

LESBIAN NEWS

Victoria's Monthly Lesbian
Feminist Newsletter

Vol. 1, Issue 5
January 1990

\$2.00

THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF

Genevieve Bergeron

Helene Colgan

Nathalie Croteau

Barbara Daignault

Anne-Marie Edward

Maud Haviernick

Barbara Maria Klueznick

Maryse Laganier

Maryse Leclair

Anne-Marie Lemay

Sonia Pelletier

Annie St. Arneault

Michele Richard

Annie Turcotte

AFTER MONTREAL

by Debby Gregory

Like most of you, I've spent the last few days spinning between sorrow, anger, fear, and a sense of apocalyptic change. I've been thinking about those poor dead women, their families, friends, and lovers; and I've been thinking about all the women, everywhere in the world, who die every day - less dramatically but no less just because they are women. I've been thinking about the night last September when 800 women marched from Centennial Square down Government Street to Take Back the Night, and the Times-Colonist wouldn't even cover it. And I've been wondering what good it does to Take Back the Night when they are killing us in broad daylight.

I've been thinking about all the women who call themselves feminists and those who don't, and about what we have in common. The writer Rebecca West said she'd never been able to figure out what a feminist was, only that people called her one whenever she expressed sentiments that distinguished her from a doormat.

What is absolutely clear since these killings is that under patriarchy it doesn't matter if we call ourselves feminists or not - we are all absolutely vulnerable to male violence. Though poor and non-white women bear the brunt of grinding daily violence, being white won't save us, being middle class won't save us, loving men won't save us, loving women won't save us, just minding our own business won't save us, power dressing won't save us, getting more women elected to high office won't save us...under patriarchy nothing will save us.

But this dreadful knowledge doesn't make me feel all hopeless and depressed. On the contrary, it gives me hope and a great sense of freedom. Because if men are going to kill us as feminists just for being women and alive and not doormats, then we have nothing to lose. We might as well all be feminists, and the wildest, biggest, most outrageous feminists we can manage. 

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Individual copies sell for \$2 at Everywomans Books, 641 Johnson Street, Victoria, B.C. V8W 1M7.

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

Classified Ads are \$5/month for up to 10 words and 50¢ for each word thereafter. If you want us to hold and forward replies to Personals, add \$2. We reserve the right to refuse any ad that might create legal difficulties or that offends our highly developed sensibilities (see note below). Ads and payment must be received by the 15th of each month for inclusion the following month.

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

WHO ARE WE?

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Alisa Gordaneer (Welcome Home)



**COMING IN
FEBRUARY:**

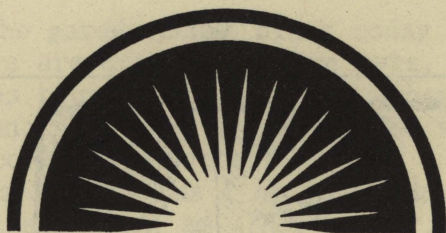
Classifieds

So I've made myself a promise. To honour the memory of those 14 women killed, I've promised myself that in the coming year I'm going to commit 14 extra acts of feminism. And I invite you all to join me in this, especially those of you who have never before thought of yourselves as feminists, and also those of you who have been active feminists for many years and had been thinking lately you'd done enough and it was time to let others take your place. If we all, each in her own life and in her own way, next year and every year thereafter, commit 14 extra acts of feminism, we can help create the kind of world where no woman ever again will be killed just because she is a woman and alive and not a doormat.

We have the power to create some good from all this. Let's work together and use that power. And if it gets too scary, I'll leave you with some wise words by Gertrude Stein. Old Gertrude looked out at the world and said, "Considering how dangerous everything is, nothing is really very frightening."

This was the text of my speech at the SWAG memorial vigil for the 14 women killed in Montreal on December 6th, which I've been asked to make available for those who couldn't attend.

NOTICES



UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA DECEMBER 6 MEMORIAL FUND

One positive response to the murder of 14 women engineering students has been to establish the December 6 Memorial Fund to aid female engineering students at UVic. Donations to this fund may be directed to the UVic Development Office, Sedgewick Building, University of Victoria, PO Box 1700, Victoria, BC V8W 2Y2.

MEMORIAL FUND

VICTORY METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH

Founded for and by lesbians,
gays and allies

Sunday service 4:15pm

James Bay Community School
140 Oswego

Worship coordinator Steph Ozard
Information 386-5078

DEVELOPING WOMEN'S SELF-DEFENSE TRAINING

Any women interested in training or
classes, please phone Colleen 380-6933



Dear Gertrude

Dear Gertrude:

My current job has some bad things about it, but one of the good things is that I am comfortably 'out'. I have a possibility for getting a much higher paying/higher status job elsewhere. It seems doubtful that this new job would allow me the same freedom of disclosure. I am torn between staying in my comfortable but dead-end job or taking the higher-powered straight position. Can you help me choose?

Getting Splinters
From Fence Sitting

Send YOUR queries on the fine points of lesbian living and loving to GERTRUDE.

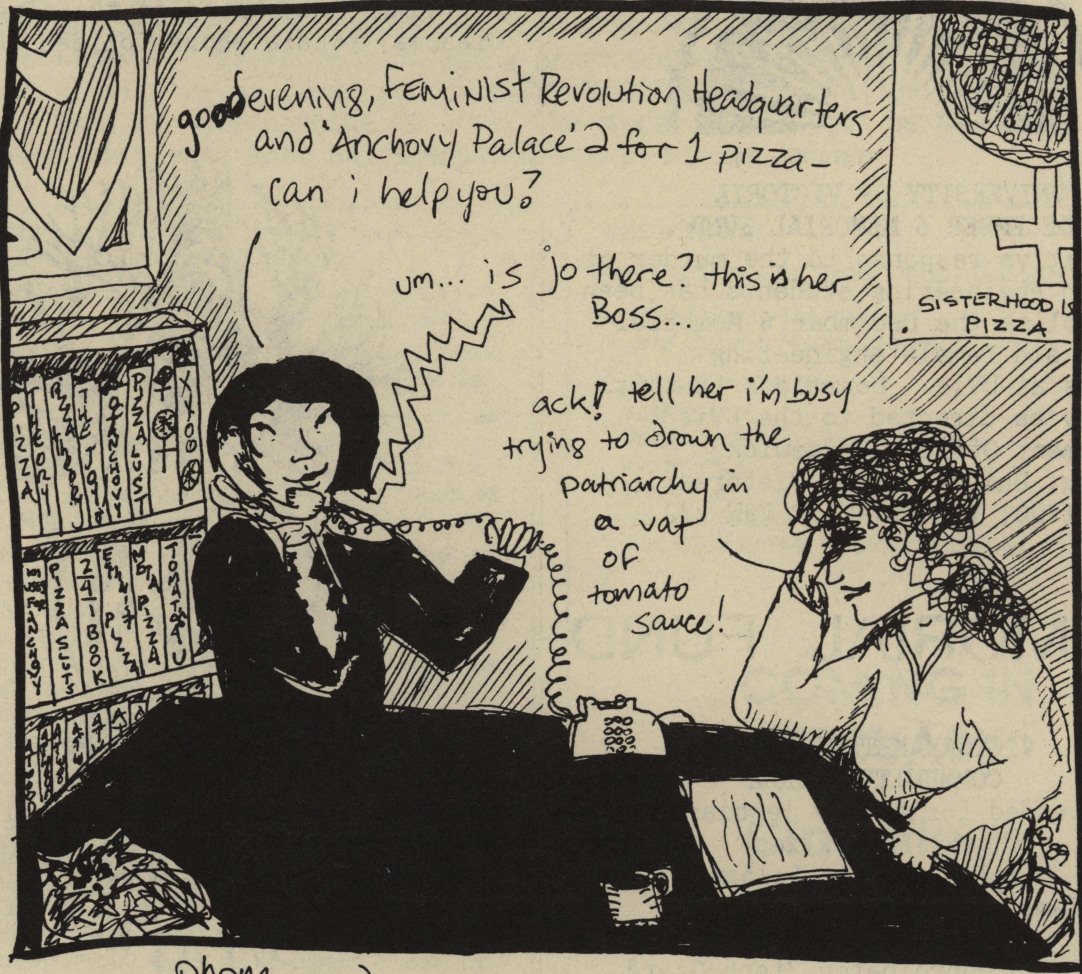
Dear Splinters:

Wow, contemplating a risk - a time for excitement, analysis and FEAR! Some questions: on what do you base "It seems doubtful...."? Do the people involved in facilitating your promotion know your orientation? What would you lose on the new job by being out? The job? Clients? Colleague respect? What do you lose being closeted? Freedom? Self-esteem? What do you gain by staying in your current position?

Only you have the answers and your decision is based on your values and priorities. DO WHAT YOU CAN, you owe yourself no less and no one else any more.

Gertrude

Portrait of panic



phone and games.

Alisa Gordaneeer

890725



Linda Macfarlane

Beyond Sissinghurst

by Heather Gibson, Dipl.T.

The garden seems bleak today. The colors are drab, birds are mute, shapes blur under a dull December sky. I cannot write of gardens. The news has come from Montreal.

As strongly as I am anything else in this life, I am a Montrealer. Most Montrealers share a passionate love for the city, a sense of identification with the place. I've been away for fourteen years and Montreal for me has become the memory of a simple secure childhood and an adolescence full of enthusiasm and exploration. In a strange way, I have created in memory an idyllic and innocent Montreal, a place I fondly call my hometown. Today this place is lost to me forever.

You see, I can picture the place where he lived, the man whose name I will not speak. I can see the tree-lined street flanked with three-storey brownstone walkups. I can trace his route to the steps of L'Ecole Polytechnique. I can feel the biting cold of that windy Wednesday afternoon cutting into my face. It's so easy to place myself there, back in my hometown.

But now even the word "hometown" is as bitter as December in Montreal. From now on I will never be able to think of the place as home. I have no refuge there. In fact it seems that

there is no refuge anywhere. We are all sitting ducks. We are targets. We are the hunted. We are prey.

My way of being conforms to the disorientation of the hunted. I am in a state of randomness, grasping at anything to help it make sense.

Sense? I cannot make sense of expressions that hurl themselves headlong into my consciousness. "Maitre chez-nous" does not mean the women of Quebec. "Live and let live" does not include us. The "just society" does not exist for women.

I am in a state of flight, looking over my shoulder as I flee from the horror of it all. The denial that women, feminist women were specifically the target, are the target. The focus on the killer - looking for his "reasons". The distancing that men so instinctively and unconsciously do - denying that they can so easily be just like him. The way it is all going to be rationalized, excused, explained, forgiven and in some quarters lauded, keeps me reminded that I am just like Annie St. Arneault, Annie Turcotte, Anne-Marie Edward, Anne-Marie Lemay, Barbara, Barbara Maria, Genevieve, Helene, Maryse Laganier, Maryse LeClair, Maud, Michele, Nathalie and Sonia.

Farewell sisters, adieu.

Sonia Johnson in her recent visit to Victoria rekindled a burning interest I have always had in the psychological oppression of women -- the study of how they, (the patriarchs), get us to do their work of subjugating us for them by occupying our minds and therefore our behaviour and choices. In her afternoon session Sonia presented a brilliant analysis of how patriarchy has defined and constructed "relationship" rules so as to bind those in it to master and slave roles. She named many of the problems that arise when the "ship" sails into the living room and bedroom with its many complex requirements that have little to do with what leads to closeness.

*We all did the best that we
could given who we were
and what we knew.*

My own lessons about the hazards of the "ship" are based on an 8-1/2 year marriage, 2 long-term lesbian partnerships (5 and 7 years) and a number of shorter but significant journeys with Lesbian lovers. The contrast of my dysfunctional behaviour with all of these "lovers" and the greater ease in being myself with my meaningful friends has puzzled and often tormented me. I think I am beginning to see and sense the way through.

It was with shock and chagrin that I began to face my own blind masochism and slave mentality when I involve myself intimately with one special, primary other. Rather quickly I disempower myself, usually unawares, by letting myself be owned. The dynamics that have then played out have not required the knowledge or consent of my partners who may have had a very different vision of the dance we were doing. There may even have been active opposition. In some instances they may have been doing the same steps of the dance without my knowledge or consent. This analysis is not intended to blame or embarrass

FROM BONDAGE

by Sara

any of them. We all did the best that we could given who we were and what we knew. My goal in describing aspects of what occurred is to join Sonia and others in charting the ways to break free.

My particular masochism was learned from my mother who to this day believes she loves me but who actually has never known me. Who she has loved is "the good little girl", an image and projection of her own making. (More accurately, of her patriarchal conditioning.) Her "ship" is ownership. She performed well the role patriarchy assigned her of teaching me oppression. She laid out the rules about what I was allowed to do, be and feel. She also defined reality and like every good slave I went into agreement with the lies. I learned denial, the principle defense of the psychologically oppressed. If we do not even know what we feel and want it is easier to get us to do what is expected by another or others. I learned to distrust myself and my ability to take care of myself. When I was nearly 40 she still felt called

We were so sure that having discovered u

Sonia helped me when she shared her so many years. She read an article that intelligent people than less intelligent must be brilliant. The same mind that effective in freeing me.

Here, then, are some beginning forms maintaining closeness with another. We know, accept, and love ourselves (which or even men in patriarchy). Neither can sacrifice ourselves in any way. Because behaviours may happen so automatically dozens of rationalizations about why the increasing evidence that such behaviour we come close by controlling or manipulating identification with the oppressor -- if and losing, are all we have seen, it is refuse to be the losers). Neither can

E TO BONDING

oy David

upon to tell my lover to be sure to have me wear mittens and slippers when it is cold! She masked her criticism and put-downs so that they impacted me but left me with no right to protest (from her point of view they were not being made at all or else I was too sensitive). She had all the rights and I had all the duties. She was also always "right." Guess what script I have played out ever since...

The stage was set for all the succeeding owners -- the fathers in every area of study -- English and French literature, education, and psychology. The stage was also set for all my lover/owners. I defined myself as a relationship failure when no matter how much a partner and I had going for us, no matter how much love or good will, the ships hit the rocks and capsized. I alternately congratulated or condemned myself for my willingness and courage to grieve, let go and reopen while I repeated this pattern of allowing myself to be owned many times. I now see that it is not that I am stupid or a slow learner.

men we would create something different.

embarrassment about remaining a Mormon for indicated it is easier to brainwash more ones. Like Sonia I now realize that I ruled me mercilessly can now be equally

ations of what does not work in cannot relate successfully when we do not are all monumental achievements for women we, if we seek approval, placate, or of our patriarchal brainwashing these e don't even notice it or we may make y are necessary even in the face of do not get us what we want. Neither can ting another (the legacy of controlling and being controlled, winning natural that some will be smart enough to e be close when we are deceiving ourselves

about what we are doing. We cannot come close when we have not healed from past anger, fear, and pain. These legacies can be stifled and denied but they do not disappear. New intimacy triggers them and they may then be projected onto our current lover/friend. An equally futile or even destructive choice is withdrawing from intimacy or going into confusion out of fear of feeling such feelings in their full intensity.

Another pitfall is to turn our lover/friend into a rescuer. We cannot be close when we are codependent. There are limitations to how close we can be when we are doing what we "should" instead of what we desire or when we are desiring either to connect or distance for the wrong reasons ('wrong' = any other reason than listening to hearts freed from conditioning).

*The only thing worse than NOT
being in a relationship is
BEING in a relationship.*

No wonder there are so many relationship crashes and changes. All of this is before facing the added barriers created by homophobia. There are costs to not having family and social support and blessings for our selection of a mate. The "ship" has to have proved itself before we are ready to have it be visible. We don't want to risk disapproval, being disowned, losing jobs for something that may not even last. So we forgo sharing the joys of early romance, the struggles that set in when the free spirits who attracted one another begin to play prescribed roles, the disappointments about what went wrong.

Continued next month



Book Review

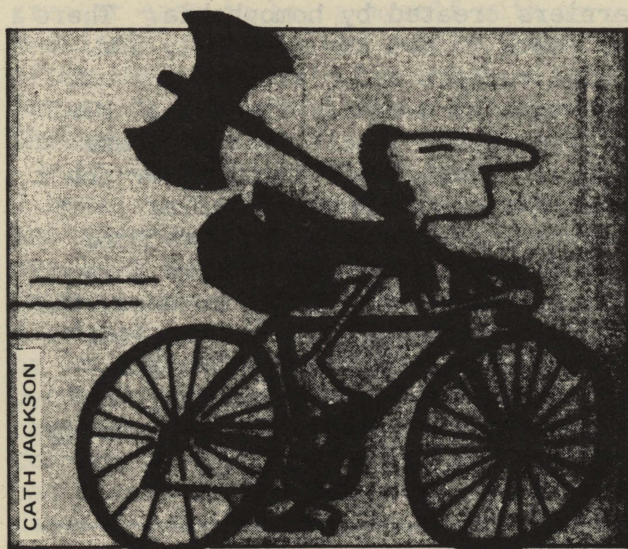
by Mary Fair

Gender Blending: Confronting the Limits of Duality
by Holly Devor
Indiana University Press, 1989
\$16.85

This is, as far as I know, the first contemporary book written on this subject. It is an in-depth study of a group of 15 women, which the author, Holly Devor, calls 'gender blenders.' These are women who identify themselves as female in gender (although some have had trouble accepting their gender identity) but who do not fit nicely into society's gender role stereotype of how they should look, dress, act, feel, etc. These women have repeatedly and consistently been mistaken for men a good part of, or in some cases all of their lives.

The author gives us a fascinating and very good background on the role hormones and chromosomes play in determining gender, then goes on to provide a psychological basis of gender, maintaining a strong feminist bias throughout. How, and to what degree, these women integrated themselves into a society in which they did not fit is the main part of the text. We gain the broad and variable experiences of these women as they grow up, become sexual and try to reconcile their feelings with the dominant patriarchal structure.

Clear, strong analysis and summation brings all this valuable information together, with a vision for a brighter future.



If you've always had a secret urge to be a cover girl, here's your chance. We need drawings and graphics for our cover. The publisher's attention gets focused on the text and she always forgets to find suitable images for the cover. So....if you have some suitable interesting or beautiful or imaginative images that would fit into a 5" x 6-1/2" box, just send us a good photocopy (we cannot be responsible for original work) with your name and address. If you're sending in someone else's work, we need her written permission to use it. If we use your cover, we'll give you credit + we'll give you a free copy of *LesbianNews*.



COMES THE DAWN

After awhile you learn the subtle difference between holding a hand and
chaining a soul,

And you learn that love doesn't mean leaning and company doesn't mean
security,

And you begin to learn that kisses aren't contracts and presents aren't
promises,

And you begin to accept your defeats with your head up and your eyes open,

With the grace of a woman, not the grief of a child, and you learn to
build all your roads on today because tomorrow's ground

Is too uncertain for plans, and futures have a way of falling down in
midflight.

After awhile you learn that even sunshine burns if you get too much

So you plant your own garden and decorate your own soul instead of waiting
for someone to bring you flowers.

And you learn that you really can endure.

That you really are strong

And you really do have worth.

And you learn and learn. . .

With every good-bye, you learn.

- Anonymous

COMING IN FEBRUARY: Classifieds

Help inaugurate our new Personal Classified section, with a special heart-shaped valentine greeting to someone you care about. Up to 10 words for \$5. Deadline for inclusion in the February issue is January 15th.

Welcome to the Gay Ninety's!



LOOKING TO SHARE QUIET OFFICE SPACE
with other women health care
practitioners. Call Nancy at 383-8440

LESBIAN THEATRE IN VICTORIA?

Is there an actor, a dramatist, a producer, a lighting technician lurking within your depths? Do you long to belong to a troupe of lesbian thespians? We are two women, Karey Pearkes and Lynn Greenhough, interested in writing scripts, looking for women to join us in our dream, ongoing lesbian theatre. If you would like to join us at an initial meeting to discuss any ideas you may have, come to 2896 Inez Drive, on Sunday evening, 7pm, January 21st.

WE'RE A GOING CONCERN!

Impossible as it seems, we are meeting our expenses. There is a scary gap between the time the money goes out, in huge chunks, and the time it comes in, in dribs and drabs, but at the end of each month we're just about balanced.

You could make the gap less scary by subscribing. It's cheaper for you that way, and it gives us money before we incur expenses, rather than after. If you've been holding back for fear we wouldn't last a year, fear not - **LesbianNews** is here to stay.

Thanks to all our subscribers and advertisers, and thanks to all our supporters and contributors. Your enthusiasm, energy and money are all very much appreciated - that's what keeps it going.

HELP SPREAD THE WORD

Do you know women up-island or elsewhere [or even in town] whom you think might like to read **LesbianNews**? Send us their name and address - with postal code, s.v.p. - and we'll send them a complimentary copy.



Calendar

MONDAY JANUARY 8: SWAG OFFICE REOPENS

#320 - 620 View Street, 381-1012
9:30 - 1:00 weekdays, 10:30 - 1:00
Saturdays. For what's happening in
the Victoria women's community.

FRIDAY JANUARY 19 -

SUNDAY JANUARY 21: LESBIAN LOVE

An opportunity for Lesbian women to
join together in: removing barriers to
self love, acceptance, and success/
celebrating self and others/deepening
friendships/experiencing more joy,
harmony and commitment in intimate
partnerships/creating family connec-
tions and community.

Facilitator: Sara Joy David,
registered psychologist, 17 years
experience. Fee: sliding scale.
Venue: #308 - 733 Johnson Street. To
register: phone 383-8998.

**Visualize your business card
in this space
and then send \$5 and
make your vision come true.**

FRIDAY JANUARY 26: THE FIRST WOMEN'S DANCE OF THE DECADE

9pm-1am, 106 Superior Street, \$5
Wheelchair Accessible, booze/smoke-
free. Tickets are limited so avoid
disappointment and buy early:
available at Everywomans Books from
January 6th. Out-of-towners may
reserve tickets through the bookstore
after Jan. 6, but they must be picked
up and paid for by 9pm the night of
the dance (unclaimed tickets sold at
the door).



NANCY ISSENMAN
C.A., Dipl. Ac. (NCCA)

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383-8440



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