

The HERLAND VOICE

October, 1993

COME OUT COME OUT

National Coming Out Day, October 11, is an annual event recognized by lesbians, gay men and bisexuals and their supporters as a day to celebrate the process of accepting and being open about their sexual orientation. Commemorating its sixth year, National Coming Out Day festivities will be held across the country encouraging people to take their next step in the coming out process.

Several celebrities and prominent figures have come out this year and made it easier for others to take that first step and come out. "When people like tennis great Martina Navratilova, singers k.d. Lang, Janis Ian and Melissa Etheridge, media mogul David Geffen, and former Mr. Universe and Mr. Olympia Bob Jackson-Paris come out, they send a strong message to those in the closet that coming out and being honest about who you are is a better and happier way to live," says Rob Eichberg. "Each of us who comes out also has a tremendous impact on those around us. Closeted lesbian and gay family members who find out their 'favorite Aunt Sarah or Uncle Jim' is also gay, immediately adopt a better sense of self worth and optimism about living a happy and productive life free of the deceit and shame they face in the closet.. Heterosexuals who find out family members are gay rapidly learn the negative stereotypes they have of lesbian and gay people are false. It's important to provide them with those role models."

"Coming out and having a political impact are integrally linked," says Tim McFeeley, Executive Director of the Human Rights Campaign Fund. "Every poll shows that American voters who know a family member, loved one or someone close to them is lesbian, gay or bisexual support federal protection against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Coming out to the people who love and respect you is the most important political act you can do."

National Coming Out Day is held on October 11 to commemorate the 1987 March on Washington for Gay and Lesbian Rights. The march was a milestone for more than 600,000 individuals who attended it and for the community nationwide. October 11 also commemorates the inaugural visit of the Names Project (the AIDS Quilt) to the nation's Capital.

The first NCOD was held in 1988 as a positive and proactive statement of pride on the part of the lesbian and gay community and received media recognition from over 41 mainstream and 58 lesbian and gay publications as well as attention from the Oprah Winfrey show, USA Today, and National Public Radio. □

BEING OUT IN ACADEME:

A YEAR OF MY LIFE IN ENID, AMERICA

by Jan McDonald

They knew I was a lesbian when they hired me to be the Chair of Education at Phillips University in the Spring of 1992, but I didn't know they knew. I had gone to no lengths to hide it, but neither had I mentioned it during my three-day interview. They knew my several trips to Stillwater were to see my partner Judy who had been hired at OSU the year before, but I didn't know they knew. Since Phillips is affiliated with the Disciples of Christ, I was not surprised to be asked about how comfortable I would be in a church-related institution. But, I must admit that being asked that question by every individual who interviewed me, seemed odd.

As I waited back in New York, negotiations regarding my hiring were bogged down for over a month because of the on-campus debate over my sexual orientation. My references were called a second time and asked if I had ever done or said anything to "embarrass" the institution. The debate continued after my hiring was announced. Several homophobic faculty members (some of whom subsequently left the institution) had laid the groundwork for much concern.

The first day of class I always ask students to tell me a little about themselves in writing. One student wrote: "I'm black, gay, loud, and proud." I was surprised and very pleased to see her pride and openness. She began frequenting my office to discuss the course material. Our discussions turned quickly to issues of sexuality and the possibility of starting a gay, lesbian, bisexual group on campus. Soon more students began arriving in my office and the idea of the club became a reality. I spoke with a few faculty members and administrators. They were encouraging and not surprised that I was asking. I came out to them. They weren't surprised about that either. Five weeks after my arrival, I realized that I didn't have to come out to the campus community. I was already out. (continued page 4)

In observance of National Coming Out Day, we asked our readers to share stories of their coming out with us. This issue is devoted to those stories. They represent the spectrum of coming out from personally recognizing and accepting our sexuality to living openly and publicly as a lesbian. In a society where lesbians and bisexuals continually face prejudice and oppression, all are stories of courage. We offer them with the hope and the challenge that you, the reader, will find the inspiration to take another step in your coming out process.

ST. SYBIL

St. Sybil is an occasional contributor to this space. This month, much to her astonishment, she received a real query in a real letter from a real person, and didn't have to compose the question as well as the answer. Keep up the good work, folks!

Dear St. Sybil,

I want Oklahoma to have a lottery but, can you tell me why there aren't more lottery winners for smaller sums than one winner for an excessive sum??? I mean, doesn't that defeat our purpose for having a lottery and merely corrupt and ruin one more life? If there's a 20 million dollar pot, wouldn't it benefit more people and more businesses if there were at least 20 winners?

We want Oklahoma to have a multi-winner kind of lottery, how can we help make that so?

Sincerely,

Jack Pots and friends

Dear Jack,

I think maybe the real purpose of having a lottery is not to make a few people really really happy and then ruin & corrupt their lives, but to raise money for the state in as painless (and politically safe) a way as possible. Those who favor a lottery hope that a major portion of the funds raised would be used to improve the quality of lives of those citizens most in need - your school children and teachers, for example. (Are you aware that several of the school buildings in Oklahoma City are not air conditioned? This is barbaric. Would you be surprised to learn that most of these schools have a predominantly minority student body? Neither was I.)

Anyway, back to your question. At this time the lottery is still only a proposal, and you can have all kinds of input on its final form. Write the Governor, the Lt. Governor, and your State Senator and Representative. Write Nickles and Boren and your Congressman. It is the same as with all legislation you want to influence: the first thing you do is pick up the phone, or pick up a pen.

Good luck,

Sybil

Dear St. Sybil,

This month, for Coming Out day, could you bring out some famous people who we might not know are gay?

Thanks,

N. Quisitive

Dear N,

Yes, I could, thank you for asking. I can do almost anything. Will I do it? Not likely. Tend to your own garden, Sweetie.

Bye,

Sybil

□

POSTCARDS FROM PARADISE

Cris Williamson and Tret Fure will be in concert in Oklahoma City November 18 at the Civic Center Little Theater. Tickets for the performance, which benefits the Herland Legal Defense Fund, are \$25 and \$15 in advance. Any remaining tickets will be \$25 at the door. "Tickets have been in great demand since going on sale on September 18. The concert hall seats 390 and we expect to sell all of the tickets before the night of the concert," says organizer Wanda Chapman.

Persons who make a \$25 tax-deductible donation to the Herland Legal Defense Fund with their purchase of a \$25 ticket will be concert "Sponsors." In addition to having their names listed in the program, they will have the opportunity to meet with Cris and Tret.

Cris and Tret have just released their first duo album, *Postcards From Paradise*, after collaborating in performance settings and on each other's recordings for the past twelve years.

Singer/songwriter Cris Williamson is one of the most successful artists in the independent music industry. She has performed in virtually every major concert hall in the United States -- including two sold-out performances at Carnegie Hall -- recorded 14 albums with Olivia Records, and has sold nearly one million. Her first album, *The Changer and The Changed*, sold more than a quarter of a million copies, becoming one of the best-selling releases from an independent label.

Tret Fure began writing music at the age of 19 while a student at the University of California at Berkeley. After moving to Los Angeles, she worked with Spencer Davis as a vocalist and guitarist. She has recorded four solo albums, *Tret Fure*, *Terminal Hold*, *Edges of the Heart*, and *Time Turns the Moon*. In 1975, Tret began engineering and producing soundtracks and albums, becoming one of the first women in the industry to do so.

The Herland Legal Defense Fund was established in 1992 to assist lesbians who have lost custody of their children. The Fund is currently working with two lesbian families where child custody was granted to the father solely on the basis of the mother's lesbianism. Both cases are being appealed in the hope that the children will be returned to their mothers and a favorable precedent set. □

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Couples,
Individuals, &
Family Therapy

COMING OUT

by Vivien Ng

I used to keep a "Coming Out" folder in my file cabinet. No, I wasn't a closet Edgar Hoover snooping on the private lives of friends and enemies alike, but I was a collector of all sorts of essays and articles about the coming out experience. Once in a while, I would open the folder to pull out an endpiece written by John D'Emilio called "Professors Owe It to Their Students to Come Out," and read it over and over again for affirmation.

D'Emilio was not arguing the position that EVERY lesbian or gay professor should come out publicly to their students, but his point was that those who could afford to--those with tenure, for example--owe it to their students to be out. While I had always agreed with his position, I did not really appreciate how right he was until OU's GLBA students began to tell me how much it meant to them to see me at their meetings.

...to do nothing is to collude with homophobes and other hate mongers.

We are not necessarily talking about great feats of courage here. It does not take much to go to a GLBA meeting. It does not take much to use an occasional "we" when referring to the lesbian/gay community. And it takes nothing at all to speak out against homophobia and heterosexism. But to do nothing is to collude with homophobes and other hate mongers.

I am not so naive that I do not recognize the dangers associated with being out. Esther Newton has written a powerful piece that speaks to such perils, "Academe's Homophobia: It Damages Careers and Ruins Lives." She relates how she was shoved from behind while ice skating and how her wrist was broken in three places because of the nasty fall, all because she was seen holding hands with another woman. While homophobia in academe is not as overtly violent, it is nonetheless just as damaging: "It occurs in a privileged context where hostility is rarely so crudely expressed. But it does break spirits, damage careers, and ruin lives. Like my attacker at the skating rink, homophobia among academics is usually a sneak. It strikes in closed-door meetings of tenure-review and promotion committees and in secret letters of recommendation. Rejection and denial are almost always attributed to the victim's alleged personal and intellectual shortcomings."

Newton's career indeed suffered because she is a lesbian, but, in the final analysis, she has no regrets about being out: "I have been held back, paid less, disrespected by many people. More profoundly, homophobia has forced me to define my life by its imperatives. Without it, I would not identify so strongly with other homosexuals. My work might have been on paleolithic arrowheads instead of on people who are marginal and different. Although the kind of writing and teaching I do best--interdisciplinary, controversial--has been scorned by some colleagues, it has gained me the respect of others, and the admiration of students. I have found my intellectual voice in the silence society has tried to impose on me."

I am comfortable with being out. I wish more of my colleagues were out. I used to regard myself as morally superior to those who remain in the closet, until I read Audre Lorde and learned the lesson of empathy: "[I]f I fail to recognize...the woman who remains closeted because her homophobic community is her only life support, the woman who chooses silence instead of another death...if I fail to recognize them as other faces of myself, then I am contributing not only to each of their oppressions but also to my own...."

We do owe it to our students to come out, but we should do it on our own terms, according to our own timetable. To do otherwise denies us our self-determination, and thus defeats the very meaning of coming out. □

TAKING THE NEXT STEP

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR OBSERVING NATIONAL COMING OUT DAY

1. Say the word lesbian out loud.
2. Say the word lesbian out loud in a public place.
3. Tell someone you love that you are a lesbian.
4. Wear a Lesbian Pride button to work.
5. Invite your parents, brother, sister, co-worker over to your house without "de-dyking" it.
6. Put your lover's picture on your desk at work.
7. If you hear a derogatory lesbian joke -- don't laugh.
8. Write a letter to the producers of your favorite TV show asking them to include positive lesbian characters.
9. Read a novel or non-fiction work about lesbians.
10. Check out a book from the library with the word lesbian in the title. If you can't find one, ask the library to include books by and about lesbians.
11. Join the women of Herland, the women and men of Simply Equal and OGLPC at 7 P.M. on Wednesday night, October 13, at the Spaghetti Warehouse to celebrate our coming out.

These are just a few suggestions of ways to come out a little further. Whatever you do for National Coming Out Day, the important thing is to take pride in yourself and your community. □

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JOY HUSKA, D.V.M.

OUT IN ACADEME

(continued from page 1)

With the help of Oklahoma State's GLBCA, a group of 5-7 Phillips students and Enid residents wrote a constitution and presented it to the Phillips Student Senate. To our shock, our proposal for a group passed unanimously after extremely limited debate. When the student newspaper announced the group's existence, the local paper, the *Enid News and Eagle* picked up the story and called me for an interview. The next day (Friday, October 30th), the paper's front page headline read "Gay, lesbian support group formed at Phillips University." The article described the purpose of the group (which we called Perspectives) through interviews with me, our club president, and our community liaison. Each of us also confirmed how pleased (though surprised) we were to find the campus to be so open. An Associate Professor at Phillips Theological Seminary was interviewed and noted the "mixed opinions of church members" on the issue of homosexuality. He added though, that those opinions had no bearing on the formation of the group. He said that "differences of opinion are allowed in the denomination" and that even "though people can radically disagree," the "overriding perspective of the denomination" is to "seek to bring about unity in the face of diversity." He mentioned that there was a gay and lesbian support group "at the denomination's national level" which had the support of "a number of congregations." The director of public relations was also interviewed for the article. He denied a rumor that a member of the Board of Trustees had threatened to resign because of the new club.

The newspaper coverage outraged a group of faculty, staff, and students who felt that the article portrayed a false perception that the entire university community supported the club. The group quickly organized a day on campus to "Reaffirm Romans I:24-27." Fliers announcing the meeting covered the campus, and the Friday after the article first appeared, we were back on the front page -- "Gathering clears air on gays" (October 7, 1992). The article described the meeting of more than 100 people who squeezed into a small faculty lounge to hear "several members of the Phillips faculty who wanted to make it clear that they had not sanctioned Perspectives..." One organizer noted that their purpose was to "share redemptive powers." Following a heated and extremely emotional exchange on the morality of homosexuality, "a variety of views on the Scriptures, Christian love, and campus responsibilities were discussed." "Supporters of the club challenged everyone to come out to meetings and find out what the club [was] really about."

"Several students broke into tears in explaining that judging fellow human beings seemed completely opposite of Christian love." The campus Chaplin praised the meeting "for creating discussion, bringing people together, and giving people a chance to examine their differences." The University President said that "a university should be a place for free and open inquiry." He "approved of the public forum," and said that the "subject has not been 'as widely debated as it ought to be.'"

In the weeks following, the *Enid News and Eagle* was filled with letters to the editor from readers who were "shocked." They couldn't believe that Phillips could "call themselves a Christian University and yet allow such perverse behavior." They worried about the campus getting a "big epidemic of AIDS," compared homosexuality with "cohabitating with a dog or horse," reminded us that "God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve," and that the "only place [they] had ever read where God wiped out a whole city was because of homosexuality." In addition to the letters in the press, I received several letters (some anonymous, but most signed) that quoted scripture, reminded me that such behavior was "perverse" and that the writer was "disgusted" about the university's "decision to acknowledge this perversion." Over a period of several weeks, my secretary got harassing phone calls. In December a student wrote a letter to the campus community complaining (among many other things) about my teaching, although she wasn't a student in my class. Parents and students visited the Dean's office, concerned that I was allowed to teach at Phillips.

One day I was invited to visit an Enid elementary school for a special program they were having. Distraught that the press hadn't come to cover this special event, one of the teachers said, "Gee, it's too bad that the newspaper wasn't here for this." One of the school counselors responded to the group: "We should have told them Jan was coming!"

In the midst of all of the controversy, I received a wonderful letter of support from a retired Disciples minister from Enid. He told me of his lesbian daughter and how much he supported her. He said he was "pleased about the formation of a gay and lesbian support group on campus." Letters like his weren't as frequent as the others, but they more than made up for them. Several gay alums living in Enid called to say they wished there had been a group on campus when they were students. Fellow faculty members, the chaplin, and the retired Disciples minister dropped by my office routinely to make sure I was "OK," express support, and share hugs. A student popped her head into my office and said, "Dr. McDonald, you don't know me, but I just wanted you to know that some of us are really sorry to see what you've had to go through."

As the debate persisted, several contributors asked for their money back from the University. "Concerned Christians" questioned the President when he attended community functions. The President wrote a letter to the campus community and reminded them of the mission of the University. He wrote, it is a place "where free and open inquiry takes place," "where each of us is heard, where the opinions of each of us are respected, where our differences are honored, and where our persons are held in the highest regard."

Things settled down after the new year. For a while, I thought we were past the eye of the storm. The group was meeting twice a month and offered a variety of programs. Our attendance at meetings ranged from ten to 25 and included a consistent group of self-declared heterosexuals. We watched films and videos with gay and lesbian themes, we discussed commitment versus marriage, we had AIDS and safer sex awareness seminars, we shared coming out stories. We had a guest speaker from San Francisco who had lived as a transvestite while growing up in Enid and had recently completed sex-

change surgery. She wore a gold sequined dress with matching spike heels, spoke bluntly, and announced her HIV positive status.

February brought National Condom week and the Umbrella Coalition on campus planned a week of activities. The issue stimulated controversy and the campus and local press descended. The papers, once again, were filled with articles and letters to the editors. On February the 16th, three local churches bought a full page of the Enid paper and filled it with seven full-length columns of their names and a letter to the President of the University. They wrote that they were "embarrassed" and "offended" by the "open promotion of the homosexual lifestyle" and "condom activities" on campus. The President's lawn was littered with garbage and an old toilet bowl. More contributors requested their donations be returned.

The next day, the President and the Board of Trustees ran their own full-page ad. The University Seal was set above a bold-lettered, "THE PURPOSE OF PHILLIPS UNIVERSITY." This was followed by the University motto, its mission statement, and its objectives and methods. Appearing at the bottom of the page was a statement signed by the President and the Chairman of the Board. It read, "there is unanimity on the University campus that gay and lesbian persons are entitled to be treated with all the respect due any student..." The University affirmed their commitment to "recognize the profound seriousness of sexually transmitted diseases"; and to "increased efforts" to encourage "personal discipline" and "education."

I have no idea how this year will be for me and the Phillips community. I know that I feel welcome and valued. My partner Judy came to the opening campus picnic, something we never would have considered last year. She was warmly welcomed by those few who had already met her and those who had only known of her. This year Judy's name follows mine in the campus directory. In the middle of a wall-size puzzle, showing campus activities and organizations welcoming students and parents to campus, was a puzzle piece in bold blue that said: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Association. Seven new and former students have come out to me. On the other hand, the editor of the school newspaper just printed an editorial condemning the "immoral lifestyle" of homosexuals and the puzzle piece has been cut out and removed several times in the first three weeks of school. Each time, though, it has been replaced by notes like "this may not be your thing, but this group is a part of our campus community." I have no idea what will be in store for us this year at Phillips, but on most days, I really look forward to the second year of my life in Enid, America. □

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COMING OUT...

I've battled with it for years. Do I keep it all inside and agonize or do I let the secret out? I can remember the musk-scented nurse that cared for me during a hospitalization at age 6, Mrs. Girod, my 4th grade homeroom teacher going through a divorce whom I wanted to hug tenderly, Miss Dickinson in 9th grade Home Economics who instilled in me the classic phrase, "Girls, you're not a machine that a guy can pop a quarter into and get any pleasure he wants!", and then Kellee in my college-bound English class who sat in front of me - my insides ached when she turned around long enough to wink at me with those greenish-hazel eyes and flash a quick smile. There were countless others - my most favorite was Peggy - short for Margaret. She had long, wine colored nails, perfect calves attached to petite feet in 3-inch pumps and sleek, dark brown hair. We were at the Market Street Bar, drunk on margaritas, when she abruptly hugged me and said very confidently that she was divorcing her husband. I was ecstatic - now was my opportunity to become closer to her, and then she announced that she was in love with Bobby who was joining the Air Force. I hurt over it because I worshipped her. I asked her out anyway and she declined. She married Bobby and on her last day of work, before moving to Illinois with him, I gave her a pair of Garnet earrings. Her face lit up and she cried as she hugged me. I can still smell her hair and feel her soft skin... and it still hurts ten years later.

Since then, I've had relationships with women and men - in fact, I'm married now to a man that I love, but am emotionally distant from. I love a woman who is my true love, emotionally and spiritually. We cherish every second and spend our time to the fullest extent. My "coming out" is a consistent experience - it may never be complete, but it is gratifying.

To Debbie I. from Robbie H. □

COMING OUT STORY # 1,000,000,001

It was as if she laid arson to my soul and body; fire enhancers in every corner, a rain of kerosene over all; and one small match - one laugh leaping from her eyes and breathed through her sweet little teeth from a distance just inside my personal-integrity zone - no wonder when the fire caught I set a new standard for the word "easy".

The giant hand of Creator, Life Force, La Loba, the raunchy goddess Bauba, Joy and Gladness, Yin and Yang, the goddess, the one real god and all gods, reached through that beautiful sexy woman to my midsection, found the dual switches of my physical and emotional senses, and turned me on. I supposed that I must have reeled from the shock; if I had not managed to lower my eyes from hers I would surely have burned to an ash in a moment. My skin glowed neon; and I expected at any moment for the management of the place to ask me to leave.

I could as easily have held back the ocean tide, or denied myself my next breath, as to deny this firestorm.

Another Vote for "Orientation" □

A QUESTION OF OUTNESS

by Peggy Johnson

When did I first come out?

Was it in the fifth grade when I surreptitiously snuck my arm around Rosemarie's shoulders while we were watching a film in the auditorium? (Smile a little smile for me, Rosemarie, Rosemarie.)

Was it at 12 or 13 when I read an article on handwriting which said if your p's and q's tails below the line are pointed you have "homosexual tendencies" and I saw that mine did?

Was it in band when I got jealous when my flute-playing friend Michele went out with boys instead of me?

Was it in college when I followed Cindy around until she started hanging out with me?

Was it when the other girls on the dorm hall called me a lesbian and told me I had to move and all I knew was that I loved a woman? My roommate still thought of me as me and didn't want me to move. My love and I ignored it all (or so we thought) and hopped a train for California.

Was it the following summer after she decided she wasn't "gay" and I had a boyfriend when I realized consciously that "It's women. I like women."?

Was it the relationship I discovered with a woman right after I realized that "It's women" (That thing of the heart.)

Was it when I realized that Anita Bryant was talking about me?

Was it the first time I went to a gay bar?

Was it the first time I went to a lesbian bar?

Was it the time I bought *The Joy of Lesbian Sex* at the mall in Macon, Georgia?

Was it the time my mother asked me if I were homosexual and I said yes?

Was it the first time I called myself gay?

Was it the first time my mother called me a lesbian like it was something bad?

Was it the first time I called myself lesbian and realized that was something beautiful?

Was it when I claimed the word "dyke" as my own?

Was it when I realized I never had to date men again?

Was it when I checked "no" on the have-you-ever-engaged-in-homosexual-acts box of the Navy admission form and knew I was lying?

Was it when the Navy asked me if I were a lesbian and I said yes?

Was it the first time I told a friend, co-worker, teacher, boss that I am a lesbian?

Was it when I wrote Don't Say No, High School Senior, That Thing of the Heart?

Was it the first time my name ever appeared in the Herland Voice?

Was it the first time I said "lesbian" into a microphone?

Was it the first time I ever told the teller of a gay or lesbian joke that I thought it was offensive?

Was it the first time I ever listened to Meg Christian and Cris Williamson?

Was it when I checked out library books by Jill Johnston, Del Martin, Phyllis Lyon, Kate Millet?

Was it the first time I sang for a benefit for some lesbian or gay cause?

Was it the first time I went to a lesbian and gay pride rally or wore a t-shirt with an L or a G on it?

Was it the time a friend and I smiled and waved at the people who yelled "Dyke!!" at us out their car window?

Was it the first time the Daily Oklahoman or the Oklahoma Gazette ever published an article mentioning that I am a lesbian?

Was it the first time I ever thought it, wrote it, said it, did it?

Was it the first time someone else thought that I was?

Is it in this article when the hardest part is not coming out but is admitting that I had a few relationships with men?

Is it every time I tell my story to others so maybe it will ease their burden of silence or, better yet, breaking it?

I don't know. All I do know is that this is my story and I love it. I love it because it's mine. I love it because it's rich with culture and experience. And it means that through now I have made it. I have made it beyond societal boundaries, norms and prescribed role-play to become myself. I have cut the puppet strings and been given the gift of reality, the gift of true love. No regrets. □

COMING OUT

Coming out was a long procedure for me. When I was 17 years old I was in love with my best friend. After 3 years of telling me "I love you, and no man could mean as much as you do to me", she came home and told me she was getting married, and moving to Colorado. Would I move with them? Needless to say I was heartbroken. So I did what society taught me to do.

I got married, had three children, stayed home and pretended to be the happy homemaker. But it didn't work, after ten years of trying to conform to society I left.

After awhile we moved in with a single mother and her two children. We became very close. She told everyone I was her Significant Other. I didn't know anything about being a lesbian. She was a big tease she wanted to be cuddled every night, slept naked, wanted full body rubs, and to top it off she even wanted to take showers together. But according to her we were not lovers. I knew I wanted more than this. I wanted a real relationship with a woman. But who? I didn't know any lesbians. I didn't even know Wichita Kansas had any gay bars.

I took a job of running a transitional home for homeless women and children. I lived there and had an open door policy.

One night a friend I didn't know well came walking in all depressed and needing a place to stay. I asked her if she wanted her own room or to share mine. Was I ever glad she didn't want to be alone, and wanted to share mine. (Sorry ladies, nothing happened). She became a regular evening guest after that.

My feelings for her were different than I'd ever felt before. I'd watch her get off the bus in front of the house. I'd sneak peeks of her in the bathtub. I'd tickle her just so I could touch her. I'd sit on her lap just to feel her arms around me. I was in love, but what do I do with all these feelings?

One night I told her I wanted a relationship with a woman. (I should have been more assertive and told her "The woman I want is you, Karen"!)

Karen thought I wanted someone else. She told me she'd been with a woman before and couldn't live the lesbian lifestyle. (Shit, my heart was broken again.)

Karen kept coming over, sleeping over. One morning I was awakened by the most gentle hand caressing my breast.

We didn't talk about it until later that evening. I've never been the same since.

My whole life something was missing. It all came clear; the love, the understanding, the closeness of being with another woman.

What I'd been looking for was a soul sister. I found that in Karen. We've been together for five years now and I plan to spend the rest of my life with her.

By B. S.

CLUES

When I finally realized where my affectional/sexual orientation & preference lay, I had the easiest coming out in all of history; everyone else, it seems, already knew, and they were happy I finally figured it out. I got congratulatory cards and even some presents, from friends and family alike. Just a few of my early-life clues were:

I nearly dislocated my shoulder trying to kiss my elbow when I was little, trying to change from a girl to a boy.

For the talent show at summer camp between my 7th & 8th grades, I performed my interpretation of "Be My Love" in drag, sounding as much as I could like Mario Lanza. The camp (talk about "camp"!) was amazed.

I have always loved men's clothes. I used to tell myself I wanted to be with someone wearing them; in reality I wanted to be *in* them.

The sexiest human being I ever saw was a cocky young dyke in full masculine drag, with not one but three very feminine, very attractive women on her arm. She was probably twenty-five or thirty, slim and elegant and commanding, with very short dark hair, wearing a grey pinstripe suit. She was breathtaking; her face and figure and aura are imprinted on my mind; but I never thought consciously of her again until I came out many years later.

I was always secretly convinced that men were incapable of actually loving anyone except themselves, or possibly their sons, fathers or brothers. (I have since come to believe that a few are as capable of love as women are.)

With a few important exceptions, almost all of my friends for years before coming out were lesbians.

Of the seven women including my sister and me and two sets of first cousins, five and a half are lesbians; and I was the last to know it or act on it. (The last, that is, unless my sister is yet to come out, heh heh.)

I wish everyone could have as easy and happy a coming-out as I did; but maybe I wouldn't have been so lucky with it if I had read my feelings and come to my senses at a more reasonable age. Everything is a trade-off, I guess.

An Old but Happily Practicing Lesbian

SLEEPING OVER

One day in 4th grade, Jimmy came to school and told us he had found out how babies are made and how people "do it". Then on Friday some of us girls in the class rode the school bus home to S's house out in the country for a sleep-over. Before dinner time, we all went out to the river bed and talked over what Jimmy had told us and we decided to see what it might be like to touch one another. Later, back at the house after supper, games of tag, and hide and seek, we went upstairs to the old iron bed. The three of us would take turns experimenting the missionary position, utilizing our hands to create the "excitement" with the partner, laughing and giggling at the tickling sensation, at the same time supremely cognizant of the necessity to be quiet about our activities, for S's mom and dad were sleeping downstairs; but her three brothers were not far away in a room down the hall. We whispered about how men and women went about such activities, although it was difficult to imagine that our own parents actually did such things...

7th grade: On our way back to town from a ballgame at Hazelton, 40 miles away, Opal was describing how kissing takes place, using her experiences with her boyfriend as references. I asked her just how kissing should be done properly, and suggested that she show me. She explained that when the lips meet, there must always be left a small space, so that if the boy intends to kiss in the French mode, there would be room enough for the tongue. Opal was sitting on my lap in the crowded car, and we put a coat over our heads and Opal demonstrated this technique. I pretended to be a slow learner, to require more instruction, so that more practice would be required...

My senior year in college, my roommate and some other friends and I went to Wichita to visit the gay bars. Entering the first bar on our tour, I saw two women and a male classmate of my sister, seated at a table near the door. Now my hometown had a population of a booming 4090, so there were no secrets, as I was soon to discover, for the three patrons from my hometown assured me that they had always "known" about me. At one point during the evening, the bartender brought me a drink I had not ordered. He explained that it was from Kenny (my former fiance), seated at the bar. A few years earlier, we had decided to cancel our wedding plans, as I was not of that persuasion, and obviously, neither was he.

Of the episodes related to my coming out, the sleepover experiment is my fondest memory..

by L. as told to S.

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Subscriptions to *The Voice* are free upon request.

The Voice is printed on recycled paper.

DIVERSITY WITHIN OUR OWN COMMUNITY: A FIRST STEP

By Judith S. Kaufman

September 24-26 was the weekend for the retreat at Ardmore. It was also Yom Kippur which began on sundown Friday night and ended on sundown Saturday night. Yom Kippur is one of the Jewish high holidays; it is the holiest day of the year and marks the end of a ten day period that begins with Rosh Ha-Shanah. Rosh Ha-Shanah is the Jewish new year which marks the year 5754. Yom Kippur and the days which precede it are a time for most Jews (religious and non-religious) to come together and introspect on the experiences of the past year and how those experiences can be used to make the coming year a better one. We traditionally say to each other "Le-Shanah Tovah" which means "may the coming year be a good one for you." The new year is also a time to seek forgiveness from those you may have hurt during the past year, and it is a time to grant forgiveness as well. Even for non-religious Jews, Yom Kippur is embedded in our cultural history. It is a time of the year when you especially take notice of your identity as a Jew and your solidarity with other Jews.

The ideas of Jewish religion and culture are important ones to understand. I, like many Jews, consider myself a secular Jew. I do not believe in god, but this does not diminish or trivialize my Jewishness. Jews share a rich history that is marred by hatred and oppression and in the face of this we hold dearly to our history to keep the culture alive. I have a tremendous amount of pride in being a Jew and the holidays are a time to celebrate that pride, a time to remember my history and a time to recall my childhood when my entire family came together at my grandmother's house to feast, celebrate, remember, and rejoice in being a Jew. In this way, the holidays are inextricably tied to Jewish identity which for many includes religion, but for all includes culture.

I understand that Herland has adopted a policy of ignoring all holidays based on your belief that the women's community is not particularly religious. This belief entails the assumption that your beliefs are representative of the entire community. Simone de Beauvoir once said that men describe the world from their own point of view and then confuse their view with the absolute truth. What you have done is to confuse a belief about yourselves for the truth. Your decision to ignore the holidays has had the result of excluding all those who do not share your views. In my case, your policy of exclusion is a form of anti-Semitism that is not overt or easily identified. It is one which Irena Klepfisz describes as "elusive and difficult to pinpoint, for it is either the anti-Semitism of omission or one which trivializes the Jewish experience."¹ I am not raising the issue of anti-Semitism to make you feel guilty, and I do not want you to see this as yet "another ism" to deal with. This is about all of us becoming fuller human beings because we recognize that we do not all see the world in the same way. As women, and as lesbians and bisexuals we know what it means to live in a

world that tries to discount us and deny our existence. We need to learn from this knowledge and bring it to bear on our own community.

If Herland has as one of its goals to be inclusive, to achieve diversity then you must take the time to educate yourselves and to sensitize yourselves to the needs of the community you would like to reach out to. The first step involves raising your level of consciousness and recognizing that your beliefs naturally differ from the community that you would like to include. I have written this essay in the spirit of dialogue and education. My hope is that it stimulates a dialogue on issues of diversity within the Herland community and that this dialogue leads to commitment and action to achieve diversity. I missed you this year at the fall retreat, and I want you to know that I am grateful for Herland. My life here in Oklahoma and as a lesbian is easier and fuller because of your existence.

Le-Shanah Tovah!

¹. From Irena Klepfisz, *Dreams of an Insomniac: Jewish Feminist Essays, Speeches and Diatribes*. (Portland, Oregon: The Eighth Mountain Press, 1990) □

HERLAND RESPONSE

The Fall '93 Herland Retreat coincided with Yom Kippur, the highest and most holy of Jewish holidays. Because of this the retreat lost the company of some fine women, and we sincerely regret this. We also regret any pain this caused.

Herland has long had a practice of not recognizing religious holidays, as many of us feel that organized religion has been the source of much suffering, especially on the part of women. However, we do not want to exclude anyone, or give offense; and we recognize that Jewish culture is much more than a religion.

We are grateful for Judy's willingness to educate us and the Herland community and hope *the Voice* will continue to be a forum for a dialogue on the the women's/lesbian community and welcoming diversity vs. exclusion. Additionally, all women are welcome to attend and have input at all Herland Board meetings.

ARTIST COLLECTIVE FORMED

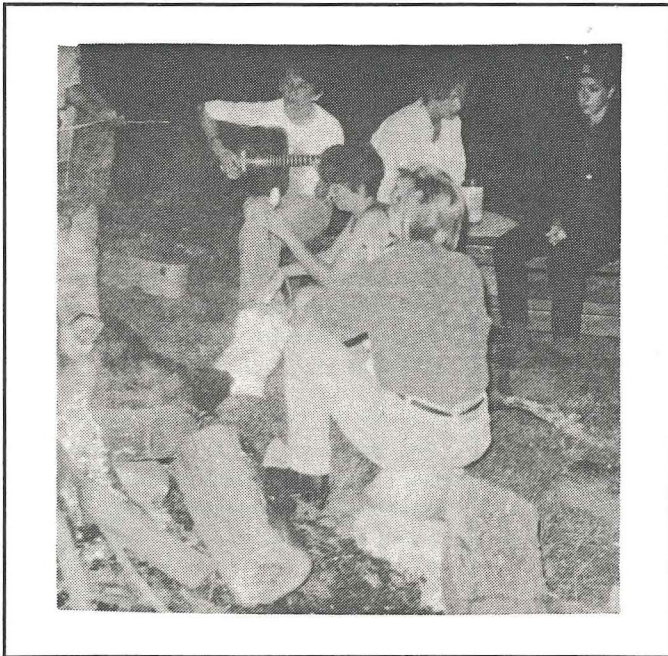
Eight central Oklahoma artists have formed a collective through the Triangle Association of Oklahoma City to provide a wider forum for the work of lesbian, gay and bisexual artists. Known as the Queer Consortium, the group plans to host art showings on a bi-monthly basis at the Triangle Association offices, 2135 N.W. 39th Street in Oklahoma City.

"There is a tremendous amount of excellent work being produced by Oklahoma's gay, lesbian, and bi-sexual community," said Triangle Association Director, Dale Smithson. "It's our hope that the Consortium will give all Oklahomans a chance to become familiar with this work."

Triangle Association is a non-profit HIV testing, counseling, treatment and outreach center. The Association administers free, anonymous HIV testing seven days a week, provides treatment for people testing HIV positive and for people living with AIDS. The Association is open from noon to 10 p.m. seven days a week. For more information call 843-8378. □



Herlander's celebrate the closing of the Lower Deck. The Lower Deck, a Norman bar that had posted a sign "No Dykes" was the site of protests and a boycott led by Simply Equal - Norman.



The traditional campfire was just one of the highlights of Herland's Fall Retreat. Over 100 retreaters laughed, played, sang, and built community during the three day retreat at Lake Murray State Park.

OKC HUMAN RIGHTS ORDINANCE

The Oklahoma City Council will consider adoption of revised human rights ordinance at their meeting on October 5. The proposed ordinance, recommended by the Oklahoma City Human Rights Commission, includes sexual orientation as a protected category. I

The proposed ordinance will prohibit discrimination based on age, disability, sexual orientation, familial in addition to race, religion, color, creed, sex, ancestry, or national origin which are included in the existing ordinance.

The proposed ordinance is scheduled for a vote on October 5. City council members may be reached to register your opinion on the ordinance by calling:

- Mayor Ron Norick -- 297-2424
- Frosty Peak, Ward 1 -- 297-2569
- Mark Schwartz, Ward 2 -- 297-2402
- Jack Cornett, Ward 3 -- 297-2404
- Frances Lowery, Ward 4 -- 297-2402
- Jerry Foshee, Ward 5 -- 297-2569
- Beverly Hodges, Ward 6 -- 297-2402
- Willa Johnson, Ward 7 -- 297-2569
- Jackie Carey, Ward 8 -- 297-2404

□

HELP!

Your back hurts, you get headaches too often, you can't sit comfortably for any length of time, you hate driving on long trips because your shoulders get so tense, you wish you could run but when you try your body just feels too sluggish, when you play golf it really bothers your left shoulder, you feel like you can't breathe as fully as you'd like, gravity seems to be getting the best of you.

If any of the above is true for you (or anything else you can think of), you may benefit from Aston Patterning®, a form of "body-work." Aston Patterning includes exploring different ways of using your body in your daily life, whether it be at work, sports, performing arts, sleeping or reading in bed. It also involves hands-on deep tissue release work and massage. It helps you find a way to get out of the pain circuit and into a body that is more yours than you ever thought it could be.

For more information, call Rhonda at

942-4748

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Four 1½-Hour Sessions for just \$130⁰⁰

FOR NEW CLIENTS

Dykes To Watch Out For



BULLETIN BOARD

WANTED: Stories, episodes, etc. of your experiences on or about the Red River, red-eared sliders, rose rocks, red-tailed hawks, other experiences with RED in Oklahoma. Send to - or contact - Suzan Ceterra, P. O. Box 513, Bethany, Oklahoma 73008. THANKS!

Lesbian Only Counseling group, Wednesday evenings. Call Jo L. Soske, M.Ed/MHR/NCADC/NCC/LPC at 364-5708.

"Teaching Alternatives to Violence"; Speech and Dialogue with Colman McCarthy, Saturday, October 2, at 8 p.m., at St. Luke's United Methodist Church, 222 NW 15th, OKC. Mr. McCarthy, nationally known as a writer for the Washington Post, has for decades taught peace studies and nonviolent conflict resolution in Washington D.C. schools and colleges.

LESBIAN POTLUCK: Lesbian faculty and staff employed at Oklahoma universities and colleges are invited to a potluck dinner on October 16 at 7 p.m. in Stillwater. For more details, call Judy at (405) 377-4718 in Stillwater or Vivien at (405) 364-2693 in Norman.

Thanks to all those who donated prizes for the raffle held at the fall retreat: The Kitchen, Lobos, C&A Designs, Peggy Johnson, Diana Faulkner and Tommy Thomas.

Advocacy Without Fear! The League of Women Voters of Oklahoma will present a lobbying seminar on Friday, November 3 at the Oklahoma State Capitol. For more information contact the League of Women Voters, 525 NW 13, OKC, OK 83103 or call (405)236-5338.

The Audre Lorde Poetry Competition sponsored by The Cleveland Poetry Center is open to all lesbian poets of color. The winning poet will have her manuscript published by the Cleveland Poetry Center at Cleveland State University in Spring, 1994. For more information contact, Prof. Nuala Archer, Director Cleveland Poetry Center, CSU Department of English, Rhodes Tower, Room 1815, Cleveland Ohio 44115.

HERLAND FINANCIAL REPORT JANUARY - JUNE, 1993

Operating Account

Income:	\$13,126	Expenses	\$15,842
Donations	\$ 2,325	Building	\$ 5,102
Bookstore sales	\$ 2,467	(Mortgage, utilities & maintenance)	
Retreat Registrations	\$ 2,965	Newsletter	\$ 2,284
Events	\$ 2,807	Inventory	\$ 1,881
Other	\$ 2,562	Retreat	\$ 1,679
		Program	\$ 4,579
		Other Expense	\$ 315

Herland Legal Defense Fund

Income: \$835	Expenses: \$1145
Donations \$135	Payments to attorneys \$1000
Christmas in July \$700	Mailing \$ 145




OCTOBER 1993



Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

BIRTHDAYS: October 2, 1800, Nat Turner and 1869, Mohatmas Gandhi; October 4, 1946, Susan Sarandon (aka Louise); October 10, 1956, Martina Navratilova; October 11, 1884, Eleanor Roosevelt and 1879, Joe Hill; and October 27, 1932, Sylvia Plath.

1 Allison Joseph at OSU 8 pm Student Union Theatre	2 HARVEST MOON BALL at the 1st Unitarian Church, 600 NW 13th OKC 8 pm
8	9 Gay Octoberfest
15 MISS BROWN TO YOU at VZD's 42nd & N. Western 10 p.m.	16 PEGGY JOHNSON at the Grateful Bean 10th & Walker in OKC 9 pm
22	23 FIGHT THE RIGHT Conference *The Therapy Sisters with Mary Reynolds see info below
29	30 PEGGY JOHNSON at La Baguette 323 W. Boyd Norman 9 pm

3	4 Herland Legal Defense Fund Meeting 6:30 p.m.	5	6	7
10 AIDS Walk 2pm Bricktown	11 NATIONAL COMING OUT DAY Come Out Come Out Wherever You are!!!	12	13 Coming Out Dinner call Herland for details	14
17  HERLAND Board Meeting 4:30	18 Herland Legal Defense Fund Meeting 6:30 pm	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28

31

Have a
Fine and
Spooky
Night!

* The newest Therapy Sister is Oklahoma's own Mary Reynolds. They will be in concert Saturday, October 23, at 8 p.m., at the Blue Door Cafe (once widely known as the Hotel Bohemia). Tickets are \$7.00. For more info call 525-7472.

HERLAND SISTER RESOURCES INC
2312 N.W. 39th Street
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73112
405/ 521-9696

Hours: Saturdays 10 - 6; Sundays 1 - 6

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