
PROVINCETOWN

SUMMER/FALL 1985

womantide.





FROM THE EDITORS FROM RANDY

As in Provincetown, in San Francisco everyone seems to have come from somewhere else. The same sorts of dreams which create Provincetown as a lesbian haven, work for San Francisco. Both are power spots of North America, both edges. Both are living symbols of gay life and serve as harbors for sexual and artistic freedom. And in San Francisco, a truly multi-ethnic and multi-racial city, lesbians from as far away as Central America and Southeast Asia come to find and to establish a political refuge where they can transform their own lives and empower themselves to continue the struggle against political, sexual, and spiritual oppression in the world at large.

East Coast, West Coast, or in between, **Womantide** seeks to be a resource for the lesbian community. We seek to serve as a vehicle through which women can explore and share their own visions — because we believe that the personal vision translated into art is interconnected with social, political, and spiritual realities, and because we believe that collective art has the power to transform the world. New visions empower change. Shared visions consolidate power. □

FROM SHERRY

On August 2, 1985, the Internal Revenue Service granted **Womantide, Inc.** tax-exempt status as a publicly-supported, non-profit organization. Not only will this make us eligible for State, Federal and foundation grants, but it means that you, our public, can make tax-deductible donations, gifts and bequests to **Womantide**.

Womantide, Inc. is a charitable and educational organization as described in the IRS Code, Section 501(c)(3). Our purposes include promoting attention to and interest in lesbian culture, both in contemporary life and in the history of the past.

To this end we've published our magazine and organized cultural events such as performance evenings and film showings. Now we will also seek to establish a lesbian archive and reading room/meeting space—our own heritage museum, documenting lesbian life here in Provincetown. We hope you will begin setting aside legacies for us, in the form of financial support, books, magazines, letters, photographs, original artwork, prints and memorabilia.

There have also been some major changes in our board of directors. At our annual meeting in June, Roslyn Garfield stepped down from the board in order to remain our legal counsel; her efforts contributed greatly to the favorable IRS decision, and we are all very grateful to her. Ms. Mike Wright was elected to Ros's seat on the board—we all welcome her. Randy Turoff was re-elected President. Linda Weinstein resigned as Treasurer later in June, but remains a member of the board. Sherry Dranch has now been elected Treasurer, and Jackie Lapidus was elected Clerk of the corporation.

Thanks again to the many underwriters whose businesses are listed on the back pages of this magazine. These underwriters have supported independent lesbian expression. They have provided important proof to the IRS that **Womantide** is a community voice. We urge you, our readers, to support them whenever you can.

We expect to hold an open meeting for Provincetown's lesbian community in the fall, so that our readers can give us highly valued feedback on **Womantide's** content and activities. Watch for our announcements around town—and join us! □

FROM LINDA

Randy Turoff, Pres.
Womantide, Inc.
Board of Directors

Dear Randy,

I hereby offer my resignation as treasurer and editor of **Womantide Magazine**, effective as soon as possible.

I have given almost 3 years of my personal time in helping to create lesbian visibility within our own community of lesbians and gay men, as well as gaining support from the community in general.

I feel that my co-editors and I have prepared the groundwork for a vitally important vehicle that will continue to communicate insight into the world of lesbian women. It is my sincere hope that our pioneering enthusiasm

will encourage those that follow in our footsteps. Also, it is of utmost importance that **Womantide** continues its work with the "straight" community in bringing about non-threatening changes in homophobic attitudes.

Finally, I would request that my name not be removed from **Womantide**. My suggestion would be to change my title to co-founding editor. I would like to continue as a member of **Womantide's** board of directors.

In sisterhood and love,
Linda Weinstein

We'll miss you! Randy & Sherry

WOMANTIDE, INC.

A non-profit, publicly-supported organization, tax-exempt under IRS section 501(c)(3), formed to promote interest in lesbian culture.

DIRECTORS

Sherry Dranch, Susan Harrison, Jackie Lapidus, Edith Pearlman, Randy Turoff (Pres.), Linda Weinstein, Mike Wright

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WRITE WOMANTIDE

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SUBMISSIONS (with stamped return envelope) and comments welcome.

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COVER PHOTO: "Valerie and Carolyn"
by Ariel Jones



POLITICAL ACTION IN PROVINCETOWN— FOSTER PARENTS AND THE MEDIA

DR. DIANE GREENE

What kind of access do lesbians and gay men really have to the media? The anti-gay and lesbian foster-parenting policy imposed this summer in Massachusetts was probably caused by major media hostility; the general public has been kept ignorant of the facts.

*The above is the gist of Joyce Johnson's interview with Dr. Diane Greene, clinical psychologist and consultant to the New England Home for Little Wanderers, over WOMR-FM, Lower Cape Public Radio, in early August. After spending two summers and winter on the Cape in the 70s, Diane bought land in Truro, built a house, and now spends three days a week there. She is a former chair of Lesbian and Gay Media Advocates (LAGMA) in Boston. **Womantide** is glad to have the opportunity to publish these excerpts from her remarks on WOMR.*

This (foster parent) situation tells me there's a need for LAGMA to re-start working with the media, because some very ugly things have happened with the media coverage.

The first newspaper article, May 8, was headlined "Some Oppose Foster Placement". I thought to myself, why is a reporter covering bigotry and intolerance? Why does that merit coverage? The next thing I heard, on the radio, was, "The children have been allowed to remain in the home (of gay couple Don Babets and David Jean)." By the evening news, the Department of Social Services had yanked them out. So this happened in one day. By Tuesday, there was a rally at the Park Street station, and we had people from the very community that this had occurred in, making it quite clear that the **Globe** reporter had created and then covered this controversy — that in fact everybody had not been outraged at the placement, that the men had been very well thought of in the community, had been studied for 11 months by the DSS as prospective foster-care parents.

The following Thursday, May 23, another rally took place, and in the middle of that rally someone rushed down saying that a bill had just been introduced and was being voted on, right then, opposed to the policy that the DSS was then considering. Children could not be placed "in the care of a person or persons whose sexual preference threatens the psychological or physical well-being of the child. For the provisions of this restriction, a homosexual preference shall be considered a threat," etc. It passed in 11 minutes, without any debate, in total ignorance of the studies that had already been done.

The next day, Friday, the DSS came out with their new "regs". It didn't prohibit

homosexuality outright. What it said was that children should be placed with traditional families — relatives first, then traditional families, and if you were single or gay you would have to be considered on a case-by-case basis. But it made it pretty clear that it was highly unlikely that a gay person would ever get a child. Or anybody untraditional — for example, single women.

One reporter walked into a community, wrote an article, and in two weeks we had new laws and new regs. And that was that. Dukakis has not only backed this, but he has lied, as far as I'm concerned . . . On June 21 there was a most exciting forum of social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, private agencies reviewing their policies on foster care placement, and many agencies issued statements quoting the research — that there are no untoward effects on the children, no prior evidence of any of the ills attributed to children being raised by homosexuals. Right now, a third of the children in foster care are placed in non-traditional homes — single, divorced or whatever. So they talked about the needs of the children and the discrimination issue. At 5 o'clock, Dukakis met with 12 people who had sat in overnight at his office — from the lesbian and gay defense league — to get a meeting with him. And he said that he would not change his position, because it was in agreement with the majority of the field. Well, I spent the afternoon with the (people in the) field, from 1 to 4 p.m., and his opinion is **not** in agreement, and he knows that, because every person who spoke had already sent him, weeks before, copies of their stuff!

I read the paper that night. The whole
cont'd. on p.23



About 75 Provincetown lesbians and gay men demonstrated against the DSS's anti-gay foster parent policy on June 21 outside the Provincetown Inn, where Gov. Michael Dukakis was addressing a state Department of Welfare convention. He slipped in through a rear entrance to avoid them, but local and up-Cape media covered the demo, one of the first ever to take place in Provincetown. The demonstrators carried signs saying "Gays Foster Love", "Give 'Em Good Homes, Give 'Em Gay Homes", "Ignorance Is the Real Moral Threat to Kids", "We Love Our Gay Moms and Dads" and "Gay Parents Unite, Our Kids Are Next", and **Womantide** staffer Jackie Lapidus made the front page of the **Cape Cod Times** next day wearing a sign that said "Sappho Was a Lesbian Mother".

The demonstrators accused the governor of acting for political reasons and ignoring the real needs of foster children. Restaurant owner and town nurse Alice Foley observed, "Kids do not ask sexual preference when they are hungry and abused."

ANTI-PORN

Nikki Craft, women's rights and nudist activist (see **Womantide**, Fall/Winter 1984), was arrested again twice in Provincetown this past July for actions she described as "civil disobedience as retaliation against sexually violent images in the media" and against the discriminatory ban on topless sunbathing for women on National Seashore beaches. Nikki, now of Oshkosh, Wis., and Melissa Farley of Iowa City tore up copies of **Penthouse** and **Hustler** in retail outlets on the Fourth of July, after pointing out to cashiers and shoppers that they contained photos of women being tortured, "a form of violent propaganda against women." On July 9, she and Harriet Arnoldi of Wellfleet were arrested for barring their breasts at the Race Point ranger station.

The leaflets she gave to the press and passersby, signed by an organization called Citizens for Media Responsibility Without Law*, made it clear that "there is a difference between a genuine love, acceptance and empowerment of the body, and the marketing of women and exploitation of nudity that is the trademark of pornography. We do not want pornography hidden. We want it displayed, discussed and rejected as bigotry." Another flyer explained, "We defend freedom of explicit sexual information and erotic expression. We are not working for legislation that might introduce new limits on free expression." But, added Melissa Farley, "Pornographers have freedom of expression and we don't." □

*P.O. Box 6571, Oshkosh, WI 54902

Leave Me A Rose

The story "Leave Me a Rose" in our last issue created quite a stir among our readers, as we expected. The point of publishing this piece was to show that lesbian culture is extremely varied, and to give first-hand testimony on lesbian S/M, which for the past few years has been at the heart of an ongoing debate among lesbian feminists nationwide, on issues of pornography, censorship and sexual expression. Let's briefly review our publishing history:

SPRING/SUMMER 1984

Womantide published a cover photo of two masked nude women by Morgan Gwenwald, longtime feminist and founding member of New York's Lesbian Herstory Archives, along with an interview by Mimi Joyce with Provincetown therapists Ann McCord and Alice Foley, continuing our "women's sexual issues" series. Their topic: lesbian sado-masochism and power & trust. Alice: "There's no way anyone could convince me that that's appropriate for two people to do to one another. That's frightening. It's abandoning." Ann: "The people left handcuffed or hooded in the bedroom didn't feel or sound victimized, but very highly eroticized." The cover photo itself elicited a wide range of responses, from appreciation of its surrealist aesthetic and of its message (S/M dykes are still in the closet) to reactions

that it was "ugly" or dismay that Womantide's cover subject could possibly be the "faceless woman".

FALL/WINTER 1984

A more mainstream feminist issue, but Womantide editors felt obliged to print a reader's letter criticizing the McCord-Foley interview: "Having two therapists and a moderator discuss sexual behavior they have never tried is like having a panel of male doctors discuss lesbian sexuality." The editors responded that S/M was still largely a closeted practice in Provincetown, but promised they would publish a first-hand S/M fantasy — anonymously, at the author's request.

SPRING 1985

Womantide published a beautifully-written work of fiction in a lead position in the magazine, even though we had mixed feelings about the practices described in it. Explicit pain in the story was counterbalanced by extreme pride, dignity and self-assertion on the part of the narrator, who took the "bottom" or passive role. The characters were well-defined individuals; neither was made to humiliate herself or to be verbally abused. They both were explicitly satisfied sexually and emotionally by the experience of pain.

In our introduction we stated simply that we knew who the author was, respected her, and were pleased to publish her work in Womantide. A photograph by Barbara Mayer, which had appeared in a group show at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum during the winter, accompanied the story. Unfortunately we omitted the title: "Stone Cold" is a photo of part of the statue in front of the A-House Bar in Provincetown, and not, as some readers assumed, a bruised woman's body.

The story accomplished its goals: it made readers explore strong feelings, consider controversial issues, and recognize that lesbian S/M has been happening in Provincetown.

We lost some underwriters and one sales outlet (Read Cycle), none of which feel comfortable supporting an organization that publishes such material. Which is their right; it's all part of the freedom we're talking about here. But we also received much support for our action, and we know we are empowering artists, whose freedom is at stake, when we publish controversial material.

Womantide has always been and will remain an open forum. We are glad to see other women speaking out on these issues, including those who disagree with us. We will continue to address these issues in future magazines, and we encourage you all to send us copy and comments.

(see opposite page for comments)

womantide magazine cover featuring the title 'womantide' and a black and white photograph of two women in a physical struggle or embrace.

womantide magazine cover featuring the title 'womantide', the story title 'Leave Me A Rose', and the author 'by Anonymous of Provincetown', along with a black and white photograph of a woman's face in shadow.

has womantide gone too far?

A Rose by Any Other Name...

To the Editors:

It seems to me we have so many more important and timely issues on which **Womantide** can lend comment. "Leave Me a Rose" is so fringe-oriented as to alienate more minds than it is worth. Therefore, not seeing the forest for this highly emotional tree may result in lost credibility . . . and subscriptions for **Womantide**. Don't let this happen.

Ronni Anonymous
Provincetown

To the Editors:

I would like to commend **Womantide** for the courage to publish "Leave Me A Rose" in its recent issue, at a time when many publications and bookstores are closing their doors on a subject that, while being disturbing and controversial, is a genuine facet of many women's experience, one that needs, in these days of Pluto in Scorpio, a forum to air its dimensions and be understood.

I am personally much more disturbed by the self-righteousness and proscription in our midst, which is political, public and repressive, than by the expression of consensual private acts leading to pleasure as defined by its participants, and I celebrate anyone's freedom to explore, change and define that realm according to her arousal.

Olga Broumas
Provincetown

From the Editor:

WOMANTIDE, the magazine, can be seen as a living entity. Like any living entity, it has its own mandala. It is a product of its possibilities, as well as a producer of its own possibilities. Its structures are neither predetermined nor undirected. WOMANTIDE functions within the rationale of its particular social, ethical, and aesthetically defined structures, but the magazine is open to its future, and is perpetually changing. This means that as a living entity, WOMANTIDE is also subject to the exigencies of its collective unconscious. We, as editors, are not closed to the influences of the deeper, darker, and sometimes disturbing visions that surface from the material of some of our contributors. I'm referring specifically to the more heavy-duty documentation of lesbian S/M which we've found fit to publish. We cannot censor that Pluto energy within us all. We must begin to understand and to integrate the more disturbing projections of our own shadows along the sexual continuum—the continuum which is in itself composed of all our collective influences. We must maintain dialogue, and open relationships between all aspects of our collective personality, in order to understand one another, to develop, to grow, to transform.

It is essential, if we are striving to maintain a large community, to ensure access to different, not necessarily opposed, dimensions of thought. WOMANTIDE is committed to keeping the communication about our relationships to each other open. Within our pages we work to share the artistic expressions of our joys, our sorrows, our dreams, our politics together.

Randy Tuoff
San Francisco

recommended reading

*We strongly recommend Joan Nestle's "My History with Censorship" as essential reading for our friends (still good and dear friends) who objected to "Leave Me a Rose". Joan's essay appeared in the Spring 1985 issue of **Bad Attitude** magazine. Here is an excerpt:*

"Some proposed antipornography laws could be used to silence most of my erotic writings if my words are interpreted to mean subordination . . . If you as a community lose my voice, no worlds will end. But think of what is happening. Think of the times and the traditional relationship between the state and sexual minorities. Think of the tools of repression some are helping to put in place. The antipornography movement is helping to recreate a new McCarthy period in the lesbian community. Some lesbians are more acceptable than others. Leather and butch and fem lesbians, transsexuals, lesbian prostitutes and sex workers, writers of explicit sexual stories, little by little we are being rounded up. First we are distanced and told we are not feminists—even though many of us have spent years building the movement. Then we are told we are patriarchal . . . voices of submission and dominance . . . heterosexual lesbians. The doors close to us. Then . . . there will be nothing between us and the government the antiporn movement is helping to empower."

Joan Nestle



monoprint

by DENISE MINTER

HUMOROUS FICTION

“HOW WAS IT COMPARED TO LAST NIGHT?”

by RITA SPEICHER

I can never even the score nor do I want to, so when the radiator bursts and floods the plants still on the floor while we are making love I decide it will be the last time with Alexandria.

I twist a corner of blue sheet into my fist and decide. If Alexandria continues to enter sex as archetypal competition, pitching orgasm against orgasm in a perversely cherished tally, I will have no part of her.

Even if in our raw intentional pleasure I am incapable of imagining another.

It's not just the tally.

Alexandria always asks while my body still drifts in that adoring tangent of after-sex “How was it compared to last night?” At first I thought she was joking but Alexandria is serious in bed as if solving a complex historical problem.

With Alexandria sexual passion is always tumultuous. It lifts her eyes from where they normally rest deep in her skull and makes her stare as dangerous as her hand. Only she can enter me then, no thought, memory, fantasy. And each time she asks “How was it compared to last night?” I am shocked. I moan. Like a handshake, it is a formality that admits nothing.

That is, I think I have decided.

Alexandria turns into the pillow and sleeps. I have no idea how old she is. Tonight I am too agitated to sleep. I blow out the candle, the last of a purple gross an ex-lover bequeathed to Alexandria in a scandalous will.

In the dark my fingers graze her breast. She stirs away from the accident. Alexandria is beautiful but she is not bewitching. I replace the bottle cap of Love Oil #9, Cinnamon. Maybe my courage is too thin to argue with Alexandria again.

Last week I argued like this.

“I'm calling it scoring because that's what it is.” I am sitting on the edge of our bed. Alexandria curves her body across its width. She kisses my hip. She eases her arm around my waist to my thigh.

“Will you please stop for a moment. I can't think when you touch me.”

“Then why think,” Alexandria says, the flat logic of someone who believes in sex the way people used to believe in the native benevolence of nature or progress.

“Because I need to talk to you,” my voice rises in pitch.

She floats her fingers down my thigh then up again, spread like a bronze fan. With her fingers on me, the pure suggestion that two or three could immediately enter, I begin to fail my argument.

With her free hand Alexandria lifts the ten-pound dumb bell and starts flexing. She admires physical strength the way people who regret language do.

“Look, the first time you asked me I thought it was amusing, endearing, kind of love talk.”

Alexandria sits up and drops the dumb bell. “It's not talk.” She lights a Marlboro and passes it to me. She doesn't smoke but like my mother eats figs from the jar, mixing their syrup with heavy cream. “Some people need fantasies, center-folds, toys. It excites me to know how I'm doing each step of the way.” She sinks her thumb into the center of a bavarian creme donut on the night table.

I do not understand Alexandria which may be explained by the fact that we met in a parking lot.

I leaned against a DeSoto resurrected by Karmachanics and the back door opened. Alexandria exits followed by a small woman in cut-offs. Alexandria's long legs stretch in front of me. A thin cream leather belt.

She crosses the parking lot, ushers the small woman inside the bar, walks back to me. I am thinking she has forgotten something in the DeSoto. She stands close enough to kiss, touches her finger tips to mine and asks if I want to go swimming at the lake. Though we have watched each other many times, we have never been introduced.

This morning I wake to cinnamon, Alexandria's hands on my thighs, her tongue on my clit, lightly, still, no more than an insinuation.

Alexandria prowls the physical. I wait for her. “Tell me what you want. Ask me. Tell me what.” Between the edge of my skin and the air, I swell for her in the terrible exhilaration of having forgotten the future. And when she asks “How was it compared to last night?” I am still shocked and I still moan.

She goes to work before my pleasure turns.

On and off, Alexandria works in a bakery. She brings home French bread, donuts, wedding cake. □

Rita Speicher is a founder, coordinator and faculty member of Freehand, a women's community of artists, writers & photographers based in Provincetown. Her work above is excerpted from a longer piece entitled "The Healing Arts After Hours."

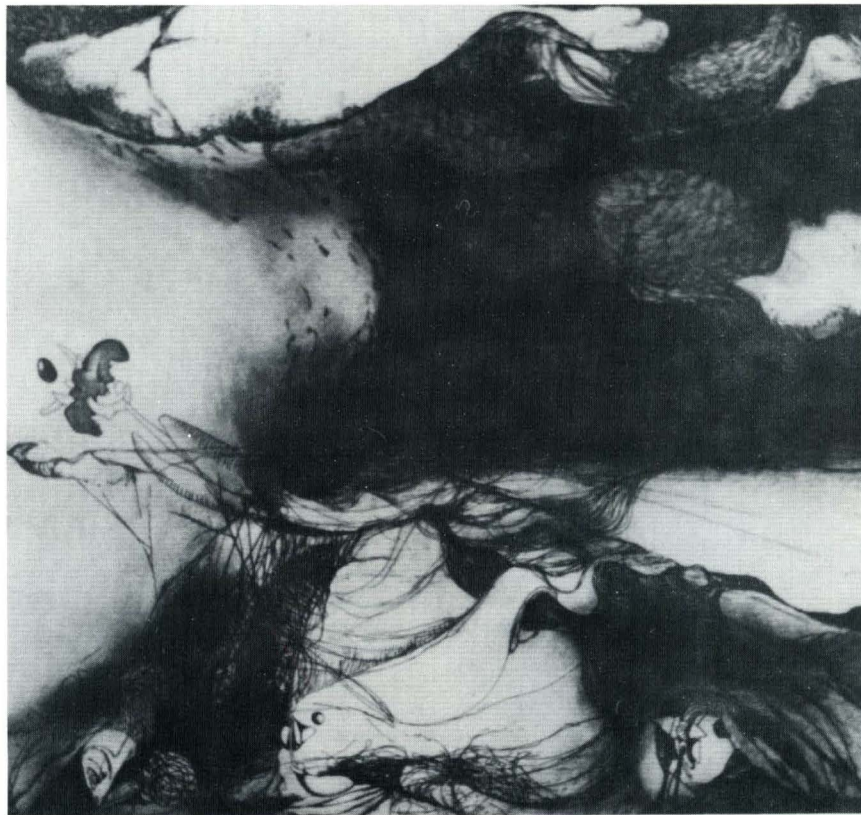
Two Poems by Randy Turoff

ATLANTIC BACKDROP

*This brazen horizon has been performing again,
living through some beginning and waking behind the next.*

*The sea superimposes indifference between the sky
and earth. It simply constructs all eyes.*

*As long as you haven't arrived, so that we can persist
with these wooden wars of the syllables,
let's just say that each of us must fashion
what she cuts from her disasters.*



Atlantic: The Rising of Astounded Souls.

Etching — Laurie White



ANIMA/ANIMUS
sculpture by Analia Magen

BONDAGE TO BEAUTY from a sculpture by Analia

*In the mirror
me, painted, masked
beauty I admire she sees I
with her vision
on the wall
adorning her studio, in pieces.
twisted off fragments
torso stories
muscle and bone romance
We hide erratically in poses,
become schematized
electric people flashed on a screen —
quick events in the eyes of our sunglasses.*

*It's the pain I adore,
It's the pain,
it's almost solid
the cocoon she's spun.
I snuggle
beneath her command
with wet bandages
she applies her caresses
my armpits lubed
along the bones a cheek is smoothed
pubes oiled
body bound.*

*Between my legs tingle
erect nipples
brush the smell of hair awakened
to comforts more tender
the body yields
still smarting from constriction.
muscle and bone romance
torso stories
twisted off fragments*

*What you see in me, baby
Is what I've given you,
my obsolescence,
to know, to use, and to destroy.*

Lesbian-owned guesthouses, entirely or mostly for women, provide a special kind of space for lesbian activities in Provincetown and, for their owners, a lifestyle difficult to find elsewhere. In this interview, seven lesbians talk about their experiences in the guesthouse business. What they say here is only part of what they told **Womantide**; for reasons of space, we have kept our focus to the aspects of their lives and work most closely related to the gay atmosphere in Provincetown. And their views are of course not the complete picture, since there are now about a dozen lesbian-owned guesthouses in town and we were unable to interview everyone involved in running them. We do feel, though, that these women are a representative sample of the range of backgrounds, styles and attitudes to be found among Provincetown's lesbian "innkeepers".

JACKIE: Guesthouses especially for women are a notable feature of lesbian life in Provincetown. How did you happen to open one? Was this something you always wanted to do?

MARGE: I started mine in 1978 because there wasn't any girls' guesthouse then. I came up here after my first lover of 27 years died . . . we came here in 1950 on our honeymoon.

CAROLE: I found the company I worked for moving progressively backward as far as women's opportunities were going. My feeling was that I'd like to go out on my own. The thing I thought I could handle best was a guesthouse, especially as I spent so much of my time in Provincetown.

MIKE: I just came up vacationing, in 1983, and the last day I said, "I think I'll look at real estate". I went back to another guesthouse where I had stayed ten years previous; I knew the old gentleman could lead me to a potential place. I was flying out of town in two hours, and I said to the realtor, "Would you like to show me the house?" As soon as I walked in, it felt like something I was supposed to do.

HELEN: I wanted something of my own. I wanted to own my own business. I'd been visiting here five or six years, and I thought, people always need a place to stay. I was going to buy a condo, live in it and rent out the other rooms. But B.J. came with me and we ended up buying the business together.

JACKIE: Had either of you run a business before?

HELEN: Nope! I was a police officer. At the time I left I was in the detective bureau, in community relations. And as I looked ahead, I couldn't see myself retiring in it. I wanted something I could really put myself into. I'd taught school before that. B.J. worked at a corporation that made precision tools.

GABRIEL: I went to art school and was doing photography for years before I became involved with the guesthouse. And I taught photography for a while in Provincetown. I bought the house in 1979 with my lover, who was a handyperson and carpenter, and my partner from the kite store and her husband; we each had 25%. Over the years I bought my other partners out. My lover and I broke up and I bought her out too, so I ended up having it by myself. It was a women's guesthouse starting in 1980.

DOTTY: We'd moved down here from the North Shore and started Pilgrim Cab; we'd been here for three years. Rents were outrageous, and we decided it was time to get involved in an income-producing house.

JACKIE: What were you doing before you came to Provincetown?

DIANE: Dotty had a 9 to 5 job which she hated.

DOTTY: I was working in a multimedia kind of place, with a man who was a genius but very difficult to work for. There was sexual harassment. I just knew it was time to get out of it.

DIANE: I'd been a teacher for a number of years. Every time I had an opportunity to

MAKING LESBIAN SPACE: WOMEN'S GUESTHOUSE OWNERS

DIANE BAINS, MARGE BETZOLD, GABRIEL BROOKE,
HELEN BROWN, DOTTY MULCAHY, CAROLE WHITMAN,
MIKE WRIGHT

INTERVIEWED by Jackie Lapidus

get into other jobs, I kept falling back into part-time teaching, coaching, substituting. We had a friend who had a cab company in P'town. We came down to lease it, and ended up staying.

JACKIE: Was it difficult getting started? What kind of support did you get from other people, and from whom?

HELEN: No problem at all from the other businesses. The only other guesthouse person we met was Marge. Then we joined the Provincetown Business Guild, which helped out considerably. When you join them, you meet everybody. And the guy across the street had a guesthouse — he was really helpful. Once people know you're here — like, we regularly bought coffee at the same shop — you get to know the people who run that shop. The Cellar Bar was one of our first places for socializing. From there you get contacts. And most of those were women. It seems like a separate clique as long as you're visiting. To get to know the women, they have to know you're going to be here for a while. If you've come in to make your bucks and roll away, it's not like you're part of the community. You've got to invest in it.

MIKE: I did have to get a commercial mortgage, and I was an out-of-state person, so it was a little difficult only because (the bank) didn't know me, and I was many states away. Also, I had to write quite a proposal package to convince them I was businesslike — a good risk. I picked Carole's brain, and I talked to Marge and some of the other guesthouse owners.

CAROLE: We took over the existing mortgage. And we had to take out a second mortgage with the owners, and a third for the renovations.

JACKIE: How did other hotelkeepers react to the phenomenon of women's guesthouses?

CAROLE: It wasn't so much a phenomenon as a relief, because many places were overbooked. They had a new kid in town, so they could send a lot of women our way. That's basically what kept us going our first summer.

MARGE: When I started, mine was the only women's guesthouse, and they all referred to me.

JACKIE: And who came through for you when the going got rough?

MARGE: Oh, my mother . . . until she passed away.

MIKE: My mother went through it all with me. It's wonderful that I had her. She had such great energy. When I knew I had two weeks to get the house prepared for opening, my mother would beat me out of bed every morning at six and say, "get out there and start painting, start cleaning, you have to be ready in two weeks!" And it did happen.

CAROLE: The people I couldn't deal with, Mary could deal with, and the things she liked to do, I didn't care to do, so we could play off each other. Plus, the women are very supportive of each other.

DIANE: The other women's houses gave us a lot of tips about things to watch out for, a lot of good advice. In fact, the papers went out June 10 and we already had a full house for Fourth of July weekend. We had to get it together in three weeks. We had to run up to Boston to get furniture, but somehow we did get it together.

DOTTY: And I was on crutches at the time! It was hard that first summer, because we were running a cab, starting a new business, the whole mortgage trip.

DIANE: We were trying to do everything by ourselves, chambermaids and everything. This is our third season now, and we delegate.

JACKIE: If you started the business with a lover, did working together cause problems in your relationship, or vice versa? Gabriel, you said you and your lover broke up . . .

GABRIEL: One of the drawbacks in the relationship was that we were working all the time. I was going through a very ambitious period in my life, and I was very driven to produce a lot. I think that what happened

was that it became a work relationship more than an emotional relationship. We didn't have any romantic time with each other. But I think that, ideally, I would love to be 'married' with somebody and run this with her.

JACKIE: You don't think it would come to the same end?

GABRIEL: No, because now the work isn't so extreme. In the beginning years, it was a 50-60 hour week here. Now the work is cosmetic — painting a room, refinishing furniture. We're not having to build walls, floors and ceiling. No, I think it would be a wonderful lifestyle with a lover — because we'd be home all the time!

CAROLE: The business itself had nothing to do with the relationship. It was something we both wanted to do, and we felt very comfortable about doing it, being with each other 24 hours a day. The relationship was deteriorating before we moved down here. Because we were both doing something we really loved, it put in the background the things that were really a problem, and we just immersed ourselves in the house. And in pleasing other people.

JACKIE: And if you're not lovers, are you still friends?

CAROLE: I don't know if we're still friends, it's still an ongoing situation. Maybe ask me tomorrow!

I think that when we do these things, we're not prepared — we don't have ourselves down legally. If you're really smart, you have this whole thing down on paper. We had actually gone to a seminar, at which an attorney spoke, and talked about partnerships. And we looked at each other and said yeah, we really should do that. And we really should have a will. We just never sat down and did it.

MARGE: Because you think you're never gonna break up.

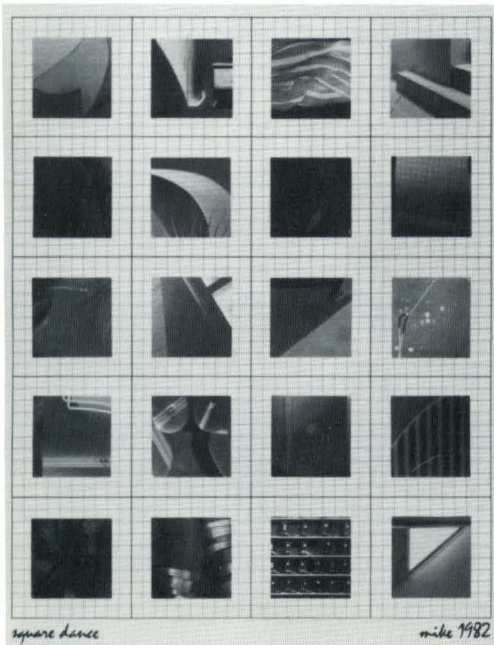
HELEN: We both like the guesthouse business, and we've been talking about doing it together again. We still get on very well as partners. We had loads of fun together — like doing the rooms, we used to laugh and joke, it was so coordinated, so great. We regret that we sold (our first house). We should have held on to it.

JACKIE: Dotty, how did running two businesses affect you and Diane?

DOTTY: It was the beginning of the end, I guess.

DIANE: It was part of it, definitely. We were obviously having other difficulties; we'd been together seven years.

JACKIE: Do you think having to carry on helped you through the crisis? cont'd.



square dance

mike 1982

orig. dimensions 15" x 19 1/2"

WOMEN'S GUESTHOUSE OWNERS

DOTTY: It did, but there were times when we both just wanted to pack it up. We thought we'd split the businesses, one to each of us. But we just worked it through.

JACKIE: What made you decide not to split?

DIANE: I dunno — a combination of emotional involvement and a financial commitment to the two businesses, I guess. I think we can effectively run them better together than trying to do it individually.

* * *

JACKIE: Let's talk a little about the atmosphere in the women's guesthouses. What's the big attraction at your place?

MIKE: I've added the breakfast draw to mine, so I'm getting a crowd that likes that kind of social situation, where they can gather at breakfast and talk to other women. That's my special thing. And a parking lot! It's amazing how many people call and the big five things they ask for are air conditioning, cable tv, private baths, parking and bathtubs! I say the breeze is on the patio and they never have time to watch cable tv. Too many things to do.

JACKIE: Cable tv is on Carole's porch.

CAROLE: Exactly. You see it all from the porch. That's what I think draws many people here. It's sort of a melting pot.

GABRIEL: Something significant that has happened at my house is that people associated with it have had great community dinners and parties together — we've had alcohol- and drug-free parties here — and Christmases, and it's created an alternative family for me. It feels good that this space has been used on many occasions for social events that haven't been pickup scenes or anything like that. There have been readings here, and photography stuff, and it's been really nice. Also, this summer Alix Dobkin gave a concert in the back yard; last summer we had a concert too, and the Dyketones and Ricky Yorke were there.

HELEN: I wish I had the facilities. My common space is just my enclosed porch, where I have continental breakfast. If the place were larger, I would definitely like to make it more open, like Gabriel's. But some socializing goes on in the morning, when coffee is out. They'll start a conversation and I'll join in it too; it lends to the guesthouse atmosphere. It's not like a motel or hotel. It's that home-away-from-home, with other women. And we share a lot — there's no end to what you can talk about.

JACKIE: Do guests ask you for information about lesbian life in Provincetown?

HELEN: A lot, especially if it's their first time here. I try to steer people — if there's a

restaurant I haven't heard good things about, I'll let them know that, or where to go dancing, or quiet places where you can have a conversation . . . I don't know where I saw this, maybe one of the men's guesthouses, but they had a chart with all the places listed, and categories, "excellent, good, fair, bad". And the guests would put check marks. When you live here, you don't go out so often! So this way, the women could use the checklist.

“Basically I said I was flattered, but the business was my love at this point.”

DOTTY: The women who come here can sit in the common room and enjoy being together; they meet other women. In (straight places) there's not that kind of space for women to get together. We've taken women who come here to parties, too — to some very strange parties! Especially in the winter, a lot of women come down for romantic, quiet evenings together — it's really nice. We've also had seminars here. There's an older lesbians' group that held one here; they stayed in other guesthouses but met in our common room. We're also trying to set up an area where women can show their art.

CAROLE: The supreme challenge I see is that two women come down, they walk straight to the porch, they're looking straight ahead, they don't want to become part of the social scene, and all of a sudden, as the days go on, people say "hi" to them, next day they get a little bit warmer, and before you know it they're sitting right in with everybody else. They're feeling comfortable, they go out to the Pied Piper, they see a friendly face and they've got someone to talk to.

JACKIE: What do they ask you for?

MARGE: Restaurants — someplace they can eat without getting sick.

CAROLE: Toilet paper, they always ask for toilet paper.

MIKE: Changing rolls for women!

MARGE: I keep 20 rolls under the toilet — they can always help themselves.

CAROLE: Where the bike trails are. Horseback riding. The best whale watch to go on.

MIKE: What to do if it rains.

CAROLE: They blame you!

MARGE: Except the newlyweds!

JACKIE: Do your guests always come in couples?

MARGE: Yeah.

MIKE: I've seen more single women this year than last year.

JACKIE: And if the singles meet somebody here, do they tell you?

MIKE: Do they blame you?

MARGE: I have all double beds, so it doesn't matter. They can bring someone home for a night or two.

MIKE: They pay double price, so they can bring somebody home, and, I'd say, eventually most do. I get the comment, "can I bring her to breakfast?" Then I definitely know what's going on.

MARGE: There was a girl from Arizona once . . . and another girl came and I didn't have any room. So I said, if you want to share her room . . . And they got together, they stayed for weeks, and they both went to Arizona. They stayed together about a year and a half. I hear from the one — she comes back every summer. And the other one — this is the best part — owed me about \$150, and she kept saying it was coming in and it never came, right? And she had to leave. I got that money, like, four years later.

JACKIE: Do the singles ever flirt with the landlady?

HELEN: Not this landlady! oh, on occasion, but it doesn't happen very often. Last year there was a woman who was just coming out of a relationship . . . you know, if I feel someone's really vulnerable, we usually just sit and talk a lot. But I don't usually act on it. There's something about mixing business with pleasure . . .

MIKE: Some of the guests have tried to get romantically involved with me. I did have a woman from New York — she had never really been a lesbian, but she felt that she was one. Me being friendly, I guess she took that to mean I was making an overture. When she got back to New York she gave me a call. Basically I said that I was flattered, but the business was my love at this point.

MARGE: My guests think I'm pretty wild for my age — when I'm out dancing, I last longer than they do. They're in their 20s, 30s.

JACKIE: I don't know how old you are, Marge. Old enough to have been around?

MARGE: Several times!

JACKIE: Do you think they're attracted to your experience?

MARGE: I think we just have fun.

DIANE: We don't have time! Sometimes the single women like to hang around with us and see what's going on.



Women & PROVINCETOWN *in the Fall!*

October 18, 19, 20

Provincetown is spectacular in the fall, the pace is slow and the air is brisk. Join us, the women's guest-house owners, and let us introduce off-season Provincetown to you.

On this unique three-day weekend you'll enjoy:

- ★ open houses
- ★ a women's concert
- ★ a bay cruise
- ★ P-town women talent show
- ★ brunches
- ★ a beach clambake
- ★ hiking & biking
- ★ womantide videos

Reserve early, contact your favorite women's guest house for special package rates or call 487-3232/487-2283 for further information.

DOTTY: I wear a sign that says "Not Interested".

DIANE: That is, actually, something that can be bothersome: lack of space, your own personal space in the guesthouse. You're renting out as much as you can, which includes your own room. You end up sleeping in very small, cramped spaces.

MIKE: I could tell you a story about a fight in my house. I was watching the Olympics; it was about nine in the evening, and all of a sudden the beds started moving around. And I heard doors slamming and I went, uh-oh! I ran up the stairs and knocked on the door and said, "If you want to have a fight, please go to the beach, or go into your car, but you're disturbing the house." By the time I got to the bottom of the stairs they had started up again, and one of the women said, "I've been waiting four years to tell you this!" and she proceeded to tell her, and then I heard fists smacking. I ran up again and knocked on the door real fast and said, "all right, one of you has to come out of there!" One woman was quite frail and the other one was hefty, and I thought for sure the hefty was smacking on the small frail one. But it turned out to be the opposite, because when the door opened this woman had what was to be quite a black eye for the next week. She came down and watched the Olympics with me, till her lover cried herself to sleep. The next day there was a wonderful bottle of wine at my door, and two cards asking for forgiveness. But they never did appear for breakfast after that.

JACKIE: Are all your guests lesbians?

DIANE: Well, we get all women — we don't ask them about their sexuality, but I think about 95% of the women are lesbians.

DOTTY: The only straight women I can think of, off the top of my head, were someone's mother and aunt. They had a wonderful time, they just loved it here! They'd come down and have cocktails and ask other women to join them.

JACKIE: What is it about a women's atmosphere?

DIANE: I think they feel comfortable — running around in their shorts, with their tops off — it's their space.

DOTTY: Which we encourage, of course. Our chambermaid runs around topless in a leather bikini!

HELEN: Actually, my card says "woman-owned", but most guidebooks have (symbol) keys that say gay-owned. I don't want to turn away straight women either. If women as women need a women's space, if they don't feel intimidated by being around lesbians, then I don't want to put that on them. I want it to be known that I'm a lesbian, but

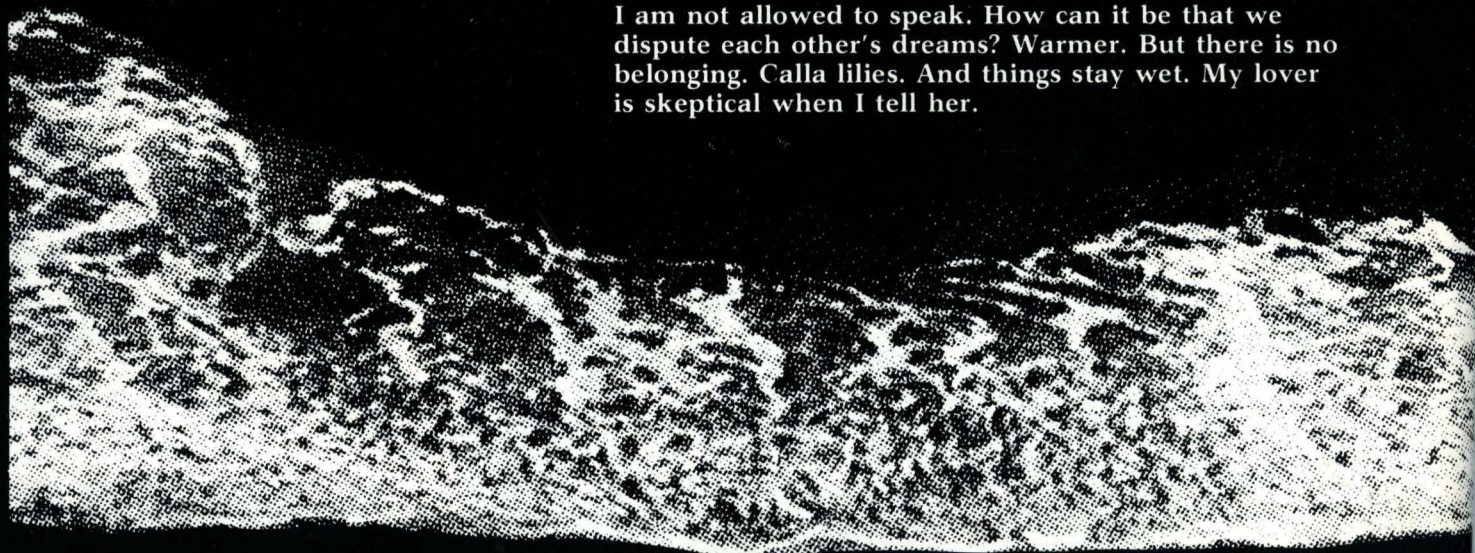
Princess Stephanie looking hot on the pages of Vogue.
Dark haired lover we desire, can't believe she did it
for the money. Her own form of charity. Mid-winter
a princess, warm shoulders and a look that says, "try."
A kind of call forth. How the edge of the ocean daily
has changed me. Not too shy to stare. A billion years
of sexual exploitation on the cellular level a lesbian
is by nature a revolutionary. By the time we reach the
chocolate mousse we're bored of talking romance. Move
into the hard sciences. The why of it. Not the how,
not the with whom. Saffron socks with black camels.
Willing of time.

Frailty by Kim Vaeth

The winter. Years. In March, a linen suit is tried on
but still no change. The difficulty of orgasm
with my beautiful selfish lover who is now unselfishly
sleeping with others. Little intimacies on the phone
while the two of us bathe together. Until the water
in the white tub grows cold, we do not argue about money.
Though the compulsion for affection runs deep. Damp
sour towels. She's asleep and sad in my arms dreaming
that all is lost. Especially her childhood

in another country. A beautiful selfish country
whose inhabitants dream of their childhoods in other
countries. Even the lies that happen in dreams
are the truth. Back and forth. From the street
to the dream. From the dream to the house: language
oh hometown! Papagos. Corrientes. Greenhill. A winter
of cold food and fragments. Few believe the carrot
before its plastic bag. The dream before its meaning.
My lover is skeptical when I tell her the recurring

dream about an old lover is a way of looking at my
father. Or that my friend Frances is, in the dream,
also my grandmother, Frances. Dream pictures. Fragments.
Hands waving from dark windows as I walk
to the uneaten meal. Beside me, the inmates with whom
I am not allowed to speak. How can it be that we
dispute each other's dreams? Warmer. But there is no
belonging. Calla lilies. And things stay wet. My lover
is skeptical when I tell her.

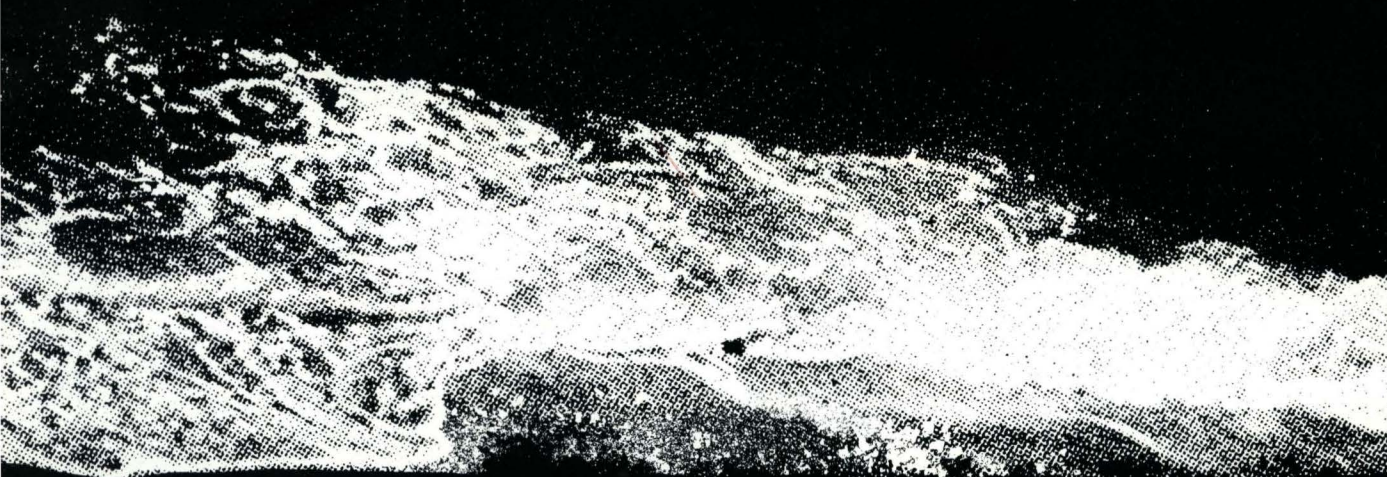


PROVINCETOWN

Sonnets by Marilyn Hacker

While you slept, I'd pull on, quietly,
jeans and shirt, jacket, take books and go
downstairs (behind her door, Mrs. Aho
was ironing, with the 8AM TV
news on, low volume), creak through the screen door
and walk off like a sailor in the fog.
No one was on the street but a tan dog
patrolling hedges. The grocery store
was closed. Down toward the bay, Commercial Street
glistened like an abandoned movie set.
A few fag jocks jogged by in shorts. The fleet
was out since dawn. I knew where I could get
coffee, read, chat in French if I wanted to.
Toward ten, town waking, I'd walk back to you.

Some nights there blazes on these neutral walls
my favorite home movie, starring you.
(When neither of *us* are, it's a deep blue,
triple-X rated — that's for kisses.) All's
well that begins well, talking in the dark
around some brandy. When you're on your back
your voice gets lower, aphrodisiac
— too bad if we're sprawled in Riverside Park,
but now we're not, and soon enough, your mouth
close to my ear, moves over mine, and I
move over you. You say you can't slow-dance:
I say I'm clumsy: not from circumstantial
evidence. Everything migrates south
where summer stars burn stories on the sky.



SISTAH BOOM

text by Randy Turoff

You hear them everywhere, a rolling thunder of percussion, women's energy raised together flooding the streets, the parks, the stage with sound. It's **SISTAH BOOM**, a community-based, multi-cultural women's percussion and dance ensemble created by Carolyn Brandy, formerly of the band **ALIVE**. They came together five years ago to play at the Gay Freedom Day Parade and have played every Gay Day since then. This year, with 104 musicians doing Afro-Cuban and Brazilian rhythms, and with 16 hot, hot dancers, **SISTAH BOOM** spread her joyous energy through the streets of San Francisco. You could also catch **SISTAH BOOM** at marches against U.S. intervention in Central America, at rallies against apartheid in South Africa, at events in support of lesbian and gay struggles, etc.

Says Stefanie Mattfeld, dancer and choreographer, (pictured in the center photo):

"We're a really rowdy bunch, we have fun. Rehearsals are as much fun as the gigs . . . We also have rap meetings. Right now we're having ongoing racism workshops. We're getting together and doing process, bringing up issues and feelings that have come up within the group. It's a start of real communication around things so that people can feel safe talking, feel safe with each other. And we're getting to know each other better. That's what's so great."





photos by Happy/L.A. Hyder
dancers by Erica Marcus



Jean! an interview.

by Sherry Dranch

SHERRY: As a woman and an artist, does being surrounded by women in intimate relationships create a different kind of spiritual and emotional space for you?

JEAN: Yeah, oh yeah, very different.

SHERRY: Does that environment inform your work at all, is it one of the reasons why you're in Provincetown?

JEAN: Well, that certainly is one reason. I love that about this place. I once lived with a woman for twelve years. We had a wonderful relationship but it sort of broke up, mainly from drinking, which I've stopped. Just about twelve years ago. But she's become one of my best friends and she comes down here about once a month or so and spends a weekend, and we go swimming. We're very relaxed with each other. I hope to find somebody, another close relationship, eventually. Right now I'm very into my work and stuff. And I'm certainly not lonely. I mean, I have a lot of friends.

SHERRY: When did you first come to Provincetown?

JEAN: About ten years ago. And I came actually on a visit. When I had been here about a week, I suddenly said to the girl I was visiting, I think I want to stay here. Because I had no particular plans.

SHERRY: What was it that made you suddenly want to stay?

JEAN: I think one thing was that I was entertained by gay women, all the lesbians, I liked that a lot. And I liked its proximity to the ocean, and I loved the idea of whale watches, which were just starting then. I went on three and never saw a whale, and then all of a sudden we began seeing them and it was terrific!

SHERRY: Have you had any experiences that might be called of a psychic or spiritual nature out here?

JEAN: Well, I think my trips out to Race Point in the middle of winter are very psychic. It's the tremendous power of the waves and the wind, the whole thing. I just dress up to the nth degree with long johns and mittens and everything. I'm fascinated with the power of the sea. We spent summers up in Maine and it was very wild, right near the rocks, and the south-west wind was just roaring in, you know, and it was just beautiful,

and we had three big reefs sort of guarding (the house). I feel quite a lot that way about Provincetown, about Race Point, the guarding sort of effect, the way the point comes around at Land's End. And I like, if I possibly can, to get out on a whale watch once a week, though I'm very busy for the moment.

SHERRY: Do you recognize the individual whales?

JEAN: Yes, sometimes I can. I remember one called Trunk that sang. That was the most exciting time I was out there.

SHERRY: I remember Trunk but I never heard him sing.

JEAN: He just sang that one day. I happened to be out there, and the other boats said, if you keep the boat still over this one point you'll hear some singing. We thought they were kidding; then all of a sudden we heard this beautiful, wild sort of sound. We lay down, we got down on our knees to put our ears against the deck, and listened. It was just beautiful. It was like an orchestra, sometimes. He sang a theme and then variations on it, and then came back to the beginning. It was a fascinating thing just from a musical perspective, which I've always been interested in because our mother was a super violinist. I haven't played in years, but I played the piano and sang and whatnot. And I just enjoy music. I think, you know, if anything happened that I couldn't have a career in painting or sculpture I would like to compose music.



photo by Marian Roth

with Jean Kent, artist and whale watcher

SHERRY: I was struck by what you said about the power of the wind and of the whales, and somehow the bulk of your stone sculpture shows there's some kind of fascination with power. Have you ever thought about what your relationship is to that concept?

JEAN: Well, I think that it (began) very early. I was brought right up with the water, and I think I was 2 months old when my mother brought me up to Maine. She used to put me out in the coach with the water only maybe forty feet away, and I'd be out in the fog and everything. I remember the smells and the feel and sound of the water.

SHERRY: There was no fear?

JEAN: Well, there was a little bit when I was on the Jersey coast trying to ride waves. I was about three or four. Daddy had this idea that we had to swim all the length of the pool by the time we were four or five, so we learned quite early how to do it. I was somewhat scared but very excited. And I think it was a sexual excitement too. I think I have a real love of the ocean. And yes, there's a certain amount of fear. I get scared when there's a bad thunderstorm and I'm out on a whale watch, and things like that. And when I ride waves, if I see a big one coming I usually run. But I love it. I've had a boat, my own boat, ever since I was sixteen. I don't have it now, but I had a racing sloop that I bought second hand and in excellent condition. By the time I was five years old we were taking the wheel and everything along with Daddy sitting right there. My mother's training was interesting. My grandmother was scared to death of the water but never told them because she thought they should be able to enjoy it. So she had a big friendship sloop built for them. My early youth was spent on that boat too. Then they went out on an old lumber schooner. The whole family took a trip with a very unusual and wonderful captain, and he taught them everything he could about ropes and sails and wind and the direction of things.

SHERRY: Do you feel that your relationship to the ocean, then, is like your family's? Do you think of it as mastery?

JEAN: Sort of working **with** it, in a way. I once got in a terrible storm which wasn't forecast, and I was far too far out in the ocean; I sometimes went out of sight of land on a clear day, which is wild. I then had a 16½-foot, very able boat but nevertheless . . . And I remember being terrified, but I was doing my best sailing that I'd ever done in my life. I headed west on the compass course for the North American continent, as nearly as I could before the wind. The waves were at least 20 feet high. All my sailing had to be done when a wave went up, and then I had to have my rudder set exactly right, and then I either went down in the trough so that I was becalmed or else from on top of the wave to the other and just shot. Of course it was highly dangerous. I never, never did that again. Now I never sail out of sight.

SHERRY: No radio or anything?

"WHALES" by Jean Kent

JEAN: No, I had a guy with me who didn't know much about sailing, but I put him quickly into a life preserver, then I didn't dare leave the tiller long enough to get into one myself. My therapist was dying (at the time) and I thought if I did some great enormous adventure in which I was successful, I would save her by some magic sense. I think that had a lot to do with it, because I really knew enough not to go that far out. The Coast Guard said the minute they saw me every eye was fastened on my boat to see if I was gonna make it. It took me three hours to get in, even running before the wind.

SHERRY: What happened to your therapist?

JEAN: She died, yeah. Very sad. I loved her. It had a lot to do with my feelings about women, because a man doctor took me for four years, then he said, now you have to work out your feelings about women. He

cont'd.

said I wanted a lesbian relationship, and then he said, well, you've got to work out your feelings about women so what do you say if I get you a woman (therapist)? And I said, great!

SHERRY: Were they trying to cure you?

JEAN: Well no, they were trying to make me work out my problems. It was a big help, she broke through all kinds of barriers. I was with her for about six months. She was a wonderful woman. So it was a crashing blow when she died, I remember. And then I'm still in therapy, but I just use it as kind of an ongoing thing, you know, in which I bring up problems that are bothering me.

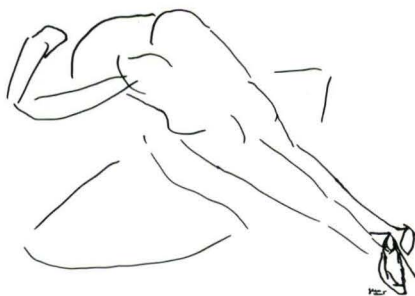
SHERRY: I'm learning a lot about how I feel about your work just by talking about this kind of struggle with overwhelming elements. When I look at your sculpture . . . first of all, they're enormously heavy, and then your work seems to highlight or emphasize the fact that they're resistant — yet if you work with them sort of like the ocean, then something can be done, some experience created.

JEAN: Yeah, the resistance is terrific but that's how I like my muscles to feel, you know, I enjoy that butchy side of it.

SHERRY: Yeah?

JEAN: I wouldn't say which angle I was, specifically. I enjoy that resistance very much. But I also enjoy the unconscious element running through it. You don't quite know what you're starting. Sometimes I work in fact blind, or actually even with my eyes shut and see what comes out, and then I get an idea from that and go on. And sometimes I draw a picture of what I think I'm going to do. But I never can draw in three dimensions, so it's always two dimensions—although I went to art school for years.

I went to one school where I fell in love with my Russian roommate. She wrote poetry. She said I had to pitch my tent out in the woods, and then when she was gonna write a poem I couldn't sleep in the same room with her because she couldn't be disturbed. But I had to leave my trumpet at her room so she could blow in case there was a thunderstorm and she got scared. What a relationship! I was madly in love with her, but I think she was at least partially straight. And that's been a trouble all along. I'm quitting it now. That was something I had to get over. I guess it was the old attraction to my mother. She was a great woman and was responsible for all our wild and wonderful progressive education. At least I think it was. Mother was a very flirty type of woman, too, you know, with somebody she liked. So I was sort of fascinated with her, totally. And I felt very sad when she died this winter. She died right at Christmas time. I remember just longing to go to the sea, and my friend Avis



drawing by Jean Kent

kept driving me out there so I would feel better. Just watching the waves. It all had to do with love too, the ocean does for me. Movement. And that, I would say, was totally lesbian love. My mother is the one that my image of the ocean is involved with the most, though Daddy taught me a lot.

SHERRY: You're saying something very important there, about the relationships that lesbians have with their mothers.

JEAN: Well, my mother was a great hero in various things. She saved a big boat from sinking by rowing out in the middle of a storm by herself. She also stood on her head on an aquaplane, which I was terrified of. Don't try that! She did that when she was about forty-five. And she swam across the bay, which was a mile, in 40-degree water. I mean, she took big chances. I didn't agree openly with all that. I was proud of her, secretly very proud. And the fact that it was a woman doing that. Daddy always tried to put her down a lot, although he was very fond of her, so that made me furious, just from the word go.

And I think I decided to be a lesbian by the time I was one year old. I remember that year very well. My one year was a great year because there were no other siblings yet, so I was absolutely master. There's a portrait of me which is coming up here soon, by a wonderful artist, a painting of me when I was one, and it seems to me I was very alert and full of life and ideas. As much "that way" as what people have done of me when I was 22 or later.

SHERRY: You speak of a childhood, an infancy when you were a conscious being, making choices, having thoughts and deciding on being a lesbian, and you say it not as if there's some kind of hereditary or biological determinism—

JEAN: No.

SHERRY: —but that you were born and then you were in a certain environment. And using your own noodle, and your own feelings, you decided to live.

JEAN: I made the choice.

SHERRY: I'm thrilled by what you're saying. I don't remember so early, I remember things when I was three. My favorite opera was *Carmen*. I knew some of the arias by heart. We had a wonderful London recording with a woman on the jacket with black hair and white skin and a rose in her teeth, and the shawls and castanets. And I was in love with that woman, with her voice, which I identified with the picture and also with my mother. By the time I reached five, I knew also very clearly that I was a lesbian, but I think by three I knew, and I was doing things, learning things.

JEAN: I didn't know the names or anything, of course.

SHERRY: No.

JEAN: The feeling I knew, yeah, absolutely.

SHERRY: Love for women.

JEAN: And belief also in their strength and their daring and their ideas. I believed in all that, and their love.

I remember also knowing at five that I would die some day, which was a big shock to me; I definitely don't think I knew that at one, I thought I was immortal. And actually, some of that was still left over, because one of my bitterest feelings about my parents dying was that I would now be the next, you know. And that I wasn't going to live forever. Somehow as long as they lived to be ninety-one, I thought that while they were living I was safe, I wouldn't die. But it turns out that I really thought I was immortal. Although I did pattern my life on Siegfried. I must say that's one of the things we had very early, the Wagnerian thing. We had to recognize the music. We had to choose a theme and then recognize our theme when it came into the music. The pianist would play, and then we had to go and dance out, in the middle of a circle, what the idea of the theme was. That was in either kindergarten or first grade.

SHERRY: What year could that have been?

JEAN: I was born in 1920. So that would have been 1925, 1927, somewhere around there. I remember knowing music before I learned to read. I thought that was some magical thing too. They said, this is the little red hen, and pointed at the sentence, and said, now read. And I said, well, I can't read. Then I got fascinated with snakes, because there was a man from India who came to kindergarten and told us a great deal about elephants and snakes. I got interested in cobras particularly. I wanted to read the part in the Encyclopedia Britannica that tells about snakes. And of course I couldn't, I couldn't read anything. So I just decided finally to learn their way. By the end of the



photo by Marian Roth

second grade I was able to read the encyclopedia. I learned fast.

But I remember that when I was five it was just too much to be learning that you're gonna die, you're gonna be a lesbian and you're gonna not be able to read! And also the boys in the class were punching me in the stomach when I asked for the shellac brush; they kicked me out of the Valentine class because I was flunking, I couldn't draw a valentine. So they put me in carpentry with the boys and I loved it, except when they hit me. Then I was scared to go to school the next day . . . I thought the shellac was what protected whatever I made. But also I remember working in sand, building sand things. And then I remember the fact that sand doesn't last. I think that had in part to do with my wanting to start on rock, although I didn't do that until I was thirty-two.

SHERRY: And it's still an illusion, when you talk about permanence, it's going to become sand sooner or later.

JEAN: Yeah, I'm afraid so. That's why I use granite. These are soft stones that I'm working with now, because I want to rest, but my whale is blue stone, which is quite hard. Now I'm gonna get some marble because I'm interested in how that works.

SHERRY: What's blue stone?

JEAN: Blue stone is also called shale. You use marble tools with it — I mean it's a whole different set for granite. A different hammer, much heavier hammer. Marble is less so, but you can use marble tools on blue stone and that works.

SHERRY: How did you first begin working with stone?

JEAN: I went eight years to the Museum School, two years to the Cambridge School of Design, first, then eight years just taking exactly what I wanted, painting and sculpture — majoring in sculpture, which they didn't like but I liked fine. And then at the end of that I went to work with John Bergschneider, who was a wonderful sculptor, mostly known in Germany. He had a studio in Boston's North End and I worked there. Often he would be just lying down, taking a nap. While I hammered he would sleep, then if I made a mistake he would wake up suddenly and say, do this a different way, and he would roar! He was a great man. And I learned a great deal. I did the whale when I was with him, and the Druid (which has been sold), and it won a prize in the Biennale Internationale in Vichy, France. I was excited about that award of Honor for Artistic Merit.

SHERRY: What's your relationship to what historians still insist on calling "primitive" art?

JEAN: I think it's tremendously exciting. I love Ice Age art. Ice Age paintings are just fascinating to me. And I love primitive art. I get mad if somebody thinks an ordinary artist is better than my work, but not at all with the Eskimos. I feel that they can teach me, you know, at this point. And I often look at them over again. I'm working on one piece now, just started, a soapstone piece, that little end one there, I've been filing it. I think it's going to be a small Eskimo on the back of

its mother. Well, it's one of the things that Eskimos do, but also they do what you see here, animals, sea animals especially, seals and whatnot. This one is supposed to be a narwhal.

SHERRY: When did you get interested in Eskimo art?

JEAN: In 1952. Which is the year I started studying art actually, as an adult.

SHERRY: *Womantide* publishes work by lesbian artists and highlights it regardless of whether it is on gender-oriented or lesbian-oriented or sexually-oriented subjects. Are there some pieces of yours that are sexually oriented?

JEAN: Yeah, there are some sculptures that are sexually oriented. I think of them as two women. You know I don't say women lovers or men lovers.

SHERRY: You just call them "Lovers".

JEAN: Yeah. Well, last year my mother and father died. That made me feel that I can be, that I wouldn't hurt anybody by saying that I was a lesbian. Most people know it, I think.

SHERRY: Well, I find it's helped me a lot in my work just to have people know about that. Just to go on with your business, with your work, and not have to feel that there's some part of yourself that you have to hide.

JEAN: Yeah, yeah. No, I'm perfectly free about that. □

"I was teaching philosophy and women's studies, and I couldn't sleep. Yoga hadn't helped. Neither had self-hypnosis, karate or vodka. I started getting polarity therapy. I still didn't sleep, but I quit teaching, studied polarity, massage and zero-balancing. Then I became an acupuncturist, started lifting weights, and got back into psychotherapy. All of it helped, after all. I practice acupuncture and body therapies in Watertown, and in Provincetown at Wonderful Hands. I'm not exactly a champ, but I sleep much better now."

Recent feminist explorations of sexuality have taken place for the most part in conjunction with, and as a reaction to, debates around pornography, sadomasochistic sex, and butch-femme role-playing among lesbians. These debates have determined both the language and the framework in which many feminists have considered sexuality. I began thinking about this paper because my own experience of the erotic is hardly even hinted at in these discussions. What is missing, I believe, is some conceptualization of the body and its role in sexual pleasure.

Many feminist writers have suggested two basic strategies for getting in touch with and exploring sexual pleasure. The first is talking. The second is fantasizing. Both these activities are primarily mental. Emphasizing the mental aspects of sexual experience can foster a healthy tolerance of sexual difference, but it also tends to discourage exploration of **physical** experience.

Very little attention has been paid to the body in discussions of sexuality; our culture is pervaded by what Elizabeth Spelman has called "somatophobia" — fear of the body. In this culture virtually everyone is alienated from their body. Alienation from the body manifests itself, first, in the belief and the feeling that the "real" person is hidden somewhere inside the body, in the mind or brain or soul. The body is then seen as a source of limitation, temptation, distraction, sickness, death. (If only I didn't need to sleep . . . If only I didn't feel so sick . . . If only I could fly . . .) The second manifestation is unfamiliarity with, disregard or denial of one's own physical needs and impulses. We often don't sleep when we're tired; don't eat when we're hungry; eat, drink, smoke and otherwise ingest things that are harmful.

Moreover, in this culture we hardly ever touch each other except to convey sexual messages. Our bodies are constantly giving us vital information about our external and internal environments, and they have tremendous power to guide us. Yet most of us spend a lot of time and energy denying and undercutting that power. Alienation from

SEX, POWER AND THE BODY by **FRANCINE RAINONE**



photo by JEB (Joan E. Biren)

the body produces fear of the liberating aspects of its power. As a practitioner of holistic healing, I've found that many people who begin receiving massage are completely unable to distinguish between sensual and sexual touch. As they gain more experience, a different relationship with their body often emerges. They may begin to take pleasure in the sheer existence of their physical selves. In the contours of their muscles, their weight on the table, the feel of the sheets under them.

* * *

With the notable exception of Audre Lorde, most recent feminist discussions of power in sexual experience have concerned only one type of power: power-over, or domination. This type of power is not at the heart of my erotic experience. What is at its heart is the empowerment that comes from being attuned to my body, in concert with another. Bodily attunement has three main aspects: familiarity, identification and connectedness. Each contributes to the joyful unleashing of the erotic.

To be familiar with your body is to know what it can and cannot do. To know the limits of your strength, your endurance, your capacity to eat and drink, your ability to withstand tension, your capacity to feel. This is an ongoing process of discovery, since we are constantly changing. People who do not identify with their bodies may take exquisite

care of themselves. They may watch what they eat, forego smoking, caffeine and alcohol, and exercise every day. But they still regard their bodies as "other", as things to be whipped into shape and kept under control. To identify with your body is to know that you are an animal, the parameters of whose life and health are determined by physical laws. And to the degree that people are involved in substance abuse, particularly of an addictive kind, they do not identify with their physical selves.

To identify with your body is also to know that it is the "record" of your life. This has nothing to do with conforming to cultural standards of attractiveness or of being able-bodied. It means that the conditions and hue of your skin, your habitual posture, and the pattern of stress and strain in your muscles, among other things, reveal your character at least as well as your speech. They provide you knowledge of what distresses you and what enlivens you. They also provide that knowledge to others. Trained practitioners of Chinese medicine, of bioenergetics, of Hakomi, as well as other therapeutic systems, can **see** a person's character and disharmony in their bodily structure and movements. They often know what's bothering you before you tell them. This is not the slightest bit mystical. We have all had the experience of knowing when our closest friends are depressed or sick even if they don't say so. We know these things

DR. DIANE GREENE ON FOSTER PARENTS cont'd.

article was about the 12 people and Gov. Dukakis' statement. It said "a number of people in the field met that afternoon", but not quoting any of the substance of that meeting.

It feels like censorship. It feels like a blanket around the information that needs to get out. The **Globe** did not cover Gay Pride this year — which occurred right in the middle of this controversy — 20,000 people

came! This was a political rally where the two (gay) men and a number of people spoke on the issue! Not a word of text appeared in the **Globe**. It's very frightening to me. It's very pointed. It's not just errors or omission any more. It's very malicious and purposeful.

What I do know, as a child psychologist having access to all the research that's ever been done, is that if you control the variables, there are no differences in the psychological adjustment of the children. The thing that's important is how adequate and caring a parent one is, not whether one is gay or straight. And the research is clearly in: there are no more children of gay parents that grow up gay than of straight parents. It's a normal deviation, analogous to left-handedness. It's going to be 10% (of the population) any way you cut it. These studies are not hitting the papers, they're not being reported on. This is just out-and-out fear and bigotry. And it's not in the best interest of children. Ninety-seven percent of child sexual abuse is heterosexual men to girls . . . If you want kids to be safe, probably your best bet is to put them in a gay home. I've watched a number of lesbians take on multiply-handicapped kids and do wonders with them. If I can think of the most thriving, growing environment for a damaged kid, I'd put them in a lesbian household because, for the most part, 'it's' wonderfully nurturing.

At one of the rallies, somebody pointed out that in Nazi Germany, one of the first rules was that Jews could not teach Aryans below the age of 16 because they would corrupt them. If this isn't analogous to that, I'd like to know what is. This is such outrageous discrimination that nobody should feel safe with something like this happening to anybody. The resistance needs to start now. You can't just say, "oh, let them have this one", because you're letting them have the world.

As in every profession, 10% of all child care professionals will be gay and lesbian. They are so offended about this because they **have** been raising children for years, and doing a very fine job of it. Many of them get involved in teaching or child care because it gives them children in their lives. Many times it's because people do not have children (of their own) that they're willing to go the extra distance. These are very difficult kids. It takes very special people to care for these children.

In Wellfleet, Truro and Provincetown, people see gay and lesbian families all the time. They see the children, they know us as people. I feel that straight people here should not turn their backs on this issue. If not now, when? If not you, who? We need our neighbors here to support us on this issue. □

by paying attention to physical cues.

You can identify with your body and be familiar with it and still not be connected with it. Connectedness means paying attention, and acting on that attentiveness. It means not taking on another meeting because then you won't have time to go to the gym. It means stopping what you're doing for five minutes and just sitting quietly, because stress is making your breathing shallow and your neck muscles hard. It means arranging for the kids to spend the night at friends' so you can have a leisurely evening and the next morning making love. Many people only begin to connect with their bodies when a physical crisis interrupts their ability to perform daily activities.

I believe that bodily attunement enriches our experience of the erotic. Erotic desire is instinctual and arises from our physical being. Its nature is wild. It is as limitless as the mind's capacity to form ideas. Its expression is as personal and as transpersonal as our conceptions of our selves. The more my everyday relation to my body is one of exercising power and control over it, the more likely it is that the wildness of sexual passion will terrify me. The more unfamiliar I am with my bodily limitations, the more losing my sense of boundaries and merging with another person will frighten and overwhelm me. Many people who regularly provide others with therapeutic body work routinely merge physically and even emotionally with

their clients. I have seen the same images, had the same memories, felt in my own body the path of the pain of people I work on. For those of us who believe we are all connected, and who "listen to things more often than beings", loss of boundaries is commonplace, and not **per se** frightening. The more I identify as a being who thinks, the more it will seem that "I" am overwhelmed and threatened by annihilation by passion. The less I pay attention to my physical sensations, the more their intensity will feel like vulnerability. This is not to say that vulnerability and fear are not part of my erotic experience. It's just that they are not **central** to it.

I believe bodily attunement allows us to surrender more easily to the body's power. Erotic activity involves the tension, discipline and excitement of having to pay close attention. A slight tension in her thighs only travels to her waist. So I take into my mouth as much of her breast as will fit, and suck hard. Her excitement spreads through me so strongly it is hard to breathe, to suck. Now she must kiss me, enter me, roll me over. And she does. To describe the empowerment that comes from this experience in terms of my ability to make things happen in the world is to miss the point. By surrendering to passion, not controlling it but following its changes, I feel the full force of its wildness. Abandoning myself to attunement with pleasure, I feel limitless, and an infinite poten-

tial to do. Not to do any particular thing. But to do anything I choose. We can't tame the erotic. Part of why and how it empowers is precisely that it cannot be entirely known, but has always to be discovered and created.

Talking and fantasizing alone will not connect us to the body's erotic power. Bodily awareness exercises, relaxation, giving and receiving nonsexual touch, masturbation, conscious exercise and meditation that focuses on bodily sensation can all help. Anything we do to cultivate familiarity, identification and connectedness to our bodies can help us tap into the limitless, potentiating force of the erotic. And use it as we choose. □



JEB

welcome homosexual lesbian physicians

Author's note:

All of us have or have had a relationship with members of the American Medical Association – our doctors. What we don't know much about is how the world looks for lesbians on the other side.

Over 60 women from all over the U.S. participated, while at least 70 more were turned down for lack of conference space. They met at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum for three days in May, to discuss lesbian health and mental health, including their own.

Here I have tried to summarize a few of the sessions. Unfortunately we lacked space to document such excellent sessions as the one on pathological dyadic lesbian relationships (the "shared underwear" syndrome) or the session on lesbian battering.

Many thanks to Joan E. Biren (JEB), whose color slide show with music, "Out of Bounds – Lesbians On the Loose", was part of the cultural offering of the conference. The depth and richness of it can only be hinted at by the black-and-white reproductions in this issue.

2nd ANNUAL LESBIAN PHYSICIANS CONFERENCE PROVINCETOWN, 1985 by Sherry Dranch

CLOSETS ARE HEALTH HAZARDS

Nanette Gartrell, M.D., is Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School.

Dee Mosbacher, M.D., with a Ph.D. in Social Psychology, is a Clinical Fellow in Psychiatry, also at Harvard Medical School.

Gartrell and Mosbacher were the organizers of the 2nd Annual Lesbian Physicians' Conference.

Dr. Nanette Gartrell's talk centered on the risks of staying in the closet, based on her experience as a therapist and on her observations of closeted lesbians within her own profession.

"We deny that maintaining the lie costs us anything if we're good at it," said Gartrell, "but the cost of secrecy is always great. We hate ourselves for denying our partners, for avoiding intimacy in public situations. And this fact of lying does breed self-contempt. With the erosion of self-esteem, there is no way of eliminating the internalized homophobia which we all absorb by living in straight society. Stress becomes a major health hazard –we all know stress is related to illness, anxiety and alcohol and drug abuse."

"What is this about being a lesbian anyway?" Gartrell asked the physicians and med. students in the audience. "As Lily Tomlin once put it, 'the average person only spends three minutes out of her entire lifetime in a state of orgasm anyway, right?'"

Gartrell and Dr. Dee Mosbacher initiated a series of very popular conference workshops on closeting—this was clearly a much-needed aspect of the conference for its participants. In her general lecture Gartrell outlined arguments physicians could use in their debate with themselves over coming out professionally.

"We have more economic mobility than other lesbians," she note. "The need for lesbian doctors is such that we may have to move, but there will always be a job."

Coming-out steps she suggested included 1) seeing if one's medical school or hospital or residency has or will develop a policy of non-discrimination; 2) developing a casual way of saying "it"; 3) realizing that others' advice to maintain secrecy is an indicator of their own homophobia; 4) developing a high-to-low priority list of persons to whom one might come out, favoring those closest first; 5) educating these people with books and articles, not being the sole educator; 6) developing contacts with lesbian culture.

With the aid of a slide show, Dee Mosbacher also encouraged the physicians to come out. She told two anecdotes concerning her own life: in the first, her family pediatrician, to whom she'd been going since childhood, divorced when Mosbacher was around 16. "It was said she was a lesbian," Mosbacher related, "so my parents told my sister and me to stop seeing that doctor. I was confused and very disturbed by that order, concerned that my parents might be thinking I was particularly 'susceptible'."

Little did she know . . . or did she?

The second anecdote was about Mosbacher's application for psychiatric residency at Columbia University, where her sexual orientation

became an issue. Her last interview there was with a man who grilled her. "He thought lesbianism was pathological, and I disagreed. But after the interview, he actually followed me to the cafeteria, where I was meeting my lover: he was spying on me!" Mosbacher, who was accepted at Harvard anyway, said that experience was part of her decision to make Harvard the first choice.

"In therapy," Mosbacher concluded, "I've seen the effects of career paths which take lesbians deep into closets. Overwhelmingly," she said, "I've found this will lead to despair, especially for those who therefore lose their lovers and lose contact with lesbian culture."

There are about 400,000 physicians in the U.S. This means we can assume about 40,000 are lesbian or gay, not including other health care professionals. One can only imagine the self-validating impact of all of them coming out!

For those who are out, the tasks are enormous. "Mainly," said Mosbacher, "we are trying to convince the homophobic physician to say to a lesbian patient, 'I'm a homophobe, please go to someone else.' 'If you can't deal with it,' we tell them, 'refer the person!'"

Lesbian history interacts dynamically with the history of two professions, the medical and the legal. We would all like to see an end to the battle over who will "get" us—the courts or the hospitals. Both Gartrell and Mosbacher are members of the American Association of Physicians for Human Rights (AAPHR), whose executive council also met in Provincetown in May. If these physicians and other politically active lesbians show enough strength and receive enough of our support, perhaps someday neither lawyers nor hospitals will be showing any profits based on our oppression. □

hippocratic oath-takers dyke docs

ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION—A DIFFICULT CHOICE

With Massachusetts leading the bigoted way, passing legislation effectively barring lesbians from becoming foster parents (see "Political Action," p.3), many lesbians who want to raise children will doubtless be considering having them biologically this year, if they are physically able to. Many of these will consider artificial insemination as an alternative to intercourse with a man—insemination with sperm from either a known or an unknown donor.

Both Mary Clark, attorney-at-law, in her lecture on legal issues for lesbian physicians, and Patty Robertson, M.D., in her discussion of lesbian health issues, addressed the problems of artificial insemination.

Clark told the physicians that there are as yet no Federal or State statutes, and there's very little case law, regulating the status of the donor in terms of child custody, visitation rights and child support. She outlined the three existing possibilities: the unknown donor, the donor whose identity is known only to a "screen" (i.e. a go-between who would normally be a lesbian friend of the mother's) and the known donor.

An unknown donor is a possible plus in terms of confidentiality, but a minus in terms of health risks. Clark said that screening at existing sperm banks in the U.S. is not rigid—some men who sell their sperm to banks hide or do not know their health histories. The cost is \$100 per treatment—a woman must go twice during each menstrual cycle and of course there's no guarantee she will immediately become pregnant. Another drawback of the unknown donor to be considered, said Clark, is that the child might eventually want to know who her/his father was.

Robertson later pointed out that 60 to 65 percent of frozen sperm babies are boys—a larger percentage than with insemination through intercourse. She noted that making sure you are inseminated as your body temperature *drops* during ovulation could increase your chances of having a girl. She warned that sperm banks or individuals dealing with known donors must screen them for rubella, Tay-Sachs disease, sickle-cell anemia and other hereditary diseases.

Clark seemed to favor the idea of a go-between to shield the mother's identity from the donor, although the go-between might incur heavy responsibilities if she were later to be subpoenaed by the courts at the donor's request. Robertson told of a gynecologist who as a med. student was such a runner, and who was later successfully sued for child support because she had also performed the insemination—"a high price to pay because she knew how to use a speculum."

Clark told the physicians that a known donor with a friendly relationship to the mother might be

the best choice, providing better screening. "If he's a gay man, that would equalize you later if there were a problem in the courts," she said, conceding that AIDS would now be a problem.

Robertson confirmed Clark's misgivings about gay men donors and AIDS. "It's a lymphadenopathy syndrome," she said, "therefore the virus can be transplacental." Many sperm banks are still not screening for AIDS. But Robertson suggested one remaining "safe" choice: "If your prospective gay friend-donor has been entirely monogamous since 1978—before the virus was widespread—that's a very low-risk person." She looked around the conference room and added earnestly, "But that's a very hard person to find!"

Clark also noted that the known donor can be a problem altogether in terms of custody, "because insemination agreements, even those written up by your attorney, are not going to be binding on the courts. You're acknowledging a

man as the father in writing, on a legal document," she said. "If the mother dies, the courts will uphold the father's rights over the child, above those of the mother's partner, even if the partner raised the child."

You can try to protect the co-parent by executing a will (not automatically binding in court) naming her as the child's guardian should you die or become incapacitated. A co-parenting agreement in case of break-up and a medical consent document so that the co-parent can admit the child to a hospital are also necessary. But as far as the donors/"fathers" go, the best way to handle a custody case, said Clark, is to keep it out of the courts, which are still homophobic. "Avoid, if possible, all litigation," Clark said. Good advice from a lawyer herself! □

Mary Clark is a member of the Massachusetts and the Washington State Bar Associations.



CONFERENCE FACULTY

FRONT (L→R): Elizabeth Harrison, M.D.; Nanette Gartrell, M.D.;
Minnie Bruce Pratt; Marjorie Posner
BACK (L→R): Lesley Anderson, M.D.; Dee Mosbacher, M.D., Ph.D.;
Patty Robertson, M.D.; Margie Sved, M.D.

(Not pictured: Joan E. Biren and Mary Clark, J.D.)

photo by JEB (Joan E. Biren)

PHYSICIAN'S CONFERENCE—

LESBIAN

SEXUALTY SEXUAL DYSFUNCTION MEDICAL ETHICS



photo by JEB (Joan E. Biren)

NANETTE GARTRELL, M.D., AT CONF.

It seemed like an odd juxtaposition at first, when Dr. Gartrell decided to link the treatment of sexual dysfunctions with the ethics of affairs between doctors and their patients. However, she made an interesting case for the parallel between male psychiatrists' involvements with female patients, and those of lesbian physicians (especially psychotherapists) with their lesbian patients.

Gartrell's overview of sexual dysfunctions in lesbian couples ranged from discussion of partners with different sexual needs, lack of attraction to each other, or dislike of certain sexual techniques, to communication-therapy for lesbians feeling overall discomfort with sexuality and treatment of lesbians with orgasmic difficulties.

For the latter she suggested reading material to teach patients how to masturbate, and also in some cases the use of vibrators, then manual stimulation followed by oral stimulation, moving from greater to lesser stimulation in therapy. She urged the physicians to refer patients to someone experienced if they themselves had not developed a treatment.

Gartrell told of her success in helping lesbians with rheumatoid arthritis adapt to limitations (e.g., not using hands), and in helping those with back problems develop pain-free positions. She has also experienced some success with lesbians who had had hysterectomies or mastectomies and who thought their sex lives were over as a result. "A 60-year-old patient who had had a mastectomy came to me with her partner of 20 years," said Gartrell. "Among other problems she had obvious-

ly lost nipple sensation—but with exploration we were able to discover an aureolar-sized area of her abdomen which eventually gave her a similar sensation."

Gartrell also addressed the problem of sexual dysfunction resulting from drugs prescribed for other conditions. "Almost all lab tests of drugs are performed on *male* lab animals," said Gartrell, "so of course their effects on women's sexuality are unaccounted for in the profession." She urged the physicians to ask about sexual dysfunction as a possible side-effect of drugs prescribed for women. "If you find sexual function is impaired with a drug, try switching drugs if possible," she said.

Finally Gartrell revealed the results of a questionnaire administered to the conference participants—six percent had had a sexual relationship with one or more current or former patients. She urged these to seek help or counseling, even if they had a hard time thinking of this as abuse. "The courts do think of it as abuse. It's unethical in professional codes and can result in the loss of your license for *all* health providers, not just psychiatrists," she said. Lawsuits on sexual abuse by health providers are currently being settled for about \$750,000, according to Gartrell, with the highest figure at \$3 million. "I can't think of anything worse," she said, "than being lumped, as lesbian physicians, with male abusers who are health providers." And she warned the participants that legally this extends even to anyone who has been, but no longer is, a patient. □

DISEASES AND TREATMENTS

Patty Robertson, M.D., is a member of the clinical faculty at U.C.L.A., and has a private practice in obstetrics and gynecology in Los Angeles. She is a co-founder of the Lyon-Martin Lesbian Health Clinic in San Francisco, and is currently Vice-President of the American Association of Physicians for Human Rights.

DR. ROBERTSON WAS ADDRESSING PHYSICIANS IN HER TALK. PLEASE DO NOT FOLLOW THE ADVICE IN THE SECTION WITHOUT CONSULTING YOUR DOCTOR!

Dr. Patty Robertson reported on diseases common to lesbians as women, and on their treatment/prevention as part of AMA practice, with special consideration of lesbian patients. Some of her discussions on treatments/prevention of breast cancer, ovarian cancer and osteoporosis (brittle bones due to calcium loss in older women) were controversial, as she herself pointed out.

I am aware that many readers consider AMA practices detrimental to women's health generally, and I brought this up with Dr. Robertson after her lecture, asking her how she felt about holistic or "alternative" health care. "We know about the effects of using therapeutic drugs," she answered, "and we know the effects of using no drugs. We simply don't know enough about anything else."

Robertson and her associates conducted a study of sexually transmitted diseases using a small test group (148 women) of sexually active lesbians in San Francisco in 1978. This study and her own clinical experience and research provided the basis for her talk. The statistics gathered on the San Francisco group were fascinating. As background: 90% did not have children, 50% were reasonably informed on general health practices, 25% of those who were "out" had met with considerable disapproval, 90% had had some sexual relations with a man in the past, 25% had been raped and of these none had received counseling, although they all had sexual problems connected with the rape, 18% had been victims of incest, and 28% had been victims of battering either by ex-husbands or lesbians.

The study revealed no venereal disease in that sexually active lesbian population (except for one case of gonorrhoea from artificial insemination with frozen sperm). Because the mean number of partners in the sample was 2.3 the previous year, this may be partly attributable to the lack of multiple sex partners. Or, Robertson suggested, it may yet be seen that woman-to-woman contact is a less efficient means of transmitting syphilis, cervical gonorrhoea or herpes simplex virus (as opposed to herpes genitalis).

HEALTH ISSUES

Herpes genitalis is a chronically activating disease that affects 20 percent of the population. Robertson has found trichomonas to be frequently transmitted between partners (unfortunately, the treatment is heavy antibiotics, she said), while vaginitis seems not to be transmitted often between women, unless one of the partners has repeatedly suffered from it. She urged the physicians to research this question of transmission. Gardnerella, a normal vaginal flora which in imbalanced proportions causes a symptomatic yellow discharge with an odor, also seem prevalent in the oral/vaginal lesbian population. "It's very hard to knock out," said Robertson. "You can try ampicillin, then flagyl (a drug with dangerous side effects)."

Endometriosis, or patches of tissue in the wrong places in the womb, causing pelvic pain, pain during sex and spotting between periods, is another condition warranting more research, said Robertson. There are various theories on what might cause the uterus lining to "back up."

Robertson said that lesbians are still at risk for cervical cancer, since most have had contact with at least one man before they were 21, and many have had relations with at least three men in their lifetime.

Lesbians are also a high-risk group for breast cancer, as they don't have children to interrupt their menstrual cycles. Robertson favors routine mammographies at ages 35, 40 and then every two or three years. She urged the physicians to set up surgical contacts who will avoid extreme surgery if possible. "This is still very controversial, but there is now some evidence that taking hormone treatments after menopause will reduce the incidence of breast cancer, provided the treatment is estrogen *plus* provera (a synthetic progesterone which tested alone has been shown as a possible cause of breast cancer in beagles)." Robertson favors continued study of preventive estrogen-replacement therapies, which the Food and Drug Administration banned briefly several years ago. For prevention of breast cancer, she suggested avoiding coffee, sugar and salt, and taking up to 500 mg. of vitamin B6 a day.

Ovarian cancer is also a high-risk disease for lesbians. In fact, although the American Cancer Society says we are low-risk for ovarian and cervical cancers, and only need PAP smears every three years, the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology disagrees. Robertson was adamant about lesbians getting PAP smears once a year. "The only low-risk lesbians are women who were virgins when married and have had only one partner, or nuns or celibates who are not sexual-

ly active, only an estimated 10 percent of the lesbian population," she said.

A controversial prevention technique against ovarian cancer suggested by Robertson should be explored and tested, she said, with women who are not smokers and have had no history of breast cancer in the family. "If for two years during your early thirties you take a low-dose, low-risk birth-control pill, especially if you have irregular periods, indications are that by interrupting your cycle you may be up to 70 percent less likely to develop ovarian cancer," said Robertson. "But after age 35 it appears too late for that prevention to be effective."

Finally, Robertson suggested that the physicians test all women patients over 55 to measure their bone density for signs of osteoporosis. As prevention, Robertson warned against bone-

meal/dolomite pills, which have been found to contain lead contaminants. She suggested a half-hour walk three times a day, tofu, and perhaps calcium carbonate (two TUMs a day!) or oyster-shell calcium (OSCAL supplements).

Robertson urged all lesbian physicians to be particularly aware of surgical practices in their affiliated hospital. "Hysterectomy, one of the most frequent surgeries, is often the first experience a lesbian has with surgery at all," she noted as an example. "Try to change your hospital's policies in terms of providing more support and understanding of lesbian patients." Robertson said that in her experience some lesbians have found their sexuality increased after a hysterectomy, some decreased. "It's still a question in my mind," she said, "as to whether loss of libido is a bio-physical syndrome connected with loss of pulsation of the uterus, or not." □

"STEPPING OUT OF LINE":

Nanette Gartrell and Dee Mosbacher (2nd and 3rd from right) at the National March for Lesbian and Gay Rights, October, 1979, Washington, D.C.



© JEB (Joan E. Biren)

GUESTHOUSE OWNERS cont'd.

I don't want to turn away any woman who'd want to come here.

GABRIEL: There's a real variety of women who stay here; I get all the way from silk stockings and leatherettes to bankers and lawyers and doctors and women who dress up like men, the whole traditional 50s kind of thing. All the way to ardent feminists, women from farms, city women. If I can offer a place where women can feel free, whether they're into s/m or being very traditional in terms of the roles they play with each other, I'm open, I don't care — as long as you're not hurting somebody else.

JACKIE: Helen, has it been a problem to live as a black lesbian in a white town?

HELEN: I don't find this town as white as the town I left. I've always basically lived in a white community, so I'm used to it. But I would have hoped there'd be more black people, black women. I miss the black community. There's a certain kind of socializing and understanding and heritage background which binds you. So I miss that, gay or straight. When I go someplace, I'm always, always aware of whether or not I'm the only black there.

JACKIE: When you're with other black people in Provincetown, is there ever a tension between your identity as a black woman and your identity as a lesbian?

HELEN: No. We're almost in the same boat. As blacks realize we've been through it, I think we have a tendency not to put it on anybody else. I would like to see more Third World women stay here. I found that once the word gets out among some of the sisters that yes, there's a black woman here, they come around to see the house.

JACKIE: What satisfactions do you get personally, and as a lesbian, from having a guesthouse in Provincetown?

DOTTY: Well, we see all these beautiful women!

HELEN: It's the satisfaction of having something I own, that I have almost total say-so over. It gives me a lot of independence. It's changed my life in that I was always used to a 9 to 5 job and benefits. But I think that if there were many disadvantages, I would not be here. It's allowed me to be who I am, to be the lesbian that I am without the kind of problems I would have had in Connecticut. And I have a place that I think is pretty nice, that other women enjoy.

MIKE: I'd always wanted to volunteer for something, in the life I had before. With this business I'm in, sometimes you're a therapist, sometimes a social director, sometimes a mediator with people who are having a rough time. You're a friend, you're

a mother sometimes. You're volunteering all these aspects of yourself. I feel I can finally offer people something I never could before. By the time they leave, they look relaxed, and I always feel like maybe I helped a little.

CAROLE: You catch people on a high, on a positive note. They arrive in Provincetown and they're looking for something good to happen, good energy. It puts **you** on a high.

GABRIEL: I really enjoy being able to be part of something I feel gives women a positive experience while they're here. They're not having to deal with a real heterosexual, rigid kind of place where people are going to be staring at them. And I have a nice place to live, and a nice back yard, and I can have any animals I want. And I go sailing a lot.

DIANE: It's nice to be your own boss, even though when you have your own business you're married to it. When it comes down to it, I'd rather be working for myself.

DOTTY: I also feel good about providing a space for women. That in itself is satisfying.

“*Well, we see all these beautiful women!*”

JACKIE: Have you seen any changes recently in Provincetown lesbian life, resulting from women's guesthouses or from other causes?

DOTTY: I think there are definitely more women coming down. Memorial Day weekend was just wall-to-wall women. It was wonderful. That seems to be the big, big women's weekend.

JACKIE: Marge, were there as many gay women in town before they had places of their own to go to?

MARGE: No. Every year there's more women coming to town, starting early, looking for jobs and whatever.

CAROLE: Plus, I think that, financially, women are coming into their own. I find that more and more, the women we're attracting are in professional fields. There are more women who can afford things they couldn't afford before. Everybody's tired of being underground. They're seeking out more.

GABRIEL: Because there are so many women's guesthouses in Provincetown now, it has helped increase the lesbian population. And I would love to see 20 more open up.

HELEN: Lots of women who come here want to know, is there a local lesbian community or group, and there really isn't per

se. Most of us look forward to that quiet period when we can get together and see our women friends, people we haven't seen during the summertime. Off-season there are more community-minded things going on, like potluck dinners, free movies, invitations to someone's house. That part hasn't changed. There used to be a women's center here some time ago, before I got here. The last couple of years there's been **Womantide** events — the dances, the lesbian whale watch.

JACKIE: Have the lesbian guesthouse-owners thought of getting together to try and organize another women's center? The houses are in some sense a focal point already.

HELEN: Not only thought of, we even had meetings off-season last year, and did a good amount of follow-up work, to find out what was available, what was needed and what, realistically, we could establish here.

DIANE: Well, I think now that we've got this women's guesthouse owners' association started, I should think that would help to reach out to a larger community. I'm quite excited about it. But this time of year we're only meeting once a month because we're too busy. I think this women's weekend we're organizing in October will generate a lot of women's energy and do a lot of good things for women's businesses in town.

DIANE: I think we all feel there's a cohesive women's community here. Driving a cab, it's us against everybody else.

DOTTY: That's what makes me feel good about what I'm doing (with the guesthouse).

JACKIE: Why do you think cooperation works for the women's guesthouses and not for the cab companies?

DOTTY: It could be just the fact that it's women working together.

JACKIE: For a while **Womantide** has been putting forth the idea of an alternative to the bars, a women's center. Maybe it'll happen, if enough of us want it.

HELEN: I know enough of us want it. One of the problems we had was finding a proper building. Other than that, the desire's here. I think there's even enough interest from women who come here to visit, to partake of whatever's going on while they're here. It could lend itself to more women coming in off-season. If you have a place to stay, a place to eat and something to do . . . That would be great!

JACKIE: Maybe it's an idea whose time has come.

HELEN: It would involve a lot of work, but it could be done, if we're all converging. □



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IN THIS ISSUE: Jackie Berger develops her craft at Freehand, a community of women artists in Provincetown. Joan E. Biren (JEB) is a lesbian feminist activist and photographer from Washington, D.C. She is the author of "Eye to Eye: Portraits of Lesbians," and travels widely around the country presenting her slide shows. Sherry Dranch, Ph.D., is a founding editor of *Womantide*, a teacher at Freehand and a waitron. Dwora is an award-winning photographer based in Los Angeles, whose color works grace the private collections of Carl Reiner, Mel Brooks, Mary Kay Boyd and others. She contributed the Spring '85 cover photo, "Red Shoes," to *Womantide*. Dr. Diane Greene, Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist and consultant for the New England Home for Little Wanderers in Boston. She is a former chair of Boston's Lesbian and Gay Media Advocates (LAGMA). Marilyn Hacker is the editor of *13th Moon*. She gave workshops at the Provincetown Fine Arts Work Center in 1981 and was here this year for Fourth of July weekend. Her latest books of poems are "Taking Notice" and "Assumptions" (Knopf). Happy (L.A.) Hyder is a U.P.I. photographer based in San Francisco. Joyce Johnson is a sculptor, photographer, a reporter for Provincetown's weekly newspaper and a D.J. on WOMR-FM, listener-supported Lower Cape radio. Ariel Jones is a fashion/art photographer who left Boston last year to set up a studio in Provincetown. She has contributed, among other photographs, both "Claire," (cover, Spring '84) and the current cover photo. Jackie Lapidus recently moved to Provincetown after living abroad for over 20 years. She is on the board of *Womantide*, Inc. and has published poems in magazines and anthologies, as well as two collections. Analia Magen is a prize-winning sculptor in various media. Her "Anima/Animus," pictured in this issue, was nominated to represent the County of San Francisco in this year's 39th Annual San Francisco Arts Festival. Erica Marcus is a San Francisco photographer. Denise Minter, sculptor, painter, printmaker, lives in New York City and spends summers in Provincetown. She was a Fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center in 1984-85 and exhibited her work at the Hudson D. Walker, FAWC Annex and Bayer Fine Arts galleries. Both Francine Rainone and Rita Speicher explain themselves better than we can (see copy inside). Marion Roth is a prize-winning photographer whose works have appeared at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum and in numerous galleries. She is a founder and teacher of Freehand. Randy Turoff is a poet and founding editor of *Womantide*, now residing in San Francisco where she is currently working as a stage-manager and free-lance writer. Laurie White is a graphic artist, art editor and printer who has shown her work in numerous West Coast exhibits and multi-media presentations.