purpose of the
Daughters of BILITIS

A WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROMOTING THE INTEGRATION OF THE HOMOSEXUAL INTO SOCIETY BY:

1. Education of the variant, with particular emphasis on the psychological, physiological and sociological aspects, to enable her to understand herself and make her adjustment to society in all its social, civic and economic implications—this to be accomplished by establishing and maintaining as complete a library as possible of both fiction and non-fiction literature on the sex deviant theme; by sponsoring public discussions on pertinent subjects to be conducted by leading members of the legal, psychiatric, religious and other professions; by advocating a mode of behavior and dress acceptable to society.

2. Education of the public at large through acceptance first of the individual, leading to an eventual breakdown of erroneous taboos and prejudices; through public discussion meetings aforesaid; through dissemination of educational literature on the homosexual theme.

3. Participation in research projects by duly authorized and responsible psychologists, sociologists and other such experts directed towards further knowledge of the homosexual.

4. Investigation of the penal code as it pertains to the homosexual, proposal of changes to provide an equitable handling of cases involving this minority group, and promotion of these changes through due process of law in the state legislatures.

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CONTENTS

A Brief of Injustices.................................................................4
"Where Late the Sweet Bird Sang"—by Jody Shotwell........8
Homosexual Voting Bloc Puts Pizzazz in Politics.............13
Interview with Jean.................................................................15
Readers Respond.................................................................26

Front cover: "Portrait of Jean" (see "Interview with Jean", page 15). Photo by courtesy of SANDY.

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A BRIEF OF INJUSTICES

Release of a hard-hitting BRIEF OF INJUSTICES - "an indictment of our society in its treatment of the homosexual" - put San Francisco's Council on Religion and the Homosexual in the news in late September. The CRH is a group of clergymen and laymen which aims to promote a continuing dialogue between the church and homosexuals. Its BRIEF is an impressive document which pinpoints and describes ten major injustices stemming from oppression and harassment of homosexuals and their sympathizers.

The BRIEF was sent to Mayor Shelley's Human Rights Commission, to all candidates in the current city election, and to a number of officials, clergymen, and other influential persons.

In a story beginning on page one and taking nearly 30 column inches, the San Francisco Chronicle for Sept. 25 said that the BRIEF "damns public attitudes toward homosexuals and 'unenforceable laws' affecting them - but it is most truculent in dealing with the police." Discriminatory treatment by police has long been a prime grievance of San Francisco homosexuals.

Police Chief Thomas Cahill, according to the Chronicle, "said he didn't know what the ministers were talking about. He said charges that homosexuals are 'utterly false.' ... He said homosexuals are 'a segment of the population that requires constant policing.'"

The encouragement felt by the homosexual community as a result of wide publicity given the BRIEF, changed abruptly to shock and indignation when word came that the Rev. Canon Robert W. Cromey, one of the prominent signers of the BRIEF, had just had his duties in the Episcopal Church sharply curtailed.

Canon Cromey, a Trustee of the CRH and an outspoken supporter of the homosexual movement in San Francisco, held an important position as diocesan director of urban affairs. His post, according to a spokesman for the diocesan council, had not been eliminated but was dropped to sixth place in priority in the budgeting and made subject to further review in mid-December.

Supporters of Canon Cromey felt that the diocesan council's cutback of his job was tantamount to getting rid of him.

Thirty picketers, including leaders of San Francisco homophile organizations, turned up at Grace Cathedral, the masterpiece of the Episcopal Diocese of California, as worshippers arrived for services on Sunday morning September 26. Signs carried by the demonstrators protested the "removal of Bob Cromey."

Stories on the council's decision and the picketing appeared in the Chronicle and the Examiner on Sept. 27. The Chronicle reported that Rev. Cromey indicated "some Episcopal leaders... felt his ardent championing of homosexual equality was 'going against the teachings of God'." The Examiner quoted the canon as saying that the diocesan council's action "was not 'primarily to move me out, but I feel they did have a sense of relief when they once saw a gentlemanly way to get rid of me'." He added that he would continue to work for social justice as an individual. commenting on the picketing, he said, "I appreciated this show of concern and support for me personally!"

Suffragan Bishop G. Richard Millard was quoted by the Chronicle as saying: "'Nobody's trying to eliminate Bob (Cromey). Like any of the other 200 clergymen in the diocese, he is perfectly free to speak out on social issues.'"

While the demonstration was taking place at Grace Cathedral, an audience in New York, attending the annual conference of East Coast Homophile Organizations, heard the news from Bill Beardemphl, president of a San Francisco homosexual group known as SIR (Society for Individual Rights). When he announced he had learned by phone that homosexuals in San Francisco were "picketing at this very minute" to protest apparent discrimination against Canon Cromey, there was resounding applause from those members and friends of eastern homophile groups who favor picketing as a strategy to call attention to injustices.

For other developments affecting homosexuals in San Francisco, see page 13 of this LADDER issue. The following paragraphs are from the concluding pages of A BRIEF OF INJUSTICES, one of whose signers was the Rev. Canon Robert W. Cromey.

"As ministers, we are discouraged when we realize that some of these social problems (relating to homosexuals) stem in part from misconceptions about theology and the interpretation of the Bible. The churches cannot escape their own participation in the perpetuation of these injustices. Selection of scriptural references, for example, contributes to the attitudes of parishioners. One may read the Ten Commandments, wherein homosexuality is not mentioned at all, or one may use the oft-quoted Sodom and Gomorrah passage to justify the extermination of all homosexual behavior.

"We as churchmen cannot separate ourselves from our participation in the society which now perpetrates the injustices which we have described. At the same time we want to align ourselves with the causes which uphold the rights of persons, and against institutions which treat any person as less than a human and a child of God."

"In drawing up this Brief of Injustices we feel we are helping to expose a pattern of social, legal and economic oppression of a minority group, based not on fact and scientific analysis but rather on taboo and fear. No amount of condemnation, intimidation or incarceration in penal or mental institutions
can alter the fact that a large minority of American citizens has, according to existing laws, at least upon occasion been guilty of committing homosexual acts. Further, the unreasonable discrimination against homosexuals is demonstrated by the existence of a vast schism between the actual sexual activities of the entire population and those theoretically ideal standards which legal codes seek to uphold. Thus, that a few are caught and punished is even more reprehensible.

"In sexual matters the law should be concerned with the protection of youth and the guarding of the public against force or predatory conduct. Other sexual behavior should be rooted in personal liberty and should be legally protected. Closely related, the right to peacefully meet in places open to the public is no more than the right of assembly granted to all citizens and should not be denied to the homosexual.

"It seems to us the first duty of the police is to prevent crime, not to provoke it for the sole purpose of its prosecution and punishment. Surely the utilization of plainclothesmen to try to induce citizens to perform homosexual acts for the purpose of arresting them is neither the best use of our police force nor an act of public justice.

"We also believe that Americans should reject any custom or law which would make public authority the judge of private, personal moral convictions. Certainly such an authority should not permit a civil right to be whittled away indirectly any more than it should allow it to be destroyed directly.

"We feel that the test of a democratic society is in the extent to which it suppresses individual thought and action. For some time there has been a demand for regulation of every aspect of human behavior and the repression of more and more conduct that is supposedly different from the so-called norm. This in itself is an expression of a growing tendency to employ broad standards and vaguely worded laws which seem to equate sin with crime, and which are used by the police to scoop up possible violators as they see fit.

"The excessive concern of some Americans over what are essentially areas of personal expression in sexual behavior, exercised between adults in private, can result in our becoming a nation of professional snoopers and privacy invaders, a society of voyeurs seeking to expose the scandals and defects in others which we refuse to recognize in ourselves. Laws based on such whims are a step backward. Such tendencies are diametrically opposed to the principles of equality we profess to maintain, reducing suspected homosexuals to the status of second grade citizens and inferior human beings. In addition, it is our firm belief that any law which is unenforceable is worse than no law at all.

"Besides the violations of civil and human rights which these injustices imply, there are issues which reflect concern for human tragedy and waste of potential contributions to the growth of our society. The expenditure of public monies on witch hunts is only the smallest part of such waste. Greater losses occur in the reduced capacity of the individual to produce either for himself or for his society. The dispersal of energies in countless small, yet terrible tragedies, seems unnecessary.

"We feel the chief goal in dealing with homosexuals should not be to try to reorient their sexual propensities through punishment and intimidation but rather to help them attain a satisfactory self-image and a meaningful relationship to society. Indeed, no one should be forced to suffer in silence or live in fear.

"We believe that the only sensible criteria for judging human relationships are the maturity, necessity and justice inherent in each relationship. Social and legal justice is essential. Society must not suffer from cheap harassment perpetrated in the name of virtue when, in fact, it is a terrible vice.

"Reacting to these pressures, the persecuted minority is forced into ghetto-like in-groupisms and secrecy which lead the homosexual to perpetrate on himself insults and degradations far beyond those imposed by the oppressive and hostile society in which he lives. So the homosexual is forced to perpetrate the last great injustice upon himself, that of failing to realize the best in himself and his part in cultivating the best in his society.

"We of The Council on Religion and the Homosexual must find ways to establish communication between the homosexual and his society. Our work is not aided by police who harass us, by politicians who are fearful of talking with us, by segments of the press which prefer either sensationalism or silence, by portions of the religious community which prefer to condemn rather than to understand, and by homosexuals who reject any effort to approach them.

"Fear will never set man free, and fear itself is perhaps the greatest obstacle which man must overcome. In our efforts to become free men we must be guided by the central ethical command of our Judeo-Christian tradition: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.'

"Signed by the Board of Trustees of The Council on Religion and the Homosexual, Inc., June 1965: the Rev. Ted McIlvenna, President; Mr. Donald S. Lucas, Vice-President; Mrs. Del Martin, Secretary; Mr. Robert Walker, Treasurer; Mr. William Beardsmephil; Mr. Harold L. Call; the Rev. Dr. Clarence A. Colwell; the Rev. Canon Robert W. Cromey; Mr. Mark Forrester; Mr. Darryl Gled; Miss Phyllis Leon; the Rev. Charles Lewis; the Rev. Jan Marinissen; Mr. Guy Strait; the Rev. A. Cecil Williams."

A slightly modified copy of the text of A BRIEF OF INJUSTICES can be obtained for 10 cents from: The Society for Individual Rights, P. O. Box 5526, San Francisco, California.
“Where Late the Sweet Bird Sang” —by Jody Shotwell

Emily came out of the station braced for the assault of autumn in Manhattan. She was met, instead, with sheer delight, with an embrace.

It was more than she had hoped for. She had stayed away for time enough to reconstruct herself, to become whole again and free against the onslaught of intolerable memories.

Just once before, since Alexis went away, she had come and been sickened by the phantoms with their prodding fingers; tantalized by mirages that turned every slender girl she glimpsed into the shape of Alec. She hadn't come again until today.

She walked, feeling love for passersby and warm October air. She felt tall and lithe and very young, and ... giggled inwardly at the deception that drew admiring eyes. What she was experiencing was a beatitude, an attribute of peace, not of intoxication. Yet, at this moment, she felt intoxicated in, you might say, a non-toxic way. Its opposite was quietude, and that too would be welcome when it returned.

Her heels tapped the sidewalk and she had to restrain her stride to accustomate the slim skirt of her black sheath dress. Moira’s party was at five. She had an hour for the long and lovely walk.

Coming at last to Washington Square, the most haunted ground, perhaps, of all, she found a bench and sat down. Her feet ached, but not, this time, her heart. They had been here in the mornings and in the afternoons and evenings, too. They had sketched or just walked through, or simply sat and watched. She sat here now and thought of it with a pleasure that was far more than mere absence of pain. "To think I had that!" And what, for this year, she had recalled with grief, she now felt with a new perceptiveness—a widened eye.

About the Author: JODY SHOTWELL, native of Philadelphia, is still engaged in a lifelong love affair with her city. "New York is the fascinating other woman in my life," she says. "Seductive but too overwhelming." Mrs. Shotwell has written short stories and poetry for THE LADDER and ONE Magazine for a number of years. She has recently completed a novel.
Their group had wandered out onto the tiny terrace and they followed.

"Look," Ralph was saying, "I can see Campbell's soup cans any time I open my kitchen cupboard. I'll be damned if I want a picture of one hanging on my wall."

"It's not all soup cans," someone else said.

"No, some of it's Aunt Tillie's old bed-springs," Jason contributed in his best rasp.

"My dear, what's happened to your dress!" the woman called Sylvia said to Emily. Emily glanced with dismay at the front of her dress where half of her marini was just seeping through.

"I guess pushing through that mob..." she said, laughing a little.

"Here!" Emily looked up and the girl Claudia was there, offering her a somewhat crumpled tissue. "Will this help?"

"Oh, bless you...yes, I left my purse somewhere..." She mopped at herself half-heartedly. "Well, it will dry."

"Let me get you a fresh drink," Claudia whispered. Her eyes, her awed expression, were disconcerting.

"No!" sharply. Then, "No, thank you. This will hold me for a while." Emily turned slightly away from the girl and tried to listen to the long-haired blonde in sandals who was speaking.

"—means something different now. It arouses more than just contemplation."

"What more?" Emily asked, almost desperately, needing to involve herself away from Claudia, standing so close.

"Well, a challenge, maybe. You can hate it, or laugh at it... but at least you feel something..."

"A hot-foot for the Jaded," Jason inserted, just as Emily was about to make a reply of her own. Instead, she drained her glass and looked about for a place to set it down. Immediately, Claudia reached for it.

"Let me get you another," she said. "You hardly had any of this." She bounded away.

"Who is that?" Ralph asked. "Did you bring your water-boy with you, darling?"

"I've been wanting a drink for hours," Sylvia said plaintively. "Nobody waits on me!"

"Get your own slavey, sweetie," Jason remarked. "This one's obviously consecrated to Emily."

"I don't even know her!" Emily said, trying to smile. But she felt strange and almost panicky. She shouldn't have come. Conquering ghosts was one thing, but perhaps she wasn't prepared yet against the invasion of real, live people.

Claudia reappeared with a brimming glass. She offered it like a supplicant, her young eyes (so like Alexi's) worshipful. Emily muttered her thanks.

"Miss Taggert," the girl said, "I know I'm going to sound like a fan club or something. But I just wanted to tell you - I've read your poetry and things and I..." Her voice trailed off and she flushed.

"Yes?" Emily said, knowing what was coming. For so it had begun with Alexi. Would you read my things, she had pleaded. Would you tell me if I can write at all? No, no, she thought. It can't happen again!

"I write poetry, too," Claudia said, "and I..."

"Excuse me. I must see Moira." And Emily brushed past the girl and went blindly through the crowd in the living room. She saw Moira in one corner but she pushed her way past and fled to the bathroom down the hall, still holding on to her drink.

Oh, it was cruel, she thought. Possibly one of the most unkind things she'd ever done. But terribly, terribly necessary. If only the girl weren't so much like Alexi. If only, she told herself, crumbling now, she was really as strong as she thought she was. As free.

She patted at her face with a damp cloth. "I've got to go out there again," she whispered. "I've got to." She poured the martini into the sink. She would need every faculty.

Moira was waiting outside the bathroom door. "There you are! Baby, let's go into the studio. You haven't seen my latest things."

She should have been relieved. Alone with her old friend, the door closed against intrusion, she exclaimed and admired as Moira brought out the woodcuts and lithographs. But adoring young eyes kept coming between her and Moira's work, and she wondered how those eyes had looked after she walked away. Hurt, perhaps even tearful? It wasn't fair. Claudia wasn't Alexi. She was blameless, young, sensitive. Suddenly, Emily felt urgent. She had to see the child again - if only to smile at her, to be kind.

"Moira, forgive me," she said. "I left my purse out on the terrace. There's a pill I have to take, right now." It wasn't true, but they left the room together and Emily went straight to the terrace. Claudia wasn't there. The others had gone in and she returned to the living room, her eyes searching the clusters of guests. She looked into the kitchen
and then, despairingly, into Moira's bedroom. The girl was
gone. Jason approached her as she re-entered the living room.

"Where've you been, princess?" he asked. "I thought for a
minute you'd taken off with the pixie-child."

"Never fear," Emily replied. "This isn't my season for
pixies."

Not this season, nor any season. She was sage - and maybe in
a little while she would be glad of it. But at the moment
there was a bitter taste in her smiling mouth,

"Come fix me one of your extra-special dries, will you, darling," she said.

RAIN

Moonlight, pine-scent,
shrieking of frogs --
against these there is armor:
memory of glad nights
not along...

Seeing you day by day
given over to another,
knowing you night by night
in the arms of another --
against this there is armor:
proud smile
and no thinking at all...

But to wake in rain --
wake from leaning to your lips
(ah, do not shrink --
ever, never, even in dream
I reach your lips) --
wake and lie alone with the vast lonely
weeping of windy rain...

This is betrayal,
sudden helpless,
to the long yearning curve
of your lovely throat,
the offered flower-softness of your face --
haunting ecstasy in your eyes --
the whole terrible wild tenderness of you
wanting love.

And you tonight
hers utterly...

Oh God, how long
is it going to rain?

- Abigail Sanford

Homosexual Voting Bloc
Puts Pizzazz in Politics

The strong interest in local politics being shown by San Fran-
cisco's homosexual community is no accident. It is the direct
result of intensive work by well-organized groups in the city,
particularly the Council on Religion and the Homosexual, Mat-
tache Society, Daughters of Bilitis, the Tavern Guild, Soci-
ety for Individual Rights, and the newspaper Citizens News.

Attention is currently focused on the municipal election in
November. Voter registration of homosexual citizens has been
vigorously promoted in an effort to bring to bear on the elec-
tion a homosexual voting bloc of significant size.

Two open meetings are being held, to which the candidates for
the city posts of supervisor have been invited to express
their views, especially on topics of concern to homosexuals.

The first meeting, sponsored by CRH at the suggestion of the
DOB chapter in San Francisco, was held on September 21. More
than 250 Bay Area homosexuals and supporters of their cause
jammed the hall at Glide Memorial Methodist Church. Five of
the fourteen candidates invited (the other six candidates had
filed too late to be asked to this meeting) appeared.

Only one of the five who came is an incumbent. This candidate,
Jack Morrison, won the house by declaring "I'm for a civilian
police review board." S. F. Police Chief Cahill opposes such
a board. Police harassment of homosexuals is a major com-
plaint of San Francisco's homosexual community. Morrison also
gave the right answer when asked by an audience member, "Will
you be willing to listen to homosexuals?" "Yes," he said. In
other remarks, he pointed out that he is the only city super-
visor who has consistently opposed the use of police dogs.

In a write-up of this open meeting, the San Francisco Chron-
icle called former newspaperman Morrison "the bravest of all
incumbent supervisors seeking re-election."

Another candidate, attorney Robert Gonzales, told the assembly
he supports the Citizens Alert now being planned (see below)
and favors an expanded police commission that would include
members of minority groups. But "if these don't help in the
area of less police harassment, brutality, and malpractice,
then a citizens review board is the next step," he said.

E. Robert Scrofani was critical of the homosexual New Year's
Ball - "Society is not ready for this," he maintained - but he
declared himself in favor of minority pressure groups and an expanded police commission and said that if elected he would be receptive to all organizations and citizens with grievances.

Dorothy Shinder is campaigning particularly for tax relief for single persons - a legal matter of interest to homosexuals.

Donald Morgan told the meeting he aims to restore respect for law and order, keep neighborhood school patterns, halt freeway construction and abolish personal property and inventory taxes.

While homosexual voter sentiment leans toward Morrison and Gonzales, most San Francisco homosexuals are maintaining a cautious attitude about the candidates and are waiting to see which ones will come to the second open meeting, being sponsored by SIR on October 20 - and to hear what they will say.

Meanwhile, the homophile groups are cooperating with other Bay Area organizations in plans to establish a CITIZENS ALERT, an agency to provide complete services around the clock to assist in time of need those citizens who suffer from harassment of any minority group, from police brutality, or from unequal enforcement of the law.

Elsewhere in the nation, similar concern for police tactics was expressed by a panel at the September 15 meeting of New York Matchline Society, discussing the topic: "Police Abuse of Homosexuals - A Civilian Review Board Needed?"

Those interested in the subject should read Herbert Packer's "Policing the Police" in the Sept. 4 NEW REPUBLIC. In his article, Packer notes: "The main source of hostility to police among minority groups is the helpless frustration engendered by the current knowledge that, whatever the police do, there is no way in which they can be called to account for it."

THE LADDER will continue to report on the strategies of homophile groups in San Francisco in their determination to weld a homosexual voting bloc and make police reform an issue in local politics and legitimate concern of the entire community.

- Kay Tobin

D.O.B. Has Moved!

Both the National Headquarters and the office of the San Francisco Chapter are now located at 3470 Mission Street in San Francisco. These are much larger quarters than D.O.B. had at its former address, and meetings and other sizeable gatherings can be held here. Donations towards rent and cost of furnishings are most welcome! Please send your contribution to D.O.B. at the new address: 3470 Mission Street, San Francisco, California.

interview

with JEAN

(Editor's note: Jean is our front cover subject this month. She lives in a large midwestern city. This interview with Jean was done by Kay Tobin and Barbara Gittings in June 65.)

Q. Jean, how does a girl raised in a small town in Ohio, as you were, find out about gay life?

A. Well, if she happens to join the service, that's one way.

Q. And how old were you when you realized you were gay?

A. Eighteen years old, and I'd been three months in the service. Until then I didn't even know the gay world, anything like that, existed. Before then, I just felt...different.

Q. Did you have any crushes on teachers in school?

A. Well, there was one teacher. I was 16 and she was only 21. I used to go up to her apartment with her and grade papers. We'd have dinner by candlelight, and sit and have discussions for hours. Also she'd let me drive her car. She taught Home Economics, and I took 4 hours of it every day, even though I just hated to cook and sew and all that stuff. Then she went on to teach in Cleveland, later married an artist.

Q. Did she ever use the word homosexual?

A. No...nobody did. But I think she might have been gay and just couldn't connect with other gay people. The only thing that was ever mentioned was "fairy." I didn't know what a fairy was. We had a boy in my school, much younger than me, and very feminine. That boy was called fairy, and the way they treated him was terrible. I always felt sorry for the kid. Older boys would throw stones at him. His family was very poor and some days he would come to school in his sisters' sweaters. And the boys would take his clothes and tear them up and deliberately torment him. I don't know if he was homosexual. But they got downright nasty and tormented that boy every day of his life. But that was all I ever knew about homosexuality. Oh - except when I went to the opera.

Q. What happened then?

A. When I was in sixth grade I went to the opera in Cleveland, the Metropolitan opera. I remember I was selling newspapers at the time. I was 12 and had been selling papers since I was 9. My sixth grade teacher - they used to call her "Bulldog" because she had a face like one. I always got along well with
her. We used to talk about things the other kids didn't talk about, and books... Well, she took me to the opera one time. We had seats overlooking the box seats down front, and all the people in the boxes wore evening clothes. And this teacher said to me, "Do you know how many people there, of those men dressed in tails and top hats and white gloves, do you know how many of them are really women with their girlfriends? And do you know how many of those women who are dressed in evening gowns are actually men with their boyfriends?" And why she brought this up I don't know! I said, "No," and that's all.

Q. Well, what an introduction to the opera! AND to transvestism! Did you ask her anything about it?
A. No. Sometimes you come across a subject that's too deep for you. I was ashamed to ask any questions. But I thought it was interesting. And afterwards when we mingled with those people, I nearly broke my neck trying to discover who was!

Q. Getting back to the Home Economics teacher, what did you think about your feelings toward her?
A. Well I can actually analyze it all now. Before that time my family and I had moved to Florida, but it didn't work out there for us. So we moved back to Ohio and my family went to live on my grandfather's farm. But I wanted to go back to my old school, so I took a room by myself in the town where we used to live. And this isn't acceptable for a child to do in a small town of 2,000. I earned my room and board by mowing lawns and raking leaves, and if I didn't do any work, I didn't eat. And the only clothes I had were summer clothes. And I was left alone by my family. I was afraid and I was hungry and I was cold. The Home Economics teacher gave me attention and was interested in my welfare, and I think that was the prime reason for my attraction to her.

Q. You lived alone, away from your family, by your own choice?
A. Yes. My father didn't disapprove but my mother did. But I was always very stubborn when I wanted to do something. For example, when I was a kid my mother took up a new religion and was cramming it down everyone's throat in the family. Everybody else gave in, but I rejected it. Then when I was 18 and I knew I was going to get out of that town one way or another, I decided to join the service and I wanted my parents to sign the papers, but my mother said, "If I sign these papers because I know it's the only thing I can do. And I know that from this day I have lost you as my daughter." You see, she knew me, not that I was gay, but she knew my life was going to be so far different from theirs, that I was going to be completely independent, that I would no longer need them, I had been champing at the bit for years to go out and see the world.

Q. Then when you enlisted in the service, weren't you asked on your application whether you were homosexual?
A. There was a blank on the form that said, "Are you homosexual?" I didn't know what the word meant, so I put down "No."

Q. Then when did you find out what the word meant?
A. Well, when I was in basic training, there were two girls who were accused of being lovers. They were in the room right across from mine. But this was all right with me, because when I joined the service, I knew I was going to learn a lot of things and I accepted the fact I was going to learn, so nothing was a shock or a surprise.

Well, these two girls were actually not lovers at all. It turned out that several other girls in my barracks were gay, but these two were not. One was simply very lonely and insecure, and the other was a rather emotional person who liked to be a big buddy and was trying to help this kid.

Q. Who brought the accusation against them?
A. Some of the others in the barracks. There was no formal accusation or court-martial, because in basic training these things are handled differently - they know that a lot of girls are insecure and unsure of military life. So these two were simply brought up before the commanding officer. The accusers then admitted to the C. O. that they had no proof whatsoever, and they just "thought" the girls were lovers. So the C. O. then made them apologize to the two who had been accused. The training instructor later gave the accusers hell, too. But I didn't think much about it then. In basic training, they keep you running. They don't want you to have time to think.

Then after basic training, I was made acting barracks sergeant. The real sergeant was never there, so I had to be in charge. And I never gave an order - I always gave a suggestion. And I got wonderful results with these people, who were all older than I was. I was learning so fast, so was open to learning.

But there were a couple of girls who were being discharged for being gay. The older one, Terry, I knew she was gay, and I asked her if she would tell me about this way of life. So we went to an empty room, and we spent four hours just talking. She told me about her life, and I asked questions. And after four hours, I left and went for a walk alone. And I just decided that I was gay - that's what it was, that answered a lot of things I didn't know. There was no big revelation, no mad affair. Absolutely nothing and no one forced me into it.

Q. What sort of picture did Terry paint of gay life?
A. Well, she was very straightforward. She said there were a lot of sides of gay life that were bad. But she also pointed out the parts that were advantageous. And I was happy - because I had found myself. This was the missing part of myself that I knew nothing about. And it all just fell into place.

Q. Then did you want to run out and live it - fast?
A. No, but suddenly I was accepted as gay by others who were.
Q. But you weren't attracted to any one person.
A. Oh yes - I was. But I didn't try to establish a relationship.... I didn't know how.

Q. So this was only a gay "attitude" you had, rather than an activity?

A. Yes. I was in a whole group of girls who were this way - knowing they were gay, but without actually having had any affairs. We'd go to the movies, take drives, go swimming. One of the girls played a guitar, and we sang. We did just what any other group would do, and none of us was really as guilty as we were made out to be when we were put out of the service.

One night three of us were out at an ordinary neighborhood bar, and we were talking with the people there. And this straight guy got on the subject of homosexuals, and he said, "I can always spot a lezzi-bun. Any place, any time, I could pick one out of a crowd." That's just the way he said it - lezzi-bun. And he was serious. We three just looked at each other and went on talking, I wanted to ask him how he could spot lesbians, did he think they had horns or three eyes or what. It just proved that people don't usually even know it when their next-door neighbor is gay. We all got a big laugh out of it.

Q. How did you happen to be put out of the service?

A. Well, one girl - a way-out kid who thought she was God's gift to women, a tall, skinny, homely girl with a Connecticut accent - she began paying attention to a very attractive straight girl who'd recently been busted for insubordination. And there was something about the whole thing that made the rest of us wary. The straight girl kept insisting on being brought around to wherever our group was. And it turned out that she was running down to the C. O. I, making reports on us. She did this because she had been busted and she was mad and she wanted to make someone else pay for her own mistake.

So she latched on to the gay kids.

One day at work I was tipped off that the sergeant was coming over to pick me up for something serious. I removed all the pictures from my wallet, but I knew it was too late to do anything about my living quarters. So the sergeant came and took me to the orderly room. And there were all my friends, sitting there looking very upset.... I knew exactly what it was.

Next we went one at a time to the commanding officer's room, where two men asked us questions. And then the two men and the C. O. took us one at a time over to our living quarters. Well, the C. O. was really shook up. She sat down on the edge of a bunk with me while these two men went through my things. I offered her a cigarette, but she was so nervous she couldn't even light it.

The men searched everywhere - even in my mattress and pillow. And then they told me to unlock my locker. So I did. And I handed them the book THE WELL OF LONELINESS and I said, "I guess this is what you want, isn't it?" Then they took us to O. S. I. headquarters and they put us in a big room on straight-back chairs, and we had to sit ten feet apart from each other. Two women watched us. We couldn't talk. We could smoke, that was all. If we wanted a drink, or wanted to go to the John, we had to be escorted. So for five hours they kept us there.

They would take us individually into a little room - the kind where they have the two-faced mirrors. And they locked the door. There were two men who asked questions, and a stenographer. And some of the questions they asked were downright dirty. But these men actually acted as if they were tired of their job. Finally I asked one of them, "Don't you have trouble sleeping at night?" And he said, "Yes, but it's just a job and we have to do it."

Q. Did they ask you about sex practices? And about friends?

A. Yes, and they asked many things I didn't even know anything about. And I refused to reply. I just sat there looking at the ceiling for two hours. One of the men got mad and pounded his fist on the table at me. First they would try a tough line, then a soft one.

Finally they said they had statements against me. That was the first time I replied. I said, "I don't believe you and I want to see them." I saw them all right. They were not true, but they were statements. So I just said, "These are lies."

Q. Had this straight girl made statements against you?

A. Oh yes, she had put down times and places - where absolutely nothing had happened. It was a big farce.

And then they pulled this thing on me. I had a friend, an officer who lived off base. I used to visit with her on weekends. But there was nothing gay about our relationship. She was a wonderful person, and the most beautiful woman I've ever seen. I painted her portrait lots of times.

Well, my interrogators knew about my visits with this woman. So they threatened to call her in and drag her through questioning. And I just couldn't bear to think of her going through what I had gone through. It was humiliating. It was sickening. So I said, "O. k., I'll sign your silly statement." And I did. That was after 12 hours of questioning.

Q. How old were you at the time?

A. I was nineteen.

Q. What was the statement you signed?

A. The men wrote it up. I read it and said, "This isn't true, but I'll sign it anyway." It didn't implicate any friends - it just said that the statements against me were true. I was the last hold-out in my group. I was exhausted, I was beat, and I was mad.
But I could have fought it.

They had me scared, too. Because they said you can go to the federal pen for three years for perjury, if you go through a hearing and you’re found guilty.

Then after signing, I was confined to the barracks for a solid month, while the rest of the girls could come and go. I had a top secret classification and so I was the most dangerous security risk – so they told me. Then I was discharged.

Q. What kind of discharge did they give you?

A. Undesirable. Everybody else burned theirs, but I kept mine to remind myself never to be that foolish again.... So that affected my life for the next 3 years. I couldn’t settle down. I couldn’t go home. I just wandered around, a professional hobo. I did go home for a visit. And I found that my parents thought that I’d gotten pregnant. And I was so indignant that I told them the truth about my discharge – that I’d been accused of being homosexual. But they didn’t understand, and we never discussed it again. Then I took off, without money, and I wandered.

Q. Where did you go?

A. New Hampshire, Connecticut, all through the midwest, then south to New Orleans and Florida.

Q. Did you find gay people wherever you went?

A. It’s hard, awfully hard, to find other gay people when you go to a strange city. For some people, it takes years. But I was lucky, because I knew so many girls, from the service, who were scattered all around the country. And sometimes I’d get together with other girls who had less than honorable discharges, and we’d rehash how we got them.... I kept up with people then. Now I don’t, my life is changed.

Q. What were you doing while you were wandering?

A. Drinking.

Q. How did you get money?

A. Washed dishes in bars. Baby-sat. Ran errands. Washed and ironed clothes. Cleaned apartments. Painted portraits sometimes.... But I couldn’t accept civilian life, I was so much in love with military life. I wasn’t trained for civilian life. I didn’t know where I wanted to go, what I wanted to do, who I wanted to be.

Q. Why had you liked the military so well?

A. I liked the uniform I was wearing. I was proud of it. It meant I was doing something and – I believed this, I wasn’t just naïve in my beliefs – that I was willing to fight for my country if it ever came to that. I was proud of my country, and this was the least I could do for it.... And the military taught me discipline, physical and mental discipline. I loved the rougher, harder, almost Spartan way of life.

Q. Then what did you think about the injustice of having the country you wanted to serve treat you so shabbily and spend so much effort and money and time to put you out of its service?

A. Well, surprisingly enough, I didn’t blame what happened on the service. I blamed the straight girl involved, and I blame myself too, because I shouldn’t have let it happen to me. I was not guilty of what I was charged with! Therefore why did I let those people buffalo me? I blame myself.

But of course I was in no position to fight something so big, when I was so young. I knew a girl who did fight, and she beat the charges. But her life wasn’t worth living after that, while she remained in the service. They hounded her day and night. She actually was gay, but she got witnesses to side with her. And she beat the system, got out with an honorable discharge, though they did everything they could to catch her.

Q. How did the straight women in the service feel about the lesbians in their midst?

A. The majority accepted it. Because they usually didn’t even know who was gay. And when they did find out, chances were it was a person they’d grown accustomed to working with, and so they couldn’t feel she was really so bad. When we were put out of the service, our straight friends were very sympathetic. They thought it was rotten. Almost everyone was disgusted with what was being done to purge the service of homosexuals. Even the straight people – the girls in the barracks, the guys I worked with – thought it was a disgrace to have things like this happen, especially to those who were dedicated to the service. Our C. O. was so upset, she didn’t even say goodbye to us when we were discharged.

Q. Do most lesbians in the service succeed in staying in?

A. Yes. Most of them never call attention to themselves as being gay. But actually, there aren’t as many gay women in the service as people think. They’re really a very small minority, possibly smaller than in the general population. Because gay women know it’s going to be rough on them, that they’re not wanted, and they just don’t join up. Or else they join anyway, and leave gay life entirely and don’t get involved with anyone. There are, believe it or not, people who are just that dedicated to doing a job for their country.

Now that I look back, I wouldn’t want to go into the service again for anything. I’m not sorry for one minute I spent in though, except for that last month.

Q. Could you tell about some of your experiences while wandering around the country after your discharge?

A. Well, there was the time I worked for a massage parlor that was a front for a whore house. I wasn’t paid, I did it...
just to have a place to live. I was the lookout - looking out for the fuzz, man, the fuzz. This place was run by one of the richest and most respected women in town. This was the underworld - not only prostitution, but a whole complex of activities. But I can't stand seeing people knocked around, so I stuck up for someone this influential woman didn't like. And I ended up being "assorted" out of town, with only the clothes on my back. All my belongings and paintings were destroyed. And I was beaten up besides.

I can usually take care of myself, come out on top .... But I think that the lowest thing a person can do is engage in any kind of physical conflict. Words are so much more powerful and give much better results. Fighting gets you nothing except a broken nose or something.

Well, I was dumped out on a highway, with blood all over my face and my levis and shirt. And then I was picked up by a couple of cattle rustlers in a truck, men who'd been forced into this kind of life. There was a recession, and they both had families to support. They'd lost their jobs, their unemployment had run out, and they couldn't find work. So they were stealing cattle from the wealthy and selling these cattle to feed their kids. And I didn't feel it was really wrong, because all they were trying to do was exist and keep their families alive. So I helped them, I became a cattle rustler for a short time .... I was a tough little kid in those days, but I never did anything really harmful.

Then there was a bit of fun in Florida. We had a fictitious newspaper there we called the GAYOLA GAZETTE. I was dubbed assistant editor because I always knew what was going on with everybody. I brought the idea up north, and two boys here took it up and actually got out a mimeographed sheet once or twice under that heading, as a gag, a gossip rag for friends.

Q. Then when did you finally settle down? And how?
A. About 5 years ago, when I came back to the midwest from Florida. And how did I do it? First of all, I got a dog, by advertising for her. Second, I got an apartment without any furniture, and I bought the furniture for it. I knew that if I had only my clothes and my paintings, I could pick up and leave any minute. So I deliberately got the dog and the furniture. The dog needed a home as much as I did. And I just thought it wouldn't be so lonesome if I had her.

And I got a job in photography. I had done developing and printing in high school and in the service. And let's face it - that was the only thing I knew how to do, except sell newspapers and pop popcorn in a theater.

Q. But your painting - did you seriously think of trying to make a living from your art?
A. No. Because I knew I wasn't good enough without training. I realized this. But now I feel that within a few years I can probably make a living from my art. And I intend to try.

And I think that being gay has done a lot for my painting. The very fact that I live two lives gives me more inner feeling. It's like, before I went into the service and found out I was gay... then there was just one way, one life, one way of doing things. Now I know that there's more than one way - that there are more than two ways. And this I feel gives greater sensitivity to my approach to art. So I feel that my gay life has helped my painting. It's given it contrast, and movement, and pattern, and design. And it helps my photography, too, this wider range of sensitivity and understanding.

Q. Have you ever discussed this theory with your art teacher?
A. Oh yes - and he agrees.

Q. And you don't feel fragmented by living two lives, you don't find it difficult to put on a show part of the time?
A. No, I think it's good. It keeps me on my toes. Once you fall into a rut, you stop thinking. And I think it's a credit to the gay person who has the ability to live two lives.

Q. Some gay people feel that living two lives tears them up.
A. For me it's beneficial. And I think it's so for a lot of them. Conflict and challenge are the most stimulating things people can have. And there just isn't enough.

Q. Do you think you're ever going to be famous, that you're ever going to be on top in an artistic or a financial sense?
A. I'll never be rich. But I'm damned sure going to try to be famous as an artist! Or at least, let me say, not famous, but good as an artist.

You see, to me, life is a fight. You can't beat the game of life, you know you're going to lose because no one lives forever. But it makes going to meet the old man with the sickle not so bad, if you know that you've fought. Anybody who fights is a much better person than the guy who just takes things as a matter of course. You can't just go along with the tide. You're nobody and nothing if you do.

Q. Have you ever tried to establish a permanent relationship with another woman?
A. Oh yes. But it always got in the way of my art and my photography. They didn't like the idea that I would work 18 hours a day in the darkroom. Or paint instead of paying attention to them. So ... I'll be patient, and maybe some day someone will come along who has the same interests I have, or will understand and appreciate what I'm trying to do. You see, I paint as a compulsion. I can't stop this thing. It's like the sex urge in some people - only with me, it's my art. I just know I have to do it.

Q. What do you think about the person who doesn't have any such strong urges?
A. He belongs to the mass. His life is like a card that's put into a slot and that always stays there. I'm very poor financially, but I'm wealthy in experiences, in mistakes, in knowing myself. Challenges - whether I've won or lost them - have always been rewarding for me. And I'm still an individualist, and I'm proud of it.

Q. With your drive, would you expect to overshadow anyone you had a permanent relationship with? Or would you want someone who was equally strong in drive and individuality?

A. I am much more attracted to a woman who's not a weak, soft, easy-going person. And by the way, I consider myself neither butch nor femme. Some lesbians find it necessary to define themselves in these terms, but I think for most it's not necessary. As with my whole life, the more challenging a person is, the more I'm attracted to her. The nice, sweet, good person can do nothing for me. I need the challenge, the stimulus, to keep me thinking, keep me active, keep my driving.

But I haven't really looked hard. And the few times I've gone with people, I've been pretty cautious about it. I've learned that people try to make an impression, put their best forward. Then there's often a big let-down when you really get down to the so-called routine of going together. So I walk away from many situations. Through my own choice.

Q. Do you go to gay bars to meet people?

A. When I go to a bar, I'm not looking for somebody. I go to draw pictures, or sit and talk with friends. But I'm sure not looking. And I know this for a fact - you'll never find anything worthwhile in a bar. Any people that I have been interested in, and had decent relationships with, I've never met a single one of them in a bar. The people that I've had disillusioning relationships with, I have met in bars.

Actually, I don't go to gay bars very often. Just once in a while when I feel the urge to be out with lots of people and hear noise and just sit as an observer. It's so much fun that way. People drinking in bars get awfully emotional. But I do not go to become involved with anything going on in the bar. But I think gay bars are important in a community. They give gay people a chance to let off steam with their own kind.

Q. Aren't you given a rather cool reception in the local gay bars because of your aloofness?

A. Yes, several people have said that I'm "cold" and "unemotional." But you see, I don't want to degrade myself. And I prefer being in control of myself, especially when others aren't in control of themselves.

Q. Do you think you've changed the opinions of any straight persons about homosexuals?

A. Yes, but the people I go around with are already more intellectual, more liberal than the average.

Q. So it would be pretty hard to gauge whether you've had any real effect on their opinions?

A. Let's say I've opened up new facets of their liberalism. Often they haven't thought much about homosexuality. So their scope has been widened. I can honestly say, I've never had a really unfavorable experience with a straight person who found out I was gay. The only bad thing has been that sometimes, very discreetly, very politely, they've let me know that they don't trust me completely. That happened recently with a girl who was uncertain about whether or not to let me paint her picture. But she didn't know me very well or I don't think she would have hesitated.

Q. Did you ever feel that you were missing something, that you were unfulfilled, by not marrying and having children?

A. In the first place, I'd be too busy with my work - my art and my photography. And it would be very foolish for me to get involved in anything like that, because I know that my work means so much more to me.

Q. You probably don't meet too many lesbians here who have as interesting a career as you do.

A. No. In fact I don't know any other lesbian here who is a sincere artist. I know lesbians who like to paint, but it's just when they're not having affairs. But with me it's not just the opposite - my painting comes first. I wish I could meet other gay women with my interests. Because these other women, who don't have anything else to do besides their job and their affairs, don't understand me. That's why they think I'm so aloof. And actually, they bore me. There is so much more to talk about than your past and current and future love affairs.

Q. Why did you pick this city to settle in?

A. The main reason I settled in this city was because it was such a challenge here. This was the city where the gay people blackballed me. I was stigmatized because I'd had an undesirable discharge. I lived here for 6 months after I got out of the service, and I was cut by the conservative gay community here. They were afraid to be in my company, didn't want to have anything to do with me. This hurt - boy, it hurt. So I finally came right back here, to prove something. And it took me 5 years until I was accepted. I wore down their resistance by living my own quiet life until they saw that I was o. k.

So I met the challenge. And I have a chance here, I now have my own business, and an art teacher that I like. If my photography business doesn't work out I don't know what I'll do, because I don't like working for anybody else. I'm too independent for that. Anyway, I have a chance for a start here, in some things that have nothing to do with gay life. They're very important to me. And I've got to work them out.
"The Invisible Woman" by L. E. E. (June) irritates me as much as it pleases. Mary McCarthy's novel THE GROUP got hostile reviews because the men did not realize what it said, not because they didn't. It's one of the most anti-male books yet written. However, THE GROUP is not the only one taking this position; it's a minor theme in Hubert Montelleit's THE ROAD TO HELL, and is also present in DESERT OF THE HEART by Jane Rule and in Margaret Kennedy's gentle novel NOT IN THE CALENDAR. No, Mary McCarthy isn't the first of last anti-male novelist.

When L. E. E. says that "Miss McCarthy's Final Solution, the elimination of the male, is the logical outcome of the situation she describes," I can't go along with her approach even though I agree. It certainly is time for women to revolt, and many are doing so and more of us must. But let's not advocate all-female worlds - I'd love it but I doubt if everyone would.

I applaud L. E. E.'s militant feminist screams and I'll join her on the street-car tracks - but her protest is almost too noisy. She cites David Riesman as suggesting celibacy for women who have conflicts about marriage and career. What on earth do you expect him to advocate - homosexuality? He's not that much of a fool. If he's to continue to be published as a sociologist, he can hardly advocate a way of life which is still socially illegitimate and unacceptable.

- B. G., Kansas

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Marilah Barrow (Readers Respond, July/August) deplores the failure of successful lesbians to join the homosexual cause, and pleads that we find a way to get their support.

Homophile organizations, by and large, certainly do not represent successful, top-flight professional people. And it takes only a little imagination to understand why, I suggest the only chance of getting support from such people is through:

1. A strictly non-social organization with specific goals and program, and plans for eventual paid staff with competent supervision; and

2. Inclusion of non-homosexual community members or leaders on the board of directors.

I doubt if these suggestions will be taken seriously, and I am sure that there will be continued non-support from top professionals.

- F. C., California

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