pie-zon). Written by Mommy St. Wee-Wee a.k.a. Diane Di Massa, and published by Giant Ass Publishing in Connecticut, its an hilarious and refreshing comic zine¹ about a politically incorrect dyke named Hothead and her cat, Chicken. If you've ever fantasized about cutting off men's penises, spraying "het repellent" when you've been blatantly heterorized for the 900th time or have lucid conversations with your cat, you'll love this zine. I have and I do.

Hothead is really a good dyke gone mad from a steady diet of misogynist media. And Chicken is not just another cat; she's her buddy, playmate, catfidante. I know, what is it about dykes and their cats? Or is it cats and their dykes?

Hothead is raging, raunchy, violent. She's a "lesbian homicidal terrorist" who is sure to offend men who think with their pricks. She might even offend heterosexuals who don't think and behave in a blatantly heterosexist manner when they encounter us. And what about the politically correct lesbians who think Hothead acts just like the men she's bashing. (Going to be a lot of offended people out there)!

Even Hothead herself thinks she should come with a warning-- "Caution: Socially bizarre dyke, not quite up to political snuff; eats meat, likes sex toys, has never protested in B.C., prone to raving and episodal behaviours, including vicious mood-swings."

One of my favourite scenes is in Issue #2 when Hothead is fantasizing about her birth. Just as the omnipotent male doctor is about to give her the slap of life, baby Hothead says "don't even THINK of slapping me!!" and slices off his head with a scalpel. As the cover states, not for the weak.

Hothead's behaviour may be vicious at times, but it is not always lauded nor does it occur without context. Hothead's blind friend Roz thinks her anger is destructive and tries to persuade Hothead to go into therapy. In Issue #2 the "CENSOR" shows up to say this comic is too violent. When Hothead says, "What about Bat-Fuck and Nintendo and the Road Runner?" the censor replies, "That's different. Boys will be Boys, you know!!!"

Besides Hothead and Chicken, there are other great things about this zine. I love the photos on the back covers of each issue and I love the selection of fan letters. Dianne Di Massa even includes letters she gets from male fans. One letter was addressed, Dear Sirs, and another one Gentlemen. Some people just don't get it.

This great comic zine issue #8, is available, at Everywoman's Books. In November 1992, 35 copies of Issues #1-7 were seized and held by Canada customs and then shipped back to the distributor. Toronto Women's Bookstore had the same experience. Apparently, customs has found Hothead #7 to be sexually degrading (to whom?) and declared Issues #1 and #2 "banned at all points of entry". As Diane stated in Issue #2, "Boys will be Boys" you know!!"

Everywoman's intends to order more copies of Issues 1 - 7. Right now we are not sure whether the seizure of these zines is a random act or part of a new campaign to harass women's bookstores. Up to now, Canada Customs has only targetted openly gay and lesbian bookstores like Little Sisters in Vancouver and Glad Day Books in Toronto. Stay tuned for further issues of Hothead and the Censor.

"Zines" are self-published magazines, often produced on photocopy machines and stapled together by hand. They often take one person's radical viewpoint and build a magazine around it. Victoria has three of its own--"Moral Purity", "H.A.G." and "OH" (the latter the only exclusively lesbian one).

(Editor's Note: After fiddling about at the keyboard for the better part of a day I got hungry. I slipped between the traffic for a snack and returned legally via the crosswalk. Here I am two doors up from Everywoman's books, typing away, running next door to check on things. You can't blame me if I passed a bookstore window and demanded a pedestrian's rights to danger pay and wondered if customs had gone crazy.

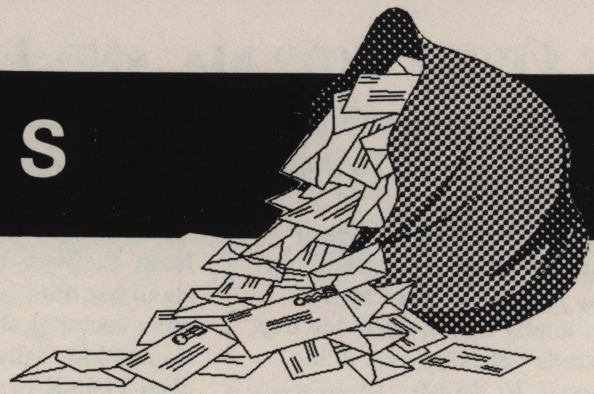
There before my very eyes was a zine collection of violence and human degradation. Everywoman's? I gasped!! No, I looked up and discovered the name of the place is Legends. Superheroes. Whose legends? Is there a double standard here?

Shucks, it's not that bad. But really, from what I read of the zine review I just input? I can't rightly say I see much difference, ma'am.

Perhaps ellenews can put together a lighthearted but surefooted and surefisted but democratic and conservatively outrageous but viable sort of vigilante squad to oppress the oppresser. Or at least bring to the attention of customs that our own country produced as bad, or imports as bad crap as they are outlawing for the lesbian community.

Then maybe we can be like those collectives that I read about in the lesbian books my friend lends me from Everywoman's books that have all those exciting tales of mission accomplished. Except maybe not the murder? B.Mcl.)

LETTERS



Dear Formerly LesbiaNews:

When I first moved to B.C. several years ago, I subscribed to your magazine based on your name alone. I definitely wanted to support a lesbian magazine and have enjoyed receiving it. Imagine my surprise to find out about your new name.

How you could change the name to **ellenews** on the front cover and have an ad for a talk on the importance of being out on the back cover is beyond me. The word "lesbian" is everywhere in the newsletter, so why remove it from the name? It seems like just a touch of internalized homophobia to me. As a lesbian physician, I know that one of the biggest health risks we lesbians suffer is on an emotional level when our reality is not recognized by society. It takes a lot of self-esteem and strong feelings of self worth to be out and about as a lesbian in a homophobic society; you would think your magazines could at least be reflective of our lives and lesbian reality without having to hide behind cute names.

I for one am tired of usually having to function on the lowest common denominator when it comes to women's communities-- I am part of a vital, exciting, lesbian culture which is there for any woman who wants to be part of it. Please do not become retrogressive; I don't want to open the newsletter in a few months to have "lesbian" replaced with "woman" or "l-word" so the magazine can be more accessible--better put the efforts into making the community an open and healthy one in which women are

free to live our lives in peace and honesty and which does not have to hide behind any kind of homophobia, internalized or otherwise.

In sisterhood,
Ruth Simkin

Dear Eds:

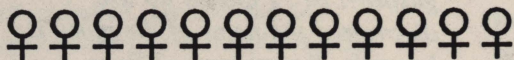
The unsolicited free plug for the comic quarterly **OH** in your "Letters" page was much appreciated (I think...Is it really your aim to put readers to sleep by publishing trite and boring letters?)

Clearly you have been pilfering from our cartoonist Joan Hilty's vocabulary when you tell your readers that we have words like **Clik!** **Jeez!** and **Zot!** You neglected to mention, however, that we also have the words 'inspired eloquence' and that "stories using pictures are not the sole domain of children, or those who are seen to be children at heart".

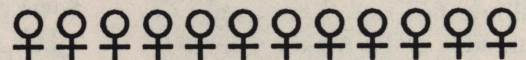
Like your new incarnation to **ellenews**. I enclose some cartoons that go under the umbrella title "Tara King" for the files as a gift to this re-birth, and wish you much luck with your "mostly" monthly move.

So: I call you when I get a flat tire, right?

Cheers
Hope **OH...**



Sportsdykes:



Guide to Erotic Sports (continued)

Ice hockey: If you're looking for a sport to hide those extra X-mas pounds you put on, ice hockey is the sport for you. Everyone wears a lot of protective padding, so no one knows how much anyone else has gained. This is a sport where you get to slip and slide, bump and grind, all in the hopes of scoring. In the 90's world of safer activity, gloves and helmets are used on the ice, and are forsaken for towels and soap afterwards. For further protection in the ice, a jill is strategically located between the legs to protect private parts required for after-game activities.

Broomball: Forget the tame bumping and grinding of ice hockey, the broomball women want it hard, fast, and physical. If you're wanting, craving, or yearning for full body contact, broomball is the sport for you. Put away your brooms and aprons - the play toys of this sport are hard plastic broom-sticks, little rubber booties, and balls. There are no frigid fems in this sport; whether they're up or down, these fiery women love to score on the ice. Best looking body position for scoring: on your knees, head up and smiling; or (my favourite) horizontal body extension along the ice. While scoring, the use of two hands on the stick is optional. If you're into scoring hard, fast, and forceful, use two hands (although using only one hand does free up the other for various creative scoring maneuvers).

Sport Dykes to Watch Out For

♀ Drop-ins:

Thursday - 6:30-8:pm, North Ridge Elementary: Soccer

Friday - 7:30-9:30pm, Fernwood Community Centre: Volleyball

Sunday - 7:00- ? Fernwood Community Centre: Volleyball Events:

March 6- OSU Dual Meet - Elk Lake

5&6 - CWUAA Woman's Basketball Championship

12-14- CIAU Women's Basketball National Championship

13- Elk Lake Spring Regatta: 500m-1 pm; 200m-8:30 am

20-21- Soccer Spring Cup M&W Centennial Stadium

Field Hockey: Saturdays: 10am Div III; 12:00 pm, Div II;

2:00 pm, Div I...Fields of play: UVic, Lansdowne HS,

Windsor Park, Beacon Hill, Cowichan HS, Parklands HS

Broomball: Mondays, 10PM, Esquimalt Arena; March 1, 8, 15, 22 - championship

Ice Hockey: Sooke, Saanich, Esquimalt, Mill Bay,

Cowichan, Fuller Lake, Comox, Port Alberni: Times and

locations vary: call Mrs. Cotton 478-5203.

Flag Football: Info 652-0773; Reynolds HS 9am, 11am,

1pm; Sunday

Soccer and other sports next issue.

For further drop-in times or sport info (eg b-ball, etc) write **ellenews**.

Top Girls are a Top Act, and UVic Deserves our Support.

A Play Review by Barbara McLaughlin

There wasn't a lesbian visible in Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* which opened at UVic's Roger Bishop Theatre February 11. Now don't go to sleep. This was a women's play. About women, by a woman, and judging from the snores from the male seated beside me, for women. I'm assuming this man heard the words as a form of jingoistic lullaby. More's the pity. For him.

A simple set, brilliantly conceived by Master of Fine Arts candidate David Lucas who will go far, provided a playground for an able cast of 10 who could have laboured through this epic but chose instead to romp, seize and carry off a suitably challenging script that birthed a new and equally challenging dialogue known then as cross-talk. Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOA's) and COdependents already know this, but it is a process of issuing dialogue while ostensibly listening to other dialogue so that neither sender nor receiver really hears a word, or doesn't respond directly until sometime later when those two are the only ones in the room who know that the response is not, by now, a non-sequitur. And if you had to read that sentence twice to understand it, you will have experienced how difficult and unacceptable the dialogue was for critics of the early '80s. They hated it. And, in fact, it is hard to get used to. But the language of the play is too wonderful to miss and paying attention is worth it.

Lucas' centre-stage was a revolve upon which he had inserted two curved panels painted in swirls and whorls of colour. Behind the revolve he placed a huge cyclorama which director Linda Hardy effectively employed as both an entrance ploy and historical visual.

The play presents its best and wittiest dialogue at the beginning when protagonist and the only constant in the play Marlene (Kira Bradley) is joined at lunch by Scots world-traveller Isabella Bird (Erin Malin), Lady Nijo, (Joanna Hodgson) former concubine to the emperor of Japan and a Japanese nun, Pope Joan (Shannon Anderson)

whom we all know, or should?, the ever-obedient to her princely husband, Griselda alternately played by Nancy Ford and Rebecca Erickson, and Dull Gret (Alma Watson) the subject of Brueghel's *Dulle Greit*, the woman depicted as leading a crowd of women charging through hell and fighting the devils. It was rather like Marlene, a top executive in a women's work placement centre in London, England, had called these women to herself as Henry Ford is alleged to have called together the great dead business heroes of his time in order to mastermind his own business advances.

It is Pope Joan who gets the best lines at this rather bizarre luncheon partly because we have had some time to adjust to the cross-talk, and mostly because like some lesbians Pope Joan was never male dominated and maybe unlike many of us, never female oriented. Or so she says. She reminds us that women weren't allowed in the library in 800. Cardinals knew her as a very clever boy.

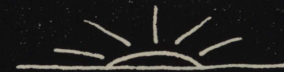
Having had no contact with other girls or women, poor Pope Joan didn't know she was pregnant. She had after all, led a very sedentary life as pope, and the food is very good in the Vatican, and when the pains started getting rather frequent... The rest, as they say, is herstory. In Pope Joan's day, "women, children and lunatics couldn't be pope". Now

where have we nearly 2,000 years later, heard that one. And how far have we come. But hell, sorry Joan, the play isn't about that. It's about wisdom, Hardy tells us, rather she asks, what is wisdom?

We don't get an answer from Churchill on that one. As we move back into that part of the play which reveals Marlene's dazzling business career and her secret past do get a reminder that England under Maggie Thatcher is a dynamo for Marlene who as Phoenix has risen from the ashes of her background. Yet for her sister Joyce and those like her who are stuck in their poverty, Thatcher is a divisive force between the rich and the poor.

Hardy reminds us again in her much-appreciated notes, that the other question is: who and what gets left behind as women take on the challenges that have been men's. This play sends it home, Pogo, dear. Our archest and cleverest enemy is us.

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ARTISTS AMONG US

As our first "artist among us", Ramona Scott interviewed Judy Bell, a 50-year-old bank employee (not the kind you imagine) and long time resident of Victoria. Judy exemplifies not only how art, but life, can be expressed creatively.

If you know someone you would like us to include, please tell us. Better yet, write about her (or yourself) and mail it to us.

ellenews: Judy, I've admired your independence and creativity - your amazing range of interests and talents. I know you as an extraordinary gardener and cook; a practical builder and car mechanic; a designer of elaborate sound and video systems; a whimsical art collector; an outrageous painter; and a model train buff. I'm sure I've missed something?

Judy:...a motorcycle rider.

ellenews: Oh yes, and a very enthusiastic biker! What makes you so self-motivated and inspired to do all these...what should I call them? ...projects? hobbies? impulses? creations?

Judy: Hobbies, now, I guess. At this stage in my life I'm not proving

something. I just do things I enjoy. Earlier in my life, I had to become self-sufficient because, basically, I was ignored. I kind of raised myself to become competent to look after myself. Also, when I was growing up, boys were allowed to do things which were interesting while girls weren't because they wouldn't need to know things - girls only grow up and get married. There was a part of me that needed to learn things. I quietly went about learning how to fix things.

ellenews: Did you have any role models in your life? Were there women who were doing things you were interested in?

Judy: No, I was stealing things from people like my father. I know he was clever at things. I helped myself to his tools. He knew I did, but I never actually damaged anything so I got away with it. I remembered where I got things and put them back, although his gouges and chisels were never quite as sharp as when I took them.

ellenews: Did you think you were different when you compared yourself to your friends?

Judy: Yes, I did, but I was determined that there were some kinds of traditional growing up that I didn't want ...like selling my soul to appeal to men. There were times when I would try for about five minutes - to appease my mother, but ultimately I just knew it wasn't my path in life. I couldn't depend on other people to look after me. I knew it was my responsibility to make my life what I wanted it to be.

ellenews: There is a thread of playfulness in all that you do. How do you maintain this playfulness?

Judy: Probably by not knuckling down to doing what other people want me to do. Just being stubborn and perverse, I guess.

ellenews: Like that huge, brilliantly-coloured painting of red poppies? One of the poppies just can't seem to stay on the canvas! Or your collection of

wildly colourful fish, cats, and figurines situated in very "interesting" positions throughout your living room! You have an aesthetic appreciation that is quite "different".

Judy: You know, a lot of the living room is Barb. I am slightly more functional. My area is tools, the garden, the train...kinetic things. She is the visual artist.

ellenews: You seem so busy. You always have something on the go. Yet, I get a sense of you being a loner - someone with a lot of initiative, not needing another person to do things with. How do your activities fit into your partnership with Barbara?

Judy: Barb plays with my stuff and me, and I play with her stuff and her. We teach each other things. She's really good at socializing me and I'm good at rescuing her when she makes a *faux pas* (said as "folks paws") with something mechanical, and making sure she gets fed something. It's important for me that we each have our own interests; that we don't get enmeshed in each other. It's difficult and we work at that.

ellenews: Has being lesbian contributed to developing the interests and abilities you have?

Judy: When I was growing up, being lesbian contributed to my isolation and, therefore, in a linear kind of way, to my learning what I learned.

ellenews: You had to be more self-reliant?

Judy: Yes, and I wanted to ignore all the influence that tried to haul me into the mainstream. It wasn't a positive push to becoming who I am. It was like a back eddy in a river - a kind of resting place to release the pressure. I don't know if that sounds negative, or not.

ellenews: You are a role model for us, especially when we see women who are in traditional relationships with men with expectations of performing certain "female" roles. They are not

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trying out a lot of different interests; they are fitting into a mold. You have been describing a kind of growing without limits, space to explore what you want. In your primary relationship, too, it seems there is sharing but no set roles either has to fill.

Judy: Yes, that's true, except it is safer for Barbara to stay out of my kitchen when I'm cooking and it's safer for me to stay out of her kitchen when she is washing dishes. We have complementary things we do, mostly because we're not interested in certain tasks. She's more willing to clean up the joint and I'm interested in bringing in the vegetables and feeding us, and messing up the joint.

ellenews: What project is your real love now?

Judy: We're expanding the trains by quite a lot at the moment. It's taking up most of the other big bedroom. It's u-shaped, double track layout which

means it is idiot proof and nobody can say, "whoops, I forgot your train was on the track" and BANG!

ellenews: How did you get interested in model trains?

Judy: I suppose from my brother who got a train when he was growing up and I didn't. I got to have all kinds of useless things like dolls. I was much more interested in his trains. I have always loved real trains. I spent a lot of time in Britain finding all the funny little ones they were restoring on branch lines.

ellenews: Are you in a train club?

Judy: There are other train buffs. In hobby shops, I talk to friends who are interested in trains - we talk about what scale we are working in, steam or electric, indoor or outdoor. There is quite a network of people I know who play with trains. They are all guys. I don't know any other women who are interested in trains. "Are

there any women out there interested in electric trains?"

ellenews: Have you been doing any more painting?

Judy: That sort of comes and goes. It's not something I'm as fond of as mechanical things. The next art-y thing I'd do would be a visual pun based on a bicycle. I'd have a bicycle hanging on the wall with strategic little details on it. It's an idea that has been brewing for a long time. I just don't have a wall big enough on which to hang a bicycle.

ellenews: Thank you for this interview, Judy. I appreciate your openness and inspiration. Do you have any parting words of wisdom to share about letting the artist in us come out?

Judy: The most important thing for me, despite all the slings and arrows, is to be myself. The other thing is not to be hard on ourselves. The rest of the world is hard enough on us. The key to life for me is to play.

WHAT IS AN "OLDER LESBIAN" ANYWAY?

The French, with typical *savoir faire*, refer to it as *un certain age*. We anglos have done away with it altogether. You're no longer middle-aged. You're either YOUNG or OLD. But where do you draw the line? **ellenews** asked a few readers: What's an "older lesbian"?

- "Me."
- "It's relative. You're as old as you feel. Over 35, although I don't fit that age group. Older to me is in their fifties."
- "Oh neat, I could go to that (TGIF). I felt included. As to what age younger than I am, I don't know. I'm 45, on the edge of being older. Part of the way I define older is when your children are grown. Groups in the past have specified 50 or 55, and I haven't been included and now I am."
- "Elaine. Elaine's older than me. What's old? I'd say 45. What I consider older is more like 55, but there is a split in the community between younger and older. That's about where the split is, at about 45."
- "What picture came to my mind is someone who stays in one place, you know, she has a career, so she stays in one place."
- "To me older is older than me. Now I'd say fifty, because I always think that while I'm not normal in some ways, in some things what I am is normal, like hair colour, breast size. Age is one of those things."
- "To me an older lesbian is a woman in her fifties and up who's probably been around long before the women's movement, probably has short hair, wears pants, would rather die than be buried in a dress, is hopefully financially independent to some extent. Probably lives by herself in her own space which she owns. And butch."
- "I think of someone over 40."

shOUT about it

The following story wasn't signed. We have decided to protect the anonymity of writers if they obviously so desire. This one raises some interesting points. What Is Out? Let us know.

I came out of the closet 15 years ago. Personally I date "being out" from the time I told my mother. At any rate it was in the heady days of 1978, and I couldn't get on a bus or buy a cup of tea without telling everyone within earshot. In the time since then, I've basically stuck to the principle that it's a good thing to be out.

And what does being out mean? It means I challenge assumptions. I let people know I am a lesbian. I bring it into conversations where it has relevance; because I want people to know and appreciate the diversity that includes me.

Today I find myself wondering what effect it has on me and others to be obvious about my sexual preference. Until last year, when I inadvertently passed for straight for awhile, I never really considered if there were barriers that existed, or maybe were created, because of my being out-- because I was clear about who I was.

I had started a new job in a new city. I came out at my last job, (started five years previously) by being clear that when Susan telephoned for me, she was to be treated as my partner, or in the same way as any call from spouse or lover would be treated. In this new job I didn't know what to do. I didn't have a partner to explain.

I wanted people to know who I was, but I didn't want to just say: "Hey, I'm a lesbian". I decided to wait until it came up and then I would mention it.

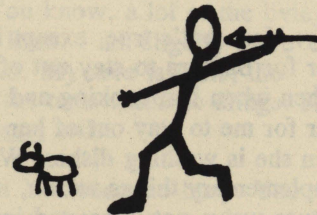
Weeks passed and it (lesbianism) didn't come up.

What did happen was something I never expected. People assumed I was straight and included me in conversations in a way that was entirely new to me. And because they did that, I learned that I had been treated differently all this time. It was very disorienting. It felt like people assumed I was part of their group in a way that they didn't usually--that my experiences were understandable to them, and that my reactions would be predictable.

What was it that seemed so different to me? I've tried to put it together and I know it's composed of silences and assumptions on both "sides". Straight women are, in a way, constrained from bitching too much about men, or, alternatively, showing how much they care about men. I think they feel they might be judged. I know the same holds true for me. I stayed with one lover for years partly because I didn't want to let the team down--didn't want to admit that lesbian relationships could be bad, hurtful, destructive, mean or petty. And I couldn't talk about that with straight women--I didn't want them to be sorry for me. Maybe.

So now, I wonder, in 15 years of being out have I really been "out"? Is it even possible?

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CANADA

Issue #3 out in May

BRAIN FEVER

by Karey Perks

In a far corner of the yard the Blackberry bush has taken advantage of numerous seasons of neglect and begun building a regular patch. From its borders I have already rescued a rusty steel drum (for burning garbage) and an overlooked, rangy young fruit tree which the canes had bent, forcing it to grow into the ground.

Blackberries seem to thrive on abandonment. I cut away the first layer of arching young growth and now I can peer underneath it at a rusty, twisted bicycle imprisoned by woody red stems as big around as my wrist. I've heard of people laying boards across Blackberry patches, for crawling out to get the best August berries. I've heard of people falling in. I can imagine the plunge, the scratches momentarily anaesthetized by surprise, and then the pain catches up, and with it the knowledge that getting out will hurt even more; the pleas for rescue and the useless advice of the unentangled: don't struggle, it only makes things worse.

Pain makes some people afraid. They get loose from the Blackberry because fear shrinks them up into almost nothing and there's not enough left for the barbs to hook into. Once they escape the thorns they get as far away as they can and never go near another Blackberry patch for as long as they live.

But pain makes other people angry; it brings out the fight in them. They are the ones who struggle and impale themselves further on a bad cause or a hopeless

love. They torture themselves trying to get free and they never do, because the Blackberry knows they are its Children, tenacious and slightly mad, who can only be held by something as tenacious as the Blackberry itself, which hooks them by their pain and swallows them whole.

I wonder if once they are down there they long for the sky, or if the sky becomes nothing more to them than shards, because it looks like an empty blue bowl that was overturned by accident and broken?

I can imagine the plunge,
the scratches momentarily anaesthetized
by surprise

Or do they crawl in through the windows of rusted-out cars and paint stripes on their faces with the rain-soaked ashes of previous journeys?

That's what I would do, if I couldn't see the sky opening up over my head, or jump in my car and drive and drive as if a place with no pain could be found facing the street. I would be hollow-cheeked and morose, with eyes like empty steel pipes, and my mouth would be full of rust if I were swallowed up by the Blackberry, but the Blackberry's Children don't feel the way I do. They like living in a place where every move has its own new pain.

The Blackberry patch offers them a terrible kind of peace. Not the fluffy, Dandelion sort of peace where nothing ever hurts, where no matter what you throw yourself against, it floats softly away from you in a thousand unimaginable directions. For the Blackberry Children, the kind of peace that is merely an absence of pain is an illusion. Down there in the barb-tangled rubble they call themselves realists, and they say they are at peace because they always know, at any moment, what life will bring.

Such knowledge may give them courage, as well as a scratched-up appearance, but the arrogance of their suffering makes them hard to be around. Brave as they are, I've decided I want them out of my back yard. I've been pruning and cutting away at the

Blackberry patch, opening it up to air and sunlight, thinking I would catch the Blackberry Children out of the tail of my eye, see them turn scarred faces toward the sun. But I'd forgotten how they scorn freedom. The Blackberry Children have withdrawn into the darkest, thorniest corners, and the only sure way to get them out now is with fire.

Fire appeals to their absolute sensitivities. They understand how its hunger feeds on the hunger of the Blackberry, how the pain of the flames relieves the pain of its thorns. When I set fire to the Blackberry Patch, their own hunger for pain will consume the Blackberry Children, and I'll be free of them. It's the only kind of liberation they understand.

Women's Nights at Rumors

Last May the Victoria Pride Society with the assistance of Rumors put on a fund-raising auction to help finance the Pride Picnic. I bought the right to be DJ for a night at Rumors. I chose the night before the picnic, gave the DJ my list of music plus some records and tapes (one week in advance), invited my friends, arrived at Rumors and waited for my tunes.

The DJ refused to play them.

Terry Froud, half owner of Rumors, was embarrassed. He apologized and several times offered to give me a night for Women's Music. He would also give us the run of the place. I was angry and disappointed, regretfully barely civil to him, and not listening.

Marion Stoodley, having heard about his offer, argued that the community needed those dance nights and that I should take up the offer and the challenge. My party-loving partner Pat and I began an

informal survey of the community. We passed lists around asking women to name their three favourite dance tunes. Women told us to play the music we want, turn down the volume and make the hours earlier.

Terry agreed to a Friday night, November 29th from 7:30 to 11:30. We gave him our music list, posterized the universe, told everyone we encountered and hoped for the best.

The big night arrived. At 7:30 women were waiting for the doors to open. Terry had the place decorated and put out complimentary munchies. His DJ, Brent, had "previewed" the request list, located the records and disks in their library or bought extra CDs. He became a Heather Bishop fan in the process!

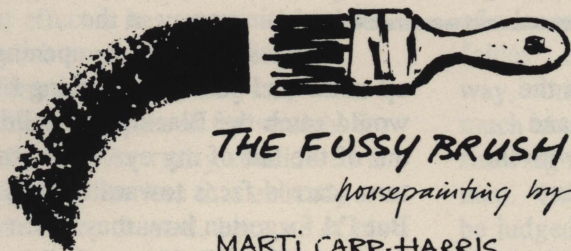
By 9 p.m. Rumors was full. Terry sent all the men, but for the two who slipped in at the stroke of 9, to BJs. An unprecedented 290 women showed up during the evening. Wow!

It was a myth-dispelling night. Women don't buy drinks? Womens' music begins and ends with Patsy Cline? Hah!

Success breeds success. December 18th's dance included Terry's donated Santa. No men allowed until 11 p.m. Santa, a.k.a. Charlie, with elf, distributed candy canes. Those who had their photos taken with Santa made a donation to Aids Vancouver Island. Thanks to Marion Stoodley who designed posters for both December and January's event, the latter attracting 239 women.

Marion was right. Terry has now set aside two more Fridays for Women's evenings. Pat and I, Marion and Terry, expect to see you there. Mark your calendars for **February 26 and March 19.**

By the way....Would the woman who requested polkas please bring along a record or two? Rumors plays requests. Lee (Ed.B.Mcl)



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ADDENDUM

Addendum to book review of "Lesbian (Out)law: Survival Under the Rule of Law" by Ruthann Robson in previous issue of *ellenews* (vol.1:1, pg. 7): Kim Campbell has finally introduced an amendment to the Canadian Human Rights Act to prevent discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. But her definition of "marriage" means only heterosexual couples, though she says private companies can go beyond this if they wish.

It should also be noted that in Ontario, British Columbia, and the Yukon, Workers' Compensation benefits can go to lesbian and gay couples. Milnor

Alexander

(ellenews noticed that we omitted Milnor Alexander's name from her interesting article in the February issue. Sorry, Milnor. J.G., Ed.)

REVIEW OF OH (IN SIX FRAMES)

by KP



Frame #1: A forty-seven-year-old queer Jewish writer drawn in smudged amateurish pencil, lying on her back in a dark catacomb looking through a magnifying glass at a comic book called "Oh..." by the light of a sputtering candle. On the walls, pictographs depicting Egyptian ancients in attitudes of awe and wonderment and carrying boxes of corn flakes. Glowing eyes in dark corners.

Frame #2: Creativity and genius symbolised by gloppy drawings and areas of black = city / disorder / violence / exclamation points, etc. A woman of power and onomatopoeia in full force.

Frame #3: Two line drawings which resolve themselves into women, suggestions of nakedness, intimacy. Great names, but where are their nipples?

Frame #4: The woman is half-naked. Speech balloons cover her nipples. Her smiling lover is holding a gun to her head. The half-naked woman has something to say about that. Ten frames later she disarms the smiler and that particular aspect of the mystery is solved. But she had me worried for a minute there.

Frame #5: A scene in parliament. The entire conservative caucus wearing Sam Browne belts and Hitler mustaches surges behind Brian Mulroney who waves in his fist a rolled-up copy of "Oh..." A speech balloon dribbles from the corner of his frothing lips: It's anti-mediocre! It's dangerously creative! It's amusingly and sexually subversive! Elect me and I promise to seek out the makers of "Oh..." and DESTROY THEM!

Frame #6: A shiny watch spins on a chain. Behind it, an enormous pair of eyes, their pupils replaced by spirals. Thought balloon: Buy it...buy it...buy it...

Frame #7: A note to the sane: "Oh..." is a comic for us grown-up lesbians, produced in right here in Victoria. It's got lesbian super-heroes and lesbian archetypes and lots of cats. Available at Everywomen's Books. Good stuff.

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ADS & NOTICES

Items for this column must be submitted by the 12th of the month to appear in the following month's issue. Items may be mailed to us at P.O. Box 5339, Stn. B, Victoria V8R 6S4, or submitted by phone to Karey at 380-7562.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

GUESS WHAT? (FREE PLUG FOR QUESNEL)

A lesbian support group is starting in Quesnel. For information write Quesnel Women's Resources, 690 McLean Street, Quesnel, B.C. V2J 2P6. OR FAX them at 992-6160. This group has also asked for any information a lesbian support group here may have that to pass on as above - attention Alice Stoddard. (Ed: *Do we have a lesbian support group in Victoria? If so how about letting our intrepid and ill-informed reporters know about it. We can use the copy.*)

LESBIANS OVER FORTY

A social club for over 40s has been started for those who are bored with the bar scene, can't remember the bar scene, are new in town, or just want some fun and new faces. Our first outing was a walk at the Swan Lake Sanctuary. So far our common interests are hiking, scrabble, cards, camping, bridge and bowling. If you are interested & old enough call Sandy 656-2772 or Dawn 384-2601.

LESBIAN FASTBALL players wanted for competitive team. Try-outs March 15, 17, 22, 24, and 27. For further info, phone 727-0908.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Press gang Publishers is calling for unpublished writing/ artwork for a Canadian/New Zealand lesbian anthology edited by Beth Brant and Cathie Dunsford. Short stories, biographical writing, B&W artwork and other creative submissions depicting lesbian experiences of colonialism-including colonization of indigenous cultures and of women's bodies-are sought. Aboriginal women and women of colour are particularly encouraged to submit work. Send SASE with submission to Press Gang Publishers, 603 Powell, Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6A 1H2. Deadline: Mar 31/93. Do not send orig. artwork. Write or call 253-2537 for more info.

TIME TO RENEW • TIME TO RENEW

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



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 1
LESBIAN SENIORS CARE SOCIETY
Next meeting at Apt. 102, 950 Rockland Avenue, Monday, March 1st, 7:30 p.m. Further information call 386-8380.

March 8 and March 13
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY
Uppity Women, lesbian women, all women, even REAL women? your attention puhleeze!!! March 8 is International Women's Day. Victoria Status of Women has planned and is planning a number of events for the women's community.

There's a potluck March 8.
There's a dance March 13 at Cedar Hill Recreation Centre. And there will be a number of video showings at the SWAG office, #320-620 View Street.
Call SWAG for details 381-1012.

March 19
WOMEN'S NIGHT AT RUMORS
(See article this issue, "Women's Night at Rumors", p. 10)

March 24
BUILDING A GAY POSITIVE WORLD
An evening of information and discussion with psychotherapists, Rowena Hunnisett and Mary Wilkie, Wednesday March 24th, 7:30 p.m., Victoria Centre for Self Awareness, University Hights Mall, Upper Level, Shelbourne and MacKenzie. For more info, call: 721-0405.

CLASSIFIEDS ACCOMMODATION:


FERNWOOD--newly renovated character home has large furnished room for April 1. Looking for student or working lesbian. N/S share bathroom, kitchen. \$300. Tel. 388-0808.

SALTSPRING NS woman seeks Monday to Thursday accommodation in quiet house while working in Victoria. March until June. Heather, days 387-0945 or 537-2547 weekends.

HELP WANTED:

WOMAN WITH TRUCK - wanted to haul away discarded kitchen / bathroom fixtures and misc. junk. Bodies available to help load. Please phone Diana at 386-7458 evenings or weekends.

ellenews HAS OPENINGS for new members! And we're not talking nostrils, either! Women with an interest in writing, illustrating, editing, computers, lay-out, paste-up, cartooning, designing graphics and covers, business management, marketing, licking stamps, or any of the 1000 + 1 things involved in putting out a monthly newsletter are invited to join the staff of LNEWS. Experience is not a requirement. For more info and the date of our next meeting, phone 380-7562. Ask for Karey.



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