

Laura McMurry

MAIDEN

VOYAGE

Vol. 2 No. 3

February 1971

CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS

Thur., 2/11 -Maiden Voyage comes out.
Myrna Lamb, female liberationist, 8 p.m., Hayden
Hall, B.U., 685 Commonwealth Ave.
Sat., 2/13 -DOB Valentine Party at Diana Travis' house.
Call 522 - 1070 for directions.
Mon. - Tues., March 8, 9 - Women Today, WBZ, plans
to produce a program on homosexuality. More
details coming.
Fri., March 12 - DOB Business Meeting on incorporation.
Fri. - Sun., March 19 - 21 - Congress to Unite Women at
Boston University. Kate Millet and Florence Luscome
will be among the speakers. Saturday workshops
include a session on gay women. This is the result
of the New England Women's Coalition Jan. 23 at
B.U.
Sun., March 21 - DOB plays football, 1 p.m. Lars
Anderson Park, Brookline. Rain date is Sunday,
March 28.

GAY GROUPS

Gay Women's Liberation — Call Mary or Nita - 787 -0439

Homophile Union of Boston - Meetings every other
Sunday, 33 Bowdin Street, 282 - 9181

WOMEN'S GROUPS

Boston Women United, P.O. Box 278, Allston, 02134 or
253 - 6498

Bread and Roses, Old Cambridge Baptist Church, 1151
Mass. Avenue, 492 - 4130

Media Women, P.O. Box 8926, JFK Station, 02114

Female Liberation. 1126 Boylston Street, Boston, Nancy -
445 - 3987

National Organization for Women (NOW) P.O. Box
346, Cambridge, 02138. 492 - 5533

Women's Center at B.U., 232 Bay State Road, 2nd
floor. Mon - Fri: 9 - 5. 731 - 6858

MAIDEN VOYAGE IS PUBLISHED BY BOSTON DOB

Contributors this issue, Kim Stabinski, Andy Cox, Diane
Benison, Diana Travis, Martha Shelley, Pam Boyd, Laura
Robin

Cover by Diane Benison

The opinions expressed in the publication are not
necessarily those of the organization, but the opinions
of the individual contributors.

DOB OFFICERS

President - Andy Cox
Vice President - Jo Peckarsky
Rec. Secretary - Vacant
Corresponding Secretary - Laura Robin
Treasurer - Rose Tuttle

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ads \$7.50 an issue.

DOB REFERALS

DOB recommends these persons to members who want
professional advice.

LEGAL

Alan Cook and Michael Buckman, 1514 Dorchester Ave.,
Dorchester, Mass. 288 - 4041

PSYCHIATRIC

Dr. Richard Pillard, 6 Bond Street, Boston. 423 - 9722 or
262 - 4200, ext. 5251

RELIGIOUS

Roman Catholic - Father Kevin, Newman Center
(St. Clement's Church) 1105 Boylston Street, Boston.
536 - 2376 or 277 - 4847

Episcopal - Rev. Gilbert Dent, Christ Church, Zero
Garden Street, Cambridge. 876 - 0220

Methodist - Dr. William Alberts, Old West Methodist Church,
131 Cambridge Street, Boston. 277 - 5088

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Martha Shelley ---- 'A gay woman who's a feminist'

by PAM BOYD

More than 100 women crowded into the Clarke Room at the Arlington Street Church Jan. 29 to hear lesbian-radical Martha Shelley offer her views on subjects ranging from her arrest for criminal trespass to bathroom conditions in the New York City subway system.

A free lance writer whose articles have appeared in 'The Ladder,' 'Sisterhood is Powerful' and 'Women's Liberation: Blueprint for the Future', she described how attempts to establish a Women's Center in a 40-year-old, 14 story abandoned building in New York City were thwarted by city officials.

'The city started an illegal petition saying the building was unsafe and that people wanted the women out. The only people complaining were those in the front office and the manager of a nearby store,' she said. She accused the city of 'acting in bad faith' and claimed that city building inspectors 'deliberately' damaged the property so they could declare it unsafe.

Now facing criminal trespass, Martha and others involved in a protest leveled against their eviction have secured the services of four lawyers.

'If the case comes up right away, we can do a big deal because it will still be fresh in people's minds,' she said. 'We plan to generate a lot of publicity to bring our plight out in the open. We even have a film that makes us look great--it will warm the heart of any jury.'

Although there are currently more gay groups in New York 'than you can shake a stick at,' they are not doing much beyond holding dances and sending out speakers,' according to Martha. 'There is no concentrated effort to do much else. A lot of people are talking, but that's about all.'

Martha, who describes herself as a 'gay woman who is a feminist,' hasn't done much public speaking in recent months, nor is she active in the Radical Lesbians of New York DOB.

Members of the audience participated in the program with questions aimed at discovering more about Martha's views on revolution, gay philosophies and women's liberation.

In concluding she asked, 'how do you get it into women's heads that they need to be liberated, when they think they've been free all along?'

FEAR NOT SHAME

Keeps the closet door closed. 'We must no longer look at our closets as our protection, from a hostile straight world, they are places of hiding'

by DIANA TRAVIS

I think the only answer for real gay liberation can come by abolishing closets. We must no longer look at our closets as our protection from a hostile straight world—we must look at them as what they are: places of hiding.

What seems to me to be keeping most people in their closets is fear of one kind or another—not guilt. Fear of what parental reactions will be, fear of losing a job, or fear of social ostracism from straight friends.

When I have queried the reasons many of my friends have for remaining in their closets, I have never heard one say, 'I'm not letting anyone know because I'm ashamed of it.'

Quite the contrary—it runs more like, 'Now don't get the wrong idea, I'm proud to be gay, only I can't run the risk of...' etc. Again and again I have argued my philosophy of re-evaluating what is important in one's life—but I wonder how much one's own philosophy can mean to someone else.

Anyway, my argument runs something like this: Is it important to have 'good' family relationships while denying part of yourself? And in all reality, how good is the relationship if you are failing to relate as a whole person? Is it important to keep the job you are now working at, if keeping it means lying about your personal life to your friends at work and to your employer (if you're one of those few who actually have that close contact with her employer)? If you can't recognize this as a day-to-day oppression that you are putting yourself under, then surely (see page 4)



Martha Shelley as she spoke in Arlington Street Church.



DOB President Andy Cox introduced Martha Shelley

Informal rap sessions were part of the weekend too.



Out of the closets (continued)

you can see that you are denying part of your existence, rationalizing that this job is more important to you than being a complete individual.

There's also the fear of losing your friends, whether they be little-long chums or school friends or people you enjoy working with. I can only attack the rationale for hiding your identity as a homosexual from your 'friends' in one way—don't you really want to be liked and accepted for your whole self? Is a person really what you'd call a friend if she or he would freak out or 'cool' a friendship if that person learned you are gay?

I have been trying to examine these fears head-on and I firmly believe that we are making mountains out of what often aren't even mole hills.

For years my biggest fear was my family finding out I was gay. When it happened (not because I suddenly got any courage, but because my mother found a letter) I received quite a surprise. I found my family loved me a lot more than I thought. I think most of us don't give our parents credit enough to really love us as the individuals we are and to want us to be happy our way, not theirs. I thought my mother would totally freak at my being gay; she only freaks at my using my real name on television, and she's even changing in that way.

Practically all my other friends whose parents know—particularly if they had sat down and told them—have had similar reactions, ranging from 'so what else is new?' to 'I wish you had told me years ago, we could have been so much closer.' It's the rare occurrence for this new knowledge to alienate one of us from our family...and in the few cases that I've heard of this happening, as soon as the initial shock wore off, through open and unashamed discussions the same result of acceptance and continued love followed.

This is usually true for most jobs where any humaness is to be found—your fear itself usually far outdistances the actual risk of losing your job. I am a teacher and after a recent television appearance on Channel 44 the mother of one of my students came to me and said she had seen me. She told me she was impressed that I would go on television, and that she thought people were changing and more willing to accept gay people. Other friends of mine...nurses, secretaries, social workers, physical therapists, teachers, medical supervisors, etc., have not lost their jobs and have not hidden their homosexuality behind closet doors, either. This is not to say that we don't lose our jobs when found out—this is probably the area in which we are most discriminated against in any concrete way... and we should fight it, because we have the power... economic power...to do it.

And now the last fear, and for most of us this has been the least of the fears to conquer because either all our friends are gay or because we've just got to have some level of honesty somewhere. I've only lost one friend because she found out I was gay – and that was my fault. I fumbled for words, I didn't know what to say, I looked at the floor, and I finally denied it. She came to me, wanting me to tell her and fear is what kept me from being honest with her and what kept me from being honest with her and what consequently cooled our whole friendship. I have no doubt that had I been able to speak for myself ... or shall I say had I known-how to speak for myself, things would have been much different. None of my straight friends whom I have told in an unashamed and honest manner about my homosexuality – in other words by acting totally if there was nothing to hide – have turned away.

How does one, then, get out of the closet successfully? For those of us who are out, it didn't happen overnight. You have to learn how to talk to people, whether they're your friends or an unidentifiable radio audience.

I think what helped me most to come out of my closet was the knowledge of a real gay community forming here in Boston ... people who want to work together so that eventually none of us will have to submit to oppression again. I am, personally, one of those people who find strength in numbers. I lost my friend in high school because I had never talked with another gay person. If you want to get out of your closet, you can start by talking with people in the organized gay community who have come out. You know, it's really not that hard to do it ... and each step you take away from your closet becomes easier.

The responsibility for educating the public lies with all of us, not just the few of us who are willing to go on T. V. or the radio or speak again and again to groups from this and that organization. Education comes with talking to people, and not at them. It's quite hard to
(See page 5)

Out of the closets (continued from page 4)

talk with whole groups of people. I remember reading an article last year that said if each gay person only told her or his immediate family and six or seven friends, that that would take care of educating everyone. But we've got to know how to tell them—and I deeply feel that it is telling them outside of our closets, where we are all free and proud.

'WHY I QUIT DOB' by MARTHA SHELLEY

(With this article explaining why she left New York DOB, Martha Shelley becomes a regular monthly columnist for the Maiden Voyage. Ed.)

Quitting an organization is not a decision one makes lightly, particularly if one has been involved in the inner workings of that organization and given it a considerable amount of time and energy.

I was both treasurer and president of DOB—New York for brief periods (not simultaneously), and I must admit that I was not particularly competent at either position. At the time I accepted the posts, I was full of enthusiasm and ignorance, much better qualified for public speaking (which duty I fulfilled) than for administration (at which I was a good-hearted bungler).

A lesson for other organizations: your most captivating spokeswoman is not necessarily your best administrator. And a good administrator may be a dull speaker.

I resigned the presidency of the New York chapter after becoming aware of my inability to fill the post properly, both in terms of the day-to-day supervision of work and as an arbitrator among the various factions in the chapter.

Some people are good at being peacemakers, and I was not one of those. Blessed are the peacemakers. If you know any, let'em run for office, preferably the White House.

After resigning my post, I stayed with the organization for a while, and finally my membership lapsed, as a result of the formation of Gay Liberation Front, and my activity in it. Let me explain in greater detail:

Shortly after the Stonewall Riot, it occurred to me that the gay organization in New York had to respond to the event or be forever discredited in the eyes of the gay community. I proposed to DOB that we sponsor a rally, along with the other New York groups. DOB was disinterested. I then went to a town meeting called by the Mattachine Society, and made the same proposal. The hierarchy of Mattachine was also reluctant to involve itself, but the response from the general membership was overwhelmingly in favor, so Mattachine agreed to let those who were interested in working on the rally use its office as headquarters. We did so, and some of the younger women at DOB came down to help out.

At the same time, a number of homosexuals and lesbians who had been working in the peace movement and with various radical groups began to meet at a loft in Greenwich Village to discuss their problems as gay people.

They had been fighting for freedom for black people, Vietnamese, Puerto Ricans and other oppressed groups, but had been hiding their homosexuality from straight coworkers in the Movement, had been afraid to fight for their own liberation.

Eventually, the two groups—the committee that worked out of the Mattachine office and the group that met at the loft—combined to form Gay Liberation Front. I was one of these. At the time, I was still a member of DOB.

For a long time, I had been pushing for an alliance between DOB and other groups—not a coalition, but some sort of mutual defense treaty. I wanted to be part of an organization which would not be afraid to take a stand on the way, or join with black people in a picket line, or support a cause which did not directly concern gay people. GLF was that organization.

At the time, I felt that DOB members were too selfish in their insistence, that other organizations, political groups, etc., take positions with respect to the oppression of gay people, but that DOB should not alienate any possible member by taking a position on the war or any other issue.

We were delighted to have the support of some brave churchmen who risked alienating their congregations and losing their jobs by (see page 6)

'WHY I QUIT DOB' (continued from page 5)

taking a moral stance in our favor, but we wouldn't even risk the possible support of lesbians who dug the Ku Klux Klan.

Finally, I felt oppressed as a human being by some of the DOB women. Since I was also involved in GLF, I was suspected of treason by some, and of Communist tendencies by others. (Tendencies have always been a problem with me--homosexual, heterosexual, Communist, Jeffersonian, you name it. Actually, my worst tendency is procrastination.)

At one point, I even resigned from GLF, and had to endure a humiliating cross-examination by the governing board of the chapter to determine if I was loyal to DOB. This was nothing official, more or less a private session to which I submitted in order to keep peace. The peace was ruptured shortly thereafter. New York's chapter still contains people who would like to wring my neck and I daresay that in some instances, the feeling is mutual. On the other hand, some of the people there were very generous with me in many ways, and that includes some of the right-wingers with whom I had my bitterest arguments.

As I grow older, I grow more uncertain of my adolescent conviction. It seems to me that the best feature of the women's movement is pluralism--that any group which sees its needs somewhat differently from another group can form a new organization and go its own way. Sometimes, sadly enough, two groups which are almost identical to an outside observer are very hostile to one another--like jealous lovers who have separated, and who cannot tolerate the minor differences between them. Each takes the other's need for separate development as an insult; neither can let go and wish the other peace. So we hate each other instead of our real enemies.

Public Education Committee review

DECEMBER 5, 1970 Diana Travis, Laura Robin spoke to a sociology class on the family at Emmanuel College (Catholic, women's school) in Boston and afterwards stayed for informal discussion in school snack shop. 30 kids in class, reception from the third who said anything was friendly.

DECEMBER 17, 1970 Diana, Laura and 3 HUB (Homophile Union of Boston) members and one psychiatrist (HUB and DOB referral psych Dr. Richard Pillard) spoke in the evening to ORT group (Organization for Rehabilitation and Training) (a women's service organization for the temple) at Temple Beth Am in Randolph, Mass. Men and women in audience, more or less friendly.

JANUARY 12, Ellen and a friend of hers spoke to a class of teachers, nurses and others taking a course on youth problems like drugs, sex alcohol at Braintree High School. The course has meetings once a week all semester. There was some bad interaction between speakers and audience.

JANUARY 14, Gail King, Jeb Boswell (latter from Harvard) spoke to a group of a dozen ministers who are chaplains at Mass. General Hospital for an hour. Discussion was friendly but slow moving. The group meets once a week to hear people on sex.

JANUARY 18, several members of DOB (Gail King, Diana Travis) talked with about 25 women in Female Liberation about gay liberation, upon invitation of F. L.

JANUARY 21, Laura, Kathy Rowe from DOB and Harry Phillips from Harvard Homophile Assn. spoke to a similar class at Higham High School. Discussion slow, reaction reservedly friendly.

JANUARY 21, 22 David Reuben, author of 'Everything You Wanted to Know About Sex...' was on WBZ-TV channel 4, Boston 'For Women Today' show, 9 a.m. There were many questions from audience. Diana made statement on the first day saying his chapter on male homosexuality and statements on lesbians (in the chapter on prostitution) only perpetuated untruthful stereotypes, dealt with these categories of people as less than human, so there were hardly any questions she wanted to ask of him. Dr. Richard Pillard also spoke about a new counselling service, the Homophile Health Service, during the question period and Rita Hecht was on 'Women Today' asking some questions. (See page 7)

JANUARY 26, Diana, Rita, Sharon Earll, and a HUB member, Chucky, went to First Parish Church (Unitarian) Framingham to speak to parents and their children, a followup to a visit that was made last year. It was lively, interesting and the kids asked a lot of questions and made a number of comments.

OPEN THAT DOOR!

There will be a meeting to discuss various tactics of encountering family and friends with your gay identity. People will be there who have been through it.

Call Diana at 522-1070

Haiku by Kim Stabinski

First leaf, gold and red

How enviable...

I sent her, with other falls'

Wee, fluttering firefly

Tender memories...

Lighting on her breast

Glassy-eyed at work,

my mind accepts just last night...

Then sunrise snuggling

Those soft snow-print trails

betray where we side by side

Went crunching, crunching

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I don't like the name 'Maiden Voyage'. It has a flavor of maiden aunt and voyeur about it. It is embarrassing to tell people this is the name of our newsletter. I suggest we call the newsletter 'Boston Daughters of Bilitis Newsletter'.

Laura Robin

TO ALL OF DOB:

I'm very sorry to withdraw from DOB at this time, but I've thought it over a great deal, and no other road is available right now.

I am announcing my resignation as Recording Secretary and also withdrawing from membership in DOB until a time when I can devote all my effort and energy in the right way.

Someday I hope to be able to participate in this terrific group, but for very important reasons now, it is impossible.

Thank you for making me feel so wanted and appreciated; not just for being Gay, but for being myself.

Peace! Jeannie O'Brien

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SISTERHOOD IS POWERFUL a review by Del Martin

An anthology of writings from the women's liberation movement, edited by Robin Morgan and published by Random House, New York, 1970. 602 pages, \$8.95. Paperback edition, \$2.45.

This book, originally called The Hand That Cradled the Rock was prevented from using this title because of threatened court action by humorist (?) S.J. Perelman, who had written an obscure story by that name some decades ago. Actually, as it turned out, Mr. Perelman did Editor Robin Morgan a favor. For the volume, she with the aid of countless women across the country, put together a definitive statement of the women's movement (past, present and future—) and spells out for the doubters that indeed SISTERHOOD IS POWERFUL.

The introduction by Ms. Morgan sets the tone with militance, humor, pathos, artistry and love to be found throughout the book in the writings of women, individually and collectively. The book covers the testimony of women from the professions to the factory worker, from a poem by a seven-year-old woman to a piece on the ageing woman, from white middle class to radical lesbians and the additional problems faced by Black and Chicana sisters, from psychological and sexual repression to changing consciousness of high school women, from the lessons of the nineteenth century women's movement to the historical documentation of today's women's organizations, from a general bibliography to counseling references in major U.S. and Canadian cities.

Members of the Daughters of Bilitis will be particularly interested in the two pieces by Gene Damon and Martha Shelley. Ms. Damon writes a glowing report on efforts to attain civil rights for Lesbians by DOB as an organization which is still, for the most part, after 15 years of operation, plagued by the fears of those it would help. She addresses herself to heterosexual women and challenges them to understand and accept Lesbians as their sisters. Ms. Shelley speaks from a more radical stance, of Lesbianism as a road to freedom from oppression by men, as a sign of mental health in a male-dominated society, as an alternative life style for women.

'Sisterhood' is a powerful book that can't help but raise the consciousness of any woman who reads it. The pages weld together an alienated 51% majority of the population who has heretofore 'enjoyed' minority status, but who will no longer accept anything less than equality as persons in a society that must and will be reshaped.

Ms. Morgan indicates that all proceeds from the book will go to further the women's liberation movement. Keep this in mind when you do your Christmas shopping!

Interview with the Speaker of the Mass. House of Representatives, David M. Bartley, Reported in the Phoenix, January 5, 1971

PHOENIX: What about repealing laws against homosexuality?

BARTLEY: One bill was introduced last year and it was summarily killed without debate ... it is really in that never never land of legislative ducking, the legislature ducks anything that isn't pushed upon it ...

PHOENIX: Do you see the need for these laws?

BARTLEY: No, I have never felt any need for this type of legislation on the books ...

PHOENIX: Well, what about repeal?

BARTLEY: I just don't know ... I've never had it put to me by any group just like that ... I mean, never had any group that said they were being pushed around or hurt by the laws ... there's never been any group pressure ... (grinning) maybe because they haven't had a full time lobbyist on the hill ...

(Editor's Note: This excerpt from the PHOENIX is important. It shows NOT that Bartley is unperceptive, he is quite perceptive. It reminds us as members of a homophile group that we haven't made much of an impact in the State Legislature.)



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