



The
Celibate
Woman

*A Journal for Women Who
Are Celibate or Considering
This Liberating Way of
Relating to Others*

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Indra Allen
 With special thanks
 to women for peace
 in Finland. 88

THE CELIBATE WOMAN JOURNAL

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>A Perspective on the Celibate Lifestyle</i> by Martha Leslie Allen	3
<i>On Being Alone</i> by Diane Conklin	7
<i>Valentine's Day Lament</i> by Lisa Freedman	11
<i>Editor's Comment: Sexually Transmitted Disease</i>	14
<i>The Shocking Reality</i>	15
Excerpts from <i>The AIDS Epidemic</i>	16
Poems by Susan Noe Rothman	20
<i>A Pattern, Shifting Respects, Celibacy</i>	
<i>Completeness From Within</i> by Syeda Noorein Inamdar	22
<i>Delgado Street Blues</i> by Kay Gibbs	23
<i>Happy Anniversary</i> by Marjorie Calow	26
Poems by Astra	28
<i>Autonomy, My Choice</i>	
<i>Little Things</i> by Louise	30
<i>That Damnable Question of Sexuality</i> by Delin Graves	31
<i>Let's Hear It For The Celibates</i> by Alta Cretton	35
<i>A Dialog of Georgia Stone and Ellery Foster, excerpt</i>	37
<i>Functional Celibacy</i> by Anne	38
Poems by Kendra Usack	50
<i>Take Back The Night, The Universal Weaver,</i> <i>Woman-Warrior To Come, Women's Change</i>	
<i>Letters to the Editor</i>	43

SUBMISSIONS:

We welcome articles, artwork, letters, experiences, ideas, thoughts and theory. With no paid staff and limited resources we are unable to provide financial reimbursement for submitted materials. If you would like your submissions returned, please enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope.

The Purpose of this Journal

The Celibate Woman Journal is a communications network among women who are interested in exploring new and meaningful ways of relating to others — including those with whom we are intimate — rather than taking our affections in a sexual direction. Our sexuality is a part of our being and does not need to be expressed through genital interactions; indeed, we find new levels of creative energies available which can be expressed in a variety of ways when we don't focus on sex.

We each determine our own definition of celibacy, its context, and duration. Some of us satisfy our own sexual desires while others of us turn even these energies to other things which we enjoy. The extent of our touching, caressing and intimacies with loved ones is also self-determined. The length of our celibacy depends on circumstances in our lives and what we are able to gain from this experience. We don't advocate celibacy for others; we simply wish this to be an option for all women who might wish to experience the benefits of this way of relating to others. We do not feel we are excluding anything — we see it as opening up new avenues. It is a path freely chosen.

The Celibate Woman Journal also may include writings from women who feel they come to celibacy from lack of good, healthy sexual experiences and want time to regain a perspective on their own sexual directions. The *Journal* is a forum for all women wishing to explore issues relating in any way to celibacy.

Martha Leslie Allen, Editor

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About the editor: Martha Leslie Allen is the Director of the Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press, and editor of its annual *Index/Directory of Women's Media*. She is writing her dissertation on the development of a communications network among women. Martha holds black belt rank in the martial arts of Tae Kwon Do and Ja Shin Do and teaches a Self Protection Through Self Empowerment class. She has been a student of the Artemis Institute system of self empowerment, whose center is in Santa Fe, New Mexico and whose Director is Dana Densmore, for ten years.

A PERSPECTIVE ON THE CELIBATE LIFESTYLE

By Martha Leslie Allen

There are many aspects to the celibate lifestyle that I find attractive. As my interest in celibacy does not stem from moral or religious commitments and as I have not taken any kind of vow of abstention from sex, I am able to use flexibility in determining how it might apply to my life. I am interested in getting feedback from other women on your experiences with the celibate lifestyle and what you find as its attractions.

I am single, living independently, and I increasingly appreciate being able to go in the directions I wish without the necessity of fitting my life around the needs and interests of another, or of explaining myself. I have specific ideas of what I want to accomplish in my life and I choose to give the majority of my time to my own determined "causes."

This does not mean that personal relationships are not important to me and that I am in any way isolated from influences of those I choose to interrelate with. I do find, though, that celibacy can provide the greatest range of relationships; fewer demands on my time; and the most harmonious continuity in the way I wish to lead my life. A sexual relationship is more likely to lead to another placing higher expectations on me in areas not of my choosing.

I've seen how sexual involvement with someone can lower the level of other types of communication and can end up substituting for other types of intimacy and depth in a relationship that I find valuable. It can also lead to jealousies, a lessening of respect, and emotional dependencies.

I do not want to imply that this is automatically the case. Individuals who are committed to treating each other with the highest respect, supporting each other in their strengths and helping to give direction when the other is weak (emotionally; with respect to their integrity; or in their handling of adversity), have the potential for beautiful relationships which may not be adversely affected by the complexities of a sexual involvement. I realize that couples have the potential to have healthy, committed relationships which do not compromise the independence and growth of each individual. But many do

not do the work involved, or have not come up with ways to make this kind of beautiful relationship a reality.

Single and/or celibate individuals are also not automatically the version of individual they may hope to be in themselves or in their relationships with others. It takes strength to be independent and on your own, but it can also be that the individual is not willing, capable, or interested in finding the elements that are necessary for close, ongoing sexually intimate relationships.

I believe it is better to be independent and enter an intimate relationship with someone else out of strength, not out of dependence as is often the case. Celibate individuals often have more room in which to focus on their own development and understanding of what is important in an intimate relationship than those continually involved in sexual relationships.

Let me distinguish now between a sexual and an intimate relationship because I have been using both terms. To me an intimate relationship may or may not include sex. For the celibate individual it would not involve sex. What made the celibate lifestyle a possibility for me was the realization that it could include intimacy and affection but exclude the focus on sex and genital preoccupation. As Ann Landers discovered, many women seek affection and intimacy and care little for sexual acts. I share their sentiments — I find more depth of feeling and communication and love other ways. Add to that the complications that can arise when one becomes sexually involved and one sees the attraction to celibacy.

This of course does not mean that finding an intimate relationship with someone you love, without the inclusion of sex, is an easy path. Most people are still interested in sexual relationships. There are not many celibate individuals around with whom you may share love and affections. And when one establishes an intimacy with one who is not celibate, most likely when the other person finds a sexual partner, the pressures to end the intimate aspects of your relationship will be tremendous.

What exactly do I see as an intimate relationship without sex? What could this include? To me it can include anything that does not take affection in a sexual direction. There can be no external definition of what that would include: this is determined by each individual — most likely it is different for each person. Each person would simply redirect the intimacies if it were to start to become sexual. Nude hugging or nude

messages with an intimate friend is to me acceptable within my concept of celibacy as long as both understand the terms: not having that intimacy and affection be carried in a sexual direction.

How can one see something as potentially sexual as nude touching as simply affection? It depends on the attitude and state of mind. People giving professional nude massages don't give them in a sexual way. In an intimate relationship you of course would be adding special love and affection that is missing in the business/professional massage but it shows that nude touching in itself need not mean feeling things sexually. Or a doctor's vaginal or breast examination: those are not sexual — or should not be. And at the opposite extreme, if your mind is on sexual wavelengths, there need be no nudity — a glance of a fully clothed body, or the touch of fingertips can be sexual. The mind and attitude is very important in determining whether you proceed in intimacy in a sexual or in a solely affectionate direction. If both individuals who are being affectionate and intimate are approaching their touching as a form of affection I believe that even breasts and genitals could be touched in a non-sexual affectionate way, if not done for stimulation. Of course this clearly depends on the attitude one brings to the affectionate touching: the affection, love and intimacy would be the high point. It would not be so if one saw sexual stimulation as being the goal. Sexual feelings may be somewhat intertwined with other feelings when sharing intimate affection but not taking things in a sexual direction means not focusing on sexual feelings and not stimulating each other sexually for the purpose of taking those feelings in a sexual direction.

To many celibates any affection while nude no matter what the state of mind may be considered sexual and therefore not what they wish to become involved in. This would need to be determined by each individual. I think the most important thing is that both people sharing the intimacy understand and agree on the parameters.

Married celibates may be more likely to include nude touching in their affections because of the closeness of their intimate relationship. Married celibates are often pursuing this lifestyle for the heightened spirituality and communication, and the potential for deepened love and affection. But where single celibates find others with whom a deep intimacy is possible and desirable in their lives, still wishing to continue keeping sex out of the relationship, I feel this is valuable. I've

thought that perhaps a different term than celibacy might be more appropriate for this level of intimacy, but generally conclude through my own experiences that it is still closer to the realm of celibacy than not.

I welcome responses to these reflections from other celibate women or women considering the celibate lifestyle. Do you include intimate relationships in your lives? What problems/complications do you encounter? In what ways has celibacy strengthened loving relationships with other people? What do you see as the benefits of this lifestyle compared to any previous lifestyle you experienced? Experiencing celibacy can help free people from exploitative relationships and allow people to see reality more clearly. What have you noticed along these lines? Do you expect your celibate lifestyle to continue throughout your life, or is it indefinite, or for a specific period of time? When you write, please let me know if you'd like your thoughts and analysis to be shared with others through publication in the next issue of the *Journal* or if it is personal correspondence.

Martha Leslie Allen:

"As editor of the Celibate Woman Journal, I encourage the exploration of more honest and loving relationships between individuals on a more variety of levels. I feel that the celibate lifestyle as an option for women can provide insights into this process. I look forward to the day that our society is less couple oriented and single women can pursue their interests and feel at home in their single lifestyles. If we strive to be complete in ourselves and share our lives with others out of strength rather than dependence — this will lead to positive, respectful, and loving relationships."

ON BEING ALONE

Excerpt from *Tales of Rileyville*

By Diane Conklin

Winter brings it out in me, the longing for someone. I remember one winter's evening with the land all covered in snow, walking down the hillside toward a friendly light in the cabin window from the hanging lamp wondering just where my heart should be. With me or with someone else. The day had been blue and brilliant. The hills looked more blue than ever I had seen them before with white snow laying lightly upon them and a blue grey sky above. The sky would change from blue to white to grey while always being a thoroughly winter sky, that special sky of frosty breaths and snow crunching underfoot. Two foot icicles hung from the cabin roof and as the sun set over the mountains to the southwest, a pink glow trimmed the white clouds that lay along the opposite horizon. And then the moon came up. A white globe in a clear and starry sky. I lay on the hillside, the peaked roof of the cabin below, and made angels in the snow. Lying there making my angels, stepping out of them carefully so as to make them look as if they just magically appeared on the earth, I thought of Helen and when we made them in Ohio. I thought of the joy of a shared winter afternoon making angels and forts whose walls never did stand very tall. The forts were more like holes that we burrowed into than any kind of edifice. Our noses would drip and our mittens would be soaked and our hair would be stringy from the melted snowflakes, some almost the size of our palms and always there would be snow in our boots and freezing wet socks. But as blustery as the wind might become, as cold as our hands and feet may have been, our hearts were warmed by each other's company and we played with a vengeance that it might ever be so and that we would feel this way, this safe, this warm, this caring and cared for together in our lives. And then we both grew up. I moved away, got married. Helen got married, moved away. I am no longer married. Don't know if Helen is or not but I do know she had a baby and I don't know anything else

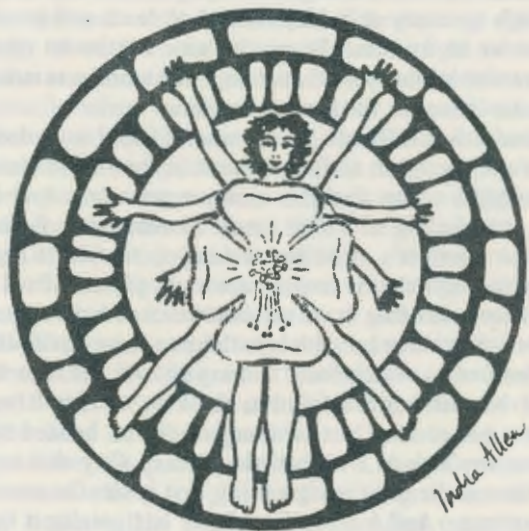
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ed in its light, pale light falling softly over the rounded hills, traveling down, down to the valley floor and the river.

I know now that it is enough to be alive and share these things with the world itself. While I may not always be alone, I have learned a great secret and that is I can be alone and be happy and content. By myself, I tap into a special kind of strength and power that connects me to the earth and to my life and renews me. In this way, I experience the world as a place full of life and love to be enjoyed on one's own and I re-experience myself in the world, so pleased to be here. This is the great romance we all can know. And I am richer to have begun to understand these things.

Diane Conklin:

"I am a 38 year old woman and I live in Arlington, VA. I have a cabin in the mountains overlooking the Shenandoah Valley and for the past five years it has been my regular week-end retreat. I am a student of the Artemis Institute, a Path I have chosen through which to know myself better and to grow. I will be moving this June to Santa Fe, NM to continue my self empowerment / martial arts training. This excerpt "On Being Alone" is part of a book that I am writing as a gift to myself and to return some of what the Valley has given to me."



VALENTINE'S DAY LAMENT

(Reprinted from *Broadside*)

By Lisa Freedman

Ann Landers, whose advice is gospel in many homes, recently revealed the results of her nationwide survey of women which attempted to determine the answer to the following questions about sex: "Would you be content to be held close and treated tenderly, and forget about 'the act'?"

The results, which seem to have shaken the foundation of our supposedly sexual liberated society, showed that 72% of the 90,000 women who cast their ballots said yes, they would be content to be held close and treated tenderly and forget about the act. Of those 72% who said yes, 40% were under 40 years of age.

Do these results surprise anyone? One would tend to think so, given the amount of controversy and conversation that this poll has elicited. Society has told us for a long time that women have emerged from the Victorian era and are enjoying sex as much as men. Books and magazines have devoted themselves to telling us that we love sex, anywhere, anytime, anyhow. How dare Ann Landers tell us any differently?

But women for the most part were not surprised. Whether they put themselves in "the other" 28%, or whether they are women who would have agreed with the poll results, the lack of surprise with which many met the results of the survey merely reinforced what many women have been saying for a long time — something is going on in the bedrooms of the nation and it is not necessarily something good.

The results of this survey have been hotly disputed by almost every person who has a stake in promoting some sexual myth about pleasure and satisfaction. *Playboy* was quick to point out the defects in the sample. *Playboy* disputed the numbers, they argued that the sample was not representative of the sexual attitude of the nation and they complained that the wording of the question was slanted. For the purpose of this argument I am willing to grant *Playboy* all of these points, because it is not the sheer numbers that are the most telling parts of this poll.

What has garnered the most interest from this poll is the accompanying comments that Ann Landers relayed. Women were not asked to comment, but her office was flooded with letters outlining the personal testimony of these women's experience.

I would love to be spoken to tenderly. It would be enough. My boyfriend never says a word. If I say anything he says, 'Be quiet. You're spoiling things.'

I am under 40 and would be delighted to settle for tender words and warm caresses. The rest of it is a bore and can be exhausting. I am sure the sex act was designed strictly for the pleasure of males.

The best part is the cuddling and caressing and the tender words that come with caring. My first husband used to rape me about five times a week. If a stranger treated me like that I would have had him arrested.

What these women are describing are conditions of inequality where they don't feel that they have any choice in the bedroom, where something is happening to them that they do not like. These women are feeling used and exploited. It is important to note that these women are not saying Sex is dirty — their testimony is not laced with morality.

And what they are describing affects us all. What does or doesn't go on in the bedrooms of the nation is not just "those women's problem." This poll directly addresses the serious question of what is happening to women in the privacy of their homes, in the fortress of their bedrooms. For too long we have considered the bedroom out of the domain of criticism or commentary. But it is this argument that has been used to keep battered women silent for years. We know that the private domain is where women often suffer the most, and most often suffer in silence.

And why do women prefer cuddling to "the act"? Is it because it is safe, there is no fear of pregnancy, of an unwanted child? Is it because there is no guilt, blame or question of performance at stake? Is it because women are tired of all of the pressures that affect all of our sexual lives? The structure of society in the workplace leaves us little time to develop good sexual relationships. Weekends become pressure-filled. And for these women in the survey, it seems that the precious

little time that couples do have to spend together is not quality time.

These women are craving affection *and* physicality. What they are getting is only physicality, and from the results of this poll, they are not getting that too well. But why do women allow ourselves to continue in this ongoing course of timidity and frigidity of expression? Why can't women develop a vocabulary that would allow us to tell our partners what we want. Why do we have to believe the messages that society sends us — that we have to accept and be satisfied with force.

There is something going on when, first of all, a survey question has to separate tenderness from the act, as if they have to be mutually exclusive. There is something going on when society perpetuates conditions of inequality that allow men to force their sexual will on women. And there is something going on when women endure all this in silence. Perhaps on this Valentine's Day, instead of saying it with roses, we should say it with words.

Lisa Freedman is a Toronto feminist lawyer who is actively involved in issues relating to violence against women. She is the social-action coordinator at the Metropolitan Toronto YWCA. A chapter entitled "Wife Assault" appears in No Safe Place, Violence Against Women & Children edited by Connie Guberman & Margie Wolfe, published by the Women's Press (Toronto, 1985). Lisa Freedman is a member of the Broadside collective. Broadside is a Canadian feminist monthly tabloid that reviews international and Canadian events, arts, politics and women's issues, featuring comment through the written word and graphic art. Subscriptions are \$16 plus \$2 outside Canada: write or call Broadside, P.O. Box 494, Station P, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 2T1, Canada (416) 598-3513. This article was reprinted from the February 1985 issue.

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASE

There may be women who join the ranks of the celibate because of the desire to avoid sexually transmitted disease. But if a woman *does* want sex included in her life, there are precautions she can take to make it safe. It may require some research to find out what precautions are necessary, and it may take discipline, such as practicing "safe sex" (no exchange of bodily fluids) in the case of AIDS infected individuals or those who wish not to take the chance of getting the virus (there is a substantial period of time where those infected with AIDS do not know they are infected because the symptomless stage can be lengthy and the virus can be passed on to loved ones unknowingly). However, if the joys of sexual activity do not outweigh the benefits of sexually free relationships, there will be more individuals who consider the celibate lifestyle as a positive choice.

I wish to remind women that if you are *not* coming to celibacy as a positive choice, you might wish to reconsider because as long as you are willing to take responsibility for your life, your health, and your relationships and accept the parameters of the reality our world sets out for you, sex need not be excluded from your life. It may just take more initiative on your part to make it safe and the kind of sexual relationship that *you* would like it to be.

At the same time I would also like to say to those who for whatever reasons find themselves exploring the celibate lifestyle that there are many benefits that you may not realize are valuable because of society's expectations and emphasis on sex. Romance need not be discarded. Intimacy need not be discarded. And so much can be added! This *Journal* is a forum for exploring some of those benefits so that those of us involved in this lifestyle or considering it can appreciate it more fully.

With this preface, I would like to share an important item with you that appeared in *On The Issues*, publication of Choices, Women's Medical Center, Inc. [97-77 Queens Boulevard, Forest Hills, NY 11374. (718) 275-6020] in the column "We've Come A Long Way???" [Vol. V, 1985].

THE SHOCKING REALITY

What did women get out of the sexual revolution? Mainly sexually-transmitted diseases, according to physicians, health experts and departments of health throughout the country, and — due to the nature of women's physiology — most of the STDs have more serious consequences for them than for males. In fact, many of the males remain entirely asymptomatic, passing the diseases on to women through semen and/or saliva, while showing no outward signs of infection. Among our "new" arrivals are chlamydia, a major cause of infertility and pelvic inflammatory disease in women; recent evidence shows that women on the Pill are especially at risk. Last year, 3 to 4 million new cases were diagnosed. Genital herpes claimed more than 300,000 new victims. Venereal warts, which like herpes have been linked to cervical cancer affect more than a million annually; and AIDS is spreading among heterosexuals. Now the papilloma virus, present in common warts, is suspected in cervical cancer also. The virus is passed on through semen, and, possibly saliva, from males who have warts, or who have had a sexual partner who has them. (Sometimes the warts are internal in women, and they are unaware of them.) All together, physicians now know of at least 25 diseases spread through sexual contact — and the number keeps growing. Epidemiologists estimate about 27,000 new cases of STDs occur daily, and that eventually 25 percent of all Americans between the ages of 15 and 55 will be infected. Although multiple sex partners certainly increase the risk, even one romantic encounter with a person who has (or has had) just one other sexual partner is all that it takes. The worst news is that, at this time, many of the diseases are incurable.

For conservatives, this makes a good case for old-fashioned monogamy. Radicals may consider celibacy! [Emphasis in original.]

On The Issues, Vol. V, 1985
Choices, Women's Medical Center, Inc.

Excerpts from *THE AIDS EPIDEMIC*

by James I. Slaff, MD and John K. Brubaker
NY: Warner Books, 1985

The following are a few excerpts to give you an idea of the valuable information in this book.

* "A great deal of confusion surrounding this disease is related to the oft-repeated but mistaken notion that AIDS is somehow related to homosexuality. The large portion of AIDS cases to date in gay men is due to an historic coincidence peculiar to the American pattern of AIDS virus spread. Unknown to anyone in America at the time, the virus was first introduced in this country into urban homosexual communities. Increased exposure in these communities to the virus has no intrinsic attraction for gays, and gays have no mysterious susceptibility to infection." (page 4)

* "One-fourth of all American AIDS victims to date have been heterosexuals. Today there are more than 250,000 infected American heterosexuals, 90% of whom are unaware of their own infection. Press coverage to the contrary notwithstanding, male-female and female-male transmission of the AIDS virus has been extensively documented. Although multiple sexual partners correlate most strongly to AIDS virus infection in heterosexuals, any partner of the past few years represents a possible source of infection." (pages 5-6)

* "Urban prostitutes particularly facilitate AIDS virus transmission. There may be 6,000 infected prostitutes in New York City alone and 40% of a group of Miami prostitutes were found to be infected. In some cities many of the sexually active bisexual men are infected as well." (page 6)

* ". . . [T]hose closest to the problem do not expect an effective treatment program or vaccine within the decade. Presently, an AIDS virus vaccine is inconceivable. Unlike the polio virus, the AIDS virus continually mutates. There have been 18 variants isolated, and were a vaccine developed, it would likely have effect on a limited number of variants for a limited amount of time. It took 11 years of concentrated research to develop a hepatitis B vaccine, and the AIDS virus is proving to be a much more complex medical challenge." (pages 6-7)

* "The AIDS virus is infecting Americans at the rate of one every 90 seconds. Some experts project that by the end of the decade 10 million, or perhaps double or triple that number, will be infected." (page 8)

* "Despite its tiny size, the AIDS virus has proven itself to be one of the most deadly germs to ever infect humans. It is a tiny killing machine of almost unbelievable durability and potency. It has the ability to disguise itself within a cell. Once inside a body, it cannot be killed by any known medical means. It can launch a preemptive strike on the immune system, which is the body's way of defending itself from *all kinds* of germs." (page 10)

* "As soon as an AIDS virus enters a new bloodstream, it locates a specific T-helper cell. The virus has a method of incorporating itself within the genetic structure of a T-helper cell. This process does not kill a T-helper cell, but renders it unable to perform its function as "field general" of the immune system. A T-helper cell that has been invaded by an AIDS virus cannot sound the alarm to the rest of the body's immune system." (pages 13-14)

* "Most people who have been infected with the AIDS virus are not aware of it for at least one year. During this period of "dormancy," the AIDS virus has not attacked enough T-helper cells to cause noticeable damage to the immune system. . .

"Incredibly, the AIDS virus seems impervious to the antibodies that the body produces to combat it. The AIDS virus seems to be a killer with armor-plated protection against which the immune system's 'bullets' have no effect. The AIDS virus has sheltered itself within the genetic structure of a T-helper cell and cannot be killed. It lurks in that form indefinitely. There it remains, threatening to explode into an active phase of replication and to attack more T-helper cells. . . . When the AIDS virus explodes out of dormancy, it turns the host cell into a replicative factory. The AIDS virus uses the material of the invaded T-helper cell to manufacture millions of copies of itself during the six hours prior to the host cell's death. These newly created AIDS viruses can then swim freely in the bloodstream to locate other healthy T-helper cells to invade and destroy. . . .

"Replication can be triggered by any number of medical events such as pregnancy, surgery, or concurrent stressful 'cofactors.' . . .

"The AIDS virus can do more than destroy a functioning immune system. . . . A dysfunctional immune system will not, by itself, kill a person. It renders them defenseless against attack by other germs. . . .

". . . In the terminal stages of AIDS, patients are victimized by unrelenting, multiple infections. People who die of AIDS actually die of the complications of unopposed infection caused by this assemblage of germs." (pages 14-18)

* *"Can the symptomless carrier transmit full-blown AIDS?"*

"Yes. One of the most heartbreaking aspects of the entire AIDS epidemic is that the symptomless carriers, who are unaware of the fact that they carry the AIDS virus, may unintentionally harm or kill the ones they love the most." (pages 28-29)

* *"What issues appear to be the most important in successful transmission of the AIDS virus?"*

"There are three factors generally discussed as influencing the possibility that a particular exposure will lead to AIDS virus infection: mode of transmission, dose of contagion, and condition of host at the time of exposure. The mode of transmission relates to the type of body fluid that is exchanged and the point at which it enters the host. Types of infected body fluid include the blood, semen, saliva, tears, and urine. Points of entry include the rectum, mouth, vagina, other mucosal membranes, blood vessels, and skin abrasions.

"Dose of contagion. In many infectious diseases there is a threshold value of contagion that must be present for infection to take place. This is referred to as "critical mass." . . . Concentration of the virus varies within an individual in the various fluids — semen, blood, saliva, tears, and urine. Volume relates to the amount of fluid exchanged — a large amount of semen presents a greater risk, for example.

"Condition of the host at time of exposure. Is he or she healthy? It appears that an activated immune system due to illness at the time of exposure may increase chances for transmission. What is the state of his or her immune system? A weak or strained immune system (perhaps caused by an unrelated medical condition, trauma, or aging) increases susceptibility to infection." (pages 30-31)

* *"Is kissing safe?"*

"No. Current United States Food and Drug Administration and World Health Organization guidelines to individuals who have had a positive blood test show antibodies to the

AIDS virus specifically recommended that infected individuals refrain from intimate, or "French" kissing.

"It is significant to appreciate that this was not always the case. Recommendations in 1983 did not mention intimate kissing as a possible form of virus transmission. However, since then the AIDS virus has been cultured out of the saliva of infected individuals." (page 31)

* *"If I am infected with the AIDS virus what are the chances I will develop AIDS or ARC?"*

"Only a percentage of those who contract the AIDS virus will develop AIDS within the first five years. Indications are that at least 5% and perhaps 20% or more will develop AIDS within five years of infection. An additional 25% will develop some form of AIDS-related complex, or ARC. ARC can take a number of forms, including swollen glands, persistent fever, weight loss, and diarrhea. Some of those who develop AIDS-related complex will develop AIDS.

"Beyond the first five years, it is at this point impossible to project. It could be that if you remain symptomless beyond a certain point, the risk of developing AIDS or ARC decreases. It could be that the AIDS virus can be "triggered" later in life by significant medical event or chronic condition (such as pregnancy, gallbladder surgery, or diabetes). The long-range connection between the AIDS virus and a variety of blood malignancies, leukemia, and lymphoma is under current investigation. Since the transmission pattern has not been fully described, symptomless people with the AIDS virus should consider themselves infectious.

"Because the disease is relatively new, it is not known what the consequences of infection are beyond five years. It *does* appear that the virus stays in the body indefinitely, and that as long as it is in the body there exists the potential to infect others." (pages 73-74)

1985 LIST OF ALTERNATIVE AND RADICAL PUBLICATIONS — Over 300 periodicals listed; \$2.00. Write: The Alternative Press Center, P.O. Box 33109, Dept. L, Baltimore, MD 21218.

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reveals communication and honor,
trusting a vision of celibacy
frees the inner me to respond,
shifting respects from structured
to natural, opens my mind to thee

Susan Noe Rothman

CELIBACY

celebrate
evolving
lifestyles
intuitively
believing
all
credits
Yahweh

Susan Noe Rothman

Susan Noe Rothman:

"I am a poet, a teacher, a dreamer and a visionary. I believe in growth, learning, personal development and honesty. I write, paint, garden, and craft various holiday items. Most of all I believe, I believe in my family, my friends, and myself."

COMPLETENESS FROM WITHIN

In deep despair I fall
The pain of emptiness overwhelming
My lover has ceased to call
The loss, I am contemplating
What went wrong?
Why was I not more accommodating
Now, he is forever gone
Lost, amidst senseless self blaming
despising my existence
Why did it take so long?
To realize, he was only a trivial nuisance
Just like all the others
So much time lost
Catering to loves confusion
Energy depleted by the violent shatter
Of my fairy tale illusions
Searching for completeness
Burdening other souls
Why was enlightenment so slow?
The completeness is within my own soul

Syeda Noorein Inamdar

Syeda Noorein Inamdar:

"I have written this poem especially for your magazine. I have read The Celibate Woman, and I was quite impressed with the contents. My poem may not be as explicit as some of the others I have read in the magazine, but it deals with the same concept of searching for an alternative and eventually finding that it was always there, yourself.

"I hope to write more for your magazine in the future."

DELGADO STREET BLUES

By Kay Gibbs

After a quiet divorce from a very quiet man, I decided to find my real self. I had many options and finally chose my soul's home, Santa Fe. I had no connections, no friends there, but after concentrated effort I found my new nest: a dank, hundred year old adobe guest house off Canyon Road, near the plaza. Squatting off by itself in a corner, it was a hard, mean little place when I first saw it, filthy and cold. The realtor and I slogged past the compound gates to this hovel through gobs of adobe goo that had been loosened by the January thaw. I wouldn't be able to use the garage, the realtor said, as it was a potter's studio for one of the main-house renters. The place was so horrid that she apologized for the amount of rent, but I knew better and signed the lease.

That drab place got a cleaning first, then a coat of white on the ceiling. The walls I left gray, a foil for the orange geraniums and Santa Fe blue window trim. The multi-paned windows with their foot-deep sills opened on private space, so rarely were the peach curtains drawn. Finally, after twenty years of mothering, of moving things up high, of fitting in cherished trophies won long ago by another, I unpacked just me.

I picked the place where I wanted to work, got a job working nights as a waitress at the Palace, a very fancy European-style restaurant. This allowed my days to be free for gallery snooping, going to the spa, exploring, lunches with new friends and just sitting on my patio, feeling out to the edges of me. I began to hear once again the morning's cooing dove. I laughed and I sighed. My selfness grew and I liked me.

The space heater in my bedroom, standing cylindrically in the corner and another squatting in the living room sent instant heat to warm the adobe ice-walls. No heater in the kitchen, but the pilot lights kept the pipes from freezing and the six by eight room warmed quickly when I brewed my tea. The bath "closet" had an overhead ring of glowing, red heat that didn't want to drop warmth any lower than the top of my head, never mind the toilet seat!

I burned pressed logs when back from work on cold even-

ings and pulled an apple-green beanbag up to the kiva fireplace, propping my bare feet on top of its oval opening. In the quiet flickering dark of my living room, the shadows of my treasures leapt and danced for me. Sometimes, I found mel-low jazz on the stereo; other times, I listened to classical music. The fire, the wine, the music were only a part of the magic; most of it was inside of me.

No closets. Well, yes, one but so shallow that a clothes hanger would not fit, so off came the door. I found an ancient pie safe and dragged in the wretched thing. I rigged a bar in it, gave it a coat of blue paint and it became another hanging space. No fear of my bed collapsing; so much was stored under it that the springs were nearly lifted off the floor.

To know such feelings of contentment and peace, at long last, and so simply. We chase, grab, make order where order already exists. The brass ring, ever elusive, keeps us on the merry-go-round. Letting go is difficult, scary even, but "the other side of fear is freedom." My bliss was the exclamation point at the end of these bon mots.

My kitchen also had a kiva fireplace, sitting kitty-corner across one edge of the petite room. I tried, one bitter cold morn, to fire a log and nearly made the house history despite my frantic swipes at the tumbling fireball to get it back in the opening. The chimney was too small and no draft but charming as hell so I set poseys in it in their season. There was a table and deep casement windows and what a joy it was to flip the latches and push out the windows as though swinging my soul out into another day. In a little niche outside the house, sat a plum tree. The spring wind sifted the blossoms down through the air like snow. I would sit at my table drinking hot tea. The east sun would warm my skin as I watched the white fluttering off the tree. My life was so simple and so undemanding that such pleasures could register their delights upon my senses. Doves chortled softly in the morning air and the only other sound I heard was my own deep sigh.

I loved cleaning the five hundred square feet of my home. All the dirt, my dirt. Looking for something, knowing that I was the only one to have misplaced it. Shame on me! A call to lunch with a friend, Marie stopping by, the main-house gardener shouting hello, neighbors visiting and screendoors slamming. I was inanely happy with the most mundane of things.

After all these words about frugality, I must admit that I did a very extravagant thing. I gave myself permission to

spend a wad of money on a feather comforter. What fun! Stretching a pink sheet over the mattress, I stuffed the comforter into a deep maroon cover. The plump pillows in a floral pattern were tied with pink ribbons. How frivolous! But what sheer ecstasy, this nest of feathers and pillows. In the early morning, birds called to wake me, but I only peeked out and fluffed my comforter at them. Then, slowly, I would stretch, first this leg then that. I'd never been able to schedule such a slow re-entry into the cosmos. It is the only way to do it. No sweaty pillows, no thumping or grunting next to it. No vocal intrusions into the rested peace of my mind. What sheer relief, not having to respond to another's remark, not having to mediate between warring family factions, not having to massage bruised egos, just being and with no explanations. Free to find me. Do I sound like a recluse? I think not. Private space is so very dear and so easily lost; one must guard it.

By letting go of everything, I found myself "moving in grace" where all things fit, flowed and interconnected but in the quietest of ways.

From my bedroom window, I watched the east sun play in the highest branches of the green cottonwood trees. Then it would slide down the limbs of the apricot and pear trees. A soft breeze, flirting with the curtains, reached my face with its sweet morning hello. I heard myself whispering, "Thank you, thank you."

The guest house patio was situated between a huge pine and a tall, fat cottonwood and that's where I hung my Pawley Island hammock. When I came home late at night but still jazzed up from working, the hammock would creak as I fell into it through the soft summer air. I could look up through the alley of dark left between the two trees and see stars and stars and more stars. My bare toes gently kicked against the cool patio stones to keep the soft creaking going. Faint sounds from the plaza; a dog howl, maybe voices a compound away. The air smelled of roses. A childish smile spread across my face, so great was my inner peace. Alone, doing as I pleased, just feeling, finding me on Delgado Street.

Kay Gibbs:

"First and always, I am creative woman. I polish my many facets with diversified energies; however, now I find I am free to stroke the ones I appreciate and often neglect the facets others would select for me."

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

By Marjorie Calow

Some people celebrate silver weddings and the like. This year I, on the other hand, am celebrating my tenth anniversary of single blessedness. (I wish it was my tenth anniversary of celibacy, but the desirability of that way of life didn't dawn on me until a long time after I realised that I like living alone.) One of the many pleasant features of living alone is that one makes one's own decisions about finances, furnishing one's home and so on. During the last few months I've been teaching a "Women and Assertiveness" course. As part of the course we did some exercises in life planning in which I, of course, participated (I never ask students to do an exercise that I am not prepared to do myself). We formulated our seven-year plans and : CLICK — I suddenly knew what my tenth anniversary present was going to be. I had always vaguely intended to play the piano again when I retire in seven years' time. But I suddenly realised that I would never be able to buy a piano once I was living on a pension, whereas I could (just about!) pay off a bank loan while I was working. No sooner said than done! I arranged a loan (oh, the *bliss* of not having hassles of the whatever-do-you-want-to-spend-money-on-that-for type) and ordered the piano (oh, the *bliss* of being able to choose the model and the variety of wood *myself*). When it was delivered I had a celebratory glass of sherry (dry — and chilled to precisely the right temperature.) and said: "Happy anniversary, Marjorie."

Yes, of *course* I'm terribly selfish; that's why I like living alone. My home is my pride and joy and my refuge from the hostile world. It is tiny but it is cosy and it is furnished with all my treasures and my household goods (and my books — which indulge in spontaneous generation or something whenever my back is turned, but that's another story.). Just lately I've become much more observant concerning the homes of single women. All the ones I've been privileged to visit (and I'm now actively searching out celibate, single women as friends since they are *so* much more interesting as individuals than are partner-centered women) are lovely. The styles of decoration and furnishings vary enormously, but their homes

are always snug and neat. By that I *don't* mean that they look as if they've just been arranged by an interior decorator (god forbid!). I mean that they are arranged for the greatest comfort of the occupant and there are always neat piles of whatever is necessary for the joyful use of time by the owner (books, records, jig-saw puzzles, bits of embroidery and so on). There *may* be a bit of fluffy dust around (there certainly *is* in my home) but all the yukky traces of families in general and men in particular are absent. There is no ring of scum round the bath or washbasin, there are no heaps of grotty towels lying around and there are no horrible rooms full of garish posters and scruffy trainers Okay, I'm a Born Spinster — and like to visit Born Spinsters (who do occasionally co-habit with each other, which is pleasant). The joy is in the fact that I've at long last realised that I've been a Born Spinster all the time. Born Spinsters used to get away with it by being Maiden Aunts (and I suspect that Maiden Aunts were often a lot happier than they were supposed to be). For my generation being a Maiden Aunt was not really an option. It's *lovely* to have reached an age when I can accept my true self, "come out" as a Born Again Spinster and adopt an appropriate lifestyle. I may have left it late, but better late than never. Meanwhile, roll on the next anniversary. I wonder what the gift-wrapped present will be? One thing is certain: it will be *exactly* what I've always wanted.

Marjorie Calow resides in Britain. She is a regular contributor to The Celibate Woman Journal.

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LITTLE THINGS

What's so great about that little thing?
It wobbles and flops
And when it doesn't
It goes into one of the only
Known cavities in the female body
That has no feeling whatsoever.

It looks even more absurd
When it is swollen up than when limp
At which time it points more or less
Left, or right.
Quite
Lacking in direction unless guided.
Really!
What's so great about that?
Or two hundred pounds of meat
In a manner of speaking
Heaving around, briefly, thank God
On top of a woman who assumes the most
awkward position
Ever devised by man. (I use the word
advisedly.)
Other positions being no better
And in some instances even more boring.
What's so great about that little thing. . .
Keep it!
I enjoy *me*
Without all that nonsense.

Louise 1985

Louise:

"I'm an artist. Avante Garde. I make marvellous ART BOOKS for poets who want them, each one a museum piece (i.e. ONE only) and each one different from the last generally using ONE poem in some unique form. I also make what are known as HERITAGE BOOKS, but these include original paintings as well as a collection of the poets' poems. I adore CELIBATE WOMAN and wish the whole subject would hurry up and come out of the closet so to speak."

THAT DAMNABLE QUESTION OF SEXUALITY

By Delin Graves

I have always thought of myself as an immortal soul first, a human being second, and a woman last. It's so much more worthwhile to emphasize what we have in common with others, than to stress our differences. Although, intellectually, this mode of thought has always made sense to me, it took me a couple of decades, and a few schizoid episodes, to really internalize it. I had never been confident of, comfortable with or accepting of my own sexuality. "Femininity" and "womanliness" are qualities I have difficulty ascribing to myself. I'm sure those statements will provide a good guffaw and much disbelief to many of my old friends who knew me to be an active and desirable participant of the sexual revolution in the sixties. However, I have long felt that my *real* self had no sexuality — was beyond that distinction which only manifests itself on a physical plane.

At sixteen, I found it difficult to ignore that which seemed so important to my peers. Attractiveness was a basis for acceptance, and sexuality a tool for communication. In order to defy what my adolescent body was making abundantly evident, I wore Alice-In-Wonderland clothes and maintained a true air of innocence, which was still, somehow, attractive to my cohorts. I did not want to grow up. I longed for the comfortable asexuality of childhood. I even went so far as to work up comic routines in which I assumed the role of a four-year-old. This not only served the purpose of entertainment, but also made the more covert statement that Peter Pan was alive and well within me. Even my peers eventually realized that I was going off the deep end and tried to help. They all seemed to take on adulthood so well.

By my first year in college, I had reverted to the opposite extreme. What the hell was I so afraid of? I plunged headlong into that which I most feared, as has generally been my habit. I became a shocking and crude cross between Mae West and Janis Joplin, which had a tendency to frighten some people and amuse others. I found that I could have my choice of men, as friends or lovers. But, in my quiet moments, when I could drop the facade, the gnawing knowledge that this was

all so superficial, preyed on my psyche. I knew that there was a plane on which I existed, somewhere beyond my body and my thoughts, beyond time and space.

In my early twenties, I married a man who seemed, intellectually at least, to understand that there was such a plane of existence. But he seemed to also have some obsession to compete with my sexual history. In addition, he insisted upon choosing my wardrobe in order to "showcase" me wherever we went. This sometimes meant trying on a dozen outfits and accessories until he was satisfied and I felt like a mannequin.

Although we had not agreed to a monogamous lifestyle, he was a compulsive skirt chaser. His activities returned me to that banal level of insecurity about my sexuality. It shouldn't have, as it really had very little to do with me. But I began falling apart, becoming literally fragmented. I was very schizoid and needed to discuss it with him. He was, however, as frightened by my behavior as I was and told me to refrain from mentioning it to him. I was told to simply solve the problem myself.

For about a month or two, I locked myself in my room and wrote. If I had to have any social interaction at all, including with my husband, I'd put myself on "automatic pilot," whereupon all the correct social mannerisms would appear, but with a flat affect. My demeanor was that of a robot. A volcanic hysteria boiled beneath the surface and most of my energy was applied to controlling it.

My writing was a stream-of-consciousness to the extent that I would be reading what I wrote as the pen scribbled it, with no forethought. It was like looking over someone else's shoulder. The results consisted, primarily, of conversations so that my work took the form of a script. There were two entities: "Me" and "The Committee." The former was my personality, the latter was my solid, inner core (my soul). "Me" was drained of any emotion, although her intellect was still intact. Simply wanting to give up and die, she told the committee to replace her with another, stronger personality. The Committee empathetically conveyed that they had to try to rehabilitate her first, because a change of personality would be very abrupt and, although the entire self might be fine afterward, to all observers it would appear that the new personality was vastly different from the original one. They'd label me "crazy."

Some of these conversations took place on paper. The others were either mental or spoken aloud. I've never been

sure whether or not I was vocalizing the "peace talks."

When I started emerging from this abysmal torment, I took a job as a Playboy Bunny, in an effort to find my place as a female. That lasted precisely two months. Being ogled and pawed was immensely dissatisfying and did nothing to affirm my "womanliness." In addition, the pain inflicted by the shoes and corset became unbearable.

The end result was a decision to forego "femininity," to just be myself and quit hassling over this petty, superficial problem of sexuality. Since my appearance as a sexual object and his own sexuality were of utmost importance to my husband, I divorced him.

What followed, ironically enough (and as is common with many divorcees), was a series of affairs with a variety of men. I had decided that I never wanted to have another intimate relationship again. This behavior was of a vengeful nature. I felt that I was abusing these men to the extent that I would ignore the essence of their beings (their souls) and attend only to their superficial aspects (their bodies). Of course, this logic is fallacious in that many men (as well as others) only care about bodily functions and are not at all hurt that you don't care who they really are.

I plunged into therapy with a fantastic woman who not only induced me to relax, but nudged me into corners of my mind that I never knew existed. I even discovered a past life in which I'd been the madame of a brothel in New Orleans, at the turn of the century. The madame had been quite comfortable with her sexuality. Perhaps that's why her soul returned in the form of my body: she probably needed to learn there was more to life.

This speculation led to the next stage of my therapy: developing a life philosophy. What I finally arrived at (and I smiled appreciatively upon reading the same concept, years later, in Shirley MacLaine's book, *Out On a Limb*) was a feeling of being part of a timeless continuum. If our souls are made of energy and, according to the laws of physics, energy never dies, then it must be passed from being to being through the ages, for eternity. And, it apparently has memory which can be transmitted to whichever new brain is presently occupied by this timeless, nomadic soul. This is evidenced by those who remember previous lives.

The point is that this concept is totally asexual and the only reason that sexuality comes into play is that our physical manifestations are the most obvious ones. We cannot see our

souls, thoughts or ideas, so we tend to become entrenched in the concrete and intrigued with our differences on that level. I am speaking less of the sex act than of the rites and attitudes surrounding it.

The androgynous movement that has recently come about may not be a mere fad, but the result of human evolution to an augmented spiritual state where our connectedness as beings (our collective unconscious) is of utmost importance. The heart-pounding produced by orgasm, "love at first sight" or a tight body is far more fleeting and less satisfying than the serenity of looking into someone's eyes and recognizing something so familiar that you feel you've known that person forever. It's called finding a soul-mate.

To observe me in my present role as a "dutiful" wife and mother, swamped by the demands of husband and toddlers, it might be difficult to believe that I ascribe to this metaphysical philosophy. One day I will live it. For now, I exist in this secret world, within myself because when you know a secret that no one else will believe, you keep it to yourself or lose your credibility.

End of think piece. Deactivate brain. Automatic pilot: on. Switch to "Mommy" mode.

Delin Graves:

"I'm primarily a writer of fiction, currently living in Southern California. Although most of my stories are about sexual relationships, they're written with more than a touch of cynicism. I'm currently working on a novel about a young woman who, after many affairs, grows to discover that sexuality has not only rendered these relationships superficial, but has also detracted from her creative energy. I'm hoping that Playboy will jump at the chance to publish it in installments. I'm also an avid dreamer."

LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE CELIBATES

By Alta Cretton

I applaud the brave and courageous celibate people who are "coming out of the closet," as it were, these days, and admitting they are celibate. Every other group is making their debut, so why not? It would seem the biggest sin of all according to this sophisticated society is to be living a celibate life. We are considered the queerest of the queer.

The truth is that many people aren't meant to marry at all. Consider the divorce rate, and the unhappily married. People put such pressure on those who aren't married to do so, that misfits are marrying other misfits in a hurry without giving a thought to suitability, like common interests, values, goals, etcetera. Consider the cliché, "People wouldn't get divorced for such trivial reasons, if they wouldn't marry for such trivial reasons." Maybe a lot of the pressure to marry comes from people who are unhappily married — you know, the old saying "Misery loves company." A lot of women are like sheep. They do whatever everyone else is doing whether or not it's right for them. They believe one must *never* be "relegated" (the popular belief) to a so called "old maid" status. A woman of a certain chronological age and unmarried is considered inferior in some way. There *must* be something wrong with her. Regardless of how beautiful she is, how personable, talented, smart, etcetera, if she isn't married, she is analyzed, so that her critics can find some imperfection. Her married sister can be homely, even ugly, have no personality, talent, or any redeeming qualities, but if she has a man, she has it made according to society, and she is normal. They never seem to realize that many women are too particular to marry some of the "nerds" many of her sisters have married. Why does the world think it a worthwhile achievement to "bag" a husband, regardless of whether he's a bum, an alcoholic, or short on grey matter? Men aren't superior to women. There is a vast supply of stupid, ugly, untalented men, and there are those kinds in the female sex also. There are handsome, intelligent, talented, personable men as well as those of the female gender. Scores of women have been brain washed into believing any man is better than no man. No wonder there are

so many battered wives and abused children. Women are also influenced from the time they are very young, and all throughout their lives thereafter, by the fairy tale books of fiction they read, and the "Soap Opera" romances on television, which depict marriage as a heaven on earth. Then, when they marry and live in close proximity with a man, they both discover each other's "pimples," quirks, halitosis, and other faults, and realize their previous fantasies will never come true, not with this person, anyway, so they divorce, and seek someone else who will satisfy their fantasy life. But this never materializes for either of them.

There are a lot of people who are not able to live the celibate life. Should they choose to marry, they should be careful in choosing a spouse, unless they are equipped physically, mentally, and emotionally to endure the hassle and shock of divorce; they should never marry in haste. There would be a lot less divorces and broken homes if people would know each other well and use their heads as well as their hearts in choosing a mate. A condition which is going to affect the rest of your lives, and perhaps children, should certainly be deserving of adequate thought and contemplation.

Let's hope progress is being made in understanding the celibate, as is the case with other lifestyles. Hopefully people will abolish their ignorant prejudices, and outmoded ideas concerning celibates. They are human beings too. Some are ugly, some attractive, etcetera, the same as the rest of the human race. There might be a difference in that they are not as erotically inclined as others, which enables them to live this way. Each to his own, but hopefully more and more celibates will emerge from their confining, self-imposed cocoons into the light and have the courage to continue living this way, if that be their pleasure and satisfaction, just as productively, and creatively, in a different, but no less worthy way, as their married sisters in *their* productive ways of creating little human beings and developing their other creative talents. Don't be ashamed of being a celibate, and don't be ashamed to "come out of the closet" letting it be known. You don't have to go out on the street and shout it out to the world, but don't deny it, if and when the subject is broached to you. Let's all respect each other, and no more "put downs" for the celibate, please!

Alta Cretton:

"I've had poems published in the Panorama section of the

Gary Post Tribune. *My former employer published one of my poems on the cover of the brochure he used to publish, and Pen magazine in Denver, Colorado published one of my poems. I write frequently in the "Voice of the People" in the Gary Post Tribune.*

DIALOG

Ellery: It's worth emphasizing, isn't it, that society has not always been male-dominated, that before it became patrilineal/patriarchal it was matrilineal and relatively peaceful, with little fighting except for occasional conflict over hunting and gathering grounds.

Georgia: Yes, it's generally understood, isn't it, that macho male horny stud sexism didn't come into being until after men learned what their sperm has to do with women getting pregnant? After that, men began treating women as soil in which to plant their seed.

Ellery: Men could have come to that conclusion by observing that farm female animals have to be "serviced" by a male to become pregnant.

Georgia: Anyway, women have been trying to make the best of a bad situation ever since. Used as sex objects and household servants they've been treated as 2nd class citizens. Except for a rare few strong women who refused to submit to such domination and humiliation.

Ellery: And except for individual men who developed enough conscienceness to treat such women with real respect.

Georgia: How do you feel about the idea that Hiroshima-Nagasaki and the finding of the long hidden Gnostic and Esene libraries so soon after provided women with a new opportunity to make their presence felt in new constructive ways.

Ellery: Like by calling men to task as the inventors of murderous militarism, greedy commercialism and hypocritical superstitious religion?

Georgia: Not just to be negative like that, but to come forward with proposals for discussion of conscientious alternatives, including that of loving conscienceness relationships between men and women, featuring intimate touching and loving without having sex. This as a way to sublimate sexual energy and use it for developing the mutual aid alternatives to all three of the present male-dominated abominations mentioned above.

Excerpt from "A Dialog of Georgia Stone and Ellery Foster," pp. 4 & 5 of their "Conscienceness Religion Vs. Superstitious, and related writings by Georgia Stone and Ellery Foster," Box 841, Winona, MN 55987.

FUNCTIONAL CELIBACY

By Anne

This is a story about functional celibacy, not ideological celibacy. I am a lesbian, 28, and I have been celibate since March 3, 1981. This is how and why.

In 1980, I was an active member of the lesbian community in Houston. I was highly promiscuous, constantly involved with bar pickups, one-night stands, and brief affairs. My life lacked meaning and purpose beyond questions about who my next lover would be.

On September 1980, a lesbian friend who worked with a certain agency asked me if I would consider allowing a run-away to stay with me for a few days. I wasn't in the habit of having a housemate, but since there was no other place for her, I decided to take her in. Mindy's situation was complicated and pathetic. She was 12 and 3 months pregnant. Her father raped her, impregnating her from that single assault, after which she ran away from Louisiana to Houston. Through a series of other events unimportant to this account, she ended up living with me.

Unbelievable as it sounds, it was love at first sight. Our sexual relationship began about a month after she came to live with me, continuing almost daily until she went into labor on March 3, 1981. Following the birth of "our daughter," we abstained from genital sexuality. Initially it was related to her post-delivery situation, but afterward it was a mutual decision.

There were several concerns in our choice of celibacy. First and foremost, we were in love, desiring our relationship to continue without any appearance of impropriety. Even though we were deeply in love, we knew that continuing a sexual relationship would not be accepted by lesbian friends or by straights. Giving up the sexual relationship was a price both of us were willing to pay to continue our relationship.

Also, we wanted to develop a "cover," in a new town, where no one would know the circumstances surrounding the baby. We have since moved from Texas.

Our lifestyle is beyond question. We have separate bedrooms. We express love and affection, but without genital love.

My transition to celibacy has been amazingly easy. Once every 2 or 3 months I will awake following a sexual dream, experiencing an involuntary orgasm. Otherwise I have no genital expression. Mindy has had more difficulty. Our physical contact — kissing, embracing — highly arouses her. From time to time she loses control. On those occasions, I will hold her in my arms while she masturbates to orgasm.

Overall, we have a happy, satisfying life as celibates. Of course we are not happy about having to keep our love a secret. Celibacy has, however, made it possible for our love to endure.

I have a feeling Mindy will want to resume genital sexuality with me when she turns 18. Time will only tell where our love will be in 2 years. Regardless, it will be love!

Anne:

"I am a life-long lesbian, and a reformed sex addict. My life is complete with Mindy, my lover, and our daughter. Aside from my job, all my energies are focused on our home life, and on the recovery by Mindy from the rape! She is a survivor! We are thankful that celibacy has provided the way for our love to grow and develop. We dream of growing old together."

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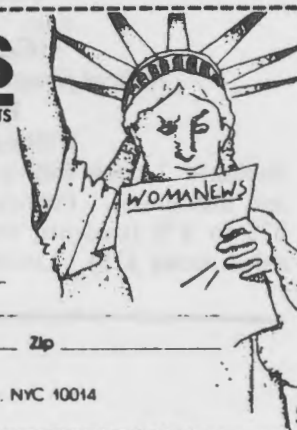
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TAKE BACK THE NIGHT

She has my voice,
My face.
We are twins.
But hers is etched
With pain,
I hold her tight,
As she tells me over and over
Of the night
He came to destroy her dreams.
The night of fears.
I know I must take her out of herself,
She must learn again
It is her right to walk in freedom
And that is why I light this candle,
Carry it aloft,
March with other sisters,
Singing.
Time we were safe to walk
The streets of life
Without paying for our freedom, our truth.

Kendra Usack

CASSANDRA

radical feminist nurses newsjournal

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THE UNIVERSAL WEAVER III

The threads fly around her,
Spun on the webs
Of a hundred shutters,
She catches one, then another
And harnesses them to her loom,
Its taughtness
The beginning struggle
For a new soul,
Created from the tension,
Toned by the struggles of life.

Kendra Usack

WOMAN-WARRIOR TO COME

Ancient songs
And spells, the moon's fullness
In a surge of gladness,
As she weaves the services of the sword—
A weapon for the woman warrior to come,
Who will make dreams that will never die
And recreate the land,
Giving it back the fertility of truth.

Kendra Usack

WOMEN'S CHANGE

The women pour their life stories
Into old, stained coffee cups,
Each verb gripped with tired need,
Until the cups splinter
And from the splinters
They rebuild
A bird impaled on thorns
To sing its heart's truth
As the sun
Melts away
Becoming part of the night.
They can no longer live in halves
They must be ready
To face themselves,
To be the night of dreams.
From the journey,
None will return unchanged.

Kendra Usack

Kendra Usack:

"As long as I can remember, I've wanted to be either a writer or an archaeologist. The writer won. I work as a temporary in the Northern Virginia area, using the money I earn to feed my writing habit. I am also about to launch my own small newsletter based on the Dr. Who series. Contributions welcome. As you can tell, I am also a rabid science fiction fan. When I don't write and read poetry, I am writing and reading science fiction. At present, I am on the second draft of a feminist science fiction novel. I may actually finish a novel before I am thirty! (This is the first one I've managed to get past the first draft stage.)

I grew up in an all woman family (except for my Dad and various pets), so feminism was also an early part of my lifestyle. I like being a woman!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

9/7/85

Dear Journal:

I have been celibate for over 30 years (I am 71) and never hoped to see something like you appear! You give me great heart for our species, which up to now hasn't seemed to be doing too well in these matters.

Very much interested in your effort & would like to subscribe, cheque encl. for \$8.00. . . . Interesting that *all* mammalian fetus' are initially female, but it doesn't seem to tell the biologists anything! Am a retired Industrial Engineer & ex-Journalist!

Sincerely,
Blanche M. Pinkerton
Kirkland, AZ

4/11/85

dear ms. allen:

i can't tell you how affirmed i have felt from reading the *celibate woman journal*. i have been celibate for most of my life, and i have talked to womyn about it while they look at me like i am crazy, making excuses for being "screwed up" etc etc. but to finally see my thoughts in other womyn's minds and on paper is a fine nurturing feeling. i even have my therapist reading it.

i am writing to you to not only thank you and the others that do all the hard work to put this journal out — but — also to ask you to please enlighten me a little about the artemis institute. i would love love love to know more. if you don't have the time can you send me an address or a phone number i can call. do you know if they have correspondence courses. what is this amazing institution all about.

for years i have respected and watched for anything that dana densmore has written.

i appreciate your help in this matter and hope one day to contribute to this fine journal.

p.s. — do you have any back issues left that i can buy?

respectfully,
arlene arp
seattle, wa

Dear Martha, (hope you don't mind first name terms)

. . . If you have ever visited Amsterdam you may or may not have realized that there is a large population of young women who thru obvious reasons are independent of the much smaller male populous thus the term "celibate women" is an everyday term, so much so that it isn't even mentioned in passing. This acceptance of celibacy for long periods of time, tends to increase the amount of genuine relationships one can achieve, not only with the female sex, but also the male gender. These relationships/friendships tend as such to blossom under these celibate conditions, to such a degree that inevitably a bond of love is formed between the two partners concerned, which is in some cases followed eventually by sexual relationships of varying degrees. This form of relationship is far more satisfying for both partners concerned, as friendship is the one enduring factor in their lives, surmounting all the fickle and petty squabbles one often finds elsewhere. So as both partners in a relationship are first & foremost friends be it male/female, female/female, male/male) a deep enduring friendship blossoms.

. . . Sorry about the blathering on but I felt that I had to write to you to express my interest in the subject of celibacy.

Yours Sincerely,
Annie Riddock
Amsterdam, Netherlands

August 26/85

Dear Ms. Allen,

I'm sure you don't remember me, but I certainly remember you. You were the editor who took the time to write me back a nice personalized note (in reply to my form letter) just about the time I was starting to wonder if my inquiries were reaching other human beings out there in the publishing wilderness. Or is that supposed to be the publishing jungle? I forget.

Being so heartened by your kindness, I immediately set about giving your journal my most careful consideration. Of course, that was not necessary. I was so pleased — and relieved! — to find other women like myself, feeling as I do. I knew I would subscribe. I've enclosed \$8 for a subscription. If you require more for postage costs to Canada, please let me

know.

One day I hope I may contribute to *Celibate Woman*, but I'm not sure I'm ready yet. I've previously published five books in a local college series . . . but lately I've been leaning towards more personal work. Perhaps reading the work of other women like myself will give me encouragement. I want to thank you for the encouragement you've already given. I look forward to my first issue of the *Celibate Woman Journal*.

Thanks again!

Sincerely,
R.J. Garside
Vancouver, B.C.
Canada

October 5, 1985

Dear Martha,

Just a note to say I found your magazine a joy and just what I needed. Enclosed is a check for \$20.00. . . .

[And the next month another letter and enclosure.]

Nov. 9, 1985

Dear Martha,

I have been meaning to send you this clipping for some time now. It was in the Oct. 20, 1985 *Pottstown Mercury*, the newspaper I bought when the *Philadelphia Inquirer* was on strike. I think you'll be pleased at what I've underlined. Maybe people are beginning to get some sense.

"Can a woman be happy without marriage? Seventy-two percent of the female respondents said yes. Only 57 percent of the women believed men could be happy without marriage.

"Sixty-percent of the men believed both men and women could be happy without marriage."

Yours,
Miriam Greenwald
Merion Station, PA



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