

Herland

VOICE

October, 1999

MARY'S STORY

By Joanna Campbell-Fife

Advocate for Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Programs

(Ed. Note -- October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. This article is the first in a series of three on the issue of domestic violence and the battered women's shelters and crisis services available in Oklahoma. Mary's story is typical of the of battered women who find safety in these shelters.)

Mary B. is a survivor of domestic violence. She talks about how her life was before she left her abusive partner. "When we met, Chris was so attentive, and jealous, too. I always thought that jealousy meant they loved you a lot. After we got together, the jealousy was so bad, it was like living in a prison cell--no freedom at all.

"When it was time for Chris to come home in the evening, my stomach would knot up, I would get nervous, anxious, and grouchy with the children. I would put a little vodka in a glass, and sip it while I made dinner. I was so tense, I thought it would help. I never knew what Chris's mood would be. The children would disappear into another room, disappearing like wild animals when a storm is coming.

"I'd try to make everything perfect, so it would be OK. That never worked. 'Perfect' changed every day. I was told over and over and over that everything was my fault. I believed it. First came the mean, hateful words, words children shouldn't hear about their mother. Then, if I was lucky, I got to clean food from the floor and walls, pick up broken dishes or glasses, and hope I was doing it 'right,' so the hitting wouldn't start again.

"I dreaded the accusing questions, the insults, the orders, the complaints, throwing things, the fists in the wall, the threats to lock me up in a mental hospital because I was so crazy. Then came the slaps, the kicks, the punches to my torso, the twisted arms. All was done to a litany about how bad I was and how this was all my fault and how it wouldn't have to happen if I would just do things right.

"Some days, I'd get so tense and jumpy, I'd say something to get it started and get it over with. When it happened, I'd try not to make much noise, so maybe the children wouldn't know how bad it was.

"Chris told me many times that I was an unfit mother, and that the children would be better off without me. I believed Chris could take them away from me. I no longer had any ego. It had been worn away relentlessly. It terrified me that someday, I might not be able to protect my children and that the anger might be turned on them.

"Chris always told me not to be friendly with people. I wasn't supposed to have friends. I wasn't even supposed to be nice to my parents and my brother and sister. (continued page 3)

OUTART '99

Oklahoma's Lesbian and Gay Arts Festival will be held October 8, 9, 10, at Windsor Hills theaters, NW 23rd and Meridian, and The Copa, Habana Inn, 2200 NW 39th Expressway. Tickets are now on sale at Jungle Reds, New Leaf Florist, Diversity Coffee Shop, and Collectibles Etc. Purchases are available out of town through Global Travel Network by calling 1-800-721-8866. Movies are \$8, plays or concert are \$10. A special package including tickets to the entire festival - a \$100 value - is available for \$82.

In honor of Gay and Lesbian History Month and National Coming Out Day, as well as OUTART 99, the Oklahoma City Art Museum, located on the state fairgrounds, will show the documentary "Coming Out Under Fire" every Sunday at 2:30 PM in October. The Sundance award-winning "Coming Out Under Fire" explores the history of Gays and Lesbians in the military since WWII in the light of today's "Don't Ask Don't Tell Don't Pursue" policy.

The film portion of the festival will be held at the Regal Windsor Hills Theaters at NW 23rd and Meridian with ten movies shown on two screens. All movies are recent releases and none have been shown in the state, said spokesperson Tony Francis. The movie titles are *Edge of Seventeen*, *Different for Girls*, *Bedrooms and Hallways*, *Out of Season*, *Hard*, *Razor Blade Smile*, *Like It Is*, *When Love Comes*, *Broadway Damage*, and *It's In the Water*. (continued page 2)

CELEBRATE DIVERSITY--STOP THE HATE

Oklahoma City will be one of scores of cities across the country participating in a "Stop the Hate" Rally and Vigil on Thursday, October 7, 1999. The rally will be held at 7:00 p.m., beginning at the Myriad Gardens Water Stage, and continuing with a candlelight procession to the Murrah Plaza Park for a closing speakout and vigil. The subtitle of the event is "a Vision of Healing, a Vision of Hope". It is cosponsored locally by the Interfaith Alliance of Oklahoma, the Say No to Hate Coalition of Central Oklahoma, and the Oklahoma Council on Violence Prevention. Dozens of local organizations and churches have signed on as endorsers, including Herland Sister Resources, Cimarron Alliance, Amnesty International, Church of the Open Arms, Mayflower Congregational Church, and the NAACP.

The rally will be a call for people of faith and conscience to act nonviolently as individuals for healing in our communities; to oppose hate violence directed at anyone; to speak out when anyone is attacked due to their race, religion, sexual orientation, nationality, gender or disability; and to raise a united voice for the loving spirit of inclusion and acceptance which is the human potential.

Transportation will be provided for those who cannot, or who choose not to walk to Murrah Plaza Park. □

ST. SYBIL'S ELEVEN REASONS NOT TO COME OUT ON OCTOBER 11 -

11. Living in fear of exposure is so darn much fun...
 10. ...as is the challenge of seeing how many ways you can refer to your lover without using a pronoun.
 9. You find fulfillment referring to the person whose body and soul you adore as "my roommate".
 8. You don't want to hear Uncle Bert crow, "Aha! I knew it all along"
 7. Your gay nieces and nephews don't need a gay role model - you got along fine without one!
 6. It would kill your grandmother.
 5. It's easier not to; you can pass as straight and have no hassles in life at all; so why muck it up?
 4. It might blow your really solid chance of being elected President of the U.S.
 3. It would "out" your spouse.
- And the two really-truly good reasons not to come out on October 11:
2. You've *been* out since Caesar was a pup; or...
 1. You're *not* gay!

Dear St. Sybil,

I just read your tongue-in-cheek list of reasons NOT to come out, and I have a bone or two to pick with you. First of all, # 6 is right - it *might* kill my grandmother, and why should I ruin the poor old lady's final years? Secondly, you left out the number one reason for not coming out - the possibility of losing one's job. This is a very valid concern for very many people; teachers, for instance, and of course those of us in the military. So I think you ought to back off the dubious humor a little bit and not go around making people feel bad because prudence doesn't let them do something they wish they could.

Yours,

A seriously disappointed fan

Dear Fan,

Excuse me, but where did this Prudence come from and why does she get to dictate what you can and cannot do??? OK, I'm sorry, just a little more of my suspect humor there. Seriously, you need to know: grandparents are made of sterner stuff than you realize, and they certainly don't want you to wait for them to die for you to go live your life - what a morbid concept. Trust me, no grandparent has ever died because a grandkid turned up lesbian, or married out of their race or religion, or spent the war in Canada, or voted Republican.

Your other point is better taken, and while from where I sit on the Grand Continuum it is clear that changing jobs or professions is a small price to pay for gaining a more fully integrated life, I am well aware that from where you sit it very often is not worth that. And for that reason, may I suggest that perhaps a teacher, tailor, soldier or sailor might want to skip coming out to their

The Voice is published by: Herland Sister Resources, Inc. 2312 N.W. 39th, Oklahoma City, OK 73112.

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supervisors or anyone else in a position to jeopardize their livelihood. Instead, come up with - and out to - someone you cherish and value: a grandparent (or a grandchild!), a childhood friend, a new friend, a sibling, a parent, a cousin. Bring them into the fullness of your life, and broaden the circle of those who you know love the full, true *you*. You'll be glad.

Peace & Love,

Sybil

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UPCOMING SHOWS

by Jill Garner

Mary Reynolds will be performing at the Blue Door with Ann Hills and Michael Smith on October 15th. Three very talented people in a great little place to hear music and unfortunately I'll probably be out of town. But if you're here, please go because Mary by herself is a lot of talent, but getting to hear Ann Hills and Michael Smith in the same night will be well worth your time and money. I've heard Ann Hills at the Blue Door before so I know she'll be good and I've read a lot of good things about Michael Smith. Don't miss this one and please support this great live music here in Oklahoma City. The Blue Door is one of the few places in OKC where you can go to hear some of the best talent in the country today. You can discover new music, and make your CD collection rich beyond belief.

Speaking of some of the best talent in the country today, Stacey Earle will be back at the Blue Door on October 23rd. I've been listening to her CD since her first visit here in OKC and I love this woman! Talent certainly runs in the family. Her brother Steve Earle is one of the most prolific songwriters ever, and he certainly will be remembered someday as one of the best. He encouraged Stacey to "sing like her own damn self" instead of trying to fit in the Nashville mold. I'm glad she did because she has a wonderfully unique sound. Her husband Mark Stuart accompanies her on guitar and does a wonderful job on harmony vocals. I'm really excited about the chance to hear her again.

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OUTART (continued from page 1)

The theatre, music and art gallery part of the program will be held at the Copa in the Habana Inn complex on NW 39th Expressway. A new theatre production will premiere there on Saturday afternoon. The popular theatre hit *Drama Queens*, written by Robert Matson, will have one performance on Sunday afternoon. The musical event will salute gay and lesbian composers from the international and local scene. The art gallery will feature twenty local gay and lesbian artists and their work. In conjunction with the art gallery, Francis said, Borders Books on NW Expressway will devote the wall of its coffee shops to the artists for the month of October, with an artists' reception on October 1.

OUTART 99 organizers are still accepting volunteers to work at the festival. Positions will be available for a variety of duties over the weekend. If you're interested, call 752-2762. An orientation will be held on Oct 3. For more info, visit the OUTART 99 website at www.gayokc.com/outart99.

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THE WNBA

by Jill Garner

The third season of the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) has just come to a close. I never envisioned a day when I'd be sitting on the couch watching sports and saying, "Honey, can you bring me....." but it's happened! I love to watch this league, and I've learned a lot about the players, the teams and the coaches, and while I can't quote statistics like some sports fanatics, I hate to miss a game, and I really hate to see the season end.

But what a season it was. With the other women's professional league, the ABL, folding last December, the WNBA was flooded with a lot of new talent. One of those players, Yolanda Griffith of the Sacramento Monarchs, was named Defensive Player of the year, Newcomer of the year, and MVP of the league! All that despite the fact she missed the last three games of the season due to a knee injury! Chamique Holdsclaw, dubbed the female Michael Jordan, came to the WNBA from the mighty University of Tennessee where she helped lead them to three NCAA championships. Speculation abounded about her ability to excel in the WNBA but her talent is amazing and she won the Rookie of the Year award! There are players like Griffith and Holdsclaw all through the league, and let me tell you, these women can play some tough basketball.

The Houston Comets went on this year to win their third consecutive WNBA championship. Their coach, Van Chancellor, won the Coach of the Year award for the third year in a row. With the big three (Cynthia Cooper, Sheryl Swoopes, and Tina Thompson) leading the way, they amassed quite an impressive record for the year (26-6), and are a lot of fun to watch. Cynthia Cooper has an awe-inspiring talent for getting the ball to the basket that makes it look like the opposing players are not even there! She's not a real flashy player but by no means can anybody forget that she's there leading the Comets in every way. Sheryl Swoopes can weave down the court dribbling the basketball in and out of her defenders and look so amazingly graceful doing it. Tina Thompson can shoot from anywhere and is a great defensive player as well. She doesn't get the publicity that the other two stars do, but the Comets would be nowhere as powerful without her. When these three are on, there's no one who can beat them!

The Comets championship victory came a week after Kim Perrot, point guard and the heart and soul of the Comet's team, died of cancer. Kim was amazing to watch and so feisty and determined. As she put it, she showed that height doesn't necessarily count in basketball. She was small, and she almost didn't make the team when the league started, but she played her heart out in the two seasons she played. Coach Van Chancellor said there's no doubt in his mind that Kim was the reason they won the championship last year. He considered her one of his best friends, and she was the leader of the team, so the games heading into the playoffs were very emotional for Houston, the entire league, and the crowds who held signs remembering Kim. Perrot was only 32 years old and everyone who's a fan of the WNBA will really miss getting to see her play.

The league will be expanding next year by four teams. I really hope it's a good move even though I'm slightly concerned that it's too much too soon. I'm also a little disturbed by the number of coaches who have been fired, and the fact that men have replaced most of them. And, I don't like the way that only certain teams,

those who have players with star potential, get covered on TV, but all that aside, I really enjoy watching all the teams I've been able to see, and I can't wait for next season. They're starting the league two weeks early to enable the Olympic team members to still play in the WNBA before going to the Olympics! If you haven't had a chance to see any of these women play yet, tune in next June. I could go on and on about all the great players, fiery coaches like Cheryl Miller, and the awesome fans in so many of the cities, but see it for yourself next year! □

MARY'S STORY (continued from page 1)

If I saw someone I knew and talked to them-- or even if I didn't-- when I got home, I was bombarded with accusations, vicious insults and hateful questions. Chris's words undermined every concept I had of myself, as a female, as a mother, as a wife, as a daughter and a sister, as a human being. I was scarred from the inside out. Every soft, tender place in me was covered with scar tissue. Scar tissue doesn't grow and change with life. The only thing that kept me together was scar tissue and fear--fear for my life, fear for my children.

"We don't have a dog anymore. Hurting my little dog was a way to hurt me. It was almost a relief when I found Buppy dead one morning in the back yard--relief from the constant dread of seeing or hearing him hurt. As I cradled his poor little body in my arms, I felt a murderous rage envelop me.

"One day, I took my courage into my own hands, and called the domestic violence shelter. I had no choice but to trust them to be able to protect us from Chris. My little girl hovers around me now like an anxious mother over her small child. My small son Joey says he likes the shelter because Mommy doesn't get hurt and cry anymore, and he likes sleeping on top of the bed, instead of under it.

"I am learning now how harmful Chris's abuse of me has been for our children, and how easy it is for children to learn to be abusive, and especially for little girls to learn to accept abuse is a normal way to show love or to live. I am also learning I don't have to live that way anymore."

For information on local services for battered women anywhere in Oklahoma, call the the Safeline Hotline at 800-522-9054. □

MORE OCTOBER EVENTS:

October 9 -- Herland Supper Club meets at Herland at 5:30 PM and goes to dinner together. Come join the fun!

October 16 -- Festival of Race Unity begins at 1 PM at Metro Tech on Martin Luther King Blvd. and Springlake Drive. Music, Food, Booths and Workshops. For information call: Marvin Chiles at 751-3308.

October 17 -- The Oklahoma City AIDS Walk, a fund-raiser benefiting local HIV/AIDS prevention and service organizations begins with opening ceremonies at 1 PM and the walk steps off at 2 PM For information about participating call 405-232-2437 or email OKC99AIDSWalk@hotmail.com.

October 29 -- "Women's Bold Journeys: Weaving Justice and Hope" a state-wide program for women of all ages and backgrounds, cosponsored by the Oklahoma Conference of Churches and over 35 other community and state organizations. Patrice Gaines of the Washington Post and author of *Laughing in the Dark* will be the keynotespeaker. Call 405-525-2926 for registration information. □

