

# **L** NEWS

BC's Premiere Lesbian Magazine

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### **From Addiction, home**

One woman's journey  
towards making life work.

### **Lesbians are strong and other stories**

Lesbians with disabilities  
challenging our stereotypes.

### **Costly hyphens no more**

A Canadian Court clears  
the way for lesbians'  
to go a-happily-hyphenating.

and much more ...



### **In Triplicate**

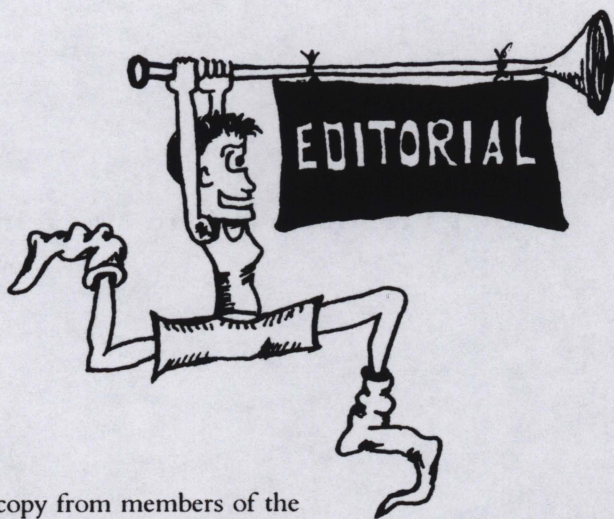
April, Joyce Pate and Debb Bergsson doing Joyce Pate

**February 1998**

**Vol. 9 Issue 5**

**Price: \$3.50**





When copy from members of the community comes in for LNews I edit for space and clarity. Articles must be signed. LNews is here to provide a monthly written forum for lesbians and allies that celebrates, promotes, gives voice, honors diverse and common interests, and promotes dialogue on issues as long as our lesbian arms. Thus when Jannit submitted her article, *An Open Letter to the Goddess*, I felt it met the criteria. In fact, I had no idea it was going to "promote dialogue." It did. You can read it for yourself. In the process of receiving feedback for the article, I was so taken aback by the reactions that I had a second look, wrote an apology and sent it out on e-mail. To some out-of-country readers, I sent a letter. Then, I remembered that LNews isn't about me and my reactions. I retracted the apology. There was controversy over the apology. I guess one of my jobs is to be a horse's ass. And, quite frankly, for the lessons learned, I feel pretty good as a horse's whatever. It really is up to you to respond to the articles—in print. You can always get them to be by e-mail or snail mail.

Meantime, it is a brand new year. I've been thinking about the one just passed and our community. I think about how important community is to me—little bits of it, lots of it, hits of it. No matter what is going on in my life, I feel safe in my community. Not everyone feels that way. Some of you feel threatened by community; overwhelmed by community, find the

community too much in your life—especially your love life. Well, I think about what it was like to come out alone, to be without community, to be the only one I knew for the longest time—how I kept my first relationship under the covers in more ways than one. I don't want to waste time hiding from community. I love it that the girls are interested in whom I'm dating, whom I'm not dating, what I'm doing, how I'm doing and how I'm doing it. I love to feel free to talk about dyke (woman) menopause, aging, ageism, sex, to dildo or not to dildo, to explore all kinds of different ways of being in a world that used to wish I'd go away. There is such strength in community. Even when I look the fool, I do it gladly. Being in community, risking to be part of it, risking to be there at the G-Spot even though I am shy—yeah, I am—is a growing daily experience. I'm grateful to the G-Spot. Even the girls who don't go there must have noticed what the spot has generated. The Girl Spot, a place where we can hang, has set up so many spin-offs that we have to make choices about what activities to enjoy. Choice. That's what community is becoming. Amen. BMcL

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contributors, letter-writers are lesbian. All  
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or allies.

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Community Connections Foundation. The  
LCC mandate is to provide a monthly  
written forum for lesbians and allies that  
celebrates all aspects of lesbian, bisexual, &  
transgendered lesbian lives, to promote a  
healthy, visible community by giving voice  
to and honoring diverse and common  
interests and to promote dialogue on such  
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# Diary of a Political Odyssey, Part II: The Politics of Disability

by Sharon Dale Stone, Kelowna

In November I wrote that in terms of lesbian organizing, our collective strength lies in our diversity. It's something I firmly believe. I'm tired of being asked to fit myself into someone else's idea of what a "lesbian" looks like, does, believes, etc. Politically, we need to recognize our differences, value our differences, and learn to come together through our differences. Individually, we need to make room in our lives to truly honour our differences, and this means going beyond lip service.

This month, I want to address going beyond lip service to accepting the implications of disability. These days, my energy level is such that I'm not as active as I'd like to be around disability issues, but I've a history of activism in this area. I first came to an understanding of the politics of disability through involvement in the DisAbled Women's Network (DAWN). Years ago, I was fortunate enough to find through DAWN a group of lesbians with disabilities. Together, we came to understand that if we felt left out of "the lesbian community," it wasn't because there was something wrong with us, it was because the able-bodied lesbians who were "running everything" seemed to have no time for us. Lesbians could be every bit as oppressive as non-lesbians. Only it hurt more coming from lesbians, because it was like being offered unconditional acceptance, only to find that there were conditions after all. Like the condition that you look like a lesbian (and now that lesbians are acceptable in the mainstream, the media are good at reinforcing able-bodied images of lesbians—Ellen Degeneres, for example, sure is popular!). Among other things, I learned that lesbians are, on the whole, as good as anyone else at promoting objectification. And I learned that letting out my grumpiness about objectifying stereotypes was healthier than turning it in on myself.

One stereotype I'm particularly

impatient with is the idea that lesbians are strong women. Sure, on one level, each and every one of us is strong. In this world, to take the radical step of naming oneself lesbian is something that requires tremendous courage and conviction. It takes even more to keep it up. But to assume that coming out makes a lesbian strong, is to ask lesbians to fit themselves into a mould.

What does it mean to say that lesbians are strong women? Does it refer to physical strength? In a way, I think it does. Perhaps we don't necessarily expect each other to have bulging muscles, and maybe we don't even expect each other to be able to run a marathon, but it seems to me that more often than not, we *do* expect each other to keep up with what's going on. Sooner or later, if you're not seen to be out and about, if you're not at the dance, if you're not at the coffee-house, if you weren't at the party last week, you're forgotten. We expect each other to fit into schedules. When someone doesn't fit in, it can be easier to assume she's not interested, than to consider that perhaps there's a problem with those expectations.

Partly, I write this from personal experience with not being able to fit into other people's ideas of when things should be done. My own disabilities mean that I tire easily, so I tend not to go to dances, parties, or anything else that doesn't get going before 9:00 at night. So

others assume I'm not interested in socializing, but I am. My own disabilities also mean that I can't stand around for extended periods of time. There are not too many parties, though, where everyone has conversations while sitting down. Those who don't "circulate" are assumed to be not interested in socializing. What are they doing at a party?

As much as anything else, I am angered by the attitudes I see displayed towards others with disabilities, whether their disabilities are visible or not. I notice, for example, that when a woman doesn't perform according to social expectations, it's easier to see the problem as residing within *her*, than it is to consider that there might be something wrong with a world designed for the convenience of able-bodied people. In the world of the able-bodied, I've learned, appearance is everything. If you look more or less like everyone else, you're expected to fit in. No accommodations. Don't expect the world to adjust its expectations to more realistically take everyone into account.

If this sounds radical, strident, unreasonable, unrealistic and hopelessly utopian to you, then you haven't fully understood what the politics of disability is about. It's really quite simple. Social organization needs to change.



Elizabeth Cook

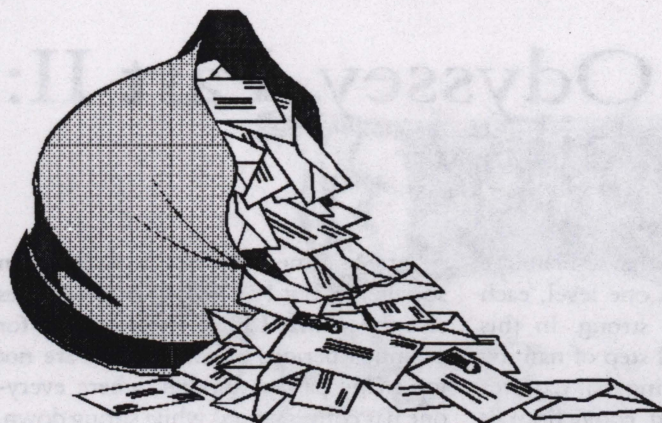
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## Phooey on Little Lezzie etc

Susan Strega's recent "letter to the editor" in *LNews* took the words right out of my mouth. Although my subscription will not expire until May of 1998, I won't be renewing my subscription. I am one of the fortunate people who can afford a wide range of magazines but at the same time I won't spend money on a product which isn't meeting my community's needs. To hear repeatedly in *LNews* what a small select group of lesbians are doing on a regular basis increases the isolation and separation one already feels as a minority and a lesbian. Susan is correct that *LNews* isn't a perspective of the lesbian community, it is only a perspective of what appears to be a small intimate group of friends.

It disturbs me when an editor of a magazine also uses the phrase "a lesbian

perspective" when giving her opinions, suggesting that these opinions are what are the "norm" of the lesbian community. Many times the opinions certainly aren't shared by this lesbian, once again increasing the sense of isolation I already feel

in a very heterosexual community. Because of different comments in "Little Lezzie Flashes", I have deliberately shied away from different community events and organizations (i.e., functions at G-Spot). I do not wish to attend functions or organizations which appear to have an elitist or clique attitude. To repeatedly hear who hung out at GSPOT and who Barb McL has seen there and who did what to whom is cheap, annoying and belittling to a much more diverse community. Columns such as "Little Lezzie Flashes" do nothing to bring a community and a minority together, it creates separateness and a class system.

*LNews* simply isn't my world, it isn't my community, it isn't my life and I suspect that is true for many of the lesbians in our community. My world is much more diversified. *LNews* reminds me of a high school year book, giving the dirt on the kewtest, hippest cheerleaders and the rest of the in crowd, leaving all the rest to fight for themselves and giving them the knowledge that once again they don't fit in with "the gang". I suspect that the only way my voice will be heard is

through my pocketbook.

Regards, Adele Warner

## Response to the Goddess Letter—

first from the men

Hi Barb,

I'm writing to respond to Jannit's "Open Letter to the Goddess." I am not going to jump all over you as Editor for printing it; frankly, I think that Jannit's letter, by allowing some of the issues and assumptions it raises to be aired publicly, could do far more good than suppressing it would have, for I'm sure the sentiments she expresses are far from hers alone. That said, here's my letter, which I hope you will see fit to print:

I would like to think that, were I a woman rather than a man, I would still be drawn to respond to Jannit Rabinovitch's "Open Letter to the Goddess" (*LNews*, Dec-Jan). It raises a question that is of critical importance to all of us: how should our society deal with the problem of violence and abuse. Jannit's response is very disappointing. It is facile, at best, and misguided at worst. Let me first address the claim that the problem of violence is fundamentally a problem of male violence. Journalist Cathy Young, in an article in the *Washington Post* (Jan. 14, 1994, reprinted in *Balance, The Inclusive Vision of Gender Equality*) had a number of

interesting points to make on this issue: Japan and Israel, both more male-dominated societies than ours, have a lower incidence of violence against women. Sweden, arguably a more gender-egalitarian society than our own, also has far less male-on-female violence.



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What these three countries have in common, Ms. Young points out, is that they all have dramatically lower rates of violence in general. And the higher rate of violence in North America extends not only to men but to women as well: American women are more homicidal than Swiss or Japanese men. In Boston, for example, one out of 6 juveniles arrested for violent crime are girls. We in Victoria have recently been witness to a brutal killing of a teenager by a group of her mostly female peers.

I would have hoped that someone as sophisticated as Jannit Rabinovitch would have resisted the urge to take refuge in simplistic, irresponsible reasoning to repudiate an entire gender. It is far too easy to hate. And to foster hatred. There are things drastically wrong with our society. It is dominated by a competitive ethic that values material and political success over mutual support and caring. Women and men alike must be concerned about this, and seek solutions in educational programs that actively teach children to engage in cooperative behavior, and in economic models that free parents from the kinds of financial burdens that prevent them from assuming a greater responsibility for properly socializing their young.

I have been married to a feminist and social activist for many years. What I have come to regard as one of the fundamental tenets of feminism is that each and every one of us, regardless of gender, should be acknowledged for who we are as individuals, free of bias, free of stereotyping. Would that Jannit had been true to that value. The sentiment expressed and encouraged by Jannit Rabinovitch, to again quote Cathy Young, "...does nothing to end violence, and a lot to poison male-female relations. We're all in this together—women and men of goodwill against those to whom human life, female or male, means nothing."

**Bram Goldwater** (*ed note: Bram neither subscribes nor is he gay. But he is a good friend and I do call him, honorary lesbian*).

**Dear Barb**

I am a subscriber to LNews, and a man, and a great supporter of women's issues. I'm responding to *Letter to the Goddess* as a subscriber and as a friend to both you and Jannit. I am happy that there is a forum for this kind of letter. I appreciate a love of tongue in cheek; however, I found all of her facts to be correct; statistics were correct; I even corroborate them as a man of colour. I found the article amusing. Before we go off into Utopian fantasy, however, let me say that I suspect there would be some form of hierarchy should women "rule the world". Regarding issues of racism, my personal theory is that somewhere along the line all of us have to take responsibility for ourselves. As each of us do, it makes it easier for others to take responsibility for themselves and less easy for anyone to stay in denial.

**Joe Carlson a.k.a. Queen Victoria.**

**Hello Barbara;**

I wish to express my concern. I appreciate the bravery implied when a small local newspaper prints articles that can be construed as expressing a radical opinion. I thought the article by Jannit Rabinovitch was excellently written, researched, and to the point. However,

I realize that this is not everybody's point but a variety of opinions and a diversity of views are what create the uniqueness of lesbian culture. This culture is what holds us together and has helped us to manifest the amazing changes in human rights we've seen in just the past few years. I am under the impression that the role, no the responsibility of LNews is to express and represent that culture. I have heard that you have apologized for printing that article. Don't apologize for the bravery that is inherent in the role you have chosen. If someone disagrees with

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# Letters to the Editor, continued

an opinion you have printed, please let the paper be a forum for that disagreement so that we can all be granted the respect of deciding and forming our own opinions. This kind of forum is stimulating, and can only cause us to grow within ourselves and hopefully grow closer as a community that accepts and cherishes our diversity.

**Ellen Hines, Dept. of Geography,  
University of Victoria**  
(response to my original letter of apology.ed)

## To the Editor:

As an advertiser and contributor to *LNews* I want to make it clear that the opinions expressed by Jannit Rabinovitch in her article *An Open Letter to the Goddess* are in no way my own. I have advertised in *LNews* right from the first issue and I will continue to support the lesbian community this way. However, I am now concerned that "anything goes" is the editorial policy. If I resubmitted Jannit's article and just changed the word men to lesbian, would it be published? Could the Christian Right (which is neither) get an article condemning homosexuality as sinful be printed? As a supporter of the magazine I have made

some assumptions about what is and what is not going to be published. I have always feared censorship as I am sure that, in the wrong hands, it would be used against those people most dear to me (feminists, lesbians, Jews, etc.). Where to draw the line is a very interesting question

While I was offended by Jannit Rabinovitch's opinions, I acknowledge that her article has spurred a great deal of discussion in the community about male-bashing, the origins of violence, etc. It's good that this is now out in the open. However, I hope that *LNews* will not publish articles merely because they will outrage people. I disliked the article, I abhor censorship, I wish it hadn't been printed, and I realize that there are internal contradictions in this sentence. I guess what upsets me the most is that some people think that suggestions of genocide are funny. "Humour" has traditionally been the thin edge of the wedge in campaigns of oppression and hatred.

**Susan-Rose Slatkoff**

## Dear LNews:

As a person who grapples profoundly with the problem of men's violence, I was incredulous upon reading *An Open Letter to the Goddess*. Fantasy about eliminating masses of men is hurtful and I believe it is dishonest to mask it as satire. The article's theory, that men are of the wrong kind of "nature", is a frightening echo of the theories of present-day right-wing groups and of the Nazis, which led to the deaths of millions for being the "wrong" kind of nature. I am horrified that the author and the Editor saw fit to repeat such ideas in the *LNews*.

I too feel rage about violence but violence will not stop through further psychological damage. I believe we must take collective responsibility for its existence, practice respect and understanding while creating a different kind of change than such simplistic solutions, which do not address the complexity of human hatred.

Sincerely, Rowena Hunnisett

## Thanks and No Thanks:

### Dear LNews

Thank you for continuing to send *LNews* in exchange for the Open Door. Unlike your correspondent from Coombs (S. Strega), I find *LNews* to be very politically relevant. The way I see it, there are people who want to talk the talk, but very few who are willing, like *LNews*, to walk the walk. Keep up the good work. I do, however, have a concern I'd like to express about your recent issue. I don't know if "Messages From Michael and Guides" is for real, or just a fictional column. If it is real, I must object to her "advice" to A Worried Friend. Anyone who speaks of suicide, even in a subtle way, should be taken seriously. Sometimes only one other person is the link between a potential suicide and the help she needs. Nobody should discount threats of suicide. Saying "she is not ready to leave the planet no matter what she says" is an incredibly irresponsible reaction to another woman's real pain. I urge you to put this woman in touch with a good and sympathetic therapist, as soon as possible. Even if this column is really just a joke, I think it's irresponsible of *LNews* to print it—others might read such a column and discount the words of their suicidal friends. A threat of suicide is an attempt to reach out for help. It isn't anything to do with addictive behavior. And sometimes it is the last desperate attempt that a sister will make before giving up completely. Please, I implore you to print an article by somebody sensible (maybe Rowena Hunnisett) about the seriousness of suicide and suicide threats. We have lost too many good and strong women to suicide. It's time we take it seriously.

**Yours in sisterhood, Judith Quinlan**  
(Judith is editor of the Open Door, a feminist newsletter from Burns Lake, BC)

**Sandy Slovack, M.A.**

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# Supporting That Old Gal in Sensible Shoes

By Tanya Anderson

In the past three years, I have made service calls on many women seniors who are living on old age security and small annuities set up with our insurance company. This puts them below the poverty line. Often they will have a small amount in the bank and not much else. I leave their places admiring their spirit and worrying about their futures. What's going to happen when they need more care? Will their families be able to take on that financial burden? The more a woman has to rely on government social services, the more limited her choices become about how and where she lives. If there are no family members who can help financially, poor women are at risk of losing their independence.

So what does this have to do with someone reading *LNews*? Lots. Many women in our community create income for themselves in non-traditional ways, which means they aren't contributing to company pensions. They may not earn enough income to contribute the maximum to the Canada Pension Plan. Often they are childless and sometimes estranged from their families. Unless they develop a plan to send money ahead to the old women they will become, there's going to be trouble.

If you're in that category, monetary baby steps are better than financial procrastination and paralysis. Some plans can be set up with as little as \$25 a month.

That's a small amount but it's a start.

If you are earning an income that allows you to save more for the future, is the money you're saving working as hard for you as it can? There are ways to make that money grow and reduce your taxes. I am not going to regurgitate the information available in newspapers each week on registered retirement savings plans (rrsps). If I add to your information overload, I'm afraid your eyes will glaze over and you'll stop reading. Please don't as I'll be covering my foolproof tips on how to get a date if you suddenly find you're single again. In the meantime, If you want clarification on anything relating to rrsps, call me.

If you are one of the few who maxes out her rrsp and is looking for other ways to defer taxes and create more retirement income, there are insurance tax shelters. A straightforward description of how they work can be found in a little book with the title *The 10 Secrets Revenue Canada Doesn't Want You To Know!* Silly title but helpful information. For years, these plans were called the insurance industry's best kept secret but now even the large stock brokerage houses are publishing material on why they can be a valuable part of someone's long term planning.

I've addressed a few categories—just a little bit of money, an average amount of money, and more money than most. Regardless of which category you fall into, I hope you will do what you can to

send money ahead for that old woman. As treasurer of the Victoria Lesbian Seniors Care Society, I want us all to have the financial means to create communal housing so that we have choices about who we're living with in our old age—preferably neat old gals in sensible shoes.

I'm sorry I didn't get to the foolproof tips for securing dates. You'll just have to wait for the book.

Happy Saving!!

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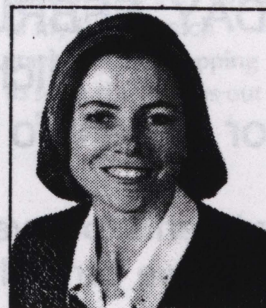
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# The Subject is Suicide

by Rowena Hunnisett

Many of us have known lesbians who have committed suicide or made attempts, or we have tried it ourselves. Studies show that sexual orientation is a factor in over 20% of youth suicides. This time of year is hard for many and increases likelihood of suicidal thoughts and attempts.

We all need to feel wanted, loved and accepted for who we are. If a child has a hard early life, is unwanted, has been physically, sexually or emotionally abused, she may think: "I shouldn't exist, I'm not worthy of being alive, I'm not worth loving; I'm not loveable. My real self is not OK". When she eventually realises that she is a lesbian or bisexual, and feels badly about that too, then the negative messages from childhood, combined with the sense of being unacceptable as a sexual person, can become dangerous. It's not surprising that the outcome is suicidal thoughts, feelings and actions.

Suicidal fantasies or plans need to be expressed to someone trustworthy. If you are committed to suicide you won't do this; however if any small part of you holds out hope, it may help. A confidante needs support too, especially if the suicidal person is moving beyond thoughts into preparations. The latter requires urgent action. However, the situation is still serious if the person is "only" *thinking* about suicide. Your local crisis line is often a good resource. Encourage your friend to get to a doctor and a therapist or somebody who has experience with suicidal people. Developing a support group for the person may be helpful if it is planned carefully with the suicidal person's involvement.

Drug therapy is usually offered by a doctor or the hospital emergency rooms. Drug therapy is not enough, although it may temporarily help a person avoid suicide attempts. For a few people some time on a psychiatric ward may be helpful because it provides a sense that they are not alone in their responsibility for

themselves.

To heal self-hatred and self-shame (which are part of feeling suicidal) persons need to be able to feel that they deserve to be wanted and loved for who they really are—a difficult task until they understand what has happened to them to make them feel so badly about themselves. Suicidal people tend to believe that they really are bad, unacceptable and unworthy; they are usually extremely self-critical and believe they should remain so. Thus, they will have to experience emotional and attitudinal changes to feel deserving of life.

Some people react to emotional pain by acting out violently against others. Suicidal people turn against themselves, as if their problems were all their own fault. Not true. Recovery from suicidal feelings may seem far away. So when it seems impossible to keep faith in life for yourself, it is your community of friends and professional people who can help you keep that faith like a strong rope you can hold onto until you have it for yourself.

*Rowena Hunnisett is a therapist in private practice in Victoria.*

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For more info phone: 360-2393

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We need you, right now, to help make Pride '98 even more successful. The actual work to produce Pride is huge—permits, security, set-up and tear down, advertising, media, entertainment, web-site info, fundraising, registration...you get the picture! How can you help?

First, and most important, we need your tremendous skills and energy to work with the Pride board of directors. Volunteers are needed to plan all of the events leading up to Pride Day and then of course, the day itself. The Pride Board is working hard, but we are only eight, and Pride has taken on a life of its own. We need all of our communities working together to make this 1998 Pride a stellar day.

The Pride Society will host a community meeting Sunday, February 8 at 547 Michigan Street, at 2:00 pm, and we want to pack the room! Please come and give us your support by bringing your ideas, creativity, friends, ex-lovers and their ex-lovers and all that collective PRIDE. If you want to get involved before that, please phone 360-2393 and talk to one of the Board members listed here: Karen Leman, Marc Mertens, Catherine Snowdon, Lisa J. Lander, Glenn Saunders, Ingrid Olson, Stacy Leblanc or Scott Wilson.

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no kidding

the ritual's a big, important part of my life

once a month...every month....year after year after year

I'll also miss those mornings when I wake up nasty

hatred licking at the back of my throat

and that rare unrivaled sensation of...angry iron claws

gripping my uterus from inside

pulling, twisting, tearing

until the only bearable position is fetal

and the first closing suffocating my heart as I count out

38 days...39...40

panic, rippling my body

yes, I'll miss that too

and to think I'll never have another abortion

menopause is trendy now

yet another bizarre fashion

made in hell so they say.

I ask my mom who looks vague

nothing dear, her voice puzzles, they just stopped

horrible thought, isn't it

here I am all ready for another fight

and maybe I won't even suffer

they'll just stop and I'll have nothing, save clean sheets,

a clean calendar, and a whirling, shining release (so they say)

on that sad, sad day

the first time I fly out back

to my flower patch

crackling and snapping

to scare the bejesus out of the kids next door



# MAKING

by Nikki Tate-Stratton

Three cats, two kids, grandparents, girlfriend, roomie and a dog—just another typical family—right?

Debb Bergsson's family is growing in leaps and bounds. The latest addition to her clan is Sophie, a kitten with springs in her legs who met me at the door by enthusiastically attacking my shoelaces. Sophie, I discovered, was cat number three of the house, also shared with a dog called k.d. Debb's cheerful smile, several children and a woman in the living room (roomie, Chris) were the next things I noticed. Strategically placed here and there around her comfortable living room were sculpted figures of women, earth mothers, voluptuous beings holding various creatures, holding each other. From somewhere downstairs drifted a tasty smell of something cooking (I later found out that I had come to visit on the weekly evening when Debb's mother, who lives in the downstairs suite, provides dinner for the household). Sitting at the dining room table, sipping coffee, the atmosphere was instantly relaxed, cozy, congenial. Conversation flowed easily with a

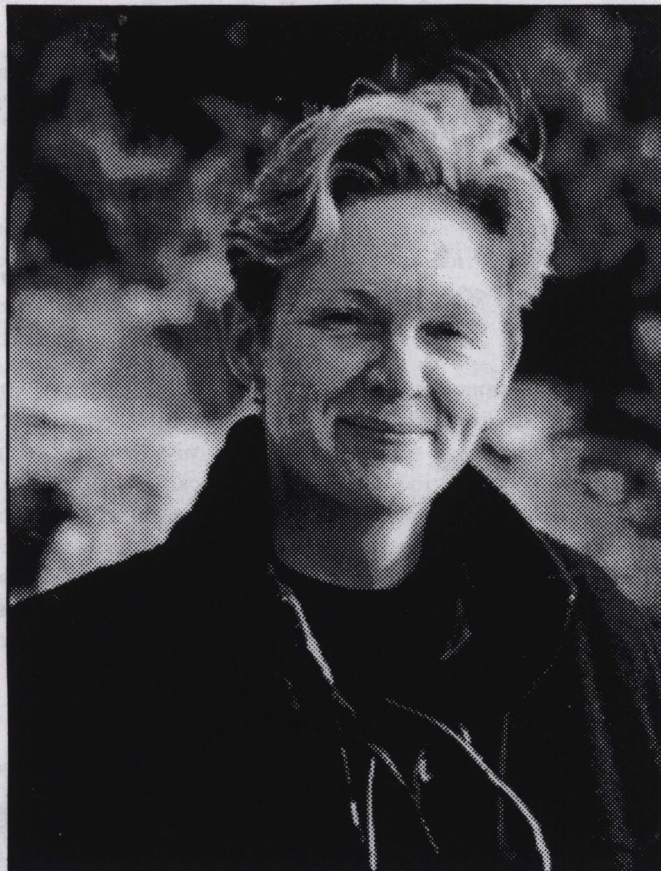
woman clearly comfortable with herself and happy with the life she has created.

But things were not always so rosy. For years, Debb struggled with alcohol and drug addiction, an unhappy marriage, and a sense of isolation and utter despair.

"It was the addictions which kept me trapped," she says of her past, "not work, not my husband, not my kids." And it wasn't until she squarely confronted the sad reality her life had become that she could begin to make changes. She stopped drinking. She left her marriage. She quit smoking pot. She started again. "For so long, I tried to be what society was telling me to be," she explains. "I was miserable but I went right along with everyone else's expectations." Sobriety gave her the strength to leave her marriage. But she still found herself cut off from the rest of the world—and still smoking pot. It wasn't until she kicked that habit, too, that things really began to turn around.

"I was totally isolated and I didn't want to be in that place any more. I knew I had to reach out, I had to get connected with the community, with the gay community."

But reaching out was not so easy for someone whose self esteem was low, and



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# LIFE WORK

whose feelings of insecurity threatened to overwhelm her. Her first foray into the lesbian world was going to one of the Loose Tongues poetry readings at the G Spot. "I was terrified," she admits. "I had huge fears to overcome to even be there." Once she arrived, she found herself thrilled to be sitting in a room filled with real, live lesbians. She screwed up the courage to talk to a woman sitting beside her. She went to Wild Tongues a month later, and soon after began volunteering at the G-Spot. "I made a commitment to myself to change the way things had been. And then, I started meeting people like you wouldn't believe!" The friends she has made in the lesbian community, the close relationship she has with her parents (in the downstairs suite), her two children, her children's friends, Chris (whom Debb refers to as 'the perfect roommate') and, for about the last eight months her girlfriend, Joyce Pate, have certainly catapulted Debb out of isolation mode and into the heart of a boisterous, very extended family. "There's lots of love in this house. There is always somebody here for the children."

Not that the past several years have been without downs as well as ups. Her two children, Hannah, 9, and Alex, 11, have had quite a bit of adjusting to do in making the transition from a two parent, traditional household, to one led by an outgoing, happy, sober lesbian mother.

"I think it's been particularly hard on my daughter. In some ways she's very comfortable, very accepting. But in others..." She shakes her head slowly, and I recognize the look of a mother who is concerned above all about the well-being and happiness of her child. One of the biggest challenges has been trying to balance a romantic life with full time work and family obligations—the latter which Debb firmly puts before anything else. She credits Joyce with being very understanding, and very committed.

"It's like we are having a long-distance relationship—except we both live in the same town. We touch bases each day on the phone but only see each other on weekends." And only then when their alone time doesn't conflict with the needs of Debb's children.

"I was very up-front at the beginning. I just don't have a lot

of time to dedicate to a relationship."

At this point in our conversation, Debb smiled. There was no trace of resentment towards her children, job, other life commitments. "I am so happy that I'm really here for my kids. I'm truly available, and that wasn't always the case."

Of course, I couldn't leave without asking about the sculpted women. Debb led me into the kitchen where a cracked work in progress sat off to one side, dried out and abandoned.

"I don't have time just now to sculpt—my art is going to have to wait for a while. But just look at this piece. I started it when I was still smoking pot." She pushes at a foot which has broken off the figure, a woman with her two children. There is a heavy sadness about the work and I find it an interesting reminder of another time to be kept hanging around the kitchen. "That's what happens to your life when you're addicted," she continues. "Everything dries up, cracks, breaks down."

We move through the house and look at her other sculptures. The women are full-figured, round and beautiful. One cradles a dolphin in her lap, another a gecko in the palm of her hand. Some, the earlier pieces,

wear pale blue dresses. Others are naked. The forms are simple, the lines honest and thoughtful.

When, as she someday surely will, Debb begins to sculpt again, she says she'd like to try some larger works. "That creative stuff just has to come out," she says. In the meantime, to allow a vent for that creative steam, she paints decorative bowls which are small enough to manage at the end of a long, full day.

I ask her to tell me about a time in her life when she was happiest. She looks a little surprised and then flashes me a wide grin. "Right now!" She reels off a long list of all she enjoys and appreciates at the moment. The she stops, leans back in her chair and says, "What can I say? Life is good!"





# The Loaded Tongue

Judy Lightwater

Ear googies are on the increase. Is this...Global warming? Air pollution? Or are our bodily functions just starting to break down and crumble? I swear when I clean my ears now I get three times as much on the tip as I used to. Is this part of perimenopause?

On other fronts we are told El Nino may come our way this winter. That could mean more rain than ever before or unprecedented dry warm weather. Wouldn't you like a job where you could be wrong 50% of the time?

Sex has been on my mind a lot lately. I like it. It likes me. But then again joining a convent sounds good too. The calm and uncomplicated nature of meditation appeals to me. My friends think I'm kidding. I know there's lots of sex in those convents, but the fact is few nuns are cloistered anymore; most of them are out working, renting their own places, taking the bus, buying groceries, and living from paycheque to paycheque like everybody else—but without sex! What's the point, I asked one

of them recently, a very hot woman my age who I met at a catholic retreat centre. She smiled benignly and didn't bother to answer. She also didn't bother to tell me she was a nun for quite some time after we met.

A friend recently told me about the food channel. I turned it on because it's free for two months and I saw an hour of recipes, restaurant reviews, and more gay men than I meet in Victoria in a month of Sundays. I'm told, but haven't seen for myself, that the show Three Dog Bakery is the highlight of the network. It comes on about 4:00 a.m. and is hosted by two gay men and their three dogs. These pooches, with their fleas, fur and other googies, lie on their mats and observe the proceedings. At the end of the session the audience rates the presentation of the food and the dogs get to eat it!

If I can figure out how to program my VCR I'm going to tape it—soon.

## Old Timer Dance

January 31, 1998

Doors open at 7:30 p.m. for dance instruction

Dance at 8:00 p.m.

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# Canadian Couple Wins Name Change

By Chris Ambidge with NewsPlanet Staff

**SUMMARY:** The Ontario Human Rights Commission has ruled that a committed lesbian couple by any other name is not as sweet...it's discrimination and that can be costly.

A Toronto lesbian couple has won a ruling from an Ontario Human Rights Commission Board of Inquiry allowing them to join their names at the same low price as unmarried heterosexuals. Bonnie Bewley and Michelle Crawford became partners eight years ago, had their union blessed in a ceremony at Toronto's Christos Metropolitan Community Church, and wanted to combine their names into "Crawford-Bewley" to indicate their relationship. When traditional couples are legally married, a name change comes as part of the package, with the only additional fee being \$25 for a birth certificate showing the new name; common-law heterosexual couples also have the option of making a name-change at a nominal fee. But when the lesbian pair tried to do the same thing more than six years ago,

the Registrar-General refused to comply, insisting they would have to go through the process by which single individuals make name changes, at a cost of \$150 each.

Believing this constituted discrimination based on sexual orientation, prohibited by the Ontario Human Rights Act, the couple filed a complaint with the Human Rights Commission. The Commission provided for them the services of attorney Joanne Rosen, who early this year argued their case against provincial government counsel Peter Landman, who has represented the government (and lost) in a number of other cases involving lesbians and gays. Landman tried to get Bewley to

say on the stand that the couple had been motivated by outside influences or political motives. In fact their motives were quite simple: to have simply paid up at the individual rate, in Bonnie's words, "Would Not Have Been Right." On November 6, the Commission advised the couple that the Registrar-General has been ordered to make the name change, and that they would also receive some compensation for damages. There's reason to believe that the Ontario government will appeal this decision, as it has so many others involving gays and lesbians, but the couple is enjoying their victory for now.

## An Open Love Letter to the Goddess,

I write to you in praise and awe of all aspects of your creation.

What an adventure is this life; to pursue and reveal beauty in all things, especially the beauty that is hidden behind walls of fear or confines of culture.

When beauty pops out through a crack in our fear, or through a glimpse from a brand new angle—these are the miracles in my life.

I thank you for them and I celebrate the transformation that occurs through recognition and attention to the wonder and beauty of all life.

*Judy Fries*



## Mosaic Valentine Concert AND Dance

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and from Mosaic members



# Call for Writers

via e-mail & Jan Trainor

Here's a call to authors requesting contributions for a new web page: *Sapphic Voices - Lesbian Fiction Online*. *Sapphic Voices* is intended as a platform for lesbian, bisexual and transgendered writers to reach a wider range of internet readers than the usual webzine. Intentionally designed as a graphics-lite and text-intensive site, *Sapphic Voices* plans to give amateur and professional writers the technological resources to interact with their readers, by posting fiction and poetry for longer periods of time, and allowing space to post longer works than many lesbian websites currently do. The site includes a newsgroup and links to other lesbian and writers' resources on the internet.

With no publishing deadlines to meet and no agents as intermediaries, we hope that *Sapphic Voices* will pro-

vide encouragement and contacts for the many women who enjoy expressing their creativity through the written word. This email is a call to amateur and professional authors to dig out those dusty notebooks or to start writing new works for submission. We believe that there are a lot of very talented women who write as a hobby or are even just starting to try their hand at writing.

*Sapphic Voices* will be a place for you to post your efforts: a platform from which you can reach an audience without going through the hassle of agents and publishers. Of course, we are unable to offer monetary compensation, but feel that you will find writing for internet publication rewarding in and of itself. You would naturally be the sole owner of copyrights to your story, and notices to that effect will be placed prominently on *Sapphic Voices* pages.

ing offices and even postponing publishing seasons. Their choices of what to publish are necessarily even more limited to those books they are certain will reach the largest audiences.

So how will it work? Once you submit a story, we will post it on *Sapphic Voices* along with an email address you provide, so that you can get feedback directly from your readers. Unlike webzines, the story will remain posted much longer, giving you an opportunity to reach a larger audience over time. (How long will depend on the success of the site and available space). To demonstrate our faith and commitment, we have purchased this space for at least a year. In addition, *Sapphic Voices* will have a newsgroup to serve as a discussion forum for authors and readers alike.

If you are interested in exploring the technology we are offering you,

please reply with a request for the guidelines for submission. Tell your friends, too. We want to hear from as many authors as possible. The internet has made the world a smaller place. At *Sapphic Voices* you'll get some help, a few kind words, make some new friends, and become an even better writer. Best of all, you'll have what every author craves—readers.

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We are concerned about the current conditions under which the lesbian publishing industry operates. Because of competition from mainstream publishing houses, some of our favorite lesbian publishers have been forced into fund raising, clos-

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Along with all other life we are a part of the being of Earth. It is of deep importance at this time that we re-establish our spiritual/physical kinship within this being.

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# You can help!

Volunteers are needed for a wide variety of tasks associated with the Out from the Shadows Project: International Summit of Sexually Exploited Youth

The Out from the Shadows Project is being co-sponsored by PEERS (Prostitutes Empowerment, Education and Resource Society) and the University of Victoria School of Child and Youth Care. The Summit is taking place from March 7 - 12, 1998. Volunteers are required to assist with the following areas:

- Hospitality and Entertainment
- Safe Room Counselors
- Translators (Spanish, Portuguese and French)
- Facilitators
- Workshop Recordors
- Logistical Support
- Transportation

Interested? Plan to attend a Volunteer Information Session on January 19, 1998, 7:30 PM City Hall Ante Chambers. Please find the description of volunteer tasks to help you decide what role you would like to apply for. (Call 388-5322 if no task description attached.) Volunteer Application forms will be available at the Information Session.

What is the Summit about? Delegates from 10 countries will be gathering to discuss experiences of the sex trade and to develop a Declaration for Action. The purpose of the summit is to encourage the youth delegates to speak out about what led

them to join the sex trade, the conditions of work, and what is needed to help people leave the sex trade if they wish and many sensitive issues and dynamics that require great care to prevent further exploitation of the delegates. Volunteers are asked to make an application to the Volunteer Committee. Experience and sensitivity are important and will be considered with confidentiality.

For more information please contact the Out from the Shadows Volunteer Committee, Tathra Street, 388-5322.



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## LITTLE LEZZIE FLASHES

First up is a note from a lesbian in Trenton, Ontario who is writing to us to ask for support. Her name is Deborah-Marie and she wants to correspond with other lesbian mothers who have children living with their biological fathers. She has a 13-year-old son and a 15-year-old daughter. "I sometimes feel like I'm a mother no longer." And she wants to get information on how to start a lesbian sobriety group. If you relate or know the answers, you can write to her at 610 English Settlement Road, R.R.4, Trenton Ontario K8V 5P7...Still sort of out of town EGALE has a new twist on getting some action. Adopt an MP. You get an adoption certificate and a reminder that this is a chance to provide your Member of Parliament with the education and support she or he so desperately needs! You can get your info on same by contacting the Lez or by writing EGALE, 306-177 Nepean, Ottawa, Ont. K2P 0B4 or e-mail them [egale@istar.ca](mailto:egale@istar.ca)...Peggy Maher sends this to me via e-mail from Burnaby: The feds defining the valid Marriage: Bill C-225, an Act to amend the Marriage Act received first reading on

October 1, 1997. The purpose of the Bill is to ensure that the only legally valid marriage in Canada would be that between one man and one woman... Nikki Tate Stratton is finding peddling books is not all its cracked up to be. Cracker barrell, maybe. Nikki found herself reading in the cheese department at Save-On... Marti and Denise did it again this year. Christmas, that is. Well, they got the Lez again. A card read "Merry Christmas. At last I found the perfect gift for someone with your unique tastes." Inside it said. "A Mistletoe belt buckle." ...Over the holidays Jan Trainor sent me some wonderful one liners. This one from Robin Tyler: If homosexuality is a disease, let's all call in queer to work. Hello, can't work today. Still queer. And this from a comic...Labels can be so misleading. I saw a news report about a lesbian protest march and the reporter said, "Coming up next, a lesbian demonstration." My first thought was, "Cool. I always wondered how those things work." That one must have been from a male comic. We know, don't we? Toodles.



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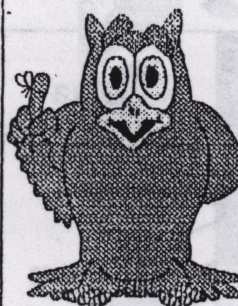
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Please mail items to us at P.O. Box 5339, Station B, Victoria, B.C. V8R 6S4. Or Call Barbara 598-6490. Deadline for submissions is the **first** of month prior to publication. Classified ads are \$5. first 25 words and .50/word thereafter. Community notes etc. no charge unless money for service involved.

## CLASSIFIED ADS

**HELP WANTED:** Looking for female attendants to assist disable lesbian to help her to live independently. Must be open-minded and flexible. FAX C-Jay 383-3908. Remuneration to be discussed.

**FOR RENT:** In Lesbian friendly community, a Bright Studio Apartment . Rural Setting. N/S \$475 plus utilities. Call 474-7369

**FOR RENT:** Quiet non-smoker for Feb. 1 or 15 for small self-contained bachelor in converted garage. Kitchenette, bathroom, sleeping area. Dead end of Fernwood street. \$425 inclusive. Call Sara 370-0346.

**FOR RENT:** Lesbian to share three-bedroom n/s house with two other dykes on quiet dead-end street. One room \$395 incl. Avail immed. Larger room with balcony \$425 incl. Avail Feb. 1. Call Jenny, 479-3423.

**SPINTSTERVALE IN COOMBS:** offers rustic cabins at \$7.50 per woman per nite, larger cabin sleeps 4 to 6. \$30 per weekend. Inquire about farm-hand position or work exchange. (3-hrs per day equals room and board. Call (250) 248-8809. E-mail Sunshine@macn.bc.ca

**HOUSE FOR RENT:** in Port Renfrew village West Coast of VI. Stones throw to the ocean. Available by day, week, or month. Reasonable. Call (250)382-6686.

## PERSONALS

**READINGS:** Channeled through Ascended Masters. Relationships, personal growth, health matters, metaphysical subjects. In person or via mail. Quill (250) 658-3653. Mail to LNews.

**DESERT WRITING: and painting** experience for women. Tucson, AZ. Feb. 23 -March 2, 1998. Creative, non-fiction, poetry, fiction, painting. \$730 US includes room and meals. Phone (250)598-6034, e-mail: jlightwater@pacificcoast.net

**MAGICAL ART GROUP FOR WOMEN:** drawing class with a twist evenings or weekends at the G-Spot. Includes some outdoor, some art therapy. Eight to 10 lessons for \$100. Call the G-Spot for info and to register.

**G-SPT note:** No comfy cozy on Thursdays. See you there for regularly scheduled volunteer events like Yoga, art group, Wed. coffees at 10 a.m.

**VANCOUVER ISLAND S/M WOMYN HOT TUB WEEKEND:** Social Night Friday March 6 @ 8pm - Potluck Dinner Intro to Play Workshop Sat March 7, 1 - 3 pm. Play Piercing Workshop Sat March 7, 1 - 3 pm. **PLAY PARTY!!!** Sat March 7, 8 pm. \$12 - \$20 all womyn welcome. For location and more info 472-1944 or 472-6111.

## ON-GOING SOCIAL FUN BUDDIES WANTED

**SAILING:** buddies & info re Pacific Rim Yachting Club. Wendy (250) 388-4317.

**TENNIS Anyone?** Relaxed tennis and par 3 golf buddies. (250) 598-6034.

**OVER 60s:** New to town, or long-term resident and 50 or 60 plus? Come out and meet the community of older women for social contact. Phone Margaret (250) 384-6568.

## COMMUNITY NOTES & HAPPENINGS

**NANAIMO:** Sweetheart Dance with 40s, 50s, 60s theme Wellington Hall. Jive to old faves. Check with V.I.L.I.P.S. (250) 755-1023 beginning of Feb.

**OLD TIMERS DANCE:** Jan 31 at Red Cross Building. Proceeds to senior care facility. See ad this issue.

**MUSICA DANCE:** Feb. 14 see big ad this issue.

**The Victoria Status of Women Action Group:** Services available include: free use of computers, an extensive resource library; lots of info on local events and organizations that work with and for women. We're the place to go to strategize for the revolution, arrange a support group meeting or....it's up to you! VSWAG is here for all women Monday through Friday, 9:30 to 1:30, Suite 200, 506 Fort Street, or call 383-7322 for information to

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volunteer and/or become a member.

**RE-CREATE!** Supportive, accessible recreation group meets third Sunday of every month at noon, rain or shine, Starbucks on Cook. Activity decided by group that day. Look for Lynn, Jude, & Taylor. No 'phone calls, please. See you Oct. 19, Nov. 16

**WISEWOMAN:** Friendship group for women over 40 at G-Spot last Saturday every month 7 to 10 p.m. Call the Spot for details. 382-7768.

**PINKLINE VOLUNTEERS:** Develop some helping skills and volunteer for a good cause. 920-6121.

**TAROT READINGS:** Puzzled by your girl's behaviour? Questioning your current job? Ask the cards and Melissa will translate at the G-Spot most Wednesday mornings at coffee time. Adds a new dimension to your morning coffee. \$10 To confirm she's there, call 598-6490.

## COMING OUT DISCUSSION

**GROUP:** Meet other women in similar situations to learn about ourselves, our sexuality and lesbian culture in a safe, supportive atmosphere. Call Tanya 382-5868 or Kathryn 592-9356.

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## SERVICES ACTIVITIES CONTACTS

**Dykes Bilingual:** Meet at the G-Spot. Jenn 652-7072.

**Dyke basketball:** Jahnett 380-6617

**Dyke Dimensions Radio Show:**  
 Mondays 8:00 to 9:00 p.m. FM CFUV  
 104.3 Cable FM 101.9

**Gay & Lesbian Parenting Group:**  
 Natasha at 384-6252

**Lesbian Art Collective:** Rebecca 386-2550.

**Lesbian French Club:** Meets G-Spot. Call Jenn 652-7072. \$2 cover non-mbrs.

**LNews:** P.O. Box 5339, Station B, Victoria, B.C. V8R 6S4. Barbara 598-6490

**Lesbian Writing Group:** Serious writers meet bi-weekly. 598-6034.

**Musaic:** Lesbian & Gay Choir. Daphne 480-0024.

**Pink Line:** Gay & Lesbian Info and Peer Counseling, 920-6121 Tues-Sat. 7-10

**Pink Umbrella:** fax/phone 727-6669


**P-Flag:** Information, 642-5171.

**Some Very Nice Dykes:** Lesbian social club for newcomers. Mary 595-6997

**Writers Club** meets 1st and 3rd Thursdays at G-Spot Thursdays 7:30

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**Irena Klepfisz**

**is coming to Victoria.**

**You are invited to attend all or some of the following sessions:**

**February 23:** She will speak to Debby Yaffee's evening Women's Studies  
Class on **Jewish Lesbians and Jewish Identity**

**February 24:** She will speak to the general public at UVic.  
Topic: **Secular Jewish Culture: Some Feminist  
Response**

**February 25:** She will speak at the Jewish Community Centre.  
Topic: **In Their Own Voice: A bilingual Yiddish/English  
reading and discussion of Yiddish women's writing.**

Everyone is invited to these lectures. Please let Debby know in  
advance if you want to attend her class on the 23<sup>rd</sup> so she can book a  
bigger room if necessary.  
For further information **call Debby Yaffee at 721-6261 at Uvic or 598-  
9634 at home.**



