



pointblank times

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Houston, Texas

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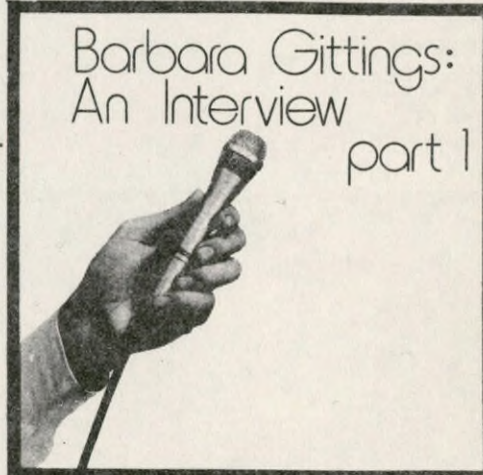
If the Gay Activist Movement in the United States could have a "grand dame", one candidate for the title would undoubtedly be Barbara Gittings. Active in the Movement since the late 1950's, Ms. Gittings was responsible for the establishment of the first gay group within a professional organization--the Task Force on Gay Liberation of the American Library Association. She is presently serving on the Board of Directors of the National Gay Task Force.

Q: It is commonly accepted that the Stonewall Riots of 1969 mark the beginning of the Gay Activist Movement. Could you give us some sense of what it was like for gay women before 1969?

A: Well, it's not really true that that was the beginning of the Gay Activist Movement. The Movement has been in existence and active, in one form or another--usually in many forms--since the early 1950's. It was started by a very small, very frightened group of people who met in someone's apartment in Los Angeles in late 1950 or 1951. You know they were so scared they had the blinds drawn, the door locked, and a lookout posted for the police, because they really thought they might be arrested for talking about homosexuality. But nothing happened, and they got courage, and soon there were little discussion groups like this one all over the city of Los Angeles.

To cut the long story short, this was really the beginning of what is today the Gay Liberation Movement in the United States. Soon there were groups of various kinds, not only in Los Angeles, but in San Francisco,

and one of the groups in Los Angeles did publishing. It put out a magazine called "One, Inc.". The title for both the organization and the publication came from the Thomas Carlisle quotation: "A common bond of brotherhood makes all men one." And there were women on the staff, very thoroughly involved in the publication during those first few years. Later it became a much more male-oriented magazine.



Prior to the publication of "One Magazine", there were, I think, three issues published by a lesbian in the Los Angeles area--a magazine that she called "Vice-versa." However, there wasn't what you'd call an on-going gay movement at the time, and she had a very small circulation-- mostly with friends-- for her little

magazine, so it didn't really take off. But "One Magazine" did not die, because they reached out and set up subscription arrangements and advertising wherever they could, and they built up quite a subscription list over the years.

Now, the first, and for many years, the only lesbian organization was founded in 1955 in San Francisco. That was Daughters of Bilitis. The name "Bilitis" comes from the prose poems by the late 19th, early 20th Century writer, Pierre Louys. (A series of prose poems called "The Songs of Bilitis" about a mythical Greek woman who lived part of her life in lesbian affairs. She was not a real person.) This organization, the Daughters of Bilitis, was founded in 1955 by Del Martin, Phyllis Lyon, and six other women. They were not

(cont'd on page 8)

There is within the women's movement a preoccupation with the saga of Jane Alpert. The story has been reported like a folk song whose tune remains the same but whose verses vary from one part of the country to the other reflecting local color more than fact. The issue has become for many publications a kind of journalistic trap. A major story accompanied by related stories and editorials, spawn articles which update, refute, agree with, or view from a personal bias that which has been printed.

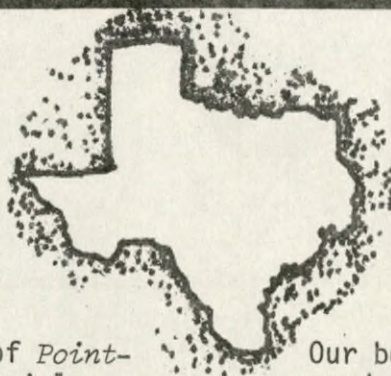
We believe that controversy is healthy. We believe that the Jane Alpert story is important. But we do not intend for the *Pointblank Times* to become the *Jane Alpert Review*. This issue, which contains a personal analysis of the situation, will mark the end of our treatment of the story unless factual developments occur which we feel we should report to you. Although the analy-

sis printed in this issue does not necessarily reflect the view of the staff of this paper, we feel that it is well thought through and worthy of your attention.

It has saddened us to see that stories printed on this controversy have had the single common result of producing paranoia and mistrust between sisters within the movement. Because such contradictory information has been printed, we can only surmise that conjecture is being printed as fact in some publications.

If you wish to read further accounts of the Jane Alpert story, we recommend to you the following publications: *Majority Report*, *Big Mama Rag*, *Off Our Backs*, and *her-self*. All of these publications can be found at Abraxas Limited, corner of Mt. Vernon and West Alabama.

PBT Collective



With this fourth issue of *Pointblank Times*, we come to a crucial point in the life of the publication. Many readers have helped us along by subscribing or donating funds and materials for the paper. We are extremely pleased with the good response. Most readers seem to like the paper very much.

But, alas, "liking the paper" is not enough. We are in need of help. We need two kinds of support if we are to continue publishing. Of course, we need financial support. If you read the paper, but have not subscribed, please do so, if you are able. Please send your friends copies of the paper, and urge them to become involved.

Our best method for advertising is by word of mouth.

Equally important, creative women must come forward into the light! There are eight women working on the paper. We cannot continue to write 90% of each issue. The strain is beginning to show. So many women have told us they plan to submit material, but few have actually done so. We need news articles, essays, artwork, photography, short stories, and poetry. Work does not have to be "lesbian" in content. We only ask that it be of interest to women. Please help us by submitting some of your own work. If you have none, make some! Also, encourage your friends to contribute. Without your creativity and involvement, the paper will surely die.

THE ELECTRIC WOMAN

Sleeping beside the electric woman
Opens wide my doors,
Sparks arch from jamb to jamb,
The porches of my soul
Turn into auto mats,
Seals break
And "In" and "Out"
Fly open both at once,
A loud buzz adds confusion.

All sticking switches pulled,
We set the room full daft with lights,
And mad alarm bells
When we love, I am
Humbled by her potency--
Great cracking gaps of fire
Leap to the ground of my earthen tongue.

Frieda Werden

Penisia

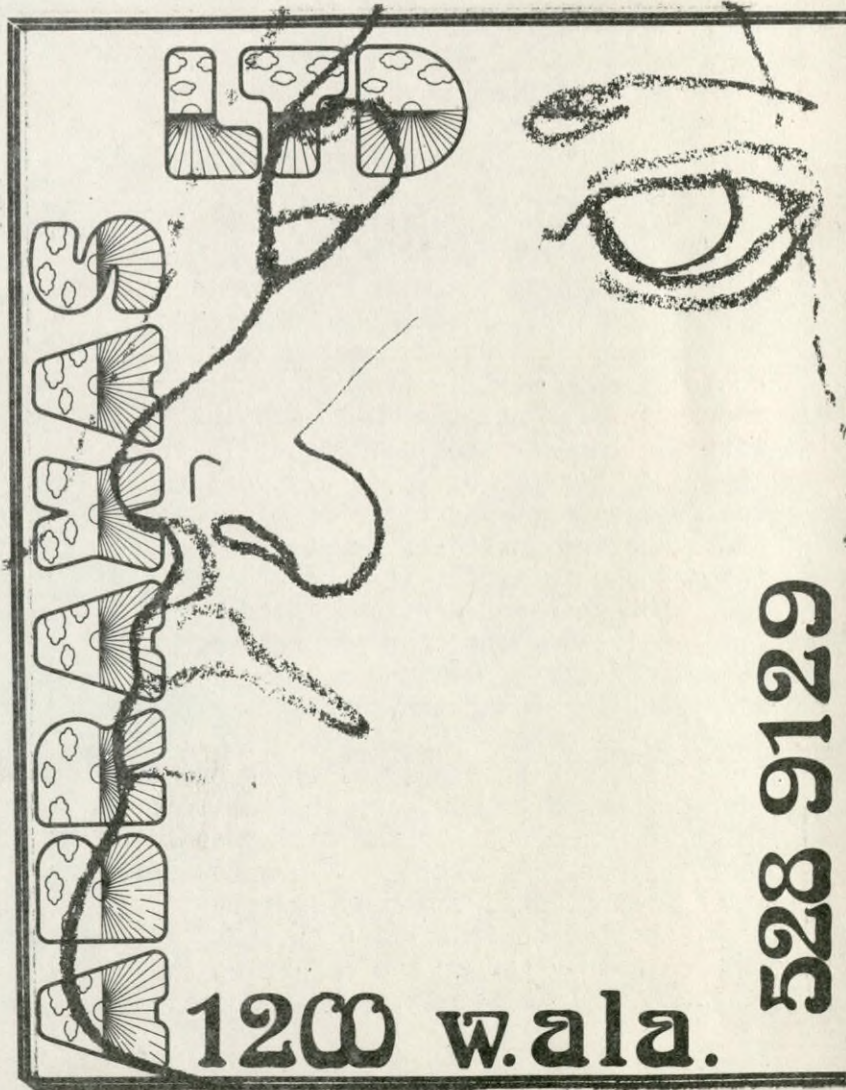
Men's words describe a man's world. A women's counterculture is rapidly evolving (evidenced by an explosion of women's publications, organizations, books, art, etc.) but it is being held back by a lack of words to describe the new perspectives being explored. Penisia is a word I invented to meet my need to label many oppressive phenomena which seem to be related.

Penisia (derived from penis): a social disease possibly arising out of a need to appear potent and in control despite deep-rooted feelings of insecurity. Symptoms: sexual dysfunctions (e.g., voyeurism, exhibitionism, rape); phallogentrism (obsession with size and performance of penis and penis substitutes such as cars, guns, balls, etc.); gynophobia (hatred, fear of women); Note: One need not have a penis to qualify as a penisiac, nor does having one necessarily mean contagion, though there is a correlation.

If you are interested in exploring this word further or offering words of your own to fill in communication gaps, let *PBT* know, and maybe it can be shared.

Ellen

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SHOWDOWN AT PALEFACE PARK

On Saturday, May 31st, a struggle took place at the Rites of Spring campout. The campout included approximately 130 women and 20 children and was located at Paleface Park, 30 miles West of Austin in Texas hill country. Because of rising water from the Colorado River, the camp was split into two small peninsulas by a large cove of water. There were women from several cities camping, but for simplicity, one side of the camp was called the "Houston side" and the other side was called the "Austin side." The Austin side was at the bottom of a dead end road, was bounded by water on two sides and by a fence on a third side. It was approximately 200 ft. wide and 200-300 ft. long. At least 50-60 women and children were camped in this area. A dirt road provided the only vehicular access to the site. The site, then, was crowded with women, some of whom were swimming in the nude.

At about 9:00pm on Saturday, 4 drunken men in a camper entered the site and began to argue with the women. Harsh words were exchanged and the men were asked to leave. They left but later returned and threatened to go and get guns and more men and return. They did return two more times to argue and threaten the women.

At 11:00 pm the Austin side called across the river for help from the Houston side, announcing a meeting to form a plan for protection. About 40 women crossed to the meeting. At the meeting discussion centered upon ways to protect the children and whether or not the women should counter with violence or should try to talk with the men. A group of women was sent to call the Travis County Sheriff for help. The women meeting agreed to try talking with the men and to avoid violence if possible. Four spokespersons were appointed.

At 11:30pm the four men returned in the middle of the meeting. All children were put in cars at the site and several women moved other cars to block access to the site. Not knowing whether or not the men were armed or how many men had returned, about 70 women went up the dirt road to meet the men. An estimated 10 women were armed with sticks, tools, or baseball bats.

A heated confrontation ensued. The men were extremely vulgar and insulting and yelled many lewd comments and accusations

about lesbians. One woman was kicked in the groin and was later taken to the hospital to be treated for shock. The men were intent upon getting down to the site and the women were intent upon preventing their advance. Finally the men tried to push their way through but the women held their ground, chanting "no" and urging each other not the fight. The men were pushed back up the road.

Another group of women from the Houston side left to call police again and their car was stoned by the men on the road. The men then began throwing rocks at the 70 women in the access road. The women took cover. The men advanced several times throwing rocks, but each time the women took cover. To our knowledge, no woman threw a rock or in any way physically attacked the men. Finally the men left, evidently believing that police had arrived. No one had been seriously hurt, physically.

Fifteen minutes later Travis County Police did arrive. They went out looking for the men, found them, and arrested them. The men were so drunk and belligerent that the police put them in handcuffs. All women with complaints were called forward to discuss pressing charges.

At 2 am, police in 4 police cars returned to the Austin side and told the women to either break camp or be arrested. They accused the women of throwing a Boy Scout off a cliff and breaking his leg. The women denied this charge and pointed out that there were no cliffs in the area. The police said that that did not matter. Finally a woman went with police to confront the Scout. The Scout had actually tripped, by himself, in a hole and had sprained his ankle.

Several women, one a lawyer, discussed the situation with police and at about 2:45am the police left, after agreeing to allow the women to remain on the site.

Charges of assault have been pressed against one of the men and, according to local police, two of the men had previous criminal records, one of them for assault.

Linda J. Lovell

PBT would like to feature photographs from the Rites of Spring in our July issue. Please submit any black and white photographs or color negatives you would like us to consider by July 5th.



Linda J. Lovell

STAR AND THE 75: A Children's Story

"Tell me a story before bed," Garin asked her mother.

"Okay. This is the story of Star and the 75," started her mother, as Garin snuggled up closer to her. "Once upon a time there was a woman named Star. She lived with Laura and loved her very much. They would share their flannel shirts when they went camping and would rub lotion on each other when they got sunburned at the beach.

But one day Laura went away with a man she had met. She told Star, 'I'm so happy. With a man it's for real.'

Star knew she had loved Laura 'for real'. Star wondered if she was the only woman in the world who thought women were important enough to love for real.

So she went to a center where she had heard there might be other women like her. But there were mostly men there. So, as a joke, she would always pretend there were really 75 women there. Her friend John would say, 'Oh, you just missed them. The 75 just left. They said something about going to take a shower together.' And Star would always say, 'Darn, I missed them again.'

Slowly though, one by one, Star began to meet other women like her. She didn't even wonder if she was crazy any more. Then one day she had an idea. 'Let's get everybody together and go camping! We can call it the Rites of Spring.'

And they called and wrote to everybody they could think of. On the chosen day, it was ugly and raining. But just when Star got to the river where they were to meet, the sky cleared up and was a brilliant blue. And there were all kinds of wonderful women there, old and young, rich and poor, from many cities with funny names like Houston, Austin, Galveston, Wichita Falls, Denton, Fort Worth, Dallas, and San Antonio. They got there any way they could. One woman, called Gunga Din, rode her bike all the way for a week to get there.

(cont'd)

That night they sat around the campfire that Gunga Din built and ate chili and brownies and were very glad to see each other.

The next day Star let the good feelings of the sun and water and friends sink deep into her. She took her shirt off while she was canoeing, and had to laugh when someone on the shore called her an Amazon. She had never thought of herself as an Amazon before.

Carolyn was swimming in the water pulling a raft full of naked women behind her, yelling 'I'm Esther Williams saving New York City.'

Sandy the dog paddled out to one of the rafts and sat on it proudly, like a sea captain.

They all played softball in what they called Bovine Bowl."

"What's Bovine Bowl?" asked Garin.

"That means a field where they had cow patties to mark pitcher's mound."

"Ooh! You mean they stepped in it?" Garin wrinkled up her nose.

"Well, not on purpose. Anyway, Star offered to pitch. And someone said, 'Are you sure you can pitch?' And Star answered, 'Sure,' even though she wasn't all that sure."

"Did she strike them all out?" asked Garin.

"No, not exactly. In fact, she walked Dianne three times because she couldn't keep her mind on pitching when Dianne was up. But they all had a good time--even Carolyn, who decided to play even though her permanent looked funny from swimming and saving New York City.

As the sun went down everybody roared with laughter at the Mother Tongue Theater. And Star looked around at all the colored tents and the people. She remembered her fantasy of the 75 and smiled to herself. She felt good and warm and alive.

But that night some people came who were not invited. They yelled at the women and called them names and tried to push them."

"But why would somebody do that, Mom?"

"These men were unhappy with themselves. They tried to hurt and scare people, and when that didn't make them happy, they just got more unhappy and yelled louder. They even yelled at each other. By then they were too mad to hear the women telling them that bodies are for swimming and hugging and touching, not hurting. The men even threatened to get their cars and run over the women."

"Was Star scared?"

"Yes, she was. She didn't want to be, but she was anyway. The women crowded around the lantern to decide what to do."

"Did Star get a machine gun and shoot those guys dead?"

"No, Garin. Star hoped she wouldn't have to hurt them. So she and her friends stood quietly while the men yelled. In the light of the headlights Star could see her friends' eyes shining with fear and anger. Finally the men threw rocks at the women as a last attempt to prove to themselves they were brave, and then went away. Later the police came and found the men and put them in jail."

"Hurray," said Garin.

"The next day Star swam across the cove, and got sunburned all over. In the sunshine the night before seemed not so scary. There had been a fire in the trees and a boat had swamped and a boy scout had broken his leg, too. Linda said, 'The only thing that *didn't* happen was a cattle stampede.'

And people were glad nobody had gotten hurt bad. And Star met new friends who shared their avocado and cheese and beer with her. And they were eager to go camping together again, and planned to be ready if any unhappy people came around again. And Vicki said, 'If there is a lesbian heaven it couldn't be much different from this.' And Star was very glad the 75 were real....And that's the end of the story."

"Hey, that's a neat story," said Garin sleepily. "I wonder if the 75 *could* be real."



● Texas House Bill 759, which would have decriminalized sex between consenting adults in private, failed to get out of committee this legislative session. Committee testimony, all in favor of decriminalization, included representatives from the Texas Gay Task Force, lesbian feminists, the Texas County and District Attorneys Association, the Austin University United Methodist Church, and the Dallas Association of Psychologists.

Community News, June 1975

● The federal bill to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual or affectional preference (Civil Rights Amendments of 1975) is slowly gaining support. Introduced by Bella Abzug and 28 co-sponsors, it appears the bill will gain the endorsement of the National Women's Agenda, a coalition of over 120 women's groups -- including the Campfire Girls.

● *Ms.* Magazine's Petition for Sanity campaign is going well. Elaine Lafferty reports over 10,000 signatures collected to date, "and not one nasty letter." Houston has collected about 275 signatures for the petition, which affirms each woman's freedom to choose her own sexual lifestyle.

● The move to rescind Texas' ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment died without a whimper as the Legislative session closed. Nationally, the drive to ratify the ERA this year fell four states short of the required 38 states.

● California has passed consenting sex legislation ending 103 years of laws against oral and anal copulation. The assembly and governor weathered a barrage of opposition, mostly from fundamentalist Christian groups. At one point 20 small children from a church group sang outside assembly chambers, "Stop it, Governor Brown. Protect the family unit." The governor's calls and letters ran as high as 14 to 1 against the bill until a statewide effort supporting the bill closed the gap to a near-even ratio.

The Advocate June 4, 1975

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Univ. Blvd. Bookstore, 2437 Univ. Blvd.
Abraxas, Ltd., W. Alabama at Mt. Vernon
Big City News, 1414 Milam

(Gittings cont'd)

part of the launching back in Los Angeles, because they lived in San Francisco, but they did start the first all women's gay organization in the U.S.

The movement was very active in the 1950's and the 1960's. In fact, I'd say the first wave of real militancy in terms of our attitude about gay problems and our attitude toward straight society came about in the early 1960's--ten years ago and several years before Stonewall. Stonewall represents a turning point, in a way, because it was one of those unexplained, unexplainable incidents when non-Movement gay people who were in a bar that the police were raiding just decided "We're not going to take it anymore", and they fought back, and they precipitated the Stonewall Riots. The news of the Stonewall Riots got around the country via the wire services, and the newspapers, and it encouraged thousands of gay people who had not been involved in the Movement to either join existing organizations or form new groups of their own. While in the year before Stonewall --1968, that is --there had been approximately three dozen organizations in the United States (three dozen active organizations), by the end of the year of the Stonewall Riots, the year 1969, there were about 300 organizations. It had taken all those years for the Movement to develop from the first little discussion group in Los Angeles to three dozen organizations. Suddenly there was a spurt of growth, a burgeoning, a grass-roots kind of thing. That is what Stonewall represents--it is not by any means the beginning of the Movement.

Q: You mentioned a little earlier that you thought the Activist Movement began in the early 1960's. What, specifically, did you mean? How would you mark the beginning of the Movement? With D. O. B., or was there something else?

A: No, D. O. B. was very much part of the mainstream of thinking that was prevalent in the time of the 1950's. I will roughly characterize the two periods of the Movement before the Stonewall Riots. Any movement for social change starts with the idea that something ought to be done about a particular problem. Now, the problem of homosexuality was generally perceived in our first decade of existence as being mainly one of finding out about the cause and the nature of homosexuality. In other words, what are we, really, and how did we get to be this way? And getting this information out to the general public to soften their dislike and their hostility and to persuade them to give us a few privileges. Gay organizations at the time, for example, would have panels and lectures, at which non-gay experts, usually in the fields of law and religion and the behavioral sciences would get up there and tell us about ourselves. We sat out in the audience, and applauded them and politely asked tame questions. And that is roughly equivalent to a roomful of black people listening to white man Daniel Moynihan telling them about the pathology of the black family.

Now one of the important things that the early groups did was to provide social services. It looks very benighted today, but you must understand that movements don't simply arise full-blown overnight as we see them today. They have to start with something smaller, and possibly very different. And so it was appropriate that we thought this way at the time--we didn't have any other way of thinking. The organizations provided direct help and referrals to people in need. That was something that was very important. And most important of all, the early gay organizations provided help and reassurance just by their sheer existence, their visibility, for thousands of gay people who were grateful there were groups of their own and people they could turn to.

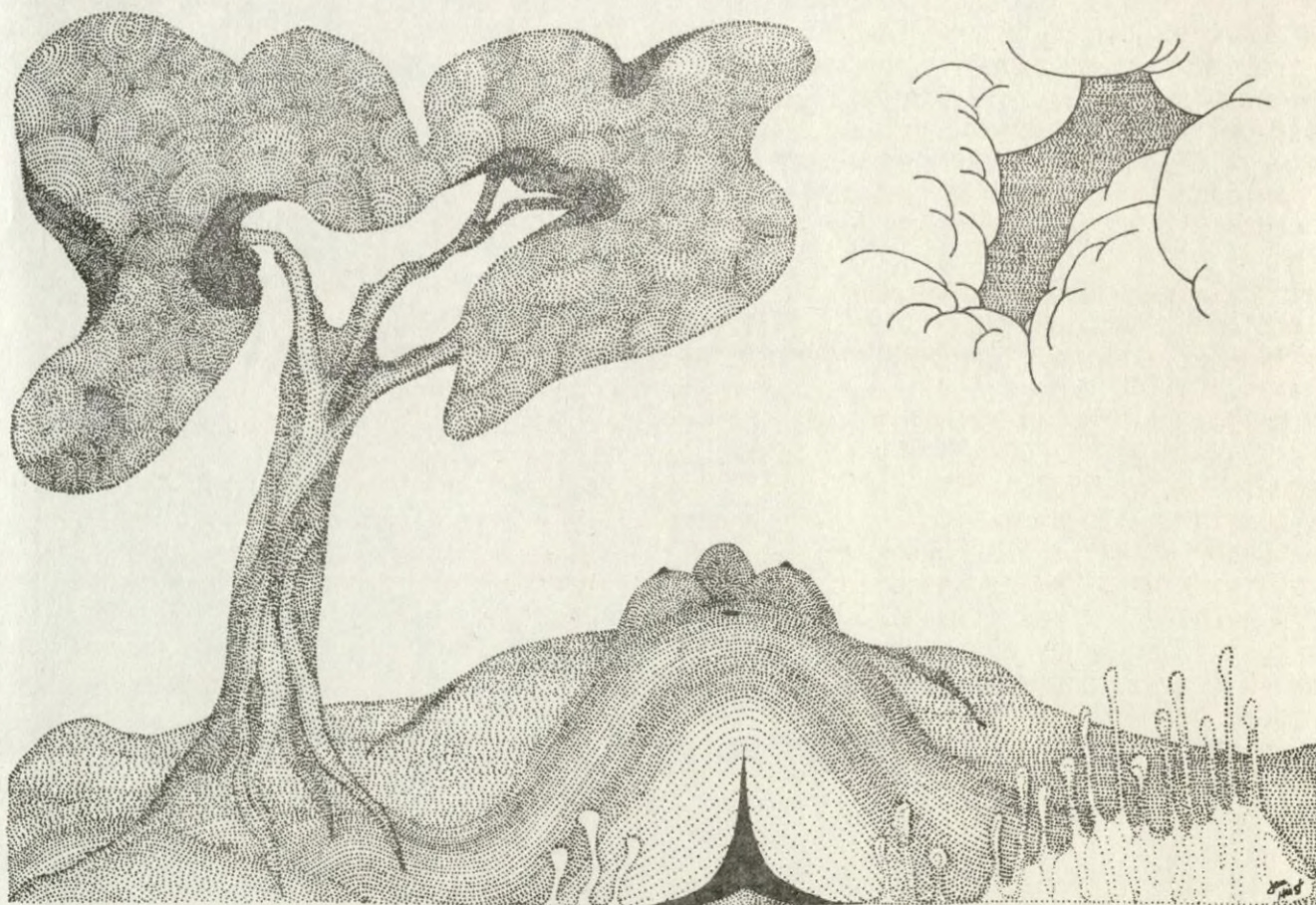
In the 1960's there was a very distinct change in the temper and the tempo of the Movement, and I think this is partly a reflection of the militant attitude that came along with the black Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's. People were beginning to look around them and see that some of the things they thought of as individual problems were really social problems. We began to feel and to say in the early 1960's that the problem of homosexuality is not our problem--it

is society's problem. The problem is not that we gay people exist, and therefore there's no use trying to find out how we got to be that way, the problem is that some other people are upset about it. They are what we should be devoting our attention to, changing their attitudes, and changing their treatment of us. Not that that wasn't done to some extent in the 1950's, but not nearly with the same kind of over-arching way of thinking that developed in the 1960's. It really swelled until it became the main philosophy for the Movement. It didn't come easily--there were pockets of resistance, and there were people who did not go along with us at first, but soon it became taken for granted that we saw ourselves as the reference, and other people as having to respond to our initiative.

Another change that came in the 1960's was that we didn't politely ask for a few privileges anymore. We started demanding our rights, and we're taking them. And we stopped having the non-gay experts come and talk to us about ourselves. We started telling the public, that, in the long run, we are the experts and the authorities on homosexuality. And we really made that point very thoroughly, because you'll hardly find a single panel or lecture on homosexuality today that doesn't at least include gay people. We completely reversed it. We also made them realize that we're not going to shape ourselves up, or make ourselves over into some kind of image that is acceptable to straight society to make it easy for them. They're going to have to accept us just as we are, on our terms.

These were some of the changes in thought that came about in the 1960's. And there isn't any one thing that I could point to that is responsible for the changes. They were a natural outgrowth of the times themselves, when a lot of people were looking at minority problems and realizing it's not the minority that's the problem, it's the majority, and their attitude toward the minority.

Vicki Glasgow



THE F.B.I.

The fact that several fugitives on the FBI's ten most wanted list happen to be lesbians or are in league with known lesbians has had an impact upon lesbian communities all over the country. In their pursuit of underground "criminals", FBI agents have infiltrated lesbian communities and harassed lesbians by threatening to expose them to employers or relatives if they refused to cooperate. In two instances lesbians were jailed for contempt of court when they refused to testify to grand juries. Lesbians are finding that it is no good to say that you have never heard of the fugitives, or are totally uninvolved in gay activism, much less revolution, because in the eyes of the FBI and other law enforcement agencies, all lesbians are implicated.

The question every lesbian is or should be pondering is, does she identify herself with the oppressed minority and refuse to cooperate with oppressive agencies, or does she continue to view herself as a law-abiding, cooperative citizen and try to convince the FBI or police of her dissociation with any kind of underground or subversive movement.

It is encouraging to me that there are more and more instances of lesbians choosing to identify themselves with the oppressed minority to which they belong and fighting for their human rights to dignity and freedom from persecution, discrimination, guilt and paranoia. Several gays in Kentucky and two lesbians in Connecticut chose imprisonment over cooperating with grand juries; two Army privates voluntarily disclosed their lesbianism and are fighting dishonorable discharges in Ft. Devens, Mass; and lesbians at the Rites of Spring on May 31 asserted their right to take steps to end harassment by not allowing four men to enter their camp again.

...and you

If you are ever approached for information by the FBI/CIA/police, you have the right to refuse to talk to them. If you should *choose* to talk, anything you say may later be used as evidence against you or someone else; even saying you know nothing can leave you open to charges of perjury if they later obtain evidence that you had information they wanted.

So do *not* talk to them. Deal with officers/agents civilly, do not antagonize them unnecessarily, but at the same time, do not trust anything they do or say. Contact your lawyer immediately (or ask the ACLU for a referral), and stay cool-- there are a lot of people behind you.

I hope that more and more lesbians will come to feel that it is time to stop apologizing for being different, time to recognize that we are being unfairly oppressed, time to assert our right to love each other without fear, and time to support others who have reached the point where they are turning on their oppressors and saying "No more."

Ellen

Saetas por Diablo

Los homosexuales, estan haciendo su Agosto en California, el estado mas grande de la Union Americana, al conver ce en una fuerza politica. Ahora los politicos buscan su apoyo visitando bares y lugares de gran concentracion de estas criaturas "carinosas." Lo interesante sera saber que les prometen a ellos los politicos, A CAMBIO DEL VOTO!



Y no se subestime la fuerza politica de este grupo, ya que estadisticas recientes calculan un 10 por ciento de la poblacion total de Estados Unidos, ser...HOMOSEXUALES!

from *La Cronica de Texas*

Houston, June 13, 1975

ALPERT CONTROVERSY

ALPERT: FRIEND OR FOE
OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT?



from her-self, women's community journal

In the May issue of *PBT*, we published a news story on the Jane Alpert controversy. The following is the author's personal analysis of the controversy.

* * * * *

The understanding of this controversy is crucial to us as women for it will be an initial step of establishing just what is the women's movement, that is, of providing us with a theoretical base around which we can efficiently organize. But before examining this, let's go back and scrutinize Alpert's motivation for leaving the left and her accusations which, for her, negate its viability for women.

Alpert's limited knowledge of the left

First we should question Alpert's authority to criticize the left. She never belonged to any organized left group. Her only contact with the left and leftist ideology was precipitated by Melville and was always a mouthing of his ideas. The one exception is Alpert's working on *RAT* independently of Melville. But even on this all-female publication, Alpert claims in her article that Melville controlled her political thinking through his Rasputinian hold on her. After Melville's imprisonment and her disappearance into the underground, Alpert lost all contact with the left except for one abortive encounter with Mark Rudd which the Weatherwomen say was geographically impossible. Thus Alpert's actual working knowledge of the left is extremely limited.

Basis of her argument is personal relationship with Melville

When she demonstrates that the left is a male supremacist organization, her main proof is her personal symbiotic relationship with Melville. Because she came to the realization that she was exploited as a woman in her personal relationship with a leftist, she condemns all the left as male supremacist, the Attica brothers, everybody. That there exists an international array of leftist organizations and tendencies with diverse stands and practices on women's oppression outside of the small ultra-leftist grouping of Weatherpeople that she had contact with, or even that there exists any left outside of Melville himself, never occurs to Alpert. Her entire argument of the sexism of the left other than a few inaccurate facts about the organization of the Weather underground is that Melville, a leftist, exploited her. Therefore leftists exploit women.

Assumptions about other leftist women

Carrying her fallacious logic to the extreme, Alpert assumes that all other women in the left are as mindlessly led on as she was and exhorts them to leave the Rasputinian male mentors of the left and follow her example. Alpert seems to believe that the thousands of leftist women were and are incapable of making correct political decisions. To her, leftist males have manipulated them into selling themselves out and working for male supremacist organizations. When we consider that Emma Goldman and Rosa Luxemburg are supposedly in this grouping, we cringe at the stupidity of the charge. And then, to add insult to injury, Alpert gave the FBI information which can result in the arrest of women she supposedly supports.

Alpert's political development

Yet Alpert is not stupid. What, then, caused her to take such a stance as to think feminism excuses one from the responsibility to former sisters and other oppressed groups and responsibility for the political consequences of collaboration with the FBI? Probably her political naivete and political isolation. Alpert never seems to have internalized any of the Marxist theory she so vehemently espoused in her ultra-left days. At her own admission all her political ideas were direct transplants from Melville. She never had the political experience of the day-to-day workings of a leftist organization, never had the experience of working in an organized manner with the working class whose cause she supposedly championed. Her political activity was confined to clandestine, illegal bombings, necessarily not subject to open political discussion or lengthy analysis. Then this political novice was suddenly thrust reluctantly into the isolation of the underground. According to her published letter, she immediately lost all contact with leftists. Because she was a criminal in the eyes of the state she could take no part in any sort of political movement or activity. This included the anti-war movement which took place during Alpert's hiding underground and which is where most of her generation and political genre received their political experience and education. Alpert could take no part in this mass movement. At the places where she worked she could not participate in or help organize unions because of her criminal status. The only activity allowed her was women's consciousness-raising groups, and in these she could at no time become too political or anti-government. Thus, in this straight-jacket Alpert finally began to develop a political consciousness of her own. But even with these political adjustments to her circumstances, the acute isolation from public life began to wear on Alpert, who is an activist and writer by nature. And the only way to become active in public life, to write about events concerning herself for publication, was to turn herself in. Here we might question the astuteness of the illegal tactics used by the ultra-leftists such as bombings and bank robberies which then force their people into the political and personal isolation of the underground at a period in U.S. capitalism when these activities are not necessary.

Alpert's political position destructive to women's movement

Realizing Alpert's political isolation and her lack of any real experience in the left, in the anti-war movement, in the labor movement, or even in the organized women's movement, her contradictions are more understandable--but never acceptable. They are never acceptable because in betraying her comrades by "cooperating fully" with the FBI, by denigrating Attica, and by her non-support of other peoples' struggle against oppression, Alpert places herself against the women's movement.

Basis of women's oppression

The chief form women's oppression takes is economic. We do all the household labor without pay. We are the cheap pool of surplus unskilled labor along with blacks, browns, and Orientals, which capitalists rely on. We devote our lives to procreating and raising gratis the next generation of labor for the capitalists to

suck dry. To demand that 50% of society be paid for what is now unpaid labor is to demand the economic downfall of this system. The economic order of this system is based on not paying labor its true value so the surplus can be pocketed by the capitalists and called profit. To challenge women's oppression, or black's, or the working class' oppression is to challenge the economic tenets upon which this society is built.

Rockefeller's reasons for massacring the Attica prisoners were, as columnist Tom Wicker writes, "The order of things must be preserved. The powerful must not be at the beck and call of the powerless . . . If lives sometimes have to be sacrificed to the order of things, what is the alternative? Only the unimaginable--that the order of things be sacrificed to life."

If we women dare to challenge the order of things and demand some power which would interfere in our economic exploitation and consequently, in Rockefeller's further accumulation of capital, he will do the same to us. If we do not see that the brothers of Attica waged the same struggle as ourselves (or as the Kennedy-Sherman-Atkinson-Hamilton petition states, "We are Attica"), then we have capitulated to our oppressor. We have allowed our real enemy, our economic exploiter, to divide us peoples who are challenging "the order of things" and pit us against each other.

The responsibility of the women's movement

Alpert sees the brothers of Attica as women's enemy and cooperates with the likes of the FBI. The Kennedy-Sherman-Atkinson-Hamilton petition states, "It is time for us to take responsibility. To choose. We have declared our right to feel. Now we must declare and exercise our ability to think. To take responsibility for what we support and print. To recognize the implications and consequences of our ideas and actions." We must realize the sinister consequences of Alpert's actions. We cannot glibly allow any interpretation of the women's movement no matter how destructive, because we are engaged in a life-and-death struggle. For by declaring ourselves dedicated to eradicating women's oppression, we have declared ourselves counter to this capitalist society's order and we are, therefore, liable to extermination like the brothers of Attica. Consider that just being lesbian--not teaming with a male in an exploitable family grouping--is considered criminal by the state.

Let us then organize a little more efficiently to fight the monster that oppresses us. And while remaining true to our commitment to liberate ourselves, let us never, never allow what Alpert's position leads to--the success of the oppressor's strategy of setting us as oppressed people against other oppressed peoples, against our brothers and sisters in the struggle. No more insults about our political incapacities, Alpert. We recognize what your political stance results in, and, therefore, vehemently reject it.

M. Pipkin

A national socialist feminist conference is planned for July 4-6 in Yellow Springs, Ohio. For more information write: Socialist/Feminist Group, 1309 North Main St., Dayton, Ohio 45405. Some members of Austin Lesbian Organization have been discussing the possibility of attending.

The nation's sixth lesbian center has opened in Tampa, Florida. The Lesbian Resource Center plans social activities, peer counseling, a lesbian mothers group, car clinic, employment referral, guerrilla theater, possibly a newsletter, speakers bureau and library. They can be contacted at: LRC, P. O. Box 4264, Tampa, FL. 33607; (813) 251-4089 or 932-0334.

To Erica Jong, with respect

You lied at the beginning.
What you said - you wanted it to be true -
only mimicked me
and told us both a lie.

You said you wanted
me, us, to be free
of possessions and traps and
all that passes for convention and ordinary.

I lied in the middle
when I thought outloud - surrounded by feardespair
that m a y b e
our days should become concentric.

I said (after daysmonthsyearsdecadescenturieserasons
of my personal fight with convention and the ordinary)
that m a y b e
we should live together.

But in daylight, I put you off,
as my inner thump recalled my history
and the urgency of the day
pushed fear from my gut.

Near the end you,
not to be put off again,
camped on my bed and
I cowardly refused to listen to my thump

until the thumping accelerated,
causing chaos inside
which choked me and
silences outside which stifled us.

I am unfulfilled now that I'm filled by you.
My head my gut my cunt are full of you.
But instead of being grateful,
I'm thumping: "I've had it up to here!"

Carolyn Nichols