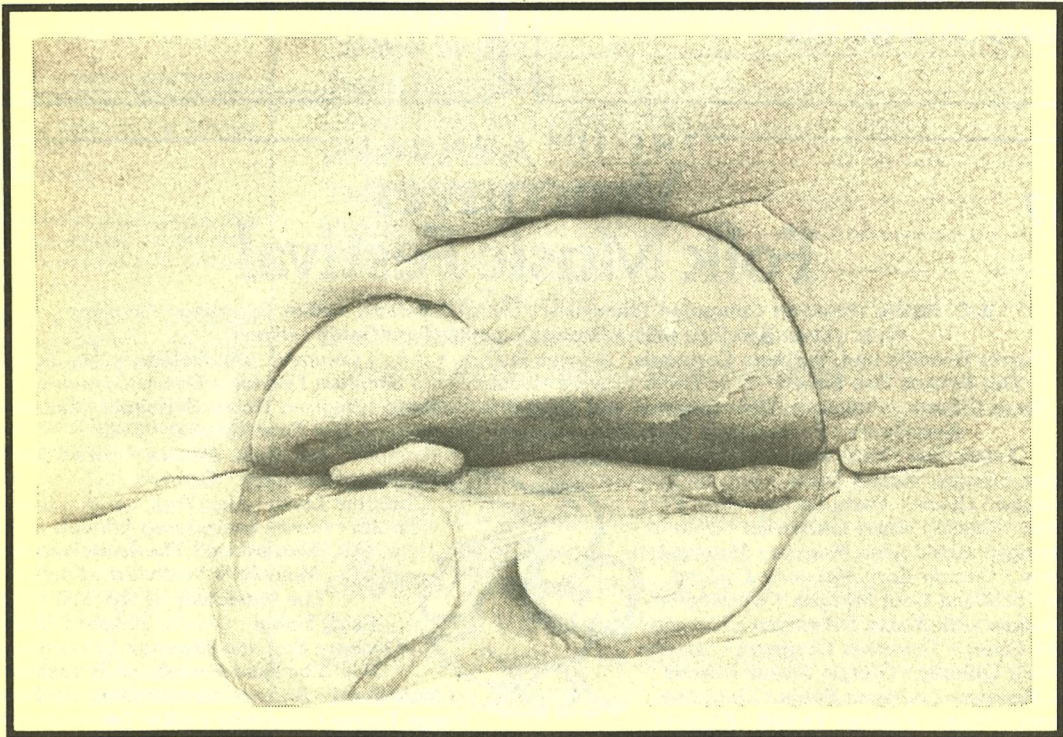


May 1988 Vol I, No 1, \$1

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The Lesbian Rag



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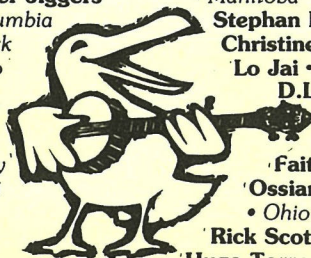
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Diversity: The Lesbian Rag

Rag: An extensive display of disorderly conduct, carried on in defiance of authority or discipline.

—Oxford English Dictionary

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Diversity is a rag by, for and about Lesbians. Our aim is to celebrate Lesbian diversity. We especially encourage submissions from Lesbians traditionally denied voice.

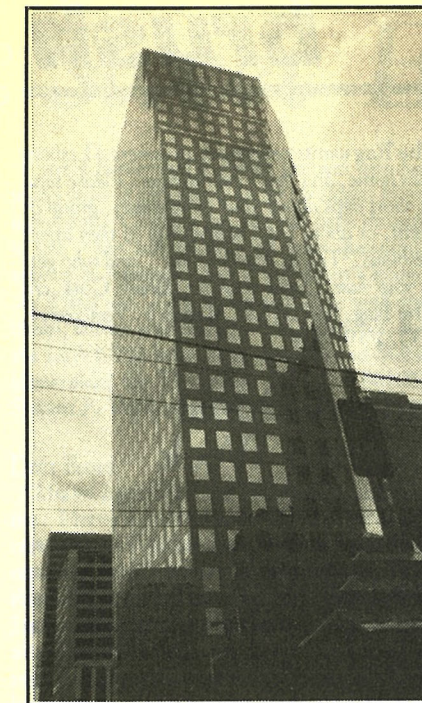
Submissions should be typed (or hand-written neatly) and double-spaced with your name, address and phone number attached. We will withhold your name at your request. Submission does not guarantee publication or that your material will be returned. Don't send us your only copy! We reserve the right to edit material for length and clarity.

Deadlines: Submissions for the July 15 issue must be received by June 15. Ads must be booked no later than three weeks prior to publication. Camera-ready ad copy is due no later than two weeks prior to publication. Next production weekend will be July 9 and 10.

The Diversity collective does not necessarily share the views contained in any article, even if the byline belongs to a collective member. Views of the collective are expressed only in editorials and material signed by the collective. Publication of an advertisement does not imply endorsement by the collective.

Mailing address:

Diversity: The Lesbian Rag
PO Box 66106, Station F
Vancouver, BC V5W 5L4
Phone messages: (604) 254-8458



**Guess How Many
LESBIANS
Work in this Building?**

You've probably all seen those contests where you're asked to guess how many jelly beans are in a bottle. Well... Send us your answer and reason to: Jelly Beans c/o The Rag, PO Box 66106, Station F, Vancouver, BC V5W 5L4, before June 15th. The most original answers will be published next issue.

photo and concept by Sherry

IN THIS ISSUE

To Our Readers	4
Brush Cuts	4
Cartoon by Etta	5
Sweet Esmeralda	5
Deuce Less by Lynda Lewis	6
What You Said	7
Two Poems by Chrystos	8
Riding the Sperm Rodeo by Lin	9
The Good Parts by Sherry	10
Drawing by Tanya Russell	11
Distinguishing Marks by Della McCreary with interviews and photos by S. McCarnan	12
Lesbians and AIDS by Jennifer Catchpole	14
Heart Fixtures by Toshiko Hyodo	15
Call Me Athene by Jean noble	16
Learning to Walk by Diane MacLachlan	17
Mayhem Relieved by Lynette	17
<i>My Father's House:</i> Review by J.L. Williams	18
Drawings by Val Speidel	18, 22
Hot Off the Presses by Donna Kaye	19
Christina by Sherry	19
Dyke Road	20
Visual Artists	22
Classifieds and Calendar	23

On the front cover: photograph by Daphne
The cover photograph of a natural rock formation was taken on one of the Gulf Islands.

To Our Readers

DATELINE VANCOUVER: 13 May 88

Diversity: The Lesbian Rag hits the stands. Canada's new Lesbian magazine, five months in the making, comes out. Lesbians rejoice! **The Rag** is here to stay.

The women of the Diversity collective first came together in December, 1987, in response to one woman's advertisement. Most of us had never met until the idea of starting a Lesbian paper drew us together. We are each very different from one another, and our common ground is that we are Lesbians. The Diversity collective is not connected to any other group, and our purpose is to make **The Rag** possible.

In the five months since our first meeting we have advanced from a dream to the reality of the paper you hold in your hand. We want **The Rag** to be open and available to all Lesbians. We believe that our individual diversities as members and volunteers will help us support the wider Lesbian diversity that **The Rag** celebrates. We hope this first issue is proof of our commitment.

In this issue you will find a wide-ranging collection of wonderful work. Our intent for the future is to expand that range, and to include as many stories and styles as there are Lesbians. **The Rag** is a home for true stories, and a launching pad for imagination. We hope to enter into active conversation with our readers through Dyke Road, our letters column; and to encourage humour and strong feeling. In coming issues you can expect to see **The Rag** continue to publish personal writing and artwork that pushes back boundaries and reveals hidden truths.

We invite all Lesbians to help us achieve these goals by writing for us, whether or not you think of yourself as a writer, whether or not you have ever published before. We encourage Lesbians to make our own images, to draw and photograph what we don't usually see. Every Lesbian has a story to tell, but many of us have never told our stories before, or have been disregarded in the telling, even at times by other Lesbians. We hope to hear those stories, and by printing them, to share the risks and pleasures of Lesbian lives.

The Diversity Collective

The Rag May 1988

brush & cuts



STOP VIOLENCE

Lesbians and gays in Canada are being denied basic human rights—this is not o.k.

March 4, 1988 marks the second anniversary of the federal government's announcement to support the inclusion of sexual orientation in Canadian human rights legislation. The federal Justice Minister of that time, John Crosbie, P.C., undertook to introduce appropriate legislation during the lifetime of the present parliament. The Minister made this commitment to the Canadian public based on the discrimination faced by the 2.5 million Lesbians and gays in Canada and documented in the report prepared by the all-party Parliamentary Committee on Equality Rights.

Since that time the Yukon, Ontario and Manitoba have included sexual orientation protection in their human rights codes. These three provinces, with the inclusion of Quebec, now provide half the population of Canada with sexual orientation protection. This means that half the population does not have this protection. The 290,000 gays and Lesbians in B.C. do not have this protection. The Social Credit government has a record of spiriting away human rights, not

The Rag wants news from anywhere a Lesbian calls home, and that's everywhere. Please send us short clips about your community, group or event, or about local happenings as they affect Lesbians. Tell us how you live...and who gets in your hair. Send news to: Brush Cuts, c/o The Rag, Box 66106, Station F, Vancouver, B.C. V5W 5L4.

International Lesbian Week

October 1988

It's time to start organizing Vancouver's third International Lesbian Week. Since 1983, Lesbians in Austria, France, Holland, Quebec and Canada have been organizing events to celebrate International Lesbian Week during the first week in October.

Lesbian groups, Lesbian caucuses and individual Lesbians are welcome to participate in this year's organizing. Bring proposals, ideas and dykes to the first planning meeting on June 6, 7:30 p.m. at the Vancouver Lesbian Connection at 876 Commercial Drive. We hope to see you there.

The Vancouver Lesbian Network

Jewish Holidays

1988-1989 5748-5749

The Jewish calendar goes by the lunar cycle. Each year the Jewish holidays fall on different days of the Gregorian calendar. Jewish holidays are observed from sundown to sundown. Therefore if the first day of the holiday is a Monday, it will begin at sundown on Sunday.

*Those marked with an asterisk are most widely observed and should be considered when scheduling events.

High Holy Days: 88/89

*Eve of Rosh Hashana

*Rosh Hashana—The New Year

*Yom Kippur—Day of Atonement

Succoth—Harvest Festival

Simchat Torah—Celebrating the yearly conclusion of the Torah reading

*Chanukah—Festival of Lights (1st day)

Tu B'Shvat—The new year for trees

Purim—The Feast of Esther

*Pesach—Passover (1st & 2nd days)

(7th & 8th days)

Shavuoth—Feast of Weeks

Summer Harvest

*Yom Ha'Shoah—Holocaust Remembrance Day

Tisha B'av—Day of Mourning

Shabbat—Weekly Sabbath (Friday sundown to Saturday sundown)

Rosh Chodesh—Monthly celebration of the new moon.

by the Vancouver Jewish Lesbian Group 1987

adding to them. Given the Social Credit government's track record, it's safe to assume that our rights will come from federal legislation.

We ask that all people who support a woman's or a man's right to choose their sexual orientation and the dignity of this choice take action now.

Write or call your MP. Tell her/him that you support amendments to the Canadian Human Rights Act to include protection for Lesbians and gays. Ask your friends, family, neighbours and co-workers to do the same.

Reports of violence against Lesbians and gays are on the increase—2 bombings; 10 physical attacks; 5 bomb threats; 11 threatening calls; 1 fire. In order to empower and protect ourselves, we need your aid and information. Have you as a gay man or Lesbian experienced any form of violence? Do you know anyone who has? Are you afraid for your safety? Do you require support or assistance?

For more information, or to get involved in fighting back, please call the Vancouver Lesbian Centre at 254-8458, or The Gay and Lesbian Centre at 684-6869/683-3303.

The text of this article comes from a leaflet produced and distributed by the Vancouver Lesbian Centre.

Δ Building Bridges

This year the Fifth Annual B.C. Regional Gay and Lesbian Conference is happening from May 21st to 23rd, at Britannia Community Centre, 1661 Napier Street, Vancouver.

The Conference offers workshops, panels and forums which deal with many different topics.

The conference committee is mak-

ing the Conference accessible. Sliding scale registration fee, wheelchair access, signing for the hearing impaired, free quality childcare as well as space for caucuses and insured representation by women of colour on panels and in workshops are being offered.

There will be a dance on Saturday night and a variety show on Sunday night.

For more information, to pre-register, or to volunteer call 251-2397.

Sweet Esmeralda

Sweet Esmeralda is a wise Lesbian who has many years of experience under her skirts. Have a problem? Chances are, she has been through it too. She can answer all your questions, serious or frivolous, and if she doesn't know, she'll find out. Cry on her shoulder, wail and moan, tell her your secrets—she's used to it, and she LOVES to help! Send questions to Sweet Esmeralda, c/o The Rag, PO Box 66106, Station F, Vancouver BC V5W 5L4.

Dear Esme:

I have a problem and I hope you can help me. I have a mad crush on my best friend's new lover. I've tried to ignore it for weeks now but it just gets worse. Every time I see them together my stomach ties in knots and I have to go home. I haven't told my friend about this but I'm sure that she would be really angry with me if she knew. I don't know if her lover knows since I've tried to be very natural around them. Do you think I should talk to my friend or her lover or what?

(signed) Knots of Love

Dear Knots:

Dummy up and wait it out. You can only cause trouble if you say anything—it's your problem. If you grit your teeth and endure, this impossible feeling will soon go away like the flu.

Dear Sweet Em:

I like to go dancing a lot but the bars are too smoky. I've tried wearing an air mask but then everybody stares at me. If I try to tough it out with the smoke, I end up coughing all night and snoring (which means I have to sleep on the couch because my lover can't sleep). Can you help me?

(Signed) Coughing on the Couch

Dear Coughing:

As yours is a common problem, I'm sure that by organizing a petition and lobbying the bars you could FORCE them to have smoke-free nights. The owners would fill their clubs with new customers, and you and your lover could enjoy nights on the town and a bed together after!

Dear Esmeralda:

I've just come out, and I feel like a puppy. I can't tell who is single and who is interested. How do I meet the women I want to get to know?

(Signed) Puppy Love

Dear Pup:

You need to be visible in the bar and/or in one of the various Lesbian communities (depends on what you want), so go out LOTS. Then, risk, risk, risk—put your ass on the line enough times, and someone will take the bait. Besides, you'll get a great reputation for assertiveness—very sexy!



SOME POSSIBLE EARLY WARNING SIGNS OF LESBIANISM...



DEUCE LESS

by Lynda Lewis

I am presently incarcerated at Lakeside Correctional Centre for Women. I am doing a "deuce less." That is, two years less a day for manslaughter.

I was arrested September 14, 1987, and have done six months dead time, time that doesn't count for anything, just waiting. I was sentenced on March 9, 1988.

I am gay and I have something to say. I believe that because my case was of a Lesbian nature, the judge sentenced me unfairly. Also, where does the media get off on distorting facts?

First, I should fill you in on the details leading to my conviction. I met a womyn, Karen, and I fell in love with her. We met at Scores, a gay bar in Toronto, and I haven't been home since, almost two years now.

I was living with my brother and his wife and three daughters. I have two daughters, age seven and five, but I lost custody to my mother due to the fact that I turned gay. I was working towards retaining custody and had them every weekend. I worked fifty to sixty hours a week for my brother as an apprentice cabinetmaker.

At the time, Karen was just out from B.C. visiting Toronto and she wanted to go back. She told me how beautiful it is in B.C. and that we, together, could try for custody and bring my daughters out there to live. My mother and I don't hit it off where my kids are concerned. She detested the idea of me being gay, and even went as far as saying she

would never give up custody to me if I continued to be gay.

For me B.C. was an escape, so Karen started to make plans for us. She told me that she had her carpentry papers from the pen, and that I could continue my apprenticeship under her. Also, she said she had a house and a workshop in Chemainus, B.C. (on the Island).

When we arrived there was an eviction notice on her door, the locks had been changed and all her tools were gone. From that point on, our relationship went downhill. It definitely was not a stable one. We fell easily into the Chemainus lifestyle of drinking up welfare cheques. Karen started to see a shrink for her frequent mood swings and violent behaviour. The psychiatrist put her on a variety of medications.

Sometimes, something would snap in Karen's mind for no apparent reason, usually when she mixed her medications with alcohol. She would become totally outraged. I could see the change in her. Her facial expressions became the looks of an evil person. I was afraid of this change because I knew a shit-kicking was to follow, but she wouldn't remember afterwards. She once told me that she was afraid to start hitting me because she couldn't stop herself, and she was afraid that she might actually kill me.

Karen was a good person by nature with a heart of gold, when she wasn't being abusive. She treated me kind. I admired the way she just spoke her mind, not caring what others thought or said about her. She was such a lovable person, and

very intelligent with great potential.

But there was definitely also a dark side to Karen. She was brought up in a violent atmosphere, and this probably had a lot to do with it. Sometimes she would beat on me so badly that I wouldn't be able to get out of bed for weeks.

Once she held a knife to my throat but I stopped her from using it by saying, "Go ahead, you'll be doing me a favour." Her reply was that she wouldn't give me the satisfaction.

Nevertheless I was still deeply in love with Karen and desperately wanted to make things work between us, but I knew that I couldn't go on with the frequent physical and mental abuse.

I left her many times, hoping that she would realize that I just couldn't take it anymore. I even went to a transition house for battered womyn, but love for her and hope that things would change always brought me back to her. I also felt trapped on the Island, and not having the money to get back to Toronto, and not really knowing anyone to turn to, I felt imprisoned within myself.

Karen and I were engaged to be married, and I couldn't end that commitment because our love for one another was so strong, so deep. I wanted to spend the rest of my life with her.

One night when we were drinking and Karen was on her medication, we were going to go mushroom picking. We were to sell them and use the money to go back to

Toronto. Karen told me to roll up some cigarettes to bring with us, but I couldn't find the roller. THIS SET KAREN OFF. I could tell by her facial expressions and actions that something had snapped. She flipped out and threatened to kill me. I panicked knowing that if I tried to leave she would follow me and hunt me down. Anyway, where the hell would I go?

I don't remember what happened next. I must have blocked it out of my mind, but I did stab her. I ran to the hospital immediately after seeing blood. They took her to Chemainus Hospital, but they didn't have the proper equipment. En route to Victoria General she passed away.

This is still extremely hard for me to accept. The nightmares, the anguish and guilt I feel, it's something I have to live with the rest of my life. I never meant to take her life or even to harm her in any way. But I'll always believe and feel in my heart I was protecting my own life, and that it was in self-defense.

I was charged with second degree murder, and pleaded not guilty on the grounds of self-defense. The verdict came back guilty of manslaughter, and I was sentenced to a "deuce less."

The judge said in sentencing that I "did not play the traditional role of a battered wife." He added that in heterosexual relationships a battered wife is usually bound to her husband by children or economic

ties. He is ignorant of the society of gays, so how could he compare! This to me is not justice, but one man's biased opinion. In my mind and heart I was the battered wife.

The media stated that I "was in a fit of rage induced by alcohol." This is totally wrong. I was in a frantic state of panic, not a fit of rage, and this all came out at my trial. The media should have been at the trial to get the facts straight.

The court decided that I used more force than necessary in defending myself. Who is to say how much force is necessary? When you have a split second to make up your mind, you don't think, you can't think. I believe a defense mechanism takes over for us that we can't control. Try to put yourself in my shoes, in my state of mind at the time. You don't have time to stop and think, "Well, how hard should I hit?"

Do we as Lesbians have equal rights as far as the legal system goes? If my case had been a heterosexual one, would it have been considered self-defense?

The sentence, I can handle. If it weren't for the opinions and the reasoning of the judge and jury, then I would be content with it. My sexual preference should not affect the justice of the court system.

Anyone wishing to contact Lynda Lewis can write to Lakeside Correctional Centre, Drawer O, Burnaby, B.C. V5H 3N4.

What You Said

Here at The Rag we'd like to thank all of you who took the time to answer our advance questionnaire. You helped us select the content of this paper by giving us your opinions. The first question was "What would you like to see in the paper?" You wanted: news, reviews, sports, poetry, fiction, drawings, photos, graphics, erotica, interviews, herstory, an advice column, a calendar of events and personal ads.

The next question was: "What would you not like to see?" You didn't want to see: sexism, racism, classism. No personal ads and no erotica. You didn't want us to be oppressive to any form of sexuality, biased, one-sided or in bad taste. No sports and no sex.

Question number three was: "What tone would you most appreciate (ie. political, spiritual, entertaining, other)?" You got us there. You answered "Yes!". Some of you went on to add: newsy, educational and informative.

From the answers to the fourth question—"What are your criticisms of other papers that you think we should avoid?"—we know that you don't want us to be too wordy, narrow, dull, academic or dated. We should also watch out for self-censorship and party line politics.

The last question was for you to tell us "Anything else you would like us to know?" One woman didn't like part of our name (The Rag) and one thought we should put our energy into other papers. The rest of you said: "great idea," "we're behind you," "thanks," "long overdue," "well done" and "I can't wait!"

Well, the waiting's over. The Rag is here and you are reading it. From the collective, thanks again for your input and keep us up on what you think.

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Your Tongue Sparkles

sun on water now in my mouth memory rich as real
kisses I understand to my roots to bone ancestors where red
& so new you speak without calluses despite our scars
Woman down my throat you stir my heart nectar where bitterness
has fought to seed

O you rainy tongue you amaryllis tongue you early spring tongue
you smooth black leather tongue you firemoon tongue
you goosebumps tongue you soft bites tongue
you feather tongue you take me all in tongue
you fill me up tongue you butter tongue
you maple syrup tongue you rising wind tongue
you creamy silky tongue
you fine fine tongue
your knows the way
tongue

Two Poems by Chrystos

Chrystos is a Native American political activist, artist and writer. She lives on Bainbridge Island in the Pacific Northwest. "Your Tongue Sparkles" will be published in her forthcoming book Not Vanishing, to be released in June 1988 by Press Gang Publishers.

I See Nuclear War

for Rachel Lederman

as I move through my days burning Don't know how to stop
these visions without an overdose
old friend that kills knowing to much
Birds with wings on fire Blind deer skin peeling off
crashing into trees which are torches
I'd just as soon have humans wiped out
Our respect is gone Our lives hideous distortions
Flailing to rid ourselves of cruelty we ensnare our feet deeper
All of us whatever we believe are part of this torture
We've sold ourselves to devils of greed comfort laziness triviality
But I can't accept butterflies sizzling
swallows smoking eagles cinders
A world black with bones variety & splendor reduced to ash
Can't accept the gasp of rainbow trout silver salmon belly up
I dream
of a huge canoe I'm guiding all the animals of the world into it
& setting out on the sea
Those survivalists can't be serious
I couldn't bear to see this beautiful green gold red blue world twist flat & gray
I couldn't live without birch trees mallards blackberries
Could any of us?

Riding the Sperm Rodeo

by Lin

Dan's eyes seemed sunken and red-rimmed as he spoke. "Well, I don't really know how to tell you this. I guess it all started with a dream—I knew that all the people around me were conspiring to kill me. I had..." Dan's words became a blurred mass in front of my eyes, and I began to feel the oxygen leave my brain, slowly trailing down through my limbs. Dan, my unassuming gay friend, had been supplying me with two donations of sperm every month for the last year, and his unexpected message that he needed to talk to me made it clear that something was amiss. It had to be AIDS. How utterly ironic that I should live my life closeted and oppressed as a lesbian, and then have to die of the only disease that I should be sure of not getting! How completely uncomprehending my family will be, having only just grasped the truth of my relationship to Katie. I surfaced from the sea of Dan's words and said abruptly: "Dan, just say it." I could no longer wait. "Oh dear," he began. "Of course. Well, it turns out that I have contracted gonorrhoea."

"GONORRHOEA!" I shrieked. "Gonorrhoea?? Thank God for gonorrhoea!" I felt my blood thaw at a rapid pace, felt the room return to its horizontal position, and dived to hug my befuddled friend.

I had known that AIDS was the most serious threat that we faced in our decision to try to conceive, but we had made the decision that we would simply have to trust the two men who had agreed to help us out in our attempts. Moments like this threw the insecurity of this trust-relationship into sharp relief. This was ridiculous, and yet, what other way was open to us? With insemination costing multiple dollars per visit to the doctor, and the fact that Katie and I had planned to introduce four inseminations a month, coupled with the cruel joke of my not having become pregnant in the last twelve tries, it was totally out of the question to consider doing this through a doctor.

Katie and Dan and I lapsed into laughter about the sheer craziness of our whole set-up, our twice-monthly visits ("Glad you could come!"), the race for the speculum, my spending four nights with my hips in the air—opting out of get-togethers with friends with

no explanation. But we were not really laughing.

I am reminded of the days when Katie and I first had made our decision to have children. Interestingly, it felt as though this announcement to friends and family cast a clearer light on what their feelings were about our relationship than had our earlier mention that we were in relationship. Family members who had been very "supportive" of our relationship in terms of recognizing us as a twosome at Christmas time and inviting us both to family gatherings, responded by saying that maybe I should look carefully at what I was embarking upon, because you know, children of single parents often lose out on a lot...Single? A longtime friend from high school who had struggled to go straight for years expressed her fear that I was too young. Too young? Too old?

Katie and I had short-listed an already short list of possible men who might help us out with our "project," as we called it. Mr. Right was going to have to be somebody that we knew (because our tenuous trust in the safety of the sperm would not let us have an intermediary find and deliver it, scared as we were of paternity suits). But these men would have to be people who we didn't know too well, for reasons of the danger of emotional bonds being forged between them and the foetus. They should be healthy, with no history of cancer or heart disease, gentle people and intelligent. And they should each have had AIDS tests before we began.

Dan and Jack were not the first men that we asked to help us out, for they were a little closer friends than we would have preferred. We first asked an attractive gay couple Katie knew if they both might give us a hand, as it were. But only after an elaborate meal at our home, in a congenial atmosphere. When, after a sociable evening, drink had been shared and we were all enjoying the quietness of the eve, and Katie had slipped out to use the washroom, our guests stretched and said, with all the satisfaction of a meal well-spent: "Well, I guess we had better be moving along home." Damn. With all elegance aside, and before my loving partner could make her way from the lavatory, I had blurted out that we were

going to try to have children, and were looking for men who could, er, help us out in syringe-kind-of-way?

Whenever I am tempted to wonder what nuclear winter might be like, I hearken back to the latter part of that evening. Unfortunately, I sometimes see these two men about and around town still.

I can't even remember the various men we asked, and all the alternative ways in which we asked them. I do remember that, since my days in heterosexual high school, sperm had taken on a magic, alchemical quality. Where once guys were content to let it drop where it may, it had become for them something almost godlike, treasured. Where once guys would have beat a hasty retreat had you been cursed with an unwanted pregnancy, these days they maintained that they would feel a peculiar responsibility for "their" child. Some of me felt an intense frustration and distrust at the importance these guys attached to what I considered only a donation of a liquid that would unlock my reproductive abilities. And some of me knew that the paradox of what we were attempting was that we were asking men to do what we ourselves could never do, nor could we ever understand their willingness to do it.

When Dan and Jack said yes to our request, it came as a surprise to us and I am sure that they had no idea of how much they were consenting to. My extensive reading had assured me that most women in heterosexual relationships became pregnant within about three or four attempts, and I was convinced that the method that Katie and I had come up with, which involved four nights of donations spanning my time of ovulation, would guarantee a first or second-time conception.

Dan preferred to come over to our house, so as to keep the process secret to his housemates. There, after a cup of tea and good-natured conversation, he would leave for the bedroom and masturbate into a condom. Then, with jokes and hugs, he would leave. Jack, though he did not know Dan, had heard of this arrangement of ours and found it quite incomprehensible that Dan could do it all so "straight-forwardly." Jack arranged

continued next page

earlier in the day the hour in which he would arrive, and he would spend a good part of the evening "getting comfortable" with the process. Then, at the appointed time, he would arrive at our door with a little knotted condom in his hand, hug me with one arm and spirit himself away. Both their partners knew of our arrangement.

In the beginning months, I took very seriously all that I had read and learned about the insemination process. (I refuse to call it artificial; it is insemination, after all.) I warmed up a little towel and put it in a yoghurt container to set the condom in, before we could transfer the sperm into the syringe. A pillow raised my hips to a conducive angle for the sperm to reach my cervix. Sometimes Katie and I would make love first, but this was tiring when each of us had had to rush from a meeting on the other side of town. Most of the time she simply inserted the speculum and inseminated me through the cervix. She then read me a children's story, after which I would try to fall asleep, tossing and turning for hours in the night. These were the nights when everything went according to plan.

One evening, Katie and I had just finished a relaxing evening, having just said good-bye to Dan and finished our end of the insemination process, when the phone rang. I leaned over my warm cup of tea, struggling to reach the phone from my comfortable semi-prone position and answered it. "I'm ready!" came the unmistakable voice of Jack, who I had talked to not five hours ago about his visit to our house on the following night. "Ready?" I feebly responded. This was indeed the wrong night and though he said

that he had planned to be coming into town anyway, I didn't feel that I needed a double delivery on this particular night...

The stain remains on our ceiling from the night when I, in a rather impatient state, tried to remove all remaining air from the semen in the syringe, and mistakenly drove the barrel of the syringe upwards in my hand, shooting a milky-clear pillar of squiggling sperms six feet into the air over our bed.

But the months have moved along and I have found myself closer and closer to the edge of Frantic, with infertility statistics bounding around in my consciousness. My first trip to my GP, to ask her for help in finding a specialist, ended in her receptionist stating flatly over the phone that the one doctor they had tried said that she would not help a lesbian and did not know of any doctor in the city that would. "But do let us know if you find one, will you? It will be good for our records." My new physician put me in touch with a gynecologist she advised me to lie to. "Honesty is MY policy, too," she said, "but I have referred lesbians who told the truth and were kicked out." So I lie.

And really, lying is not so new. It often feels that this dream of having children and being the parent that I know I could be has been a colossal lie.

My body has lied to me ever since I realised that it was ugly at the age of eight. My body lied to me when I was twelve and believed that I would soon fit into a bikini. My body lied to me when it told me that I would find myself in the depths of my non-existent orgasmic pleasure with the guys I

slept with, at 16. And it lies to me now, as it whispers children to me, through every cycle of mucus, swelling, temperature and, ultimately, blood. The doctors say now that a laparoscopy and surgery should probably repair the damage that the heterosexually-transmitted disease which I caught years ago has caused. I daresay that's a lie too.

Dan wipes the tears of mirth from his eyes, exhausted from the effort of laughing. Katie and I see him to the door; we are longtime friends, now. "You'll give me a call next month, then?" he asks. I surely will.

Lin is a youth worker living in Vancouver. She considers herself a healed heterosexual.

WRITE FOR THE RAG

THE "GOOD PARTS"*

by Sherry

Are you tired of reading through pages and pages of social parrying and verbal foreplay before the heroines in Lesbian fiction get it on? Then this is for you. To save you having to read the whole book, I've compiled a list of "good parts" (just in case the copy you have doesn't open to that page by itself).

The Price of Salt by Clare Morgan (Naiad), pages 159 to 163.

The Long Trail by Penny Hayes (Naiad), pages 127 to 133; 135; 136; 163 to 166.

A Restricted Country by Joan Nestle (Firebrand), pages 139 to 142.

Dykeversions: lesbian short fiction, edited by The Lesbian Writing and Publishing Collective (The Women's Press), pages 87 and 127 to 129.

Send in your choices of the "good parts" from your favourite lesbian book to: "Good Parts," c/o The Rag, PO Box 66106, Stn F, Vancouver, B.C. V5W 5L4

*"Good parts" in this sense is used to mean the colloquial expression for sexual references and is not meant to imply that the remainder of the book is not good.

SPEAK OUT ON VIOLENCE AGAINST LESBIANS

Just Because of Who We Are

A new film on violence against lesbians
A speak out on violence towards our community

Thursday, May 19th

7:30 pm

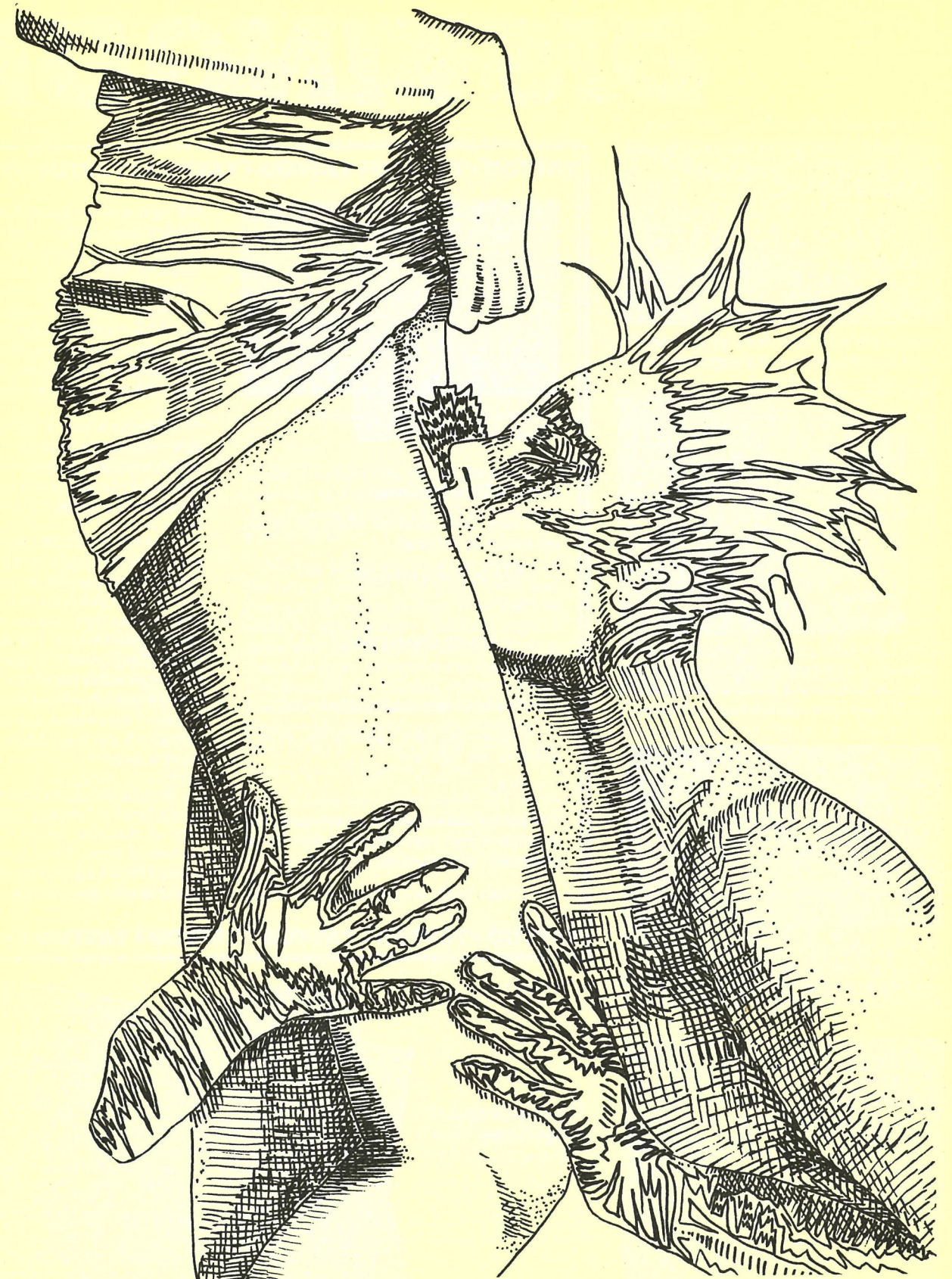
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drawing by Tanya Russell

Lesbians and AIDS

by Jennifer Catchpole

Not much is known about the transmission of AIDS between Lesbians because it is so rare—I have only come across two cases in medical literature. This is encouraging news; however, as we all want to minimize our chances of catching it, I would like to present some basic facts. I hope this information will enable you to make sexual decisions with which you can feel safe and comfortable.

There are two main conditions necessary for the transmission of AIDS from one person to another. One is that the active, contagious virus is found in an infected person. The other is that it reaches the parts of your body which are capable of absorbing it. The point of safer sex is to prevent the virus from entering your body.

The AIDS virus can only be found in its contagious state in certain body fluids. These are blood, including menstrual blood, semen, feces and vaginal fluids. AIDS cannot be transmitted through saliva, urine, tears, sweat or toe-jam. Needless to say, contact with semen (or high-risk contact with women who expose themselves to it)

increases your chances of catching it. There is a lot of information available for those who participate in het sex. If you want to become pregnant by alternate insemination, you will have to be exposed to semen. Therefore, you should know your donor's medical status (health and lifestyle history, and results of two AIDS antibody tests three months apart, with safer sex practised by the donor between tests) before you choose him.

AIDS can be absorbed into your body by two routes. One is through direct contact with your bloodstream, and the other is through AIDS-specific receptor cells, found only in your vagina, urethra, or anus. There are NO receptor cells in your mouth or on your skin.

Bloodstream contact can be complicated. The most common route of infection is non-sexual. AIDS is running rampant among junkies because of the sharing of needles and other fixing equipment. Lesbians are just as susceptible as anyone else. If you are shooting up with

anything, please, please do NOT share your works, or sterilize them between uses if you do. (Find out more from AIDS Vancouver, see below.) Habitual drug-users can have damaged immune systems, which makes it easier to get sick from AIDS.

You can also catch AIDS by extended contact of risky body fluids with open sores, such as excema, herpes, genital warts, or other open rashes. You cannot catch it through a regular little cut, like a hangnail (phew!), because the healing process begins too quickly to allow the virus to get through. However, damage which breaks the skin during sex (traumatic sexual practices) and exposes the bloodstream to risk fluids is a high-risk activity.

So, to sum up, you want to avoid contact between list (A) and list (B) (see below).

(A)	(B)
BLOOD MENSTRUAL BLOOD VAGINAL SECRETIONS SEMEN FECES	YOUR BLOODSTREAM (through I.V. equipment, "trauma" sex or open sores— herpes, excema, etc.) RECEPTOR SITES (in your vagina, anus, and urethra.)

If you wish to have sex with someone that you don't absolutely know is safe, use common sense. Oral sex is not considered a high-risk activity between women. You may want

to be more careful after traumatic dental work, such as having a tooth pulled, when there may be some risk of bloodstream exposure—but no one knows. Some groups are recommending the use of a latex barrier between mouth and genitals. I think this is silly (not to mention no fun) because the mouth has no receptor cells (can't catch it) and saliva has no viable virus in it (can't give it). That is one example of how to apply these principles to your sexual choices. Another example: if you want to share a dildo, wash it between uses, or change the condoms you put on it, because you don't want to transfer vaginal fluids between your partner and you. Use your imagination!

Personally, I don't worry about catching AIDS. A woman has to work pretty hard to catch it from another woman sexually. The virus can only live for seconds outside the body, and length of exposure and number of exposures seem to play a part in its transmission, too. I want to stress that I am not a medical professional, but am writing as a Lesbian concerned about AIDS and the lack of knowledge I see about it in our community. If you have comments, questions, or more information, write *The Rag* and let me know. I will try to answer in the next issue.

For more information contact AIDS Vancouver at 687-2437, and attend the upcoming "AIDS and Lesbians" workshop, at the B.C. Regional Gay and Lesbian Conference, May 23rd, facilitated by AIDS Vancouver representatives Cynthia Brooke and Danielle Sciarretta.

Many thanks go to Robin Barnett of AIDS Vancouver for much of the help and information on which this article is based.

Jennifer Catchpole is a 32-year-old dyke and presently at-home mother of two smallish children, who has an interest in women's health issues, especially midwifery, and whose time is now being consumed working on this Rag.

Heart Fixtures

by Toshiko Hyodo

It was winter in Toronto. I was nibbling at my lunch, bent over the round table reading the student newspaper. The door opened and in walked two women. They glanced my way with a nod and headed to the desk and memos. Moments later alert sounded through my body when she looked up from her papers and gazed at me in light conversation. I noticed her strong, lithe body, the kind of body that seems well grounded. She wore blue jeans, a light cotton shirt, and a loose-fitting tailored blazer. It was her grey blue eyes that got me though. Cool, like a patch of thick shade on a hot summer's day. A cool, steady gaze that seemed to see more than I wished to show. It unsettled me. And her hair. It fell to her shoulders in rich waves heavily streaked with premature grey. She was gorgeous.

Every time I visited the Women's Co-op after that, I hoped she would be there. Often she was. I learned she was studying law, in her early thirties, and her name was Rhia. She was full of delightful, wry insight which suited her detached, amused manner. I also learned, through general conversation and indirectly, that she was hitched. Of course I never asked her directly. The more I recalled those intense eyes staring into mine, though, the more I felt an electric current surging through the contact. I slowly remembered that those kinds of feelings are seldom one way. Was she feeling it too? My wondering became a constant companion during free moments between studying and classes and before sleep...those eyes and the full body sensation they emitted.

There were two days left of classes when I decided to ACT. I could not let this woman merge into hazy past memory.

The myriad rules I was afraid of breaking haunted me. Maybe she would think I was

disrespectful of her current partner. We hardly knew each other; would she find me too forward or shallow? Maybe this was all in my imagination.

I finally spoke. "Look Rhia, I don't know why, but whenever I see you something inside goes crazy. I mean, uh, well, I find you very attractive and have since I first saw you." Pause. Being stared at with those eyes that kill.

Finally she responded, "Ann, you're a nice person I'm sure, but I hardly know you. And, I don't know if you're aware of this or not, but I'm already involved with someone I love."

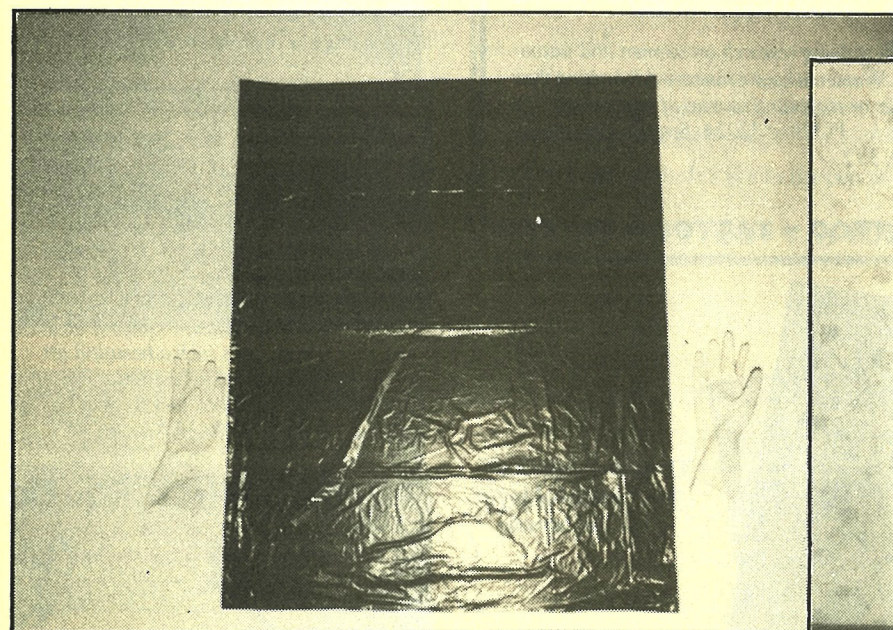
Inside I was protesting but losing the battle. "Does that mean I should ignore what I feel for you?" It was probably a stupid question. As she hesitated to find the right words, her eyes fixed on me, I couldn't stand it and cupped her attractive face between my hands and kissed her, deep, soft and long. Whatever she had intended to say now fell into confusion as our bodies pressed against one another, sending shots of pleasure through my thighs, crotch, stomach, breasts. I skimmed her neck and ear with my lips and breath and spoke my need, "God, I want you." We kissed again and my hands ran over her full, round cheeks up her back into her hair. Her mouth was cool and had a slightly sweet taste. Slowly we parted and she now looked at me soft and open but with regret.

I loved the soul before me. The vulnerable warmth that lay beneath her cool exterior was plainly uncovered. But I could see now that my love for her would never be consummated. She was committed to her lover and it was not my style to force things.

I pulled my heart away from her and poured myself into studying for the final exams approaching. The words filled my mind: "Better to have tried and failed than not to have tried at all...right?"

I think so.

Toshiko Hyodo will be spending the summer planting trees in northern B.C.



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Ready for Action

photos by S. McCarnan

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see back cover for more information

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CALL ME ATHENE

*a lesbian who fails to reinvent the world
is a lesbian in the process of extinction*
Nicole Brossard

victim silences

lesbian dyke butch mother sister lover friend hooker working
class whore madonna slut mary incest victim survivor so many words
to describe me and my womon folk add feminist in front of any one
of them and they all change radically don't they i've worked as
many of them some more problematic than others i write but only
for those who are willing to push down the walls and what matters
more is why they push my words ripple in their minds like rocks
on a calm quiet lake reproducing images used to etch away at my
energy i write echoes of my mothers thinking back through our mothers
painful and tormenting as it may be it is all i have to work from
it is all any of us have to work from struggling to find the tools
to begin the struggle with imagine you are sailing alone on a small
boat that is slowly falling apart and you have no tools how do you
begin to build a new boat culture is the boat we are in but there's
more than that isn't there the struggle to find others and thee
community a vague and sometimes empty concept used to fit a need
to belong somewhere to again build a house full of rooms with no doors

surviving language

lesbian dyke butch mother sister lover friend hooker working
class whore madonna slut mary incest victim survivor add feminist
in front of any one of them and the concepts change radically
connecting with another demanding monogamy commitment safety
security trust sex the right to monitor her time the right to own
her sexually house home family two-car garage 1.5 puppies or cats
or budgies aren't we suppose to be doing it differently past present
and future pain and hope resting on one pair of shoulders
that have little to do with reality and they crumble coitus as the
punishment for the fear of being alone for the fear of facing the
cold empty nothingness full of past pain alienation from that core
not lust for lust's sake but the manipulation of love/sex for love/sex
the exchange of orgasm sometimes for hope and security that's not
real in the first place a knowing of spirit and body that only solitude
can bring lust and simple caring for challenges beliefs at their core
where do the ripples stop on the lake why do we walk away after the
first three or four instead of waiting to see where it goes and
what it can bring back

screaming warrior womon

lesbian dyke butch mother sister lover friend hooker working
class whore madonna slut mary incest victim survivor add feminist
in front of any one of them and the concepts change radically
hundreds of little dyke boots kicking your shit away to keep me
safe and clean and dyke-strong not always loving and laughing around
a camp fire but romping and raging my anger is as healing as my
passion and that makes it real love and hate sometimes sides of the
same coin it is the pain and good byes that move me into the darkness
and into healing the scars i need both of my arms to be strong
realizing that it is both my hystery and the construct of those

relationships that i will not be a part of in spite of you and
your shit and my hystery moves me toward redefining my reality
agreeing to love/lust freely and cleanly with all the fierceness
of lesbian intensity and power and with none of the romantic love
that greases the wheels of your patriarchal/patricidal culture. Love.
That means giving of/up yourself. A death worshipping love that
rewards you with house and home and privilege for destroying your
own spirit. Accepting none of that when i can helps me stay strong
and clear and struggling to redefine even in the face of
feminist binds that limit lesbian erotica cunt does not equal porn-
ography but we can never even begin when we have insecurity and monogamy
i write this to challenge you to redefine and dare you to print
it as it is written i write prostitute for grades and credibility
but these always come first this is my voice my language and you
rape it with punctuation to make reading living more passive but
my boots are ready i question that authority do you struggle or
acquiesce call me dykewomon lesbian prostitute jew butch witch seeker
call me athene medusa for i have come from myself

jean noble

*jean is a newcomer to Vancouver from Edmonton, burn out capital of Canada,
and is enjoying doing absolutely nothing at all.*

Mayhem Relieved

(Coming out to the woman who brought me up)

One in ten
And I'm the one
One intensity
Finally shattered that darkened kitchen window
Mother
And the image of the man looking in
The deadly psychological rape/and the fear
you raised me in
Is scattered
And only returns
Sometimes when I walk down alleys at night
Past hedges
(Even though they're neatly clipped and not overgrown.)

Celebrate with me mother
That in this my twenty-fifth year I give
birth to myself
As old as when you gave birth to Me
We're free
Women born of women
Judgement is Mine
And I judge you in the hope that we can see
each other as
equal beings
You with your way and I with Mine.

Lynette

Learning to Walk

by Diane MacLachlan

Thursday, January 9, 1986: Talked with
Christine. She is off to Alberta for 2 weeks
leaving tomorrow. I said, perhaps we could
get together when she returned. We both
liked that idea!! I'm feeling very happy!!

Wednesday February 5, 1986: Last day of
being 25 years old and I called Christine to
see if she wanted to go out for espresso to-
gether. And she does! Sunday—Isadora's at
11 a.m. and a walk if it is nice out. We talked
for quite a while on the phone. I thought
maybe I would get her answering machine.
I'm glad I got through to her.

Sunday February 9, 1986: 11:40 p.m.:
Was very tired when my alarm rang at 10
a.m.. I was just going to have "a few minutes"
more sleep. But I decided I had better get up
before I slept till noon. Got to Granville
Island at 10:45 a.m. Sat in the sun and
waited for Christine. We had espresso and
muffins at Isadora's. We both exchanged
some growing up experiences. We both
learned to walk on ships crossing the Atlan-
tic. Hers from France, mine from
England. We then walked along False Creek
to Stamps Landing and back. I asked
Christine to dinner on Saturday night.
Seemed quite natural after all my fretting.

Saturday, February 22, 1986: *The Color
Purple* with Christine. Good movie.
Christine and I held hands—very nice,
quite sexual. We went to Joe's afterwards for
espresso. And we talked in the car. She likes
me! We exchanged mutual feelings of liking
to spend time with each other. I told her that
I didn't know "what to do" never having
gone out with anyone before. She said she
was demonstrative and wanted to put her
arm around me in the movie (she did in the
car). But there were 2 hetty young couples
behind us saying "gross" during the Lesbian
scene.

And we kissed good night. We are going
to Dale Spender and the Transition House
party this Friday. And we are going to
exchange some books.

Saturday, March 1, 1986 2:28 a.m.! Out
with Christine to Dale Spender speak, then
to the Transition House party at Women in
Focus. A really good night. Christine and I
opted to come back to my house for tea and
to listen to Joan Armatrading. We had a
chat and a big snog [ed. note: necking session]
on the front steps.

continued on page 22

REVIEWS

The Rag wants to know what you like. Please send us short opinions (no more than 100 words) of books, movies, theatre, art, concerts and records. Include complete information on what you are reviewing (title, author, publisher and price for books; title, artist and recording company for records, etc.) and your name, address and phone number. We will try to print as many short reviews as we receive.

The Rag also welcomes longer reviews but we may have to edit for length and clarity. Send reviews to: Reviews, c/o The Rag, Box 66106, Station F, Vancouver, B.C. V5W 5L4.

My Father's House

by Sylvia Fraser
Doubleday Canada \$19.95

Reviewed by J.L. Williams

My other self lies on her daddy's bed, her arms glued to her sides, her legs numb. Tears run backward down her face into her hair. The emotion she holds so tightly in her chest that it blocks everything else is grief. She is old enough now to understand how completely she has been betrayed.

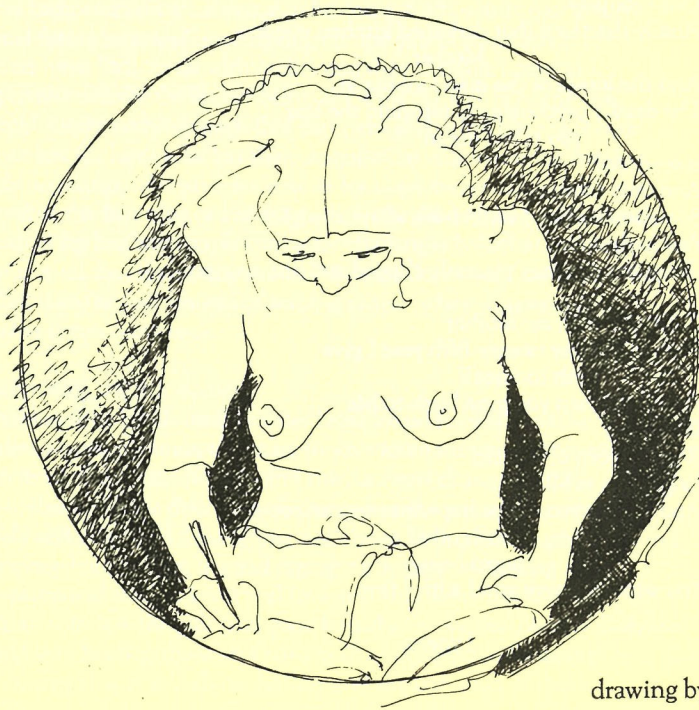
Sylvia Fraser arrived at the realization that she was an incest survivor through the back door of her subconscious. She had been a journalist who had turned her talents to writing novels, which is not that unusual. What was unusual was the recurring theme that surfaced time and again in her fiction. The theme that haunted her novels was the portrayal of extreme sexual violence against women. At the time, Ms. Fraser's inability to explain her preoccupation with the topic led one reviewer (Susan Cole, *Broadside*, February 1981) to label her "one of the new breed of pornographers." But after four novels and ten years of mental preparation, the first major piece of Fraser's psychological puzzle fell into place. On learning that a close friend's child had been sexually assaulted by the father, Fraser relates in her book that she felt "a snub-nosed bullet explode in my chest." This incident was the catalyst for Fraser to open the final door behind which were closeted her most painful childhood memories.

In her most recent book, *My Father's House*, Fraser uses fictional techniques to recreate her compelling journey of self-discovery. By the third page she has introduced

herself, her family and the other: that shadowy apparition that her child's mind invented to deal with a reality too excruciating for a child to encompass alone. Throughout the remainder of the book the reader is privy to the dual realities that were Sylvia Fraser's adolescence. She paints a chilling portrait of an era, complete with its rigid moral strictures and the narrow range of conduct appropriate for "nice" girls. Interwoven in the narrative is the ticking time bomb, the secret that Sylvia's other self and her father share.

And, lest we forget, Fraser uses the same clear candour to debunk the mythology of the fifties as a time when life was wonderfully simple. She reminds us that the era was a strait jacket for women, forcing them to walk an increasingly fine line societally, emotionally and intellectually. As always, the truth is welcome relief, especially after the steady North American diet of saccharine pseudo-remiscing from the likes of the "Fonz" and his gang of privileged white males, who have kept the mainstream media primed with their fantasy of the fifties.

My Father's House is painful reading, especially if you are a survivor, and it is controversial. Sylvia Fraser says, "All of us are born into the second act of a tragedy-in-progress" and she chooses to chronicle her drama as a "story without villains." Her journey from tortured childhood to loving adult is a wonderful story of a woman's determination to become strong and whole. Read it. Because the more we know of one another's pain, the closer we are bound together as women.



drawing by Val Speidel

Hot Off the Presses

by Donna Kaye of Ariel Books

Just in time for summer are a number of exciting titles, and I've chosen a few that I'm looking forward to reading.

Cherished Love (Naiad, \$11.50) by Evelyn Kennedy is a familiar storyline about a grief-stricken dyke doctor, Megan McKenzie, who loses her lover in an accident. She throws herself into her work, putting off the inevitable tidying up of their business affairs. Enter beautiful attorney Randall Grayson, very married but dissatisfied, who, while taking care of Megan's business, falls in love (or lust) with her. Standing jealously by is Megan's best friend Lynn Bradley, who sees nothing good in the Megan/Randall dalliance. The ending is predictable, but the characters are well-drawn, the writing tidy. Good love scenes to sigh over. Nice bed-time reading.

Forthcoming is *Osten's Bay* (Naiad, \$11.95 approx.) by Zenobia N. Vole, who is Lauren Wright Douglas, author of *The Always Anonymous Beast*, writing under a pseudonym. Set in the Dutch Antilles, it's the story of Gail Murray, marine biologist, who, because of her unique research on coral reefs is hired by a research institute as a

divemaster. Assigned to Osten's Bay, she falls for Marike Osten, resort owner. Together they become involved in corporate intrigue, as Gail learns of fatal diving accidents, and that her true assignment is to help in an ecologically disastrous project to extract oil from the reefs.

Fans of Alison Bechdel's cartoons will be happy to learn that *More Dykes to Watch Out For* (\$11.95), the further adventures of Mo, Clarice, and Lois, has just arrived in town. Also from Firebrand is *A Burst of Light* (\$11.95) by Audre Lorde, more essays from this courageous woman battling cancer.

Due in April 1988 is *Lesbian Couples* (Seal Press, \$16.50 approx.) by Dr. Merilee Curtis and G. Dorsey Green, two Seattle therapists. Seal's spring catalogue describes it as "the first guide for Lesbians that tackles the problems/pleasures of being half of a couple." *Lesbian Couples* begins with issues of definition and charts the stages most couples go through, from romance to commitment and collaboration. Some of the subjects covered are common to all couples, others are specific to Lesbian couples: monogamy and nonmonogamy, coming out to family and children. The authors pay special attention to the differences of race, class, age and recovery from alcohol, substance or sexual abuse. *Lesbian Couples* promises to be an eminently useful book, particularly its sections on understanding each other and resolving conflict.

And, if reading *Lesbian Couples* doesn't prevent a break up, *Unbroken Ties: Lesbian Ex-Lovers* (Alyson Publications, \$11.95 approx.) by Carol Becker is due in June 1988. According to Alyson's spring catalogue, Carol Becker's book is based on her interviews with numerous ex-lovers in the San Francisco Bay area. They tell of the trauma of breaking up, the stages of recovery and the differing ways of maintaining close emotional connections with former lovers.

This sampling of new and expected titles should keep book-devouring Lesbians busy until a new bunch pops up in the fall.

Ask Donna anything you want to know about books, but don't call her during "Cagney and Lacey."

* * * *

From time to time The Rag will be soliciting information on new and forthcoming Lesbian titles from booksellers around the city.

ariel books for women

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vancouver, b.c.
canada v6k 1r1
(604) 733-3511

long
may
you
DIVERT

Christina

by Sherry

Christina of Sweden was born in 1626. Her father, King Gustavus, ordered that she be educated and raised as his son and heir. When Gustavus died in 1632, Christina became the ruler of Sweden. By the time she was seventeen, she had decided that she would not marry, in spite of the persistent urgings of her guardians. Her romantic attachment was to her lady-in-waiting, Ebba Sparre. Although Christina was discreet about her Lesbianism, she did not consider it abnormal.

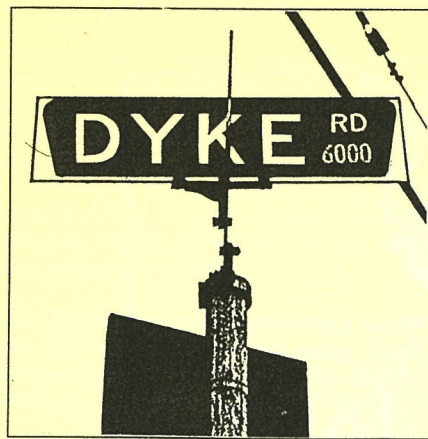
By the time she was eighteen, she had decided that she must abdicate the throne in favour of her cousin Charles Gustavus. As she had no intention of marrying and producing an heir, this was the only way to ensure a secure future for Sweden. But Charles was more interested in becoming her husband than her heir. His reluctance, coupled with the slow process of the Swedish parliament, kept Christina as Queen of Sweden until June of 1654.

At that point, Christina left Sweden and became well-known throughout Europe as a celebrity-adventurer—one who associated

with Jews and wore male attire. At that time, Christian Europeans did not consider Jews to be their equals, and a woman who wore pants was almost unheard of. Christina lived the rest of her life actively, keeping a finger in European politics by promoting peace and acting as a personal diplomat between European powers.



Queen Christina



Dyke Road is a *Letters to Everyone* column. Use it to speak your mind. We invite thoughts, feelings, new ideas, humour or questions about whatever matters to you, and we welcome replies to what you read here. This is a place to make contact, to share experience, to argue passionately and to explore all sides.

For the next issue we especially ask Lesbians who are frequently mistaken for men to write and tell us about it. What happens? How do you react? Is it ever funny? How does it affect your life?

Please keep your letters under 300 words and remember that we may have to edit for length and clarity. Include your name, address and phone number in case we need to get in touch with you. If you don't want your full name printed, be sure to say so. Send letters to: Dyke Road, c/o The Rag, Box 66106, Station F, Vancouver, B.C. V5W 5L4.

An Encounter...

As free wimmin, we are supposed to have recognized and triumphed over such universally deplorable concepts as sexism, ageism, racism, and classism. But there's one that we are still having problems with—for lack of a better name, let's call it lookism.

A recent beer garden held at a university was mainly attended by students, both lesbian and gay. Most of the people were members or friends of members of a particular club, but there were some people there who were unknown to the rest of the group. Three wimmin were actors in a transactional drama which was largely ignored by the rest of those present. One was selling lottery tickets, one was doing tarot readings, and one was sitting back with her beer, smoking. They all were outwardly enjoying themselves until they encountered each other. The dialogue ran along these lines:

Womyn One (holding out a ticket book): Would you care to buy some tickets on a draw being held by this group?

Womyn Two (inspecting the tickets): Oh yeah, I've heard about you guys. (She pauses a moment.) Sure, I'll buy three tickets; who knows, if they get off the ground they might even publish me some day. (Looks again at the tickets while scrawling her name on them.) I see they'll make the draw at the club on Wednesday night.

Womyn One (frowning, using her talking-to-children voice): It's for wimmin only.

Womyn Two (puzzled): Yeah, I see that. Sounds fine by me.

Womyn One (irritated): It's for wimmin only. No men.

Womyn Two (confused and flustered): Well, I am a womyn, dammit. What do I have to do, haul out my birth certificate?

Womyn One (as she turns away): Hmph.

A short interlude follows wherein Womyn Two sits bolt upright and crushes her beer cup in her hand. She is obviously angry. Womyn One collects her coat and leaves.

Womyn Two (softly, to nobody in particular): Oh shit, I'm getting so tired of this shit. Why didn't I just stay home?

Womyn Three (stubbing out her cigarette): What's the problem?

Womyn Two: She thought I was a goddamn man. Can you believe it?

Womyn Three (thoughtfully): Whadaya mean, you aren't? I thought you were a drag queen. Funny thing, though, your voice wasn't right for a drag queen. But you have some hair on your face, and I never see you at the clubs.

Womyn Two (bitter): Well, I didn't plant it there for decoration. And it sure wasn't my idea to be tall, either. Guess that's why you never see me at the clubs. They don't exactly go out of their way to make you feel welcome if you don't fit their politics.

This conversation went on for some time afterwards. It turned out that both of them felt rejected by other wimmin, one because she had had a hormone problem as a teenager, and the other because she looked so unapproachably butch that nobody dared talk to her at the clubs. And both of them were sick and tired of being called "sir" on the street.

The whole business left me rather puzzled; here were two wimmin who were politically aware and had the insight to appreciate the power games in our community for what they were worth. Yet they were both rejected by the community because they didn't look or dress "correctly." Would the same trip have been played out if one was

a womyn of colour, or was disabled, or an older womyn? Probably not. There must be other wimmin who could make a vital contribution to our community who are marginalized or outright isolated because their physical attributes, or their politics, or their lifestyles cause discomfort to their sisters.

The final question is this: in our splintering of the community on grounds of "political correctness" (or lookism, racism or any other -ism), are we not accomplishing the goals of the Moral Majority, ensuring the isolation and powerlessness of individual wimmin? Think about it.

—Corilane Ravendaughter

...and a Response.

I am Woman One, the raffle ticket seller. Ravendaughter has misrepresented my role in the "drama" and the dialogue reported is inaccurate.

The incident, which bears thought and discussion, took place at a recent beer garden held by Gays and Lesbians of UBC. The dialogue ran only vaguely along the lines that Ravendaughter reports. Here is a more accurate version of what I think of as the more important part of the discussion between Woman Two and myself:

Woman Two: So the draw's on Wednesday. I always like an excuse to go down to the bar for a drink.

Woman One: The event's for women only.

Woman Two: Well, according to Vital Statistics, I am a woman.

Woman One: Oh ...

This was followed by embarrassed silence from me—no repetition of "women only," no mention of "no men." And here, I can't remember if I apologized or not; my brain turned to mush with the horrifying realization that I had made an assumption about Woman Two based on her appearance, that I had been wrong, and that I had probably caused her pain and embarrassment. If I didn't apologize then, I do now.

What followed between us was not my instant retreat, but a brief and amicable conversation about things other than Diversity, the draw, the mistaken gender-casting. No "hmph," no crushing of beer cup (that I saw). I didn't collect my coat to leave—not for another 20 minutes or so, as I sat with friends and finished my beer.

I want to point out that we were at a mixed lesbian and gay social event; both women and men were present. When I approached Woman Two, I thought she was

a man in drag. I wasn't placing any value judgement on this assumption and I don't think it very unusual to think that a person wearing a dress might be a man.

I know I make mistakes in my life and I know I inadvertently hurt other people; but I try hard to examine what I do and learn from my mistakes. Maybe this will bring me closer to that "free woman" Ravendaughter talks about. But I do not believe that we are *already* free women, as she suggests, nor that we have come close to solving the problems of sexism, racism, classism, ageism and, I might add, homophobia. The idea that we have "triumphed over" these problems can only lead us to a dangerous complacency and prevent us from working further on them.

—Mary Doug

Politically Correct?

Have you ever wondered who invented the term "politically correct" and exactly what it means? I have reflected on this question late at night when considering the many mysteries of life. I think it might first have been used by a character in George Orwell's book *1984*; someone working for Newspeak. I've speculated on its meaning and have decided it must refer to how politicians act at election time; doing and saying things that will get them another term in office.

However, I'm afraid this definition cannot explain the almost magical power these two words seem to have. For example, when people get together to discuss the important issues of the day, voices of dissent can be squashed simply by uttering them. Nor can

it account for the intense sense of annoyance I feel upon hearing them.

Despite this, they can serve a very useful purpose. When I'm in a rush and don't have time to think things through I simply select the "politically correct" opinion. This way I'm spared the effort of any long drawn-out deliberation and, as an added bonus, I'm assured a certain degree of popularity. As for that slight irritation, I can easily put up with it, as I do with so many other things; such as my mother always telling me I dress too butch (people might guess I'm a dyke), the government taxing my \$7,000 a year income, or Christian fundamentalists stating it's all right for me to be a Lesbian as long as I don't have sex. Luckily for me these little discomforts in life, along with the large amounts of salt I add to my food, help to raise my low blood pressure to a more acceptable level.

—I.B.

Christian Dyke

I will admit to you that I have very high hopes built up for what your publication will be able to do. I have so craved a magazine that would reflect me in a way that did not paint me as "abnormal" to the gay/lesbian community itself! As a CRUD (Christian Radical Urban Dyke), I find myself at the periphery of virtually every community that I belong to. And yet, I am well used to that, and would not find too much pain in it if I could find avenues to express myself with integrity. So, while I would not be asking you to build a paper that was Christian-Dyke in "orientation," I do hope that Diversity will

be able to really seek out the folks who we do not hear on Co-op Radio, constantly see in *Angles* photography, find at women's rallies, etc., etc. Let us really have a taste of what our diversity is!!

There you go—an impossible mandate. But one loaded with support.

—Friend with high hopes

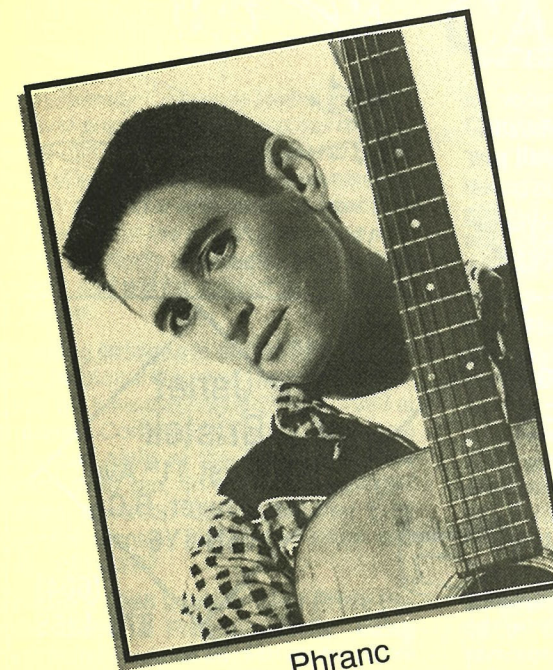
Needed:

Any women who have been institutionalized that would be willing to share any stories, writings, drawings, or just their experiences while they were in the institution, and hopefully are now out and liberated.

I am presently working on a performance for which I am applying for a Canada Council Dance grant and an Ontario Arts Council Multidisciplinary grant. The work is entitled *Memoirs of Darkness and Light*. This piece will portray the experiences of women in institutions. It will explore these experiences and reflect the impressions of women from varying backgrounds and age groups. This very real illustration of the plight of women and the prejudices against the poor, elderly and ethnic, will focus on this isolation, deprivation, forced treatment, and abilities to overcome and rise above these predicaments.

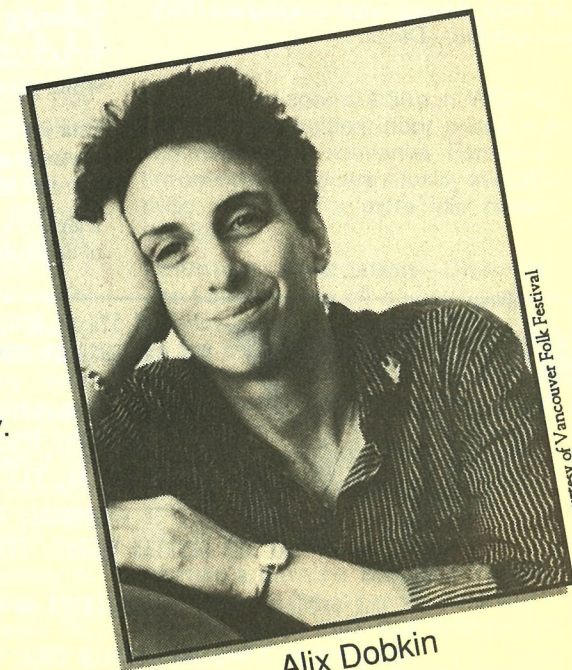
Any contributions would be greatly appreciated and treated with discretion and respect.

—Mia Blackwell
PO Box 5153, Station A
Toronto, Ontario M5W 1N5



Phranc

Phranc and Alix Dobkin are two of the Lesbians who will be appearing at the Vancouver Folk Music Festival in July. See our next issue for more details.



Alix Dobkin

photos courtesy of Vancouver Folk Festival

Monday, March 3, 1986: Christine and I had a talk last night. We were watching *The Big Chill* (a movie on TV) in each other's arms, kissing at commercials. Christine said she felt undirected in where this kissing was leading. I agreed with her. I told her that I'm very sexually attracted to her but that my emotions hadn't caught up. We have agreed not to be lovers for a while. We were in each other's arms until 1:30 a.m., then I drove her home. I was in bed by 2 a.m. Work the next day!!

Two days later, Wednesday, March 5, 1986: I'm feeling "mellow." At 1:30 a.m. this morning Christine and I were making love. Didn't get to sleep until after 3 a.m. Last night I dropped by Christine's place after night school. We listened to Cat Stevens and held hands. Christine said she wanted me to stay, but didn't want to pressure me. I didn't feel pressured at all, and wanted to stay. We are really comfortable with each other which is great. We went through the process of taking our clothes off, listening to Simon and Garfunkel. I felt really good. Felt things I had never felt before. Touching Christine... wonderful. We held each other and caressed for a long time. I was grinning for the longest time—really happy. I woke up at 6:30, Christine at 7:30. Caressed some more. Christine convinced me to go out for breakfast, although I just wanted to hold her. We went to an espresso place on Robson Street. Walking hand in hand in the West End. The sun was shining and birds were singing. I like being open about our relationship.

My passions are loving women, Christine, my cat, music, dancing, whale watching and 1950s cars with fins—Diane.

Thank You

Graceland • Heritage House Hotel—Lotus Club • Vancouver Folk Music Festival • Jason David Hair Studio • Women's Work Screen Print & Design Studio • Janet Bristeir • Pacific Hairlines • Hamburger Mary's • Pacific Cinemateque Pacific • Ultra-Love Products Ltd • Angles • Beckwoman's • Videomatica Vancouver East Cultural Centre • Vancouver Lesbian Centre Little Sister's Book & Art Emporium • Uprising Breads • Ariel Books • Airheart Co-operative Travel Centre • Vancouver Women's Bookstore • Press Gang Printers • Persimmon Blackbridge Eastside Data Graphics • Thurlow's • People's Co-op Bookstore • Press Gang Publishers • Spartacus Books • Video Villa Vancouver Status of Women • Kinesis • Q Magazine • Story Travel Ltd • Co-op Radio—Women Do This Everyday/The Lesbian Show • Sandra Robinson • Sherry McCarnan • Maureen Field • Chrystos • Lovie Sizzle • Biruta • Stari Nari Cole Tanguay • Corrine Hunt • Sheila Gilhooly • Lorraine Nelson • Claire Kujundzic • Zhara • Les • Shana • Lillian • Kate • Cheryl • Lynette • Margaret •

All the women who came to our fundraisers and gave us suggestions for a name • Everyone who bought raffle tickets • All our contributors and volunteers •

Thank you for supporting Diversity: The Lesbian Rag

☆ visual artists

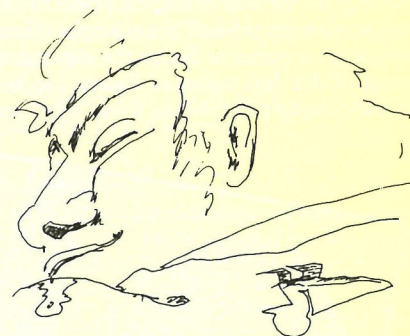
Daphne: The photo says it all!

Val is a burgeoning artist with a background in self-taught motorcycle mechanics and gardening in extremis.

S. McCarnan has never taken black and white photos before.

Etta works as a graphic artist while she continues to search for someone who will pay her just to draw cartoons.

Tanya is a subversive artist with little sense of decorum—and an Emily Carr drop out.



drawing by Val Speidel

Building Bridges in '88

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CLASSIFIED ADS

Classified ads are \$5.00 for the first 75 words or portion thereof and \$1.50 for each additional 25 words. Please indicate which category you would like your ad to appear under. Classified ads should be mailed to Diversity: The Lesbian Rag, PO Box 66106, Stn. F, Vancouver, B.C. V5W 5L4. Please make your cheque or money order payable to Diversity: The Lesbian Rag. Confidential reply drawers available for \$2.00.

□ FOR SALE

MOTORCYCLE, 82 Suzuki GN 250, locking trunk, 11,000 km, great commuter bike, complete maintenance record available. Excellent condition. \$650 OBO Phone 732-7263

SLEEPING BAG, excellent condition, 2 lb. duck down, 62" x 80", tapered, \$90. Bike rack, bow-type clamps to car bumper, \$15. Call Sherry 254-4860

□ SERVICES

AMAZING!! That is the word most often used to describe my Shiatsu treatments. And it's an appropriate word. Our bodies get knotted and twisted by the many stresses we undergo. Shiatsu works to unravel those knots and to restore a sense of harmony to the body, which in turn stills the mind. Truly A-MAZING! Astarte 251-5409

RESUMES—Desktop published, laser printed, sliding scale. Phone 736-0993

WOMEN ARTIST Support/Interest Group. For more info phone Margo. 737-0910 or 254-3042

RECOVERY WORKSHOP for adult children of alcoholics/children of trauma. This is for anyone who has lived in a high stress family system. Four sessions beginning Wed. June 1, \$99.

Call Louise Long 876-7873
Doe Petty 536-3719

□ TRAVEL

BED & BREAKFAST IN TORONTO for women. Centrally located, 601 Crawford St. Toronto, Ont. M6G 3K1 (416) 588-4240

□ HOUSING

HOUSE MATES WANTED—Three Lesbians to complete a spacious 5 bedroom co-op house near Jericho Beach. The house has a fireplace, washer/dryer, 2 bathrooms, yard and garden, and is a smoke and pet-free space. Rent is \$280/month plus utilities. Rooms are available immediately or June 1. Call 737-0910

TWO LESBIANS wanted to share house near Cambie & Broadway. Must be non-smokers and love cats. Rent is \$260/month. Phone 874-6614

□ EMPLOYMENT WANTED

Women seeking employment may place ads free of charge.

□ PRISONER'S CONTACT

Ads are free of charge.

□ PERSONAL

GAY PROFESSIONAL Woman, 45, (age no barrier) interested in walks, concerts, theatre, dancing, plays, camping, music. Non-smoker, non-drinker, very much interested in expanding my friendship circle. Reply to Box 101. Will answer all replies.

□ WANTED

LESBIANS WITH MACS Diversity: The Lesbian Rag is looking for Macintosh (Plus or SE with hard disc) computers to use for a few days every two months for production. And we may want to buy a used one. Leave a message at 254-8458.

SUBMISSIONS Diversity: The Lesbian Rag wants Lesbians to write, report and create. We invite submissions of all kinds. Mail your submissions to Diversity, Box 66106, Stn. F, Vancouver, BC, V5W 5L4.

SELL THE RAG: Booksellers and news agents wishing to sell this magazine, please write for details to: Diversity, PO Box 66106, Station F, Vancouver BC V5W 5L4.

CALENDAR

The Diversity Collective invites individuals and groups to help keep our readers up-to-date on events of interest to Lesbians. We will accept written submissions for our Calendar of Events no later than the last day of the month preceding publication. Priority will be given to Lesbian events and will be subject to availability of space.

Building Bridges in 88 The Fifth Annual B.C. Regional Gay and Lesbian Conference will take place May 21 - 23, 1988 at Britannia Community Centre. Dance on Saturday night at the Heritage House Hotel, 8:30 pm, \$1-4. "Out on Stage" variety show on Sunday at Van East Cultural Centre, \$3-10. For more info call: 251-2397

Seattle's 1988 Lesbian/Gay Pride Parade/March & Freedom Rally being held Sunday, June 26. For more info or

to volunteer call The Freedom Day Committee (206) 782-3148 or 721-4936

The Third Annual Lesbian Camp-Out taking place May 20-23, Ruckles Campground on Saltspring Island. Women and children invited to join in music, games and fun. Cost is \$7/night for 4 people. For info call Judith at 385-4109

The First Annual Women's Music Festival featuring poetry, theatre, dance and music, mainly by local women. The Festival will be held August 27 at New Brighton Park, just north of PNE grounds. Volunteers needed for promotion, security, childcare, cleanup, etc. If you would like to help out or want more info, please phone 681-3617.

Coming out party: The launching of Diversity: The Lesbian Rag, Mon. May 16 at Graceland, 1250 Richards St. (entrance in the alley). \$2-\$10 (sliding

scale). Doors open at 8:30 p.m. WOMEN ONLY. Cake cutting, door prizes and commemorative souvenirs. Formal attire optional. Childcare subsidy available upon request. For more info contact 254-8458.

Volunteer Orientation—Diversity: The Lesbian Rag will be having an orientation meeting Mon. May 30 at Sitka (in the common room, which has one step down at the entrance, but a wheelchair accessible bathroom), 1550 Woodland Dr. at 7 p.m. Are you interested in fundraising? Distribution? Selling advertising? Design/production? Etc??? COME OUT! For more info contact 254-8458.

Women's Groups Baseball Tournament. June 3-4-5 (if it rains, June 10-11-12) at Britannia Park. Call Kate at 732-0786 or VLC at 254-8458.