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COSTA RICA FROM A BROAD

BY THE WAY by Connie M. DeLeon

ellenews

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mostly
Vancouver Island's / Monthly Lesbian Newsletter

VGL. 1 ISSUE 1

FEBRUARY 1993

USED TO BE

LESBIAN NEWS

... setting out in a new direction!





EDITORIAL

This, our first issue of 1993, is a new beginning for us under the flag: **ellenews**. After five months of discussing and thinking and let us not forget processing, it's hard to remember our reasons, but a large part of the name change has to do with wanting to serve the whole lesbian community, including feminists and non-feminists and lesbians who don't call themselves feminists but they really are and those who call themselves feminists but there's this other feminist who doesn't think they are. You see the problem. It's not the label that's important anyway; it's what's on the inside that counts. We hope to grow and we hope you grow to like us.

In this issue of changes we also say goodbye to departing Cover Editor and regular contributor Kelevelyn Hurley, who has left the collective

and I wish she hadn't but some people you can guilt-trip and some you can't. It was you who got me into this in the first place, Kelevelyn, and I hardly think it's fair for you to go waltzing off to the Gay, Lesbian, and Bi-Sexual Alliance at UVic while I have to sit here all by myself sweating over a hot keyboard. Kelevelyn? Are you listening? Honestly I might as well be talking to the cat...

In addition to the name change, we're changing our deadline to the twelfth of the month for the first of the month following. This is primarily for articles, stories, etc. Announcements can be phoned in (see top of announcements page). It's only three days. If we have more time we won't make silly mistakes like the wrong pull-quote in last month's Brain Fever. We do rely on your letters, opinions and submissions, etc. We apologise for any inconvenience. Any inconvenience whatsoever. Bank overdraft? Our fault entirely. Flat tire? We'll do better next time. Promise.

KP

In Memory of Audre Lorde, 1934-1992

"Black lesbian warrior poet mother", Audre Lorde died on November 17, 1992 of cancer. Readers are invited to write in to **ellenews** expressing what Audre's life and work has meant to them.

WHO ARE WE?

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ellenews IS A COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER PRIMARILY SERVING VANCOUVER ISLAND AND THE GULF ISLANDS. ITS AIM IS TO PROVIDE CONTENT THAT INSPIRES, EMPOWERS, AND PROMOTES LESBIANS. IT IS PUBLISHED BY, FOR AND ABOUT LESBIANS, BI-SEXUAL WOMEN AND THEIR ALLIES. WE RESERVE THE RIGHT TO EDIT ACCORDINGLY.
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Classified Ads are \$5/month for up to 25 words and 50c 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

Ads and payment must be received by the 12th of each month for inclusion the following month.

Submissions are welcome from all lesbians and allies; this is an open community newsletter. Send your letters, questions, comments, stories, poems, articles, ideas, cartoons, drawings, news items, calendar items, and dreams of the week to the PO Box address, typed double spaced, very neatly written, or on IBM-compatible 3.5" disk. We edit for space and clarity. Please limit submissions to 900 words.

COSTA RICA FROM A BROAD

by Corinne M. Devison

Are you tired of wet and cold in Victoria? Do you need a vacation? If yes, sit back and enjoy my journey through Costa Rica. Hopefully my tan will not fade before I finish this Diary from a Dyke.

With my map of most of the gay or women-friendly clubs, bars and restaurants in the downtown core. I was semi-prepared to search for the Lesbian community in the capital city. I took a chance and stepped into the Happy Days Bar. After the first of many *cerveza's* (beer) on my trip, a woman introduced herself as Vicki. Struggling with my inefficient Español, we decided to converse in English. Most people in the city, she revealed, did speak a little or fluent English.

Vicki was a heterosexual divorcee who thought men from her country were macho self-serving idiots. I told her she was my tour guide and to take me anywhere, but no, my opinion on lesbian love did not overwhelm her. We strolled the streets of central San Jose, and came to the corner where two gay clubs were located. The first club sounded a bit too salsa for us, so we went to the second, where the music was upbeat but on a Saturday night it cost 500 *colonias* (\$3.25 US) to get in. Too expensive for her. We ended up in an American bar discussing her life in Costa Rica.

On my fifth day I set out for some real sun on the Pacific coast. I was dropped off in paradise on a grassy field near the beach of Samara, with no Spanish and a young man who spoke no English. He flagged down a farm truck. We jumped in and set out for the small community of Playa Samara. I was able stay a night at the Los Almendros without reservations, but after a night with only one sheet on the bed and various bugs on the prowl, I sought other accommodations. The Los Almendros

did possess one of the largest discos I've ever seen, however, situated next to the beach. It was here that I finally met my first.....English-speaking women.

Noting that her earring resembled a women's symbol I ventured forth. As revealed, she was a lesbian from Winnipeg, travelling through Central America. Would I now experience passion in paradise? Heavy sigh. Unfortunately her passion pertained particularly towards her partner. I invited the couple for dinner at my more modern *cabana* by the sea. Say hi to Gayleen or Chontaille if you see them in Winnipeg.

The beach of Playa Samara was 3-5 miles long interspersed with a number of bar/restaurants and a few *pulperias*

*Would I now experience
passion in paradise?*

Heavy sigh.

(take-outs). Samara offered cycling, horseback riding, boat or reef excursions and snorkeling. There were a couple of nice hotels (\$35-\$50 US), if you didn't want to rough it in a cabin. I recommend the hotel Marbella and the Brisas Pacifico.

After walking, wiping out on a bike, and tanning for 4.5 days I returned to San Jose. With the main streets well lit at night, I walked the 10 or so blocks to the Tonite Club. The gay club had a 70/30 ratio of men to women, and a few heterosexual couples.

The next morning I left at 6 AM for my river rafting adventure. The trip provided breakfast, lunch, eight rafts, and eight guides, 7 male and 1 female. Unfortunately I was not able to obtain her services for private

rafting lessons. I ended up with Tito, an experienced river guide, and a crew of US & CDNS.

Sunday at the Tonite was for the few die-hard dancers and the gay boy Madonna wannabes. Monday the club was closed so I was in search of the elusive women's bar. The NoName or restaurant-soda, contained a decidedly feminine decor. I was surprised to see anyone at a bar on Monday, but there were about twenty or so women, mostly gay, and a few gay guys. Two women who were not afraid to show affection kissed in front of me for a good five minutes. Of course I was not about to stop them.

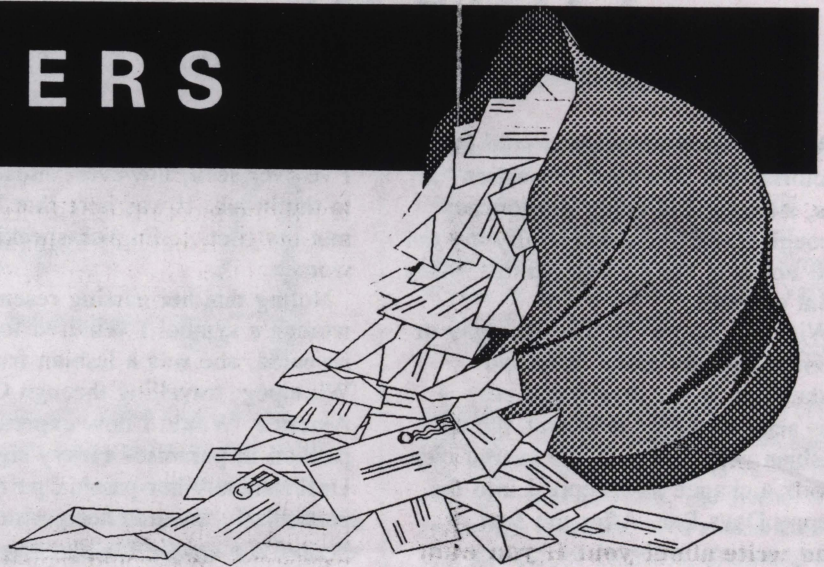
Suddenly a popular song came over the speakers. The Spanish song moved two women to get up and passionately lip-sync the words to each other. As I interpreted it, the song resembled a verbal and almost physical discussion. One woman, playing the man, tried to suck up to his lover, begging for forgiveness. The woman revealed to her "husband" that "you've screwed around on me for the last time, you're a self-centred macho ass, and I don't need you any

more." The routine was hilarious and everyone clapped at the end.

For those of you who now feel like flying to Costa Rica here are a couple of key addresses: Tonite - Ave.1 and Central, Calle 7. No-Name (Soda Restaurant - Bar) Ave.8, Calle 3-5. I found these addresses in "Going Places" at Everywomen's Books, a must-read for travellers.

P.S. It was nice to see University Posters on self defense and stopping violence against women. Women's issues and t-shirts are shared internationally. One familiar shirt read "what part of NO do you not understand?". If you're into women in uniform, there were a lot of them in San Jose. I couldn't even get frisked.

LETTERS



Dear LesbiaNews:

After a particularly frustrating day, I hit my computer keyboard and came up with this:

Silence is oppression (not a novel concept). If I use the word "lesbian" it will be edited out: wiped from the T.V. screen, and lifted from print. All the feminist writers I've mentioned during the interview are lesbian. Wickedly intelligent and passionate women. Is there a megaphone somewhere in the studio? I want to grab one and start shouting: "Lesbian, lesbian, lesbian...". I want to activate air sirens throughout the nation. At noon, as the provinces sit to have lunch, tens of thousands of women's voices will fill the air saying: "Lesbians are everywhere...they teach at your universities, colleges and schools; they repair your bodies, minds, homes and cars. You listen to them on the radio, and are entertained by them at the movies and on the television. The work of their hands fills your galleries. Politics and policy are influenced by their minds. Lesbians are everywhere....".

Carl Jung said lesbians would save the world. What a curious and disturbing statement. If lesbians did save the world, I doubt they would get credit for it. History has a terrible memory for fact.

Thanks for the space to rant! Thanks also to LNews for another year of space and opportunity for dykes to have their say, without censorship.

Sincerely,
Janet Stewart

Dear LNews:

I want to thank all the women who so generously contributed to Heather Gibson's Memorial Bench(s) to be placed in Lokier Park and the Rose Garden, both places where Heather worked, and where a lot of her energy can still be felt.

The responses were so positive that this was a wonderful way to not only remember a person who is

unforgettable, but that it is a place that we can go and spend some time with the essence of Heather and the landmark of scents and colours she left behind and to think about the times we share with her. We collected more than enough money for the bench, and any residual funds will be spent on items that Heather apparently wanted to have in the Rose Garden.

I gather that the benches have been ordered and they will likely be placed in the gardens in the spring.

Thank you again to all of you who contributed - see you under the wisteria sometime in the spring!

Sincerely,
Denise Bragg

Dear Karey:

Your response to my artwork in the November issue of LesbiaNews was very heartwarming, though I think my heart did stop a beat on discovering that you decided not only to publish my artwork but enclosed boringist letter.

Hopefully, this letter will be trite enough not to meet the same fate.

I'm enclosing an inaugural issue of a new comic for women which your readers may find interesting, if they can bring themselves to pick up a comic and not feel they are somehow regressing in their reading matter. And if OH is not fit material for review, I hope that you will at least find it entertaining and interesting reading yourself.

When my brain returns from the vacation it seems to have gone on, I will be in touch about placing an

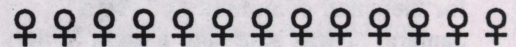
advertisement, assuming, of course, we somehow manage to break even from this first issue, and get the stupid thing running like the beautiful capitalist tool it should be.

(Did I mention that your perception of my art was not only flattering but somewhat intriguing .. does it really come off as romantic?)

Anyway, no more waxing lyrical. A Merry Xmas and good wishes for the New Year.

Hope

The editor replies: After this shameless, unsolicited free plug, any readers who are still awake may look forward to a review of OH in the next issue. (In case you're curious, it has words like Click! Jeez! and Zot! This is what distinguishes a comic book from a dictionary. Also a comic has more pictures.) Hopefully someone will let us know where to buy said OH so its creatrices (you mean that isn't the plural of creatrix?) can make baskets of lovely capitalist money so they can afford to buy capitalist groceries and capitalist toilet paper, etc. As for romantic, well call me old fashioned, but somehow I see these naked and semi-naked women touching and kissing and I just kind of go all funny inside....



Answers to Lesbian Culture Quiz (page 10)

Books:	A-6	E-3	A-5	F-9
Artists:	A-3	B-1	G-3	B-2
	C-1	H-4	C-6	D-7
			I-8	D-2
			J-2	E-10

ARTISTS AMONG US

We have turned to poet, Elsa Gidlow, and painter-writer, Mary Meigs, both seasoned lesbian artists, for our introductory column on "Artists Among Us". Expressing our art is a special part of being lesbian, because lesbians are in a unique place to be creative, in whichever way that creativity manifests itself. We want to celebrate and acknowledge the artists among us - visual, literary, lively, or whatever. We know some of you. We will interview, review, and write about you. If you want to write about your talent or another lesbian's talent with unabashed vigour - please do so - otherwise we will come to you. If we don't know you, let us know who you are!

Elsa Gidlow says:

"Does it become plain why lesbianism is liberating for the woman, for the artist in her? Or for those women born with or who cultivate what I call a lesbian personality? As I see it, that personality manifests itself in independence of spirit, in willingness to take responsibility for oneself, to think for oneself, not to take "authorities" and their dictum on trust. I usually includes erotic attraction to women, although we know there have been many women of lesbian personality who never had sexual relations with one another. Even where an erotic relationship exists the sensually sexual may be far from predominant. What is strongly a part of the lesbian personality is loyalty to and love of other women. And every lesbian personality I have knowledge of is in some way creative. To my mind this is because she is freed or has freed herself from the external and internal dominance of the male so ignored or rejected (usually male prescribed) social assumptions that the constellation of domestic functions are peculiarly hers. The important point is that the lesbian has sought wholeness within herself, not

requiring, in the romantic sense, to be "completed" by an opposite." (Elsa Gidlow is a poet who has made her living most of her life as a journalist. A book of lesbian love poems, On a Grey Thread, was first published in 1923.)

Source: "Lesbianism as a Liberating Force", Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics, Vol.1, No.2, May, 1977, pg 94-95.

Mary Meigs says:

"..I belong to a generation of lesbians, many of whom unconsciously made a pact with the patriarchy. We would remain invisible in return for the comfortable sense of belonging, and, forty years ago, it was much more comfortable to belong to them than to ourselves. The closer we came to ideals of painting and sculpture which had been evolved by the

... every lesbian personality I have knowledge of is in some way creative.

greater masters, who were always men, the happier many of us felt in this rite of assimilation which is a kink of "passing". I have known lesbian artists of my generation who reacted indignantly to the suggestion that they were in any way feminine, and much more violently if it was suggested that they were lesbian. This is understandable, since to be known as a lesbian was a kind of professional death-knell. "Lady-painter" or lady-anything has always been used in its most patronizing sense to suggest that masculine vigour and intelligence are absent, replaced, according to male critics, by the very qualities of softness and sentimentality which according to these same men, are in other contexts feminine virtues. ...
"..The carefulness, the stonewalling of lesbians my age, including myself until quite recently, makes the

tumbling down of the walls of secrecy in the last ten years more wonderful, astounding and joyful. The lesbians who first had the courage to come out generated courage in others until there is now an irresistible flood either of work by lesbians in which the content is unmistakably lesbian, or of work by lesbians who no longer feel handicapped by being out in the open. There are so many examples of lesbian painters, sculptors, performance artists and filmmakers both in Canada and the United States that it is impossible to single out a few without overlooking many others....

"..In sum, lesbian artists have found their voices and their direction, many directions, each as different as each woman is different from the other. It has happened as it has happened to women in all the minorities that have traditionally been oppressed both by racism and sexism. Very often, the categories overlap and an artist will identify herself as Black, Jewish and lesbian, or lesbian, Native American and Latin American, two of the

amalgams which seem to make for a special kind of freedom of spirit. I have the impression of a renaissance, the unlocking of positive energies that have been imprisoned for centuries, prisoner of an imposed conscience, which were unable to free them-selves until recently. If there is some chaos and incoherence in the art lesbians are producing, it is only natural, for they had almost lost the power of self-expression. The wonder is that so many seem to come out of prison ready to spread their wings and soar like birds." (Those of you who have seen the 1990 NFB film, "In a Company of Strangers" and read Mary Meigs' account of the making of the film will appreciate how inspired and inspiring Mary Meigs is!)

Source: "Lesbians in Visual Arts", Resources for Feminist Research-The Lesbian Issue, Vol. XII, No. 1, March, 1983, pg. 28-30

CAN A WOMAN BE A LESBIAN AND NOT BE A FEMINIST?

*It's a fairly obvious question, but when the **ellenews** Roving Electronic Reporter called up a few lesbians from her little brown book of phone numbers, she stirred up quite a buzz. So much for random.*

- "Oh sure. I know some lesbians that are merely pretending they're men. They have all the same attitudes and behaviours. I think they must hate being women."
- "An unequivocal yes. Simply because I have met so many lesbians who don't have a clue about feminism. It was a surprise to me, having come to lesbianism through the women's movement."
- "She shouldn't be, but I think it's possible. I think that all women should be feminists. I think that all men should be feminists. All people."

- "Yes. Just because you're a lesbian doesn't mean you're a feminist and I think the majority of lesbians aren't, but I think they should be. To change society you need to be a feminist."

- "She can, whether she should or not is another question. I would like to think that lesbians are supporters of women and some of them are not. Some of them are quite misogynist. It's like being an anti-semitic Jew. There are anti-feminist lesbians. What's happening now is a split that's really healthy, because the alliance of lesbian and feminist was a kind of homophobic cop-out. It was easier to call oneself a feminist, rather than a lesbian, so we denied the power of our sexuality. Now we're sexualizing our lesbianism and I think that's healthy. But I'm not sure where it's coming from, whether it's a sexual liberation thing or a feminist backlash. Ask me again in twenty years."

- "Absolutely. Getting your jollies from getting off on another woman's genitalia doesn't say anything about the politics of money and power. Lesbianism becomes politicised by being a phenomenon within a misogynist heterosexist culture. It takes on the earmarks of being a feminist act to be a lesbian, but when you get down to brass tacks, non-feminist lesbians don't have an investment in sisterhood."

- "Yes, she says bitterly. I wish they were the same but they're not, although they should be, because the fate of lesbians is more tied up with the fate of women generally than with homosexuals. Lesbians have more commonality with other women than they do with gay men. For a lesbian not to be a feminist is cutting the ground out from under herself."

LESBIAN SENIORS HOUSING SOCIETY MEETS

The first meeting of the Lesbian Seniors Housing Society met on January 6 with the purpose of establishing a care facility for older lesbians. The facility would provide different levels of care, as well as allow couples to remain together when only one requires care. Discussions included provision for individual spaces where women could have their own furniture and things, common areas for dining, entertainment and activities, and garden spaces.

We have proposed naming this residence the Pat Smith House, in honour of one of our best known and loved lesbian-feminists. As many of you will remember, Pat was instrumental in launching "The Pedestal", the first feminist newspaper in the early 70's. She also helped establish Press Gang Publishing and worked long and hard with "Women's Press" to promote and market feminist authors. Those of you who don't remember Pat will no doubt be familiar with her work, including the

posters "Class is Knowing Which Side of the Fence You're On" and the MacDonald's Woman "Disarm Rapists", part of the legacy that Pat left us when she was tragically killed in 1985 at the age of 35 years. (Watch for a biography of Pat in next month's issue.)

To raise money we will be presenting the Victoria premiere of the film "Forbidden Love: The Unashamed Stories of Lesbian Lives" featuring our own Steph Ozard and Reva Hutkin. This Canadian herstory of lesbians who were out there in the 50's and 60's is a must see so stay tuned for dates and times.

Our next meeting is Monday Feb. 8th at 7 PM at Sandy and Jackie's. Please call 386-8380 for directions. This mtg. will focus on our name, purpose and constitution. Hope to see you there to be a part of this exciting new project.

Lesbians Under The Rule Of Law

When the Federal Court of Canada ruled that the military's treatment of Michelle Douglas, a 28-year-old Ontario woman forced out of the Air Force in 1989 for being a lesbian, contravened the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Immediately after this court decision, the Department of National Defence said that gays and lesbians can now work for the Canadian Forces without fear of discrimination.

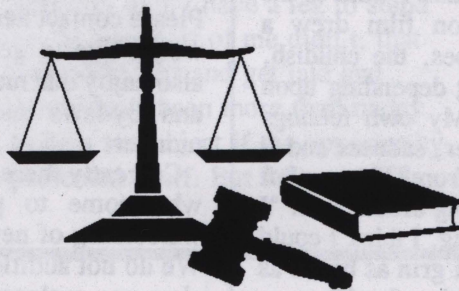
Chapter 7 in Robson's book is on "Lesbians and the Military". (Ruthann Robson is a lesbian attorney on the Faculty of CUNY Law School in New York). The U.S. Department of Defense has an express policy codified as a rule of law. According to the current Code of Federal Regulations, "Homosexuality is incompatible with military service. The presence in the military environment of persons who engage in homosexual conduct seriously impairs the military mission." Robson explains the history of this policy, and reviews the various cases that have gone through the courts.

So Canada is now ahead of the U.S. on this issue. Although I generally tend to be against women being in the military (because of the kind of training they get), I recognize why many young women are attracted to the service. Therefore, I can understand Michelle Douglas' feeling that this change in policy is a "great day, not only for gays and lesbians, but for the military."

Tom Warner of the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Ontario said: "The policy is a step forward but it also has to be accompanied by changes in attitudes. There is still and incredible amount of homophobia in the Forces." It would be a brave individual who would come out and decide to announce his or her sexual orientation. The Forces' reply to the new policy has been "mixed", according to a Times-Colonist article on October 29, 1992.

The new policy is the third boost for gay rights in recent months. Last month, an Ontario human rights tribunal ordered the provincial government to pay survivor pensions to same-sex partners of its civil

service. And in August, an Ontario appeals court ruled that the Canadian Human Rights Act is unconstitutional because it doesn't protect gay men and lesbians from discrimination because of their sexual orientation. The federal Justice Department has decided to accept this court ruling and therefore has, in effect, added a gay-rights clause to the Canadian Human Rights Act (Times-Colonist, Nov.1, 1992). Svend Robinson (New Democrat MP) has been trying to get the government to amend the Act for a long time, since the promise to do so had been made over six years ago.



Ruthann Robson in her book Lesbian (Out)Law: Survival Under the Rule of Law, (Firebrand Books, Ithaca, N.Y., 1992), about law, theory, and lesbianism in the U.S. discusses the past history of lesbianism before the law, refuting the assumption that lesbianism was irrelevant in legal discourse. References to lesbians in Anglo-European legal history are apparent, and that history is not benign. Ancient Greece and Rome, the Old and New Testaments, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, the Witchcraft trials, the indigenous peoples of Americas, and modern lesbian legal history are all discussed in a most interesting fashion. She also has chapters on Crimes of Lesbian Sex, Sexual Privacy, Public Exposure, the Regulation of Lesbianism in the Military, Immigration, and Prisons: Lesbian Relationships (including Lesbians with children), Lesbians and Violence, and Mediation and Alternative Dispute Resolution. The

last chapter - Lesbian Legal Workers - is particularly enlightening considering the recent statement by Canadian Justice Minister Kim Campbell that Canada's legal system is marred by sexual discrimination, and that women are often held back because of it. (Times-Colonist, Nov. 1, 1992)

LEAF (Women's Legal Education and Action Fund) has fought and won some cases in Canada in connection with equality rights, although it has had to combat the deeply ingrained patriarchal system all the way. (See Canadian Charter Equality Rights for Women: One Step Forward or Two Steps Back? by Gwen Brodsky and Shelagh Day, Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1989). LEAF also recently sponsored a major symposium on equality rights in Ottawa in February). Lawyer Gwen Brodsky, speaking on a panel on Sexual Orientation, discussed how the formal model of equality manifests itself in sexual orientation jurisprudence. She said litigants have "called out to the courts and tribunals 'we're just like you, and we want to be treated like you'", but the courts have disagreed. In cases related to bereavement leave and pension benefits, judges have found that a same-sex couple is not a family on the basis that there is neither a blood relationship nor a reproductive unit. (LEAF Lines, Summer, 1992).

In May and June, LEAF sponsored consultations with lesbians in Vancouver, Halifax, and Toronto to discuss how best to litigate for lesbian equality in the courts. A report of the consultations will be included in the fall issue of LEAF Lines.

One last point: In the recent election in the U.S., the state of Oregon had an anti-gay/lesbian referendum on the ballot, and, although it was voted down, the 45% of voter support it gained is rather worrisome. And a less severe measure removing special protection for gays and lesbians passed in Colorado. With all the right-wing forces lobbying against the lesbian and gay community in Canada, similar moves could be made here.

SHOUT ABOUT IT

The following story is just one of the tales of thousands. Yours is unique. We can all, however, identify. Laugh, cry, hoot, giggle as we share our "coming out stories on this page. Yours is welcome. In any form.

We made love on her wedding day. Later, as her maid of honour, I watched her kiss the groom and seal herself away from me. The door to my heart, feelings and closet clanged shut. In the following six years I wandered through an assortment of males, produced a couple of plays, started spending a lot of time with my gay friend Paul, returned to school, broke an engagement, started writing for our local daily paper, got engaged to my journalism professor. Earl and I went to see "The Killing of Sister George" at Hamilton Little Theatre. Childie's and George's relationship puzzled and intrigued me and I had no idea why.

Two years later (and dis-engaged) Paul and I went to the movie. The Killing of Sister George on film drew a broader, larger audience. The homophobes, the childish, the jerks--all laughing, hooting, catcalling depending upon the age of their arrested development. My own feelings were an assorted scrambling of hurt, anger, sadness and -- exhilaration? Where did that one come from? As we left the theatre I turned to Paul and, taking a big breath said: "I don't know why those people were laughing. I think I could be LIKE THAT. Paul looked at me with a grin as broad as Niagara Falls and replied: "I've been waiting for 10 years for you to tell me this. My only regret is you've missed a lot of fun". Coming out to Paul was easy. The resulting relief and release was joy! What I was going to do with this discovery was yet to be seen in the middle of downtown, homophobic Brantford.

The hard part was admitting to myself what I had denied at age 21 when I watched Jo stop being mine. There I was, the classic case, admitting at last that I loved A woman, (not "women", therefore I was not definable). In 1967 I made a conscious choice to admit to my sexuality as a lesbian ...something I was born with, evolved, acknowledged, accepted and now celebrate. What was scary about coming out the first time in total ignorance was admitting that a big part of me was something I didn't even understand. Thank goodness for Paul! He'd been out all his life. There are as many coming out stories for one lesbian as there are parts of her being: daughter, sister, friend, mother, team player, co-worker, employer.

The first time is often the easiest. Telling my mother that her number one daughter is a lesbian was an horrific experience. I watched the walls grow as we talked. And I told her badly. I told her that I had chosen to be gay. I wanted to spare her any thoughts that I ("it") was her fault. I wanted her to know because I was going through a break-up and I needed to share the pain realistically. I needed to be who I was with my parents. My father, spared first-hand relating of the EVENT, simply said: "Barbara is a big girl; she knows what she's doing". I couldn't ask for more supportive and accepting parents. **Coming Out** was worth it. Being me is worth it.

FIRST BREATHS DRAWN BY SINGING GROUP

Octavia is an "out" performance choir of lesbians, gay men and our allies. (An ally is anyone who enjoys singing with lesbians and gay men.) We are open to singing any music that we like as long as it is not oppressive to minority groups. Our goals are to enjoy singing together and when we are more confident about our singing as a group we will start rehearsing for performances, which will not be restricted to the gay/lesbian community although we look forward to singing for our community.

Our structure is loose at the moment. We make decisions by consensus. Whoever shows to our business meetings is empowered to make decisions for Octavia. We are in the process of auditioning conductors. If you know of a likely candidate, please inform an involved member of the choir.

Our coordinator is Rowena Hunnisett (ph: 384-2833). Please contact her or Pearl Newfield (ph: 382-1419) if you would like to get involved. There is lots to do, and we also enjoy our meetings. We are working on a constitution and by-laws and on getting society status and a tax number.

Currently there are 39 people on our mailing list and 20 who come to practices. We are very open to and welcoming of new members, so feel free to sing with us. We do not audition new members! All people who love to sing are welcome to join. Ability to read music and singing experience are not necessary.



New Book on
Sexual Assault
from



Montreal Health Press

Montreal Health Press has issued a new, revised edition of a book about sexual assault. Sexual Assault addresses the attitudinal and legal changes regarding sexual violence, including sections on the new assault laws in Canada, and a revised section on pornography. The publication looks at sexual assault as a private and personal experience, with practical advice on prevention and on how to deal with the legal, medical, and psychological aspects of an assault, should it occur.

Well-illustrated, with both medical diagrams and photographs, single copies of Sexual Assault costs \$4.00 and can be obtained by writing the Montreal Health Press, C.P. 1000, Station Place du Parc, Montreal, P.Q., H2W 2N1. Bulk orders can be placed at a substantial savings. The Montreal Health Press is a non-profit women's publishing house.

BRAIN FEVER

by Karey Perks

Looking back, I've always been a dyke. At first, when I was sure I would never balance on two clothes pegs with my feet compressed in leather visegrips, I thought I should have been a gay man. I could wear comfortable clothes, and I was still thinking I was supposed to be with men, so it was still technically heterosexual. After a while though, I wondered if I shouldn't have been a straight man, because I could wear the OK clothes, and get those take-me looks full of molten lust I saw women giving men in the movies.

That's what I mean by being a dyke. I wanted to win the tournament, slay the monster. I wanted to wear the costumes of power. I wanted to be loved and desired by women in that really drippy fifties way. I wanted to be swooned over.

I still do.

I discovered feminism in mid-coming-out. Or rather, feminism discovered me. Baby grease dyke that I was, I was doing my revolutionary duty by repairing cars for women. Suddenly I found myself in a group of women who called us a feminist collective, and who knew what that meant, presumably. I didn't. I was getting away from "the system" and back to the land while feminism was happening in the city. When I came out - of the closet and the bush - it was becoming well established.

There were lesbians everywhere. Not dykes. Not queers. Lesbians. And they all seemed to be feminists. Naturally with all those lesbian-feminists around, in no time at all I was wrong about something. Having

just come out it was natural that all I wanted to do was flirt and get laid. (Laid, as in to lay with, as in will you lay with me.) My fellow collective members, who felt I needed a lot of feminist education, outnumbered me. They had studied their stuff at university, and most of the time I agreed with them anyway, being a woman and all. So I basically didn't have a leg to stand on, at least part of me didn't, that wanted to flirt and get laid and would have been more than happy to be a sex object if the opportunity presented itself. But I figured if I

*Having just come out
it was natural that all I wanted to do
was flirt and get laid.*

wanted to have any friends, I had to shut up about it, so I did. Anyway, it was all tied up with wanting to be a man, and that was not a secret to be shared in the political micro-climate I somehow found myself in. I mean, these women were radical. Even the men they knew wanted to be lesbians so they could "be with women" (as in fuck, screw, get laid, etc.) and still be politically correct.

As the years passed I spoke up about swimsuit calendars at work (when I wouldn't mind putting up a few pictures myself), and I cleaned up my language and started using pronouns on an equal-opportunity basis. You know the drill. And then one night at a potluck a couple of

years ago, I heard lesbians calling each other girls. As in cookies, girls? And: It's been a slice, girls.

Girls! Pu---leez!

To give them credit, they looked a little sheepish, but I couldn't blame them. Clearly the strain of all that feminist analysis had taken a dreadful toll. We couldn't be girls. We all had to be women, very adult and serious. No spilling, no stains on the social fabric. Future generations of women depending on it, etc.

Girls! Pu---leez!

Frankly, I became a lesbian to get laid. I freely admit I became a feminist to be popular, i.e. to get laid. And some feminism did stick, I won't deny that either. But in the process something happened to my emergent dykehood. Somehow I got the idea that my dyke sexuality wasn't appropriate, that my simple

lust for a woman wasn't acceptable, and it was as if I had exchanged one form of puritanism for another.

Strange that feminism made it easier to be a lesbian and harder at the same time. I still don't know very much at all about who I am sexually, about the part of me that wants to possess a woman, that wants to surrender to her, know like an experience, I mean, not like a piece of information. When I was twenty-four, I thought I would come out and that would be it. I never thought it would take this long, and it's still not finished.

Until it is, you know where to find me. I'll be standing on the corner, watching all the girls go by.

LESBIAN CULTURE QUIZ

(answers page 4)

Books

Match the following Lesbian authors with their works:

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| A. Radcliffe Hall | 1. Rubyfruit Jungle, 1973 |
| B. Juna Barnes | 2. The Desert of the Heart, 1964 |
| C. Claire Morgan | 3. Patience and Sarah, 1971 |
| D. Jane Rule | 4. The Price of Salt, 1952 |
| E. Isabel Miller | 5. The Lesbian Body, 1975 |
| F. Rita Mae Brown | 6. The Well of Loneliness, 1928 |
| G. Monique Wittig | 7. Nightwood, 1937 |

Films

Match the movie titles with the Lesbian characters portrayed in them:

- A. A young student in a strict boarding school is driven to a tragic end (almost) by her love for one of her teachers. She is rescued at the last moment.
- B. Two school mistresses are accused of lesbianism by a student. Original play brought fame to Lillian Hellman.
- C. Viveca Lindfors plays a lesbian librarian, one of many lesbian roles this fine actress has played during her wide-ranging career.
- D. This film depicts Liv Ullman as a lesbian.
- E. Candice Bergen, as a lesbian, gives a jerk husband whose wife has committed suicide his just desserts in this adaptation of Mary McCarthy's novel.
- F. In this adaptation of Jean Genet's play, Shelley Winters falls for Lee Grant.
- G. Loren Bacall plays a lesbian who takes a young woman artist to Paris with her.
- H. The lesbian scene in this movie, with a title from the well-known lesbian novel by Violette Le Duc, verges on soft porn.
- I. A lonely schoolteacher springs a surprise kiss on Joanne Woodward but promises never to try it again.

J. Melina Mercouri and Alexis Smith are lesbians in this adaptation of Jacqueline Susann's novel of the same name.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. The Children's Hour, 1961 | 6. Sylvia, 1965 |
| 2. Once Is Not Enough, 1975 | 7. Persona, 1966 |
| 3. Young Man with a Horn, 1950 | 8. Rachel, Rachel, 1958 |
| 4. Therese and Isabelle, 1965 | 9. The Balcony, 1963 |
| 5. Madchen in Uniform, 1931 | 10. The Group, 1966 |

Artists

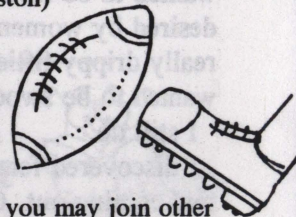
- A. Famed for her animal and landscape painting, this lesbian artist said she would rather paint bulls than men. She dressed in men's clothing and was eventually given legal permission to do so. She lived with Nathalie Micas for forty years. The love of her later life was Anna Klumpe.
- B. This painter spent much of her life in Rome where she was a great success, despite her youth and race. She is best known for her paintings of Native Americans and for being part of the artistic set of Charlotte Cushman.
- C. This lesbian artist lived most of her life in Paris and was famous for her portraits of celebrities of the day. She had shown all over Europe and was awarded the Cross of the Legion of Honor. She only began to be recognized in her native land when the Smithsonian organized an exhibit of her work in 1971.

1. Romaine Brooks, 1874-1970, U.S.
2. Mary Edmonia Lewis, 1843-1909, U.S.
3. Rosa Bonheur, 1822-1899, France

(Source of quiz information from Lesbian Lists, Dell Richards, 1990, Alyson Publications, Boston)

SPORTSDYKES

A LIPSTICK LESBIAN GUIDE TO LOVING EROTIC SPORTS



The following info is rated X for eXercise, and was inspired by my bible, *Girl Jock Magazine*.

Would you like to learn how to move your upper and lower anatomy into new and exciting positions? Would you like to increase your sustaining power, flexibility, and list of telephone #'s of hard, hot and sweaty bodies? If I have identified your yearning, the following erotic sports guide may assist you in your search for the right exercise or the right women.

Soccer: The aim of soccer is to pass a leather ball through, between or around vertically straddled legs. On the pretext of going for the ball, physical contact is permitted and sometimes applauded. I recommend a frontal attack, as I like to see who I'm going to take out before, during, or after the game. Sorry, only one player on a side is allowed to use her hands. The rest must use their lower anatomy. Or their heads.

Basketball: Five women on a side strategically try to score into a tiny hole.

In this game many passes are thrown and "faking it" is allowed. There is no lying down in this sport. If you sneak around you may still be able to do as many lay-ups as your opponent so graciously permits. Yes, you can lay it in, lay it up and even lay it around and up. A lay-in with good vertical and horizontal extension is a must for all b-ball lovers. Checking: overt hand contact is not permitted, but if done discreetly, it can be enjoyed by both competitors. The b-ball dykes can be boxed up playing a zone or they can play woman on woman defense. Some women will follow you wherever you go with the ball, while others will just plant themselves and wait for you to come. In addition, moving the ball through the legs and around the body is a good strategic move if you can do it, even better if you can do it between the firm long legs of your opponent. Caution: you may be forced to leap or lunge your body over top of others to score, and excessive body contact may get you sent

to the showers where you may join other players who previously had a problem with pre-game ejection. A frequently practised play to know is the Pick and Roll. You get to pick the player you want to roll. If you think the players are too intense on the court, just imagine their intensity in the locker room, the shower, I could go on! Finally, patting of the bum is mandatory in all erotic sports, for good or bad behaviour.

Why participate in sport? Besides the enjoyment of taut and sometimes sweaty bodies, where else do you get so many women together all seeking physical stimulation? A further note, autoexercising is sufficient for maintaining sustaining power, but remember, scoring in team sports is done with multiple players. Continuous practice with more than one person is recommended, as long as you practice safe physical exercising, that is.

Bye for now and safe exercising, CMD
(Closeted Misplaced femDyke)

NOTICES

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

TGIF - THE LETTERS MEAN "THANK GOODNESS IT'S FRIDAY (or possibly, *This Girl Invites Fondling, ed.*) and it's a chance for older lesbians to get together and celebrate making it to the end of the week. For lesbians "of a certain age" or anyone who considers herself to be "an older lesbian" or even any woman who likes the way our eyes wrinkle at the corners and we can hide pennies under our breasts even if we're an A-cup. Relevant details: Friday Feb. 9, 5:30-9:00 PM at the Coast Harborside Hotel, 146 Kingston St., Victoria. Cost: \$10. Hors d'oeuvres will be s'oeuvred.

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

HOT FLASHES HOT FLASHES HOT FLASHES! Friday Feb 12, 8-11 PM, 106 Superior St. \$2.00. Tantalizing Desserts. Fresh Coffees. A fire in the fireplace. Mmmm.

VOLUNTEER CORRESPONDENTS WANTED by *ellenews*. Are there three or four women out there from Saltspring Island, Gulf Islands, and Central & Northern Vancouver Island who would be willing to become regular correspondents to the newsletter? The job would entail writing to us by the 12th of each month to let the lesbian community know about events and special happenings in your area. Please write, or phone 474-5348 for more information.

CONGRATULATIONS! Annie and Phyllis on your 20th Anniversary on January 7, 1993.

JOURNEY TO THE TEMPLE. A multi-media environment by Maureen Peacock is presented by Xchanges Gallery, 951 North Park St. February 11-27. "This multi-media installation, constructed almost entirely of string, incorporates painting, drawing, video and projected images... Sourced from a turbulent personal history, the recurring theme of struggle evolves into a...journey to the temple of the self." You are invited to attend the opening reception, Thursday, Feb. 11 at 8 P.M. Artist in attendance.

THE WELCOMING CONGREGATION: RESOURCES FOR AFFIRMING LESBIAN, GAY AND BI-SEXUAL PERSONS - a 10 week program sponsored by the Unitarian Church. How can a congregation today honor the "inherent worth and dignity of every person" and become more welcoming to gay, lesbian and bi-sexual people? The Welcoming Congregation presents a broad and flexible framework for tackling this issue. Through its array of workshops, readings & worship material, The Welcoming Congregation offers churches the chance to become more inclusive, more integrated, more... welcoming. Tuesdays, Feb. 9 - April 13, 1993, 7:30 to 9:30 PM at 106 Superior Street. Materials fee is \$10.00 for Unitarian members and \$15 for non-members. Call Andrea Pite 383-3091 or Ramona Scott 474-5348 for further information.

ARE YOU A UVIC STUDENT wishing you could somehow combine being a student with the rest of your identities? Want to watch films like Desert Heat and Paris is Burning with other lesbians and gay men? How about hiking through Goldstream, going to see Drawing the Line, hearing Svend Robinson speak on the importance of being out? Look no further. UVIC's LGBA (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Alliance) is for you. Drop-in to SUB Room A137 on any Wed or Thurs 12:30 - 2:30 pm. Find out more about upcoming Queer Valentine Week; meet other lesbians on campus. For more info, call Mairi Scanlan 595-5986 or Kelevelyn Hurley 386-7197.

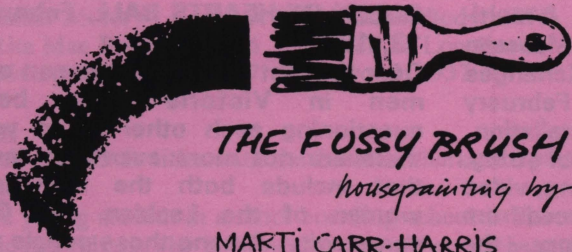
QUEEN OF HEARTS BALL, February 13, 1993.

Over the last few years women and men in Victoria have been questioning each other as to why there are not more events in town that include both the men and women of the Lesbian and Gay community. Among those people are Annette, Glen, Janie, and Wayne who have decided to organize a dance where both the women and men of our community are welcome. Victoria now has the First Annual Queen of Hearts Ball - a get-together for both men and women as well as a fund raiser for various organizations in the Victoria area. The dance will be held Saturday, February 13, 1993 at the daVinci Centre at 195 Bay Street in Victoria. Tickets will be available for \$12 each at AIDS Vancouver Island and W.I.N. (Women in Need). The organizers invite and look forward to seeing all Lesbians and Gays at the dance. The four organizations that will benefit from the dance include: AIDS VANCOUVER ISLAND, TRANSITION HOUSE, W.I.N., and WOMEN'S SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE. Music for the dance will be performed by a Vancouver-based band consisting of four women called **RUMOR HAS IT**. Please join us in uniting our community and supporting these four organizations. If you require any further information regarding the dance, please call AIDS VANCOUVER ISLAND and leave a message for either Glen or Wayne at 384-2366.

LESBIAN SENIORS HOUSING SOCIETY will meet Monday Feb. 8 at Sandy and Jacqui's. Please call 386-8380 for directions.

YOU MIGHT CALL ME AN OLDER LESBIAN or you might not. I'm looking for a non-smoking lesbian, with or without cat, to share my house and large back yard in a quiet Gorge/Admirals neighborhood 1/2 blk from Gorge Park. Phone 380-7562. Ask for Karey.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING OUT

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