
womantide.

PROVINCETOWN / DECEMBER 1982



FREE 'BEANS

This is our third issue of WOMANTIDE and both the idea and the reality of a lesbian newsletter out of Provincetown have gathered momentum. WOMANTIDE hopes to make it more comfortable for lesbians to be "out," by telling the stories of individuals, by highlighting the many lesbian events that attract women here, and by showing off our non-threatening lifestyles. We own businesses and houses, we employ many people, we're unemployed, we're artists, we're looking for a space where women can socialize.

Where else could seven lesbians coming from different parts of town end up "carrying on" on the steps of their town post office? The "carrying on" is almost vaudevillian in style as we exchange quick, sharp quips. Quips about jobs, moving, who was seen with whom, parents and family, cesspools, the weather and the silly fact that here we are, "the 'beans" doing "our thing" with our own language, innuendos and the pleasant feeling of comfort and security in our home town of Provincetown. We know that we belong to a "'Bean society" and we aren't afraid. Some of us express affection in public by kissing, hugging or holding hands, and it has become O.K.!

Contributors to WOMANTIDE are growing in number and we hope they'll continue to do so. We'll be sponsoring events this winter for residents and out-of-town visitors : please join us.

Lesbians from all over come to Provincetown, because they can sense how much we love the freedom of our lesbian lifestyles. We feel safe in the Provincetown environment — we are single, "married," have children; our politics and consciousness vary from "no interest" to "moderates" to lesbian feminists to separatists. Everyone is entitled! No one has to hide or feel insecure: many of us participate in local government and community projects which involve daily interaction with all aspects of the town.

We may not all agree, but WOMANTIDE has been established to provide a forum where lesbians can communicate with each other. Keep it open and contribute!

Our address is

WOMANTIDE
P.O. Box 963
Provincetown, Mass. 02657

EDITORIAL BOARD: *Malu Nay Block / Sherry Dranch / Susan Mitchell / Randy Turoff / Linda Weinstein*

COVER: "The Poland Spring Trip." Photo by Nini Lyons.

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THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU

The group of businesses listed on the back page of WOMANTIDE continues to be the financial backbone of this newsletter throughout the winter. It is important that we support them whenever we can.

Special support came from those who participated in WOMANTIDE's first fundraiser on Monday, September 10, 1982, at the Pied Piper. Pam Geneverino and Linda Gerard, co-owners of the "Pied," generously donated their whole space, their time and a large cash contribution. Many local restaurant owners gave us lots of delicious food. Our gay and straight friends also donated auction items and cash.

A wonderfully funny and heart-warming feeling permeated the evening as Pam Geneverino, the funniest auctioneer in Provincetown and the best at making a group spend its money on anything (!?), did exactly that.

Maxine Feldman came down from Boston to help with the auction: believe it or not she modeled two floor-length gowns, donated by Beulah's of Provincetown.

Sherry Dranch, one of our editors, gave a thought-provoking speech about WOMANTIDE'S goals. She made it known that WOMANTIDE is the first lesbian newsletter on Cape Cod (we think it's about time!).

In case anyone wants to know, we paid back the

debts incurred by our first two issues (and laid away a bit for the third) by raising \$1,517.00 in one night from auction items and cash donations!

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING BUSINESSES, PROFESSIONALS AND OTHER INDIVIDUALS FOR AUCTION ITEMS:

The Everbreeze, Ciro & Sal's, Dodie's, Pucci's, Alice's, Simon's Deli, Sherry Dranch and Linda Weinstein. The Dolphin Whale Watch, Sun Signs, A Cut Above, Gabriel Brooke Photography, Ellen Harris Gallery, Gabriel's, Outermost Kites, Tumbleweed Jewelry, Hersheldon's Leather, Womencrafts, Woodcarving by Dew, Blue Ridge Card Co., Secrets Gallery, The Third Eye, The Gold Box, Anne Lord Gallery, Mary Spencer Nay, Judy Israel, The Dusty Miller Inn, The Greenhouse Guesthouse, Remembrances of Things Past, Beulah's, Roslyn Garfield, Isis Unveiled, Jacqui Mac, Phylene, Wampum Jewelry, Gale Force Ranch, Gull Walk Inn.

THANK YOU TO OUR HELPERS ON THE DOOR: Randy Turoff, Susan Mitchell and Toby Hall.

ALSO THANKS TO COORDINATORS OF AUCTION ITEMS:

Maxine Feldman, Malu Nay Block, Kerry Schaefer and Linda Weinstein.

... AND TO THE STAFF OF THE "PIED"... ♡

Erotica, Pornography and Sexual Liberation

By Susan Mitchell

Two women who have broken local ground in the erotica area are Louise and Phyllis of "Isis Unveiled," a shop on Commercial Street in Provincetown. They started out seven years ago as a feminist specialty shop and changed gradually to an erotic boutique, open to straights, gay men, and lesbians. Eventually the store sold mainly sexual aids, sex toys, sexy gag gifts, erotic cards, magazines, books, x-rated movies, and cruisewear. As the store is now, it is a sex shop owned and operated by two women who believe that sexuality is as basic to personal fulfillment as is any other area of our lives.

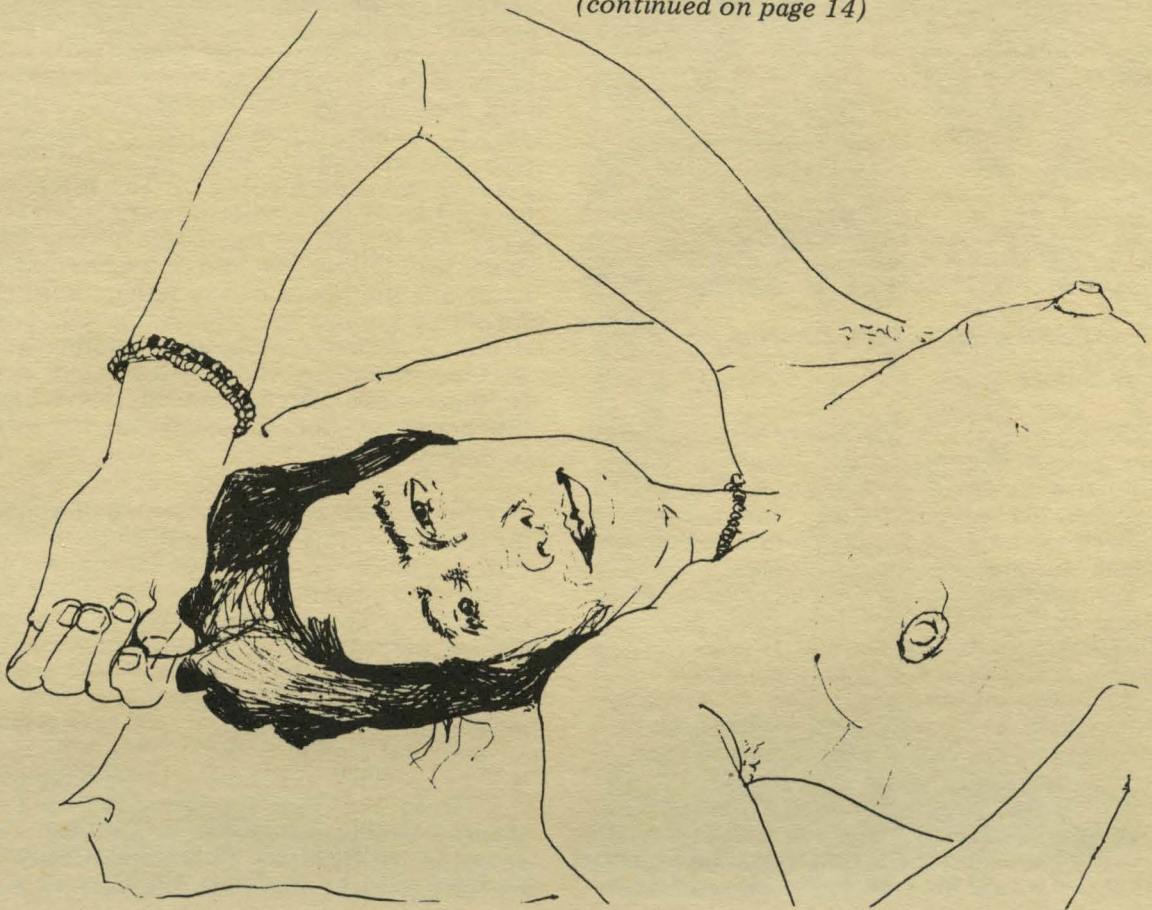
For this article, I have established a working defi-

nition of "erotica" roughly as non-violent sexually explicit material, and of "pornography" as violent. I define violence as sexual or physical acts committed against an unwilling victim. Louise and Phyllis are as disturbed by pornography which promotes violence against unwilling victims as is the next person.

Louise thinks that much hostility to explicit sexuality is caused by ignorance and fear. Phyllis told how she watched a father bring his son into the shop in the summer to educate him about sex while the mother and daughter remained outside. Louise says that this is what women must change in general, their being left out of knowledge which people say

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Drawing by P. J. Campbell: her first P'town lover



A STREETCAR NAMED

Photo/Nini Lyons



Randy Turoff: Stage Mgr./Ass't. Director

By Randy Turoff

There is no way one can lesbianize Blanche Dubois — no way to defrost her from that block of ice of conventionality in which she is trapped. She is not a tragic heroine: her anti-sociality comes neither from choice nor from noble fate, but from a socialized degradation to which she herself subscribes. She is a patriarchal plaything, until she is played-out, raped, and then discarded in the last scene of the play.

"Why are you devoting a chunk of your life to a Tennessee Williams play where all the womens' roles are so outdated? Why deal with a play which has no redeeming feminist value?" several friends asked me just as I was plunging into a three-month job as assistant director and stage-manager for the Provincetown Theater Company's production of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Despite the fact that the production would be an outstanding one and the acting would be excellent, truly what use would there be in joining a regressive

safari into the misogynistic, anti-homosexual territory of 1947 America, to travel back into a land where homosexuals are "degenerates" and unattached women ("girls alone in the world") are easy targets for patriarchal abuse? It's very difficult to separate art and politics: should one?

I did feel great apprehension, because the religious precepts of the play's conventionality are still capable of activation in these Reagan years, like viruses passed on and infecting our weaker moments, self-destructively. Male oppression still dominates us. And conventional theater, like any other institutionalized art form, often perpetuates oppressive and dominant social values. We, who are not favored sons, must be able to analyze collectively the oppression of our past, in order to be able to fight the insinuation of abuse into our present lives.

What exactly is the political and economic situation of the female characters we observe as the play progresses? Belle Reve, their ancestral home, is lost in the last instance, not strictly through the "epic fornications" of the fathers, brothers and uncles, but because in the legally sanctified realm of patrimonial lineage, two girls were not permitted to carry the name of the fathers in the absence of strong and corrupt male support. The two women of the play are prey to societal discrimination — Blanche with her pitiful schoolmarm's salary and Stella with her housewifely allowance status. The sisters could never have achieved the earning power needed to maintain what was left of the estate and to pay the bills of death for old, diseased and dying relations. Blanche never left the house of the fathers until she was forced by penury to leave. And Stella passed from one male domicile to another. Neither questioned the conventionality which had created their poverty. Neither woman acted heriocolly. And Blanche, despite her grand soliloquies, has only her own pathos to defend.

This play was the quintessential morality play of the late 1940s. It is primarily through the use of moral voices — the voice of the French Huguenot matriarch as she casts a stern and everlasting glance at the child, the voice of the mother, under the tutelage of the fathers, passed into the head of the daughter ("If you'd done this it wouldn't have cost me that!' Legacies! . . . And other things, such as blood-stained pillow-slips — 'Her linen needs changing' — Yes, Mother. But couldn't we get a colored girl to do it? No, we couldn't of course — Everything gone but . . . Death.") — that Tennessee Williams tortures Blanche Dubois into states of insanity. The social voices in her head are all metaphorically subsumed by the haunted polka tune, the Varsouviana:

REPRESSION

("Varsouviana" is heard, fades.) Suddenly, in the middle of the dance, the boy I had married broke away from me and ran out of the Casino. A few moments later — a shot! I ran out, all did! — all ran and gathered around this terrible thing at the edge of the lake! I couldn't get near for the crowding. Then somebody caught my arm. — "Don't go any closer! Come back! You don't want to see!" See? See what? Then I heard voices say, "Allan! Allan! The Gray boy!" He'd stuck a revolver into his mouth and fired! so that the back of his head had been — blown away! (Sways, covers her face. "Varsouviana" is heard again.) It was because, on the dance floor — unable to stop myself — I'd suddenly said — "I know! I Saw! You disgust me!"

The unthinking young Blanche (along with the moralistic town voices of her society) becomes the instrument of murder, and of her own misery, by blurting out the cruel judgment against her homosexual husband, whom she allegedly "loved unendurably."

And the "light which had shone upon the world" goes out, and still Blanche survives. Throughout the play she focuses her obsessive flirtatious energy on Stanley, Stella and Mitch. She may have no material wealth, but she thinks she has her sexuality to barter; for Blanche, since Allan's death, all possibilities for sexual pleasure are squelched by guilt. Desire is always linked to Death. Without pleasure, sex becomes a device of manipulation for power; and once Sex is equated with Power, women are in the hands of the patriarchy, which holds all the gold and guards it.

By *not* turning her last trick, Blanche hopes to obtain peace of mind and security through marriage with Mitch. It is risky to politic with one's own oppressor: Blanche's survival strategy is to pass as straight. Yet her contradictory feelings about degeneracy had never been resolved. From the first scene of the play, when she deftly sneaks that first shot of Stanley's liquor, it is clear that she will never be straight. Yet ironically, she sees anything tainted ever-so-slightly with un-straightness as suspect of "degeneracy," the anathema which she resists. Caught in the trap, in the witch-hunt which T.W. portrays with such force, Blanche struggles vainly against the Inquisition of the fathers. And *still* she clings to the patriarchal values which will always reject her. Because she believes that in the eyes of her family, in the eyes of God, she deserves to be punished for her sexual sins, she smiles dutifully at the gentle hooded stranger who leads her to the pyre. The pyre which is, in this case, the Mental Institution, perhaps the one where Tennessee's own sister was lobotomized.

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Judith Israel as Blanche Dubois

Publicity Photo / Khristine Hopkins

three poems

DISTORTIONS

She's spreading confusion like a cat in a box, her scent all over your life. Her will is hyper-glandular: you become another nose on the trail of her heat. At first you deliberately underestimate your needs. But she keeps fueling your senses like a drug, running more and more of your time. There's that burning irritation beneath the skin, between your thoughts and outside life; the gap widens and you're totally involved, cut off by your dream surrounded by a reign of swords — you see it in the cards. Time speeds by: you're not moving. You are both "not here" and "interminably now."

She plays you with mirrors: addicting you, making you a conquest of yourself. This is a seduction, played first for pleasure then for pain. If I were as mean a man as the bitch in her inspires, I'd beat her. I'd see the black and purple smack vibrate her jaw. But she won't let me hurt her. And she won't let me love her. A thousand snakes enclose her supine body. The closer I come, the more entwined I am in illusion, the more intimate I become with emptiness: each desire cancels out every other.

If your ego demands so much love that it becomes punishment, you will have to learn to live with one hundred hungry ghosts begging day and night to be re-born.

Randy Turoff

ONLY ME

*Nobody ever loved you
like I do.
protected you,
cherished you,
fought you
for your own good.*

*Nobody ever shared such
happiness
completeness
total immersion
merging of lives,
personalities,
as we did.*

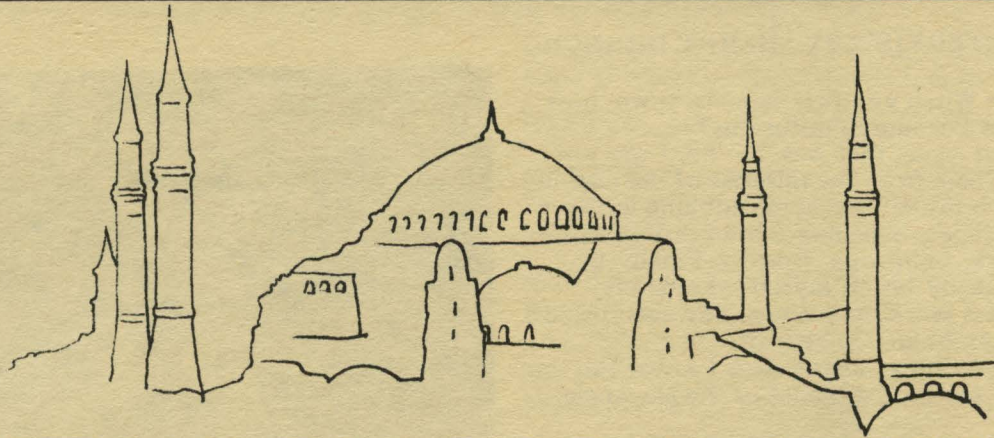
*I'm fooling myself, you know.
They all did.
The ones before me —
and the new one —
They all did.*

Jane Chambers

FOR MARIA

*when I am so close to you
as this,
skirting the edge of desire,
I string words, like beads,
into worried little knots
of conversation.*

Judith Israel



TURKISH BATH

A Story by Jane Kogan

To escape the frozen mud and cutting wind of Istanbul in February, I turn down a side street and through the swinging wooden doors of the Turkish bath. An old woman shows me to a small room where I strip and leave my clothing, shoes too. When I am naked and shivering, she walks me to a humid corridor with whiffs of steam, hands me a thin towel, opens a door, and pushes me through into a large, almost cube-shaped marble room. The high central dome is painted brilliant blue; smaller domes foam white around it. Everywhere steam is billowing, water splashing. A vast mountain of a woman, naked but for a stretched black bikini bottom, takes me firmly by the arm and propels me, slipping and sliding like an infant who would fall if she weren't holding me up, to one of the marble sinks set at intervals along the wall. Hot water gushes fiercely from the tap. Grabbing up a small plastic bowl she throws scalding water over me. I flinch away. She adds a little cold, dousing me again, and says in English, "Good, good!" then goes off. I pour the hot water all over my body.

Many women, singly or in groups, are scattered around the room. Two friends are washing one another. Several women are being vigorously scrubbed by attendants. There are families of women, fat old grandmothers with their daughters — middle aged women in the prime of life — and their daughters, nubile adolescents. Everyone is relaxed; the room murmurs with talk. For women, this is the neighborhood social center; they spend hours here in each other's company, naked, exchanging news, jokes and gossip. Whereas men go to the cafes to drink coffee, play cards, smoke their hookahs or cigarettes and talk, women are never seen in public. When they do go out, it is as indistinguishable black mounds covered from head to foot in a single tent-like garment, the *burka*. Their faces are hidden and only a fine-mesh rectangle over the eyes allows them to see out, but no one to see in. But now, in this closed community of women at the bath they are luxuriantly physical, almost narcissistic. One woman slowly soaps

her arms, her hands, then as carefully rinses herself off and proceeds to her torso, her face and neck, then her legs. Later, with the same absorption, she shaves her entire body with a small, hand-held razor. Another woman reclines languidly as an attendant lathers and shaves her legs and armpits. Others sit dreaming on the wet steps that run like low bleachers around the room, occasionally reaching out a bowl to the nearest spigot to douse themselves. And I too, breathing in the steam, my eyes closed, relax after a week of hard cold travel, happy not to talk, simply to be.

Returning, my attendant dashes a bowl of hot water over me; then she holds up each of her pendulous breasts in turn, scooping a bowlful of water beneath, and leads me down a few steps to an octagonal marble slab which fills the center of the room. Indicating that I should lie down on my stomach, she clears her throat, spits on the marble and soaps her hands. There is something greasy about her despite the soap and water: does she oil her skin? Her ample flesh quivers as she soaps me, thoroughly but automatically, shouting raunchy comments in Turkish to the other attendants who answer her with bursts of loud laughter or a brief, harsh retort. Her strong hands run over my body kneading the muscles, sliding sensually over my back and arms. I slip under her hands like a fish on the wet marble, but she pulls me back, flips me over. Lying on my back I watch her, the black hairs on her lip, the perspiration: a little sullen, she heaves great sighs after every slightest exertion, making it seem that this isn't a job she's being paid for, but a favor to me. It's better just to feel her hands as they rub, soothe, massage. Looking up into the blue dome I notice little holes, steam vents. A drop of condensation falls cold on my stomach and I tense, then relax again beneath her touch. I feel as if I'm melting in the heat. She kneads my stomach, moves down over my thighs.

"You madame?" she asks, breaking my reverie. I am startled, puzzled by her question.

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— AN INTERVIEW BY SHERRY DRANCH

SHERRY: When you first came to town, how did you manage to become so notorious?

MAE: When I first came, that was '57-'58, I was just being a beached whale from the miseries of the city. I came here to beach myself, did some cooking in the summers, at first. I was teaching school during the year, in New York, California, Boston. Finally in '70 I decided to really beach myself completely. I was doing all that working business and then I said to hell with it, I don't care if I have to scrape I'll make a living somehow and I knew I'd never be hired for teaching, because of the gay angle and so forth.

SHERRY: What did you teach?

MAE: Phys. Ed. and science. That's what got me here in 1970.

SHERRY: The gay angle?

MAE: Well the gay angle and teaching, I mean you know they knew I was a dyke. I never tried to uh, exhibit any other quality . . . So I came here and opened a business called "Mae's Mid-East" — middle eastern food — for two seasons, it was successful. And then I realized it was too much. Too much. Twenty-four-hour-a-day work. I had four or five people working for me, they were wonderful, it was a great experience, I could run a restaurant, no problem, because I've done every angle, cooking, ordering food, etc. But 24 hours a day, are you kidding, I was out relaxing and that thing was on my mind. So to hell with that. I just lived my life, that's all, did what I had to do. Bartender, kitchen-woman, honey . . .

SHERRY: Not since I've been here. Now you're a letter-carrier and a post-office clerk.

MAE: I first started at the U.S. Post Office in Provincetown in '75, as a temporary helper and so forth and then the trouble started with them, trying to get my foot in the door on a better basis, and I took their ass to court and so forth. There were traumatic times for me, getting in there. And there still are.

SHERRY: Have you been an activist elsewhere?

MAE: Activist? I'm a terrorist. I really am. I'm rebellious, a terrorist-type person who believes that men have fucked this world over something fierce and it's time for women to get their shot, oh, *long* overdue. They like these helpless people, and I refuse to be helpless, and I've always been an activist, you know, politically speaking, in relation to anything I really believed in, whether it be red-orange-yellow-green-blue; I go right at it.

I went to Martin Luther King's funeral. That was very moving. I just told the school authorities I was leaving. They actually ended up paying for the days I was gone, I couldn't believe it . . . And that's my birthday, on top of it, January 15. I identify very strongly with that man. Yeah, I'm an activist. I've done sit-ins, bash-ins, you name it. But mostly I believe that you do it on an individual basis, I don't like group shit, and I'm not a joiner unless I feel that it's absolutely necessary.

I began the Human Rights Coalition here. Due to me, we had the first meeting. That was when Anita



WILL THE REAL

Bryant was making those public statements. 'Course it was on the suggestion of a fag who said, "Hey Mae, you gonna let that go down?" I said "'Course not, I'm calling a meetin' tomorrow." Well there were a hundred people there. And it was one night. Just one night, I just went around, I said hey, look . . . and the Human Rights Coalition was formed. Because of the Anita Bryant shit. I am still on the board of the Human Rights Coalition; I was like, vice-president or whatever for a while, you know, da-da, da-da. But I'd rather be thought of as the Initiator of the First Meeting.

SHERRY: So when did you change your name to Mae Bush? Was it when you started acting?

MAE: Oh, give me the stage, I'm a big ham, you know. I love working with people and I like the feedback. Someone says, hey, you want to do this, I say sure. The first one was really great, at the Playhouse, it was Terence McNally's "Bringing It All Back Home." That summer they did a Colette piece, I like Colette, I've got her collected works . . . that was in 1971. That's the theater that burned down, you know, I watched it burn, that was a sad night. The director of the McNally play, I forgot her name, she was a very sweet young girl who was acting in the other productions and who went off and made a movie with Jack Lemmon. Cracked me up seeing her in that thing.

SHERRY: Were you Mae Bush at this time, or were you still Barbara Stevens?

MAE: No, Mae Bush was dubbed on me when I first got to town, cooking at Howard Johnson's. The



MAE BUSH . . .

woman I was working for laid that on me — the woman who owns it, Gloria — After working a couple of weeks for her, and of course, I didn't know what I was doing, I didn't know how to cook of course you don't have to for Howard Johnson's, ha ha, just heat shit up and make sandwiches . . .

SHERRY: And fry everything . . .

MAE: Yeah, burn the shit, man. Gloria comes in and we used to have a crew-and-a-half they were all crazy and of course I loved it. "Hey, Barbara," she says, "Gee, you've been carrying on here, don't you have a nickname?" An at the time the queens were doing this thing, before everything, instead of "Mary," they'd say "Mae Bush." — "Mae Bush, who has a nickname," I said, that's what I said to her, right? She says "Oh, that's it!" — I said, "No!" She said "You got it, baby." Everybody in the joint from that day on started calling me Mae Bush. Then I grew my hair in for three years, out to here and I really looked like a walking shrubbery and then I told people *that* story, that it was because of The Bush, you know, and then they called me The Bush, I mean, Privet-Hedge, they they called me Mae Moss when I cut it all off, Mae Moss yeah, the new girl in town.

SHERRY: Wasn't she an actress, though?

MAE: Mae Busch, yeah, oh yeah, Mae Busch was an actress. She's still alive, she's 98 years old, living in Florida. I keep track of her, when she dies it's gonna be a big thing . . . Mae Busch? God, yes, she was well-loved and she made a lot of money, I think she owns the Busch Gardens, this huge complex somewhere in Florida like Disneyland Etcetera, you know. They

always introduced her in vaudeville as "The Ever-Popular Mae Busch, And Here She Is."

SHERRY: Did you ever write a letter to her?

MAE: That's interesting, you know I could write a letter to her and it would get to her, I'm sure. But why should I, I mean I don't even know the woman . . .

SHERRY: You're just waiting for her to die!

MAE: I keep track of her. She had a 95th birthday and I saw there was this little blurb, I cut stuff from the papers and mags all the time about Mae Busch.

SHERRY: What sign is she?

MAE: What sign? I think Leo, I've even checked that out, yeah, I really want to read her life-story of course it can't come out until she dies. She's one of those people who has the right not to have anything published 'til she dies.

SHERRY: Well, now, to change the subject a little, can you tell me why you use so many jive expressions and curse words and words that some people would find offensive if you weren't saying them in such a loveable way? This is WOMANTIDE and since it's our community newsletter we can print anything we want to as long as it's meaningful to enough of us in some way, but if this were any other magazine or medium I'd have to bleep out an awful lot of what you say . . .

MAE: Realism. Clarity. I just go for it. For years I hedged about words like "nigger" and "dyke" and so forth; fuck you, it's what's happening now and the more it's talked about, the better people are going to feel about it. You keep closeting it and it's gonna stay in the fucking closet, you know. Of course if I went on a speaking tour I'd clean up my act, ha, ha, ha. You want to relate to people and I can be clear without cursing, it's just my way of speaking. I don't think I say that much, as far as profanity goes. I do use it when my anger rises, and rage takes over.

SHERRY: But you also used the word "faggot" when you told the story of the Human Rights Coalition.

MAE: How interesting. That's the word, I mean he's a good friend, a good friend faggot, and it's like calling my sister or brother a nigger in some situations. Language can't be repressed if it's there. And if it's there you've got to wake people up rudely with it sometimes, not be puritanical and repress it.

SHERRY: Would you care to describe your summer existence for us?

MAE: This past 8-month period has been the busiest in my life actually. Because of doing the radio show (Jazz Bush, over WOMR-FM) but during the summer, flipping out behind that console because I always used to prepare, but this summer no time, man, I'd just grab a bunch of records and run out the door, run to the radio station. O.K.: here I was, then, doing the radio show, then driving a cab 4, 5, 6 nights a

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NOVEMBER LETTER

We were lying next to one another,
I remember.
Were we at Molly's,
high in the sky,
four stories up, overlooking
Provincetown bay?
Or at the other end of town,
staying with friends.
The days with you
were tumbled then,
a kaleidoscope of hours;
we were new together,
to saying it over and over
like children learning
another language.

We were in bed, that I remember.
We were quiet, the sun was bright
and hot for late October;
Holiday was singing;
it was certainly a Sunday
afternoon.
You were on your elbow, facing me,
that long blond hair
in curving rings,
those wide blue eyes like oceans
of striking waves
against that Sunday sun.

You said simply,
"Years ago, when I was raped
and murdered by a man
in Ohio, when they brought me back
to life my face was ruined,
and they did the best
they could, but really
it's never been right. The nose,
for example, is hard to rebuild
from nothing.
The doctor cried when he explained.
They wanted to work
on me again, a third time. I said
no thanks, leave it like it is.
I've had enough of pain.
I'll take it."

You spoke
as though recalling
a grocery list.

Your words
struck like fists
against my brain.
My eyes filled,
blurring you,
that Sunday sun;
dissolving the myth of happiness.
Here was easy violence
against you,
against me,
against this life we want together.
Here was every rape
of every woman
running through my mind
like the history of motion;
every scream,
every hollow death
in every gutter we have all endured
because we can be overcome.
Overcome.
Seminal miscalculation
stared at me
through your blue eyes.
Of course there is no God.

There is only an accident
of genes, turning the ranks of men
against us.

We are raped
and killed
within the length of time
it takes to say
I love you. I will never
leave you. I will always be beside you.
I really love you, Ann.

It is futile enough, I know.
But we can stand together.
We can keep on the run
from everyone
who brings death
like a gift
to our door.

Beverlee Hughes has had poetry published in many small magazines. She is currently at work on a novel entitled *Maggie Blue Is Dead*. She lives in Provincetown.

DJUNA BARNES, DEAD AT AGE 90

by Sherry A. Dranch

When Judge Mary Morgan, the first lesbian judge in the nation, was appointed to the bench last year by California governor Jerry Brown, she stated: "One of the best things about becoming a judge was that the *San Francisco Chronicle* had to print the word 'Lesbian' in great big letters on the front page."

That was one felicitous encounter between the word "lesbian" and the press. But when Djuna Barnes, one of the most creative and well-known lesbian novelists in the English language, died at age 90 on June 18, 1982 in New York City, the brief obituary in the *New York Times* that Sunday made no mention that she was one of us.

Is it discretion or misrepresentation when such a thing occurs? "The Barnes," as she liked to be called, was described by Suzanne Daley of the *Times* as a poet, a novelist, an avant-garde writer and an artist, never once in the two half-column obit' as a lesbian. One of the last paragraphs reads: "Asked [in a 1970 interview] if she ever planned to write about her exchanges with Gertrude Stein and other writers, she once said: 'Lillian Helman's and all these people's memoirs are so disgusting — I mean she's a nice woman — but they're all so terrible, why should I want to add to it?'"

The Barnes had her wishes. And of course "Gertrude Stein and other [lesbian] writers" implies the existence of the word in brackets, for those in the know. But I am personally dismayed by the discreet censorship involved. Students using that *N. Y. Times* microfilm for research and information would never know that Djuna Barnes was a lesbian. Women who are artists and lesbians and who are free enough to portray lesbian relationships in their work, and yet who are timid about their personal lives, deny themselves as a resource to those who need to know that lesbian literature thrives.

And there is no doubt as to the falseness of Ms. Daley's account of Djuna Barnes' greatest work of fiction, her 1937 novel, *Nightwood*. It was crudely obvious that she had read only the New Directions back-cover blurb, which was based solely upon T.S. Eliot's near-sighted and misogynistic introduction. Ms. Daley writes of *Nightwood*: "The story, about a psychopathic woman who destroys those nearest her — her husband, her son, the two women who love her — is told, Greek-chorus style, by a physician." If that isn't the patriarchy on our backs, misreading us and speaking for us, then nothing is.

Robin Vote, the central character of *Nightwood*, is a boyish-looking butch lesbian who cruises the ports of Europe and fascinates the Djuna Barnes-like character, Nora Flood. Robin is described as animal-like and the narrator is *very* ambivalent about her sexual power and her child/animal instincts. Robin, it is said, "carried the quality of the 'way back', as animals do" (p. 40); she was a woman who was "a beast turning human," "the infected carrier of the



past." (37) She is a woodland creature: the perfume of her body was "earth-flesh, fungi, which smells of captured dampness and yet is so dry." (34) At the end of the book Robin circles Nora's country home, living in the woods, and is finally seen snorting, growling and wrestling with Nora's dog in a chapter called (ironically? — if not this is the condemnation of the witch by the Barnes) "The Possessed."

Nora Flood (who like Djuna Barnes was a "news-paperman" — thus termed in an interview with the Barnes), doing advance publicity for a circus when she meets Robin, is attracted to Robin's "masculinity" as power (136), and follows Robin's promiscuous and drunken trail through the ports of Europe after she is left by her. Their relationship is extremely torturous: at one point Robin stands under Nora's window visibly embracing another woman (64), at another, Nora beats Robin awake out of a drunken sleep (145).

If we are far from really understanding *Nightwood*, a difficult book made more complicated by the chapters devoted to the transvestite physician Dr. Matthew O'Connor (a voyeuristic queen who is Nora's confidant, but in no way narrates the story, "Greek-chorus style"), T.S. Eliot's introduction doesn't help at all. It is incredible that in six pages he addresses himself almost entirely to the portrayal of O'Connor, and treats the women as minor characters! The real minor characters, who appear briefly after the opening chapter of the book, are Baron Felix with whom Robin drunkenly sleeps, once, and the resulting son whom she abandons.

Among the many works left unmentioned in the *N. Y. Times* obituary, *The Antiphon*, Djuna Barnes' full-length play centering around mother-daughter love/hate, was first produced by her at the Provincetown Playhouse with the group around Eugene O'Neill, in New York City in 1922 (and Djuna is known to have spent some time in Provincetown, on visits): it can be found in *Selected Works of Djuna Barnes*, published by Farrar, Strauss and Cudahy, N.Y. 1962. Those of us who have met the challenge of her works, and are still grappling with them, have yet another delight to look forward to: last year the National Endowment of the Arts senior fellowship was awarded to her, to work on a new collection of poems entitled *Creatures in an Alphabet*. This she completed, and the book will be published posthumously, in the very near future, by Dial Press.

A "COMING-IN" STORY

FIRST IN A SERIES BY PROVINCETOWN RESIDENTS / BY KATHY WEISFELD

Coming out was relatively simple compared to Coming In although we came in as an outgrowth of coming out. We were prepared for the trauma of coming out but had little knowledge of the ins and outs of Coming In.

Some people think that we lived in Provincetown backwards our first year here. We came in September and left in July, hating the summer hordes who marched past our Commercial Street apartment and commented on our suddenly public lives. So, we moved to a farm in a quiet hilltown in western Mass. where womyn's music reigns supreme. Almost immediately we missed Provincetown's beauty and freedom and decided to move back for the next summer. The fates wanted to make sure that this was where we really wanted to be.

Moving to Provincetown requires planning ahead as it's ridiculous to move here in the summer. So, our story began on a grey day in February. Leaving our snow boots behind we began our five hour car journey to apartment hunt in Provincetown. We guiltily hoped that some unfortunate person had been unable to make it through the winter and that there would, therefore, be a wonderful year-round rental awaiting us. We stayed with two friends, two generous women, not for the three days we had planned but for six. Year-round rentals are hard to find. So, we walked the streets, put out the word and soon had several options. We decided on an apartment in the West End, quiet, clean, sunny and only \$ 300 everything included, year-round. It was a Provincetown dream. So we thought.

The tenant had given a month's notice, and the landlord was going to put in a dormer and a skylight. Leaving a \$200 deposit, we expected to move in in April. Gleefully, we returned to western Mass. to give our jobs and our landlord notice.

And then the nightmare began!

The landlord began what was to become a series of delays, his excuses too incredible to be untrue. The tenant's new apartment flooded, he told us, and he did not think that he could evict her and her infant under AFDC legislation. Because of this wait, he told us he had lost his contractors. But the landlord was a smooth talker, and he assured us in mid-April that lawyers were working on eviction, that a building permit had been obtained and that a new contractor had been secured. We'd be in by May 1st. And then suddenly we could no longer reach the landlord by phone. Two, then three weeks went by with no contact. We felt powerless (not to mention foolish) five hours away. So in May, we came to Provincetown to track him down.

He did not want to be found. He had been fired from his job. He didn't answer the phone or the door though we knew he was home. During one attempt to find him, his chihuahuas were yapping in the yard, but he didn't answer the door. We went to a nearby phone but he didn't answer. We returned to his house perhaps two minutes later and the chihuahuas were inside but the landlord remained invisible. Two trusting and kind women were quickly transformed into angry activists. We began to sleuth. Again the Provincetown grapevine was helpful. We discovered that the woman and her infant had been out of the apartment since April. We learned that the landlord had never applied for a building permit! AND, we discovered that despite our deposit and without notifying us, the landlord had rented the apartment to three people for the summer !!! Now we were mad!

We were also faced with two dilemmas. How could we get our deposit back and where were we going to live? This was now May with only exorbitant summer rentals available and with most jobs taken. Once more, staying in another generous friend's unrented basement apartment, we walked the streets and put out the word. Prices frightened us. Could we pay summer rent and eat this winter? Was Provincetown worth the expense? Many sleepless nights later, we decided that Provincetown did feel like home and we would do what we could to be here. So we borrowed money from family, decided to store our belongings with a friend in western Mass. until fall, and rented a small summer cottage.

Provincetown was soon to be our home. Yet, we had no idea that the pain of getting here was not over . . .

P.S. The summer was hectic, working two jobs each to make up for our late start, and our recovery has been slow, so there's no time for a proper finish to this story. In short, we were unable to store our belongings in western Mass. so we rented a U-Haul Minimover (which broke down, of course) and stored our belongings in the loft of our cottage where everything mildewed. We tracked down the original landlord and made a much-to-his-advantage monetary settlement despite a lawyer's advice to take him to court. We are finally living in a year-round apartment trying to recuperate. Has it been worth it? We don't know yet.

Was your move to Provincetown an eventful one? Let us hear from you for future editions of "The Coming In Stories."

Tennessee Williams records the sacrifices of Blanche and of the gayboy, Allan. He shows us the abusive morality of our time. This play which so many of us in the P.T.C. wanted to work through, is constructed upon that morality, the popular myths of my own forebears' generation passed onto me: the psychoanalytic image of the guilty subject prohibited from freely exchanging sexuality, rigid "butch" and "femme" gender posturings, "dating" restrictions taken as laws of nature, racism, ageism, expectations of marriage and the *curse* ascribed to homosexuality by the collective social family. The props of that generation, reflected in the prop list of the play, include an enormous number of cigarettes smoked as part of the "glamorous" stylizations of sexual roles, glasses filled and re-filled with booze, as well as self-denigrating *True Confession* mags, and chest-drawers brimming with worthless jewelry. Can women who have been systematically excluded from the realms of ownership, wealth and male-packaged and produced myth-making, afford to be "campy" vis-a-vis their own poverty? It is a bitter, not a gay laugh that issues from the head of the true Medusa. One must realize that female characters created by homosexual men are still male-identified and constitute a distinct category in male literature from Proust to Williams. In fact, many gay men insist that the character of Blanche is so male ("faggot")-identified that "she" could only be played as an ageing "queen". Let us not be fooled. We are reminded by role parody that when we think we are looking at a woman as we watch Blanche Dubois, in many scenes what we are looking at is a *femme*. Woman or queen, both are in pursuit of male trade, of the soldiers not far from Belle Reve, of the "young, young" man, both are at any rate, Williams' metaphoric creations for the degraded female, the prostituting "femme". The play is uneven in the categories of sex it assigns to Blanche. To be *femme* is not to be female, it is often to be homosexually male. Yet so many of us, especially those of us women still caught up in the allure of Hollywood, imbibe the false narcissism doled out by the male Romance Makers.

One generation's morality echoes into another generation through the voices of guilt and confusion. Things change but guilt lingers on. As audiences we crave new plays, as well-made, as thrilling, as emotionally powerful as this one — plays depicting new female roles as they are, and depicting us, The Womyn, as we are evolving. As one who has loved and respected the work of actresses like Garbo, Bacall, Bette Davis, Vivien Leigh, Mary Astor and so many others, yet I know that we need new scripts for women. As one who has admired and applauded Judy Israel's magnificently intricate interpretation of Blanche, I still had to work with the fact that her final role, once set, was both fascinating and dangerously outmoded. We need new scripts for our performers, for us, depicting the lesbianization of the female class. Can we resist the repressive voices of the mothers, the commandments of the fathers, and the Romantic self-destruction in all of us? Can we work through new problems that touch directly on *our* lives as they are now, not on our forebears' lives? Can we hear new female voices embodying that resistance from the stage?

TURKISH BATH/continued

"You madame?" she repeats.

"No madame, Miss."

Her eyes glaze over, but she's not really surprised. Though any Turkish woman in her late thirties as I am would be long married, foreigners can be expected to do and say anything. "Babies?" she asks.

"No babies. You babies?"

Yes, she indicates three very little ones, the oldest perhaps four. "You, no friendboy?" she persists.

"No, no boyfriends. Girlfriends. Only girlfriends."

She ignores this, the first time I have really opened myself emotionally on this trip. Our naked bodies, the sensuality of hot water and her hands all over me, have made me truthful. "No friendboy?" she asks again.

"No." My reply is curt. The moment is over.

"Turkish friendboy very good."

"Yes?" I am polite, but distant.

"Very good, Turkish friendboy."

She smiles a lazy sensual smile. I think of the men on the streets, their hot eyes, their arrogance; and of the women like chattel, some man's property. Turkish friendboys. It's hard to imagine anyone in bed with this woman, so plain, so massive, her body pouring in rolls of fat over the half bikini. But then, isn't fat prized as a sign of wealth in Arab countries, weren't kings once paid their weight in gold by loyal subjects?

Once again the steaminess, her kneading hands, the blue dome absorb me; and the masseuse too is silent as the light changes, dimming to dusk. Only her hands make a wet slapping sound as she moves above me, bending my legs, manipulating the muscles, while I lie helpless, happy as a baby immersed in feeling. Quietly, under her breath, she begins an ululating Arab song, a mother's crooning. She bathes and caresses me with firm, gentle hands until I am soft as hot spaghetti sliding onto a plate. After a moment I miss her hands and open my eyes. She has stood up: it's over. I am not ready, but get to my feet. She leads me back to my original sink. I fling a few bowls of hot water over my head, then sit tingling, smiling beatifically at nothing, everything.

Taking my towel I make for the door. My masseuse heaves herself up, hand outthrust for a tip. But I am naked, how could I have money? She scowls as I pass and I feel guilty, then angry that she has sullied the intimacy we shared. For her it's just another job, another body, another foreigner of whom one demands anything.

In no time I'm dressed and out once more on the street, but now my body is humming, radiant; and my mind too shimmers with a dream, of a community of women.

JANE KOGAN has lived in Provincetown since 1968. She is a painter, works summers in the Bookshop, and has organized several women's writing groups in the past 5 years. Her diversions are reading, writing, friends, travel and love.

Erotica /continued

would hurt them. She says that knowledge is the first step to awareness and to freedom of choice and expression.

Louise also believes that one of the purposes of the materials carried at Isis is to arouse a person sexually. She knows that many women fear that pornography causes rape, but she disagrees. It's Louise's belief, in looking back at historical events, that violence and rape against women came about long before pornography and/or novels came into being. She feels that men naturally are inclined towards these acts (i.e., examine events in any war in which men consider the enemies' women to be their rightful plunder). By having pornographic magazines and novels available, she believes we are enabling men to act out these natural aggressions in a world of fantasy. She feels that if we suppressed these materials, it might lead to these acts materializing themselves in real acts of life at a much higher incidence than is presently the situation in North America.

From her experience at Isis, Louise judges that the materials she carries are mainly used as an accessory to masturbation and as an aid to couples. Many television shows are more violent and offensive than the x-rated films that I viewed, some of which were very artistic, especially a few by gay men, and others which showed sensitive love scenes between women. I did not see all the films they sell, nor did I read through all the books and magazines. Louise and Phyllis do not knowingly sell any material which includes destructive violence.

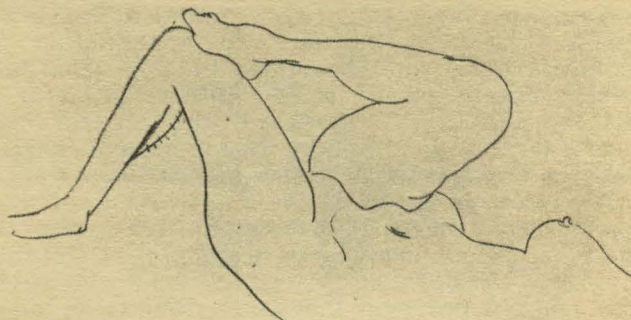
The fact is that there are some cultural connotations surrounding sex shops that involve questions of obscenity and violence. There is a wide range of sexual turn-ons from the mild and timid to the wild and adventurous. Peoples' responses depend on what they imagine and what they fear erotica to be.

Louise and Phyllis discussed how misunderstood S&M is. They explained that S&M is a sex game involving techniques that must be learned so that the "sadist" hurts the "masochist" in a controlled and pleasurable manner. They said that S&M is not the same as beating up one's partner, for which many people seem to mistake it. S&M, for most who practice it, is a ritualized form of sex undertaken by consenting adults who are exploring their sexual drives and fantasies in a creative way. It is not intended to be the same thing as violence committed spontaneously out of anger.

Within the context of contemporary feminism, women are beginning to explore their real feelings on sexuality and are trying to define their sexual needs. For example, at Barnard College, New York City, from September 1981 to April 1982, women professors and students planned a feminist conference on sexuality: the records of the planning committee and the workshop contents are published in a small book called *Diary of a Conference on Sexuality*. One topic they discussed relates to how women feel about pornography. They researched how the campaign to stop violence against women led to the "women against pornography" campaign, discovering that women who have identified male sexuality with violence fear that pornography which arouses men sexually will cause them to rape and brutalize women. But they compare the women who are acting to ban pornography with the Right-to-Life activists who are trying to ban abortion. They suggest that both groups are trying to take rights and decisions away from individuals because what they are against is a metaphor for what they fear, namely, pornography symbolizing violence which would threaten women's safety, and abortion as a metaphor for sexual licentiousness, which would threaten the family.

Many feminist groups distinguish pornography from erotica, erotica being non-violent explicit sexual material. Some groups do not believe that even erotica that is male-produced can ultimately be harmless to women.

Louise and Phyllis, dealing with a Provincetown environment, say that they see their materials as tools to free oneself of hangups. Personally, I can see how the points they are making are valid. Ideally, I would rather support only erotica which is created for women by women. They claim that they have been receptive to lesbians in the development of their shop, and are disappointed that their shop disturbs some local lesbians. Ultimately, the decision has to be left up to the political and ethical consciousness of each lesbian. In Provincetown we have the opportunity to liberate ourselves, to create our own cultural and sexual freedom, to use our space to explore our identities and to grow towards who we want to become.



H. M.

MAE BUSH/continued

week, working at the U.S. Post Office 40 hours or more, rehearsing for this play (the Provincetown Theater Company's production of Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*) — I didn't have one day — playing tennis on Sunday, I've got to do that for my soul! And I have never been this busy in my whole life. I am so tired of being available to people and servicing people, like a fucking whore — you know, I'm so available! For 8 months: "I'm available." But that's how things get created you know. One thing about all this activity that I've learned is that those who do, do and often those who don't, sit back and criticize.

SHERRY: And also there are all those who sit back and enjoy being your audience. And this summer, did you mostly drive strangers around, or did you have any passengers who knew they had the honor of being chauffeured by none other than the ever-popular Mae Bush?

MAE: One queen I loved was smashed, typical, you know, their last day and they don't want to leave, so I get him out to the airport and he can't find his wallet to pay me. "Oh, Mary," I said, "let me call Jones' Locker, maybe you left it there," but it wasn't so I said, "let me look at your luggage, maybe it's there." The plane is leaving, it's leaving and we've got her luggage open, and I'm saying "Wait . . . don't . . . Larry Jones is gonna call us back after they go through her room!" Well, finally I found this pair of fatigues and there's this chunk. She said "Oh, Mary! I never thought I'd get out of here!" We screamed, I yelled out "Hold the plane!" she pulled her shit together, threw the money at me, and finally got on. I howled. She was so gone. That was cute. "You shouldn't have had that last martini, Mary."

One really interesting thing from a human interest point of view: one night my friend Mona was driving around with me when I picked up an elderly woman who took a very long time getting out of the house. Her name was Agnes, I think. She couldn't breathe, it turns out. She was going downtown to Adams to get the asthma pills she needed very badly and had run out of. Well Mona said, "Hey, what kind is it, baby?" The woman said, "Oh, da-da-da," Mona said, "I've got one of those!" She reached right into her pocket, she says, "Here, pop this, baby." Agnes says, "Yeah, that's the kind!" So we took her downtown and Mona went in for her and gave them Agnes' check, she comes back with the prescription, Agnes is feeling better, she's breathing and laughing, we take her to the A&P, she's gonna do her shopping now. She still can't breathe well, because it actually takes half an hour for the pill to take effect. I said "Why don't you sit and rest a while," she says, "Oh, no," she says, "Mary I feel fine now." So we let her off and she wanted to give Mona a pill! "Come on, Mary, I've got a million of them!" says Mona. She called me back in two or three hours, her shopping's done, ('course by then Mona's gone), she's got 500 bags of groceries, I pick them up and take everything home for her and unload it and she gives me this fabulous tip I said "Oh, Agnes, you don't have to do that, you know," but she said "I have never had anything like

that happen to me," she said, "I couldn't breathe and if it hadn't a' been for that pill, I'd a' been chokin'." So that really is human interest, small town wonderful stuff. Really sweet. Out of the summer that was really one of the nicest.

One night I got a call around a quarter of eleven to go to the Everbreeze. I pick up four people: a woman, an old man and two queens. The old man falls into the back seat of the fuckin' cab, her boyfriend, I mean he is about 80 years old. One queen sits up front with me and starts pumping, what's happening in town and so forth. I said "Oh, Barbara Walters is in town tonight." He says, "Aw, you get that stuff all the time, you don't believe that, do you?" So I says "Yeah, they're gonna do a joke at the show, *Pirates of Penzance*, they're gonna do a Baba-Wawa joke." Well they giggle in the back seat they all laugh you know. So he went on to say "Oh come on, you people down here, you don't get any people like that!" I said, "Well yeah, I once saw Liz Taylor, da-da, da-da, I stopped on my bike and looked at her and I said 'I loved you in *National Velvet*, and you're just as pretty now as you were then.' I kept going and she turned around in the car and just smiled, those eyes, I'd never miss those eyes. Oh, she was fat and she had a babushka on . . ." So they pumped me a little more about famous people coming to town and by this time we're there. Next to Norman Mailer's house is where they're staying. So, as they're getting out of the cab — the queens are going back downtown so it's just the woman and her 80-year-old boyfriend that are getting out — so he says, "By the way, uh, Barbara Walters has been sitting right here," and I turned around, and oh, my God, I couldn't believe it, it *was* her!" "Oh, Barbara," I said, "I think you're fabulous and really good. I love your interviews and my name is Barbara too and I'm on the radio here in town." She was half gone in back she reached over and shook my hand she said "Barbara, good luck with your radio career," she says, "I hope you make out." Then she just kind of wove into the street, after which her boyfriend fell out of the car again, the queens had to get him in, then they came back downtown with me. But I shook her hand, that was so wonderful. You know how many hands of really fantastic people she's run by? I was just so thrilled.

SHERRY: Do you believe there's some kind of energy in that hand?

MAE: Yeah, mm-hmm. She didn't have to reach out. She reached out and said hey, Barbara, good luck.

SHERRY: One last thing. This is our third-issue cover photo for WOMANTIDE: it's got you on it and it's a photo entitled "The Poland Spring Trip." Would you like to say a few words about it?

MAE: Mm. Ha, ha. Bold and bodacious we carried on. We carried on to filth, my dear, Poland Spring will never be the same again, Mary.

Barbara Stevens was born from her mother's womb, but she was "Mae'd" in Provincetown.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Women's basketball at Provincetown
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Beau Fillion hosts a lesbian/gay segment once a
month. Call 487-2619 with suggestions.

If you think you're the oldest lesbian
in Provincetown, or you know who is,
please let us know. All reminiscences
welcome.

NOBODY EVER SAID IT WOULD BE EASY

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