

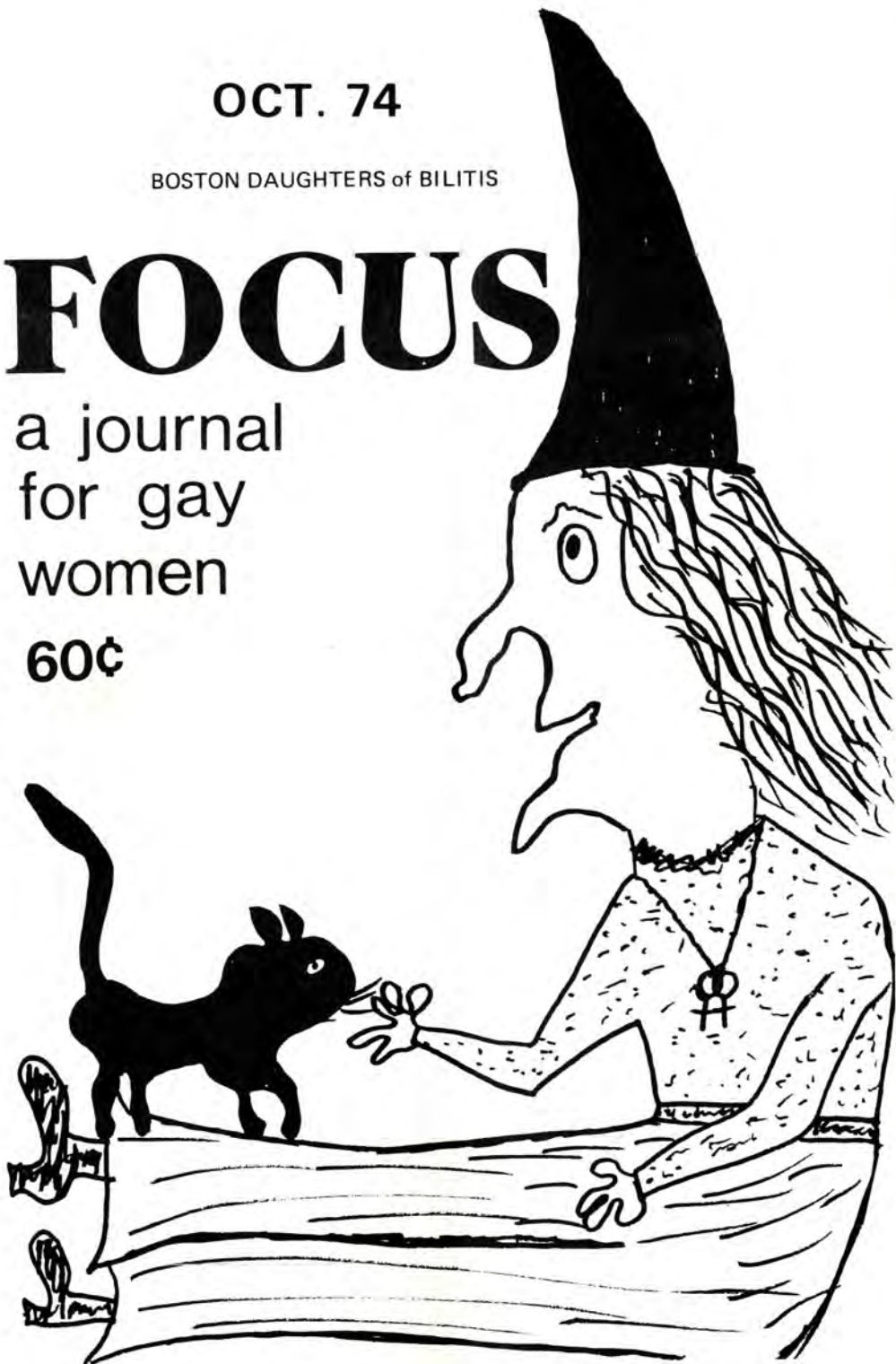
OCT. 74

BOSTON DAUGHTERS of BILITIS

FOCUS

a journal
for gay
women

60¢



FOCUS: A JOURNAL FOR GAY WOMEN

OCTOBER 1974

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FOCUS welcomes contributions from
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All letters must be signed, but names can
be withheld for publication.

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SOME SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT WITCHES

by J.S.

Witches have had very bad press. They are everything a woman is not supposed to be: old, ugly, ill-natured, wicked, and powerful. Whereas we all know a woman ought to be young, beautiful, sweet-tempered, good, and weak. A witch—and I speak not of the actual women who were persecuted and burned as witches during the past 2000 years, but of the *concept* of witchiness that we all carry around in our heads—a witch is on one level the embodiment of men's worst fears about the female sex. The cackling voice, long nose and pointed chin, talon-like nails, hunched back, and general all-around loathsomeness are an exact inversion of sexual appeal: the female creature who ought to be soft and desirable instead appears intimidating and repulsive.

On a deeper level, witches are stand-ins for the all-powerful and frightening Mother-figure who lurks at the back of our collective childhood nightmares. It is easy to see why we associate witches with magic and the supernatural: To a small child, a parent—particularly a mother—seems omnipotent. She is strong and powerful; she brings food and warmth and comfort, and she can also withhold these things. We all have somewhere inside us an image of a good, giving, nurturing mother, but we also retain an image of a depriving mother—one who thwarts our desires and refuses to give us her “magical” comforts. The harpy mother, who nags, scolds, punishes, and deprives, is the psychological reality behind the evil old witch of fairy-tale-land. Add to all this a child's very real fear of its mother's adult sexuality, and the sinister seductiveness of fairy tale witches

becomes very understandable. (“Nibble, nibble, little mouse; who is nibbling at my house?”) And what is the old witch going to do to you? More often than not, she is going to *eat you up*.

Your average witch is satisfyingly grotesque and hideous. She is always the bad guy; there is nothing good to be said for her motives, her methods, or her appearance. She is completely and delightfully hateable. It fills some need in us to be able to hate her and feel justified in our hatred. In the world of fairy tales we get back at the mother who punished and nagged and deprived us by making her into an ugly villainess. We can set her up to be the loser. Ding dong, the wicked witch is dead. Only in such roundabout ways can we dare revenge ourselves on our mothers for being less than perfect. The traditional fairy tale witch provides a very necessary outlet for feelings we otherwise could scarcely acknowledge. Let her be, in all her ugliness—she serves a purpose.

There is no male equivalent to the witch. Wizards and warlocks simply do not have the same psychological fascination for us. A witch has to be a woman. Our fear and hatred of her is a measure of her ability to hurt us—and this is the final lesson we can learn from her. Witches, with their frightening supernatural and magical gifts, are proof that deep down inside we all believe women do have power. In fact, women are so powerful they scare everybody to death. It's time to give women credit for power and strength in the positive, loving sense as well as in the hurtful, witchy sense. The one is as real as the other. We don't want the world to claim that all womanpower is witchy, because we know better.

FAIRY TALES

Once upon a time, they say,
there was a princess—
no, there were many
many princesses,
and every one was beautiful,
and every one was kind,
and everyone adored them
(except, of course,
some wicked witch or witchy mother.)
Their hair was black or sometimes blond,
their skin was white, white as egg,
and smooth as smooth as shell.
They were so delicate
you did not breathe
for fear that they might crack,
and yet, to tell the truth,
they never did—
no, no matter what the witches tried,
what spells, what chants, what poisons,
they managed to survive,
victoriously at that.
O it must have been quite awful,
when you think about it,
for those black and ill-bent hags,
curled within their castle corners,
peering from their attic slits,
knowing they would be defeated
not by powers deeper
or by those of greater might
but by prepubescent youngsters
pure as snow
and chaste as ice.

Paula Bennett

Different: An Anthology of Homosexual Short Stories

edited and with an introduction by Stephen Wright (Bantam Paperback @ \$1.95)

— Janine Bernier

The title of this peculiarly edited collection of short stories suggests a content which is homosexual in nature, but *Different* is simply a repetition of the same old thing—and, at best, a strained facsimile of the usual negatively biased collection of homosexual literature.

Stephen Wright states in his introduction: "Only some of the writers in this collection are known homosexuals, others are *suspect* (italics mine) or bisexuals, and not a few are, as far as can be ascertained, heterosexuals. My main concern, as anthologist, has been with the quality of the stories, not with the sexual habits of the writer." (pp. ix-x). While no reader in a sane frame of mind would insist that a writer must be a homosexual to write a story which pertains to homosexuality, we would assume that one anthologist's choice of material would indicate some criteria for its selection.

If Wright's "quality" is meant to allude to the alleged literary value of the stories included, then Phil Andros' stories (four in number) miss the mark badly. I see small literary value and no communicative capability in this writer's work. If, on the other hand, Wright has simply thumbed through reams of paper to amass stories which appear to have a homosexual theme, Henry James' "The Pupil" for one—conceivably the most literary of the stories selected, can be said to be homosexual in nature only if we are homophobic and tend to see homosexuality in everything.

The only other legitimate criterion I can conceive of would be an uplifting (i.e., realistic) portrayal of homosexuality—but, like Marcus

Welby's recent blunder, *Different* misses here again. A typical example can be found in "Paul's Mistress," a piece eliciting pathos for one M. Paul whose girlfriend drives him to suicide after she chooses to remain with a female companion. In reference to our hero, "If it had been a man, the one she was with...but that, that....He was spellbound by their disgrace. He couldn't move, utterly destroyed, as if he had discovered suddenly the crime against nature, monstrous, a limitless profanation." (p.31). Wright, consistent with his perspective on sexuality and his "classical" theories about literature, refers to "Paul's Mistress" as "the tragedy of a bisexual woman." (p. xi).

Another annoying aspect of the anthology is that it promises to be "more than twenty controversial classics by famous authors—'Gay' and 'Straight'...male and female." Actually, it contains 24 not-so-classic stories, two of which are written by women. Of these, Wilma Shore's work can be seen as having homosexual implications only if the reader has internalized the theory that a domineering mother produces a faggot. If you haven't swallowed the line, you'll miss the point completely. Olivia Manning's "A Romantic Hero" is true to form, depicting a man who returns to his girlfriend after a homosexual encounter: "Whether she understood him or not, it seemed to him then that Angela with her feminine warmth and sympathy was the most desirable *thing* (italics mine) in the world." (p. 273).

However available it may be, and at whatever price, Wright's anthology doesn't line up with any sane criteria, and simply isn't worth buying. *Different*—just isn't.

SO MUCH FOR SHOW

march, 1972

now i've waited hours for her,
she steps only in to say goodbye—
the ointments of my preparation wasted
the tea the incense the house strewn
ever so casually with inducements
littered like a petal-path for her.

i kissed my son goodnight and sighed
for the quiet we'd have when she came
set out a book where she might look at it
and ask why this one
lit candles and turned the radio to blues,
sounds to let the roundness out of our mouths by,
i even moved the kitchen chairs
so the table couldn't chasm off our words,
chanting away the while, a more blatant separation—
that she wouldn't care to stay.

my spells are losing power.

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D.O.B. CALENDAR OCTOBER 1974

419 Boylston St., Rm 323, Boston, Mass. 02116—617 262-1592

All events are open to all women regardless of their membership in D.O.B.

All raps are 50¢ for non-members, and 25¢ for members.

- MONDAYS, **TOPIC RAPS** start at 8 p.m. in the D.O.B. office. Put suggestions into the D.O.B. mailbox for topics. Sept. 16 – Our Religious Beliefs, what / where / is God, morality, purpose of life, religion & being gay, etc.
- TUESDAYS, 7:30 pm **Rap session on being gay for women**. Share feelings about being gay, everyone welcome. There are always many new people every week. At the DOB office, near the Arlington MBTA stop, between Arlington and Berkeley Streets.
- WEDNESDAYS, 7:30 pm **Rap session for lesbian mothers**, and phone-in time for lesbian mothers. Mothers with grown children invited to share with other mothers. At DOB office.
- WEDNESDAYS, 1st & 3rd **GAYBREAK** radio program, AMHERST, WMUA-FM 91.9
- THURSDAYS, 8 pm **Rap session for older gay women**. No ages are defined. Come if it sounds right for you.
- THURSDAYS, 9-10 pm **GAY WAY RADIO** program. WBUR 90.9 FM.
- FRIDAYS, **WOMENS' BASKETBALL**, 7:00 SHARP at Cambridge YWCA FOR RIDES TO HARVARD U.
- SUNDAYS, 10:30-11 am **CLOSET SPACE** radio program, WCAS-AM 740.
- SUNDAYS, 1pm, **SOFTBALL**. Bring bat, ball, glove and/or self; informal games. Magazine Beach Field, Cambridge, across Charles River from Cadillac-Olds and along Memorial Drive west of the Boston Univ. bridge.
RAIN OR SHINE.
- Wed. Oct. 2 **Training Session for persons interest in becoming speakers** with the Gay Speakers Bureau. Call 547-1451 for location of meeting. Discussions, role-playing, and facts.



DOB Membership includes a subscription to FOCUS. You must be 18 years or older. Single Membership \$12 Joint Membership \$18 Send Your Name(s) and address to DOB.

Sat., Oct. 5, Dance at CSMH, 8 pm with THE NEW HAVEN WOMEN'S LIBERATION ROCK BAND sponsored by CONF. '74, \$3.00 suggested donation.

Sun. Oct. 6, Training Session for potential gay speakers, see Wed. Oct. 2.

Monday, Oct. 7 FOCUS Meeting, D.O.B. office at 7:30 pm. New people invited.

Monday, Oct. 7, Topic Rap: GAY MEDIA ACTION. Videotapes of news coverage of legislative hearings, excerpts from "Nana" series, from the "Good Morning Show" with John Willis, and a sound tape of the first television program in Boston featuring gays – Dr. Socarides vs. the presidents of D.O.B. and H.U.B. in 1970. *Donation to benefit G.M.A.*

Sunday, Oct. 13 – DOB PICNIC AT COCHITUATE STATE PARK NATICK. Ask at Raps about Rides!! There is a fireplace – bring fuel; do not depend on others to feed you. Bring your own food unless you want concession things – (expensive). Bring sports things. There is swimming. Turnpike west to exit 13, Route 30 east 1½ miles. Park is on right. By bicycle from Boston 1½ hours on routes 16 and 30. Admission is \$1/car, 25¢ bicycle. RAIN OR SHINE.

Friday, Oct. 18, DANCE AT CSMH \$2.00 donation to benefit D.O.B. DEADLY NIGHTSHADE performing. Masquerade for the entire community, men and women, 2 prizes for best costumes.

Sun. Oct. 20 DOB ELECTIONS See pages 11,12,13 this issue. Don't miss this exciting night – it only happens once a year!

Mon. Oct. 21, FOCUS Business Meeting, 7:30 pm DOB office, New people are invited!

REVIEW:

SYBIL

by Flora Rheta Schreiber (Henry Regnery Co., Chicago, 1973. Also available in paperback.).

— by Gerry Azzata

Everywhere I look these days, I see Sybil staring back at me. On subways, even on grocery store bookracks - the jigsaw puzzle face of Sybil is all over the city. And, almost always, the person reading *Sybil* is a woman. When I finally gave in to curiosity and read *Sybil*, I understood why it has become so popular. It is one of the most frightening and fascinating stories I have ever read.

Sybil is the true story of a woman who, in her late twenties, discovers (with the help of her psychiatrist) that she suffers from an extremely rare form of neurosis. She is a true "split personality." Within the body of this one woman exist sixteen totally different personalities, whose presence she had never suspected. They include: Ruthie, an infant; two young boys; and Peggy Lou, an adult who often has childish, violent tantrums.

All through Sybil's life, there have been periods of time which she cannot remember, some of them lasting as long as two years. Any time quiet, meek Sybil cannot deal with a situation, one of the other personalities takes over. Following her grandmother's death, when Sybil was nine, she became Peggy for two years. Sybil then returned suddenly one day, in a classroom which was totally strange to her (although not to Peggy):

Her eyes descended to her dress....She hadn't owned it, didn't remember her mother buying it for her....She was wearing a dress that didn't belong to her in a classroom in which she didn't belong....There was no yesterday. Sybil remembered nothing since being at the cemetery.

Gradually, all of the personalities are revealed in ten years of therapy sessions. The first additional personality, Peggy Lou, had been "born" when Sybil was only three, in response to the sadistic abuse of her mother. When Sybil could not escape physically, she literally faded away, and Peggy Lou would take her place. Eventually, a personality appeared to fill every need - one to express anger, another to be assertive, etc. And Sybil would remember nothing.

Amazingly, even with these frequent blackouts, Sybil manages to lead a relatively normal life, working as an art instructor at a New York City college. The story of how her sixteen personalities finally merge into one complete person is almost unbelievable, and yet it is true.

Unfortunately for *Sybil*, Schreiber does not have a very appealing literary style. She tends to be melodramatic and superficial when dealing with the emotions of Sybil and company. Her writing takes a lot of the suspense out of the therapy process, by oversimplifying the sixteen people involved. You don't really miss most of them when they finally are

absorbed into Sybil. Beyond this, Schreiber deals pretty dismally with lesbianism. Sybil's mother, in addition to being brutal to baby Sybil, also molests the little girls she babysits for, and conducts secret lesbian orgies in a nearby forest. The only real friend the adult Sybil has is Teddy, who is aware of the personalities and helps Sybil fill in the gaps in her life. Teddy also is a lesbian, and Schreiber takes great joy in describing how Sybil valiantly rejects Teddy's advances and retains her virtue. When Teddy finally leaves Sybil, though, Schreiber sees this as a real loss for Sybil, who never let anyone else but her psychiatrist get so close to her.

But, beyond its admittedly large faults, *Sybil* is still a fascinating book. The story itself, and the meaning of the story, are too strong to be destroyed by bad style. The parallels with the lives of "normal" women are very obvious. We are all Sybils in one way or another. Some of us push anger at sexism totally out of our minds, and assume a pseudo-identity as "happy" suburban housewives. Some of us are lesbians who have one personality while at work or with our families, and then we become completely different people when with our lesbian sisters. *Sybil* offers us all a choice. We can do this identity-hopping only for so long, before the blackouts take over and we lose part of our selves forever. Or we can struggle to become whole people, able to express anger without feeling guilty, able to be honest about all parts of our lives. I think that this is the lesson we can pick up from *Sybil*, and it's a good one.

DOB ELECTIONS

DOB elections will be held at the office, Sunday, October 20, at 7:30 p.m. The final date for announcing candidacy will be October 5. Candidates for office as of this date are: President - Lois Johnson, Vice President - Judy S., Treasurer - Peggy Wilson, Corresponding Secretary - Laura Robin, Recording Secretary - Janine Bernier. (See platforms on pp. 11, 12, and 13) of this issue.)

Election will be by secret ballot. If you are unable to attend on the 20th, please fill out the absentee ballot on page 13 and mail or bring it to the office before election night. Mark the envelope "Attention Election Committee."

Candidate for President:

Lois Johnson

My name is Lois Johnson and I am running for the office of President of Boston Daughters of Bilitis. I have been a member of DOB for nearly three years and for the past year have served as Recording Secretary. During practically all of the last three years I have been active as a Rap Leader in both the Tuesday and Thursday Night Raps. I also chaired the By-Law Revision Committee. In addition to my activities within DOB this last year, I was an active part of the Committee which put together the Second Annual New England Gay Conference and Chairperson of the

(cont. page 12)

Gay Pride 74 Festival.

My aims for DOB are:

Increase our membership and activities. If the Kinsey statistic is right that there are more than 10,000 lesbians in the Boston Metropolitan area, then there are many people we have not yet reached who might need the help our organization can give them.

Build up our finances. Some good work in this regard has been done this past year. I would like to see a lot of effort put into fund-raising activities.

Keep up our participation in activities which encompass the whole Gay Community such as lobbying for law changes, the N. E. Gay Conference, and Gay Pride Week, to name a few. It is important for us not to be insular in our thinking since it is my opinion that brothers and sisters alike must cooperate if we are to continue the momentum of the Gay Movement and achieve our liberation.

I would like the opportunity to serve as President of DOB and ask for your vote.

**Candidate for Vice-President:
Judy S.**

For the past year I have been an active member of Boston D.O.B., working in particular with FOCUS and the rap committee. I plan to continue these activities, and would consider the office of Vice-President primarily an opportunity to take more responsibility in the organizational set-up of DOB. It seems to me the V.P.'s chief functions are to take charge in the absence of the president, and generally fill in whenever there are things that need doing.

**Candidate for
Corresponding Secretary:
Laura Robin**

I am a candidate for re-election.

Treasurer

Paula Bennett has withdrawn her candidacy for this office.

Peggy Wilson

I am running for Treasurer and my qualifications are:

1. Associate of Arts degree, majoring in Accounting.
2. Working as a Fund Accountant, with full responsibility for two sets of books.
3. Can prepare a Cash Flow Chart.
4. Can prepare an Estimated Income and Expense Statement.
5. Can prepare certain other financial statements necessary to any organization.
6. An active member of DOB for over a year and a strong desire to see DOB reach its full potential in the gay community.

I am sure you know how important a treasurer is to any organization. The treasurer is just as important an officer as President and should be more than a recorder of income and expenses. A treasurer should be able to show the direction an organization is taking.

DOB needs funds to operate properly and to fulfill all our goals.

The revised By-laws show we have changed our ideas and direction we wish to take as an organization. Along with this change, I feel we should take a closer look at our financial priorities and re-evaluate the direction we are taking financially.

A portion of our financial plans should be with the future in mind. DOB should also have two types of financial plans, short and long

ranged.

Our short ranged plans would consist of events planned in the next 3 months or less. Long ranged plans would be events planned 4 mos. or more in the future.

Every individual has some form of financial plan. It only stands to reason if individuals need a financial plan than so would Daughters of Bilitis.

I want DOB to grow and I feel financial planning is one way.

When it's time to vote please consider my qualifications and views.

**Recording Secretary:
Janine Bernier**

I will be running for Recording Secretary in October. In addition to preparing monthly minutes, I would like to see FOCUS used more fully as a forum for DOB's business meetings, activities, and events.



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IN FOCUS ?**

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ABSENTEE BALLOT – DOB ELECTIONS, FALL, 1974

Write in the names of the candidates for whom you are voting:

President _____

Vice President _____

Treasurer _____

Corresponding Secretary _____

Recording Secretary _____

Voter's Signature

This ballot (properly filled in and signed) must be received by the Election Committee in a sealed envelope by 7:30 p.m., October 20.

Conference '74 Postponed

Dear Sisters:

At the Sept. 11th general meeting, the women of the Boston planning session agreed to postpone CONFERENCE '74: AN AMAZON EXPEDITION until the Spring of 1975.

We arrived at this decision after recognizing that: (1) lack of funds, (2) lack of response in registration fees by the middle of September, and (3) lack of sufficient publicity on our part made it impossible for us to hold "Camp Amazonia" for the October 11-14 conference-celebration according to the terms we established with the camp directors.

All registration fees (partial and total), all contributions to the Sisterhood Fund will be returned post-haste to those women who paid fees/contributed to the fund.

CONFERENCE '74 will hold a dance with the NEW NEW HAVEN WOMEN'S LIBERATION ROCK BAND October 5th at 8:00 pm, the Charles St. Meeting House, suggested donation \$3.00. Funds will remain in

the CONFERENCE '74 account to be utilized for the upcoming conference-celebration in the Spring of 1975.

Women from the planning sessions are checking into possible countrysites. If you have suggestions, have already offered to lead a workshop either individually or with a group, please maintain contact with us at our Box 2000 address.

Minutes of planning sessions are available upon request and women and groups already on the mailing list will receive continued information unless requesting otherwise.

To all our Sisters - we thank you for your energies, time, support, and love. While we could not maintain "Camp Amazonia" we ask you to continue your support for the success of the Spring 1975 conference-celebration.

In sisterhood -
Women of the
Boston planning session
Box 2000, c/o GCN
22 Bromfield St, Boston 02108



Application: DOB Membership or subscription to FOCUS
(FOCUS subscription inc. with membership)

Membership: \$12/year FOCUS Subscription: \$6/year
\$18 for couples

Single Sustaining Membership: \$25

ENC. _____ for membership ENC. _____ for FOCUS

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Signature - I am a woman 18 years of age or older:

Date: _____

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