

PLEASE RETURN To Emma Joy. No

HQ 75
057

the open door

Special Crone's Issue

This newsletter
now defunct.
Judith Quinlan
still at spa &
has a farm
which I may visit
see end



A NEWSLETTER FOR RURAL FEMINISTS AND LESBIANS

Published at Sky Ranch

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WINTER SOLSTICE 1995

EDITORIAL

Well, it looks like Shiverree, the Goddess of Frozen Butts has finally prevailed! (See Linda Kay's article on 'found goddesses' on the back page). Speaking of which, Ms. Manners, who doesn't appear on these pages, is looking for ideas about your own found goddesses- send them in...

This issue is a special issue on Crones, and Emma Joy Crone has kindly offered to edit a regular "Crone's Corner". So send her your articles, poems, thoughts, cartoons etc., and hopefully we can make this a regular feature. See the second last page for her address.

It seems one or two readers felt the last issue on violence was unseemly. That women should not talk about anger and should concentrate on love. The Open Door welcomes controversy- but I can't print letters that merely make personal attacks, and I won't print religious harangues. Any readers who wish to make thoughtful criticisms of anything you read in TOD, please feel free. By the way, the majority of responses to the "violence" issue were overwhelmingly favourable. We DO get angry, we have a right to our anger, and learning how to direct our anger constructively is an essentially feminist exercise.

"Mine eyes have seen the glory
Of the rise of women's rage.
Lain smouldering for centuries
Now burning in this age..."

For those of you who remember my neo-Luddite rants in previous issues, I have a confession. I bought a snowblower. A very small snowblower. But a snowblower nevertheless. And I love it. It's mid-December, and my snow piles are already six feet deep, so I think I can justify its existence! There is nothing as satisfying as neat, clear paths and a big enough space to turn the pickup around in. I round off the edges, just so it doesn't look too much like Alice through the Looking Glass. I still don't have a vacuum cleaner, but I wouldn't say no if someone gave me one...

Now that winter is really here, I've started dipping into the titles in The Open Door library again. "In Search of April Raintree" by Beatrice Culleton blew me away. It's an extremely beautiful, sad and thought-provoking book. If you'd like to sample the many good reads available through The Open Door library, write to:

Susan Armstrong
Comp 8 Site 14 RR 7
Vernon, B.C.
V1T 7Z3

If you enjoy getting The Open Door, and haven't paid a subscription lately, please consider sending some money to support it. Hundreds of women read The Open Door, and it goes to rural women's centres, gay groups, transition houses etc., as well as individuals. But it costs a lot of money- especially the postage. Every donation helps. So please, in this season of giving, give a little to support the rural women's movement.

Now I've got into the idea of Special Issues, the next special issue (if you send enough stuff in) will be on ... ta-da... Erotica!. So snuggle up in your winter woolies, put pen to paper, finger to keyboard, or wherever else you'd like to put it, and write, draw, dream, your own erotic fantasy. Or a piece on the function of erotica. Or a true story. Have fun. Keep warm.

-Judith

WHEN I'M AN OLD WOMAN...

- please don't call me "dear" (unless I am dear to you)
- please don't call me "feisty" (no matter what I do)
- don't take my hand (unless I ask you to)
- don't pat my head (that makes me "feisty" too)
- don't make me listen to "Amazing Grace"
- don't talk to me with your face in my face
- don't shout to me (unless I can't hear)
- just turn up the music and pass me a beer.

RECLAIMING THE CRONE... A HERSTORY

-by Emma Joy Crone

The word OLD is being used by many women who are actively engaged in fighting ageism. I am both old and fighting. At 49 I found my post-menopausal zest a stepping stone to a new life force that surged within me, nine years after the divorce that I thought had ended my life, but had in fact set me on the road to freedom. This meant not only freedom of movement, to travel and find the self that was not evident in my teens in post-war England, but the freedom to express myself as a feminist and, now, as an old lesbian.

In my 40s when I first found feminism, and went to conferences, meetings, consciousness-raising groups and women's dances, I was unaware that old women were not represented in any area of the women's movement. I was full of my new experiences, up to my eyeballs in the issues, learning about the oppression which had been part of my life, and of course totally idealistic about everything going on around me. I was often the token older woman, being praised by the young women for what I was 'doing at my age'.

My identity and self concept have continued to change drastically during my aging process. This is a continual source of amazement and wonder for me and those who know me. As I evolve, so does my view of society and the stereotypes directed at older women.

As I age, I find the hardest thing to accept is the growing stereotyping and indifference in society to the old woman and her place in it. I have come to understand that a woman's aging process is quickened if she is of low or fixed income; or working in a demanding physical job such as waitressing, factory work or single motherhood. This woman's reality is very different from her more affluent, better educated sisters'. The stress of work takes its toll on all of us, but some have the advantages of a comfortable home, respite from the children, amenable surroundings and peers who are in a similar situation (an old girls' network, if you will). Poor or low-income women have a harder time maintaining good health and generally keeping their act together.

Now, at 64, I look at my mother and am saddened by her diseased body, the result of a lifetime of hard work- she began washing windows in her mother's boarding house when she was five.

Even the language is derogatory. Society calls us 'old' behind our backs, while calling us older, senior, golden age to our faces. People use the term 'little old lady' to trivialize the fact that women do have a tendency to shrink as we age. We are also called 'feisty' if we are outspoken or told that we 'look good for our age'.

Mainstream media rarely portray old women positively. I wonder how many old women are part of the editorial staff of newspapers, magazines and periodicals.

Ageism is all around us and we must be careful not to internalize the language, or the attitudes that are so prevalent. Old women are low status, underemployed, underhoused, undervalued and underloved. Many are put into 'old folks homes' where sedatives effectively prevent mental stimulation. I try to imagine myself in this type of setting, typewriter clattering away noisily, books filling every available space. But what about my cat, my garden, my peace of mind?

By the year 2000, there will be an estimated two million women over 65 in Canada. A few years ago, while involved in the fight over the Canadian government's intention to de-index pensions, I read in a Vancouver newspaper that in the first half of the next century, age could become a more divisive influence on the world than race, sex and class have been, because of the growing number of old people in today's rich countries. It went on to report that "(the old) could be an invigorating source of output and ideas and tomorrow's elderly will be quite formidable as a political lobby..."

Feminists of age will have an opportunity to make a considerable difference in the future, particularly if we want to take leadership roles.

At 56 I decided to find out who and where my peers were in the feminist world. Articles and a newsletter, A Web of Crones, (published from '85-'89) became my tools for increasing the visibility of old women. Crones gathered on the island where I now live in British Columbia and I started to correspond with women in Germany, Brazil, England and Australia. I met old lesbians who shared my politics.

One practical step to consider is the preparation of a 'living will' to ensure that institutions will not artificially keep us alive against our wills. We can prepare a Power of Attorney so our loved ones will not be denied access or visiting rights. This was important to me, given that my lover is not legally recognized as next of kin or even recognized as a partner in our homophobic society.

I believe that senility and many other so-called aging 'disorders' are due to segregation and/or isolation. We must contribute to the creation of resources (human and structural) to enable those who wish to live alone to be nurtured.

As old women, we must look for allies. I have been talking to friends about what I think my future needs will be. Establishing a type of caring network is important to me because I do not want to inflict total caregiving on my love (who is 27 years younger than I am). I am excited to think of having many feminists as caregivers and of the stimulation this would bring to my life.

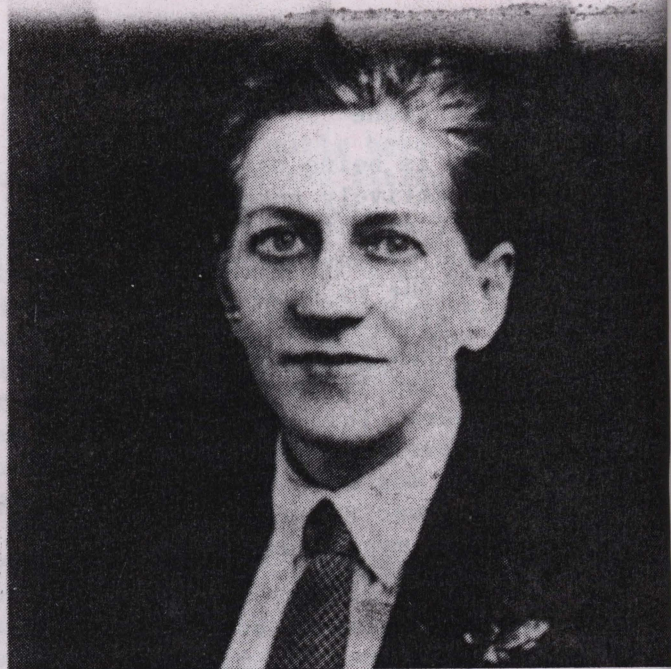
We need to attend to our fears around health and money and make our presence known in women's communities. We need to celebrate our differences, affirm the diversity of our backgrounds, and challenge the stereotypes and oppressions that have been so destructive to our lives for generation upon generation. It is my hope that all old women will come out, be seen, and raise their voices.

-reprinted from "Herizons", Summer 1992

CHALLENGE Coming Out

Finely tuned, the fencer glides,
With graceful thrusts, parries, strides,
All wary vulnerability;
Accepting life's ironic law,
That - win, or lose, or draw,
The process is the victory,
The trying is the crown,
The effort the renown;
And those who cling to the safety of shore,
By risking nothing, risk even more!

-Sandra Shera



Monte, who was born in the 1880s, and came out as a lesbian aged 105.

-with thanks, from "Lesbians on the Loose"

SOME RECOMMENDED READING FOR CRONES (AND CRONELINGS)

"Growing Old Dis-gracefully; New Ideas For Getting the Most Out of Life" by the Hen Co-op Collective. Crossing Press.

"Sister Gin" by Arnold, June. 1989. New Edition Feminist Press.

"The Coming of Age" by de Beauvoir, Simone. 1973. Warner Books.

"Over the Hill: Reflections on Ageism Between Women" by Cooper, Baba. 1988. Crossing Press.

"Ourselves, Growing Older: Women Aging with Knowledge and Power" by Doress, Paula Brown & Siegel, Diana Laskin. 1987. Simon & Schuster.

"Look me in the Eye: Old Women Aging and Ageism" by MacDonald, Barbara & Rich, Cynthia. 1983. Spinsters Ink.

"Gifts of Age: Portraits and Essays of 32 Remarkable Women" by Painter, Charlotte & Valois, Pamela. 1985. Chronicle Books.

"Recovering: A Journal" by Sarton, May. 1980. Norton.

"The Crone: Woman of Age, Wisdom and Power" by Walker, Barbara G. 1985. Harpers.

A Lavender Twilight

It was the most wrenching scene in *The Sum of Us*, two old lesbians cruelly separated, one withering and dying in her single bed in the nursing home, stripped of her life's experience, her longtime elderly lover broken-hearted and alone. But this filmic fate is no fiction as BARBARA FARRELLY reports.

My private nightmare is to spend my twilight years in the Mater Misery home for wayward convent oldies, snared by the church first in the cradle and last near the grave. *Who ya gonna call ...?*

... Matrix is a Sydney-based organisation developing a blueprint for housing projects for lesbians over 65 years of age.

Church-run nursing homes and hostels for the ageing in New South Wales can, under their charter of rights, exclude lesbians and gay men as residents.

"The whole heterosexual environment of those places is not what the lesbian community sees as the ideal for their later years," says sociologist Helen Waite, who has carried out a pilot study for Matrix to find out what type of accommodation lesbians want for their old age.

"If you go into those [church-run] environments you've got the struggles around visibility and identity all over again and no one wants to keep struggling till their last breath," says Waite, who is a board member of the Australian Centre for Lesbian and Gay Studies which is also conducting research into the needs of ageing homosexuals.

Matrix cautiously estimates older lesbians in Australia numbered 153,000 in 1994, a population projected to grow to 310,000 by the year 2041 in a country where the average female life span is 80.4 years.

"Matrix is hoping if we get one housing project off the ground," says Waite, "we can document what we're doing very clearly so we can create a working model of self-management that's not dependant entirely on a government handout.

"It's developing a model so that groups, say a community at Lismore, can pick up the Matrix model and do it a whole heap faster. Groups of women in different places would not have to reinvent the wheel; they would know who to contact. There would be a model for financial structure and management, funding for these projects, the legal structure would be in place, people could copy or modify it to suit."

Matrix is waiting to hear if a grant for \$49,000 has been approved by the Office of the Status of Women to carry out a proper study and needs analysis of ageing lesbians before pleading any case for government funding.

"In terms of aged care, with increasing privatisation, the fact that huge numbers of these places are now run by church bodies actually poses a real legal dilemma for the government. We have a very strong case for one to one capital funding for any project

because the government has allowed the church to exclude us from services they are also funding in aged care," Waite says.



Nitrate Kisses . . . Sally Binford and Frances Lorraine in Barbara Hammer's 1992 film about older lesbians.

Although people talk fondly of the now fabled Old Dykes Home, that is not the preferred option according to the Matrix pilot study, which Waite stresses is a narrow sample of 24 women aged between 40-69 years.

Most people wanted their independence and privacy and very few wanted shared households.

"Most wanted something like the mainstream retirement village where you've got staged accommodation, where you're

independent, where you're assisted and where you can have nursing home care all on the one site, but staffed by people who can really understand us — and that shouldn't be hard — and it has all the cultural and social aspects to it that could never be met in a mainstream retirement village," Waite told LOTL.

The pilot study found not only were privacy and independence important concerns, there were also fears of being alone during old age (especially in a traditional mainstream aged care facility), a need to be in the company of other like-minded people to keep stimulated and motivated and also to be able to avoid discrimination.

"The most important thing to emerge," says Waite, "is support from the community and maintenance of connections with the community, that's what most people want. That requires lateral thinking about how to do that. And location is going to be important and once you start thinking in the city you're looking at really big

money."

Waite concedes "there is some debate" but the steering committee is "of one mind" Matrix is a lesbian-only organisation.

"Half the women in this pilot do not want to live with men, gay or otherwise. In fact it seems they want to live in an all-women environment and the sexuality is less important than the gender of other residents. That makes joint projects harder."

On the other hand, half the sample would not mind living with old gay men.

For now, Matrix is creating an awareness this work is going on.

"Younger women will recognise if they put some work in now it will be in place for them when they want it," says Waite.



THE FUNCTION OF THE POET

-by Mary Billy

Irving Layton once wrote that "the function of the poet is to warn people about the dangers of the human soul." That the reason he writes is to "exalt and celebrate" the images and emotions of everyday life.

So, in order to do that the poet must always see things first, sound the warning bell and risk being called silly, stupid, a cr pe-hanger, or at best, guilty of walking in where angels fear to tread. As well, to "exalt and celebrate" life, one must be an observer of its myriad details and layers of details and put them into some kind of order and perspective. Not only for her own sake, but also for the preposterous idea that she can make her views public and that others will not only find them interesting, but interesting enough to pay money to read them. Such arrogance should not go unrewarded.

Poets live like paupers usually, go incognito through life, like walking movie cameras and recorders, sponges, soaking up and sensing by some kind of osmosis or perhaps even magic, what they can't actually see and feel happening in front of them. Not criticizing, but watching, listening, sorting, refining, always balancing and weighing it all against what they believe to be true, right, fair, good. "By their deeds shall ye know them," we were taught in Sunday School, and although hardly anything learned there ended up being true, there are a few things that have stuck and proven to be valuable lessons. This is one

of them. It is the job of the poet to be aware of both the internal and external politic and to take note of it, make note of it, satirize the fool and celebrate the heroine, hone out the essence and put it together in such a way that we reflect back to our readers some part of their or our own existence.

Cynics all, (at least most of the poets I know) we observe and file, observe and file, never expecting to win, never expecting the world to win. So when we do, we are overjoyed and celebrate outrageously, blather on and on about it all, boring those who don't live in the world of words and descriptions of things, of feelings, places, or ways of being. We then revert back to where we do our best work, on paper with words. Once more bring order out of chaos, once more make sense of the world. A poet is indeed a strange and wondrous thing, and as much as I hate to agree with anything Irving Layton says, also "exalts and celebrates" the images and emotions of human life. A major step in the life of any poet in my view, is when we finally learn to trust our own voice, that the way it works best for us is the right way. It frees us up to speak our peace/piece, become a filter, a medium if you will, for the spirit to move through, create magic and music; provide a viewpoint that resonates with care, thought, emotion and the creative energy that carries both ourselves and our readers off into that other dimension beyond ordinariness.

WOMEN AND THE ECONOMICS OF AGING

-adapted from an article in the "Times Feminist", the bimonthly journal of the Victoria Status of Women Action Group
-by Heather Gropp

We are an aging population. Women and men are living longer than ever before, and women form a majority of the older population. In 1991, in Canada, there were 138 women for every 100 men over 65 and 274 women for every 100 men aged 90 and over.

Women, as they age, experience a number of situations which many men do not. These issues- inadequate pensions, abuse, affordable housing, isolation, and a general lack of respect, etc.- have been largely ignored by policy makers and social agencies. If you are a woman with a disability, an aboriginal woman, a woman of colour or a poor woman the difficulties are compounded.

SWAG is currently co-ordinating a Women and the Economics of Aging Project. The project's aims are two-fold: 1) to submit a report to the federal government as part of their pension review, and 2) to form an Older Women's Network- creating a place and time for women to gather, plan activities and offer support. Information is being gathered in two ways: from recent publications, reports and articles, and, more importantly, from talking with women about their lives, their daily realities, their hopes and fears for the future. Some of the issues being explored include:
*WOMEN AND ECONOMIC SECURITY: Half of Canadian women over 65 live in poverty and many have had little financial independence over their lives. Many rely on one or a combination of the Old Age Security, Guaranteed Income Supplement and Spouse's Allowance programs as their sole source of income. These

programs are inadequate and need improvement.

*VIOLENCE: Many women experience family violence in various forms- sexual assault, physical and emotional abuse, financial exploitation and neglect. Canadian research indicates that almost twice as many women than men are victims of elder abuse. This violence must stop.

*HOUSING: The number of older women living alone is increasing. In B.C., one in two women over 75 living in a private household lives alone while over 70% of men over the age of 75 live with a spouse. Women over 75 are also three times more likely than men to be living in institutions or long-term-care facilities. Many of these women face isolation from their peer group. Living arrangements which better meet their needs must be developed.

For more information on this project, of the Older Women's Network, contact SWAG

P.O. Box 8484
Victoria, B.C.
V8W 3S1
(604) 383-7322

RESOURCES FOR CRONES

"Old Lesbians Organizing for Change"
PO Box 980422
Houston, Texas
77098
USA

"Seniors Active in a Gay Environment"
(SAGE)
208 W. 13th St.
New York, NY
1011 USA

Lesbian Seniors Housing Project
c/o SWAG
P.O. Box 8484
Victoria, B.C.
V8W 3S1
(604) 383-7322

"Older Feminists Network"
c/o ASTRA
54 Gordon Road
London N3 1EP
ENGLAND

"Matrix Guild of Western Australia"
-by and for older lesbians
PO Box 51
Gosnells WA 6110
AUSTRALIA

FINDING HER HERE
Jayne Relaford Brown

I am becoming
the woman I've wanted,
grey at the temples,
soft body, delighted,
cracked up by life
with a laugh that's known bitter
but, past it, got better,
knows she's a survivor-
that whatever comes,
she can outlast it.
I am becoming a deep
weathered basket.

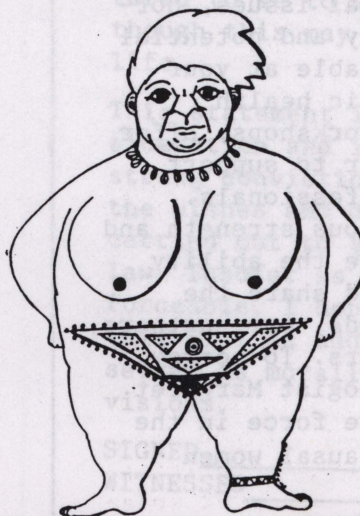
-excerpt from "I Am Becoming the Woman I've Wanted", edited by Sandra Haldeman Martz. Published by papier-mache.

A mind stretched by a new idea never
goes back to its old dimensions.

CHARGE OF THE CRONE

I am the beauty of the dark moon and the dark earth beneath your feet. I am rest in the evening of your life. I am the skin and bones of your existence. I am She who is weathered by time, aged to perfection. I am the midwife to the dying, promise of life everlasting. All acts of birthing and dying are my rituals. I am Hecate, Erishkegal, Baba Yaga, Menat. I am Sedna, Sheilg-na-gig, Sibyl, Edda, Weisse Frauen. I am the darkness you fear and welcome. I am the freedom to express your essence. I am the courage to cast aside the opinions of others, as you live life according to your own plan. I am the wisdom that can guide the world. I am the energy of the old, the knowledge of when to end, of when to cut the cord. I was with you at your birthing and will be with you to ease the transition of your dying into yet another rebirth.

—Antiga



MENOPAUSE: A TIME OF ZEST

-by Lynda A.

-reprinted from "Celebration"

THE CHANGE. Do these words strike you with terror? Do you have visions of yourself as a sexless cranky creature with a dowager's hump? Not so! Menopause is not a disease, not a medical condition, not a loss of sexuality and not the beginning of the end. It is a time of transition, a natural physiological change, and a cause for celebration.

As western women, we have historically been victimized by the patriarchal medical system. Our natural processes have been labelled in negative and demeaning terms. Menstruation- in some countries a time when women are worshipped for their special powers- is referred to here as "the curse".

Pregnancy and childbirth have been stolen from women, treated as illnesses, and controlled by the "expert" physician or gynecologist, most often a male. We have been conditioned to believe that aging is bad, begins at 30 and shudders to a creaky halt at menopause, when we are expected to beignly accept our fate as old and powerless. In fact, peri and post menopausal women are often notoriously outspoken and creative. One only need know (or be) a 40 year plus woman to know this.

We, as women, are the most reliable experts on our own health care. It is our responsibility to access a health practitioner who recognizes this and who respects our right to collaboratively develop a personal program of wellness. Information on menopause, including physical changes, nutritional needs, exercise, vitamin or herb therapy, social and emotional issues, hormone replacement therapy and potential health risks, are available at your local Health Unit. Public health nurses may facilitate workshops, offer info packages, and refer to support groups and feminist professionals.

Women have tremendous strength and resourcefulness. We have the ability to empower ourselves and share the vitality with our friends, our partners, our daughters and mothers. To borrow a phrase from anthropologist Margaret Mead, "the most creative force in the world is the post-menopausal women with zest."

METAMORPHOSIS

We begin then,

Eggs

Hatching in various ways

Are we larvae

Unique beings

Have we progressed to

Caterpillars

Crawling on our bellies

Senses to the ground

Are we pupae hiding in

Cocoons

Or do we lie quiescent in

Chrysalis

How long is the season

Of our transformation

Will we be butterflies

Soon?

-Reva Hutkin

"I am a 59 year old activist, mother who appeared in the NFB film 'Forbidden Love' which seems a final act of breaking down the last vestiges of my closet door- and breaking the silence of Lesbian Lives. I have a daughter of 28, and do photography as an avocation as well as writing."

Almost every word in the English language that has to do with women has some degrading meaning.

-Jessie Sheridan

PENPAL WANTED

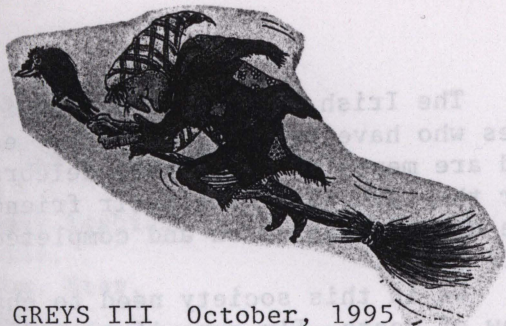
Would like a penpal. I'm 38, enjoy archery, 3 pitch ball, outdoors, fishing writing, non-smoker, in transition right now looking at moving to the west coast in '96. Very athletic. Enjoy morning walks. Like music of 60's and 70's era and a new artist Jan Arden & The Wyrd Sisters.

deborah-marie

320 Foster Ave.

Belleville, Ont.

K8N 3R5



AMAZING GREYS III October, 1995

At the Island Hall Hotel, in Parksville B.C. over 100 old/older women and their younger allies came together once again to share, to dance, to eat, to laugh, play drums, eat a gourmet banquet, listen to poetry, share stories, and enjoy by witnessing or participating in a Croning Ceremony.

I use the terms old/older because many women I meet and with whom I attempt to share my concerns about our invisibility and the ageism in our society are upset by the term OLD- I have no problems with it, and until someone can think up another word for the greying hair and wrinkles and slowing down of my body, I shall continue to use the word OLD.- I'm nearly 68, dammit, approaching the biblical three score and ten. Alive, kicking and very well in my thinking, speaking and disseminating information that comes my way regarding old women.

Back to the Gathering about which I would like to share. It was opened on Friday evening by singing and chanting led by Susan Eshelman, an ally from one of the Gulf Islands, followed by scrumptious vegetable and cheese snacks and a reception and cash bar. On Saturday morning a woman spoke of Past Lives in Egypt, another of her visit to the International Women's Conference in Beijing. After lunch there were various workshops, a popular one was given by a very informed woman on Menopause- her latest book on the subject being 36 hours hot off the press. Her name is Merri Lu Park, and if anyone out there needs some good info. on this subject you can buy it in any women's bookstore. There was a workshop on alternative cultures, including Hawaiian 'HUNA' which I went to and found very interesting. There was a talking circle led by Mary Billy who many will remember as the long-time editor of HERSPECTIVES. Mary also gathered together an anthology of poetry read at Amazing Greys II, some of which I'm sure many old/older women can relate to. These anthologies are available for \$10 ea. (\$9 for orders of 5 or more) plus \$3.50 postage. Just write to Herspectives Publishing, Box 2047, Squamish B.C. V0N 3G0.

The funds raised will enable old/older women, who may not have the funds, to go to Amazing Greys.

I was privileged this year to take part in the Croning Ceremony- when women of age who Wished to be Croned came in all their finery of dress and crowns (there were some amazing renditions) and received the blessings of all those present, as well as the gift of a certificate and an amethyst for transformation (otherwise known as the Crone Jewel).

Betty Nickerson, the main founder of Amazing Greys, has published a re-issue of her book "Old and Smart". Happily we can obtain this in our local women's bookstore too. Betty and her cohorts, Else Kennedy, Mary Billy and many others who brought this all together are to be thanked for such a wonderfully well put together Gathering. Hope to see you there next October. Look out for the announcement of times and dates.

-Emma Joy Crone

A LIVING WILL

To my family, my physicians, my lawyer, my loved ones, and all others whom it may concern:

If the time comes when I can no longer take part in decisions for my own future, let this statement stand as an expression of my wishes and directions, while I am still of sound mind.

If at such a time the situation should arise in which there is no reasonable expectation of my recovery from extreme physical or mental disability, I direct that I be allowed to die and not be kept alive by medications, artificial means, or "heroic measures". I do, however, ask that medications be mercifully administered to me to alleviate suffering even though this may shorten my remaining life.

This statement is made after careful consideration and is in accordance with my strong convictions and beliefs. I want the wishes and directions here expressed carried out to the extent permitted by law. Insofar as they are not legally enforceable, I hope that those to whom this Will is addressed will regard themselves as morally bound by these provisions.

SIGNED _____ DATE _____
WITNESSES _____

BRING ON THE CLOWNS

-by Wild Iris Dragonwoman

A couple of senior friends of mine who live in Vancouver have a friend who is 83 years old and ever since he turned 80 he has been throwing a party for himself which he calls his Pre-memorial.

The old man decided that he didn't want to miss out on hearing all the wonderful things people would say about him and his life at his memorial gathering, so he decided to hold a Pre-memorial party for himself each year until the year he actually crosses over.

This man asked Ann Mortifee if she would sing at his Pre-memorial parties each year and then at his memorial. Ann Mortifee being good hearted, liked the concept of a Pre-memorial party and the old man, so now each year sings at the old fellow's Pre-memorial parties and has also agreed to sing at his memorial.

Death is nothing to fear. I know because I have clinically died and it was the most blissful experience that I have ever known. Most people have read or have heard about the white light that one is drawn to at death. Well, it's true, the white light exists. When I died I was being drawn towards this white light. When the doctors in the hospital somehow brought me back to this life I was outrageously angry because of being taken away from this most blissful magnetic white light experience. I was so angry that when I opened my eyes and saw doctors standing all around the stretcher I was lying on, that I sat bolt upright then punched them all.

Reincarnation is a belief held by many cultures. It is also a belief that in each lifetime we live we are here to learn lessons in order that we may grow and then when we die we go onto the next life to learn more of our Karmic lessons.

In many cultures death is something to be celebrated, not mourned, as our loved ones are not only about to experience the most ultimate white light experience of all, they have also learned what they were meant to learn this time around and are about to embark on their journey into their next life in order that they may continue to learn and grow.

When we mourn or cry over a loved one passing away, the person we are really crying for is ourselves. The sadness is about our own loss of the one we have loved and whom we will never again in this life see in a physical form.

The Irish hold wakes for their loved ones who have crossed over. They eat, drink, and are merry at these wake celebrations for they are happy for their friend or loved one who has passed on and completed this life cycle.

We in this society need to change our view of death. I'm sure if a person who has crossed over could see that all their friends were sitting around feeling sad about them not being on the same plane anymore that they would love the sad ones to hear them say "Hey, don't be sad because I am feeling ultra grand in this new realm and excited about moving on to learn more of what I'm meant to learn on my continuing journey."

We traditionally celebrate birthdays in this society by holding birthday parties and often a clown is invited to a birthday party. Why not start celebrating death by throwing a death party and invite along a clown?

I'd love to have a clown at my death party as a clown has a way of placing smiles on everybody's faces. I'd much rather look back from that other realm I'm in after I've crossed over and see all my loved ones looking happy and laughing at my memorial party than sad or crying. By being happy about my death my loved ones would be sharing in the joy that I was experiencing.

I'm definitely going to hold Pre-memorial parties each year until the day I die once I get a little closer to when it's my time.

As a last wish I'm going to request that someone hire a Clown to Dance on my Grave!

Namasté. Blessed Be.

TO THE WIMMIN who called me regarding camping in the 2-3 hours drive from Vancouver range I would like to thank them. The only problem I had was the two people who responded never left a phone number or any way for me to reach them. Let's try and co-ordinate something for spring/summer '96. Please contact me at 604-872-4762 (24hr Voice Mail) leaving your phone number where you can be reached in the evenings or weekends. I never heard from anyone about gardening so either you're not interested or have a garden already but I for one would still like to grow my own veggies etc. Anyone else out there interested???

-Carol

RURAL OLD LESBIAN

R.O.L. has lived in a
Canyon

With many lesbians
in cabins,
Trillium, Star,
Rainbow.

Outdoor living
Clitoria
Outdoor beds
Under the stars.

R.O.L. has lived
on acres
Amidst towering trees
Slept on the ground
In a tipi
in a trailer
in a henhouse in a sheep pen.

R.O.L.
has danced nude
under waterfalls
In pools
Moonlight glistening
on naked bodies.

R.O.L.
at 49
learned to chop wood
raised a tipi
Discovered her rural self
Had her first Dyke haircut
in a field
Cooked for 12 women
outside
one tap
No stove.

R.O.L.
ate peyote
in a circle
shared visions
heard stories
Lesbian stories
women's pain
women's joy
singing songs, dusk to dawn.

R.O.L.
lived with lesbians
in Denmark, Wales, France and
England, Oregon and Canada.

R.O.L.
travelled to Greece
with ritual lesbians
musicians.
Looking for Sappho
Singing and loving
across continents.

R.O.L.

has grown many gardens,
eaten their produce
in many lands
harvested the Green Goddess
shared in her growth.
Taken a new name, Pennyroyal.

R.O.L.

Lives on an island
is 68
Grows herbs, casts spells
Grows smaller gardens, harvests seeds
Dreams dreams of lesbian nation
Lesbian lands.

-Emma Joy Crone

People who say it cannot be done
should not interrupt those who are
doing it.

MOON GROUP: REMEMBER THE GODDESS

Dancing flames burn high tonight
On this full moon, blazing bright
And fears of millions more to come
Till eventually the sun fades out,
singing the moon on its descent.

The pulsating rhythm of many drums,
A primal beat ever reminding us
Of our Mother who came before,
Throwing flowers at the shore

Into the syncopated rhythms of the waves
Crashing in and out with Her guidance
The cycle of blood, birth and death
Returning us back to the circle

Our breaths are as one, just the same
As the sighing wind and the lull of wave
The rustle of leaves as the trees
Slowly dip and weave into the breeze

To join us in our seemingly pre-planned
Dance as we hold the hands
Of our sisters around the raging fire
The smoke weaves gracefully, higher

To form ancient, timeless reflections
Of others like ours, we know will resonate
...in the futures to come.

-Jung-mee Kim

-by Racine
-reprinted from "Heresies", newsletter
of the Kamloops Women's Resource Centre.



Stepping into any male-dominated sector of society can be an intimidating experience for a woman. This can be especially true in the area of fitness, where youth and strength are emphasized.

But when Betty McIntyre decided to take up Tae Kwon Do two years ago at age fifty, she saw it as a challenge. It may have been easy for her to slip into Tae Kwon Do without much thought, since her youngest son is the instructor. But instead she made a conscious decision to join. Some people told her that she couldn't do it because it was a "man's sport" but Betty disagrees.

"I researched many different Martial Arts and decided on Tae Kwon Do because it is for everybody." Now she is part of a family-run operation that encompasses a Tae Kwon Do gym and another recently-opened gym and retail store.

Betty's philosophy began to formulate when she was in her late thirties, and she carries with it today. "Do what you want to do, not to prove a point, but to do it for yourself."

Armed with such a philosophy, Betty pioneered as the first female volunteer firefighter in Pritchard. She wanted to set an example for other women by rising above self-imposed limitations. She has also given her time and her gifts as a volunteer at Elizabeth Fry, the Sexual Assault Centre, and the non-profit Tae Kwon Do Society, which she helped to found.

There have been many challenges for Betty to face, including the discipline of learning and practicing moves that at first feel unfamiliar to the body. Having to overcome her soft-spoken nature was another obstacle, as Tae Kwon Do requires confident self-expression.

Betty also feels her physical limitations at times. She may draw the line at flying jump kicks, but there are still plenty of goals to reach.

She currently holds a green belt but aspires to attain black belt status. She remembers how she felt when she tested for her first belt. "I was proud of my accomplishment, but I think of myself as one of the group. The belt is not that important."

Being part of the group is high priority with Betty. She enjoys working within a group of people who are all focussed on strengthening mind and body, increasing energy and raising self-esteem. She supports and helps the white belt in any way she can, knowing that these newcomers may soon surpass her in skill and ability.

She has taken part in competitions where she had to compete with women twenty years her junior because there was no-one else in her age category. She appreciates that Tae Kwon Do is geared for individuals to succeed and to advance at their own rate. Even when tested, consideration is given to factors such as age and mental ability so that everyone has a chance to move up and earn higher belts.

Betty takes two back-to-back beginner classes, one with children and one with adults, three times a week. She also works on advanced techniques twice a week. She recalls when the gym was exclusively filled with men and how now there seems to be a balance of the sexes, both in the adult's and children's classes.

Tae Kwon Do students may come and go, but Betty McIntyre is a fixture in the gym with her warm presence and her long silvery hair. She has reached a point in her life where she is confident in following her own visions, and she hopes to "reach a hand back to help the younger ones" along their path. For Betty, this is yet another inner challenge.



MORE WOMEN'S AND GAY RESOURCES:

PROVINCIAL GAY/LESBIAN INFOHELPLINE

1-800-566-1170

This line is open Mon.-Fri. 1-4P.M.
They provide information and help
for gays and lesbians.

NOTE The Provincial Gay/Lesbian
Line is looking for rural groups and
individuals that are willing to be
listed as referral resources in your
area. If you are willing to do this,
call them. ALSO: Please consider
listing this line in your local news-
paper. It's a great way to provide a
contact without the hassle of getting
nuisance calls yourself.

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Toronto, Ont.
M5S 1G4
(416) 922-8744

- does mail orders
- catalogues available, including a
lesbian bibliography, books on viol-
ence against women & children etc.

VICTORIA STATUS OF WOMEN ACTION GROUP

Suite 200, 506 Fort St.
Victoria, B.C.
PO Box 8484,
V8W 3S1
(604) 383-7322
fax: (604) 388-0100

- support groups
- Court Monitoring Program
- workshops
- political lobbying
- bimonthly journal (The Times Feminist)
- library, information
- dances, coffeehouses

YOUTHQUEST

c/o 2980 Lazy A Street
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(604) 944-3019

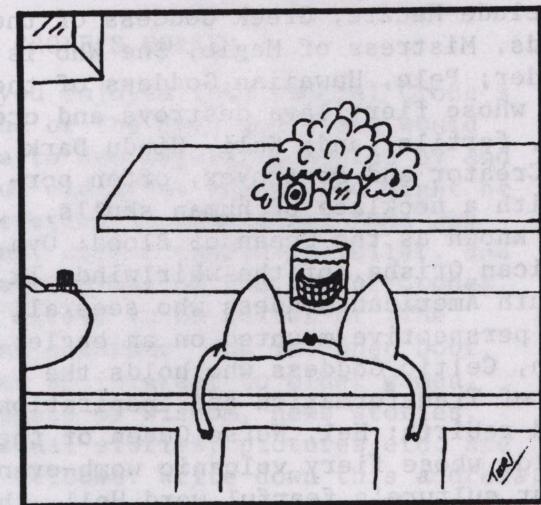
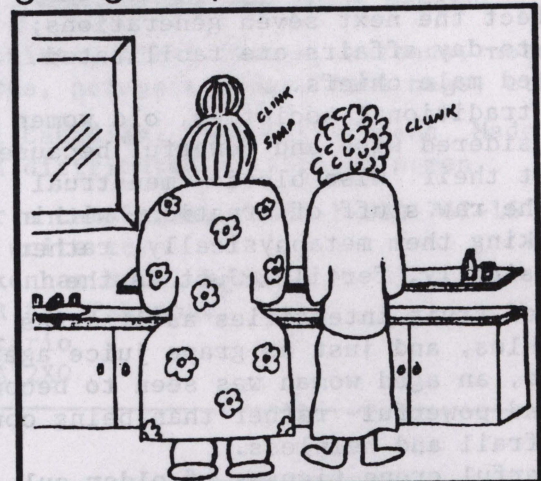
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Two elderly lesbians getting ready for bed: by TERI



-reprinted from The Gayzette

-by Cerridwen Falllingstar

-reprinted from Shared Vision Magazine,
July 1995

"Life is like a bathtub; the longer you stay in, the more wrinkled you get."

-Garfield

The crone, the hag, the battle-axe- these are words which make modern western women wince. But throughout ancient cultures, the crone, the old woman, was divine- the oldest and arguably the most powerful aspect of the Triple Goddess, she who created and destroyed life. In those older, matriarchal societies, old women held positions of the highest rank and responsibility. Even in modern times, some tribes, such as the Seneca, have a council of elder women (the Grandmothers) who make all important and controversial decisions, taking into account how they will affect the next seven generations; all day-to-day affairs are facilitated by elected male chiefs.

In traditional societies, old women were considered wise and powerful because they kept their 'wise blood'- menstrual blood, the raw stuff of creation- within them, making them metaphysically, rather than physically, fertile. Just as the flavour of fruit intensifies as it dries and wrinkles, and just as grape juice ages into wine, an aged woman was seen to become potent and powerful- rather than being considered frail and helpless.

Powerful crone figures of older cultures include Hecate, Greek Goddess of the crossroads, Mistress of Magic, She Who is the Decider; Pele, Hawaiian Goddess of the Volcano, whose fiery lava destroys and creates new, fertile land: Kali, Hindu Dark Mother, Creator and Destroyer, often portrayed with a necklace of human skulls, and also known as the Ocean of Blood: Oya, West African Qrisha, of the whirlwind; Ix Chel, South American Goddess who sees all from her perspective mounted on an eagle; Cerridwen, Celtic Goddess who holds the Cauldron of Transformation and inspiration, death and rebirth; Hel, Norse Queen of the Underworld, whose fiery volcanic womb-oven became our culture's fearful word Hell, the fiery pit from which none is redeemed (rather than Hel's inferno, which literally means 'oven in the earth' where all life was formed and re-formed, baked as bread). The crone aspect of the Goddess is associated with darkness and winter, magic and occult matters, inevitable change and subsequent transformations, death and rebirth. The Gods of one era become the demons of

the next; the revered wise woman has become the most feared and reviled of all creatures. For a woman to age- and therefore come into her true power, to distill her truest essence- is taboo in this culture. The feminine ideal is young, pliant, adolescent, thin enough to be weak from hunger, tottering on high heels, looking up in vacant adoration at the older man who knows so much more than she. In this culture, power is an aphrodisiac only when it is wielded by a man. Where the essence of femininity is seen as malleable subservience, the older woman who is full of her self, who knows her self, who cannot be objectified, is considered undesirable- hence invisible. So she desperately starves herself, or turns to liposuction to remove the fat from her body- fat which carries estrogen needed to smoothe her path through menopause. And she spends a fortune on anti-wrinkle creams, knowing that every study has proved they do not work, and on make-up to hide the shameful fact that they don't- all the while being pressured to surrender her body to the surgeons for face-lifts. Of

course, once the muscles of the face are cut, the woman is forever dependent on the surgeon who must touch-up the job about every five years. I remember meeting the mother of a friend of mine who had just had her face lift. She was 76 years old; she looked like an extremely ugly alien of about 35- skin stretched taut, distorting her expressions; all her experience, her history, her personality had been ripped away from her, leaving her face blank.

The crone does not apologize for her wrinkles or coyly lie about her age. She contains within her the power of the Maiden and the Mother who knows her own worth. She is the waning moon, the gateway to death- but in that death is liberation, transcendence, and rebirth. The words we fear have their origins in power. The word 'hag' originally meant 'holy woman' and is derived from the Egyptian heq, a pre-dynastic matriarchal ruler who knew the words of power, or hekau. The term battle-axe relates to the labrys, the double-headed axe of matrilineal Crete which symbolized both labia and butterfly, birth and rebirth. The word crone is derived from Rhea Kronia, the Mother of Time, and may also be related to Coronis, the carrion crow sacred to the Death Goddess. In her book Gyn-Ecology, Mary Daly proudly describes herself as a 'revolting hag'.

We must reclaim hag and crone as words of power, in the way that African-descended people have reclaimed the word 'black', if we want to once more inhabit the power those words describe.

We must once again expect- and be ready to receive- the wisdom of our elders, and nurture our own sources of inner wisdom so we have something to offer our culture as we age. We must be cronies for each other, long-lasting friends, valuing our ally-ship with other women. We must release our immature obsessions with youth, accepting the limitations and advantages of every age.

One exercise women can do in a group is to pair off, sitting or standing, very close, and tell each other what they find beautiful in each other. The praise must be honest- don't say the crow's feet around her eyes are beautiful unless you mean it. You may be surprised to find how easy it is to find the loveliness of another woman's mortal, aging body if you tend to be critical of your own.

Another helpful idea is to put pictures of older woman around your home or office- pictures that show the wisdom and soul of the elder- so that you have role models looking at you throughout the day.

Age is the great liberator, the time when it becomes obvious that there is nothing to be lost, and everything to gain, from being true to ourselves, regardless of what others might think. To become elder women of power and influence takes courage and determination. To be truly outrageous old women takes practice. Women of all ages must start to gather now, to celebrate all their aspects, to map strategies for reclaiming their true power and beauty at every phase of life. We have nothing to lose but our powerlessness.

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rising above
flat stones
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tidal pools
floating in sea/sky
clouds
wind blowing
downwards
I return
touch the earth
and begin
a new
cycle
another step of the
journey.



THE CRONE'S CORNER

If you enjoyed this special Crone's issue of The Open Door, and would like to see regular features by and about old/older women, you might be interested in this idea: Emma Joy Crone, writer, world-traveller, and former editor of The Web of Crones, has agreed to be editor of "The Crone's Corner" for The Open Door. Items of interest to older women, snippets of wisdom, news stories, personal stories, pictures etc. are all welcome. Write down this address, and start sending your submissions for the next issue:

Emma Joy Crone
RR #1, Hornby Island,
B.C. VOR 1Z0

FOUND GODDESSES

-by Linda Kay Wiese

Today women are struggling to recreate the Goddess religion from ancient fragments. We study the many aspects and attempt to learn the countless names of the Goddesses worshipped by our foremothers. We all learn the names of Isis, the Egyptian Mother of All; Diana, the Goddess of the Hunt and the Queen of the Witches; and Hecate, the Queen of the Underworld. Our knowledge is incomplete, so we attempt to fill in the blanks. We create our own rituals and chants. It is one thing to create ritual and music, but how about creating our own Goddesses?

During my eternal reading, I came across a small paragraph on 'found goddesses' in Barbara Ardinger's, A Woman's Book of Rituals & Celebrations. It seems that we have the option to create our own Goddesses at need. Ms. Ardinger invokes Ashphalta, Goddess of Parking Spaces; and Chocolata

and Vibrata, two Goddesses of Ecstasy. She speaks of domestic Goddesses like Roseanne the Terrible, the small but mighty Micro-Waveleh, and Refrigerata the Preserver. I can see how one could have a whole lot of fun with this concept!

Recently at a Women's gathering, I was introduced to Cafina, Goddess of the Morning. It seems that 'found Goddesses' are manifestations of the Greek Goddess, Eris (meaning strife). Eris is considered the Patron Saint of Chaos Theory. Ms. Ardinger has another name for Eris: the Goddess Gotcha. She has written a wonderful ritual to honour this trickster who represents our sense of the ridiculous.

I wonder which Goddess I need to invoke for car repairs. The Goddess Visa seems like a good choice.



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