

The

HERLAND VOICE

March, 1996

SPOTLIGHT ON WOMEN

in Celebration of Women's History Month

by Helen Stiefmiller

Ever since I started working at the Oklahoma Territorial Museum in Guthrie I have been exposed to many aspects of Oklahoma's history that are not given their due in the text books. Not surprising, one is women's history. There are many outstanding and interesting women who have added to the colorful tapestry of what makes Oklahoma a wonderful state. Women like Kate Barnard, Carrie Nation, Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher, Maria Tallchief, Clara Luper, and Wilma Mankiller have all made their marks. In honor of Women's History Month I've decided to share the story of a not well known woman who didn't necessarily do good deeds, but nonetheless, was an example of independence and nonconformity in an era when these traits were sacrilege.

One of the most colorful and interesting outlaws of Oklahoma Territory was a woman known as Tom King. Tom King was born Flora Quick in 1875, the youngest and favorite daughter of a wealthy Missouri farmer. Full of nerve and energy she assisted her father in herding cattle and other ranch duties. When she turned 14 years old she was sent to Holden College to learn to play the organ and practice the other art of fine young ladies. She must have hated it because in a few weeks she returned home to "resume her outdoor mode of living".

A year later her father died leaving her and her siblings a substantial inheritance of land and money. Her siblings sent her to Seldania to go to school where she remained only one semester. When she returned she met and married Ora Mundis "a dissolute character whose principal object was to get her estate". The couple was seen regularly drinking in the saloons having a good old time. Out of the blue, Flora sold the land she inherited and moved to Oklahoma Territory arriving in Guthrie in November 1892 where she and Ora led "a checkered life" of drinking and gambling.

Ora abandoned Flora when her money ran out. She didn't dwell on her misfortune. She became friends with the former mistress of a gambler named Jessie Whitewings. Jessie taught Flora the tricks of the trade and in a short time Flora had her own gambling business on the corner of Fourth and Grant where she traded for horses and money. No scandal was associated with her until she brought charges of assault with intent to rape against a Doc Jordan. Jordan didn't deny the charges and skipped town. After that no man would go into her business.

Flora known as a flashy dresser threw away her stunning

Shape The Future

Your ideas and desires for the future of Herland Sister Resources are important to us! The Herland Board would like to invite everyone to come share their ideas for the future direction of Herland on the last Saturday of this month, March 30. We will meet at Herland from 2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

We will be looking at how Herland serves the community, what we are doing right, and what we could do to improve or services we could add. All current and past board members, volunteers, and anyone just interested in Herland can come and enjoy lively discussion, fellowship of sisters, refreshments, and intellectual stimulation.

Be there, and let your "Voice" be heard!



Herland
Coffeehouse

7:00 p.m.

Come join us Saturday evening, March 30 at Herland for
an evening with

Marca Cassity.

costumes and donned cowboy garb, and instead of trading horses, began stealing them. She now traveled under the name of Tom King. Apparently, she was extremely successful in this endeavor because she allegedly took horses from the field, pasture, city streets, anywhere, reselling them across Logan, Canadian, and Oklahoma Counties. She also participated in a train robbery.

She was arrested a number of times and used her charms to escape from jails in Guthrie, Oklahoma City, and El Reno. After a final incarceration in El Reno, Tom was released on bail, due to her obvious pregnancy. She jumped bail and left Oklahoma for good. No one knows what became of her or her child.

Years later, Heck Thomas, a retired U.S. Marshall, described to a reporter what was supposed to have been Flora's end: A young man killed during a holdup near Tombstone, Arizona, proved upon examination to be a woman. Measurements and body scars were said to match those of Tom King.

Family Matters

by John D'Emilio, Director
The Policy Institute of NGLTF

What is a family? According to opinion polls, a majority of Americans understand family as a group of people who love one another and take care of each other in good times and bad.

What is a family? In the hands of the radical Christian right, it has become a symbol and a weapon. A symbol of an imagined past when everything was just fine. A weapon that divides people into categories of good or bad, moral or immoral, productive citizen or irresponsible parasite. The allegedly "pro-family" rhetoric of the radical right is deeply homophobic and antifeminist, and exploits historically powerful racist stereotypes.

What is family? For lesbians and gay men, family has become the frontier issue in our struggle for freedom, justice, and respect. Everywhere we look, family issues are surfacing--in the courts, in state legislatures, in workplaces, in the schools, in communities of faith, in the activities of our community centers and other organizations. Sometimes, picking up a copy of a gay newspaper, nothing but family issues of one sort or another seem to fill its pages.

It wasn't always so. When I was first coming out in the late sixties, as a college student influenced by the hippie counterculture and the first wave of radical feminist theory, "family" was something I could do without. It seemed that my only choices were to have a family, which meant my family of origin, or to be gay, which meant exile and escape from the constrictions of a heterosexist institution.

So why does family seem so important to us in the 1990's? Is the concern for family simply a defensive, reactive move on our part, a knee-jerk response to the "traditional family values" rhetoric of the Radical Christian Right? Or does the rise of family issues tell us something about how we have changed and what we want?

I think it's the latter. There are good reasons growing out of the history of our movement and communities that have pushed family issues to the front burner.

One has to do with the growing diversity of the public face of our movement and our community organizations. Lesbians, for instance, have often taken the lead in campaigns involving custody, adoption, and our right to be parents. Lesbians and gays of color have spoken and written passionately of the importance of strong, extended family ties for the survival of their home communities in the face of racism, and of their unwillingness to have to choose between family ties or their sexual identity. As gays and lesbians in smaller communities come out of the closet and organize for change, family is something just around the corner, not something to escape from.

Family issues challenge homophobia in new and important ways. One of the most destructive and persistent stereotypes used to perpetuate hatred against us and keep us isolated and separate is the claim that we are a danger to children. The gay man who molests children, or the lesbian teacher who corrupts her students, have been common cultural myths. As more and more parents come out of the closet and assert their

right to keep their children, as more and more of us choose to have children even after coming out, we force the issue of queers and children in proactive ways.

Parents are becoming front-line activists in institutions that reach into the lives of most Americans. Take the public schools, for instance. As the children of openly gay or lesbian parents make their way through the public schools, these parents have to confront the insidious effects of homophobia in compelling ways. Will the schools, through their curriculum, be teaching these children to hate their parents? Will these children be the targets of ridicule, ostracism, and harassment? What must parents do to protect the integrity of their family relationships and to keep their children from harm? The actions they take--whether at parent-teacher conferences, at PTA meetings, or in one-on-one conversations with the parents of their children's friends, is the stuff of permanent grassroots social change.

Family issues matter. Whether it be the public rituals we create to celebrate our committed relationships or our decisions to have children in our lives, the articulation of a lesbian and gay "family politics" has the power to move our freedom struggle forward.

March is
**Women's History
Month**

Celebrate your own history by
visiting Herland during regular
business hours and sharing your
family or personal history in
writing.

Herland is also offering a
DISPLAY
to celebrate this special month.

Come on by!

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The Voice is offered as an open forum for community discourse. Articles reflect the opinions of the author and not necessarily those of Herland Sister Resources. Unsolicited articles and letters to the editor are welcomed and must be signed by the writer with full name and address. Upon request, letters or articles may be printed under a pseudonym or anonymously. *The Voice* is printed on recycled paper.

Herland Sister Resources

March 1996

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p><i>HSR Spring Retreat May 17-19</i> <i>Watch for more information in the April Voice</i></p>						<p>7 P.M. HSR Coffeeshouse with Donna D.</p>
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	<p>8:30 PM Donna, Wende & Wandy at Medina's on the Paseo</p>
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
<i>St. Patrick's</i>			<i>Spring begins</i>		<p>Newsletter submissions and calendar items due</p>	
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	<p>2-5 P.M. Shape Herland's Future 7 P.M HSR Coffeeshouse with Marca Cassity</p>
						30

B U L L E T I N B O A R D

COUNSELING FOR LESBIANS - available Wednesday evenings. For more information contact Jo L. Soske M.E.D./M.H.R./C.A.D.C./L.P.C. at 321-0134 for an appointment.

HEAL YOUR LIFE - a support group for HIV positive and catastrophic illness will meet every Thursday evening from 7 to 9 p.m. at Unity Church of Practical Christianity, 5603 N.W. 41st in OKC starting March 7. This group will offer alternative healing methods for healing Body, Mind and Spirit. Please phone 789-2424 for more information.

SCHOLARSHIP FOR CHILDREN OF LESBIAN AND GAY PARENTS - For the third year, the Gay and Lesbian Parents Coalition International (GLPCI) and Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere (COLAGE) will be awarding scholarship money to further the education of deserving children of lesbian or gay parents. In 1996, the total scholarship pool will total at least \$1,000. Formerly known as the GLPCI-COLAGE Scholarship Fund, the Fund was recently renamed as the "Lee Dubin Memorial Scholarship Fund" in loving memory of a longtime member and former Treasurer of GLPCI, who died suddenly in 1995. Applicants must have at least one lesbian, gay or bisexual parent and be enrolled as a full-time student in an accredited post-secondary institution. The scholarship recipients will be announced on July 6th, 1996 at GLPCI's 17th Annual Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Applications for the 1996 Lee Dubin Memorial Scholarship are available now by writing to GLPCI at P.O. Box 50360, Washington, DC 20091; or fax (201) 783-6204. The deadline for applications is May 15, 1996.

ASTRAEA LESBIAN WRITERS FUND ACCEPTING SUBMISSIONS FOR 1996 AWARDS - The Astraea National Lesbian Action Foundation today announced the submission deadline for its 1996 Lesbian Writers Fund. Now in its sixth year, the Lesbian Writers Fund will be making awards of \$10,000 each to emerging lesbian writers of fiction and poetry. The prizes will be awarded in June of this year. "Astraea is the only foundation anywhere in the world that commits substantial grant monies to support lesbian writers," according to Astraea program director, Ivy Young. "The Writers Fund has made it possible for past winners to have that space where creation is possible. And we are happy to be able to continue the program," Young said. The deadline for applications is Friday, March 8, 1996. Interested writers should write or call the Astraea Foundation for guidelines and an application form at The Astraea National Lesbian Action Foundation, Attn: Lesbian Writers Fund, 116 East 16th Street, New York, NY 10003; or call 212-529-8021. The Lesbian Writers Fund was made possible by a generous founding grant from lesbian philanthropist Joan Drury. A committed lesbian feminist writer, Joan sought to help provide other lesbian writers with "a room of their own," in which they can nurture their work. Astraea also awards the Sappho Award of Distinction to an already established lesbian writer. The Sappho grantee is awarded \$5,000. Previous Sappho Award winners are Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldua, Adrienne Rich, Joan Nestle, and the 1995 winner, Chrystos. There is no application process for this award. For more information on Astraea, the Lesbian Writers Fund, and other grant programs at Astraea, visit our Web page at <http://www.imageinc.com/astraea/>.

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