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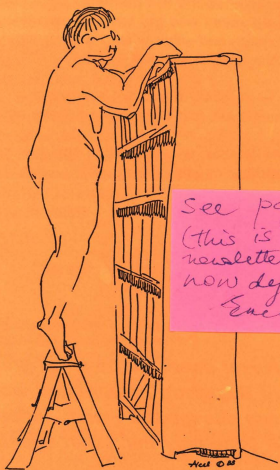
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VISIBLE

We are

Letters-Essays-Stories-Art-Reports-Poetry-Announcements-Ideas-Visions-Humor
 By, for and about lesbians & women sixty years and more



See page 4
 (this is a U.S.
 newsletter -
 now defunct!)
 Encore



Looking for the TRIBAL ELDERS - II

LAST ISSUE

★ This is a sad day for me dear friends and contributors because this is the last issue of We are VISIBLE. We had a few responses to the last issue, but not enough to warrant continuing. For those of you who sent a subscription, I apologize and will be glad to refund any outstanding money. If I do not receive a request from you, I will use your donation toward outstanding costs of printing and mailing.

There is certainly a great deal more information and analysis on age and aging, even ageism, than there was when this newsletter (then called Our OWN) was published in the early '70's by two courageous and farsighted women, Elana and Elizabeth. Since that time, several of us have edited and changed the newsletter, trying to keep up with the times - computers and all! At least, some of us are now aware of ageism even if we still experience it more often than we care to remember. I am amazed at the number of advertisements out there telling me to try this or that to keep "youthful" or "wrinkle-free". We can use it internally or have it done to us externally. Some current statistics I received recently indicates again that women continue to be economically discriminated against - Two out of three women don't have a pension; women over 65 are three times as likely to be poor as men the same age. You know all this and more and we have to continue to be angry and vigilant and agitating for change and even EQUALITY. Yes, all the "isms" are alive and well.

I will continue to be a strong, vocal Feminist in all the ways I can. Please keep in touch with me if you wish at 1023 Bath Street, Santa Barbara, Ca. 93101. Or phone us at 805 966-7796.

Vashte
1927

★ It is especially sad in these days of closing women's bookstores, opposition to women's issues and a renewed surge of male domination, to have to discontinue issuing We are VISIBLE.

For me, the energy I have used to produce it is minimal. I became 80 years old in July, and although I am in relatively good health, I have cut down on the number of activities I engage in. Plus, after a lifetime of political activism, I feel a need to withdraw somewhat and use the time I have now for pathways I was too busy, of necessity, to explore and enjoy when I was younger and struggling to survive.

I wish for all of you the peace and happiness that I am sure you have earned.

Remember, too, that when one door closes, another opens.

Lets keep in touch.

Betty
1918

★ *Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed women can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever has*★

Adapted from a quote by
Margaret Mead.



Love from
us both

*** Spendthrift at 80**

In days when I was profligate
with time
The disregarded clock moved on

Without knowledge of its
speeding hands,
Or care that life was
circumscribed

I let the hours slip away
un-named

Not even to be caught in
hazy memory

A minute, an hour, a day
A week, a month, a year
Once only words in a child's
book of time,
Are now compass stars to
steer by
In a swift and towering
sea of years.

***Alysan Hooper
1917**

***Alysan received the Editor's Choice Award from the
National Library of Poetry for outstanding
achievement in poetry for this poem.**

***Things grow stale and old not because
they are old but because we cease to
see them.**

Whole vibrant significant worlds
around us disappear within the somber
mists of familiarity.

Libby Masarit



***Twin Beauties**

In that place
"where the Missouri and the Mississippi
meet, at the point where the currents cross"
out of the place of pain
shock and grief, fear and
rage, our love grows,
a wild orchid in the woods

Out of the place where the rivers meet
swells a secret confluence
called where the twin beauties
meet

Out of the place where the rivers meet
in the tangled currents
where your legs hold mine
I am growing a new plant
grafting skin from your
skin, joy from your
merry eyes, love
from what you know

That place where
twin beauties meet
entwine and bloom
is holy ground

***Tirzah Gerstein
1926**



*Coming up to 70 - Who I really am

at 68.....

Who I really am

Is a poet

A wild woman
loving the leaping
of the mind
wanting to go on
and delve into the

true

true

Who I really am

Is a tree
whose roots still cling
to the old ways

I bend and sway in the
winds of time
my branches sweep the
ground

In the Fall
I feel useless ideas
beliefs, concepts
withering away

In Spring
I put forth new
green, vibrant
shoots
glossy, glowing

Changes

Who I really am
is a gypsy

caught inside 4 walls
only escaping in the
seasons that
allow my body to be
active with nature

A gardener

I am the river full and deep
washing against the banks
of conformity
pushing against the barriers
erected by myself
in collusion with
a sick society

Who I really am

is a singer
performing at La Scala
resplendent in costume
singing lead roles
in Tosca, Carmen
arias soaring to the ceiling
my voice swelling
an orchestra throbbing with the
power of music
before me

I am an adventurer,
strong of spirit
who knows no bounds
traversing the earth
seeking new places
exploring,
meeting new cultures
enjoying their lives, their food,
their spirits.

I am a wave

(continued over/)



*Coming up to 70 (cont.)

I am a wave
 endlessly pounding
 a sandstone shore
 creating shapes of
 beauty and delight
 foaming between rocks
 throwing seaweed to shore
 enlivening the hearts of surfers
 carrying them on high
 I rear and foam
 splashing the feet of
 small children
 delight in their cries of joy
 as I tumble

I am a contented sprite
 knowing the peace of mossy places
 where ferns shiver and
 fairies make their home
 gathering after dusk to share
 the secrets of the mother

I am the mystery
 the earth's deep centre
 that knows the core of
 life, fecundity

Who I really am is a
 passionate lover
 juicy
 filled with delight
 at the smallest
 caress
 meaningfully given,
 the lover who is giver
 and given to

Who I really am
 is a woman constantly
 giving
 birth to herself
 in amazingly new and wonderful ways

An old woman
 with
 power
 dignity and courage

Who I really am
 is an actress
 playing a million roles
 in a game
 called life

Which one to present?

Others only see
 a withered shell
 and only

I
 know

Who I really am.



*Emma Joy Crone
 1928

*As many of you know, Emma Joy published A Web of Crones from Canada during the '80's until the Web joined forces with Visible. She recently celebrated her 70th birthday - I wish I could have shared it with her. She is much loved.



* FROM THE VANTAGE POINT OF MY OLDER YEARS

Now I understand
what you once tried to tell me
the night we made love
in your studio on Polk Street
once, long ago.
I was so young then,
and so in love
with everything you were -
the artistry of your photographs,
those galleries of the human spirit;
I was in love with your experience,
with your life and your loves.
You were thirty years my senior,
maybe more--
and trying to overcome cancer
and trying to forget
the woman you'd loved
who now lived with someone else,
and trying to find the energy
to go on living.

In your little studio on Polk Street
in San Francisco--
I touched with awe and wonderment
everything that was you:
the woolen muffler that you wore;
the camera that had been
your hallmark;
a little blue teacup
on your kitchen shelf.
I had loved your flamboyance,
your Hepburne look, your history,
your jaunty stride as we walked.
I had loved the city
where you'd spent your life!

I didn't know why, when,
after the night
that we tumbled into each other's arms
with urgent caresses
tasting each others tears and

you sent me away.
I loved you more than life itself.
you were my icon and my Muse
Then, after more than thirty years
in another city, another place -
long after reason
had dominated impulse,
I had a glimmering
of understanding.

I was looking for my poetry
in a college bookshop
when she caught my eye,
slender as a reed
and almost boyish,
yet so vulnerable in beauty,
the youthful skin,
the dark waves
of her raven hair,
her eyes intense
and gray as doves
as she watched me.
The silver-asp bracelet
that encircled her arm
entranced me.

Her scent already
tugged at me
and I could feel my heart
on her parted lips--
could sense the intoxication
of her nearness
like wild cinnamon and oranges.
And I remembered then
how once love was enough -
we could build castles
and live in them
like they were tangerine treehouses

But her beauty
will be irresistible

(Cont: over)

*VANTAGE POINT (cont.)

But her beauty
will be irresistible
to others, too,
and she is thirty years younger-
maybe more.

I thought of you then,
and of long ago,
pausing beside a flower vendor's stall
that called to mind
the sound of cablecars
the scent of rain
and Polk Street
on those San Francisco evenings
So many years,
so many miles away.
Catherine,
how I've often wished
you had never made me go.....

*Anne Wilson
19??



*CATCH ME AGAIN

I've been trying to think if my life is
different now that I've passed the hill of 50;
(what hill? where? I didn't notice any hill)
and I don't see many differences.

What is definitely different is that I
came out to myself and others at the age of
50, and that has made a tremendous
difference in my feelings about myself and
my life. But that doesn't seem to have a
great deal to do with age, although perhaps
I wouldn't have had the courage to do it
earlier. I have always talked rebelliously,
while actually leading a very conventional
life.

In finally acknowledging and acting on
my homosexual feelings, I felt Whole for the
first time in my life; whereas previously I
described myself as mildly depressed. The
feeling of wholeness continued even during
the five years when I wasn't in a
relationship with a woman.

After 50, others commented on my
"wisdom," but I think at one level I've
always been a bit more thoughtful and wise
than my years indicated. I certainly have
never felt invisible; rather my ideas and
comments are often sought out by younger
people. However, I don't hang out with too
many people in their '20's.

Perhaps I'm in denial, but I still do the
same kind of athletic things I have always
done. I'm an excellent swimmer, a very
good tennis player, a fair golfer and an
enthusiastic hiker and bicycle rider. I used
to play softball, but I can no longer throw

(cont. over)

* CATCH ME AGAIN (cont.)

very hard or far and my life as a pitcher is over. My tennis game also is different because my serves don't have the strength they used to have. I probably tire more easily than I used to, but that doesn't stop me from participating.

Psychologically, what worries me is watching my mother, and Lou's mother, both in their mid-nineties, lose their interest in life, become more crippled up physically, and be here only part of the time mentally. This is not only painful to watch, but what does it portend for us -- other than longevity?

I know intellectually that my 90's will not be my mother's 90's, just as my menopause was not my mother's. However I have no wish to live my life as she now does and I can only hope that if my mind starts going, I will have enough strength left to leave legally and peacefully. On the positive side, my father lived until he was 97 and he had his full mental faculties until the end, and I can only hope that I have inherited some of his genes.

Internally, I'm a lot calmer than I was in my thirties and that I attribute to age and the psychological work I have done on myself over the years. I've always come across as being calm, even when my stomach was tied in anxiety knots, but now the inside matches the demeanor. Generally I feel quite peaceful. I have also learned over the years how to say "No" and to be assertive about what I do want, rather than giving in to keep others from being angry with me. I am paying more attention to my own wants and needs, and am more able to maintain boundaries.

Catch me again at 76. Ten years might make a difference.



* Joan Spear
1928

* IE

As I hear the different experiences of my sister-women about surrender - adoption - giving away - giving up - I think of how it would have been for me if my mother had felt she could not keep me when I was born. After all, my brothers were 9, 12, 15 years old. Here I was a surprise - to be born when my mother was 34 - family already set. It would not have been surprising if she had felt she could not handle another child. Anyway - if this had been true, I would never have known
HER SWEET WARM LOVE, GIVEN FREELY
HER TEACHING ME THAT I AM
RESPONSIBLE FOR MY ACTIONS
HER GUIDANCE IN LOOKING AT MANY
SIDES OF A SITUATION
MY SENSE OF JUSTICE
HER LARGE WARM BREASTS TO SLEEP
AGAINST
MY LOVE OF AND FOR WOMEN

THANK YOU, MOM

* Rosemary Hathaway
1930



*CANDY

My name is Christine, but I wish it were Candace. Then I could be called "Candy." That's a sweet name, ha-ha and cute. I am nine years old. Ten really, but having two numbers is scary. They go all the way to 99, and you could be dead a loong time by then. I'm afraid of dying, so I say I'm only nine. My mother looks at me funny when she hears me tell people how young I am.

My nipples are itchy, and I hate them growing big lumps and sticking out of my shirt. Mother told me about how girls get periods and I never ever want that to happen to me. I've got everyone calling me "Candy" now. I am going to change my name legally when I get bigger, but I don't like to say "older."

I'm a teenager in high school, and I wish I could stay here forever. It's fun being a cheerleader. My friends said you get popular if you're a cheerleader, but the boys are stupid and have acne. I never got even one pimple. My complexion is just like a baby's. Janet said she had sex. I thought she was terrible because she could get a disease or a baby. I'm never going to spoil my body with stretch marks or dripping boobs. I want my stomach flat flat flat! I go out with Joey, but he's going in the Army after graduation so good-bye to him. Norman is kinda nice, but his teeth are crooked. Larry is too short to be seen with.

College is more than I can handle, Guess I'm just too dumb to pass chem or French. I got a job at Macy's in the cosmetic department. I said I was 19, not just a year from graduation. I'm learning how proper make-up can hide blemishes, not that I have any, or wrinkles, god forbid!

Even clothes count. Wearing vertical stripes or black, keeps those small bulges from being obvious. Its time to sign up for a gym, or diet for a while. Its only 8 lbs or so to lose.

I gave Derek back his ring. He's just not for me. All he wants out of life is to stay on the assembly line like his father. I'm head of cosmetics now and make good money.

Funny how Dereks keep coming into my life. The second one I married. But it didn't last long. Do this, do that, and its got to be HIS way, or else. Men are asses, so I tried women. I never wanted anyone to know I was brought up to believe in the religious malarkey about burning in hell, but if it is true, I'm gonna be one hot cookie.

So I gave up messing with anyone to be on the safe side. I'm back in cosmetics, and I look as good as the other sales ladies who are somewhat younger than I. So maybe there is a line or two around my eyes. The right make-up covers it all. My hairdresser says I should stop using hair color products. She says my hair is thinning, but I don't see it that way. I have no idea what color is under the blond, so I told her to just keep it going and tease it up a little.

(continued over)



*CANDY (continued)

I don't have to be on the sales floor ever again. They have all kids there now, and I'm a buyer!

I can lose a pound a week if I use my new electronic walker. If I use it every day in a year I'll be a size 14. There's a new plastic surgery procedure that doesn't leave your face still as a mask. Maybe I'll look into it, but my complexion is just like a baby's. A tooth in the back is loose and shaking. The Xray showed some bone deterioration, but nothing serious. Just one tooth. Had a little scare. There was a bit of blood on the toilet paper. After not having periods and bleeding from one end, it was a bit disconcerting to see it on the other. I'm sure its just from straining.

The damned Social Security is giving me a hard time. They said I was only 64, and have my work records to show proof. So, I'll have to fish out my birth certificate. Dammit, I can't find my glasses anywhere and I'm having to use the old prescription. This top denture keeps me from eating anything too hard, so I've lost a lot of weight. My stomach has been bothering me from my inability to eat regularly.

Luckily Eunice found me when she came to clean, or I'd probably still be on the floor. I don't quite remember what happened, but I'm in a lot of pain, laying flat on my back. Must be in a hospital or something. There are tubes in my arms. I wish my hairdresser would visit, my hair is a mess. I must look a sight - no make-up, no teeth.

Yes, I'm Christine, I remember that, aged 64. But people call me Candy, isn't that sweet?

What operation did I have? Do I know you?

* Miriam Carroll
1930



DANGER
HEALTH
WARNING

BEING A WOMAN
IN THIS SOCIETY
CAN SERIOUSLY
DAMAGE YOUR
MENTAL HEALTH

*TO ANYA

Your poetry
is like
the best
Ballet dancer

Head high,
a noble neck
swanlike
it lifts itself
into the air
seemingly
with

no effort

* Patricia Tremblay
1926



*THE UNMENTIONED

When we were in high school there were things never mentioned. Even in gym class, if we were bleeding we got excused because we had a "visitor". We told secrets at slumber parties about girls who probably "did it" but everyone was really shocked when a very nice girl, whom we all loved, had gotten herself into trouble and had to get married. We were taught to be ashamed of our female body parts and to never mention the words for them (except to doctors). My friend told her mother when she started bleeding and her mother slapped her!

When I was in Junior High with JoAnne we were reprimanded for playing Spin-the-Bottle at Scout Camp which our parents thought was really funny, since everyone knew that nothing could ever happen with "just the girls". Later, in high school, spending the night, we played these games: "It's okay if a boy kisses you like this," we'd say, and practiced closed-mouth kissing. "But sometimes, boys try to kiss you this way" and we'd open our mouths and lie panting and delirious in each other's arms, promising we would never let a boy do THAT!

The night of our Senior Prom, at last, she floated over the floor in clouds of white lace, with rhinestones in her upswept hair; her bare shoulders petaled with orchids. Why did I feel so betrayed when, meeting me in the girls' room, she said, "If he kisses me the OTHER way tonight, I'm going to let him"!

*Anne Wilson

●RECOMMENDED READING

- As usual, Mother Tongue Inc., has put out an exciting edition of WE'MOON '99, the focus this year being LUNAR POWER, Gaia Rhythms for Womyn. If you regularly get this calendar, you will be delighted, and if you have not had the pleasure of day to day delights, treat yourself and your friends. Available from your bookstore for \$14.95.
- TURNIP BLUES, a novel by Helen Campbell, is the enduring story of the journey of a lifetime for two spunky 75-year-old women to visit the grave of the legendary blues artist, Bessie Smith. The author creates a brilliant collage of personalities and relationships, family and friends...heart-wrenching, bittersweet, a humorous story of guilt and loss; of intractability and toughness; of the role of survival; of forgiveness and redemption; and especially, the power of women to sustain one another in the hardscrabble struggle that is life. Spinsters Ink, \$10.95, or from your bookstore.
- A stunning debut novel by Mariana Romo Carmona, LIVING AT NIGHT, draws us into the world of Erica Garcia, a young, working class Puerto Rican lesbian searching for her place in the world. We see her struggle to maintain the dignity of the old people she cares for in an institution for developmentally disabled persons. It is a story of hope and redemption - a healing read. Spinsters Ink, \$10.95.
- Remember PILOT BOOKS for books like Free US Tourist Attractions. Call them at 1-800-79PILOT for a catalog.

'considering how dangerous everything is
nothing is really very frightening'

We are VISIBLE

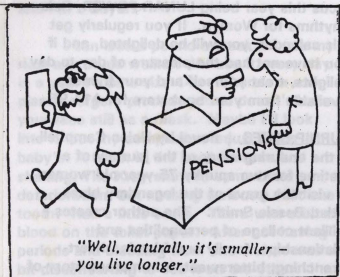
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Thanks so much for all the years!
-Love- VXX

LAST
ISSUE

