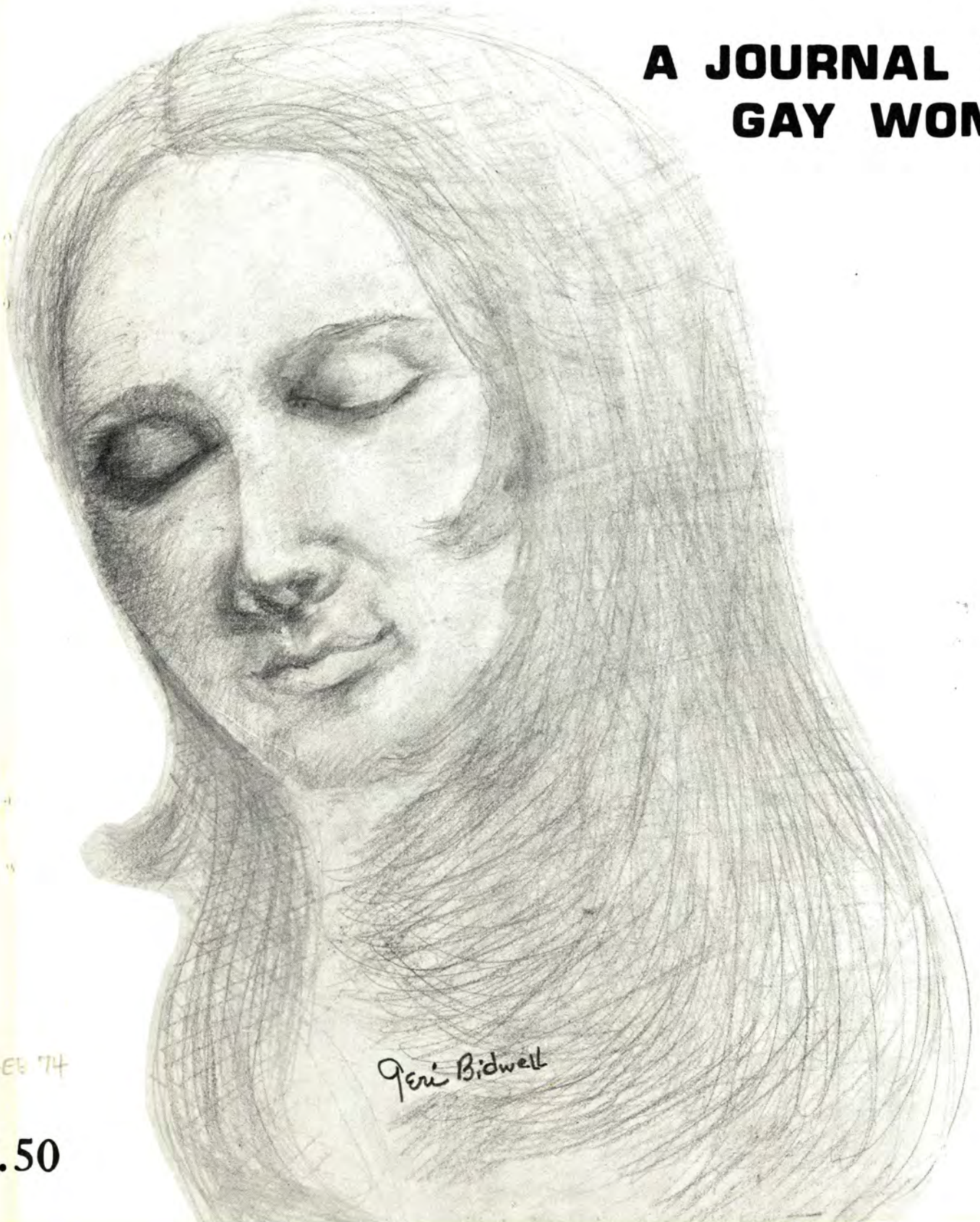


FOCUS

BOSTON DAUGHTERS OF BILITIS

**A JOURNAL FOR
GAY WOMEN**



FEB 74

\$.50

February 1974

FOCUS is published monthly by Boston Daughters of Bilitis, Room 323, 419 Boylston St., Boston, Mass. 02116

Phone: 617-262-1592

Subscriptions are \$5/year, samples 50¢. Give us your zip number. If you move, let us know in advance because the post office will not forward 3rd class mail to you.

This publication is on file at the International Women's History Archive, 2325 Oak St., Berkeley, Calif. 94708. It is available on microfilm from Bell and Howell, Wooster, Ohio to October 1971 and from the IWhA from October 71 on.

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DEADLINE for March issue: Feb.21

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THE HOMOPHILE COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICE:
ANSWERS TO SOME UNSPOKEN QUESTIONS

By Donna Medley

The Homophile Community Health Service is a mental health service primarily concerned with the needs of the gay community. Information concerning appointments, fees, historical background, or purpose can be obtained at the Health Service, 419 Boylston St., Boston, Mass. 02116 (617-266-5477). The overall philosophy of the Health Service is that homosexuality is a viable lifestyle.

The purpose of this article is to reach people who know the Health Service exists but are not sure how it may relate to them. I'd like to attempt to answer some unspoken questions. You might call this, "What You've Always Wanted to Know about HCCHS but Were Afraid to Ask".

1. Should I assume my therapist is gay? Should I ask?

Not all therapists at HCCHS are gay. However, each therapist prior to acceptance at HCCHS goes through an intensive interview process (which we fondly call the Inquisition) to determine, among other considerations, if the therapist harbors any prejudices concerning homosexuality.

You have the right to ask your therapist any question which will help you establish a trusting, working relationship. Since the emphasis is on a working relationship, it would probably be more useful to determine the therapist's attitude towards gayness rather than her (his) personal orientation. You should feel a sense of security that the therapist is not out to convert you to her (his) particular preferences or ideologies; rather, that the focus is on you.

2. What about confidentiality?

Information about clients is stored in two places: file cabinets in the office and the therapist's head. The client's file is identified by number, not by name. The numbering system resembles nightmares I used to have before math

exams in college. However, a determined thief--armed with a crowbar and Einstein-type mind could probably cart away a client's file. The hapless thief, however, would not be able to find your name in the file. All references to you in the file are either first initial or the abbreviation for client ("cl").

The therapist's head is another matter. Simply stated, if you don't trust a therapist to respect the confidentiality of the therapeutic relationship, you shouldn't go to him or her. Because it is a "small gay world", counselors at HCCHS are probably more sensitive to the absolute need for confidentiality.

3. Must I see myself as mentally ill to go to HCCHS?

It would be helpful and more realistic if you didn't view yourself as mentally ill. The medical model suggests the image of a broken mind which is somehow mended by two aspirin and a doctor-magician muttering incantations like "compulsive-obsessive personality --begone!" Because emotional pain is felt so intensely and pervasively, one is lured into seeing oneself as totally debilitated--mentally ill with no healthy functioning. That notion is insulting to the functioning part that had the ability to make the phone call for an appointment and to the part that had the insight and sense of responsibility to seek a constructive method of dealing with pain. If there were no mental health, there would be no use for therapy. If we are to consider the medical model at all, consider the absurdity of a doctor treating a cadaver.

This is not to diminish the reality of the client's emotional discomfort, nor am I suggesting that it should not be a concern. The suggestion is that to buy into the stigma of "mental

patient" is buying a burdensome illusion no less damaging than the stigma society foists on gays as "perverts". To engage in therapy at HCCHS is to become involved in a working relationship--the work should aim at personal growth as well as the reduction of pain.

If one needn't see oneself as a "basket case" to come to HCCHS, what are possible reasons to enter therapy? If you experience pain or discomfort because you hallucinate, have lost a lover, are coming out, are uncertain about your sexual preference, can't sleep at night, can't keep a job, have no friends, want to kill yourself--to name a few and to suggest a wide spectrum--you might find therapy useful.

4. Should I go to HCCHS if I'm unsure about my sexual orientation?

Where else? (To express a slight prejudice). If a person is uncertain about an important matter, the most frightening, and de-humanizing, solution is brain-washing. Certainly gays have experience heterosexual brain-washing in massive dosage and don't need another brain-washing experience. HCCHS recognizes this and is responsive to it but not only from the gay perspective. Let me give two examples of people who may have serious concerns about HCCHS's perspective.

One person is the woman who has identified herself as a lesbian but has felt reluctant to discuss her feelings for men. If she enjoys men socially and/or sexually, she may feel like a traitor with other lesbians and unable to speak with a gay therapist. The basic fear is judgment. Another fear is that she may be heterosexual and feels that she has already "paid her dues" for being gay. For whatever reason, the woman considers herself pre-judged. She remains silent or runs away from whomever she thinks "knows" her.

HCCHS as well as the lesbian community must be open to hearing these women. To be silent is to participate in gay elitism; it is to adopt the standard that heterosexuality is unnatural; it is coveting the role of oppressor. Moreover, it is falling into typical

straight viewpoint that a lesbian cannot relate to men (on any level). The point, of course, is to discover your own feelings and to have them acknowledged in relationships.

The other kind of person is the woman who has had no homosexual experience but feels drawn towards homosexuality. To be with lesbians or to go to HCCHS seems like identifying prior to a decision or real appraisal. Instead of condemning the woman or ostracizing her, it would be better to help her make her own decision.

Since we are all exposed to a heterosexual brain-washing society, we should be doubly sensitive to the malice of brain-washing. Lesbians don't need converts to lesbianism. It would be nice if the straight world had the same sense of worth.

(NOTE: Donna Medley is a therapist at the Homophile Community Health Service).

NEW LESBIAN DISC:

Lavender Jane Loves Women

Alix Dobkin's new recording of women's songs marks an important step in both the gay and the feminist movements. It is exciting to have available on the store counters a collection of songs which speak openly, warmly, tenderly, wittily, about women's love for women.

Alix's songs vary in theme and mood. She is by turns angry ("she's a bargain basement Mom-replacement")--playful ("men are human beings too, fifty percent...uh, forty-seven")--thoughtful ("we ain't got it easy, but we got it")--poignant ("because she's a woman, I didn't think I loved her")--joyous ("look what has happened with just one kiss: I never knew that I could be in love like this"). Perhaps the most interesting device she draws on in her lyrics is the twisting of old cliches into new feminist meanings. For instance, when she sings: "Now I know that a woman's place is in my home," she is reshaping an expression of linguistic oppression (i.e. "a woman's place is in the home") in order to assert her new-found freedom.

(Lavender Jane, cont.)

Lavender Jane is not a monument of musical excellence--let that be admitted at once. Hopefully it is only the first of countless women's songs and records to come. Whatever its weaknesses, this disc is important because it offers songs we can enjoy frankly, without going through the persona changes we ordinarily must make when listening to straight music and lyrics.

Lavender Jane Loves Women, Alix Dobkin, Women's Wax Works (Aool), available on order from the Oscar Wilde Bookshop, 211 Mercer St., N.Y., N.Y. 10003.

City Within

Elisabeth Newbold

A Maurice Gorodias Book, distributed by Lyle Stuart.

(Review by H.V.)

This book has quite a few merits, and I recommend it to D.O.B. readers. It's about a career woman, Julia, who works in public relations at a Washington, DC private foundation. She enjoys a lasting relationship with Kate, a friend from college days who holds a highly responsible job. For some reason both women feel it necessary to wear high heels and dressy clothes at work, and suspect all women who don't. Newbold happily shows us how Julia learns, first, that she is not unique and second, that the only way to keep one's love is to lose ownership of her. The novel is worth reading for these two themes which--to say the least--don't often appear in lesbian fiction and in such a positive framework.

Sophisticated Virginia appears in Julia's office from New York and immediately attracts Julia--among others. When Julia's Kate goes to Chicago for a few months on business and family matters, Julia becomes involved in a lesbian quadrangle, including voluptuous, Bourbon-loving Henny and her former lover, cafe-singer Mary McKee, as well as the gorgeous Virginia. This foursome visits a gay bar where Julia looks down her aquiline nose at two fiftyish unregener-

ate dykes who, says Virginia, Julia could never resemble because of her "figure". Virginia and her mixed-up lover Henny buy a house, settle down, and give a marvelously funny party with a huge cast of Washington's wayward women. The sophisticated Virginia, despite the confusion in her sex life, knows how to love a woman without owning her. Through Virginia, the idealistic, totally unrealistic Julia learns to accept both her lesbian-humanity and the love of Kate, who has now returned from Chicago and is recognized as a couple woman in her own right.

Well done -- up to a point. I'm hopeful that Newbold will write another book and when she does, she'll give her chief character more inner thoughts about more of life. Having met Jane Rule's remarkable Evelyn in The Desert of the Heart and Kate in This Is Not For You, perhaps I'm spoiled, but I long to meet another intelligent lesbian in fiction -- a woman who thinks about lots more than mixing bloody marys (there's lots of liquor in City) and getting Mary into bed. In spite of its optimistic message, City Within leaves me vaguely depressed. What is there about Julia or her Kate to love unalterably? Jane Rule, we need you! Please read this and write and write and write!

Nightwood

by Djuna Barnes

review by Janine Bernier.

In 1967 The Ladder released The Lesbian in Literature: A Bibliography compiled by Gene Damon and Lee Stuart, annotating, in its own fashion, all the known books in the English language concerned with lesbianism. The predominant annotation, a T for trash, brings to mind the disgust of many readers who have picked up one lesbian novel after another only to find the stereotypic butch committing suicide when the male heir "claims" the to-be-rightfully-possessed stereotypic femme, the sexual charades of dimensionless characters, and the simplistic

blow-by-blow account of another normally abnormal lesbian intrigue--to mention only three noteworthy unmentionables.

One of the few books listed in The Ladder's bibliography as standing above all the rest and properly belonging to any collection dealing with the topic of lesbianism is Djuna Barnes' Nightwood.

Originally published in 1936, Nightwood not only transcends the contextual flows of past and much of the present lesbian fiction, but also has been described by T.S. Eliot as a book of creative imagination, stylistic achievement, and brilliant characterization.

The central figure of Robin Vote never degenerates into the all too familiar or "common" lesbian even though the author's stylistic approach of portraying Robin through the eyes of the other characters lends itself to this more than the usual technique of employing an omniscient narrator. Robin, a woman who frustrates all who seek to possess her, remains as elusive to the reader as she is described by everyone she encounters. Compared to something not quite human, a being of the night, her very nature torments her lover, Nora, who "stands looking down upon her who lies sleeping and knows the horizontal fear" for "for the lover, it is the night into which her beloved goes that destroys."

While the night and the symbolic comparison of Robin to a creature of the night facilitates her inaccessibility, there is no moral judgment passed on her. Nightwood, in spite of the suffering it portrays, does not wallow in blame and recrimination. The lesbian relationships it describes are simply described. Although Nora's relationship with Robin, for example, is seen through Nora's eyes and through those of her supportive friend, Matthew O'Connor, neither perspective demeans the book's general comment on human misery--which is seen as a universal suffering inherent in the very fact of existence and irregardless of social pressures or personal vendettas.

Much of Nora's suffering, and the cause of the split between herself and Robin, revolve around Jennifer--initially

5
introduced in connection with Robin's nightly adventures. It is interesting to note that the characterization of Jennifer is deliberately limited to a few insipid comments made by several of the other characters. Jennifer is designed to be as colorless as Robin is colorful and is juxtaposed against her as someone who "defiled the very meaning of personality in her passion to be a person"--something Robin is never said to indulge in, since she is too busy being herself. Jennifer's lack of flair also speaks well of Nora's and Robin's relationship and has a tendency to return the focus of attention back to Nora even when she and Robin are separated--reinforcing their union as the initial or primary relationship.

The reunion, for those of us who stipulate that reunions are essential to the new breed of lesbian novels, does not coincide with the reader's probable expectations. It is, however, consistent with the symbolic mode consistently used by Barnes. Earlier in the novel, O'Connor speaks of the relationship with Robin and Nora, saying "Though those two are buried at opposite ends of the earth, one dog will find them both." Appropriately and satisfyingly, the novel's conclusion picks up on this statement of O'Connor's.

Whatever you may decide Nightwood is, you will not find the stereotypic bit of trash you may already have encountered. It is also void of the usually distorted sexual tidbits one might expect to find in "Lesbian Case Histories Annual". And, what is most refreshing, it is a story in its own right rather than a stereotyped response to the lesbian world.

Nightwood is a New Directions paperback and can be purchased for \$1.50 (e.g. at the Harvard Bookstore) or borrowed from the DOB library. The Lesbian in Literature: A Bibliography is also in the DOB library. It may still be available from The Ladder, Box 5025, Washington Station, Reno, Nevada 89503, for \$2.

DETAILS ON MASSACHUSETTS GAY BILLS

The following is a list of the six gay rights bills submitted to the Massachusetts House this year. The representative who submitted each one is given along with the committee assigned to hold hearings on the bill.

H. 2524 by Laurence Buxbaum (Sharon)--of the Civil Liberties Union, National Organization for Women, Laurence Buxbaum, James Collins, John Businger, Barney Frank, and others for legislation to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual preference under the Employment Security Law. This will amend Chapter 151B of the General Laws, to provide protection in employment, housing, credit, mortgages, insurance, etc. COMMERCE AND LABOR COMMITTEE.

H. 2525 by Laurence Buxbaum (Sharon)--of the Americans for Democratic Action, Homophile Union of Boston, Civil Liberties Union, National Organization for Women, Laurence Buxbaum, John Businger, Barney Frank, and another for legislation to prohibit discrimination in public accommodations on the basis of sexual preference. This would amend Section 98 of Chapter 272. COMMERCE AND LABOR.

H. 2582 by Barney Frank (Boston)--by Homophile Union of Boston, Barney Frank, John A. Businger, Laurence Buxbaum, and another for legislation to prohibit discrimination in the sale of insurance. This would add a Section 122A to Chapter 175 INSURANCE COMMITTEE.

H. 2601 by Barney Frank (Boston)--of Barney Frank, Daughters of Bilitis, Homophile Union of Boston, Civil Liberties Union, National Organization for Women, John Businger, and Laurence Buxbaum for legislation to repeal the laws prohibiting certain sexual acts. This would repeal Sections 16, 18, 34, and 35 of Chapter 272 (sections on open & gross lewdness, fornication, crime against nature, and unnatural acts, laws, respectively.

JUDICIARY COMMITTEE.

H. 2604 by Barney Frank (Boston)--of Homophile Union of Boston, Barney Frank, and another for a legislative amendment to the Constitution providing that equality under the law shall not be denied or abridged because of sex, race,

color, sexual preference, creed, or national origin.

JUDICIARY COMMITTEE.

H. 2627 by John Businger (Brookline)--of Americans for Democratic Action, Homophile Union of Boston, John Businger, Laurence Buxbaum, Barney Frank, and other relative to prohibiting discrimination in examinations or applications for public employment. This would amend Section 10 of Chapter 31 which deals with state civil service. PUBLIC SERVICE COMMITTEE.

Groups listed are those which signed in support of the bills. D.O.B. supports all the bills but accidentally did not get signed on them all. The General Laws which the bills would change can be found in many public libraries.

Letters of support for these bills can be sent anytime to your state representative. To find out who this is, call your city hall and find your district and ward number. Then call the House Clerk (727-2356) or Voter Information (357-5880) and ask who your representative would be.

In addition, letters should be sent to anyone who is on the committee which will have hearings on the bills. Both representatives and senators are on these joint committees. The clerk's office again can give this information (Senate Clerk 727-2476), as can Voter Information. Letters are addressed to the Hon. _____, State House, Boston, Mass.

Hearing dates have not yet been set. To keep up with this, read Gay Community News, call the Clerks, or call DOB. Attendance at hearings is open to all. Testimony is being prepared now by different groups and people.

If you have been discriminated against in any area for being gay and would consider letting your case (with or without name and details) be used in testimony at the state house, call DOB any Thursday evening 8-10pm or write the DOB office. Information will be kept confidential.

Custody case. The American Civil Liberties Union has entered its first child custody case involving a lesbian. Sally Hall, of Newark, Ohio, entered into a lesbian relationship two years after her divorce four years ago. Her ex-husband is now seeking custody on the grounds that she is now a lesbian. (Advocate, Jan. 30, 1974).

Bookbuyers beware! The author of Women and Madness, Phyllis Chesler, is seeking an injunction against Avon Books (the paperback publisher) for cutting certain important parts from the original. (Majority Report, Jan. 1974)

N.Y.C. Sports. The Lesbian Feminist Liberation group sponsors a sports day every Sunday at 2pm open to all women. For further information write them c/o G.A.A., 99 Wooster St. or call 966-7870.

Our own college? A group of San Francisco gay men and women have started a free university. The catalogue of women-taught courses includes everything from Female-Identified Metaphysics, Women Poets, to weekend workshops. Their address is Lavender University, 121 Leavenworth, San Francisco, Calif. 94102. (Sisters Jan. 1974)

Gay Media Task Force-L.A. Since their formation in November 1973 they have succeeded in meeting with most major networks and motion picture producers in the area. Agreements were made to consult Task Force members whenever the media are considering a script about gays. (Lesbian Tide Jan. 1974)

Historians. The American Historical Association at its annual convention at the end of December passed a resolution condemning discrimination against homosexuals. (Advocate Jan.30,1974)

A leader of the KFMLr, the Communist Party in Sweden, wrote in the party publication Class Struggle, that homosexuality is a "disease which is the product of the upper class search for new forms of pleasure". The party demanded that all gay members resign. (Advocate, Jan.30, 1974)

Hooker Report. The famed Hooker Report, formally the National Institute of Mental

Health Task Force on Homosexuality: Final Report and Background Papers, is available newly reprinted from the Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 for \$1 by mail. This is a valuable resource and an excellent bargain. The GPO catalog number is HE20-2402: H75/2.

Michael McConnell, the librarian denied a job in 1970 at the University of Minnesota after he filed for a marriage license with Jack Baker, was refused help by the executive board of the American Library Association. The U.S. Supreme Court refused in 1972 to hear his case. (Advocate, Jan. 16, 1974)

On January 16 the U.S. District Court in Concord, N.H. ruled that the trustees of the University of New Hampshire, Durham, could not restrict on campus social activities of the Gay Student Organization. The A.C.L.U. took the case for the G.S.O. The trustees intend to appeal. (Boston Globe, Jan.20, 1974)

Elaine's birthday. Hundreds of people contributed \$5 each to the Committee to Elect Elaine Noble at a party January 25 at the 1270 Club. Representative Barney Frank told how Elaine had roused him from his sickbed to attend a Gay Pride Week workshop on legal reform in June 1972 which began his own involvement in gay rights. Elaine said she was encouraged by the turnout and needed everyone's support in the months ahead.

H.U.B. The Homophile Union of Boston held its Fifth Anniversary bash at Bill's Last Call, Avery St., Boston on January 19. At this event for the whole gay community, members and nonmembers alike ate, drank, danced, were entertained, and a few won some fantastic doorprizes.

Columbus, Eugene. Attempts in Columbus Ohio and Eugene, Oregon to pass an antidiscrimination law for gays were defeated in late November 1973 (Advocate, Jan.2, 1974)

Especially to One of a Couple

Three Poems

Watching you watch me
 at our anticipated meetings
 and knowing your lover
 does the same,
 makes me feel
 as if you believe
 your joint continuance
 is in need of
 my absolution.
 And I cannot help
 but be amused
 when you approach me,
 positioning yourselves near me,
 as if my interest
 in one of you
 is the focal point
 of your remission.
 Perhaps,
 you should be aware
 that although
 I recognize your attempts
 to shield yourselves
 from one another
 with my single desire;
 I could and would not
 (in spite of the length you keep)
 extend myself
 to bless you -
 knowing that what you ask
 is merely a function
 you have ascribed
 to one more truly sanctioned alone
 than you are assured together.

--"Jim"

1

We lay together
 hip to hip and breast to breast
 and in the sameness of our bodies
 felt the difference of our love.

2

Your odor lingers on the sheets.
 I burrow with my nose
 to catch the sour scent
 and with my hand
 smooth out
 the wrinkles of our love.

3

Your voice grew hard, your eyes cold
 I felt your body stiffen at my touch
 we lay in the same bed and yet
 the space created by so many hurts
 put you on the moon
 and left me spinning here.

--P.B.

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 D.O.A.B. SPAGHETTI
 SUPPER plus showing of
 lesbian film "HOME MOVIE"
 St. John's Church, 33 Bowdoin St.,
 (government center), Boston, at
 5:30 pm. \$1.50 admission.
 Feb. 24, Sunday

Daughters of Bilitis, Boston
 Room 323, 419 Boylston St.
 Boston, Mass. 02116
 617-262-1592

TUESDAYS, 7:30 pm Rap session on being gay, for women only. Share feelings about being gay, everyone welcome, newcomers there every week. Child care will be provided. At the DOB office., near the Arlington MBTA stop.

WEDNESDAYS 7:30 pm Rap session for lesbian mothers, at the office. Also, gay mothers can talk to a mother on the phone this evening.

THURSDAYS, 9-10 pm Gay Way Radio Program, WBUR-RM 90.9

SUNDAYS 10:20-10:50am Closet Space Radio Program, WCAS-AM 740.

SUNDAYS 2-4 pm Women's basketball and swim, Cambridge YWCA, Temple St. (Central Sq) Cambridge. 75¢ ball, 25¢ swim. This is not a DOB event, the Y wants us to say.

FRIDAYS, 8 pm DOB Bowling, at Sammy White's, Soldiers' Field Road, Brighton. Ten pins. 60¢/ game. Lanes reserved under name of Hurst.

February 2, Saturday, 11 am, Brunch for all gay activists, Charles St. Meeting House, 70 Charles St., Boston. This happens the first Saturday of every month at 11 am to give people a chance to share ideas and to communicate, from group to group.

February 2, Saturday, 2pm New England Gay Conference Planning Meeting, M.C.C. Providence, 410 Waterman Ave, East Providence, R.I.

February 3, Sunday, 10-11pm Lavender Hour, WBCN-FM 104

February 6, Wednesday 8:30 pm Gay Community News is on Catch 44, Channel 44 TV.

February 10, 1 pm--night. DOB Winterfest, Ellendale Stables, Sherborne. \$5 each --buy tickets by mail or at raps. Hay or sleigh ride, all outdoor sports (bring own sled, skates, etc, own food--there will be a grill, bonfire, optional horsebackriding). Dress warmly. Dancing in the evening to the Deadly Nightshade. Children welcome at the days activities at a lower rate. Route 16 to Route 27, turn left onto 27, go a mile, just after the tracks is a yellow house on left with a place for parking. That's it.

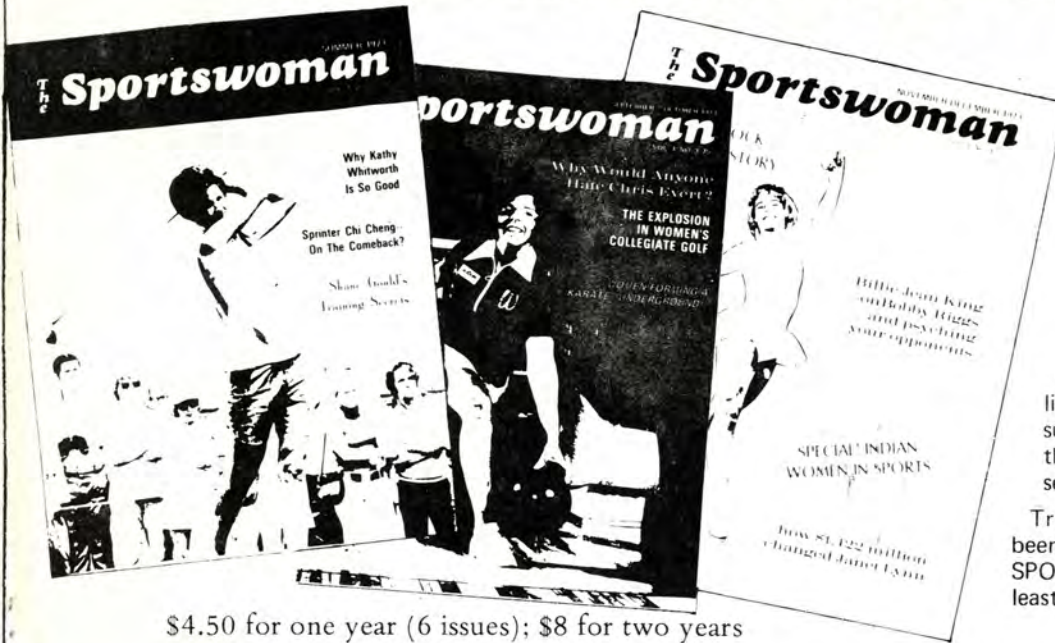
February 14, Thursday, 8pm First rap session for older gay women. Some women have expressed interest in such a rap. No age limits will be set. This will be an experiment to see how many women are interested in coming to at least one such rap--further raps may develop from this. At the office.

February 15-17 Kingston Gay Conference, Memorial Union, University of R.I., Kingston, Rhode Island. Read Feb. Focus or Gay Community News for more details or see fliers in the DOB office.

February 21, Thursday, 7:30 pm Focus staff meeting at the office.

February 24, Sunday 5:30 pm D.O.B. Spaghetti Supper, followed by showing of the short lesbian film "Home Movie" by Jan Oxenburg. There will be a discussion of the film afterwards. Following this there will be a DOB Business Meeting. \$1.50. St. John's Church, 33 Bowdoin St., Boston, near government center.

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Recommended Citation:

[Item description including title, author, and date if known], Daughters of Bilitis (Boston chapter) records, The History Project: Documenting LGBTQ Boston.