

# Women's History

## A PATCHWORK OF MANY LIVES

Most of the women who make up the patchwork of our history are unsung. Women lived before us and shaped our cultures yet their stories are seldom told in history books. As young women, we have few examples of women and even fewer women of color to look up to as role models.

In spite of the absence of women from official histories, young women still find role models. In observance of Women's History Month we have asked several women to tell about the role models they found as young women.

### MY ROLE MODELS, MY HER-OES

by MOC

I was a bit dim as a child, and completely bought into the patriarchal malarkey that said that only men could be heroes, only men had adventures, only men could lead accomplished, substantial, rewarding lives. If evidence appeared to the contrary, in the persons of Eleanor Roosevelt, for instance, or the Suffragettes, ridicule and scorn heaped on them for their appearance and motives was more than enough to knock them out of contention with me for hero status. Sybil Ludington and Sacajawea I never even knew existed until I was over forty. There was one undeniably daring, courageous and beautiful woman who was grudgingly admired by all, but who wants to be burned at the stake before you're 20? Sorry, Joan, you just don't make it as a role model. By default, then, my childhood heroes were Robin Hood and the Lone Ranger.

But, as I am today happily ensconced in a second childhood, I am designating new childhood heroes and role models. First to mind is that daredevil slip of a girl, Sybil Ludington, now Herland Saint and Channeller Extraordinaire, then a hero of the American Revolution. She did in real life exactly what I did in my fantasies night after night in my early years: ride behind enemy lines on her/my trusted pinto, saving the good guys, foiling the bad ones. I wish I had heard of her before I was forty, but never mind, she is my childhood hero now.

Secondly, Rosa Parks. What I wouldn't give to have her courage

and grace, and to know that an act of mine had sparked a revolution?

Eleanor Roosevelt, who "bloomed where she was planted," as first lady was an enormous force for good, a champion of the oppressed and a stalwart promoter of civil rights, despite the pressures of a thankless job and a dismal marriage, and the sexist and looksist ridicule of a huge number of people.

Sally Ride and Shannon Lucid, the explorers and cowboys of our day. And a woman whose name I can't remember who holds all kinds of underwater exploration records, and says that the only thing a man can do under water that a woman can't is grow a beard.

Sister Leona Luecke, who had a magical gift that brought out the best in everyone she touched, that made them happy to be themselves and to be living and working for peace and justice in a world with her in it.

And finally, of course, hero of heroes, Harriet Tubman; not a role model—who could aspire to such courage? But what a hero. She was to courage and daring and determination as Einstein was to physics and math and Picasso was to art—possessing an entire generation's worth of it, a planet's worth, a world's worth.

I still have fond memories of Robin Hood and the Lone Ranger, my childhood crushes; but I think that supplanting imaginary men with real women as my new heroes and role models was a good move, and gives me a much better chance of growing up someday to be someone I like.

(Role Models stories continued on page 6)

### HERLAND RECEIVES GRANT

For the first time in our history, Herland has been awarded a grant from a national foundation. The \$6,000 grant from the Chicago Resource Center provides funds for operating expenses and will allow Herland to continue to work toward the three year goals adopted in 1991 (see Voice February, 1991).

This grant will help to meet the goals of further renovation of the Herland building to make it wheelchair accessible, expansion of library resources, greater selection of women's books and music at Herland and increased circulation of *The Voice*.

While these funds won't replace the need for contributions from the Herland community, they will go a long way toward helping us meet our expanded goals. See the thermometer in this issue and help us make it rise by continuing to make donations. And thank you all for your past and continued support of an organization that the Chicago Resource Center thinks is worth preserving.

## ST. SYBIL

Sybil Ludington, as almost no one knows, was a hero of the American Revolution, a teenaged girl who did about the same thing that Paul Revere is famous for, but did it better and without getting arrested. Now Matron Saint of the forgotten woman, Sybil answers the occasional odd question in this space.

Dear St. Sybil:

The manufacturers of breast implants have known for twenty years that the implants sometimes burst, or harden like rocks; that they can cause severe pain and distress; that they make mammograms difficult and unreliable; that they leak and leach silicone into women's tissue; that silicone is immensely carcinogenic in animals; that silicone leakage is seriously implicated in many autoimmune diseases in women, including lupus and scleroderma. They did a study where they implanted silicone envelopes into four dogs (I'll leave my anger at that for another day), and reported that all four dogs did just fine, no problems, Fido, honestly. Honestly? Honestly, one of the dogs died, another developed a massive, albeit benign, tumor in the thoracic area. And they told us all was well, and just kept on putting time bombs in women's bodies, and assuring women that they were safe—safer than real breasts, they sometimes said, since the silicone ones wouldn't become cancerous. Oh, thank you so much, Doctor; I'm so grateful, Dow Corning!

I am so angry at this, Syb, but here's the thing: shouldn't women be allowed to have the implants if they want them? Isn't it their choice?

In anger and confusion,  
Bea Wilderd

Dear Bea:

You've pretty well stated the case against silicone breast implants, although you did leave out some of the possible nasty side effects. Before I answer your question, I'd like to spend a moment on the concept of Woman as Toxic Waste Dump. The chemical companies took a bizarre substance, once marketed as a toy called Silly Putty, and came up with a way to make *real* money on it. Now, they might as easily have gotten men to buy penile implants, men being as insecure about penis size as women are about their overall bodies; but did the chem companies market it as such? No. Why? Because it might leak, or leach, or wander around their bodies, or harden up, or cause autoimmune diseases, or interfere with sensation—and we couldn't do that to men, could we?

But to women, they thought, what the hell, they'll stand for it, they're trained to be docile and passive and accept what we do to them. We've already got lots of them putting carcinogens on their heads on a regular basis, going for that sexier shade of ash blond or whatever; we've had them douching god-only-knows what kind of chemicals into their delicate vaginal tissues, and spraying other chemicals on their genitals to forestall possibly giving some offense by smelling like a human being; we've got them taking hair off every part of their body, frequently with chemicals; have you ever smelled that hair removal stuff? Whew! You know that's got to be bad for you. We've sedated them, tranquilized them, built them up, trimmed them down—silly putty in our hands, that's what they are.

No wonder you're angry, Bea; I just hope you extend your anger to cover all of the harmful things women are expected to do to their bodies.

Which leads me to your question, why shouldn't women have the choice of having silicone implants if they want them? Which leads me to another question; why do women "choose" to harm themselves in so many ways, with such regularity? Why, for instance, do so many women walk around on mini-stilts, forever half off balance, butt out, upper torso thrust forward, feet pinched, ankles overworked, hips and spine out of alignment, teetering precariously in discomfort and pain, at increased risk of injury from falls, incapable of any sustained athletic

effort or physical labor? Because they like it? Hardly. They choose to wear high heels because, for one thing, it makes them socially acceptable. Being "fashionable" is a uniform requirement of the average heterosexual woman, trying to fit into a traditional job or a traditional marriage. (Not every woman is lucky enough to be a lesbian, Bea, or to live a non-traditional lifestyle.) Even if her job itself does not require her to wear heels, she must wear them to parties, dances, church, or wherever her socializing occurs. "Sensible shoes" mark a woman who has withdrawn from the competition, an outsider, a loser.

People want to be sexually attractive. This is the one bit of truth that Madison Avenue is built on; and Madison Avenue and our society say that a woman half crippled by her shoes is sexy, and that a woman wearing comfortable shoes that cherish her feet is dowdy. What kind of a choice does your average woman have? None; it's the "catch her/kill her" shoes for her, every time.

So here's our average woman, powdered and perfumed and painted and dyed and polished and tweezed and curled and squeezed and uncomfortable as hell; and home comes hubby or boyfriend with the latest issue of Playboy for their mutual (!) enjoyment; and guess what, guess who is grossly inadequate in the boobs department? Now the fact that a large percent of the young gorgeous nubile models in the flesh magazines are themselves surgically endowed with breast implants is—aren't we surprised?—rarely mentioned in their bio's. So as hard as our poor woman has worked, as much as she has endured, she still feels insufficiently attractive, still feels herself a failure, still feels insecure in her body.

And you do know, I hope, Bea, that only 20% of breast implants are done following cancer surgery; the other 80% are purely cosmetic.

According to a paper sent to the FDA by the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, "There is a substantial and enlarging body of medical information and opinion to the effect that these deformities (small breasts!) are really a disease...." So first they find a product and procedure that will generate \$450 million a year for them, and then they manufacture the disease for it to cure. I would say that evidence is clear that the deformities in the thinking and ethics of the plastic surgeons and the chemical company bosses are diseased and criminal to boot.

Forced choices, Bea, are really no choice at all—ask any magician, con artist or three-card monte dealer. Madison Avenue, the flesh magazines, surgeons, chemical companies—huge amounts of money and exposure are forcing the surgical card on women, encouraging them to detest their natural bodies and to try to mold themselves into an artificial "perfection."

People are denied the choice to do all kinds of harmful things to themselves or to others; if breast implants are as harmful as they appear to be, why not ban them also?

What bothers me most about breast implants, as I remember my corporeal and sexual life (*such a long time ago*), is that they frequently cause women to lose sexual sensation in their nipples. A woman who will trade that for the approval and potential sexual pleasure of another is surely conforming to immense and inhuman pressure.

Breast implants? I say ban them and damn them all.  
Yours in frequently anguished sisterhood,  
Sybil

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# MARCH FOR WOMEN'S LIVES

**We Won't Go Back! We Will Fight Back!**

The National Organization for Women is sponsoring a mass demonstration for reproductive freedom in Washington, D.C. on April 5, 1992. The theme for this historic event is "WE WON'T GO BACK . . . MARCH FOR WOMEN'S LIVES!" The Cleveland County NOW chapter is organizing a delegation to participate in the march.

Reproductive freedom is basic to the lives of all women and girls, yet women of racial and ethnic diversity, poor women and young women have suffered the greatest attack on their rights. This march will not only focus on maintaining the rights women have won but will demand that the rights of all women be protected and restored.

With the loss of the Webster case in 1989, which Bush urged the Supreme Court to hear for the purpose of overturning *Roe v. Wade*, the floodgates of state legislation to restrict abortion rights were opened. Pennsylvania, Guam, Louisiana and Utah passed very punitive legislation denying women the right to safe, legal abortion. The legislation was challenged in court and very recently the Third Circuit upheld most of the Pennsylvania legislation. This and other laws are heading toward the Supreme Court where pro-choice advocates believe *Roe v. Wade* will soon be overturned.

The March for Women's Lives will be a historic and politically significant event shaping the debate on why abortion cannot be outlawed, why women must have access to birth control and abortion regardless of their age and economic status, why women are determined to move forward in the struggle for women's civil rights. It will send the message that women will not docilely return to an era of compulsory pregnancy or to back alleys to risk our lives in order to protect our futures.

Cleveland County NOW is organizing a charter bus (or buses) to take a delegation to Washington. The delegation will leave Oklahoma on Friday, April 3 and return early Tuesday, April 6. The cost per person will be slightly over \$100. If you cannot go, please consider making a contribution to help provide scholarships to send others. For information about the Cleveland County NOW bus, please leave a message at Herland (521-9696) and someone will call you back, or write CCNOW, P.O. Box 1042, Norman, OK 73070. ■

## "ALL'Y ALL'Y OUTS IN FREE!"

Do you have Herland library books you've been meaning to return someday but never quite got around to it? March is the month to return it. Herland has declared an amnesty for all library fines and penalties for books returned in March. Bring those books back this month and there'll be no questions asked—not even a raised eyebrow when you bring in that book that's three years overdue. ■

**DON'T BE SHY!**

**COME TO THE HERLAND RETREAT!**

A butterfly

Daffodils are blooming, trees budding and the Herland Spring Retreat is approaching. The annual spring retreat will be held May 15, 16, 17 at Robber's Cave State Park near Wilburton. Plans for the retreat aren't final yet but you can expect there to be a mix of outstanding entertainment, challenging workshops, great food, and good times with friends.

The pre-registration fee is on a sliding scale based on your income and includes lodging in a group cabin for two nights and three meals. A registration form is included in this newsletter.

**MUSKOGEE NOW RAL.  
LIES FOR JUSTICE**

One year ago, 17-year-old Muskogee High School student Robin Thomas was beaten with a baseball bat, choked, set on fire, tossed in a ditch and left for dead by two 18-year-old boys, one of them a former boyfriend. The young men pled No Contest, and a few weeks ago District Judge Jim Edmondson, saying that he did not believe that they intended to kill Robin, sentenced them to serve 90 days in the county jail, 100 hours of community service and \$2,500 in fines; plus a five-year deferred sentence, which means if they stay out of trouble for five years, the charges will be erased from the record.

"I wonder if I would have died, would it have been different," said Robin, who has required plastic surgery, is seeing a counselor and is struggling to finish her senior year.

On Friday, February 7, Muskogee NOW marched through Muskogee in protest of Judge Edmondson's decision. Arm in arm with Robin and her father, Muskogee NOW Coordinator Dana Tiger delivered a petition protesting the disgraceful sentence to the courthouse, and then led over a hundred demonstrators through Muskogee from the Court House to the Women's shelter.

There is no changing this particular sentence, but it is hoped that the outrage expressed to the judge and the court will help prevent this kind of sentencing in the future. Especially it is hoped that the demonstration of solidarity and unity, care and concern will help restore Robin's health and faith and feelings of self-worth. ■

HERLAND VOICE, MARCH 1992 3

## REVIEW

by Peggy Johnson

Take Your Pick . . .

FRIED GREEN TOMATOES is a book and a movie

Imagine a movie with four women as lead characters. Now imagine three of them as strong women with minds of their own and not overly dependent on or acquiescent toward men. Say the fourth woman is breaking out of a traditional role within a marriage. There you have *Fried Green Tomatoes*. And yet it is so much more than that.

Life and death in a close-knit community. Family ties that reach across social taboos. Love between women—some of which dares not speak its name lest the movie not make it into the mainstream. But the amazing thing is that it is a mainstream movie and the main characters are women, and they are strong and they do share love and respect.

The movie follows closely to the book, *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe* by Fannie Flagg from which it is adapted. Director Jon Avnet co-wrote the screenplay with Flagg and they have created a book/movie correlation almost as fluid as the *Color Purple*'s was.

I read the book first and was hardpressed to believe that the movie could come close to catching its southern flavor, much less the depth of character. After all, I'm from Georgia and actually lived in Valdosta (one of the settings in the story) for two years so I read in a southern accent. But the movie so captured the flavor and the voice inflection (not just the drawl) that I'm actually glad I'm from there and can talk that way without thinking about it. Indeed, the accents were so well done that I'm thinking I used to know those people—especially Idgie Threadgoode, played so convincingly by Mary Stuart Masterson. If I didn't know her then, I wish I did now.

*Fried Green Tomatoes* is a well-woven series of flashbacks to Whistle Stop, Alabama in the early to mid-1900's by Ninny Threadgoode, an 82-year-old woman in a nursing home in the late '80's. Played superbly by Jessica Tandy, she reminds me of my Great Aunt Sara. Ninny reminisces about her past to Evelyn Couch (Kathy Bates), the one who's breaking out of a lifetime of being a nice girl. Evelyn can't seem to find anything exciting about life except candy bars until she gets caught up in Ninny's wanderings about Idgie and her companion Ruth Jamison (Mary-Louise Parker). Ruth lived a short time in Valdosta, Georgia. (Maybe I knew her.)

Anyway, the movie and the book explore Idgie's and Ruth's relationship and the goings-on at their business establishment, the Whistle Stop Cafe. They seem to be more than just best friends, if you know what I mean. The book gives a clearer view of that

subject but that's not the focus anyway. There's not really any sex or much hint of it but I've never seen a more attractive food fight. Mostly there is just a lot of deep love, and all the relationships are richly developed.

Overall, the book was the best at developing characters although at first it was slow for me because it treated the racial issues of the early 1900's in that too pleasant way of the "poor coloreds" and the "kindly whites" But Flagg wrote herself out of that quandary and I came to accept the light-hearted treatment as a way to get down to the relationships among all the characters.

The movie's forte was in the rich photography which captured scenery as well as the characters' faces. The acting was tremendous, from the look on Ruth's face while Idgie was retrieving a gift for her during their picnic to the scene in which Idgie tells Ruth the story about the ducks and the lake one more time. Cicely Tyson as Sipsey was an added pleasure.

After I closed the book, I sobbed for a number of minutes, mourning the loss of extended family ties and of undying love, the curse of modern society. It snuck up on me, this perhaps due to the writer's skill at storytelling. The movie was not quite as effective on that level but I did already know the story-line. There were some differences, namely the ending, but I forgive the movie its few shortcomings (including glossing over the hint of lesbianism) so that more people may be affected by its charms.

I don't know if the movie will still be in Oklahoma City by the time this is printed but if it is, go see it. Otherwise, read the book. Read the book anyway. I think ya'll would like it. And don't ask me if I've ever had fried green tomatoes—I wuz raised on 'em. ■

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a current volunteer if you are interested.

Protect Abortion Rights NOW!

**March  
for Women's Lives**

We Won't  
Go Back!



We Will  
Fight Back!

April 5, 1992

The Supreme Court could take away the right to safe and legal abortion by July. March with us to put the politicians on notice this election year. Because if we can't change their minds about protecting abortion rights, we can vote to change their faces in November!

Assemble 10 a.m.  
on the Ellipse  
Washington, D.C.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:  
**National Organization  
For Women**  
1000 16th Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
(202) 331-0066



## Freedom of Choice Act

### Section 1. Short Title.

This Act may be cited as the "Freedom of Choice Act of 1991."

### Section 2. Right to Choose

(a) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subsection (b), a State may not restrict the right of a woman to choose to terminate a pregnancy—

- (1) before fetal viability; or
- (2) at any time, if such termination is necessary to protect the life or health of the woman.

(b) MEDICALLY NECESSARY REQUIREMENTS.—A State may impose requirements medically necessary to protect the life or health of women referred to in subsection (a).

### Section 3. Definition of "State"

As used in this Act, the term "State" includes the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and each other territory or possession of the United States.

#### COMPLETE TEXT OF THE FREEDOM OF CHOICE ACT

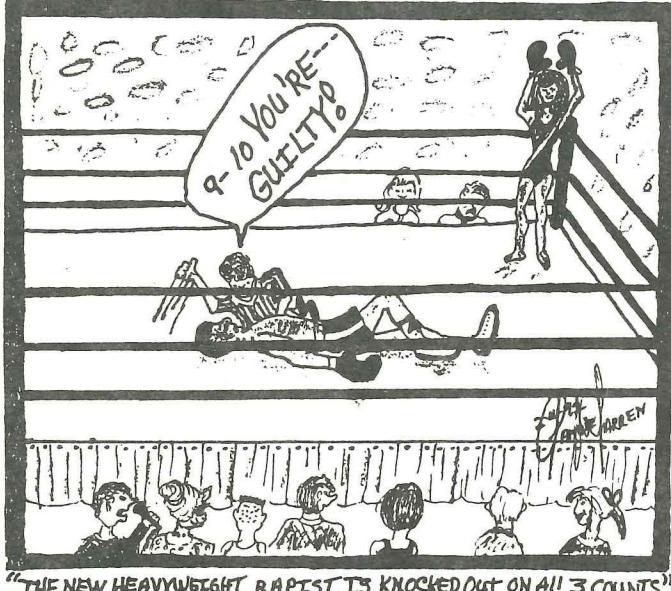
## FREEDOM OF CHOICE ACT

In preparation for the likely overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, Congress is considering "The Freedom of Choice Act." This act would forbid states from passing laws restricting access to abortion.

The Freedom of Choice Act's primary sponsor in the U.S. Senate is Alan Cranston (Democrat, Calif.) and the primary sponsor in the U.S. House of Representatives is Don Edwards (Democrat, Calif.). There are 28 Senate co-sponsors and 126 House co-sponsors. No Oklahoma Senator or Representative has signed on as a co-sponsor.

According to Kate Michelman, Executive Director of NARAL, politicians would rather avoid the issue rather than risk offending anti-choice fanatics." NARAL is encouraging pro-choice supporters to write the Speaker of the House, Tom Foley and the Senate Majority Leader, George Mitchell calling for a vote on the Freedom of Choice Act.

**NOT-CONFUSED**



"THE NEW HEAVYWEIGHT RAPIST IS KNOCKED OUT ON ALL 3 COUNTS"

## SO MANY QUESTIONS, SO FEW ANSWERS

by Nancy Dwyer

Often I have heard that wisdom comes with age. Apparently at 40 I have not aged enough. It seems that I have more questions than answers. For example, if I put two matching socks into the dryer, why does only one sock come out? Does the dryer spin so fast that the sock is thrown into another time warp?

A second question: if everyone empties the ice trays into the containers, as required in our household, why is there never ice in the containers? Maybe those "saved" cubes are out in space with the socks.

Finally; if anti-abortion groups call themselves "pro-life" why do they concern themselves only with the unborn? Statistics show that millions of women and children are beaten and abused yearly, Shouldn't the living be our prime concern? It appears "pro-lifers" are not really pro life. These same people assure us that all fetuses not aborted will be adopted. If this is to be believed why are older children, children of color, and children with disabilities still in our orphanages waiting to be adopted? Why are the neglected, abused and battered less important than the unborn? Normally a person will not buy a car sight unseen. Why should we buy an argument of future caring, when society cannot care enough to ensure the health and welfare of women and children now?

The "pro-life" movement appears to be interested only in controlling women's bodies and returning us to the "good old days" of being in the home, barefoot and pregnant. I suspect that I will locate the missing socks and ice cubes sooner than I will answer the question of why "pro-lifers" call themselves pro life. ■

## WOMEN'S PROJECT FILM FESTIVAL

The Women's Project is presenting its first annual Women's Film Festival to celebrate women's experience. The festival which began February 21 and continues through March 14, marks both African American and Women's History Months. It will offer a variety of documentaries, features, foreign language and international films that examine the lives of women in the U.S. and abroad.

Cultural activities take on a decidedly political overtone at the Women's Project which since 1981 has organized on behalf of groups who experience oppression and marginalization in this society. The Women's Film Festival is consistent with that tradition. Most of the films feature unconventional portrayals of women's lives—as older women, lesbians, women of color, Jewish women and women with disabilities—and all are films not usually available in Arkansas.

Films scheduled for March are:

Friday, March 6: *Pink Triangles*; *Where Did You Get That Woman*; *Ju Dou*  
Saturday, March 7: *Tiny and Ruby*; *Hell Divin' Women*; *Surname Viet  
Given Name Nam*

Thursday, March 12: *Privilege*, *Cycles*

Friday, March 13: *Finzan*; *Juxta*; *Nice Colored Girls*; *Positive Images*:  
*Portraits of Women with Disabilities*; *Selbe: One Among Many*; *Two Lies*;  
*Storme: Lady of the Jewel Box*

Saturday, March 14: *Honored by the Moon*; *Half the Kingdom*

Admission is \$3.50 on Thursdays and \$5.50 on Fridays and Saturdays. For information location of film showings, contact the Women's Project at (501) 372-5113. ■

# I GREW UP LOVING WOMEN ANYWAY

by Peggy Johnson

They asked me to write a story on heroes and without thinking I somehow turned it into a story on role models. Here goes . . .

I got my early heroes from TV and books. Superman was strong, Batman was smart, Robin was young. Pippi Longstocking was a girl (!) and clever and not dumb. Encyclopedia Brown was smart and had fun, too. Alvin Fernald was an inventor—like I was—as was Stuey. So they were almost all men or boys—a big drag, really—but I grew up loving women anyway.

I sorta come from a matriarchy. I mean, there was my mother and my grandmother on her side, and my older sister. There was my Great Aunt Sara on my father's side. My mother had some friends around her mother's age—Miss Ruby and Miss Beryl. They had a sister Opal and nieces Kathryn and Mary Hester. There was Johnnie, another friend of my mother's. She had a daughter, Janice, who was my mother's best friend on through high school. They kept up until Janice, a doctor, died in the early sixties.

In the neighborhood, the presence and influence of women widened. (I never thought about this until a few years ago.) Next door were Miss Somebody (I can't recall her name) and her daughter Margaret. Down the street lived Miss Alley (or was it Ali? I never wrote it down before) and her sister. Up the street lived Fannie and Margaret. I put their names in that order because that's just the way they go, you know, but I really remember Margaret a lot better than Fannie. Betty, up from Fannie and Margaret's, had two daughters, Nancy and Kathy. Kathy was older but I always called them Nancy and Kathy.

My mother had a good friend named Carolyn who had daughters Bonnie and Connie and Mitzi. My middle name is after Carolyn. Mitzi has my own mother's name as her middle name.

I had a Great Aunt Thelma on my mother's side. She lived in Florida. We all just called her Thelma.

Oh, there were more in varying degrees of proximity—friends of my mother's from high school she kept up with. We all called them by their first names like they were our best friends, too.

This is not to say there were no men around—my father, my two brothers and a few husbands of the above. But many of the women mentioned here had no husbands, or they were gone for one reason or another. And, except for my brothers, the men don't loom in my mind, ya' know.

So these women are all early role models and the memory of them is rich to this day. My earliest major role model, though, was my mother.

I remember that she always knew where things were when I couldn't find them. I thought she was a genius. Oh, and in the mornings she was so beautiful with her pretty hair kind of puffed up and her lipstick on.

She was always working on projects. I especially remember the easel she bought and we all started painting landscapes and such. She joined in on the antiquing craze (she has since recanted support of that movement) and was always planting a few flowers or herbs. Once a month she would sit down at the desk and pay the bills—always a good money manager. As far as I can recall, she always worked—in an office—though before I came along I know she had times when she didn't.

On a final note, I must mention that she always seemed to like the things I did back then—from climbing trees and making tree houses to shaving the hair off my doll's head to playing football to liking the Beatles (she loved them, too) to playing the guitar.

Speaking of guitars, my father got me my first one. Everything else is water under the bridge.

Somewhere in my childhood, my sister began to emerge as the one I went to with questions. She was sort of a fringe hippie and I listened to the same music she did for the most part. From her I picked up on Jackson Browne, Willis Alan Ramsey, Van Morrison, Jimi Hendrix and, of course, the Beatles.

I've always seen her as a strong, independent girl and woman. She has always accepted me for who I am, even when that was not the prettiest sight. When I compare the things I've done at certain ages to the things she did at the same age, well, I'll just say that I've always felt younger (I am but that's not quite the point here). She remains a steadfast support.

Through the years, I suppose I've had some famous role models . . . Janis Joplin, Bob Dylan, Jackson Browne, Bonnie Raitt, Meg Christian, Florence Joyner Griffith, and some of my other favorite raves. Flo Jo borders on being a hero, but what do we really know about those people anyway? I think I get more out of people I can see in my daily life—and in their daily lives.

Now, I still have my mother—training to be a nurse at age 62—as a role model, and my sister, after many years as an RN getting a degree in philosophy and my older brother, the nicest man I know and also a nurse. He graduated with a degree in business the same year I got my own degree (last year). I seem to be attracted to formal education lately.

On the local scene, I am blessed to view the tenacity and courage of the likes of Pat Reaves, Jean Kelsey and Margaret Cox. I often look to them to figure out what my next step should be in the ongoing struggle of equality for women.

Basically, I don't want to be like anybody else but there are times I need the guidance of others so I can become more like whoever it is that I am. Watching others accept themselves in their own lives helps me accept myself in mine.

As for heroes, thanks to the strong women and unsung lesbians who have gone before such as Rita Mae Brown and other lesser knowns, the path has been paved so that a hero such as Idgie Threadgoode can carry me through this year at least. And, by the way—ain't we having' a good time!

## HERO?

by Michelle Klukas

Hero? I had not given much thought to who my hero was until I was asked to write about one. As a child I did not have a hero, or at least none that I knew of consciously. As I have grown older, I have admired many women who have dared to live their lives as they choose and not as society dictated as proper. These women are neither famous nor in the public eye. Rather, they are women I have met and some I have only heard about from others. I also admire women who stand up and fight for their rights as women. I would like to thank those women for making my life easier to live today.

"It's wonderful to learn 'I am not alone,' The next step is difference—do not let the differences pull you apart. Use them—that is empowerment."

—Audre Lorde

# GRANDMA AND THE REST

by Rhonda Smith

When I was young my family life was chaotic, incestuous, with no boundaries and no sense of guidance. My mother was off in the ozone most of the time, and my father virtually ignored us. But there were several important female figures in my life, and even though she was mostly unreachable, my mother is included in the list.

Mother was very creative, even in the dark ages when she was still married to my father. She loved to do things with her hands and I've carried that love on into my current life. She would work on wonderful projects with us, from hand-painted Christmas eggs to sewing clothes to making creatures out of pipe cleaners. Some of my only happy memories in that house of my childhood were when we would gather around the dining room table and "make things" with Mother. She also had a deep love of music. We weren't even exposed to any kind of music besides classical. She played and taught piano, and I learned to play at an early age. I have a vague memory of dancing like a ballerina to beautiful strains of... Mozart? Probably. And that memory includes Mother watching in delight.

My oldest sister, Vicki, who was the oldest child and very responsible, made a great impression on me. She was extremely bright and very inventive. My fondest recollection is of her snuggling with us at night and telling these marvelous stories that she would make up right on the spot. She was my hero and could do nothing wrong. In my adult life she confessed to me that she didn't like me very much as a child. She was constantly trying to keep the kids on an even keel so that Daddy wouldn't "blow." We never knew when he would lose it and come after one or all of us kids for some real or imagined transgression. And I was the one in the family that was always pushing everyone's buttons, agitating, stirring things up... I think I wanted to get Daddy to blow and get it over with. I couldn't stand the waiting.

When I was about 8 (?) Mother became friends with a woman who I thought was the most wonderful person on earth. She was a psychiatrist (important job!), and had wild behavior and outrageous ideas. We would go to visit her and her three daughters and do things like play naked in the back yard while the adults sat around and talked and it was ok! It was a marvelously freeing liaison, both for us children and for my mother. And this woman (Ginny) was very loving to us, and would listen to the things we had to say. What a revelation, to find out that what I had to say could actually be considered important. I loved her.

Perhaps the most important woman in my life was my grandmother. From very early childhood on, I would get to spend chunks of time in Kansas with my grandparents, often an entire summer. They were very strict with me, but that very strictness was a haven. In that house I always knew what the rules were and what the consequences would be if I broke them. Punishment was swift, conscious, and (perhaps most importantly) finite. I knew where I stood at all times, and knew what my boundaries were. I guess my grandma was plump (they say she was fat), but all I knew was that sitting in her lap was the safest, softest, "wonderfullest" place I could imagine, in stark contrast to my mother's illusive, bony, angular frame that never seemed to hold still long enough to make a lap.

My grandmother also provided me with the guidance that I lacked in my home life. She told me the difference between right and wrong, taught me how to share, to have respect for people's property, how to listen, and that cheating and lying only hurt me. I'm grateful for her influence, even including taking me to the Methodist Church and to Bible school. I think that also played an important role in combatting the complete chaos of my upbringing.

Not everything about Grandma was perfect, though. She was

pretty stiff about how little girls should act and dress. She wanted me to wear dresses when I visited, told me to "act ladylike," and she tried to discourage me from spending too much time with my grandpa down at his furniture store, which of course was the place I wanted to be. I loved to help Grandpa build and fix things. But in retrospect, I think Grandma took secret delight in my tomboyishness and refusal to blend in with society. I've heard stories about how she used to climb trees and play baseball with the boys as a child.

There is one more female character I'd like to mention. She was two years older than me and I thought she was the best. She had her own horse, lived on a ranch, rode like a hellion and wasn't scared of rattlesnakes. I loved her because she was like me. We were a wild pair. And she didn't like dolls! I think of all my friends growing up, she helped me see that I wasn't the only one who rebelled against the social constraints of being a girl. ■

# SERAPHINA, BRIGHT STAR

by Deborah Fox

During my 5th, 6th and 7th grades I went to boarding school. My mother, a single mother, was having a difficult time in her life and following the advice of her therapist she placed me in a Catholic boarding school.

It was a very hard time for me. I was afraid, I missed home terribly and I was not accepted by the other girls. But in 6th grade I had a teacher who was to invoke hope, inspiration and a sense of security. She was a nun and her name was Sister Seraphina.

Sister Seraphina was like a star, brilliant in the dark night. Her face literally glowed with love and kindness. She was a living picture of how I'd always pictured Angels. She was beautiful, her eyes had a twinkle and her big smile was full of pearly white teeth. She was my solace. I looked forward to school to be in her presence, a place of immense comfort.

Sister Seraphina gave a creative writing assignment one day. We were to cut pictures we liked out of magazines and build a story around them. I cut out pictures from Life magazine of a young girl and boy on an isolated ocean beach. They were playfully walking down on the beach where the waves rolled up to the crags and boulders of the cliffs in Northern California. I created a love story around these pictures, from a young and innocent pubescent point of view.

Sister Seraphina liked my story so much that she came to my desk to talk to me about getting it published. I was thrilled and beaming with pride. She took my story that day so she could present it to her superiors and request permission to seek out publishers for it. I don't know who exactly she believed would publish my story, perhaps a magazine, but when she told me she could not get permission to try from her "superiors," I intuited an angry frustration within her. I wondered if it was because it was a love story about a girl and a boy, even talking to boys was forbidden at this school, though Sister Seraphina had assured me it had nothing to do with my story.

About a year later Sister Seraphina told me she was leaving the school and the Order. I asked her why she did not want to be a nun anymore and she told me she believed she could help more people outside the Order. I was sad to know she'd be gone but I was also happy for her, she would be free, and I was better and stronger from having known her. What she gave me would never be lost. ■

## BOOK REVIEW

**Faderman, Lillian. *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America.* NY: Columbia University Press, 1991. (hardback, \$29.95) by S.B.**

Not only have women been typically left out of American history courses and literature, lesbians have been even more invisible. *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers* can be used to rectify this omission. It is an extensive social history of American lesbians over the last 100 years, ranging from Victorian "romantic friendships" to the "lesbian sex wars" of the 1980's and Queer Nation. Faderman, a social constructionist, discusses the changes over time in how lesbians perceived themselves, and the context in which they existed. Factors of class, race, feminism, patriarchy, diversity, economics, sexuality, the medical community, politics and so on are covered in some depth. Although as a social constructionist Faderman believes that social conditions are the primary factor allowing lesbians to "emerge as a social entity," she does not denigrate or attempt to invalidate essentialists who believe that lesbians are born that way and always have been, although she does call them a minority. Her arguments for social construction are very convincing.

*Odd Girls* is notable in that it combines depth of scholarship with readability. It would be of use to students in a variety of disciplines, yet is also fascinating to the casual reader. Along with books such as *The Original Coming-Out Stories*, it would be invaluable to any woman coming out. The footnotes are also a rich source of bibliographic information for any reader. In summary, Faderman's book is fact-filled, thought-provoking, affirmative, and a good read. ■

PHOTO BY GINGER



Peggy Johnson and Nancy Griffith, Dallas

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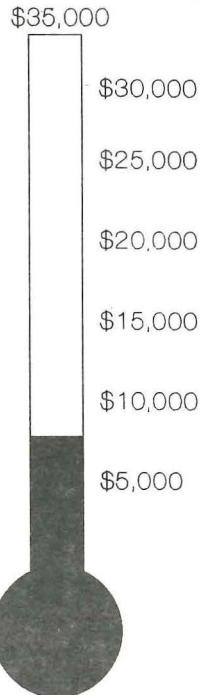
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# LESBIAN ALLOWED TO ADOPT PARTNER'S BIOLOGICAL CHILD

**ACLU Case Breaks New Ground In New York**

## State Family Law

In the first ruling of its kind in New York State, a Surrogate Court judge on Jan. 1, 1992 granted a lesbian's request to adopt her partner's biological child. The ruling means that each woman is now the child's legal parent, giving each legal rights and responsibilities toward the six-year-old boy.

"This is a historic step in the development of family law in New York State—a New York court has for the first time recognized a legal family of a child and his two mothers," said William B. Rubenstein, the Director of the American Civil Liberties Union's national Lesbian and Gay Rights Project, which handled the adoption with ACLU cooperating counsel James D. Marks and Betty Levinson.

The child, identified as Evan, and his mothers, identified as Diane and Valerie, have lived together since his birth. (Under long-standing family law procedures, the parties to an adoption are kept anonymous to preserve the family's privacy.) The women—a pediatrician and a developmental psychiatrist—have had a committed, loving relationship for 14 years.

In her decision, Surrogate Court Judge Eve Preminger recognized the depth of the relationship between the child and both women. She concluded that Evan was clearly best served by having two legal parents. "There is no reason in law, logic or social philosophy to obstruct such a favorable situation," Surrogate Preminger wrote.

"It seems clear that the proposed adoption is in Evan's best interest," she wrote. "He is part of a family unit that has been functioning successfully for the past six years. The adoption would bring no change or trauma to his daily life; it would serve only to provide him with important legal rights which he does not presently possess."

Marks, a solo practitioner in Manhattan who also led for the ACLU the recent negotiations that resulted in Montefiore Medical Center establishing a domestic partner benefits policy, said that Judge Preminger's emphatic decision "recognizes the reality of gay and lesbian family life."

"In practice, if not the law, these two women have both been Evan's parents since birth," he said. "They have shared the joy and the responsibility of parenting and Evan has been nurtured by each mother's love. It is extremely gratifying to have the courts recognize this."

The mothers, in a joint statement, said they were thrilled with the ruling. "We have been a family throughout all of Evan's life and we are relieved that the court has formalized Evan's relationship with both of us," they said.

While today's decision is the first of its kind in New York State, courts around the country have been granting what are called "second-parent adoptions" for several years. More than 200 such adoptions have been granted in 10 different counties in California. Second-parent adoptions have also been granted in Washington, D.C., Oregon, Washington State and Alaska.

"Today's decision will help ensure that Evan and his family are treated just like other two-parent families," said Ruth E. Harlow, Staff Counsel to the ACLU Lesbian and Gay Rights Project. "New York has joined these other enlightened states in legally protecting strong families and we hope that many lesbian and gay couples throughout New York State will now use second-parent adoption to create legal relationships between themselves and their children." ■

# THE THERAPY SISTERS IN CONCERT

**Don't miss these wacky women!**

**AT THE PORTHOLE  
TWO SHOWS: 8:00 & 11:00  
COST: \$4 AT THE DOOR  
SATURDAY, MARCH 7**



# HERLAND NEEDS YOUR JUNK!

"One woman's garbage is another woman's treasure." Herland needs your potential treasures for our booth at the World's Largest Garage Sale. You can drop off donated items at Herland or leave a message at Herland (521-9696) and we can make arrangements to pick up your "treasures." ■

# Chatterbox

LESBIAN ONLY THERAPY GROUP. Wednesday evenings. Call Jo Soske. M.Ed/MHR/CAC at 364-5708....

REGISTER NOW for the HERLAND SPRING RETREAT!. It's sure to be the best one ever!....

DON'T MISS THE THERAPY SISTERS, Saturday, March 7 at the Porthole. TWO SHOWS: 8:00 p.m. & 11 p.m. These women are very entertaining....

The JUNE ISSUE of the Voice will observe the 10th anniversary of the ERA Countdown Campaign. We'd like to have your reminiscences and reflections about the ERA campaign and how it has impacted your life. These can be in the form of photos, journals, short articles, letters, etc. We also would like articles about the impact of the ERA campaign on women in the U.S. and the ongoing campaign for constitutional protection of the rights of women....

HERLAND NEEDS YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS FOR "WORLD'S LARGEST GARAGE SALE" at the Fairgrounds on April 4, 1992. Do your spring cleaning and make a contribution to Herland. Leave a message for Laura at Herland, 521-9696 if you need items picked up or want to volunteer to help with the sale....

If you are lucky enough to be getting a REFUND on your Oklahoma income taxes don't forget to share a little through the Indigent Health Care Fund by checking line 55 (or line 18 on the short form). The Indigent Health Care Fund goes to provide health care for persons who have no insurance or ability to pay for care....

MARCH 20 - 22, 1992. ECOLOGICAL FEMINISM CONFERENCE in Ames, Iowa. Speakers include Margot Adler on Eco-feminism Spirituality; Pat Boddy, Videographer; Kristin Cashman; Elizabeth Dodson Gray; Judith Plant; Andrea Smith; Karen Waren and Danielle Wirth. Call 515/294-1017 for registration materials, or 515/242-6491 for more info....

DON'T FORGET TO VOTE - MARCH 10, 1992 - Presidential Primary and State Question 640....

THE OKLAHOMA SIGN THEATER IN PERFORMANCE: OST presents an original play March 13 & 14, 8:00 p.m., at OSU Tech, 1000 N. Portland. The play will be voiced also so that the hearing minority in the audience will know what's going on....

Cleveland County NOW still needs volunteers for clinic defense teams. Call 794-6884 for information.

Hurricane Alice, a feminist quarterly, is seeking essays, reviews, poems, short stories, or personal experiences on the theme "Misogyny: Current Reflections." The editors hope to publish a diversity of perspective and invention. Submissions of 3,000 words or less must be submitted by February 15 to: Hurricane Alice, 207 Lind Hall, 207 Church St., S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455. The deadline for compositions for the summer open theme issues is April 15....

The Herland DISCUSSION GROUP FOR MARCH will focus on women's history with a showing of the video "One Fine Day" and discussion of the role famous and not-so-famous women have had shaping our lives....

Christy Marie Camp is looking for help OBTAINING CLEMENCY for herself and other battered women who are serving time for killing their abusers. She is working with a group called Convicted Women against Abuse backed by attorney, Gloria Allred. They are circulating petitions asking California Governor Wilson to reduce their sentences or release them. She can be reached at Dept. HP, 32687 Latham B #323, Frontera, CA 91720. While you are at it, write Governor David Walters, State Capitol, Oklahoma City, OK and encourage him to consider clemency for Oklahoma women who are serving time for fighting back against abuse....

Planning for the 1992 Oklahoma GAY AND LESBIAN PRIDE PARADE has begun. If you'd like to be a part of the parade preparations, attend the next meeting. The Pride network meets the first Monday of each month at 7 p.m. at Oasis....

I am interested in writing future articles on SEXUAL HARASSMENT. This will not be limited to only harassment at the work place. Anonymity will be preserved if desired. Address letters to CC NOW, P.O. Box 1042, Norman, OK 73070, Attn: Nancy, Newsletter Committee.....

DO YOU HAVE A BUTTON-MAKING MACHINE that doesn't belong to you? Is it NOW's? Someone borrowed NOW's machine a long time ago and has probably forgotten about it as completely as the NOW folk have. If you have it, they sure would like to have it back. You can leave a message at Herland, 521-9696, or drop by and leave the machine there. Thanks.

## HERLAND SPRING RETREAT PRE-REGISTRATION GUIDELINES

Single Person's  
Annual Income  
under \$ 6,500  
\$ 6,500-\$13,250  
\$13,250-\$19,500  
over \$19,500

Retreat Pre-  
registration fee  
\$15  
\$25  
\$35  
\$40

Household Annual Income  
(2 or more persons)  
under \$13,300  
\$13,300-\$18,000  
\$18,000-\$26,000  
over \$26,000

Please choose the registration fee most appropriate for you based on these suggested income guidelines. Complete and return the pre-registration form to Herland, 2312 N.W. 39th, Oklahoma City, OK 73112.

## HSR SPRING RETREAT REGISTRATION

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PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_

STATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Registration fee enclosed:  \$15  \$25  \$35  \$40

I'm enclosing an additional \$\_\_\_\_\_ to provide retreat scholarships.

I need a scholarship to attend.

I would like to ride with someone.

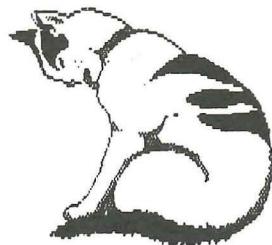
I can help provide rides to the retreat.

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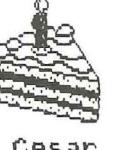


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Equality of Rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

Silent Vigil for peace in Central America. On the steps of the Federal Building, NW 4th & Robinson, OKC; each Wednesday at Noon.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH	2	3	4 Jeanette Rankin, pacifist & feminist, seated as 1st woman Rep in Congress 1917	5 Rosa Luxemburg 1871 - 1919	6 SISTERS OF SWING at Liberty Drug in Norman 10 - 2 * CoDA, 7 p.m.	7 CC NOW, 2pm Norman Public Library * THE THERAPY SISTERS, at the Porthole, At 8 & 11; \$4.
8	9 Start gathering good stuff for Herland's garage sale!	10 Harriet Tubman, R.I.P., 1913	11	12 CAROL ANN HUNNER & TIM BRITTON (Irish Music) at Hotel Bohemia 9 pm, \$5.00	13 PEGGY JOHNSON at the University of Tulsa * CoDA, 7 pm	14 Oklahoma Sign Theater OSU Tech at 8 * BANISH MISFORTUNE Hotel Bohemia 9pm, \$5.00
15  Board Meeting All Welcome	16	17 Herland Discussion Group 7 pm: Heroes, Sheroes, & Role Models	18	19 Clean out those closets for Herland's big Garage Sale!	20 MARY REYNOLDS at P.O.E.T.S in Norman 8 - 11 pm * CoDA, 7 pm	21 PEGGY JOHNSON at POETS 8 - 11 * SISTERS OF SWING, 9 pm, Hotel Bohemia
22 Good day to take your garage sale items to Herland - your benefit: a clean house !!!!!	23	24	25 PEGGY JOHNSON at Stillwater for the OSU GLBCA, in the Student Union Rm. 413, 7 pm	26	27 MISS BROWN TO YOU at THE EARTH in OKC 7:30 p.m. * CoDA, 7 p.m.	28 MARY REYNOLDS & PEGGY JOHNSON Hotel Bohemia 9 pm, \$3.00
29 Last Weekend day to bring your garage sale goodies to Herland!	30	31 		ΦΦ HERLAND GIFT SHOP ΦΦ ΦΦ The Place to Shop ΦΦ ΦΦ for Jewelry, Pottery, T-shirts, ΦΦ ΦΦ Stationery, Bird Houses & Feeders, ΦΦ ΦΦ Buttons, Postcards, Toys and More! ΦΦ ΦΦ And of course as always we're ΦΦ		*For Hotel Bohemia Reservations and Information, Call 528-0020 

ΦΦ HERLAND GIFT SHOP ΦΦ  
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ΦΦ And of course, as always, we're ΦΦ  
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