

SISTERS



april

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE FOR THE SAN FRANCISCO
CHAPTER OF THE DAUGHTERS OF BILITIS

...a woman's organization for the purpose of aiding the Lesbian to discover her place in society and of educating society to understand and accept her, without prejudice, and...

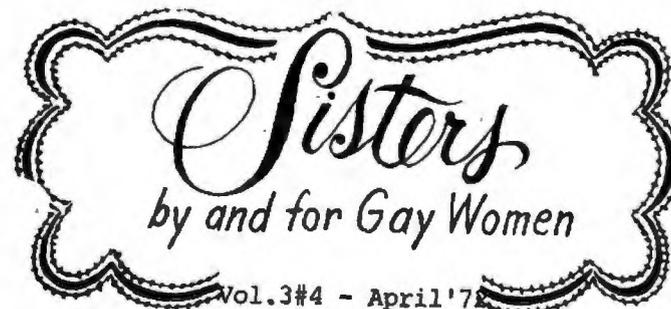
1. To encourage and support the Lesbian in her search for her social, economic, personal, interpersonal and vocational identity within society by maintaining and building a library on the themes of homosexuality and on women; by providing social functions where she can communicate with others and expand her social world outside the bar scene; by providing an organized structure through which she can work to change society's limitations upon her lifestyle; by providing a forum for the interchange of ideas and problems within her own group.

2. To educate the public to accept and understand the Lesbian as an individual, eventually leading to the breakdown of taboos, prejudices, and limitations upon her lifestyle by sponsoring public discussions; by providing individuals as speakers and participants in various forms designed to educate the public; by dissemination of educational and rational literature on the Lesbian.

3. To encourage and support and participate in responsible research dealing with homosexuality.

4. To investigate the penal code as it pertains to the homosexual and to promote changes, providing equitable handling of cases involving homosexuals, through due process of law, without prejudice.

TO SAY AND BELIEVE THAT GAY IS GOOD.



Vol.3#4 - April'78

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS INSERT

TIME AND OTHER GAMES

The phone rang and I, in my usual graceful manner, stumbled over the cat and then the carpet and barely managed to catch it on the third ring. Barb's voice drifted low and lazy across the wire, amused at my obviously disordered state. Barb is fully aware that I can reach the phone on one ring from anywhere in the apartment, and it only takes me two if I'm in the shower.

"Hi," she said, and then -- as always -- "What're you doing?" with a touch of an amused question in her voice.

"Well, actually, I was writing a letter home. Keeping the folks posted, more or less. I think of something to write, decide that I can't tell them about it, and then have to figure out what the hell I can tell them other than general bits about my health or the weather, neither of which is really good enough to write home about. So to speak."

She laughed, and I could tell she didn't believe a word of it. "For that it took you three rings?"

"Well, actually, no," I said, trying again. "As a matter of fact, I almost crushed the cat in my haste and then tripped over that crease in the carpet. I might have done myself bodily injury."

"Actually," she said rather dryly, "you were in the bedroom masturbating...."

"No. Honest," but I laughed. "The second story is true. I swear. Now, what's on your mind?"

"I don't know. You seem to be pleasantly engrossed -- whatever you're doing. Would you want to interrupt yourself for a game of pool?"

"Is that an existential question or a solid invitation?" One had to watch Barb on some things.

"Would it matter?" she said, and I could see her grinning, sure of herself and amused.

"Ho! What an egotist! You obviously have no shame. Of course it would matter."

"Well," she said rather carefully, "I think a nice game of pool would do wonders for you. I'm even willing to tag along. If I have to."

"Bullshit," I said.

"Pick you up in an hour," she said.

She won. She always wins the pool games. Sometimes she may lose by default, but those games don't count. She always wins. At least with me. This, I am convinced, is because the first time I met Barb we played pool. I had not played for years and had only shot about three games when I did play. I could barely remember the rules. I was honest and told Barb this, partially to protect myself, and we proceeded to play. I beat her. Quite soundly, as I remember. Well, I was surprised. And she was not happy.

Since then she has won every game we've played, as I say. It's not that I'm not trying. That first game was obviously a fluke. Now, even when I manage a good game, she pulls off miracle shots and wins.

After three games, we relinquished the pool table and sat at a corner table sipping at beers and half-watching the new players.

"She's not bad," Barb said, nodding toward the lanky blonde lining up a long shot.

"At pool or in looks?" One could never tell at any given moment where Barb's head was. She is still wavering between women's liberation and male chauvinism. At this given moment she regarded me with humorous scorn.

"Pull yourself up!" she said, with a slight, haughty smile. "Her pool, of course." The lanky blonde hit the ball too hard and missed the shot, but before she could react, the cue ball ricocheted into another, which sank. Pure accident. But the blonde smiled knowingly, and let her pride show in

the swing of her elbow as she aligned another shot.

"She's not as good as she thinks she is," I said, in my fashion.

"Now, now," Barb placated. "Let she who is without sin amongst you...."

Barb and I have known each other a goodly while. As a matter of fact, I'd been in love with her a good six months. She, having learned as we all do that painful emotional hassles can emerge from intense emotional involvements, had long ago sworn off emotional involvements. As simply as that. Either that or she really didn't like me well enough to get heavily involved -- which was the alternative I didn't really want to believe.

She knew I loved her, but we both pretended to some extent that it was a null factor. We ignored it. Sometimes, though, the pretense gave way to reality and I would be caught in word or thought or look.

I was looking at her then. Doe-eyed, I suppose -- all enjoyment and love and tenderness of and for her displayed momentarily in my eyes. Only when I saw the reaction in her eyes did I shake myself out of it and rummage through my head for something diverting. Anything. Found nothing handy.

For a long time she looked at me and then leaned near me, fished around in my coat pocket for cigarettes. "Mind?" she asked, pulling the pack out. I shook my head. She raised an eyebrow and I nodded and she lit one for me, too.

"We should quit smoking," she said.

"Yeah," I said. "There's a lot we should do."

She looked at me again. "You know what? You seem to be a bit caustic today. Something on your mind?"

"You're on my mind."

She looked away and sighed, her seemingly infinite reserve of patience going fast. She sighed yet again and set her jaw. She has a way of setting her jaw.

"Are we going through that again?" she asked.

She actually didn't seem particularly irritated. For Barbara. Just impatient. And I wasn't as caustic as she thought. I was in fine spirits.

"It's been at least two months since our last talk," I said. And waited for a response. None came. "You want we should go to quarterly discussions?" Now that was caustic.

"I don't want to talk about it," she said.

"That's what you said last time."

"Well, that's probably what I mean, then," And she put her unfinished beer on the table, dropped a quarter beside it as a tip, got up and walked out. She was more irritated than she had seemed.

I caught up with her in the parking lot and waited beside the car for her to climb in and unlock the door. As she usually did. For a frantic second I visualized her just driving off, leaving me standing on the blacktop, but then she slipped across the seat and pulled up the lock. I got in, relieved.

We didn't speak until she stopped outside my apartment. Stopped and sat there with the motor running, waiting for me to get out.

"Don't be silly," I said, "Come on in."

"I don't want to."

"Then you'll have to open this door and push me out. Good god, we've known each other more than a year. It's really dumb to start fighting now. Come on in. I won't be nasty. And we can't end it like this."

Stubborn, stubborn. But she did eventually relent. The thought of tossing me from the car did not, apparently, appeal to her. I know her better than she thinks, which is good since it is usually all that I have going for me. With Barbara.

Once inside, she was uneasy and fidgety. She roamed the living room, touching things, lighting incense and candles, puttering.

"Sit down. You make me nervous," and I smiled at her. She ignored it, as she ignored the beer I sat down for her on the coffee table.

"Look, Barb. I think we should either move in together or call in quits. This in-between stage is driving me up the walls." That was pretty basic, I thought. And certainly descriptive of where things were at in my head.

"I guess we call it quits, then," she said, not unexpectedly.

"I guess so. Drink your beer."

She sat down, finally, and tasted the beer. "It's unfortunate," she began, and then had to clear her throat. "It's unfortunate. I think," she said. And stopped. I just looked at her. So she tried to reason with me.

"Why do we have to do something with it? Why can't we just be friends? Like we are?"

"Because we're more than friends and we've been more than friends a long time. Barbara, I want to come home to someone at night. Why can't you see that?"

"But we see each other...."

"But that's not enough."

She was up again, fidgeting.

"Sit down, you make me nervous."

"You damned homebodies make me nervous."

"I'm no more a homebody than you are. I'm just tired of living alone."

"Well, find someone to live with, then." She was angry.

"I intend to," I said simply. "I was hoping I had found her when I met you."

"Well, you were wrong. I don't want an involvement. You know that."

"Okay. Drink your beer. Sit down." She sat. She played with her glass. Her knee accidentally touched mine and she let it stay there a moment. Then she set her jaw and moved her leg.

"What'll you do?" she asked.

I shrugged. "Patty has a friend she's been wanting me to meet. Says I'll like her. And Marlen's been calling."

Barb raised an eyebrow. "Since when?"

"The past week or so."

"What's she want?"

I looked at her and almost laughed. Instead, I grabbed her and gave her an unwelcome bear hug. "You idiot! You're jealous."

"I'm not jealous. Damn it. Get off me." And she pushed me away. But she was blushing and very teaseable.

"You're too much," I said, still grinning, which made her mad and for a second I thought she would leave. "Hey, listen," I said, softly, "I'm teasing. Don't be stubborn. Jesus, sometimes you're worse than my father. Come here," and to my surprise she came into my arms and let me hold her for a few seconds. Then she disentangled her arms and held me. She was more comfortable doing that. It was fine with me.

I waited for her to speak, and eventually she did. Her voice was low -- lower than usual. "It's a shame to break this up," she said.

"Yes," I said.

"Then don't." And her voice was quietly urgent. We were silent after that, and I finally pulled myself out of her arms.

"No," I said. "I can't take it any more. I have to."

She got up and went for her coat and I let her tug her arms into the sleeves before I put my hands on her arm to stop her.

"You are involved. If that weren't so you wouldn't be getting ready to run out of here with... with tears sitting there ready to fall." I hadn't expected the tears. Not from her. I was blinking faster than normal, but I expected that.

She shook her head at me and gave me a look that I didn't want to interpret. Then she was out the door. From a distance I heard a car door slam, and an engine splutter to life, die, start again. Then I lost it in the sounds of general traffic.

Oh, well. Marlen would probably be calling. If not, there was always Patty's friend. Someone. And it was too soon to tell about Barbara.

POEM BY GERMAINE -7-

Melting
we
together
the Connecting-Consciousness
of WOMAN
loving
HerKind

Germaine
between spaces
void of communication
ovum
evolving
through
measures of madness

Reality
pushing above layers
of suffocating lies
and now
awareness
"It's time, Our time."
unity
intuitive link
to
Life

Decades
man destroys
steadfast
on ground
Absurdity

Woman
loving HerKind
flows beyond
the mutated "Y"

Couple "X" -8-
defiance of
science
that failed
to quiet
HER
Psychic
SCREAM

Primal
evolutionary seeds
innate sounds
heard through
darkness
Universally
Our Chant
"It's time, Our time."



by Valeria Manning

Guest Editorial

AN OPEN LETTER TO LIFE MAGAZINE...AND TO ITS
READERS OF THE NEW YEARS '72 ISSUE:
HOMOSEXUAL REVOLT

Editor of LIFE:

A. E. Houseman said it in his poem:

"The laws of God, the laws of man,
He may keep that will and can...."

He goes on, and we realize that some of us fail: or rather, the laws of heterosexual man and heterosexual man's interpretation of God's law fail to take some of us into account, and we find that it is our very nature which is legislated against. So we hide in closets, and we live those lines of the poem:

"I, a stranger and afraid
In a world I never made...."

NO MORE!

Let the December 31, 1971 issue of LIFE stand not for the closing of an old year but rather as an opening into a new life for those two to twenty million homosexuals, male and female, who have not been -- and will not be -- legislated out of existence. Let it usher in a new era of Gay Pride. We have to come out of our closets; we have to stop living in a world we never made and involve ourselves in building a new world -- a world based on the right of every human being to develop to her or his full potential, with a knowledge of his or her beauty

-10-

and self-worth. NONE OF US ARE FREE UNTIL ALL OF US ARE FREE!

LIFE's 11-page article was a big step forward in awareness...however, as a woman (a homosexual woman, true, but first and foremost a woman), I must protest the uneven coverage. A cursory glance at the article would pander to the commonly held misconception that homosexuality is primarily a male condition, while a deeper reading would uncover the statement: "Women homosexuals, or lesbians, have always been less discriminated against than men."

I cannot let this go unanswered. I must demand equal time. WE EXIST! In every country, in every city, in every town, we are found, one for one with our gay brothers. And not all of us are silent!

LIFE featured Franklin Kameny, who polled 1,888 votes in running for Congress in Washington, D.C. Well, I, a woman homosexual, garnered 1,676 in a school board election in Sacramento and I also ran as openly gay. LIFE's coverage of Troy Perry's march on Sacramento was great, but I stood at Troy's side on the steps of the capitol to give an address on the position of the homosexual woman in our society; and believe me, it is not as rosy as LIFE would like to paint it. LIFE's coverage of the Metropolitan Community Church could have included some mention of Rev. Dr. Alice Naumoff, Ph.D., the assistant pastor of MCC's second largest church group: the San Francisco congregation.

However, back to the magazine's overt statement (the neglect mentioned in the previous paragraphs dealt only with the sin of omission, which, however heinous, still pales before that of commission): "Women homosexuals have always been less discriminated against than men." Let us examine that statement.

ALL WOMEN ARE VICTIMS OF DISCRIMINATION such that by its very nature it keeps all women from

enjoying those privileged positions that could be threatened by this (the discrimination against the male homosexual) kind of discrimination.

Although 40% of all women over 18 years of age are employed full time in this country, 75% of them (3/4) earn less than \$5,000 per year.

WOMEN ARE NOT HIGH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, EITHER HIRED OR ELECTED:

who can be removed from their positions because of this kind of discrimination.

WOMEN ARE NOT IN CLASSIFIED OR HIGH SECRET POSITIONS IN THE MILITARY:

where they can be considered as security risks because of blackmail. A ridiculous situation which goes:

if you are discovered, you will be fired. Therefore, we cannot hire you -- because if we do, you will become a target for people who can use the fact that we will fire you if you are discovered (because you are a target to blackmailers) to blackmail you: a circular reasoning similar to the picture of the girl carrying a box of salt with the picture of the girl carrying the box of salt with the picture of the girl carrying the box of salt, etc.

WOMEN ARE NOT IN THE PRIESTHOOD NOR (GENERALLY) THE CLERGY:

where disclosure leads to expulsion.

Since the most common form of discrimination against homosexuality in this country is in employment, it is obvious that women homosexuals are spared from this only by virtue of a vastly greater discrimination. Also, there is nothing to make us believe that if women were afforded these positions to lose that they would not lose them for the same reason that male homosexuals do.

Now, the question of arrestable offenses, which is a less commonly enforced area of dis-

crimination.

WOMEN ARE DISCRIMINATED AGAINST IN THE FORMING OF THE LAW - ALL WOMEN!

While women are the chief victims of sex crimes, most enforced sex laws protect males from solicitation and sexual approach. The most blatant example of this is the prostitute who is arrested and convicted while her customer goes free. In the same vein: straight MEN on the vice squad regularly go undercover trying to entrap women who solicit them. Also, men of the same stamp try to entrap other men into soliciting them. Those people who solicit straight men are subject to arrest and conviction and a considerable effort is put forth by our tax-supported police departments and courts to do this -- while women are regularly subjected to solicitation and verbal abuse, and there is no concentrated effort on the part of the police department to protect her. In fact, if a woman complains about this, the implication is: "what's the matter with her anyway?" Any woman who goes unescorted (and another woman is not considered an escort) past groups of men is the target for all sorts of verbal abuse, yet where are the undercover men on the vice squad making arrests for this? There are none.

Even victims of criminal rape find the humiliating police examination (both the physical examination and the questioning) leave her, in addition to having suffered the most degrading and damaging form of physical abuse, with a feeling of shame and self-blame for somehow having brought it on herself (the woman shouldn't have been where she was, shouldn't have been wearing what she was, shouldn't have been acting the way she was, etc.). So again we find that the discrimination that all women suffer engulfs the homosexual and the heterosexual woman as well; and when the homosexual

male runs affront of the laws which are instituted to protect straight males, he is subject to the same laws which apply to the woman who solicits straight males.

Finally, I would like to examine the remaining arrestable offense: the "cruising of parks and restrooms." While admittedly this is an area where the people arrested are men, this is only because this is an area where the people who do this are men. I am sure that if any pair of women were to perform a sexual act in a public restroom, these women would be arrested as readily as the men are. However, probably because of cultural factors, I know of no women who have been allowed to grow up with such a cavalier attitude toward sex and danger that they would (or could) engage in anything like this, while I do know quite a few men who do. Therefore, it would seem that the discrimination is no greater against the men who are prohibited from this form of behavior by laws, than against the women who are prohibited by culturally imposed phobias.

This letter is being offered as an open-letter editorial to SISTERS because I feel it is necessary that we answer back to the larger publications who prefer to deny our existence. There is a need for each of us to become aware of the non-importance placed on women by the news media, and to respond through letters and comments (which will rarely be printed by the mass media but must be acknowledged by those who receive them).

SISTERS, and other woman-produced publications, are vital to us and to our self-concept as women; and one of its vital functions is to serve as a forum for our gay sisters who are denied a voice in the straight-male dominated publications.

Love and peace to us all
We SHALL Overcome -
Freda Smith

Lagniappe*

They really were about the nicest pair of field boots I'd seen yet. I could tell that Lynda liked the feel of them on her feet. But \$30.00 was a lot of money to us. I wandered around in the tiny store, intrigued with all the styles of cowboy boots on display. Used to call 'em "shit-kickers" back in Tennessee. But all of these were strictly Sunday-go-to-meeting boots. I ambled on until I wandered over to some nice leather vests, and was seriously engaged in copying the pattern in my mind when Lyn said, "Do you like these, Mary? They really are comfortable."

"Yeah, I must admit they are nice -- for field boots. But I still don't see how you could turn down a pair of cowboy boots. Why, look at those lines -- man, it's like the Mercedes Benz of footwear!"

She laughed at my joke. "I know, but these vibram soles are really good up in the mountains -- you can go anywhere."

Then the store-clerk broke in. "Oh, yes. Vibram soles are the thing in country like this. Besides, if you see a nice looking young man go by, you can really dig right in and catch him!"

That long, usual moment of silence; she caught my eye and I caught hers in one movement. "Or another one you want to get away from," I added. "Come on, we haven't got the money today anyhow." We left without the new boots.

"It really is so readily assumed, isn't it?" I opened the car door for her. "But I suppose none of them mean any harm by it. They're just

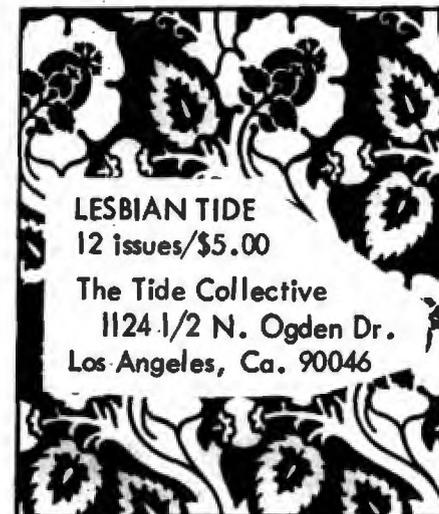
programmed."

The need for men in my life has dwindled to an absolute minimum, less than one, or - namely - none. I don't need any pointers on setting the timing on our VW. I fill out my own tax return. I seem to be capable of getting all my shit together -- at least it all works out for me. And still, I am the worst disease known to MAN (of course); I destroyed Rome and all other great civilizations, and I'm sure I'll eventually inherit the blame for destroying this one as well. I am a child-raper who lurks behind trash cans in dark alleys, waiting to attack anything female, be it cat, dog, or piano bench. I am a Lesbian, and as such cannot be trusted for one moment to repress my driving sexual urges, my violence and need which is, of course, the essence of my foul being. Bullshit.

Some years ago, in Memphis, my dad and I were riding down the street to somewhere. I caught him glancing for more than a moment at a young girl walking down the street. "Do you think she's pretty?" I asked him, with deadly playfulness. "Yes," he replied emphatically. "Why is she pretty to you?" I wanted to know. And he proceeded to tell me all the things about a woman he could think of -- the gentleness of spirit, coupled with a true strength in her heart (often hidden), of her gracefulness, her patience, her sincerity, her so-deep soul. "Do you know," I said, "I feel the very same way. You and I are in perfect agreement."

I had never been able to explain to him until that day why I was a Lesbian. We had spent many, many long hours discussing my perversity, my disease. But when he explained it to himself, no more words were needed. None at all. Now what did I do with that store-clerk?

Mary



ArenaThree
ARENA THREE, BMC/SEAHORSE, LONDON, W.C.1.

APRIL -- 1972



\$700.00

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2 DOB & KPFA	3 Office Open	4	5 RAP YWCA	6	7	8 Dance 2012 Pine St.
9 Soft- ball	10 New Members	11	12 Film YWCA	13	14 Bus.Mtg.	15
16 Brunch	17 Office open	18	19 RAP YWCA	20	21	22
23 Sports Day	24 Open	25	26 RAP YWCA	27	28	29
30 Jam session						

Our Wed. raps are now being held in room 201 of YWCA, 620 Sutter St. There is lots of room. Donations will be taken.

Wed. night raps:

8th - Abortion Coalition, Dance, 8 PM, \$1.00.

5th - Marley, "Home remedies" (bring yours), 7 PM.

12th - FILM "HOLDING", the film of a Lesbian relationship, will be shown, 50¢ donation, 7 PM.

19th - Karen & Linda on "Totally Woman"- 7 PM

26th - WRITE YOUR OWN PLAY AND BRING THEM ALONG, we'll try to act them out with a view to using your ideas on KPFA FM show.

Monday nights: The office will be open to all women from 7 to 9 PM. Monday the 10th will be ORIENTATION for all new members and friends with coffee and good vibes. Come find out about DOB and meet new friends.

9th - Softball season begins. Bring equipment. Call DOB for place. 2 PM

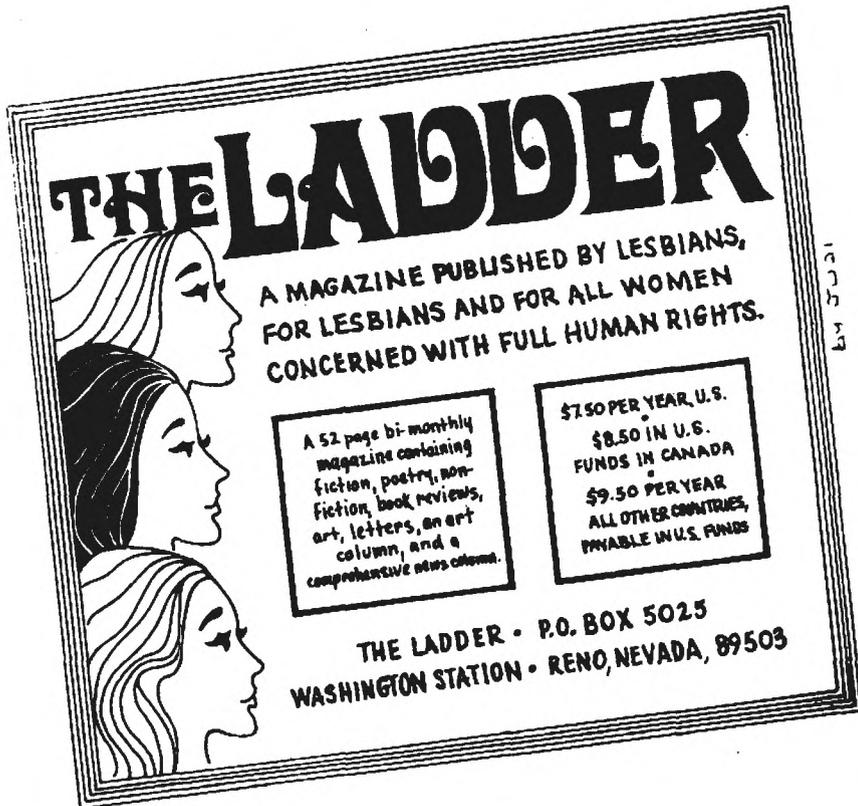
14th - Business meeting, open to all women, 8 PM, DOB office.

16th - Brunch at 310 Irving (N Judah), 12 noon, \$1.00. Afterwards, Beth Elliott will talk about transsexualism for those interested.

23rd - Sports Day--bring lunch, footballs, sacks, frisbees, etc. Meet at DOB office AT 9:00 AM SHARP for directions. Call DOB for rides.

30th - Jam session at 3428 26th St., Charleen and Linda's. Bring instruments.

EVENTS



THE LADDER

A MAGAZINE PUBLISHED BY LESBIANS,
FOR LESBIANS AND FOR ALL WOMEN
CONCERNED WITH FULL HUMAN RIGHTS.

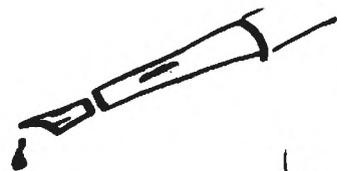
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by wells

An extraordinary article appears in the Feb./ March issue of THE LADDER. It seems so well to fit into the growing sense of awareness we women are beginning to feel that I cannot let it pass without sharing some of it with you.

Hope Thompson's article, "Sex and Sexuality," on page 4 of this latest issue of THE LADDER began as a review of Love Between Women, by Dr. Charlotte Wolff (available through St. Martin's Press, N.Y., 1971). Ms. Wolff is a psychiatrist and this book is the first attempt by a psychiatrist to devote an entire book to the study of Lesbianism. Because the book is an enigmatic one, full of contradictions and logical conclusions left unconcluded, Hope is prompted to a full 13 pages of well-thought out ideas which, taken with a bit of healthy Lesbian chauvinism, are rather earth-shaking. This review has hardly the space to give the attention this article deserves, so suffice it that I give a taste of Hope's logic in the hope that you will order this issue from THE LADDER and devour it yourself. I cannot over-stress the importance of her thinking.

Hope argues initially that she, as a Lesbian, has as much right as Dr. Freud to slant statistics and observations to reach conclusions. Freud concluded that women have "vaginal orgasms" and "penis envy." Of course, Freud was a man, and his conclusions about the vaginal orgasm are obviously designed to prove that women must have a man to achieve sexual satisfaction. Hope argues, however, that sexual activities as defined by men are procreative, male-ego oriented, and that a Lesbian's relationship to sexuality is quite different -- it is hardly a procreative

urge, but more a communicative urge, a love urge. This puts sex into a larger perspective and casts some doubts upon the male-defined "purpose" of sexual intercourse. Hope broadens the perspective even further by suggesting that Lesbian sexuality is more properly defined as general sensuality, not orgasm-oriented, necessarily. This gives women an edge, according to Hope's slant, on humanness. Women don't rape. Men do. For men, sex seems more to be a "release of tension" than an expression. Many male scientists, etc., have used these words to describe male orgasm. The male of the human species is the only male in nature who can rape a female. From whence comes this phenomenon? Hope has some more ideas.

When humans first became a viable being, men hunted the wilderness for food. Women had babies. Since nothing was known of human reproduction, men assumed that women had some sort of magic which enabled them to reproduce not only female children but male children as well. Typical of the male of the species, the men began to react to this mystery with force, making sure that the women were not left alone to capitalize upon this magic. Somewhere along the way, males discovered the greatest device they could use to control women's magic -- they found that it took sperm to make babies, sperm that came from their penises. They began to extol the penis as the magic, putting women under them at every opportunity, separating them from other women to minimize the chances of women uniting against them. Since women have never seemed to be particularly rapacious, but rather nurturing, they put up with the male trips to insure the comfort of the children for the perpetuation of the species. (If child-rearing had been left to the men, hardly a one would have survived. They would have been subjected to the worst kinds of situations -- killing animals, other men, etc. Women seem to have preserved, from the very earliest, humanity.)

It would seem that in the early eons of the human race, men and women spent little time with each other, the business of food-gathering and child-rearing being separate tasks for men and women. What would be the natural result of such segregation? Hope feels that at the beginning men and women were naturally homosexual, letting their love impulses flower among those with whom they spent their time. It is interesting that Dr. Wolff in her book concludes that women are naturally Lesbian. From her studies of Lesbians, she feels women are more naturally able to express their feelings to another woman rather than to a man. Dr. Wolff feels that the barriers between men and women are hard to surmount and that the logical release for a woman, given the generalized nature of her sexuality, would be with another woman. So here we have a startling idea: Are women naturally Lesbian? It would appear from Hope's logic that early women were. It would appear from Dr. Wolff's conclusions that it is far simpler for women to relate to other women.

If, when men discovered that their penises had something to do with babies, they chose to isolate women from other women by moving into "family dwellings" where there was one woman and babies and him, what did they do with their natural homosexuality? Hope feels that men developed "clubs" where women were not allowed, where men could release their longings to be with other men. Their "sexual tension" could be released at home with the women, with the delightful result at times of a child, the perpetuation of the MALE and his ego. There were, of course, no comparable "clubs" for women. Women, desiring only to nurture, not rape and destroy, bent to the ego of the man. Women had less of the need to express their "sexual tensions," if indeed women have such a need. Hence, the patriarchal society we now suffocate in.

If women were at any time in HIStory allowed to mingle with each other, the results would be disasterous to the patriarchal society -- women did and do most of the menial labor for free. If they refused, the society would collapse. Today, we see the women's liberation movement as the beginning of women beginning to talk to each other. The logical result of women being together without the male is love, expressed at its deepest by Lesbianism.

I recently had a conversation with a Lesbian over the phone. We discussed the fact that we could not see each other, only hear each other. It occurred to both of us that the phone system is a male invention, designed to keep people apart from one another by wires. If women were to "get it together," this woman felt, then we wouldn't need such devices to communicate. We would simply astro-project ourselves into the presence of another. Admittedly a far-out idea. But consider that women have a connection to the very elements of life: birth. We are the nurturers. Could it also be that we are closer to the psychic than are men, busy trying to build huge cocks to get the the moon (the ultimate machine rape)? We women simply do not know our potentials for communication. We have been kept from intimate communication for eons.

Hope argues convincingly that heterosexuality is really abnormal, that its major purpose is to keep women pregnant and at home, and that men, too, would be much happier relating to their own kind, but their fears of us prevent their allowing this segregation to happen. Then women would simply take over, being superior beings really.

Hope also argues that the natural state of woman is to be monogamously mated to another woman. She feels that the idea of several partners or serial monogamy is a male idea, designed, again, to keep us fragmented, away

from the secrets of our own powers. I must take some issue with this, even though I feel monogamous myself, at least most of the time. I feel quite strongly that at this particular moment of women's time, the need to relate to other women is strong. Indeed, the Lesbian movement will die without freer communication between Lesbians. We run the risk, if we are totally monogamous, of "dropping out," of losing intimate communication with other women. We become ingrown rather than out-going. At least this is the tendency. Lesbian relationships are intense and demanding. We all have a long way to go with our lovers to reach that mutual place of psychic communication. But we learn best only by trial and error. Not a one of us is so sure of ourselves and our identities as WOMEN that we can choose ONE woman with whom to build strength. That seems to me to be a cop-out from relating on the intense, caring level we women must reach with many other women. Monogamy seems to me to be a male trip; it is limiting; it is used by Bible-belters to insure the patriarchal society's survival. At any rate, the question of to whom we relate is purely personal, hardly open to speculation until we women know much more about ourselves and our abilities to love other women.

To obtain this issue of THE LADDER, write P.O. Box 5025 Washington Station, Reno, Nevada 89503, and specify the Feb/March issue. \$1.25. (The DOB office has copies of this article which may be read during office hours.)

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ANNOUNCEMENT

DOB ON THE AIR! KPFA FM/ 94, has given DOB one Sunday per month from 6 PM to 6:30 PM. Our program begins April 2nd. Our next one is April 30th. Don't miss it, and if you are interested in appearing, call Karen, 9 am to 11 am, Mon. thru Fri. at DOB. OPEN TO ALL LESBIAN VIEWPOINTS. We need yours.

ATTENTION



Danielle

READERS' RESPONSE

Dear Editor:

Enclosed find:

- 1) A check for a year's subscription to SISTERS.
- 2) A response to your research project.
- 3) An open letter to LIFE Magazine, which I am submitting for consideration as a guest editorial.

I enjoyed my visit to San Francisco, and look forward to visiting with everyone from D.O.B. the next time I get to San Francisco.

Sacramento is in a mad political whirl...and will be until after the primaries are over. I guess San Francisco is somewhat the same. If you need any information about anything in Sacramento, anytime, be sure to get in touch with me ...and I'll cover it for you.

Love and Peace,
Freda Smith

P.S. Sacramento State College is offering a course in Homosexuality (in the Psych Dept.) and also a course in Lesbianism in the Honors Dept. We have an hour news broadcast once a week on radio KERS for women's news...which I am co-ordinating so it will cover Lesbianism... and to top it all off, we are getting a half-hour on Monday evenings to cover gay news. This should be a great year for consciousness raising in Sacramento. Who knows...maybe we can get D.O.B. going here.

Dear Friends (Karen in particular!):

Karen! You're doing a terrific job! I know you have lots of great help and we bless you and all of the other gals for doing such a wonderful job in helping to bring the "light" to so many.

I don't know if you realize how much you are doing for so many -- but we do know you are blessed in your efforts!

I've an "ax to grind" -- in a sense, this: Maybe it's because we are positive thinkers (or Barb is learning to be), or maybe it's because we do our job thoroughly, without waiting for the other guy (or gal) to pull his (or her) share, but we do not feel the discrimination that seems to be so pointed out with our readings or learnings of others.

Barb and I work with the mentally retarded (for six years with the smarter ambulatory and now with the multiple handicapped that need complete care) and though we've worked with all kinds of folk -- both the dedicated and those who are just there for the paycheck -- we just go ahead and do "our thing" -- what feels best to us. We get rapport with our co-workers, horse around with them, etc., but we still (probably because we do have rapport with them) go ahead and do the best we can in the situations we are in. By being positive we can show more and in the end get those others to help more, just by example! It's as simple as that!

I'm sure many, or most, of our friends at work know what we are. But it just doesn't matter because, really, we're all there for this one reason -- the patient! And little by little, our friends are getting to realize this, too, though really they always knew it.

From time to time we have heard talk about "what we are" by folks who dislike us for one reason or another (someone's toes we stepped on),

but somehow it goes over or around us and it just doesn't seem to matter. No matter what you are -- or do -- talk gets around about anyone, anyway (who's married to who and why, or who's running around with who, etc., etc.) so what's the difference?

We, all of us, have to live with ourselves. So we have to do what feels best for ourselves! Guess that's selfish, really, but that's what it amounts to. We're not all yet up to this sort of dedication! But we'll get there.

Love,

Kathe



Dear Editor:

...May I reply to the "Guest Editorial" by Anonymous? Regardless of what she advocates, there will always remain a distinct difference between male and female, etc. We can't be labeled neuter because that doesn't do justice to us either. We must have language, written and spoken, in order to communicate. If we cannot communicate, there will be no real human experience. If we are unable to identify and differentiate each other, we become non-entities. Granted, our vocabulary is lacking proper expression, but let's not toss out the baby along with the bathwater. I am happy to be a female, such as it might be. I prefer to be a woman as opposed to being a man. Most of all, I am proud to be a Lesbian, and may it always remain capitalized, because that word is very special, very personal, and very definitive. Lesbian says that I have the ability and the intelligence to choose my own course and reach my own destiny as other proud Lesbians have done for thousands of years. This word denotes a freedom within myself to be what I uniquely am, yet it also obligates me to free other women to be Lesbians when they so desire. If I were a hippie or a commie or a Republican, I would be proud to be called a hippie or a commie or a Republican. If we have no pride or satisfaction or self-respect in what we are, then we don't deserve to be and shouldn't be. If SISTERS or THE LADDER were not designated as gay women's liberation magazines, I would not subscribe to them. Adjectives and nouns are important and necessary if we are to be free to make a choice. No one likes to be called "hey, you" and no Lesbian enjoys being tagged an "it."

I have never let myself be placed in a box without being aware of what I was getting into, and if the box fits, I wear it. Perhaps someday we will overcome our shame and our pretense, and then we will teach the world that female, woman, and Lesbian are words worthy of the wearers.

A. J. Leeson



Juoi

To O and S:

In response to the sketch by O and S in this last issue, I am struck by the inconsistency of the ideas presented. Mostly because I, too, am in a similar situation, that of trying to reconcile my responsibilities in a heterosexual marriage and a growing love relationship with another woman. This is a problem with which I have grappled for the past two years. My friend and I have an intense emotional and spiritual affinity; the physical attraction has never been resolved, but perhaps this has no bearing on the problem.

You say that "we seem trapped by the security our husbands represent;" but aren't you also placing yourself in a psychologically very unstable situation? Knowing that you are now playing and must continue to play games with your husband must produce tremendous guilt feelings. These guilt feelings are a burden which will get heavier with time. Each year you and he will have invested much of your energies into a marriage which is a sham. You say your husband doesn't know; but YOU know and you will suffer for the wasted years your husband, as well as you, have put into your marriage. It is his marriage, too! These are some things I asked and told myself about my own marriage. Is it healthy to perpetuate such a marriage? I think not.

I left my husband six years ago, but unhappily returned to him. At the time I was unaware of DOB and the moral support which could be had from such an organization. Instead, I repeated the same hopeless pattern of trying desperately to adjust by dating men. My young daughter needed her father, I told myself. The return was essentially an act of resignation and defeat. It pains me to think about that year I passed DOB's office every day while traveling to work. A bit wiser now, I am preparing to become financially independent enough so that I can care for my (now) two daughters as well as myself.

G.

To the Editor:

I'm assuming that April Sisters will be carrying news of Denver DOB's demise. I would like to share my reaction to this with you and your subscribers.

My first reaction to Stuber's decision was, "Oh no. She can't." I had been preparing my way to Denver and involvement in that chapter. She had no right, it seemed. It was as though she were closing the door to my freedom. I'm wondering now if that is the response of a number of women who have sought out Stuber and Denver DOB. To all those who may feel as I did, let me ask you what right have we to make these demands of a single individual? Why can't we open our homes and hearts? Haven't we learned anything? Unquestionably that first contact is vital. But having made that contact, how long do we drain the source without replenishing it? Prayers and good wishes are not enough.

If position, family or insolvency are our excuses, fine. They are real enough, but are they good enough?

To all of you who have come to know that you are not alone, that someone cares and that there are alternatives to living in fear, I suggest it is your responsibility (not Stuber's or even DOB's) to make some decisions for your life, just as Stuber has done with hers.

I don't wish to make a defense for Stuber. I think she can take care of herself. I do want to say that I don't believe she has "sold out" politically. In fact, if her decision does not have a positive effect eventually, I will be surprised and of course disappointed. It is my belief that the struggle for freedom does not rest with a few people. That responsibility is an individual concern and while I recognize the power of a collective struggle,

I do not recognize the legitimacy of blind dependency. The need to reach people, to be available to people, is with us, of course. But with whom? Stuber? Wells? A handful of women in California? Many of us have had our round with mother-lover-analyst relationships. Isn't it time to grow up?

Incredible as it may seem, opportunities exist even in North Dakota for those who wish to make a contribution to their lives, first, and then to others. Granted, these opportunities do not come easy, but they are here. Take a good look at your part of the country after taking a good look at yourself.

My knowledge of the Denver DOB chapter is limited. I do feel, however, that I have addressed myself to a very significant part of the problem...you and me.

Please know that I have dealt with myself in similar terms and that I submit this with love.

Linda Funk
Fargo, North Dakota

* * * *

NOTE: Denver DOB depended, as all young chapters do, upon the good will and energy of one woman. Mary Stuber gave her all to the women coming into Denver. She received little in return but an occasional thanks. She was overwhelmed with the problems of others, leaving her little time for for her own life. Linda's letter speaks to the unfortunate problem of one person's giving too much with nothing in return.

Think on't--will our movement die because we are too selfish to give and can only take?



aries

...the
RAM...

MARCH 21-APRIL 20

She wants what she wants When she wants it.... this means YOU!

MARS RULES

When - what a
temper!
What a task-mistress!

You can't seduce her, change her mind, prove her wrong, or stand in her way. Admire, desire her FIRE!

She dies the bright & witty - dazzle her! frazzle her - and she's yours.

She loves variety - unless you keep her guessing.

Heaviest sky - head in the relax. She needs to that & she's yours forever.

FIRE

Is this an Aries?



..... COMING NEXT MONTH

Part one of a profile series of Lesbians by
Linda Wesley

In Millbrae, California, there resides a household with five Lesbians who have a strong sense of community among themselves, but find that they do feel isolated and are trying to extend themselves outward. They are warm and gentle women with a tender respect for their household as a collective unit and for each other.

J.P., age 21, Gemini
Marianne, age 22, Capricorn
Chris, age 23, Libra
Lorraine, age 23, Scorpio
Joan, age 24, Vrigo

"How did you five end up here together?"

Joan: "We originally started out with me and Marianne who were moving out from jobs and parents and J.P. who was transferred here because of her job. So the three of us got this place together, then Lorraine got into it and met Chris."

"How long have you been together?"

Lorraine: "We have been together as a commune for, well, nearly two years now."

Joan: "We have often stopped and wondered how have we lived together for so long."

See May's issue for "the secrets".....

ALSO IN MAY, SOME INFORMATION ON TRANSSEXUALS,
THE REAPPEARANCE OF THE POETRY PAGE,
AND ???

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