

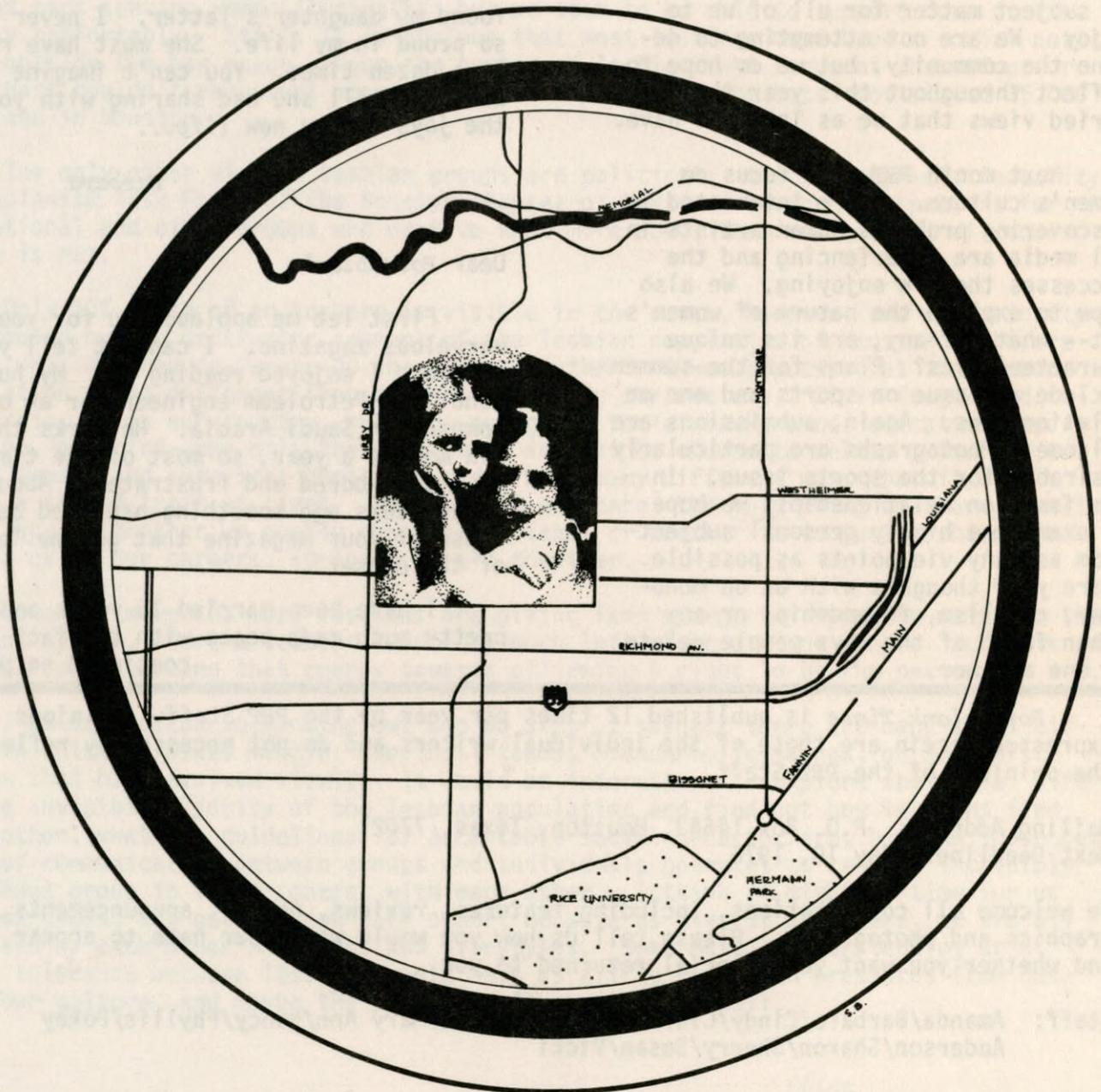


pointblank times

a lesbian/feminist publication houston, texas
vol. II no. 4

may 1976

50¢



Editorial

This month we are publishing the first of several topic issues. Our feature topic is the "Houston Lesbian Community" -- where we are and what we do. In keeping with our desire to open up and reflect this community we welcome any topic suggestions you may have and we definitely welcome any articles you may wish to submit pertaining to future topics we will announce. However, no one issue will be entirely devoted to the stated topic, in this way we hope to present a wider range of subject matter for all of us to enjoy. We are not attempting to define the community, but we do hope to reflect throughout this year the many varied views that we as lesbians have.

Next month *PBT* will focus on women's culture. We're interested in discovering problems women artists in all media are experiencing and the successes they're enjoying. We also hope to explore the nature of women's art-- what, if any, are its unique characteristics? Plans for the summer include an issue on sports and one on relationships. Again, submissions are welcome. Photographs are particularly desirable for the sports issue. In the issue on relationships, we hope to examine a highly personal subject from as many viewpoints as possible. Share your thoughts with us on monogamy, couplism, friendship, or any other facet of the ways people relate to one another.

Dear PBT

Dear *Pointblank*:

I am the grateful and proud mother of a wonderful daughter. I am not much of a letter writer but I am so full of happiness and appreciation for your love and concern that I feel that I have to write to you. There are few causes that are so close to my heart that they could induce me to write you a letter like this.

I can't tell you how excited I was last night when I read *Pointblank* and found my daughter's letter. I never felt so proud in my life. She must have read it a dozen times. You can't imagine what a thrill she had sharing with you the joys of her new life...

Barbara

Dear *Pointblank*:

First let me applaud you for your marvelous magazine. I can not tell you how much I enjoyed reading it. My husband is a Petroleum engineer for an oil company in Saudi Arabia. He works there six months a year, so most of the time I am alone, bored and frustrated. About three weeks ago something happened because of your magazine that got me "out of the closet".

I have been married 15 years and had pretty much made peace with the fact that
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Pointblank Times is published 12 times per year by the *PBT* Staff. Opinions expressed herein are those of the individual writers and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the *PBT* Staff.

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 14643, Houston, Texas, 77021
Next Deadline: May 10, 1976

We welcome all contributions, including features, reviews, poetry, announcements, graphics and photographs. Please tell us how you would want your name to appear, and whether you want you material returned to you.

Staff: Amanda/Barbara/Cindy/Clare/Ellen/Judy/Liz/Mary Ann/Nancy/Phyllis/Pokey
Anderson/Sharon/Sherry/Susan/Vicki

PBT is also available at: Abraxas, Big City News, Just Marion & Lynn's, University Boulevard Book Store, University of Houston, Ursula's, and the Women's Center.

We Are Everywhere Differently

I would estimate that there are probably at least 15,000 lesbians in Houston. That figure is mind-boggling to me, and just confirms once again that the visible lesbian population is just the above-water fraction of a lesbian iceberg.

The only obvious lesbian outposts in society are the bars. In Houston the number of bars serving women fluctuates, but we seem to be able to support four or five fairly comfortably. Still, it is obvious that most lesbians must have a social network outside the bar scene, since the number of lesbians who frequent these four or five bars couldn't represent more than a fourth or so of the total postulated 15,000 lesbians in Houston.

The only other visible lesbian groups are political: the two-year-old Sexuality & Lesbianism Task Force of the Houston chapter of NOW is a source for speakers for educational and civic groups who want to know more about lesbianism; and, of course, there is *PBT*.

Only 10% or so of an iceberg is visible in the ocean, however, and my curiosity is aroused by the underwater segment of the lesbian population of Houston. Who are they, what do they do, where do they come together? I would guess that the lesbian population is no different from any population in our society. It is fragmented into strata, as is our country, by race, religion, social background, education, profession, politics--the only thing we share is that we choose to relate primarily to other women, and even that choice is made in so many different ways that it hardly seems a shared trait at times. What we all do share, the only thing we share equally, is a label. Whether we openly embrace the label or whether it is just a shadow that haunts us in our careers, it lumps us all together.

However, more and more lesbians are giving less energy to trying to maintain the present system, where a lesbian is pretty much left alone as long as she "acts like a woman", and diverting that energy towards affirming a right to be the person you are.

I am interested in finding out who we are. I suspect there are many small circles in which lesbians mingle: softball teams, Slenderbolic saunas, or just elite groups that have evolved slowly. It would be interesting to explore the social life of the invisible majority of the lesbian population and find out how lesbians find each other, what the guidelines for acceptable social behavior are, how the loose network of communication between groups and individuals operates to keep an incredibly amorphous group in loose contact with each other. I think it might be time for us to look around and get to know each other, because as diverse as we are, we are all affected by each other's actions and lifestyles. Some mutual understanding or at least tolerance between lesbians would help us all to cope with pressures from outside our culture, and maybe the pressures from within as well.

Ellen

Supreme Court

On March 29, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a 6-3 decision upholding the constitutionality of the Virginia State Sodomy statute. The case was in response to a challenge to a 2-1 ruling by the Virginia Supreme Court which had held that the statute did not constitute invasion of privacy.

Dr. Bruce Voeller, Executive Director of the National Gay Task Force stated that, "The precedents we were relying on in this case involved the right to privacy and the right to control of one's body as established by the High Court in the Connecticut contraception cases and in the abortion cases from various states."

The decision of the U.S. Supreme Court was reached with no arguments heard and no opinions issued. Three justices of that court voted to hear arguments before reaching a decision. They were Justices Brennan, Marshall and Stevens.

The Virginia court in its written opinion cited Biblical references as precedents for their decision. They also stated that the right of privacy was never meant to be extended to homosexuals.

A spokesperson for NGTF stated that the Virginia court decision ignored the fact that the statute applied to heterosexuals as well, in that oral-genital and anal intercourse are banned for all people. The statute itself does not mention homosexuals. The assumption is made that all homosexuals practice these forms of sexual activities which is a false assumption. Recent sex surveys show that as many as 80% of all adults participate in these sexual practices regardless of their sexual preference.

The spokesperson pointed out that with the exception of Texas and possibly Kansas, state sodomy laws do not ban homosexual acts or homosexuality per se, only specific kinds of sexual practices. The law, which is seldom enforced, is used in most communities as a rationale for harassment of homosexuals.

In Texas the Sodomy Law is cited as Section 21.06 of the Texas Penal Code which reads, "A person commits an offense if he engages in deviate sexual intercourse with another individual of the same sex." Deviate sexual intercourse is defined as any contact between any part of the genitals of one person and the mouth or anus of another person. Until recently the same prohibition applied to heterosexuals. The offense is listed as a Class C misdemeanor. An individual adjudged guilty of a Class C misdemeanor shall be punished by a fine not to exceed \$200.

Efforts are underway to request that the Supreme Court review its findings on this case and to hear arguments and issue a written opinion. This effort has the support of the American Bar Association, American Medical Association, American Psychiatric Association and the National Council of Churches.

Moves to repeal state statutes are being made in those states which have sodomy laws on their books. Those states which do not have such laws are: Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, South Dakota, and Washington.

A bill to repeal the Texas statute was sponsored by Representative Craig Washington (D. Houston) this past legislative session. It was soundly defeated.

Reply

The action the Supreme Court took may be of secondary importance to the action it neglected. By electing to bypass verbal arguments in this case, the Supreme Court abnegated its responsibility to deal with the issues raised in the lower court rulings. It also missed an opportunity to provide a less emotional and more intelligent discussion of the legal ramifications of homosexuality.

Although the Supreme Court did not necessarily affirm the arguments of the Virginia Court, it upheld the ruling. The original ruling cited biblical precedents with apparent disregard for the constitutional provision separating church and state. But most frightening is the Virginia court decree that the right to privacy, which the Supreme Court found implicit in the 9th Amendment, was never meant to be extended to homosexuals. Such a ruling violates the constitutional guarantee for due process and equal protection under the law contained in the 14th Amendment. The denial of full citizenship to homosexuals by the Court has staggering implications for housing, child custody, and other rights.

Although this recent decision is far from a definitive ruling on the constitutionality of laws governing the sexual behavior of adults, it does indicate a narrow point of view regardless of sexual orientation. Efforts to challenge such laws on the state and the local level, in courts and the legislatures, accompanied by attempts to educate ourselves and the rest of our society take on even more importance in light of the Supreme Court ruling.

We are everywhere, and someday, our presence will even be felt on the Supreme Court.

Homophobia has broken down justice in our system. The American constitution and American law were not designed to promote "morality and decency" as the more puritan views of the Virginia Court claim, but rather to ensure the rights and responsibilities of all citizens are maintained within a society of conflicting interests. The Supreme Court was engineered so that the lifetime appointments of judges could secure an atmosphere in which to arbitrate points of law free from popular opinion and public emotion. The Burger court decision has effectively ignored the need for a frank and intelligent evaluation of the legal and mythical hoopla engulfing homosexuality.

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POOL

Lesbians shoot pool better and more often than any group of people I've ever encountered. Now you may say that is a rather sweeping generalization, but no one can deny the tremendous popularity of this sport among our gay sisters. Sometimes I wonder if the term "lesbian" shouldn't be defined as a woman with a lot of quarters in her pocket and blue chalk marks on her fingertips. Shooting a fair-to-middlin' game of pool is not only one of the most important social graces of our subculture, it can be your gateway to the lesbian community. I can think of at least one friend and two lovers whom I met over the green felt. But before shooting pool can be your key to a successful social life, you first have to know something about it.

The sport itself is not that difficult -- you decide on a ball that you would like to fall in a particular hole, and, using the smaller end of a round stick, you poke a white ball in such a way that it strikes the chosen ball and causes it to fall in the hole. Nothing to it. The tricky part of shooting pool is learning the rituals that surround the game. There are essentially six of them:

1. Getting the table
2. Chalking the cue
3. Racking the balls
4. Psyching your opponent
5. Winning gracefully
6. Losing gracefully

"Getting the table" is probably the most hallowed of these traditions. People who shoot pool take this ritual very seriously. If you are shooting pool for the first time in a strange bar, the best approach is to take a seat, have a beer, and watch for awhile to see how the locals do it.

The two basic ways of "getting the table" are:

1. The quarter approach, whereby a challenger places a quarter on the

table. This means the winner of the game in progress must play whoever owns the quarter that is next in line. Variations of this are the "marked quarter", where each person's quarter bears some mark to distinguish it as hers, and the "strategically-placed quarter", where any quarters not placed in a particular place on the table are ignored.

2. The sign-up approach, whereby you sign your first name at the end of a list of names on a blackboard near the pool table. The winner of the game in progress must play the person at the top of the list.

Once you have determined the proper way in which to get access to the table, do not vary from it. There is nothing more threatening to a group of pool players who all have their names on a blackboard than a woman who comes up and slaps a quarter down on the table. The quarter-slapper is likely to find herself with a pool cue in her mouth rather than in her hand.

Once you've gotten the table, you must choose a pool cue and perform the chalking ceremony. The choice of cue should be made carefully, but the true indication of your pool-playing prowess is reflected in how you chalk. Again, there are two basic styles: butch and fluff. The style you exhibit depends on the impression you wish to give. To "butch chalk" your cue, place the chalk on top of the cue, and, while steadying the cue with pressure on the chalk, roll the cue with your foot, causing it to rub into the chalk. A true master of butch chalking can do this while taking a sip of beer with her free hand. If you would rather give a fluff impression, take the chalk gingerly in one hand, and, with pinkie raised, apply several light dabs to the end of the cue, while supporting the cue with the other hand.

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..finding..

In the early beginning of my understandings, the thought of finding a lesbian community never occurred to me. This was due, for the most part, to the rearing procedure of heterosexual ignorance. I don't fault that ignorance, for although I realized I was ignorant and was at a loss as to where to begin, I started with a good premise. I was normal. In other words, after the initial trauma of my sexuality passed, I figured that I was so normal that there must be other women who also loved women. I was faced with a tremendously lonely mystery, which I was determined to solve.

I searched faces, watched for innuendoes, walked the streets, read posters, sought individuals, sought literature (they don't list lesbians in the Almanac—a great disappointment), and finally delved into what is commonly referred to as "the lesbian community". Which brings up how I discovered the Houston Lesbian Community in 1975.

It started in New York. I was visiting some friends north of the City. I had decided to return to Houston for a few months and when I got ready to leave New York, I called Gay Liberation of Westchester County. A woman there gave me the name and number of a fellow who possessed a copy of the gay yellow pages. I called him. He gave me an organization list, a bar list and a book store list. It struck me as interesting that there was a Lesbian Task Force in Houston. In May, I returned to Houston with a feeling of safe assurance that a community existed if I wanted to seek it. I wasn't in any hurry. Over the next two months my connection with that community was distant. In that period of time, I called the Women's Center, talked to Pokey Anderson twice on the phone, went to the baseball playoff one evening and subscribed to PBT.

Another couple of months passed and I felt a desire for community. I was wanting to meet people, more particularly

lesbians involved in some type of work. I chose the Lesbian Task Force meeting, because I liked the sound of the name. I arrived at the meeting an hour and a half late (I hate meetings), met the infamous Pokey Anderson and a few others, and was invited to an informal dinner that following Sunday. I was quite pleased by the company of that gathering and also took an interest in working for PBT.

I made the decision to remain in Houston. That decision was influenced in part by the lesbian community which exists here.

Basically I think there are three ways to find a lesbian community. Each can be used singularly or in unison depending on one's own personality and situation. The "Hide and Watch" method, often used in red-neck reactionary communities. The "reader method" which means you read every piece of information you can find, until little hideouts of activity can be found. As my New York description may indicate, last and my favorite is the "ask around and go and see" method. This is the most frequently used and I believe the easiest. (It's surprising to find how many different places we've all been. It's not surprising that each of us carries our own book of knowledge survival manual.)

In summary of the Houston lesbian community, I'd like to interject a few notes. I think it's possible to live and die in Houston and never realize a community exists. In finding community here, there seems to be a direct correlation between the courage to search, past information, personal inclination and chance. Houston is a collection of pockets of women, and picking pockets is an area in which few of us were trained. Four years ago I came and left Houston as a stranger of this community. A year ago I came prepared to find that community. I don't know how much of me changed and how much of Houston changed. Personally, I'd like to see a sign on every lightpole pointing the direction to the next lesbian community watering hole.

Cy

the lavender book

Where is lesbian culture in Houston? It's everywhere lesbians gather--bridge parties, softball fields, the ballet, Chinese restaurants, U-Totems. But, yes there are some special places, too.

Houston is blessed with three attractive lesbian bars. All three have juke box music, dancing, and pool tables. And lesbians.

Just Marion & Lynn's, just off Montrose, attracts a diverse crowd, ranging from the soccer-cleated to the evening-gowned dyke. You never know who you'll see there--Judy Grahn, Rock Hudson, or your high school gym teacher. It's a well-run, easy-going place.

Ursula's, also in the Montrose area, is the newest of the three, and attracts a younger, flashier crowd. They have a pool tournament on Wednesdays and (I'm sure I'm the only one who cares about this) they have dark beer in chilled mugs.

The Lamp Post is located in the Rice University village area, and attracts a range of clientele that includes a fair number of professional women.

If you want to take your intellect dancing, two bookstores are outstanding:

Abraxas, Ltd. carries a fine range of hard-to-find feminist and lesbian material, including the best selection of periodicals, small press publications, and records in town.

University Boulevard Bookstore, on the other hand, usually carries a wider selection of overground materials, including excellent sections on poetry, art, and history.

Naturally, I don't expect you to take my word for any of the above. Check them out yourself. And below are listed gay hotline numbers for six areas of Texas. Each can help you find the lesbian community in its area if the local U-Totem isn't proving very fruitful.

P.S. There's a new women's bar-- just opened this month. The name is Odd's Place, and it features disco dancing with a turntable and a real, live disc jockey.

Houston Lesbian Bars

"Just" Marion & Lynn's 528-9110
817 Fairview

Ursula's 527-0734
1512 W. Alabama

Lamp Post 528-8921
2417 Times Blvd.

Odd's Place 528-9019
905 Woodrow

Houston Feminist Bookstores

Abraxas, Ltd. 528-9129
1200 W. Alabama

University Blvd. Bookstore 527-8522
2437 University Blvd.

Texas Gay Hotlines

Houston (Crisis Hotline) (713) 228-1505

Austin (512) 477-6699

San Antonio (7-10 pm) (512) 733-7300

Dallas (214) 748-6790

Ft. Worth (817) 335-6301

Bryan (4-11 pm Sun-Thurs) (713) 823-5918

Do you want to find out where other businesses are in town that welcome lesbians, feminists, and gay men? Possibilities include everything from restaurants to plant places to auto repair shops to hair salons. I know a few. Do you? Let *PBT* know and, depending on the response, we can have further surveys of the community.

Pokey

Meg Christian

Meg Christian is coming to town! If you haven't heard of her yet, I think you'll like her. As Amanda wrote in *PBT*'s review last August: "She sings of women loving, leaving, and living with other women, of lovers, mothers and gym teachers, and of 'nightmares that mock our revolution.'" Lesbians across the country have memorized the hilarious introduction to her "Ode to a Gym Teacher." Her album, *I Know You Know*, is the first one to come out under the label of Olivia Records, the first national women's recording company.

Meg successfully combines her considerable musical talents (she was a classical guitar teacher) with a strong commitment to singing music that speaks realistically to us as women about our lives--a combination all too rare. And best of all, she has a wonderful way with an audience. In a homecoming concert in Washington, D.C., she had 500 women clapping and cheering repeatedly during the performance, and brought down the house with her rendition of "Sherry, Baby, Won't You Come Out Tonight?" Her music celebrates, reflects, cajoles, and soars.

Meg and her manager, Ginny Berson, are driving from Los Angeles to visit four Texas cities, Albuquerque, and Denver. In the process of arranging the concerts they've come in contact with women's communities they had no idea even existed. And they're real excited about coming to Texas for the first time. (And Texas women are already excited about having them.)

Meg will begin in San Antonio May 7 (call 512-655-3724 for more information). Then she'll go to Austin May 8 (tickets available at the Common Woman Bookstore, 2004 Guadalupe).

Dallas's show will be May 16, 8 pm at the Olive Branch. Tickets will be \$3.00 and will benefit Friends of Mary Jo Risher.



Houston's concert, sponsored by *PBT*, will be Thursday, May 13 at 8 pm at the First Unitarian Church, 5210 Fannin. Seating will be chairs or BYO cushion. Child care will be provided.

Houston tickets are a \$3 donation (proceeds to *PBT* and Meg), and are available in advance from *PBT* staffers, Abraxas, "Just" Marion & Lynn's, the Lamp Post, Odd's Place, University Blvd. Bookstore, or Ursula's. Or, if you want to get your tickets by mail (Houston concert only), send 25¢ plus \$3 per ticket to *PBT* no later than May 7th. The concert has signs of being a sell-out, so don't delay getting your tickets.

In addition, Meg will be doing an informal workshop with Houston women the day before her concert here. She is eager to meet active Houston women, and to discuss the politics of doing women's music or, knowing Meg, probably most anything. The workshop, sponsored by *PBT*, will be Wednesday, May 12, 7:30 pm at Abraxas, 1200 W. Alabama.

Mary Jo Risher ^{Part Two}

ON THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN:

We didn't know where to turn when all this started. We talked to people in California and Seattle and finally we were told to talk to the Dallas Chapter of NOW. So we talked with Dallas NOW people and then with the national coordinators of NOW's Task Force on Sexuality and Lesbianism, and we have had tremendous support from NOW at all levels. The National Board passed a resolution in San Diego on December 7, 1975--just before the trial started--in support of this case. I think the Dallas Chapter is maybe even a little proud of the role they've played in all this and they should be-- we talked to other women's organizations in town whose policies state they support lesbians, but they all refused to support us. Martha Dickey, Dallas Chapter President and a national officer, has appeared on TV in my behalf and the support continues: the California State NOW has established a Lesbian Mothers Defense Fund and 25% of all money going into that fund is earmarked for this case.

ON HARRASSMENT:

We haven't had any. We both still have our jobs (Mary Jo is a nurse; Ann, an assistant bank auditor). Now, we're not doing anything that will give them an excuse to fire us for some other reason, you know--but we do still have the jobs. Generally we feel pretty secure. Our neighbors and friends and the people we work with are the same as always. We don't get hate mail or hate phone calls: just the opposite in fact--we've gotten calls and letters from all over the country wishing us well and sending us encouragement.

Judi Ann (Ann's 11-year-old daughter) has had no problems at school. In fact, her teachers have told her they are sorry Richard had to leave the family. Judi Ann, by the way, knows about our relationship and was very close to Richard. She doesn't understand how Richard could be here one day and not here the next.

ON CHILD SUPPORT:

Around the first part of January, 1976, our lawyers, Mr. Risher's lawyers, and Richard's lawyer (court appointed, to insure that the legal interests of a child are represented) met to work out my child support payments. At that time it was decided that I would pay \$65 a month into a trust fund for Richard until his 18th birthday.

But by January 20th I was back in court again. Mr. Risher wanted more money, and he wanted it to go directly to him instead of to the trust fund. And Jimmy had sent along a list of things he said belonged to him and he wanted them turned over to him. Many of the items on his list actually belonged to Ann or me--the bed he'd used which Ann had brought with her when she moved in, a desk that was mine, a shotgun that was Ann's. The list went on and on, and we were amazed that he was claiming those things. We decided just to present those things to the boys as a gift rather than bicker over them in court.

Finally the court set my child support payments at \$95.34 per month to be paid directly to Mr. Risher through the Child Support people. Now Mr. Risher paid me \$100.00 per month when I had the boys. Mr. Risher makes around \$1700.00 per month at his job and he has a business on the side. I make about one-third of that \$1700 per month, and I'm paying him practically what he was paying me.

I do believe that equal rights for women means equal responsibilities for women. I do believe that women should pay child support when the children are awarded to the father. But in this case, the proportions are all out of kilter, and I believe that it was a decision that discriminated against me as a lesbian.

ON THE APPEAL:

The transcript of the December trial is being typed now--that's about \$2300 by itself. Then we go to the Civil Appeals Court next. They can decide to hear or not to hear the case. Then we go either to the State Supreme Court or to the U.S. Circuit Court in New Orleans. From there to the Supreme Court. It seems likely that it'll go the whole distance.

Our appeal is based in Due Process arguments, the Right to Privacy, and the Right of Association. We have formed a household and a household is supposed to be protected by the Constitution. It'll cost at least \$30000-35,000 to find out if that's true.

WHAT NOW?

We've already spent a lot of time traveling. We were in New York for the Tomorrow Show and while we were there we talked to the New York Times and several big newspapers. We were on a Detroit TV show because its viewers called in asking about who we were and what had happened to the case. So they flew us up there for the show. We've been to California, and we're going to Orlando, Florida this month for a benefit. Seems like wherever we go there are other women who are in the middle of a trial or about to go to court.

We're pretty tired now, but we'll go anywhere we can if we think there's a chance it'll help someone else feel better about their life or, you know, make a family member less uptight about a situation. We feel some people at least are going to feel different about us after they see us or talk to us. And we hope to raise money during these trips too, of course. (Financial support for the case is coming from NOW, from gay organizations, from donations from individuals, and from an umbrella group called Friends of Mary Jo Risher.)

We go around to these different places you know and we're not trying to convert them to our way of life. All we're saying is just let us live.

Karen Alexander

A trust fund, called FRIENDS OF MARY JO RISHER, has been set up to handle contributions. The address is P.O. Box 174, Dallas, Texas, 75221. All money goes directly into the legal struggle. No salaries are paid.

So very much

Somehow yes this is right so much begins to overwhelm me can't you do anything right yes I guess I can but it all depends on one's point of view this is like not properly fitting into your clothes or spilling coffee during breakfast someone is going to notice and there I am with that look of nothing ever being right all over me property molested and the paper says the bombs were still falling falling that cloud so lonely that I touched on that mountain where the trees couldn't grow so distant high with the clouds I couldn't hold on to falling yes when I was flying over Greenland that contrast of black and white and the kaleidoscope sunrise all so apart desolate but I had the urge to fall land on the soft snow leave my mark be a part of something that was different I could feel its strange call to be there there the ocean had icebergs that defied because so much was hidden the water boiled rapidly bubbles rose and broke at the surface I turned off the stove and they stopped the bombs fell I felt the earth shake and then I didn't know I walked up to a door and watched cars pass by who was in them to where and why

The lights and smell of a Carnival so many dark shadows against that colorful array of lights and the sawdust and cottoncandy makes me sick the leaves are turning and then they too fall the fireplace and christmas tree all smell of home where we have everything I was just packing to leave when dad made me watch this spectacle of his making it took years he explained and yes I had to agree all my life I watched it develop and I knew that I didn't want it just enough of his money to live on then I laughed at myself nothing is right and that bird that was struck in the road I stopped but I didn't help it I drove off when I saw a car behind me but I watched in the mirror saw the wheel crush that bird the scene in the mirror I couldn't see ahead the loss of something the candied apple stuck to my teeth so I threw it away and just watched the Ferriswheel turn I came up to a mirror and didn't recognize myself so I left and they

laughed but someone said that I was an allrightperson that was not enough because so many said I couldn't do anything right I left there too I still had no where to go so I came back they laughed again I got drunk and could blow hotandcold I will show them and when the car comes by this time I will stop it ask my questions I can't find my dictionary so I don't know what it means anyway why use those words so that I can't understand what you are saying one night I wanted to love but someone said something that sounded like no I left there too because the light was glaring in my eyes I couldn't see so I turned and stepped on my shadow

The fog was thick and wet so I ran people were behind me watching and though I didn't get anywhere they didn't catch me either I climbed the stairs jumped from the top and surprised everyone by flying over them for laughs I waved and left them far behind and they said I could do nothing right...

Mary Ann Causey

POEM FOR EVERYMAN

You talk a lot about your freedom.
Well what does that mean?
That you want to be free to be
Eternally on top?
And if you are on the top,
Where am I to stand,
Since there is no middle ground?
I've heard whispers
Of the good weather up there,
So move over, man:
I want to try the air myself.

Julianne Gray

dear Ann Lavender

Dear Ann Lavender,

I recently broke up with my first woman lover. I want to turn to my parents, but I don't know what to say.

Lost in Pasadena

Dear Lost,

Someone once told me that dinosaurs are born in every generation. If your parents are dinosaurs leave them in peace. Parents as a special institution can't always be "turned to" for help. If your telling brings out guilt then who do they turn to? If you don't know what to say, you are perhaps too confused to go to your parents. Confused feelings are not aided by more confused feelings. Take some time with yourself or turn to a friend.

Ann Lavender

Dear Ann Lavender,

I go out to lunch with people from the office. Once in a while someone cracks a joke about homosexuals. I want to comment, but I'm afraid.

In the closet at work,
Janelle

Dear Janelle,

I would not suggest open confrontation of a crowd of people, just as I would not suggest putting yourself at the mercy of a pack of dogs. I've been confronted by this situation myself not just with co-workers, but relatives and acquaintances, also. On rare occasions I decline to respond. Verbal battles don't change anyone's mind, usually just the opposite. In general, I've found that most small groups can benefit from a little redirection. I don't direct the conversation toward myself--

but I do respond in a personal way. If the joke is about a man, I don't laugh, I show a little discomfort. I survey the faces and state simply that I've had a couple of close male friends who are gay. I say that I've seen what they've been through with their families and friends, and I can't see anything funny in that plight. If the joke is about a woman, which they rarely are, I respond that I had difficulty accepting my oldest friend as being gay, that I have a lot of sympathy for what she went through. (This is very true--I'm my oldest friend.)

There is also a more indirect method I've used. If you check the laws of your state, you may be able to point out to a group or an individual that they are breaking the law. Oral and anal sex are illegal in most states. In some, only the missionary method (man on top, only) is legal. This also can be pointed out, with a side comment on the fact that most of the laws are used to satisfy personal grudges toward gays. It's a step forward. I've had some very satisfactory responses.

There is also something that isn't very nice to hear, but it's true. It's sometimes wiser to lie for a good cause than to tell the truth.

Ann Lavender

Dear Ann Lavender,

I've met a woman and I find her very attractive, but I don't know if she's gay. How can I approach her?

Kathy M.
Houston, Tx.

Continued on page 15.

LAVENDER

Dear K.M.,

I've had several talks with myself over that one. First, I ask myself if it's possible that the attraction is physically one sided. Am I the only person feeling something? If I decide that the woman feels something, then I ask myself, What is she feeling? If I can answer that she is probably experiencing a sexual or romantic feeling, then I try to determine if she is aware of the source of her own feelings. Sometimes the only person who can answer that question is the woman herself. REMEMBER: if you ask anyone a question, be prepared for a negative, positive, or a not-at-this-time response.

To approach: it's good to remember that time and place are important. A park is better than a busy office, a quiet room is usually better than a crowded room, afternoon is sometimes better than evening, and over a cup of tea or coffee is better than on a down town bus. If you are properly prepared for a negative answer then you should also have other topics of conversation. It's nice to be able to ease through an uncomfortable silence. Sometimes the best place to begin is to make a statement of simple fact. "Sexuality is too complex to be defined by a word." Sometimes if a woman feels openness she'll respond with openness.

I can not speak for you, nor can I be bold for you. I have been rejected and I have received positive response. I have sometimes received an answer that I didn't expect or want; but was pleased with all the same.

Ann Lavender

San Antonio Conf.

Elaine Noble (Massachusetts State Representative) will be among the featured guests of national prominence at San Antonio's bicentennial program, "Gay in San Antonio...A Sense of Belonging?", on Saturday, May 1. Also speaking will be Karen DeCrow, president of NOW, and Del Martin, co-author of *Lesbian/Woman* and co-founder of Daughters of Bilitis over twenty years ago. In addition to speakers there will be a variety of workshops.

Originally it seemed that this one-day conference was destined to be a quiet fluke: a gay-oriented federally funded bicentennial program. Well, guess again...San Antonio's vocal homophobes have raised a furor which has reverberated even to Dallas and Houston. The negative publicity has made it difficult for the program organizers to find local gays willing to facilitate workshops, or local facilities willing to house the program. But, the San Antonio professional community has been very supportive, and they are eager to attend and to increase their rapport with the gay community. National Gay Task Force leaders Jean O'Leary and Bruce Voeller intend to fly down from New York just to be participants.

Events will begin with a pre-conference reception at The Zoo (women's bar, 3240 N.W. Loop 410) Friday at 7:30 p.m. Around 8:30 p.m. Friday, Del Martin will present a lesbian historical perspective. The conference itself will run all day Saturday, May 1. If you haven't preregistered and arrive in San Antonio Saturday morning looking for the conference, call the Gay Switchboard (733-7300) or the conference coordinators (655-3724) for details.

*****FLASH*****FLASH*****

Ivy Bottini, outstanding feminist comedian, will appear at U. of Houston on Saturday, May 1, at 8 p.m. She is great--don't miss her. Admission is free, and it's at the UH UC--Houston Rm.

Personal problems? Write Ann Lavender care of *PBT* news. There is a 50% chance your question will be answered. Ann Lavender. PeeeBeeeTee News.



Book

Review

Between Me and Life, a biography of Romaine Brooks by Meryle Secrest

Some people, like photographer Berenice Abbott, will ask, "Why bother?" when discussions about Paris in the 1920's arise. And there is a good point in that question. The era was not an easy one to live in, the goals were perhaps too high and of course the rewards were small for the women who tried so hard in their art. Perhaps, the women lived harder than they meant to or, perhaps the pressure on them was greater than we can suppose.

With this book, *Between Me and Life*, the spirit and productivity of an era of prolific lesbian culture is preserved. We do not want this information to slip away from us as did our early history. The cultures of Sappho, the Amazons and the matriarchal period--all of our past--is basically conjecture now.

This is an important point to remember because it seems easy for history, written by the ever visible and vocal male, to forget contributions made by women, especially in this period dominated by such notables as Henry Miller, Picasso, Cocteau and Whistler.

The author bases her biography largely on Romaine Brooks' unpublished memoirs, *No Pleasant Memories*. The early stages of Romaine's life were like chapters in a horror story, and I cannot do them justice here, but Secrest does this well and treats the rest of the life Romaine led with great sensitivity, including Romaine's lesbianism, her mother's and brother's insanity, her art and her circle of friends.

Romaine Brooks was a portrait painter influenced by James McNeill Whistler. She worked with the subtle toned variations of gray--a color not largely used during the 1920's. Her life was one of loneliness which was largely self-imposed: "Romaine did not know what Natalie Barney (her lover) had serenely discovered: that society would tolerate unconventional behavior as long as its outward forms were adhered to."

Romaine and Natalie had a fifty year relationship, excellently studied in this book, which regrettably ended two years before Romaine's death. Romaine's inability to accept reconciliation with Natalie at the end of this relationship was one of the many ways in which Romaine's mother, Ella Goddard (even though long dead), came between Romaine and life.

Meryle Secrest also does chapter analyses on Djuna Barnes' *The Ladies Almanack* and Sir Compton MacKenzie's *Extraordinary Women*, two books which were published during this period.

Radclyffe (John) Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* is given short notice. However, Secrest's short characterizations of Radclyffe Hall and Lady Una Toubridge give us another perspective on the 1920 lesbian community in Paris and on the Isle of Crete--all of which Romaine was strongly a part.

Emerging from the debris of 1920 Europe, we now have another excellent book: another lesbian artist, ignored for so long in artistic circles, brought back into view.

Mary Ann Causey

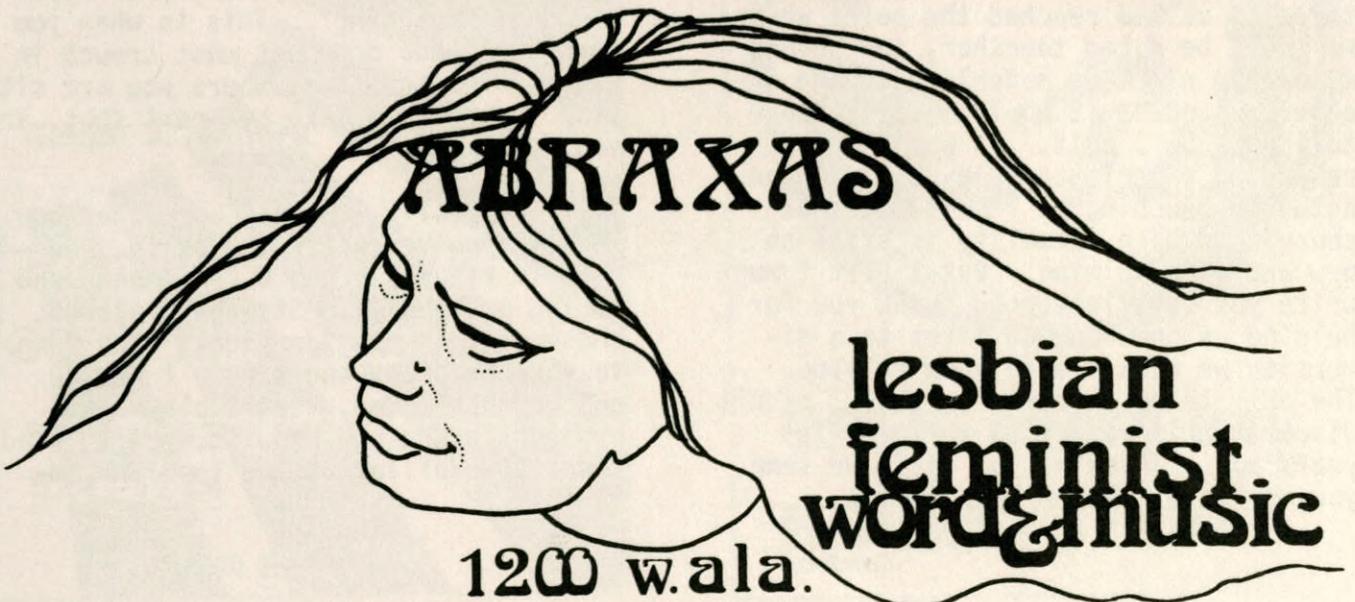
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Letter Cont.

sex would never be anything more than merely pleasant. But on one of our bridge afternoons when I was entertaining some friends I had known for over a year, something happened to change the situation. The afternoon was going along with the usual aimless chatter and card playing when one of my friends suddenly said, "Where did you find this magazine " (*Pointblank*). She was reacting to the copy that I bought the night before that was lying in the bathroom. I didn't know what to say. It turned out that she and Merry were also fans of poetry and articles on women and that immediately broke the ice, something that had never happened since I had known them. We got to talking about the magazine, then about sex in general and then about our personal lives. Before we realized it, it was nine o'clock in the evening. The time had just flown by.

The next day we were all a trifle embarrassed and didn't know whether to continue along the same track or slip back into our mindless routine. However my friend remarked that since we had broken the ice the day before it would be a shame not to continue with our newfound openness and honesty.

I am not "liberated" enough to go into details, but within a few days the three of us had reached the point where we could be naked together, and on one memorable night we made love to one another. I guess it would be silly to tell you how I felt. It was the most rewarding experience in my life. I am actually blushing as I write this because this open sexuality is still so new and overwhelming. But I felt I must write you this letter to thank you for helping us open up our lives to a dimension we didn't even know existed. The only thing I regret is that I didn't discover this wonderful way of life years ago. Thanking you again we send you our love. Three happy women.

Sandra

POOL

CONT...

Once your cue is chalked, and you've inserted your quarter, it's time to rack the balls. The polite method of racking is to arrange the balls in their proper positions, and then scoot the entire rack across the table before spotting the balls and removing the rack.

This makes a fairly "tight" rack, which allows your opponent quite a bit of recoil when she breaks the balls. For a longer game, albeit a sloppier one, rack the balls loosely. This way, at least, you'll get to spend a little more time with your opponent.

"Psyching your opponent: is the game played within the game. "Hustling" is a variety of this, where you constantly refer to your lack of skill, the time that has passed since you've played, etc. The opposite of hustling is "intimidation" where you scowl a lot, mutter obscenities, yell and stomp and beat the floor when you miss a shot, and place lit cigarettes on the table near your opponent's next shot. Probably the most enjoyable form of "psyching your opponent" is "flirting". This is when you know that your opponent must crouch in exactly the same spot where you are sitting in order to make her next shot, and you don't move.

Eventually, though, no matter how loosely you've racked the balls, you come to rituals 5 and 6 -- winning and losing gracefully. Strangely enough, these rituals are identical. You turn to your opponent and say, "I really enjoyed that game. Let's play again soon." Before you know it, you'll find yourself a pillar of the lesbian community.

Vicki Glasgow



On Saturday mornings, beginning April 17th, a women's soccer clinic will be held. Meetings are at 9:30 a.m. at the soccer field at Rice University. The clinic is open to all women, no experience is necessary and everything from basic skills to rules will be covered. For more information or to volunteer soccer coaching talent contact:

Carol Kirkpatrick 923-6397 (daytime) or Parker 795-5350 (evenings).

July 2-5, lesbians are gathering in Bloomington, Indiana for a National Lesbian-feminist Organizing Conference. Those who wish to attend are requested to pre-register by May 18th. Send name, address, and \$5.50 c/o Lesbian Feminist Union, P.O. Box 3764, Louisville, KY. 40201.

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