

FOCUS

a journal
for gay women

George Sand ▶
Novelist



◀ Joan of Arc
Visionary,
Military Leader
& Witch



Sojourner Truth
Former Slave,
Abolitionist & Feminist



Sarah Bernhardt



Lucretia Mott ▲
Feminist & Abolitionist

June '74

BOSTON DAUGHTERS of BILITIS

60¢

FOCUS: A JOURNAL FOR GAY WOMEN

JUNE 1974

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

Copyright 1974 by Daughters of Bilitis,
Boston, Mass.

Subscriptions are \$5/year, samples
60¢. Give us your zip number. If
you move, let us know: 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 & Howell,
Wooster, Ohio to October 1971 and from
IWhA from Oct. 71 on.

FOCUS STAFF:

reviews: J.S.
news: Laura Robin
features: Wendy Bauman,
editing: Janine Bernier
adv. & dist.: Cathy Baker
cover: Geri Bidwell
type: Lois Hurst
layout: Terri Lattimore
production: Geri B. & friends
staff: Gerry Azzata, Peg, Maggy

DEADLINE for JULY: June 20

FOCUS welcomes contributions from
everyone, including drawings. Include
SASE for return. All letters must be
signed, but names can be withheld
for publication.

In this issue

<u>News</u>	1,2,3
Monday Nite Raps	7
Conference '74	14

DOB Calendar	8
Letter to <u>FOCUS</u>	4

Poems

'Noble Hour' by Jim	5
2 untitled poems by Paula Bennett	7
Untitled by Judi Stein	14
Growing Old in America by Paula Bennett	15
Rita Mae by Liane Esstelle	15

Features

COMING OUT:

in the fifties ... by Lois Johnson	10
in the seventies... by Judi Stein	11
"It's Alright Ma, I'm only Dyin" by Judi Stein	6

Review

Ann Aldrich: A Lesbian's Best Friend? by Gerry Azzata	9
---	---

As the world turns...

Lesbian Nation, by Jill Johnston, is out in Touchstone paperback for \$2.95.

Larry Bernier will be ordained formally as minister in the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches on June 2, 7pm, Old West Church, 131 Cambridge St., Boston. The Rev. Troy Perry will preside. All are welcome.

The New York State Coalition of Gay Organizations is coordinating a statewide effort to repeal the N.Y. sodomy law, S. 130.38. A poll of New Yorkers will be conducted.

A Texas Gay Conference will be held in Ft. Worth June 21-23. Information is available from P.O. Box 7318, Ft. Worth, Texas 76111.

Northwestern Bell Telephone Company has changed its policy of not hiring homosexuals as a result of an anti-discrimination ordinance enacted in Minneapolis, home of the firm. (*Advocate*, May 8, 1974).

Members of the American Psychiatric Association voted 58% to 38% to uphold the board of trustees' ruling to remove homosexuality from the list of mental sicknesses. (*Advocate*, May 8, 1974).

Maine gubernatorial Republican candidate James Erwin said he did not support the University of Maine trustees' decision to allow the Maine Gay Conference to be held on Campus. "I don't feel motivated to help you in your fight," he said. (*The Maine Campus*, April 26, 1974).

Male Homosexuals: Their Problems and Adaptations is a new book written by two members of the Institute for Sex Research (Kinsey Institute). It is based on answers to questionnaires by 1000 men in the U.S. and 1,400 men in Denmark and the Netherlands. The authors are Martin Weinberg and Colin Williams. The cost is \$10.95. (*N.Y. Times*, May 19, 1974)

GAY ACADEMIC UNION

Planning for next Thanksgiving's Second Annual Conference of the Gay Academic Union is already underway and information is available by writing: GAU, Box 1479, Hunter College, New York, N.Y. 10021. The Conference committee needs papers from individuals that through original research define some aspect of gay life. Please send 3 copies of submitted papers of not more than 200 words to the above by June 15.

AUSTRALIAN WOMAN LOSES SCHOLARSHIP

Penny Short's scholarship at a teacher's college was terminated after a series of events where a medical questionnaire revealed her to be "individualistic". A psychiatrist she spoke openly with told her she could keep her scholarship if she kept her homosexuality quiet, and upon the publication of a poem on loving women in the university's student paper, Penny was told the \$ ended for "medical reasons." Demonstrations and meetings are being held by help Penny.

As Massachusetts turns...

On May 13 the only gay rights bill to be voted upon by roll call received 79 votes in favor and 139 against in the Massachusetts House. The bill, to prevent discrimination in state civil service jobs, received many more votes than expected by either the gay sponsors or the legislative sponsors, though not enough for passage.

Last year, the only gay bill to be voted on in the House received 16 votes. That was a bill to repeal the sodomy law.

The civil service bill, originally H. 2627, was renumbered H. 5863 after the Public Service Committee amended it to allow the civil service commission to determine when sexual preference *might* become a hindrance to employment. Republican Barbara Gray of Framingham was responsible for presenting the bill on the House floor.

Those speaking against the bill were William Carey (D-Mission Hill, Boston), William Saltzman (D-New Bedford), and William Hogan (D-Everett). Mr. Saltzman said that in earlier times the Italians, Irish, etc. had been at the bottom of the employment ladder and *they* worked their way up, so homosexuals should have to do the same. Mr. Carey felt that "it is time to see if something can't be done to legislate morals...to protect the youngsters in the House gallery...sex isn't the only reason we were put into this world."

Speaking in favor of the bill, Barney Frank (D-Boston) said, "Homosexuals exist, they are a fact (though I know that facts are sometimes not popular in this legislature). There are three alternatives. Put them all on welfare, let them hold jobs, or shoot them....the group that filed this bill is not a group asking for

welfare, this is a group that wants to work."

John Brennen (D-Malden) and John Buckley (D-Abington) also spoke in favor.

The bill had passed the House by a voice vote on May 8, when the representatives apparently did not know the content of the bill (it was titled "an act to prohibit discrimination on certain preferences under the civil service law"). An article appeared in the *Globe* the following morning about the vote. That afternoon Representative Carey moved that the vote be reconsidered.

A vote to reconsider preceded the actual vote on the bill Monday May 13. Eighteen representatives who voted not to reconsider, (i.e., who voted to retain the favorable voice vote) voted against the bill itself after reconsideration prevailed. The bill lost by 30 votes.

Those voting in favor of the bill were:

YES (Democrats)

AHEARN (Norwood)
BERTONAZZI (Milford)
BOLLING, Sr. (Roxbury)
BOLLING, Jr. (Mattapan)
BRENNAN (Malden)
BROWNELL (Quincy)
BUCKLEY (Abington)
BUNTE (Roxbury)
BURKE (Natick)
BUSINGER (Brookline)
BUXBAUM (Sharon)
COLLINS (Amherst)
COLO (Athol)
DAY (Lynn)
DELAHUNT (Quincy)
DiLORENZO (E. Boston)
DIOTALEVI (Milford)
DONNELLY (Dorchester)
DUFFIN (Lenox)
DWINNELL (Milbury)
EARLY, J. (Worcester)
FICCO (Franklin)
GALLUGI (Wakefield)
GARCZYNSKY (Chicopee)
GUZZI (Newton)
HARRINGTON, P. (Newton)
KENDALL (Falmouth)
KEVERIAN (Everett)
KHOURY (Lawrence)
KING, J. (Danvers)
KING, M. (South End)
LaFONTAINE (Gardener)
LANDRY (Waltham)
MAHONEY (Cambridge)
MANNING, D. (Waltham)

YES (Democrats) cont.

MARKEY (Malden)
 McCARTHY, R. (E. Bridgewater)
 McLAUGHLIN (Billerica)
 MOFENSON (Newton)
 MURPHY, P. (Brockton)
 MURPHY, J. (Peabody)
 NICKINELLO (Natick)
 O'DONNELL (Salem)
 O'NEILL (Cambridge)
 OWENS, B. (Mattapan)
 OWENS, R. (Frammingham)
 PICKETT (Somerville)
 PINA (New Bedford)
 ROTENBERG (Brookline)
 SEGEL (Brookline)
 SMITH (Lynn)
 SPENCE (Hingham)
 VOLTERRA (Attleboro)
 WEINBERG (Brighton)
 WETMORE (Barre)
 WHITE (Dorchester)

YES (Republicans)

AMES (Eason)
 BUSSONE (Beverly)
 COX (Needham)
 DANOVITCH (Norwood)
 DICKSON (Weston)
 GANNETT (Wayland)
 GRAY (Frammingham)
 HATCH (Beverly)
 HEALY (Charlemont)
 LORING (Acton)
 MASNIK (Worcester)
 McCARTHY, T. (Oak Bluffs)
 NORDBERG (Reading)
 ROBINSON (Melrose)
 SILVA (Gloucester)
 SPRAGUE (Sherborn)
 SWITZLER (Wellesley)
 WALKER (Salisbury)
 WILBER (Barnstable)
 ZEISER (Wellesley)

Those opposing the bill were:

NO (Democrats)

AGUIAR (Swansea)
 ALEIXO (Taunton)
 ALMEIDA (Plymouth)
 AMBLER (Weymouth)
 ANTONELLI (Tweksbury—
 ASIAF (Brockton)
 BALTHAZAR (Hudson)
 BASSETT (Lynn)
 BEVILACQUA (Haverhill)
 BOFFETTI (Taunton)
 BOHIGIAN (Worcester)
 BOURQUE (Fitchburg)
 BOWLER (Springfield)
 BRETT (Quincy)
 BUFFONE (Worcester)
 BUGLIONE (Methuen)
 CAHILL (Salem)
 CAIN (Wilmington)
 CAMPOBASSO (Arlington)
 CAREY (Mission Hill)
 CATALDO (Revere)
 CAVANAUGH (Medford)
 CHMURA, R. (Springfield)
 CHMURA, S. (Ludlow)
 COFFEY, W. (Springfield)
 COLLARO (Worcester)
 CONNELL (Weymouth)
 CONWAY (Malden)
 CORY (New Bedford)
 CRAVEN (W. Roxbury)
 CREIGHTON (Uxbridge)
 CUSACK (Arlington)
 DALY, J. (Arlington)
 DALY, M. (Brighton)
 DEMERS (Chicopee)
 DIGNAN (Braintree)
 DONOVAN (Chelsea)
 DORIS (Revere)
 DOYLE (W. Roxbury)
 EARLY, E. (Lowell)
 FALLON (Clinton)
 FANTASIA (Somerville)
 FEENEY (Hyde Park)
 FINNEGAN (Dorchester)
 FINNIGAN (Dorchester)
 FLAHERTY, C. (Cambridge)
 FLAHERTY, M. (So. Boston)
 FLYNN, P. (Bridgewater)
 FLYNN, R. (South Boston)
 FRAZIER (Braintree)
 GALLOTTI (Belmont)
 GAUDETTE (New Bedford)
 GRENIER (Spencer)
 GRIMALDI (Springfield)
 GRIMLEY (Lawrence)
 GULIMETTE (Lawrence)

HOGAN (Everett)
 HOWE (Somerville)
 HURRELL (North Andover)
 JOYCE (Woburn)
 KEARNEY (Hyde Park)
 KELLEHER (Roslindale)
 KITTERMAN (Pittsfield)
 KUSS (Fall River)
 LAMBROS (Dracut)
 LaPOINTE (Chicopee)
 LAPPIN (Springfield)
 LeBLANC (New Bedford)
 LOLAS (Monson)
 LOMBARD (Fitchburg)
 LOMBARDI (Cambridge)
 LONG, J. (Fall River)
 LYNCH (Westfield)
 MANNING, J.M. (Milton)
 MARSHALL (Quincy)
 MATRANGO (North Adams)
 McCARTHY, P. (Peabody)
 McGOWAN (Dedham)
 McGRATH (Watertown)
 McKENNA (Springfield)
 MELIA (Brighton)
 NASH (Leicester)
 NOLEN (Ware)
 NORTON (Fall River)
 O'BRIEN, J. (Fall River)
 ORLANDI (North End)
 PECK (Dartmouth)
 PERRAULT (Westford)
 PHELAN (Lynn)
 PICUCCI (Leominster)
 RAPOSA (Somerset)
 RONAYNE (Canton)
 ROURKE (Lowell)
 RUCHO (Worcester)
 SCACCIA (Hyde Park)
 SCALLI (Charlestown)
 SCELSI (Pittsfield)
 SCHNEIDERS (Canton)
 SCLAFANI (Watertown)
 SEMENSI (Randolph)
 SERRA (East Boston)
 SHEA, C. (Worcester)
 SHEA, P. (Lowell)
 SOBIL (Lawrence)
 STARZEC (Webster)
 STUDENSKI (Brockton)
 TOOMEY (Cambridge)
 VIGNEAU (Burlington)
 VIGNEAU (Burlington)
 VIVEIROS (Fall River)

NO (Republicans)

BLISS (N. Attleboro)
 BLY (Saugus)
 BUELL (Boxford)
 CAHOON (Harwich)
 CHADWICK (Winchester)
 COLE (Lexington)
 CONNELLY (Aagawam)
 DESROCHER (Nantucket)
 ELWELL (W. Newbury)
 FREEMAN (Chelmsford)
 GILLETTE (Pembroke)
 GRASSO (Shrewsbury)
 HARRINGTON, E. (Holden)
 HARRIS (Marblehead)
 HOLLAND (Longmeadow)
 LONG, C. (Dover)
 MacKENZIE (Wareham)
 MORINI (Northampton)
 OHLSON (W. Bridgewater)
 REYNOLDS (Northboro)
 RYAN (Haverhill)
 SHATTUCK (Pepperell)
 SHORTELL (Greenfield)
 TOWSE (Stoneham)
 TRUDEAU (Wilbraham)
 VELIS (Westfield)
 WOODS (Franklin)
 YOUNG (Scituate)

Those not voting are not listed here.

Dear FOCUS: A Reader Shares Feelings About Roles

Am I a butch, or a femme, or a balance of both? All of these are names for roles, but deciding our true roles in life must be based on our sense of ourselves. "Roles" don't exist except as we define them, yet we need some direction and sense of identity in our lives. Our bodies, our minds, our attitudes, all have to be taken into consideration before we can find the roles we are most comfortable with.

Femmes must give themselves completely and unselfishly. They belong with their lover. Their role is to please: if they are beautiful, the wait to be pleased; if they are not, they wait with patience and understanding. Theirs is not a demanding love; theirs is a giving love, a love which cares and worries. They have a real and true concern for the women they choose to love.

A butch is a taker who gives only what she can, or what is demanded of her. Yet she has the strength some femmes depend on; she is more man than woman. She prefers straights to gays, and guys to women. She is a truckdriver by definition. She hates her femininity and discards its trademarks, such as bras and lace. She wears under-shirts to make her feel more mannish. These are not bad qualities; they are good for the butch and for the particular kind of femme who fits her life style (i.e., an ultra-feminine femme who wants things done for her, who feels she needs the protection and domination.) To have healthy and lasting relationships we must start looking for partners who share our ideals and lifestyles, and stop deciding what our styles ought to be, stop forcing women into roles which aren't right for them. Life is not easy as it is; forcing some one to change to fit our own particular patterns is not fair, and can not be justified in the name of "love."

Only the gays have the opportunity to decide their roles, but how do we go about it? Do you like to drive? Do you really dig working on the car repairs, flat tires, washing it, and keeping it in mint condition? Do you like to have some one help you do all this, or sit and watch, or just leave you alone while you do it and feel your accomplishment in doing it on your own? Do you enjoy cooking and creating dishes on your own; do you really fuss to make delicious and smooth gravy or mashed potatoes? Do you enjoy dishes and pretty things and prettying things up? **BE HONEST** — or do you do these things and like to have help and some one to share them with you? Sharing is the question. Are you a loner or a sharer? Are you in balance, a butch, or a femme? Some femmes are useless and want to feel that way so that their butches can feel superior. I am not judging right or wrong; I am telling it like it is. Young or old, we must decide what we are and stop hurting those who love us.

We should not pass judgement on other people just because we do not choose their life styles. It takes all kinds; but, of course, no one says you have to be best friends, or take them home to Mother. Not all of us are in balance, not all of us want to be, and so we must all learn to live in our gay world accepting these differences, so we can have unity in spite of everything. BE what you are, love the kind of person who wants to be with the kind of person you are, and BE HONEST. Don't make promises or statements that you don't intend to fulfill. Don't take a woman to bed, try on the shoe, express your love, and then try to live together forcing her into a lifestyle because in a moment of love and in the heat of passion she promised she would TO HAVE YOU. Don't say to a woman whom you claim to love, you must change to suit me and my life style. Instead look around and find your woman who does fit, and together you can make life what is meant to be: beautiful. There is a woman for each of us somewhere. Look around and find your love; don't take someone else's. Don't say to yourself, I need someone, or I want someone, say to yourself, I want and need a particular woman, and then find her, wait for her, or do all you can to get her except taking her from some one else. But find the one who fits with you; don't try to force someone to fit into your lifestyle. It isn't fair to extract promises of changing, because trying to keep passion-promises may tear up the love you want. Let's love each other as we are.

Sincerely,

A Reader

Of Prime Time

numerates the number of raw-hanging nerves
possessed by one
leaderess of leadees

marching in tune
to the far-reaching corners
of Newbury and Marlboro

stumping dyke
stomping Bostonian fence-fuckers
to the cheer of community anthems

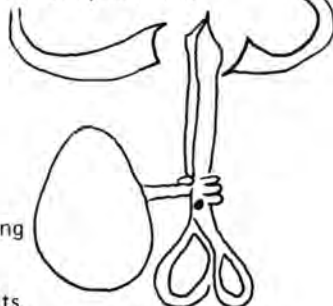


a 60 minute special

on the end of Dole-days
red-lettered Roman calendared
wine-free days

catch up on
the latest political use
of racism - phone tapping

get your free-bee dates of
scheduled feminist events
around an 18 hour-less-personal connection



call in

tell me what you want to hear,

plug your features in
guaranteed blow-ups
in Boston's pride -

the infamous nobal global
complete with ten minutes of
community subheadings . . .

"gay"
"sister"

"miner's daughter"

"union supporter"

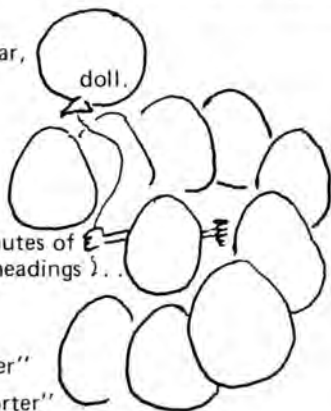
"mighty oak shaker"

"cut-her a piece of pie" . . .

During the extended
credentialized commercial

I tuned you out.

The whisper of ethics had been so faint
I couldn't hear for the volume.



- "Jim"

"It's Alright Ma, I'm Only Dyin' ";

An Essay on Passivity

by Judi Stein

—with thanks to Debby B.—

Feminists, as everyone knows, are self-reliant independent women who have rejected the passivity assigned to the female role. And Lesbian Feminists, obviously, are even more aware that they are the ones to take control of their lives. In forging new roles for ourselves, we (Lesbians, Feminists and/or Lesbian/Feminists) have rejected the notion that we must be all things to all men. We no longer assume that it is necessary for us to be house-keepers, child-bearers, dish-washers or bed-partners for men, unless we so choose those roles. But in having given up the 'all-things-to-all-men' role, some of us have assumed an even more insidious sort of burden — that of being a sister to all women.

And the role of everybody's sister is perhaps even more destructive than that of earth-mother. It is, perhaps, easier for us, as Lesbians, to know where our individual boundaries lie with men: from 'I will sleep with you but it will not be a primary relationship' through 'I will have nothing to do with you at all, anytime, ever!'. We tend to be clearer, at least from moment to moment, as to how and how much we want to/will respond to demands men make on us. But if our woman-identification is limitless and without boundaries, we will let the very life of us be all used up.

Most of us somehow struggle to a stop at some point before total collapse. We go to one less meeting, chair one less committee, listen to one less woman talking. Or we maintain the pace of our activities, but only half the quality. Or we maintain pace and quality but with a growing resentment that destroys our actions as well as ourselves. (Overcope: an egotistical syndrome characteriz-

ed by 'If I don't do it, it won't get done.')

And the single reason for exhaustion (however, it manifests itself) is that we have not established our limits, our boundaries with women.

And passivity really is, in part, a lack of adequate boundaries, or an invasion (conscious or not) of known boundaries. The resentment we feel towards our friends or organizations (and any subsequent guilt) is something we leave ourselves open to by not making it clear (verbally and non-verbally) just where our limits lie. The one thing we owe to each other, as Lesbians and human beings, is to act with as much honesty as we can. We owe it to our *selves* to work at recognizing the boundaries of our sisterhood and to act accordingly as much as possible.

We need to make clear, at the risk of offending a stranger or a close friend, just what we are willing to do and when. We must learn to discard the guilt we are supposed to feel when we deny something to a friend. We have to recognize the limits of even the sisterhood of a close friendship or love relationship. There will be times when we do not want to listen to a friend, or go out with her, or make love with her. We must realize that an honest 'no' is not only an assertion of self, but also an assertion of respect for the genuineness of a relationship and far better than a grudging or resentful 'yes'.

Women who burn-out, drop-out or fade-out of friendships or the movement are the visible victims of the everybody's sister syndrome. In other words 'If I am to be truly woman-identified I must realize that one of the women I identify with is myself.' If we are to give genuinely and freely to other women, we need to learn to say 'enough'. We must learn that saying 'no' *can* be as honest and genuine an act of sisterhood as saying 'yes'.

MONDAY NITE RAPS

NEW TOPIC RAPS

DOB has decided to offer a new kind of rap as an alternative (or supplement) to the regular Tuesday night meetings. Where the Tuesday raps focus on the problems and feelings brought to the meeting by the individual women participating, the idea behind the new (MONDAY) raps is to concentrate on a specific subject of general interest. Tentative subjects for the June raps are Transsexualism, Couples, and

Gays in Prison. Discussion will center around the topic selected for a given night, and ideas and feelings will be shared in connection with that topic. As always, the rap will also provide a time and place to socialize with DOB friends, a chance to get to know people better. As the raps get going, women who participate will have the opportunity to suggest new issues for future meetings. **STARTING THE FIRST MONDAY IN JUNE: 7:30** at the office.

Beneath the double
thickness of your shirt
your breasts are firm
yet soft and your tough
body gentle to my touch—
O lady, these are dreams
I have—the pain I feel
is waking and is real.

—Paula Bennett

In the sad and constant sky
the moon completes
her circle
indifferent
to the jagged edge of blood
that her white light
draws from my life.

—Paula Bennett

JUNE
1974

D.O.B. CALENDAR

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, Starting June, 'Topic Raps' will be held at D.O.B. office.

JUNE 3rd **WOMEN IN PRISONS** — women from prison will lead the discussion. See page 13.

June 17th subject: Transsexualism. Probably no rap June 10 & 24

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 office.

WEDNESDAYS, 1st & 3rd, 8pm, **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.

SUNDAYS, 10:30-11 am **CLOSET SPACE** radio program, WCAS-AM 740.

SUNDAYS, 1 pm, **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.**

Monday June 10, 7:30pm **D.O.B. BUSINESS MEETING** at office.

TUESDAY, June 11, 7:30 pm **CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOP** (also regular rap) Paula Bennett will conduct workshop for women interested in writing. Bring your works and share them with others.

SUNDAY, June 16 *****PICNIC AT COCHITUATE STATE PARK*****
NATICK. Rides leave the office promptly at 10 am. (call if you can offer or need one) 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.**

Thursday, June 20, 7:30pm, **FOCUS STAFF MEETING** at office.

Monday, July 15, 7:30pm, **D.O.B. BUSINESS MEETING** at office.

– From the perspective of Gerry Azzata

I'm a 24-year-old lesbian who was lucky enough to come out a little over two years ago, in the sheltered atmosphere of a small Pennsylvania college. With the rise of the women's movement, and the birth of gay activism, it was relatively easy for me to feel comfortable as a lesbian.

Ann Aldrich is the pseudonym for a lesbian who, from the early 1950's on, wrote a series of books about another kind of lesbian life-style. She isn't very widely read today – although, as of a year ago, she still was turning out books with such catchy (?) titles as *Take a Lesbian to Lunch*. Her books are, mildly speaking, not very liberated. From *We Walk Alone*, to *We, Too, Must Love* to *We Two Won't Last*, there are dozens of anecdotes that rival the worst of "True Confessions." She zooms in on the lesbians of Greenwich Village, who seem to spend 24 hours a day at bars and parties, beginning dramatically intense relationships, and sinking into liquor when affairs fail. The rest of their time, they entertain each other with stories about who has suddenly run off with whose lover.

Ann Aldrich makes an easy target for any of us who are comfortably seated in 1974. But are we really that far from the 1950's? It's only within the past few years that any truly positive literature about lesbianism has appeared. *We Walk Alone* and *We, Too, Must Love* were among the earliest attempts at lesbian non-fiction. The only alternatives to Ann Aldrich (and her contemporaries such as Ann Bannon) were Radclyffe Hall's novels, straight "lesbian" pornography, and a few – very few – monthly publications. Isolation was a reality. One chapter of *We, Too, Must Love* (1958) consists of letters from people who have read her earlier books. This is a typical example:

I hate what I am. But here I am – me. I don't know where to go from here.... At one time I would have felt I could not sign my name, but now I am so ashamed anyway, what does it matter?

It's very hard for me to relate to this woman's total lack of self-respect, except with anger and frustration that she is so resigned to her helplessness. But Ann Aldrich evidently spoke to many such women. And her message is that you are not the only one. Even if her lesbians are overseasoned with cynicism ("*We Two Won't Last*" is a constant theme), at least they are attempting to create a life style for themselves. I wonder what it must have been like to see the words "love" and "lesbian" in the same sentence for the first time.

Somewhere among the scenes of broken affairs, facades put up for "unsuspecting" parents, and all of the rest, Ann Aldrich seems to have hit a basic truth: You have to realize that you exist, and that you are entitled to exist, before you can develop any pride. And this is where I become angry with Ann Aldrich. Her earlier books are saying, "You exist," and I thank her for that. But, in 1972, *Take a Lesbian to Lunch* is still saying the same thing. Several stories are lifted directly from her first books, and she doesn't quite succeed in fitting them alongside stories about lesbians who are becoming politically aware. Ann Aldrich is in the uncomfortable position of apologizing for women who are coming out publicly, and I am truly sorry that many younger lesbians will reject her totally because of this. I need Ann Aldrich to understand my sisters who found their identities at an earlier time. Beyond her tales of butch and femme and bar scenes, I think that she really understands many of the doubts and hopes that lesbians of all ages share.

in the fifties

by Lois Johnson

I sat at a gay women's rap session the other night and tried to answer the question, "What was it like to come out and realize that you were a lesbian in the late fifties and early sixties before gay liberation and the women's movement?" I came out in my early twenties in 1958. I guess I gave the answer you might expect — it certainly was more difficult. There was no one to turn to, no campus organization, no good books or publications, nothing in the popular media, an absolute black-out. It was just as if you were invisible. I pored through the meager collection of the BPL - finding only listings under perversion - sexual, I grasped at every scrap of possible information which would help me define my feelings for the woman I had fallen in love with. Practically everything I picked up was negative or dealt with male homosexuality from a grimly clinical point of view - arrested development, all the Freudian cliches, hedonism, narcissism - you name it it was there in the books applied to homosexuals. If male homosexuals were invisible, lesbians just didn't exist. at all, or certainly must be a smaller minority than men.

I pored over the Bible, too, since I was religious at that time — looking for answers. Not very many came along. Sodom and Gomorrah kept stalking the back of my mind even tho' I genuinely felt that love for another human being couldn't be wrong. My lover and I moved in together with, thank God, her understanding straight roommate and proceeded to try and make a life for ourselves.

COMING OUT:

The only other homosexuals we got to know were men. We just never seemed to meet any women. Tho' knew they must exist. It was only when we started spending more and more time together alone in our room that the situation became difficult for the roommate and she finally moved out. Bars seemed out of the question for both of us because we didn't drink and didn't smoke. Never having been in the habit of frequenting straight bars, the thought of gay bars colored by all the grisly pictures of alcoholism, other side of the tracks, rough stomping dykes painted in the books I read was enuf to keep us away. So we lived in our little ivory tower — a complete double life. By day at work - dressed in the dresses and high heels and lipstick, doing all the expected trips of the early twenties - dating gay guys to cover for ourselves at parties, learning how to deceive (or we thought we did) any straight male that we were obliged to go out with. Keeping the dark secret stuffing it down inside our guts. Sometimes doubting that we were doing the right thing, gradually leaving the church because I could just not reconcile myself to the double standard of morality I thought I was living. We learned, yest we learned quite quickly never to slip — the taboo was so complete, the societal punishments for being branded a lesbian so unthinkable awful that you could just not allow yourself to slip. The double standard came easily after a lot of practice. You learned to stop the words of love on your lips when in the presence of friends and family, to talk about boyfriends at work, then to abandon all those lies at night and on weekends to enjoy your true life and love.

(continued on page 12)

in the seventies

MEMOIRS OF A NOUVEAU LESBIAN

by Judi Stein

I am a whole person, feminist, lesbian, categorization ad nauseum now that the three biggies are there. It was not until I became a feminist that I became a Lesbian. And it was not until I became a Lesbian that I began consciously and joyously to make some growth towards whole personhood.

I grew up a misfit and somewhat(!) of a disappointment to my popularity minded, marriage minded parents. And so I did what many misfits of the sixties did and became a hippie. For a time I fit. As a hippie I was a firm follower of the Fuck When You Feel Like It school. It took two years of very promiscuous behavior for me to realize that not only was this not Prince Charming in my bed, there might not be a Prince Charming, and I could do without him anyway. Somehow, in the midst of the self-destructiveness, I had begun to develop a feminist consciousness. The things that were wrong with the way I related to men were not always (or even often) things wrong with me. And if I was tired of waking up and going "Yech" in the morning at my bed-partner, I would begin to sleep alone.

Then followed eighteen months of absolute celibacy. I didn't even masturbate because I didn't know how. I was growing in such mental leaps that it was a relief to have my bodily boundaries maintained. I began to realize how much shit I had gone through by virtue of being female. I also began to realize how much shit I had dished out to other women who seemed not to care that they didn't fit the standard (Jewish) American Princess Mold. I joined a Consciousness Raising Group and

learned to listen to women. I decided at some point that my energy was limited and I wanted to use it for my own liberation and that of other women. Women were the people who really mattered to me, yet the thought of loving women hadn't really crossed my mind—women were your sisters and we all knew about incest. So I maintained, grew and grew mentally, and was celibate still.

But at some point I began to wonder where the stops were in my relationships with other women. There were two women in particular with whom I felt almost total intimacy. We laughed, cried, talked, argued, played together; we hugged and kissed each other; yet there was always an understanding (usually not verbalized) that the hugs and kisses went only so far. We cared for each other deeply and yet we always stopped. I realized that I wanted no assumed limits on my friendships with women. If I felt close to a person, and had warm feelings toward her, I did not want things to be able to go only 'so far'. The old "going all the way" had returned, this time as an act of sharing and not of submission.

However, things were not quite that tidy—there was a year between my mental coming out and my first sexual experience. That time was a continuation of my mental growth—as a feminist and as a Lesbian feminist. I no longer separate my feminism from my self—all women's issues are my issues.

I also grew in my Lesbian consciousness; I began to find a place where my whole Lesbian feminist self fit. But I also found that there are Lesbians who did not consider me a "real" Lesbian because my commitment to women

(continued on next page)

12 COMING OUT: in the fifties... (cont.)

Fortunately the gay men were there. We spent time at parties which were always exclusively male homosexual except for us. We certainly weren't lacking in social life. But there was absolutely no chance for role-modelling on an older person who was gay because no-one was far enough out of the closet to admit their feelings.

I was one of the fortunate ones. I don't know when I would have emerged physically as a lesbian if it were not for my first lover. She wasn't quite certain she was gay and I certainly hadn't admitted it to myself before my first physical experience. I nearly turned my back on the whole thing the morning after the night before - then I made the most important decision of my life - I refused to be bullied by whatever stereotypes I had gathered in my own mind over the years about what a lesbian was supposed to be and decided that loving someone whether it be a man or a woman certainly couldn't be wrong. And so it went hours of discussing life, love and why we were lesbians, wondering, doubting, but always ending up back at the basic rule of my life - to love someone is never wrong. Only a fool would toss the happiness I had out the window. Fortunately for me, I was strong-minded enough to overcome most of the negative stereotypes, the fears, self-doubts, the outside pressures to "be a real woman" and marry and have children that still dominated society's thinking in the late fifties and early sixties. It wasn't easy, there was absolutely no outside help and I had sense enough to stay away for the most part from the family doctor or a psychologist or psychiatrist. I can imagine what would have happened to my psyche if a psychiatrist had started playing with it and forcing all the guilt trips of that period of time

onto my unwilling mind. Also I had love - from my lover and from an understanding sister and brother-in-law who knew but never said so until I told them. So I survived but there were many dark hours when I really thought my heart, mind and soul were going to break apart and I was going to end up in a strait jacket. The pressure of trying to keep up the straight front in a hostile society was almost too much. So today in 1974 I rejoice in anything I can do to make the coming-out of a sister or a brother just a little bit more easy. I'm into Gay Liberation up to my eye-balls and finally have brought together the two pieces of my personality which heterosexual, sexist society for so many years forced me to keep apart - my personal and my public life are now becoming one.

COMING OUT: in the seventies...(cont.)

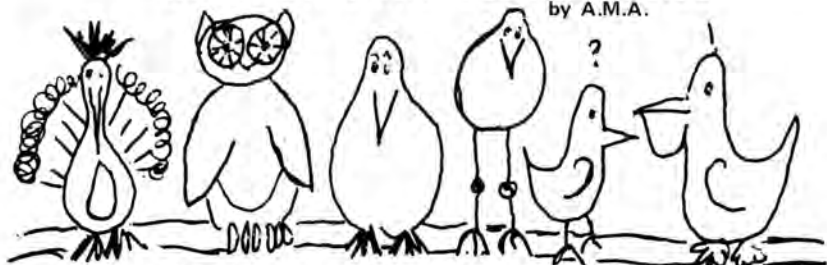
is not primarily sexual. I sometimes fear being considered not quite as gay as women who had always loved women, or not quite as gay as women whose attraction to women was based on sexual attraction. I found that there are many Lesbians who consider the feminist struggle someone else's struggle. But I am continually growing more comfortable with my whole self, including realizing that being a woman-identified-woman need not exclude relationships on any level (including sexual) with men.

My coming out has been and will continue to be a process. I am trying to be as open as possible with my gay sisters about how I got to be where I am so that as a community we can grow away from the sexual polarity that divided us from other women. As a feminist I believe in the possibility of a community of women. As a Lesbian feminist I believe in the necessity of that community and work towards its realization.

FOR THE BIRDS:

QUICK GAY ORNITHOLOGICAL GUIDE

by A.M.A.



American Coot – super-patriotic male, usually in politics, who thinks homosexuality is the moral root-rot of These United States.

Great Horned Owl – pseudo-intellectual, self-proclaimed super-male with a passion for Freudian theories; usually more than willing to prove that “all lesbians need is a good lay.”

Hairy Woodpecker – similar to the Great Horned Owl except that this variety dispenses with the intellectualizing (also known as the Hairy Wouldprickher.)

Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker – near relation to the Hairy Woodpecker, but cruder: typical construction-worker type (also known as the Beer-bellied Motherfucker.)

Blue Grosbeak – an unpleasant species which harasses pedestrians: Roses are red/Grosbeaks are blue/If it's obscene/They'll screech it at you.

Titmouse – the male of this species frequents cheesy porno flicks to get his jollies out of watching women in bed together.

Peewit – this bird specializes in bathroom humor; self-confidently vulgar, it rarely blushes or flushes.

Common Grackle – a gossipy species, whose monotonous cry echoes through the woods: Isssheorin' tshe, Isssheorin' tshe...

House Sparrow – unliberated housewife who thinks that lesbians are not ‘real women’ and that all gays are out to seduce her children.

Wild Duck (any variety) – the straight friend or acquaintance, who on finding out that you are gay, will go through all sorts of spasmodic contortions to avoid physical contact.

Bulbul – so named because this is what it devours and this is what it spews; also, generic name for all the above species – as the saying goes, “You are what you eat.”

Growing Old in America

My grandmother sits patiently for death.
 In preparation, she has shrunk
 to half her size, her hair
 and skin bleached white about her eyes;
 her hands are brown as last years leaves
 set to crumble at the slightest touch.
 She sits, attended by a nurse,
 before the television
 and with the gift of tongues, she speaks,
 babbling Czech and dirty jokes.
 She is a child again,
 eighty years experience
 squeezed from her like a sponge.
 Her arteries and veins are hard
 and in the dryness of her age
 she can no longer find
 reserves
 with which to cry.

— Paula Bennett

Rita Mae

Looking into her face,
 I had searched for answers.
 In her courage to show sensitivity
 and share her vulnerabilities
 without losing her pride,
 I found
 the gentleness of a strong woman.

Searching further for answers,
 I stayed awhile
 looking directly into her eyes
 knowing
 the simplicity of truth.

And when she smiled,
 I had stopped searching
 Only to discover and feel
 my own strength.

The Deadly Nightshade

THE SAINTS – JUNE 13-14-15

CHRISTOPHER STREET
LIBERATION CONCERT
JUNE 29 – Central Park, N.Y.C.



WANT TO ADVERTISE
IN *FOCUS* ?

¼ page \$5
½ page \$10
Full page \$20

Send to: D.O.B. Room 323
419 Boylston Street
Boston, Mass. 02116



1270
1270
1270

nightly on
3 floors

1270
Boylston

cocktail prices
noon to 8pm good drink,
good company, good vibes

PIED PIPER



ENTERTAINMENT
BEACH
PATIO



193A COMMERCIAL STREET, PROVINCETOWN, MASS.

I am a lesbian, cat, absolute how that the masturbate It was not u now. I was that I became leaps that I

Good Gay Buttons & Books
Homophile Community Health
Service Bookstore
419 Boylston Street
RING NITE BELL 4 TIMES
MONDAY-THURS. 6-9pm

FUCK WHEN CUCKER WAS
It took two use it for m
cious behavior of other w
not only people who
Charming i get the th
not be a hadn't rea
I could do women we
Somehow, iknew about
destructiver grew and:

WHITCH
WHITCH
WHITCH
WHITCH
WHITCH

THE All Women's Rock Band

WENDY
KAREN
MERRY
KAREN

For Booking Information
Call ELAINE 289-8363

WHITCH
WHITCH



The History Project
<http://www.historyproject.org/>
info@historyproject.org

Thank you for using the manuscript collections of The History Project. Copyright restrictions may apply. If you have questions or wish to request removal of a document in this collection from our digital repository, please contact The History Project.

This PDF file contains images of an issue of the publication Maiden Voyage, produced by the Boston chapter of the Daughters of Bilitis from

The Daughters of Bilitis (Boston chapter) records Collection #0011

Recommended Citation:

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