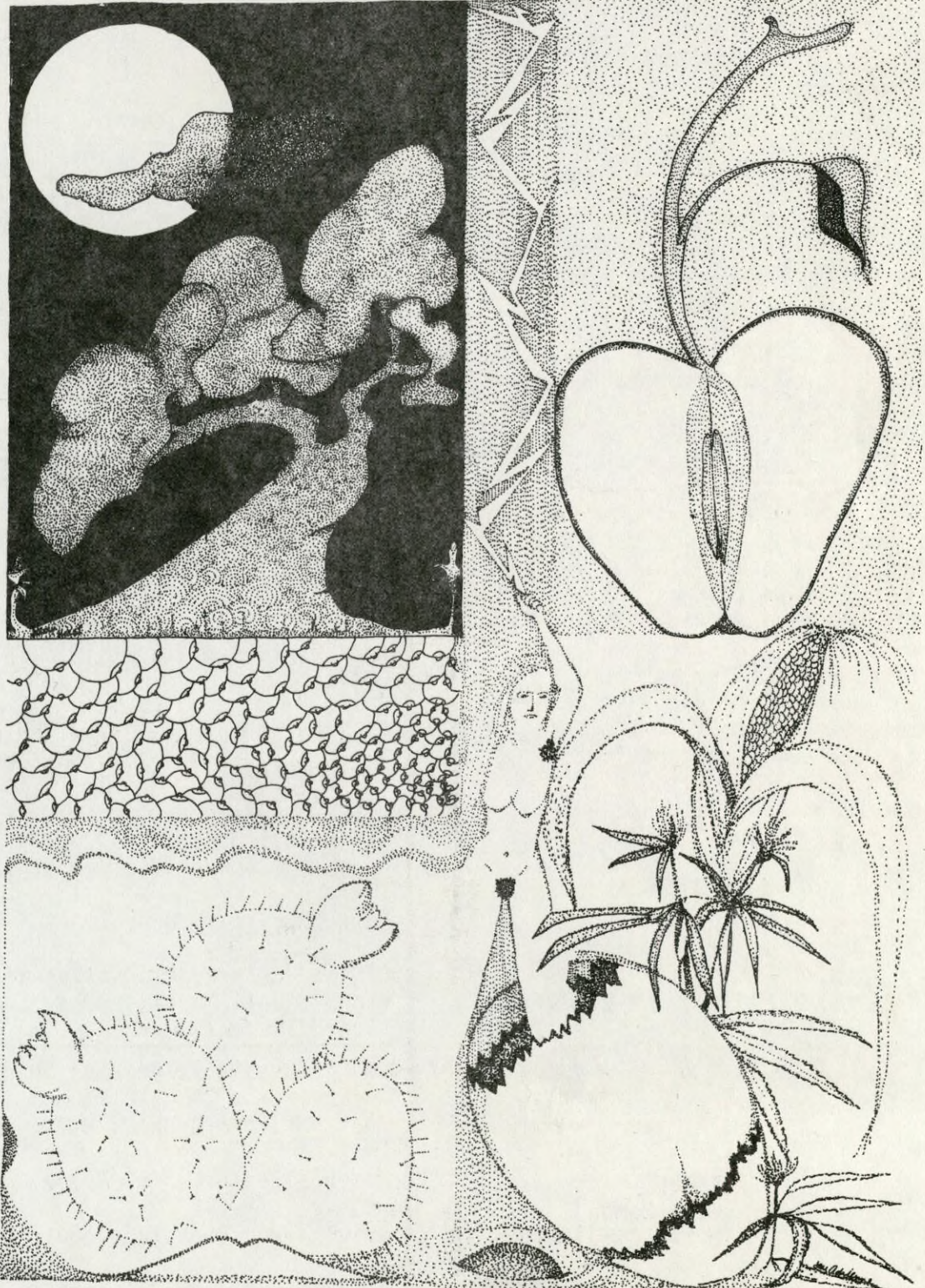




pointblank times

a lesbian/feminist publication Vol. 1 No. 3 May 1975 Houston, Tx.



Jan Hirst



Dear *Pointblank Times*,

I was editor of *The Ladder* for many many years. I have re-read the *PBT* article by Amanda about 10 times. I find it interesting, but also it's distressing and upsetting.

Let me see where to begin... how about this first sentence: "Lesbians have traditionally played such insignificant and obscure parts in literature that any discussion of lesbianism in novels centers around only a small armload of books." I am sitting in a room in a house about 40 miles east of Kansas City. The room is about 12' by 13', and it is packed, floor to ceiling on 3 walls with lesbian novels...another room in the house has two walls packed with them. First off, I want to meet the person whose arms can carry them all away in one trip. Seriously, parts of the article are provocative and well-done, but lesbians have a proud and enormous body of literature. An illustration of this is the book *The City Within*, a never reviewed apparently 1963 publication by a never before heard of NYC press. Needless to say, sadly, I didn't hear about it in time to get it into the 1975 edition of *The Lesbian in Literature*.

I like the look of your young publication. We wish you much luck in your Texas adventure and compliment you on finding an interesting and unique name. So many of the publications have look-alike-sound-alike names.

Blessings,
Gene Damon
Bates City, Missouri

(Ed. note: *The Ladder* is the oldest lesbian publication in the United States, having published from 1956-1972. *The Lesbian in Literature* (2nd edition) is a bibliography which includes hundreds of books in English concerning lesbianism. It is available for \$10 from *The Ladder*, P.O. Box 5025, Washington Station, Reno, Nevada 89503).

Dear Sisters,

I've just spent the past few days reading, rereading, and marveling over *PBT*. It is so encouraging to have this kind of publication for gay women. Here in Denton, and particularly at T.W.U., I've felt alone, isolated, and outnumbered. *PBT* does a lot to alleviate those feelings. Thanks for the effort and good work, and keep it up!

C.B.
Denton, Texas

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CAMERON

A logo is a graphic which is recognized as being associated with a name or title. The logo for *Pointblank Times* is a photograph taken by Julia Margaret Cameron, a Victorian photographer.

Born in 1815, Cameron taught herself photography at the age of 49, when her daughter gave her a camera and equipment for processing collodion plates. She soon developed her own style and became a pioneer in a new type of portraiture--the close-up. Though she is most famous for portraits of men (Tennyson, Longfellow, Sir John Herschel), one undoubted eyewitness wrote, "Female beauty was Mrs. Cameron's passion" and such works as the *Mountain Nymph*, *Ellen Terry 1864*, *Florence Fisher 1872* beautifully illustrate this point. She died in Ceylon in 1879, her last word being "Beautiful."



The Mountain Nymph

There are basically two viewpoints concerning the origins of homosexual oppression and censure: (1) homosexuality has always been found to be abhorrent to humankind, or (2) homosexual oppression has been limited in space and time, and is a product of tangible events in human history.

History can only bear out the second viewpoint. The oppression of homosexuals is a learned behavior. The question which occurs, then, is "What historical events have influenced people to condemn and punish homosexuals?"

The Hebrew people, whose history is sketched in the Old Testament, had at one time allowed homosexuality as a part of temple worship. According to some authorities, it was not until after the Babylonian Exile that the Hebrews developed negative attitudes toward this previously acceptable behavior. It would seem reasonable to suggest that as slaves and as a people who were continuously captive, the Hebrews would be discouraged by their captors from engaging in homosexuality because this sexual act would not lead to procreation (*i.e.* to more slaves).

Another variation of this theory would seem to hold true at other times in Hebrew history. Self-defined as "God's Chosen People" the Hebrews were a very nationalistic people. Homosexuality was written of as an alien practice unworthy of the chosen ones.

The Bible prohibits every form of sexual activity other than heterosexual genital intercourse. The first prohibition of homosexuality is found in the Old Testament in Genesis 19. (the story of Sodom and Gomorrah). The practice is again prohibited in Leviticus 18:22. The punishment for transgression was death. Indeed, the whole history of the Hebrews repeats the scene of the number of the chosen people being drastically dwindled because of unfaithfulness to God (*e.g.* Noah and the Flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, countless plagues). Always a small remnant remains. Because of wars and unnatural disasters, the Hebrews had an "underpopulation" problem. Power for God's chosen ones would depend upon procreation. Homosexuality would seem to subvert this purpose. It would have to be condemned. Throughout the Old Testament, there are various references to "the abomination" or to "Sodomites." (See Judges 1:22-30; 1 Kings 22:46; and 2 Kings 23:7).

Jewish sex codes were brought over into Christian codes by the early adherents of the Church, most notably St. Paul, who had been raised in the Jewish tradition on matters of sex. As a new and persecuted religion, Christianity could not entirely rely upon the conversion of "heathens" for the attainment of numbers. Procreation would play a powerful role in the growth of the Christian Church. Homosexuality would, once again, have to be condemned as an unnatural act. St. Paul brings condemnation of homosexuality into the New Testament in Romans 1; I Corinthians 6:9; and I Timothy 1:10. The most damning condemnation is in Romans 1, and includes, for the first time, a condemnation of lesbianism.

It is important to note that, although homosexuality is considered to be absolutely the *worst* sin by Church fathers, Jesus himself apparently did not consider it worthy of mention. There is also strong evidence in the story of David and Jonathan (I Samuel 20) that a homosexual relationship existed between the two, which was part of the reason for Saul's attempt upon David's life.

In Rome, when the Christian revolution was taking place, the Romans openly practiced homosexuality. But when Christianity became the religion of the Empire, a crusade was opened against the practice. In 342 A.D. Emperor Constantius imposed the death penalty for sodomy. Valentinian declared that homosexuals should be burned at the stake and Justinian, hero of law, imposed death by sword. Justinian was terrified by natural calamities which wiped out whole cities. This fear with the

argument that "the sexual act is for procreation" was promoted by Justinian and he used these arguments as a justification for homosexual oppression/death.

Most religions in other areas of the world were more lenient. In the Koran, Muhammed forbade sodomy, but 4 witnesses were needed to enforce the law, and so few homosexuals were actually prosecuted. The Hindus regarded homosexuality as abhorrent but treated the practice with leniency. Buddhists were tolerant, if not accepting. In Japan, it was considered more admirable for a man to love another man than for him to waste his time on "a mere woman." The Zoroasters of the Middle East were closer in belief to Christian tenets. To them, homosexuality was an "unnatural sin" for which there was no way to atone. It was considered worse than "the murder of a good man" and all citizens were given the right, indeed, charged with the duty, of murdering any known homosexual.

In the Middle Ages, there was very little distinction between Church and State. The two were so closely aligned that a person who violated the precepts of the Church was considered guilty, not only of heresy, but also of treason. St. Thomas Aquinas justified the persecution of homosexuals with the logic that "right reason declares that the appointed end of sexual acts is procreation." (For this reason, Aquinas considered rape to be a *lesser* sin than masturbation or homosexuality, since rape at least led to procreation.)

The words "heretic," "sorcerer," "sodomist," and "witch" were often subsumed under the same category in the Middle Ages. During the Spanish Inquisition, those who were accused of heresy were assumed to be homosexual as a matter of course. These people were burned at the stake, drowned, or buried alive. Throughout history homosexuality and heresy have been equated. In English speaking-countries, the connection between the two is expressed through the use of a single word to denote both concepts, "buggery." Webster's Unabridged Dictionary defines "buggery" as "heresy, sodomy" and "bugger" as "heretic, sodomite." Also of interest is the origin of the word "faggot":

fagot or *faggot*:

1. A bundle of sticks or twigs, esp. as used for fuel, a fascine, or as a means of burning heretics alive. (Webster's 3d Int.)
2. The embroidered figure of a faggot, which heretics who had recanted were obliged to wear on their sleeves. (Oxford English Dictionary)
3. A term of abuse or contempt applied to a homosexual male.

Today, in our overpopulated world, the concept that the sex act is for procreation only is still promulgated by such influential groups as the Roman Catholic Church and fundamentalist religions. And so women and men of these religions are denied the right to birth control, abortion and the practice of homosexuality. These churches, while not able to burn offenders at the stake as in the days of the Inquisition, today promise transgressors the fire of everlasting Hell after death, and impose whatever hell on earth they can manufacture for the living.

Barbara Cigainero and Linda Lovell

Sources:

- Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation*, Dennis Altman. 1971.
Religious Roots of the Taboo on Homosexuality, John Lauritsen. 1974.
The Manufacture of Madness, Thomas Szasz. 1970.
"Homosexual Love", *The Origins and Development of the Moral Ideas*, Edward Westermarck. 1908.
The Holy Bible, King James version. 1611.
Sexual Behavior in the Human Female, Alfred Kinsey, et al. 1953.

Pat Parker, author of "For Willyce," will read her poetry in Houston on May 29th. Judy Grahn says she reads "incredibly," so a word to the wise should be sufficient.

Her books of poetry, *A Child of Myself* and *Pit Stop*, published by the Women's Press Collective in Oakland, California, are just now becoming available in a few bookstores in Houston and Austin.

Although she now lives in Oakland, Pat grew up in Houston.

Thursday
May 29 8 pm
PAT PARKER Houston Women's Center
3602 Milam
donation requested



P
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For Willyce

When i make love to you
i try
with each stroke of my tongue
to say i love you
to tease i love you
to hammer i love you
to melt i love you

& your sounds drift down
oh god!
oh jesus!
and i think -
here it is, some dude's
getting credit for what
a woman
has done,
again.

pat parker

Rites of Spring

Strange reports have been floating in to us about women pitching tents in apartment courtyards, and secretaries wearing hiking boots to work.

Yes, the first Lesbian Rites of Spring in Texas is almost here. It will be a camping weekend, a time to relax, enjoy the outdoors, and meet new people. The entertainment will be whatever we bring--music, sports, Austin's Mother Tongue Theater group, etc. It starts Friday, May 30, whenever you can get there (it's just west of Austin). We'll try to gather around 11 pm Friday night, to meet each other and coordinate anything that needs coordinating.

The setting: a rustic public campground on the Colorado River. There are a few facilities--an occasional toilet or water spigot, some picnic tables--but mostly it's just grass and trees and deer and river, for miles. Since our weekend is the one after Memorial weekend, we hope any touristy hordes will have come and gone. And if the weather is overcast or a little misty, don't stay home! It'll be cooler and we'll have more miles to frolic in.

Who's coming: women from Austin, Houston, Dallas, Ft. Worth, San Antonio, Denton, and Wichita Falls--so far. If you're from a small town or don't know anybody, you're especially welcome.

Sports: possibilities include softball, soccer, swimming, volleyball, fishing, boating, scuba diving, hiking, and frisbee. One park no-no: motorcycle riding is allowed only on the paved road, because of the grazing cattle.

Children: Everyone will be given a chance to share responsibility for children if they want to.

Workshops: If people want to plan rap sessions instead of doing everything free-form, the possibilities are endless: Gays in the Medical Profession, Lesbian Mothers, Creating Women's Media, Dealing with Parents, the Lesbian Movement Today, Lesbians in Sports, How to Do the Bump...whatever we're interested in. We'll talk about it Friday night. If people just want to lie in the sun that's fine too.

Music: bring your instruments, from spoons to accordions.

Food, etc.: We'll have more time to play if we do our cooking in large groups. So, if you can, get together with others in your city or carload and coordinate who brings what. If you can't, you can do a sort of adventurous potluck thing anyway; bring larger quantities of a few things, and we'll throw them together and see how much chaos we have. If you have stoves, grill tops, and large pots and pans, bring them. And don't forget your sleeping bag or blanket or whatever.

To coordinate things like food and tents, *in Austin* contact Tina - 476-5051. *In Houston* contact Dee Smathers - work: 526-5701, home: 529-6801. *Anywhere else*, write PBT if you have unanswered questions.

Directions: to get from Austin to ROS

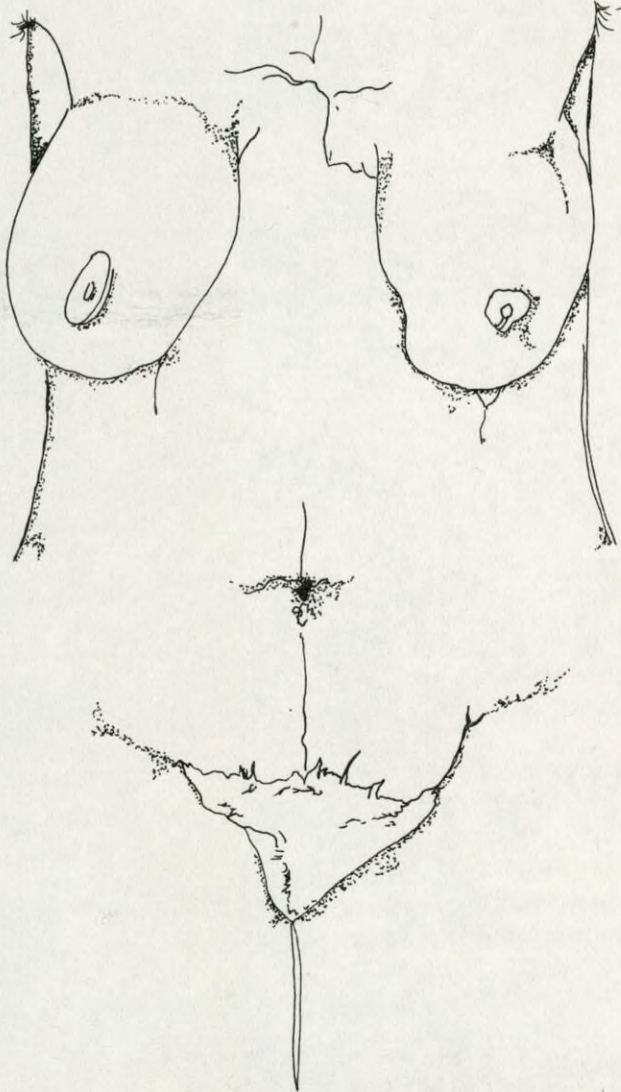
First you have to get to Austin. Then arrange yourself so you're heading west out of the city on highway 71 (Ben White Blvd.). Ignore the business loop of 71. Ignore the Mansfield Dam sign. 27 miles west of Austin, turn right on Ranch Road 2322. You'll see a rustic store on the corner there, and a sign for a girl scout camp. You'll be on this twisting Ranch Road 2322 for about 10 (?) miles, past a motel, an LCRA sign, a Girl Scout Camp, and finally--a Baptist Encampment. If it's daylight you'll see some fine views of the river. Finally you come to two signs, one saying "Paved Road Ends," the other pointing to the right "To Park Ranger." You go LEFT, on the dirt road:

follow
the hot pink
belly-buttons

Now the fun starts. It's a squatters' rights reservations system in the park, so an Austin advance party is going to go out and "squat" for us early, probably Thursday evening. They will nail up hot pink discs on the trees or wherever, to guide us to our chosen site. Possible campsites range for several miles down the river, so don't get impatient. Keep going until you see the ROS sign--and a strange and wonderful group of women. If you don't find us, go back to the place where the pavement ends. We'll send a scouting party over there about 10:30 Friday night for anyone who needs help finding the site.

Spread the word, and we hope to see you all there!

- Pokey



Debbie Saccomanno

GAY AA

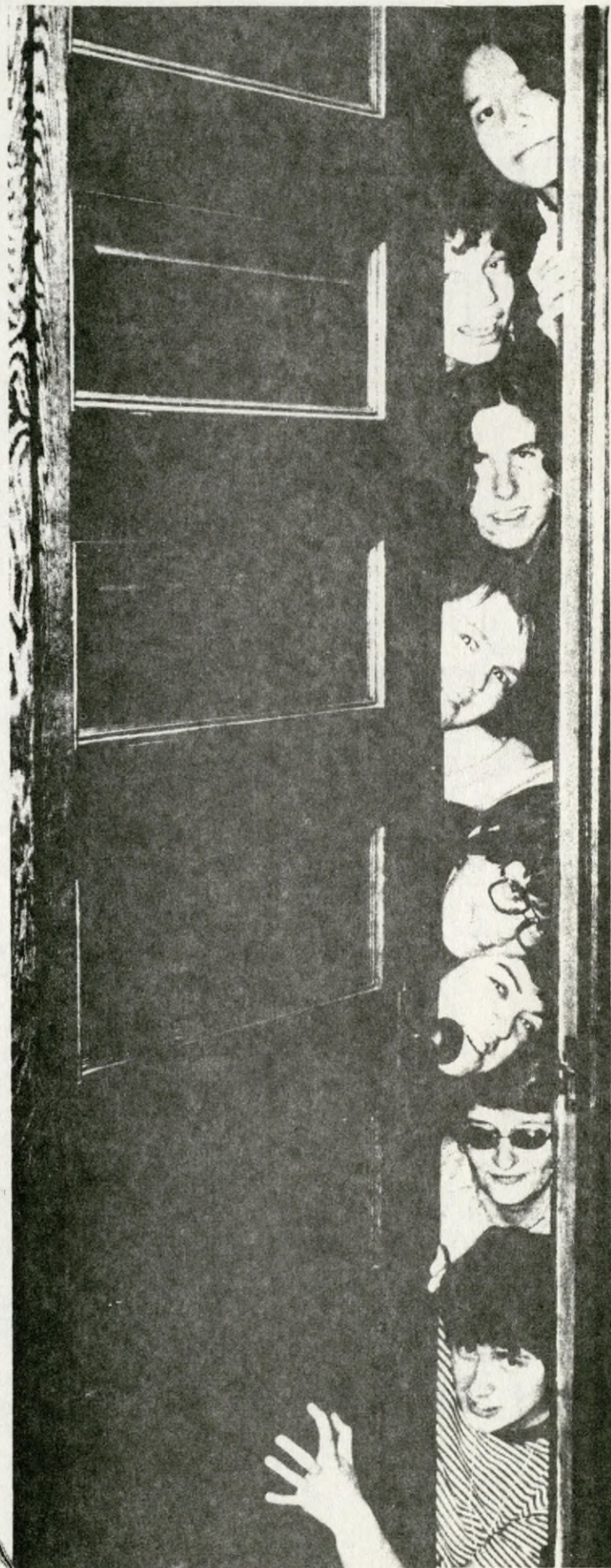
There are many times a lesbian may find herself falling head over heels. She may be in love. She may be going after a double-play ball. Or she may be staggering to bed after a heavy date with booze.

In a large city there are probably 10,000 people who live in the double closet of being gay and being alcoholic. Finally, a gay Alcoholics Anonymous group has started meeting in Houston. Called *Lambda*, it has grown to about 35 members, with mostly word-of-mouth publicity. About a third of them are lesbians. If you or someone you care about is having a love affair with booze and could use some support in breaking off the affair, ask Dick about coming to a *Lambda* meeting. His number is: 528-5107. His credentials: he's gay, he's alcoholic, and he wouldn't be alive today if two gay members of his straight AA group hadn't helped him out a couple of years ago.

MCC

The Metropolitan Community Church, a predominantly gay denomination, will hold their 5-day international conference in Dallas beginning July 30. As many as 3,000 people may attend, and Dallas may never be the same again. MCC founder Troy Perry will be present, and State Rep. Elaine Noble of Boston will be a featured speaker.

For more information write or call MCC of Dallas, 3834 Ross Avenue, Dallas, Tx. 75204, (214) 826-0291.



"Out of the Closet"

M. Cassavant

A REVIEW: *Hearts and Minds*

Focus in on a returned American prisoner of war addressing elementary students. An 8 year old girl asks, "What did Vietnam look like?" The officer in a naval uniform replies, "Except for the people, it was pretty. The Vietnamese are a very backward and primitive people. They make a mess of everything."

A North Vietnamese father at the site of an American-bombed civilian village: "Take my daughter's pretty shirt and throw it in Nixon's face. Tell him she is dead and she was only a little schoolgirl." Fade to General Westmoreland: "The Oriental doesn't have the same high regard for life we do."

Hearts and Minds is an academy award-winning documentary on the war in Vietnam. The brilliance of this film, however, does not rest on its clear and graphic portrayal of the American participation in that war. It is to be found instead in its attempt to show *what* in American society so amply prepared us as a people to napalm children, burn villages and destroy crops, in the name of freedom.

Throughout the film there is a skillful blend of war scenes and everyday American life. The conclusion which seems inescapable is that the behavior of American men in Vietnam was the logical extension of the American male mystique. The scene of high school boys in a football locker room, worked into a frenzy by the coach's tearful plea of "Don't let them beat us" takes on a new meaning in the light of repeated military expressions of "We went to Vietnam to win the war."

If your feelings as to why the Vietnam war was a mistake are vague, go see *Hearts and Minds*. But be prepared for more. Be prepared to be frightened. For, in the words of Colonel George Patton III, this country is still producing "a bloody good bunch of killers."

- Barbara Cigainero

will the woman who hasn't

will the woman who hasn't

shouted in rage
dreaded old age
lived in a cage
sobbed in sorrow
hoped for tomorrow
hidden her pain
played a man's game
regretted her past
submitted at last
and lied
and cried
and died

please come forward
and lead

- Amanda

THE HOUSTON RAPE COALITION

The Houston Rape Crisis Coalition is a voluntary organization which originated as a cooperative effort of the National Organization for Women and the Texas Women's Political Caucus. It has long been recognized by feminists that the rape victim is often victimized not only by her attacker but by the systems which are supposed to assist and protect her. Because the law enforcement, medical, and judicial systems were not responding to the needs of women who had been sexually assaulted, the Coalition was formed with the purpose of assisting women in obtaining the services to which they are entitled.

Most women do not know what to expect after they have been raped--they are not prepared to hear snide comments from police officers investigating the crime; they do not know that they may have to wait six hours in the emergency room at Houston's Ben Taub Hospital before being seen by a physician; and they do not know how to deal with the unfair accusations hurled at them by a defense attorney in a courtroom. Realizing that many women are not informed about the crime of rape and its aftermath, the Coalition sees public education as one of its main functions. Speakers are available to any group wishing to learn about rape or rape prevention. Educational programs have also been planned for businesses that are interested in the welfare of their women employees. The Coalition sponsors self-defense courses for women in which basic protective measures are taught and conducts discussion groups for victims of rape and sexual assault so that these women can have an opportunity to work through some of their feelings precipitated by the attack.

The Coalition sees as another of its chief purposes the monitoring of police, hospital, and court procedures in order to document the treatment accorded to the rape victim. Corrective measures can then be suggested if injustices are found.

The largest facet of the Rape Coalition is the advocates program. Volunteers are on call 24 hours a day to answer telephone calls from victims. The calls range from crisis calls received from women who have just been assaulted to calls requesting information about rape statistics. The advocates are also available to meet a rape victim at police headquarters or the hospital or to accompany her to court. Some victims do not wish to tell relatives and friends of the rape, so the advocate plays an important role in assisting the victim through a very difficult time. In addition to the women advocates, the Coalition has enlisted male volunteers to counsel husbands, fathers, and boyfriends of rape victims as well as to assist male victims of sexual assault. Telephone calls to the rape advocates are channeled through Crisis Hotline (228-1505), which is working with the Coalition to serve rape victims.

A long-term goal of the Coalition is to work for legislative reform of existing rape laws. A law has recently passed in the current Texas legislative session and, although it is far from ideal, it is an improvement over the old law. The Coalition hopes that it can be further improved when the Legislature next convenes.

In order to obtain more information about the Houston Rape Crisis Coalition, leave a message at the Houston Women's Center: 524-5743.

- Susan



Sundancer Photographic Studies

JUDY GRAHN

"In my opinion there should be a woman's press on every streetcorner, printing every word by every woman for the next ten years, trying to catch up."

Judy Grahn, poet and printer, visited Houston and Austin last month. Her reception included hugs and accolades from Texas women: "I've been waiting for years to hear you read 'Detroit Annie, hitchhiking.'" One woman noticed her way of bringing out other people's positive energy and reflecting it back to them. "All I can say is, she's incredibly human," summed up one *PBT* staffer. The following "interview" is a collection of her remarks during her five-day stay--from a university presentation to 3 a.m. conversations.

"I grew up in a small town in New Mexico and fled as soon as possible." Her parents encouraged her to write at a very early age. She figures they thought it was a cheap way to keep her quiet. So her writing career began with church prayers, and only later progressed to *Edward the Dyke*.

She first fell in love at the age of 14, but her girl friend's parents stood between them. She remembers sitting on her bicycle outside their house all day long.

She went to Washington, D.C. and worked in a sandwich shop at night, going to medical secretary school days. "It's hard to write poetry when you're worried about your hose running if you have to go into the bottom filing cabinet. And you always have to go into the bottom filing cabinet." She went to six colleges-- "six bad colleges. I took health and hygiene many times. I really know how to brush my teeth."

In 1965, she was a member of the Mattachine Society in D.C., and marched in one of the first gay demonstrations in the world. There was a stiff dress code for the demonstration--suits and ties for the men and dresses and heels for the women. After the march, one of the women noted that Judy's feet were bleeding from the awful shoes, and congratulated her on being a martyr for the movement. Women in Mattachine came and left as individuals; they didn't have any sense of community then. Judy and her lover didn't have many friends, and they blamed it on each other.

When she was 25, she got violently ill with encephalitis, went into a coma and nearly died. "When I came to, I was different. I couldn't talk for a while. I was emotionally volatile. Then I decided the old person had died at 25. This new person was going to do risks, going to do what *she* wanted from then on.

"You have to have extreme determination about writing. To personify that I bought a funny hat and a notebook, became eccentric, and hung around where poets might hang around. I told everyone who was interested (that was about two people) that I was a poet. I filled up notebooks with observations. Write--even what seems like trash is practice. Then when you do have something to say, you'll be ready. It's like a musician doing scales."

She remembers a teacher once being upset with her because she wrote "Lonely as a bum on a railroad track" in a sonnet. The teacher told her "You can't put the word 'bum' in a sonnet." Judy feels poetry should be socially useful, not something rigid or mysterious or "dilly-dallying with words." Some people put in an extra line that doesn't make sense, just so it'll be 'real poetry!' "That's like throwing an off-key part into a piece of music, so it'll be 'real music.'"

In addition, she feels writing has been too long thought to be a middle or upper-class thing. She feels that much of the vitality in language and music has come out of the working class and minority cultures.

In 1970 a few women started the Women's Press Collective in Oakland, "When we started I didn't even know how to use a screwdriver," and the press would constantly be breaking down. They put out a beautiful anthology, *Woman to Woman*, with sheer physical determination. It was printed in a kitchen, where children got jam prints on the books, and their storage place was in the cupboard with the dishes. They discovered that printing illustrations on onion skin involved running the machine very slowly, even to the point of turning it by hand, one by one, as they put talcum powder between each page.

Their recent anthology, *Lesbians Speak Out*, is "completely woman-made, even the binding." It took three years to produce and has the work of 80 lesbians in it. "We were supposed to be a collective but we didn't agree on anything. So we had six introductions to it." About the Press she says, "It's more a disorganization than an organization. It's a few women who want to be printing women's material more than anything else in the world."

ALPERT CONTROVERSY

Due to the controversy she has sparked in many recent women's publications, and the petitions drawn up in reaction to her actions, the case of Jane Alpert bears examining more closely.

The daughter of comfortably middle-class parents, Jane Alpert graduated with honors from Swarthmore College. When she met Sam Melville, an ultra-leftist, in 1968, she was a second year graduate student at Columbia and held a part-time job as an editor on the Cambridge University Press. Alpert became sexually and emotionally involved with Melville, quit her job and graduate studies, and threw herself into the politics of her new lover. Alpert never belonged to any left organization; thus most of her contact with the organized left was contingent upon her relationship with Melville, although she did work on the all-female leftist paper *RAT* for a period.

In 1970 she, with Melville and two others, was arrested and charged with bombing eight government and corporate office buildings in New York. She pleaded guilty to conspiracy, jumped bail, and disappeared into the underground. Melville stayed and was sentenced to 18 years in prison.

In the underground

At this point the romantic life of the revolutionary turned to the lonely tedium of the underground for Alpert--transient jobs, no friends, false identities, and political isolation. She lost all contact with fellow leftists. Her only real relationships were with a women's consciousness-raising group, which gave her a sense of community before she had to move on to another city.

In September 1971 Sam Melville was killed in the Attica prison revolt. A posthumous collection of his prison letters was made and Alpert wrote the eulogistic preface, gushing over "his great gift for making the most of small pleasures and his innate strength."

Condemnation of left and theory of mother right

She made an abrupt reversal of this sentiment in May 1973 when a letter and article signed by Alpert were delivered to the women's publication, *OFF OUR BACKS*. The article traced Alpert's change from ultra-leftism to feminism and unqualitatively condemned the left as a group of male supremacists. Using her former lover, Melville, as typical of the left, Alpert claimed he intimidated her into participating in the bombings and that her political ideas of the time were the result of his emotional manipulation of her. She went on to describe a domestic life with Melville in which she performed all the household labor, cooking, dishwashing, etc., and in which he could make love to her only if he fantasized her a prostitute. Inductively Alpert claimed that this was the caliber of all male leftists--they were all male supremacists. Consequently, in speaking of Attica, she declared that she "mourned the loss of 42 male supremacists no longer."

To further illustrate the sexism of the left, Alpert cited that the Weathermen were controlled by a council of five, only one of which was a woman. She included several other examples of the personal sexism of individual members of the underground and in doing so included names, places, living habits, and other pertinent details which jeopardized the safety of both her sisters and brothers in the underground. Then she exhorted her sisters of the left and in the underground to follow her example and leave the male-dominated left and join the feminist movement.

After dismissing the left, Alpert's article then proposed, in lieu of her formerly held Marxian theories of oppression of economic classes, an eclectic theory of Mother Right--that is oppression on the basis of motherhood. Alpert concludes the article looking forward to the resumption of the worship of the mother principle similar to the goddess worship of ancient religions.

Reaction of the women's movement to the article

The publication of this article incited immediate responses among women. Some replies affirmed her analysis of the left. However, replies from women in the underground were at first dubious of the authenticity of the article. According to them, the author had given inaccurate information about the leaders of the Weatherunderground and had included the real name of one of its members--information inaccessible to Alpert who knew only the revolutionary pseudonym of the member. His real name was used only by prison authorities.

Cooperation with federal authorities

The debate over the article's authenticity was ended in November 1974 when Jane Alpert turned herself in to federal authorities. She publicly claimed credit for the article and the theory of Mother Right. Under federal custody she then used her new found feminism as a carte blanche to remorselessly collaborate with the FBI, in the words of her lawyer to "cooperate fully" in giving the Bureau information about the underground. Soon after Alpert's collaboration with the FBI, Pat Swinton, an underground compatriot of Alpert's who had been charged with her in 1970, was located and arrested. Swinton's lawyer stated that Alpert knew many details of her client's underground existence.

The controversy

The reactions in the women's movement were extreme. Three petitions were soon circulating with numerous signers. One states that "anyone who reveals such information acts in the same manner as an agent of the State," that no movement can survive with betrayals such as Alpert's, and that she therefore should not be welcomed into the feminist movement. The second petition states that Alpert's denial of Attica is essentially a denial of the feminist movement, and that we must choose whether the women's movement is to be based on white and class privilege as represented by Alpert or whether it is a struggle which supports and identifies with other oppressed peoples. The third states that no one group of women has the right to determine what is or is not "true feminism," that is, that feminism has no theoretical basis which one can place oneself outside of. Therefore, Alpert's brand is as good as anyone else's.

Alpert meanwhile, in exchange for her collaboration, received only 27 months in a minimal security prison with eligibility for parole in nine months. She is presently in prison doing research on goddess worship.

The lines of the controversy of support or nonsupport for Alpert are drawn around the basic issue of: should the women's movement align itself with the struggles of other peoples--blacks, working class, political prisoners, or should it isolate itself and work against these struggles, as in cooperating with law enforcement institutions if it were advantageous to the women's movement or its individual members to do so.

M. Pipkin



TEXAS GAY CONFERENCE II

JUNE 20-22, 1975
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

THEME: Gays • Loving, Living, Learning • Together

A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE FOR GAY PEOPLE
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