
PROVINCETOWN FALL/WINTER 1984

womantide.





FROM THE EDITORS

In this issue, we focus on interconnectedness of women in intimate relationships -- in terms of community, love affairs and spiritual consciousness. As always, **Womantide** is a magazine shaped by its contents. In what we print, we encourage freedom from limitations. Lesbians have been closeted for so long, with few exceptions, that what we're seeing now in an open environment is the evolution of a new history, a chance to see what we're like.

Our magazine is basically feminist. To us, that also means it's open to many shades of opinion. It includes lesbians who don't necessarily identify themselves as feminists; it includes the works of separatists, although we ourselves are not separatists. **Womantide** is committed to taking risks and publishing very honest work by lesbian artists and writers.

And Provincetown is a special place to do this. Part of our message is that a place does exist where gay women lead open lives. Twenty years ago, lesbians didn't even have their own places to go, to meet. We found out where the gay spaces were by word of mouth. Now, for example, there are about a dozen lesbian guesthouses in town that advertise openly and support our efforts. We want people to know that lesbians are a strong element in the business community here and hold positions in local government.

Provincetown provides a framework very different from any other place, more

personal in its sensibilities. We're a community small enough for people to know one another and interact professionally -- we're neither isolated nor restrained by an institutional setting. P'town is on the cutting edge, the avant-garde. When we first began **Womantide** in June 1982, people told us we'd run out of material by depending on Provincetown and Provincetown-related people as our sources. The opposite has proved to be true. Women doing creative work have become part of the lesbian community here through contributing to the magazine; women who've been here for years have been actively encouraged by **Womantide** to publish their work. We spend a lot of time and energy contacting contributors personally, soliciting material. Many lesbians who come here find their creativity stimulated by the environment -- and their lives changed. We'd like to see more contributions from those women, about their experiences in and perceptions of P'town.

We want more people to know what Provincetown is about. **Womantide** is already distributed nationally, mostly in lesbian/gay/feminist bookstores, and we're starting to develop our contacts with outlets in other countries. Our major problems right now are distribution and financing. How do we get it done? We have an enormous amount of energy! The magazine itself generates energy in us. It's inspirational.

We plan to do more fund-raising, of course, and this year we'll probably be applying for grants. In our last editorial we said we had to expand or fold. Well, we're expanding: this issue has 24 pages, and display ads, for the first time. We rely on your subscriptions, donations and continued support to keep this magazine going. □

LETTER TO THE EDITORS

June 14, 1984

Dear WOMANTIDE:

I am visiting Provincetown and was delighted to find your very professional-looking magazine at "Womencrafts."

I was even more pleased to find a discussion of lesbian SM. However, on looking and reading more closely, I am disturbed to find that you have presented a topic arousing both controversy and passion, only through second-hand views. None of the three women in the transcribed interview claims any experience with SM. They only speak from their reading.

Having two therapists and a moderator discuss sexual behavior they have never tried is like having a panel of male doctors discuss lesbian sexuality. There is no

connection to the feelings, only a presumption of knowledge and a lot of judgments.

There are plenty of dykes around who have experienced SM and would be glad to tell their stories, both positive and negative. Why go to outsiders for your articles? You could, if you choose, ask local women to write about their experiences, or reprint first-hand accounts from other published sources, or get the women from the radio panel to tell us their sexual experiences with woman-to-woman sado-masochism.

Again, I'm glad you're at least covering the topic, and it's always a pleasure to see the hanky code again -- hope you enjoyed both the humor and eroticism in it.

Sincerely,
Emily Rosenberg
San Francisco

Dear Emily: We have discovered that the dykes into SM in this small town prefer to remain anonymous to protect their jobs, their business relationships, etc. We will be publishing a first-hand SM fantasy in our next issue under that condition. We're doing our best! —Eds.

WOMANTIDE a non-profit organization

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COVER PHOTO: "Claire," by Ariel Jones. Claire: lead singer for the "Ina Rae" band, which has performed in several Provincetown clubs.

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The AIDS Epidemic. Year three. Neither the virus nor the political backlash resulting from the disease are over. The 5000 men and women with AIDS have had prejudice and discrimination heaped on top of their physical suffering. The some 70% gay men among those 5000 have lived with a soul-crushing sense of assault on their identity and on their hard-won sense of community. The hundreds of thousands of gay men who do not have AIDS have suffered the terror of not knowing: will I get AIDS? Do I already have it in my body? Did I give AIDS to someone I love?

Lesbians have suffered the AIDS assault in a different way. Some lesbians have just watched, unwilling to get involved in what seems at first to be a gay men's issue. After all, where were they when we needed support at abortion rallies? But many others have become actively involved in the AIDS organizing, often because we realized that our co-workers, friends, neighbors and relatives were dying of AIDS. And we have remained involved for reasons that run deeper than the individual attachment to gay men we know.

Listening to gay male friends and reading the straight media accounts, lesbians have been haunted by memory: beneath the scientific lingo is the sex-negative rhetoric that informed our earliest ideas of our own sexuality. The intense fear we had as teenagers of getting VD or getting pregnant is not so different from the message about AIDS: If you have sex, something terrible will happen. You will get pregnant, go crazy or blind, you will get a mystery disease and die a horrible, painful death.

Just at the moment when lesbian and gay liberationists begin to feel positive about sexuality, about our diverse lifestyles, we are hit with a new disease. The media reports make AIDS sound like the embodiment of every negative image we have tried to combat. The message pushed at us about AIDS is that homosexuality is dirty, sick, and immoral after all. And the penalty is death.

Some lesbians have tried to escape the political reality of AIDS by feeling that we are different than gay men, that our lifestyles and ways of having sex exempt us not only from "germs" but from the social penalties that go with being gay. Our internalized homophobia lets us accept that gay men get AIDS from being promiscuous, even when there continues to be medical doubt about the significance of multiple sexual partners. Our self-righteousness encourages us to believe that only the stereotypical, media-image fast-track gay men get AIDS, that somehow the feminist, political gay men who have worked with us on other

causes cannot die.

Worst of all, our single-minded belief that AIDS has something to do with gay men's sex causes us to ignore the some 350 women who have AIDS, and the lesbians that certainly must be among them. Our inability to see the lesbians of color, as well as the bisexual, prostitute and drug-using lesbians in our community, obscures women and lesbians who need our support to meet their special needs as they face a disease which is, in the eyes of the medical establishment and society, a men's disease. The voices of the women with AIDS, and of the women working on AIDS, go unheard.

But the issue in AIDS for lesbians is not whether we will contract this particular disease; it is whether the health care system is geared toward meeting all of our needs, be they mundane or life-threatening. So long as lesbians see AIDS as a disease brought on by gay sex, we are helping the right-wing homophobes control our sexual choices by denying us sex-positive health care. As long as unwanted pregnancy and AIDS are perceived as conditions we have brought on ourselves, the right wing has a chance of passing the Human Life Amendment, the Family Protection Act, and similar legislation designed to outlaw abortion and homosexuality. AIDS is a disease resulting from a lack of understanding of the human immune system, not a disease of over-indulgence or incorrect sexuality.

Lesbians have a great deal to offer the struggle against AIDS. As women, we are acutely aware of the ignorance and atrocities of the medical establishment -- they have been acted out on our bodies for centuries. Instead of teaching responsibility and informed choice, the health industry pushes miracle cures for diseases its own bad practices have helped create. Many women are cynical about the potential for change in the medical establishment and have developed a broader concept of "women's health" that stresses prevention and a greater understanding and respect for the body's natural coping mechanisms. Gay men are currently facing the dilemma we have faced for years: they must ask for medical help from a system that has never been concerned about their special needs.

The battle against AIDS must continue to be waged on many fronts. Doctors and researchers still do not understand this syndrome, despite misleading media coverage of claims that the virus has been isolated. Medical research comes in tentative hypotheses, and any "discovery" short of a working cure is still shrouded in medical maybes. Even when the disease itself is con-



AIDS



LESBIAN

ISSUE ?

BY CINDY PATTON

quered, the political ramifications will live on. AIDS has infected not only our bodies, but also our imaginations. It has rekindled the right-wing backlash against homosexuality, a political reactionism that does not make fine distinctions between lesbians and gay men, monogamy and promiscuity. The incidence and intransigence of AIDS have given the right wing new hope that homosexuality can be wiped out through a Final Solution (we die off) or through laws (such as public health codes).

Perhaps the most tragic long-term effect of AIDS is the potential splitting of our fragile lesbian and gay community. The projects we work on to combat AIDS have to change the lives of the well and the sick. A new understanding of our different histories as lesbians and as gay men can come from discussion and from working together to combat the political, social and medical effects of AIDS.

There has been a great deal of discussion of "changing lifestyles" to cope with AIDS. But more important than sexual habits is changing community habits, habits that create divisions through intolerance and isolation and lead to a misunderstanding of who the enemy really is. No one should have to go through the emotional or physical crisis of AIDS alone. As we work together to live with AIDS as a fact, we must send out the message that we will not be killed off or frightened out of affirming the strength of our lesbian and gay community. □



photo by marion roth

BLACK HOLES BLACK STOCKINGS by JANE MILLER & OLGA BROUMAS,

will soon be published by Wesleyan University Press. Jane's recently published book of poetry, *The Greater Leisures*, is now available at the bookstores. Olga, founder of Freehand -- a women's community of artists, writers and photographers in Provincetown -- is currently working on translations from Odysseus Elytis, native Greek and Nobel Prize-winning poet. Olga's latest book of poetry, published last year, is *Pastoral Jazz*. □

She liked to be in the middle. One of them was taken by how close her heart beat to the surface like a robin's and how she landed with a light touch. If the sheets were white and the sun glanced on them, blond had more red. Another was olive with almond eyes, who liked to wake slowly and fall back. She lay beside the row of windows and rolled out into the night on their long wooden oven spoons. Sometimes they came for her and woke her, kissing the corners of her mouth. The long hairs in the bed, the very curly, the weighty and the subtle, lit an arabesque. When they were wet they were very very wet, and when they were dry they were funny. Excited, the candle burned like cry-breath. Who called out and where answered and when became thirsty. She reached for the lucky pitcher sailing across the sky. Tissue, tissue, kiss you.

BLACK HOLES, BLACK STOCKINGS

She didn't think we were married in any traditional sense so didn't hesitate to apply first to one and then the other the awkward silences which her colorful beauty could be felt to fill, as in panavision, setting a slower mood for the spectator perhaps but quickening her pulse. Don't leave, she didn't whisper, nor stay with me, but rather shifted her hair as one shifts an entire pose left to right closeup, taking a minute, triggering the free association where every promise lost or denied finds its place. Blue skies, tawny beach, sea-green and berry stain. By year's end she would bring us one of her first architecture assignments, in the manner of the Japanese masters, the arrangement of dots in disorder. Impressionable and expressive, she lined the corridors with butcher paper, unable to avoid herself and, hence, design — wool-bodies, lace, the infinite destinies of flakes, ceramic porosity, wormwood. She would hide sea, sand and boat by hanging the sheet upside-down. Told to watch water boil, stray rain, to unrehearse them, she did it many times and in her mind, until by ear first fathomed disarray.

I alter nothing for her; that is how change sweeps me. Imagine the momentum of sea, how at the shore the pressure is realized in the slightest touch. Where there are pines and sea together I arrive in the present. The sea, the scar it makes each time it cuts the sand. Three smooth stones, their musical bodies in my hand. Turning, I turn them over. If we think, we aren't in motion. I stand and walk across the red tile and open the window by the center clasp. Each side goes out from me into the room. The rocker, the red lampshade, the two flutes and photographs of events, the French lilacs stolen. Their hair is ruffled, they've just gotten out of bed. I am the bird that flies out when they part. Each side goes out from me into the room, red hair, brown, the chiseled chins, sun and moon. When one is out I forget, I go into that one until the details are so great I recognize them in myself and can't remember where I am. April the almond tree, April the waterfall, April the first of summer, for summer then is a surprise. They wear each other's clothes, the red sweater that once was a guide, the white sweater and white shirt, white so different from white. Young, younger, youngest. The path to the olive grove, the grove, the black olives. Each of their mothers arrives, one takes her away and one takes her away. I have the time to myself, watermark where minerals once slept; jays tumble into dry rushes from the air. If I might complete a gesture on the flute, nothing can equal the radiant human element. Returning is a message. She invites me into her room. At last I'm alone. □

an interview

By Randy Turoff



photo by edie pearlman

RANDY: Do you think that this place (the Provincetown area) has a special earth-energy?

CAROLYN: Yes, it's a power-spot. I just feel that; but I know that Edgar Cayce is supposed to have said that Provincetown was one of the seven power-spots in the U.S. . . . And I was also told by someone whose judgment I trust that the Monument is the positive pole in the town, and that there's a negative pole that looks just like it, which is a mile and a half out, around Race Point. This person was clairvoyant enough to be able to see it, it's where a lot of ships go down, and where the radar goes crazy on most ships, and that's considered the negative pole of Provincetown. There's a place in the Beech Forest where you can sit, and you're right in the middle, between both, and if you stare long enough, you can see the mirror-image of the Monument.

RANDY: How do you actually feel Provincetown as a mystical spot?

CAROLYN: I didn't come here because I thought it was a power-spot. I came to live here because of a psychic experience in which I was shown Provincetown. I saw Conwell Street . . . which was depicted in a little watercolor in a room in New Mexico. I had been here before, my parents had moved here, and I had spent 27 summers in Truro, but at that point I didn't know whether to continue teaching in New York, or just travel through the Southwest and Central America . . . I was meditating a lot on what to do next. I had one of those bus passes and went into a cheap motel in New Mexico near the Texas border, and I started getting a buzzing sensation. It was a very intense buzz in the center of my head, and whenever that happens there's a heightened awareness, like I'm going to get a message or see something. And it directed me right over to a little watercolor on the wall, and I looked at it and the buzzing was real intense, I said

with carolyn miller

astrologer, palmist, tarot reader

"this looks familiar." It was a New England street scene, and in it there was a little road sign and I looked at it even more closely, and it said "Route 6: Boston 120 miles." I knew it was P-town, and that was my answer, it was to go to Provincetown.

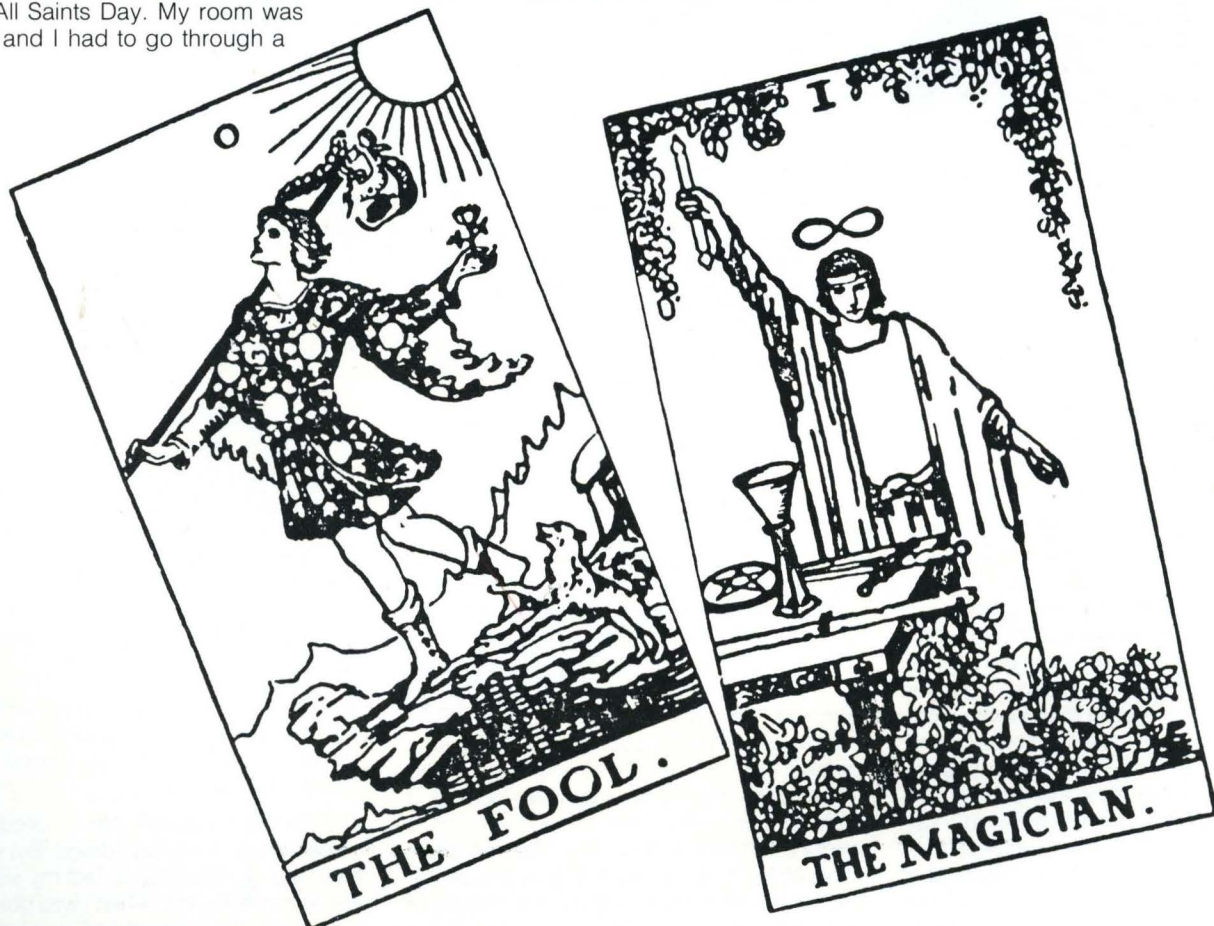
I didn't know how I was going to support myself, but I came and looked for apartments, and I found one on West Vine at Avis Crocker's. I wanted to move in on Halloween, but I ended up moving in on Nov. 1, All Saints Day. My room was upstairs, and I had to go through a

storage room to reach it. As I entered that doorway the buzz started again. I looked around . . . and I couldn't believe it, but propped up against the wall, with all this junk around it, was the same watercolor. I said to Avis, where'd you get that? and she said, at a yard sale in Connecticut. And I said, look at the road sign, and she said my god, I've had that for eight years and I never knew that was of Provincetown.

But you see, I don't know who does those arrangements, or what it is that created such synchronicity. But I do see it as a whole other level, like a web that we're in without even being aware that we're in it most of the time.

There are so many other ways I could be more aware, and tune into that level. The tarot cards are an exercise like meditation, walking in the woods, dreaming, or staying awake in dreams – exercises that make you aware of that level.

cont'd.



an interview with carolyn miller

cont'd.

RANDY: How can people use the knowledge they get from a Tarot reading, how do they use it positively, to live their lives better?

CAROLYN: Well, they come for a reason: they're either very disturbed about something and they want to be reassured, or they're looking forward to something, or sometimes they're just bored. But sometimes, you can actually see people start to glow, during a reading. And you know that you are actually healing them, that they've heard something that they needed to hear. And sometimes the cards are difficult; but I don't see events, and I don't want to see events: I just set the tone. Much of the time I don't even remember what I've said, after the reading is over.

RANDY: When you do a reading for friends, though, is the reading absolutely no different than a reading for strangers?

CAROLYN: No, it's different for a friend or a family member, say they're worried about health problems, then I get worried about that too, and I have trouble with it . . . There are things I don't like doing. It's basically the same procedure, but I tend to get more involved . . . sometimes it's better not to know the person. The cards give a mood picture, or what I call "setting the tone" for the next six months. And they give some indication of what's coming up, but I'm never that specific, like "You're going to lose your job on Thursday," but "There might be some upset or some difficulty in a work situation or in a relationship." It's amazing though, how the cards can tell you just at a glance – and the person can see it too – just from the colors, what the tone is: they'll come up all dark colors, or all bright colors, and they can be so consistent, and then there's no doubt.

RANDY: Can you remember an unusual or bizarre reading?

CAROLYN: Once, there was a reading I did for myself. It was when I came back from the jungle, and I was really out there (I had been meditating for six months, and this is when I was still drinking and drugging). I had been in one of the most remote villages in the British Honduras, living about a quarter of a mile away from some friends who were working on Gurdjieff and Ouspensky and Castaneda, in an area with no roads at all. So that when I returned to Florida, my little perceptual bubble had enlarged, and I was suffering from culture shock and also from other problems: I was working nights at a place called Autotax – "auto"! everything was symbolic – hardly sleeping or eating,

taxing myself, and chain-smoking, working with computers . . . here I am chain-smoking and a form drops at my feet from the American Cancer Society, it just flew out from the machine! And then the machine started talking . . . Well, I thought I was only coming back for a medical check-up with my little bag of clothes, my Tarot cards and my I Ching book. That was it. The Fool. So I did an I Ching reading on what to do, with all of these things going on. And it said, "Wait for the sun."

Then the Beatles came on, playing "Here Comes the Sun." They were playing it right at sunrise on the radio. I went outside and as the sun rose I began to feel calm again, the plants were so alive (this was in Florida, beautiful blossoming trees all around), and all of these living plants around me were talking to me, in this very pleasant and supportive space. And that all came with the sun. I went back inside and began to see huge auras around everybody, just huge. And I began to hear a voice and the voice said that my friends in the jungle were back in the States and that they had all faced death, encountered it, and that all I had to do was to walk in front of a truck. That's all I had to do, just walk in front of a truck!

I didn't want to do it! but the voice was tell-

“ Sometimes you can see people start to glow during a reading . . . and you know that you are actually healing them. ”

ing me I had to do it. Now in my bag, besides my cards and my I Ching I also had a gold coin from Chile, and it had been given to me by my husband to pay for my divorce – I had married someone as a favor – and the voice kept saying, "In this group you're Judas, you hold the gold coin and you won't walk in front of a truck." I ended up walking in circles. My sister was working on a newspaper down there at the time, on a night shift, she was still at work so I was alone and afraid to go anywhere near the street, so I just walked way out into the middle of a huge lawn and sat down, to wait until she

got out, at eight. And as I sat there all of a sudden a truck began out of nowhere to back up onto the lawn, straight towards me! I was actually making things happen! It was so scary . . . somebody saw me there and had been watching me walking around in circles in a very agitated manner, and they had called my sister, so that she arrived just in time. She wanted to take me home in her car but I couldn't go in a car, I said I would walk. It all made sense in an insane way because I was wearing her pants that morning, and I was afraid that **she** might get hit instead. I walked 6 miles to her home and stopped once to do a reading. The final outcome card vanished in front of my eyes. I had asked the cards in desperation for a message of guidance and inspiration and the last card vanished into thin air! I picked up the other 9 and looked all over the ground but it wasn't there. I was really getting panicky and then it reappeared – right in front of me – right where I had put it. It was the King of Swords. Right away I knew it was my friend John in Philadelphia, who was more than a friend – a magician and teacher.

I knew that I had to call him. If the card hadn't disappeared I probably wouldn't have made the connection. When I got home, I called him in Pennsylvania and he advised me to come there right away. I got a ride to the airport from my parents who hadn't seen me at all in six months, since I had been in the jungle. And I flew there sitting next to a little boy with red hair – if that little kid hadn't been there I don't think I would have made it, I was still hearing voices, I would have thrown myself out of the plane – when I got there, with my friend's address in hand, I got a six-pack of beer, and that was calming my mind. I took a cab and got to the house and I walked right in the door, only it wasn't my friend's house! It was an AA meeting. And there I am holding a beer. My friend lived next door. Well, that was my higher power, too, just telling me that that was part of what I had to do, cut out the booze, which was part of the problem of the mind, and insanity! I really did go nuts. And then I quit drinking. That was 7 years ago and I've been totally sober for 4½ years. And now I'm crazier than ever.

RANDY: Of course, you're a loon. Do you feel, since you've been sober and are using your powers in a non-destructive, a non-self-destructive way, that you've come to insights more quickly?

CAROLYN: Quickly? No, I used to get quicker insights through drugs. But you see, they had no meaning. In fact my sister said that to me in Florida, when I was going nuts; she said, "You have all this knowledge, but

astrologer,
tarot reader cont'd.

and wait until they leave. If they're standing there I'll just look at them, until they realize that it's them.

RANDY: You're giving a lot of different people a lot of your energy. Does that wipe you out?

CAROLYN: Yeah. I work less if I'm tired, take longer breaks, and I walk to Long Point, that re-charges me. I have to meditate or be near the water to get back that energy. Sometimes people will give it to me. A person will come for a reading who makes me feel great. Or when you see that glow around them, they they're giving me some of that energy too. But if I allow myself to become negative, during a difficult reading, then that's very draining.

RANDY: Are there certain people you just don't like to give readings to?

CAROLYN: Yeah, there are. And I have to trust that. I had one very closed person, who didn't even know she was like that, but it was like talking to a brick wall, and she thought she was very pleasant and agreeable. When I told her she was arguing with everything I'd say, she said "No, I don't, how dare you say that!" Sometimes someone will come up and say "Let's do this for fun. Let's do it for a joke." And I'll just look at them and tell them I don't do this for a joke, and they'll get very respectful all of a sudden, and usually get a very good reading.

RANDY: What about the title, "Spiritual Advisor." What do you think of that?

CAROLYN: I don't use it. I don't like labels: straight, gay, spiritual advisor, vegetarian, whatever . . . I'm a vegetarian who eats hot dogs.

RANDY: Yes, I've noticed that also about Provincetown. People who live here have a lot of strange combinations of practices . . . Out there, usually there are clusters of personality traits and preferences, and if a person has three, they'll usually have the other twelve that go along with them. In this place, a person will have three, and then three of another cluster, and five more of another — sometimes they'll seem to be totally incongruous, but they'll be able to juggle everything around . . . Well, tell us, what do most Provincetown women ask the deck?

CAROLYN: It's impossible to generalize. Most people will tend to ask questions on work, relationships and money. But I don't read from just those perspectives. Someone did a reading for me recently and told me I was going to get a piece of new stereo equipment, a car radio or something; I'm not interested in that kind of reading. I try to inject more of a spiritual tone to it. Let's say it might look like "a benefit to come".

RANDY: Do you feel as though you may have misinterpreted the cards for someone?

CAROLYN: Occasionally I'll get worried after someone leaves, because I'm aware of how responsible I have to be; but as long as I'm not doing it frivolously, as long as I care, and try to be aware, I do the best I can. I don't like it when people use the cards too much, when they want the cards to decide for them. You can use them as guides, but not let them dictate —; It's so easy to take orders; we're not here to be obedient, we're here to learn how to make decisions.

If someone asks the cards what to do, leans on them too much, I cut them off, and talk to them about that. Those people generally think, also, that there's a right and a wrong way to do something, and the cards will reflect what's going on; people respond to that, they recognize what the cards are saying, what they see in the cards is affirmation . . .

**“ I don't like labels
. . . I'm a vegetarian
who eats hot dogs. ”**

RANDY: Will the cards give the same message if you use them day after day?

CAROLYN: I practice with them on myself and usually it will be different cards but with the same tone. If you do ask them the same question over and over, what happens is that the cards lie. They do come up completely different, but they have no meaning. You've abused them.

It's like hexagram four, of the I Ching. "The Fool asks me many times, I tell the Fool the first time, the Fool doesn't listen: I no longer make any sense."

So that if you ask the cards about a relationship because you really want to know if it will work out and the cards come out with Disaster at the top and the Fool at the bottom (all the cards that say No), and you don't want to believe it, you shuffle the cards and then ask the cards the same question only wording it slightly differently, thinking you can fool them. The second time they'll come out, everything's roses. The Ace of Cups, the Ten of Cups, the Marriage Card, the Lovers, everything is there. Well, then you know that they're just playing a trick on you, because they've already told you, but if this is what you want to hear, okay, Fool, we'll tell you what you want to hear.

RANDY: Are you going to stay in Provincetown for a while?

CAROLYN: I don't know, I think so but I'm a little afraid of getting too identified with a place. Things can get very comfortable very quickly. When that happens and there's a rut, it's time to leave. Don Juan calls it "erasing personal history." The ability to just pick up and to put everything behind you. Liberating the ego from everything that's comfortable, everything that defines you and gives you a sense of security. And this is a very comfortable place. But I want to be free. I don't want to become a rock, sitting on Whaler's Wharf year after year. But I might, who knows? As long as I enjoy what I'm doing. You know, I've never tried to do anything, everything just happened. I do make efforts, I work real hard, but I've never said I wanted to do THAT, or the other thing.

When I came to Provincetown, I worked with the mentally handicapped. It was a good job. But I had a problem with somebody there at the job and I quit. So I didn't know what I was going to do, it was right before the season, and I began to meditate, and this little voice said, "Go to the Bookstore." I went there and ran into two astrologers, and they said "Why don't you get a computer?" Within one week I had a computer and a set-up. That winter after the season, I went to Santa Fe, and didn't know whether I would come back, it was a turning-point again; my sisters called me and said I couldn't get the astrology booth back, that they had sold out all the spaces. But I decided to leave Santa Fe and come back anyway; I was driving like a maniac to get back, and on the day I got back, a space opened at Whaler's Wharf, and the **Boston Globe** called me to do an interview, and I was offered a place to stay! All on the same day. If I had stayed in Santa Fe one day longer . . . I'm very lucky that way.

RANDY: But how about all those configurations that come out awful, aren't they fated to — like you come back the day after three jobs have been given to other people?

CAROLYN: Well, you've just got to ask yourself what you were doing, why weren't you flowing with things . . . eventually you are going to end up under a tree and something's going to fall on you, the flow isn't always what you'd call positive — but at least you're not resisting, you'll just be flowing with it. "The ordinary person takes everything as a curse or a blessing, and the warrior takes it as a challenge." That's Don Juan. Whether you're at the Plaza or in a concentration camp, it's a challenge. Most people don't know they have choices. I guess that's what I try to do with the cards: to make people aware that they have choices. □



"Sarah, Provincetown (2)" by Ariel Jones

PIED PIPER

BY JACKIE LAPIDUS

*Long before she warned me
I recognized you,
flame in your hair and your heart
hidden in black leather
like the girls who followed me
home from school in the 50s shouting
foureyes. (You were a little kid then.
Who are you now?) My
mistake refusing to be introduced,
names were more honest
than brandishing our glasses like
rhetorical grenades, banter tossed
above the din toward a space
somewhere beside me at the bar.
You drifted off to Hamelin and I
still don't know
you, only your story.
It's too soon to face the music,
the whole town watching.*



*RAS --
IT CHANGED
MY LIFE!*

graphic by barbara mayer

Dear Barb,

It's great to hear you are doing well in Provincetown. The last few things we've done were the multi-media event for RAS which you were at . . . two days of performance art, poetry, dance, a gallery show and six bands: a good response and turn-out, but talk about burn-out. We've decided to work smaller and do some feminist events. So we organized an anti-rape action on the Boston Common which involved chalk-writing over as many of the walkways as possible, handing out leaflets . . . It went quite well and drew quite a crowd. Now, we're working on a T-dance, a benefit for the Women's Peace Encampment in Seneca Falls, N.Y., featuring "Feminine Protection."

A rap for WOMANTIDE: I think Provincetown needs RAS in a big way. It's a town populated by a large number of gay men and lesbians, with several clubs. Music and dancing is the mainstay of the social scene.

A liberal, supportive scene BUT

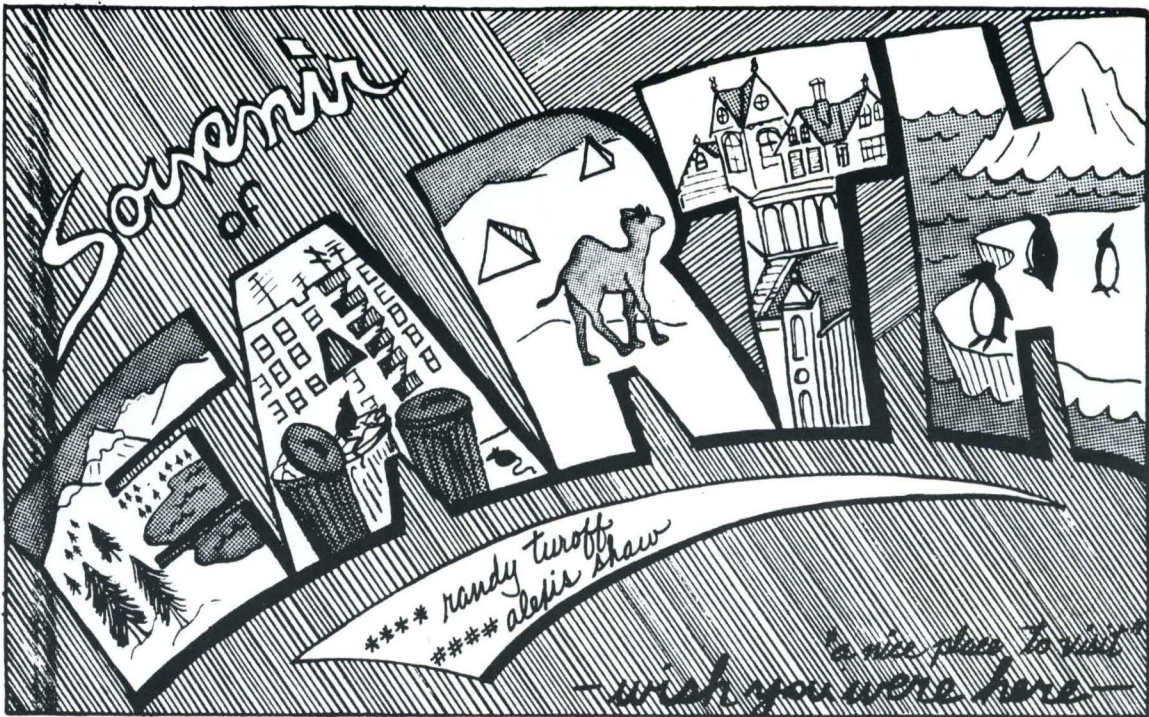
Like most gay resorts, stuck in the rut of one-style music: disco. After all these years and our so-called political awareness, I still can't understand why we continue to settle for music (that is definitely great for dancing to but) that is overwhelmingly sexist, especial-

ly in the lesbian clubs.

Even when a club does have an occasional "New Wave" night, we usually hear the same, oppressive "Top 40." There is quite a bit of political, anti-sexist or at-the-least-inoffensive rock, punk and new music floating around out there. And yes, a lot of it is danceable. It's not as easy to find as the music we are spoon-fed on radio, MTV etc., but it's worth the effort to find. It seems that gays and lesbians should start supporting and asking for music that doesn't pretend we are all straight or white or boys.

Club owners probably think punk or rock n roll won't bring in the crowds, won't make money. It may take a little time, but from the crowds and the money made at the RAS Tea dances, I don't think they have to worry. And there are more and more all-women's bands who would love to open avenues and reach a larger number of appreciative audiences. Provincetown is just the place for us to make our own angry, loud, fast fun noise . . . i.e., music. We'd love to help you in any way we can.

Love to you and P-town,
Mary Ann Peacott
Rock-Against-Sexism
Boston



Graphic by Kate Matlak

BY RANDY TUROFF & ALEXIS SHAW

random sequence of windows/ mirrors
 moon wild birds lusting wind/ blue pianos
 in the heart of guitars/ eloquent mellifluous galaxy
 streets/ siphon time/ trains/ perennial passengers/ in the
 brain
 bricks blur/ faces frozen/ pane and pattern of glass/
 given
 their moment of graffiti/ given their moment of graffiti/
 immortal streaks/ amaranth fields/ they will not fade/
 if not forgotten/ they will not fade if not forgotten . . .

**** so many thoughts
 you've left me
 so many thoughts
 you left me
 with so many thoughts
 you've left me,
 connected to you/
 your energies are so wild/ i can't keep up/ i can't be
 chained

curving the desert without a camel/ we'll never be the
 same
 who cares/ the night and stars that flare

**** it's your blindness that frightens me the most :|| (3x)

a boy rides wild a bicycle with blue hair

**** you never look ahead or at me/ you just keep going
 around
 you just keep going around you just keep going . . .

dissonance/. anonymous instruments/ not a sound but a
 thick.
 liquid.

**** you just keep going around/ day to night to day to lover
 to lover to lover . . .

metamorphosis occurs/ the artist turns to stone.

**** you keep going going day to night to day to lover to
 lover
 too many hurts and pains :|| (3x)

purple
 phase shift retro jet guitars
 words slashed/ across the fence
 fear/ the impending/ intoxication of clouds
 mushrooms in the sky/ shadows on the wall
 mushrooms in the sky/ shadows on the wall
 one last/ flash of light

**** she said/ your energy is so wild/ i can't keep up

as if i needed to be tied

**** submit and you will dominate/ i can't be chained
 to your merry-go-round speeding my life with yours
 it's your crashes that frighten me the most/
 you're so out there all the time with so many
 painful lovers/ you say it's you i say it's
 you who seeks them out but it's them.

ufos constantly hovering beneath her cleavage/
 chameleonic/
 she conquers them in sequin satellite fuck me pump
 shoes/
 queen of planet dominatrix

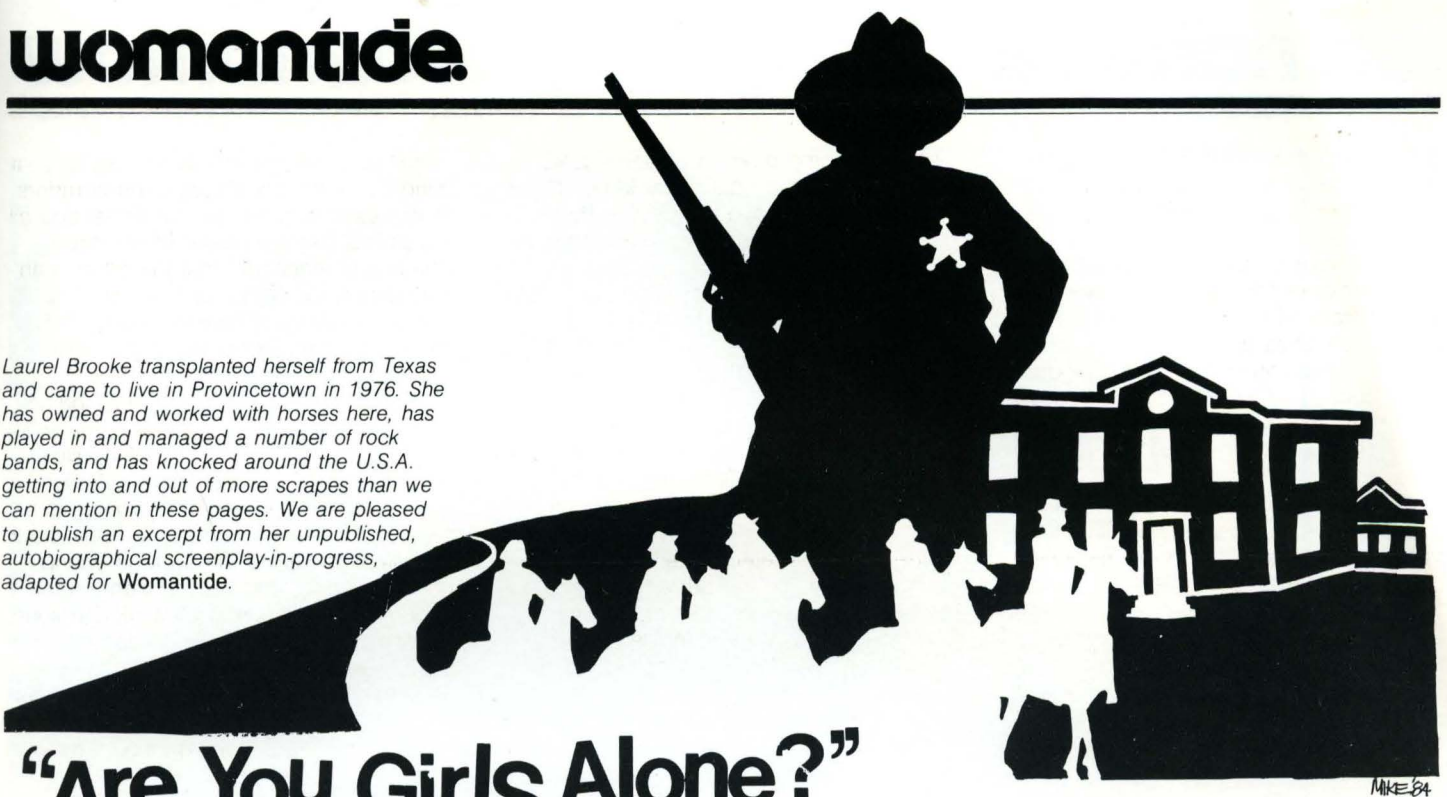
**** lover to lover/ too many hurts and pains.
 your energies are so wild/ i can't keep up/ I can't be
 chained

to your merry-go-round speeding my life with yours.
 it's your intensity that frightens me the most
 you never let up you just keep going around you just
 keep going you keep going going . . .



photo by barbara mayer

Laurel Brooke transplanted herself from Texas and came to live in Provincetown in 1976. She has owned and worked with horses here, has played in and managed a number of rock bands, and has knocked around the U.S.A. getting into and out of more scrapes than we can mention in these pages. We are pleased to publish an excerpt from her unpublished, autobiographical screenplay-in-progress, adapted for *Womantide*.



“Are You Girls Alone?”

by Laurel Brooke

At the southern end of the Boston Mountains, in the Western Ozarks, the Arkansas River cuts a wide path through the hills and levels the topography until it becomes rich bottom land. Huge six-wheeled tractors roar and tear at this earth, killing the layers of bacteria that hold the soil together, and spraying the cotton and tomatoes with insecticides and nitrogen agents. The winds blow the topsoil across hot, dusty roads.

Five women and their horses are straggled out in a long line, winding slowly down a ridge that leads to a valley below, where the small village of Mulberry shimmers in the morning heat. There is a main street through the center of town, lined with one-story wooden buildings which house a few stores and a washeteria. Behind the laundry is a one-block square of beaten-down grass, with a few tired trees whose leaves are covered by a fine clay dust.

The women arrive one by one, and tie up to the trees, kicking broken beer bottles out of the way of the horses' feet. They are tired, dirty, go slowly through their saddle bags and throw their laundry into piles. There is no conversation. Nedra goes to the grocery store, Marta moves into the washeteria and begins to make sandwiches, Linda stays with the horses to tend to their needs. Laurel and Diane go searching for a bathroom, but as they are dressed in T-shirts and shorts, while the townspeople are wearing dresses or suits, or overalls, they are refused at the drug store, the grocery and the gas station.

There are very few people in town. Lots of cars parked on the other side of the “square,” in front of the Assembly of God church. Laurel and Diane hurry into the air-conditioned business office, where a middle-aged woman is seated at a table, counting and tabulating the money collected in the offering. There is a service in progress. Laurel quietly asks, “Good morning, may we use the bathroom? There’s none in town . . .”

“Well . . . I suppose so. It’s across the hall. There’s no paper. Here, take this,” and she hands Laurel a piece of red cellophane.

Stifling a laugh but giving Diane a big look, Laurel takes the cellophane, and they go into the restroom across the hall. As they emerge, the shouts and waving arms of a preacher in full concert catch their attention, and they stop to listen:

“OH LORD OH LORRD Hear me now Hear me now. I prayed to the Lord, I prayed for money, YES, my brothers and sisters I prayed to the almighty for money in my hour of need and the Lord looked down oh the Lord looked down on me and he answered my prayer like he’ll answer yours, oh like he will answer yours. Amen. That very next week I received a check in the mail, halleluja and I was delivered from my troubles, yes like you’ll be delivered.

“For your prayers . . . for your prayers are answered by Jesus oh sweet Jesus, sweet Jesus. My daughter went astray Oh Lord she went down to the city . . . she went to college. She took drugs, yes Lord she took LSD . . . she

said, to find her way . . . but she was a lamb and the devil took her yes though she did profess to love all things . . . and she disobeyed her father, she fought with the communists to end the war in Viet Nam, Lord have mercy on her damned soul she turned from her father’s word . . .

I would cast out her devils oh Lord I would make her kneel in shame in front of all these faithful brothers and sisters and have her repent yes Lord I would ship her into Thy bosom I would cast out the devils in her that preach this doctrine of Free Love . . . she must pay for her sins, before God she must pay for her sins, verily I say unto you oh Lord Oh Lord . . .”

Diane pokes Laurel: “Come on, let’s get out of here, this guy is creepy,” she whispers. A few of the people in the back rows turn around and look at them as they hurry through the door.

Outside, a young woman in a bright green dress, walking a crying baby, approaches them, detouring them with her question: “Why didn’t you stay and listen?”

“We didn’t like the sermon.”

“Please, tell me what you mean,” she asks. The baby stops crying.

“O.K.,” says Laurel. “He’s telling us to pray for ourselves, to get money and material goods for selfish reasons. GREED WILL DESTROY THE EARTH. He shows no mercy to his daughter: hates her, wants to punish her. Sounds like she is searching for meaning in her own way, opting for loving. Beats guilt. Or getting your ass kicked by a vengeful

MIKE BA

god. I can't listen to ranting about god without love or compassion. All that gold on his altars is stained with the blood of our children.

"But I have no gold," she protests. "God provides for me: my husband is the assistant minister and we live on what the church gives us."

"Right. But you've got on a new dress, new shoes . . . you have a car, a warm house and plenty of milk to feed your baby. So much of the rest of the world is on a starvation diet."

"I have nothing," she says and begins to cry. "I feel so close to God. I want you to know Jesus . . . to feel his loving grace and the deepness of the peace and love I feel when I give myself over to the spirit." Her face was radiating love and a fanatical joy.

"Wow . . . I can see it in you . . . you're a good person. I guess that's all that matters." Laurel was excited. "The church is not just this building here and that man in there. It's this grass and the trees and you and I out here searching for the light of truth and love with each other . . . that's a church's covenant, and prayers are the songs we sing when we're in tune with the universal song." They are beaming at each other.

"ALL RIGHT! WHAT CAN WE DO FOR YOU?!" A huge woman and her equally rotund husband in their overtight Sunday go-to-meeting clothes, huffing and puffing polyester, come bursting through the church door and march over, pushing themselves into Laurel's face.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, is there something you WANT??" spits out the red-faced woman.

"No, nothing . . . can I help you in some way," counters Laurel.

"NO!" yelled the fat man. "And if you don't mind then, you can move ON . . ."

"Excuse me," interrupted Laurel. "But I was having a conversation with this woman here and if you don't mind we would like to continue."

The fat woman jumped into Laurel's face and hissed: "You don't know Jesus do you? DO ??? YOU ???"

"I've read the Bible a few times, and a few other of the world's spiritual books," Laurel says slowly.

"You don't know Jesus, dooo youuu?"

"I believe he was a holistic person."

"You don't know Jesus, I can see it in your eyes."

"I'm looking at you," says an exasperated Laurel.

"You have the devil in you," the red face screamed. "YOU HAVE THE DEVIL IN YOU."

Laurel looks over to Diane who is standing a little way off, totally still, her

mouth hanging open in disbelief. She turns back to the panting fat lady: "Right. All free women have the devil in them, right? Good women don't wear shorts or go out alone, right?"

The fat woman's eyes bulge out. "Oh LORD OOOOOH LORD Look down on this sinner For God loved the world so that he gave his only begotten son . . ."

Laurel picks up from the word "world" and says this bible passage in unison with the fat woman, standing with her and looking her in the eyes: ". . . that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Just as they finish, the fat woman lunges toward Laurel with both arms outstretched and grabs for her hair. Diane watches wide-eyed as the woman takes hold of Laurel's head and starts moving and shaking, yelling and saying words-put-together-very-fast until they blur into a song, a chant; a litany in a strange language:

"Ooooooooooohhhhhhhhhwwaaaaaa-
aaalllllsssssoooooorrrrwwllllllaaaaa
uuuueeediiiiiooooooalllllllllllllloooooooh
Lord take the devil out oooooohhhhhlord
take the talllyyyyyyaaaaaiiithe devils out
take the devil out oh god oh god comm-
mmmmmeeeeeeoooooooooooooooooeeeieinto me
and take the talllyyaaaiiiiiidevil out
ooooooooooooooooooutttttttt."

The woman with the baby now spins Laurel around, holding onto her arm, and starts chanting and singing to her. Her song comes gently, plaintive, then soaring into power that overcomes the space around all of the people. Her voice is like a thousand voices all at once and everyone feels the music inside their body:

"Wwaaaaaalllllllllaaahhhhhhhhhiiiiiiiiiiiiilloo-
ove oh lord heallllllll give this love to
heal " she threw back her
head and howled "OOOOOOOOOOOO
owwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwww
ooooooooohhhhhwaaallyiiiiii healllllllllllaaaaaa
aaaallllllllllaaaaaaaoooooohhhhhlord
kkkkkkaaaaaiiiiiiiiikkkkkaaaayyyiii . . ."



Her song fills the empty spaces of your mind . . . it echoes through the corridors of all hearts with an ancient signal and all are pulled into the power of her song. She is an "innocent" that the others can only mimic. Laurel starts to laugh. The tension is released from her body and she stands transfixed, swaying slightly with the force and intensity of this woman's spiritual feelings. Things begin to move in slow motion. People are drifting out of the church and walking slowly around them in a circle, saying "amen," and "Halleluja." Others are droning in the background. A living symphony. Soul chords all focussed through the young woman's song, and her hold on Laurel. Time comes to a standstill. Only the song continues. Laurel is looking deep into the eyes of the woman: "I see you," she shouts in joy and excitement. "I see your love, feel your song and I am moved by it. I see you and I love you also. This is god. This is what god is all about . . . I love you!"

All becomes dead quiet. Fifty or more people have stopped. and stand still, as if waiting for something.

"What are you DOING here?" shouts the black-robed preacher as he comes rushing out into the crowd, waving his black bible in the air with authority.

"Well," says Laurel, "I came here to use the bathroom and now, I don't know what we're doin'. How about you, what are you doing?"

"I have come to do battle with the defiler of God's house . . ."

"There are bombers flying in God's house all over the world, killing children by the thousands for money and power, and you sit in your church telling your people to ask for more of it. Your altar is full of gold while people are starving right here not two blocks away, in that shanty town right by the river . . . what god are you praying to?"

"OUR God is the ONLY god," he yells at her.

"Yeh, that's what they all say . . . all religions are so much alike: candles, incense, deities, theatrical rituals. Men holding the power by being privy to the great granddaddy in the sky."

"WE ARE THE REPRESENTATIVES OF GOD!"

"Then represent God for all to see." Laurel projects. "Give yourself to the people, the lonely, suffering people of the world. Share your wealth. Open the churches. Live like Jesus. Love one another. Jesus was a healing person, nurturing, compassionate, graceful . . . with a gentleness of spirit and a power of vulnerability that was all-encompassing in its love. Aren't these the attributes of a

cont'd.

"Are You Girls Alone?" cont'd.

woman? Yet you war with me. Is that why you killed Jesus, because he was a woman also? I won't give in to your fear. That's what you see in my eyes. I won't submit, and that's what you want from women . . . wow, that smacks of S and M, you know . . ."

The preacher is hissing: ". . . And the Devil rose up as a serpent . . ."

"Paaalleeeese . . . not your old, tired story of how it's women's fault the world is such a mess. Women are tired of being scapegoats. Jesus said "Love one another" and his companions were twelve "perverted" men and a whore. How can you expect me to believe in a god you don't believe in yourself? Here, give me your bible . . ." She reaches for his bible. "I can show you words about love and understanding."

"DON'T TOUCH THIS WORD OF GOD, YOU . . . DEVIL!" He backs away from her, clutching at his cross and holding the bible up in the air out of her reach.

"Hey, break it up, comeon now, what's going on here?"

A short, thin man with the face of a vulture and a bald head is moving through the crowd with the sheriff and yelling towards them. "Comeon you . . . girl . . . I SAID stop that now yahear. I'm the mayor here. You all just move aside there. And you," he says, pulling on Laurel's arm, "you come with me." They move away from the crowded church yard, escorted back to the horses by the sheriff and two men acting as deputies.

The preacher yells after them in pious righteousness: "She is quoting God while speaking with the tongue of the devil."

"Now you all calm down here a minute," returns the mayor. "And girlie, you just git a move on, and we'll see about this."

Trucks and cars are pulling up all around the dirty little square, as the men of the town get word that something exciting is happening. None of the men bring women with them. A state trooper's car swirls up with lights flashing, which frightens the horses: they are bucking and pulling on their ropes. All eyes are on Laurel as they walk towards Belle Starre, her horse.

"O.K., what is all this?" huffs the mayor.

"This, is everything we own. We are traveling through the mountains on a quest."

"What for? What the hell is that . . . Aw right you, get the rest of your little buddies out here and let's see what we got here . . . bunch of nuts."

A sheriff's deputy is in the washeteria with his huge beer belly, rounding up the

other conspirators, trying to act unafraid and seize the hunting knives the women wear, acting as though they were loaded forty-fives. If any of the women make a move towards him he backs off and snakes his hand down to the big gun slung low on his hip. "Awright girls, lets go, lets go come on, come onnnnnnn."

Linda stays cool, but stands solid. "What's the charge?"

"How does disruptin' a church service sound to yah, fer openers?" he says as he unsnaps his pistol.

Laurel has gone into her packs for I.D. and camera and is filming the mayor with her super-eight. He is fuming around, writing tickets, acting as authoritative as a bantam rooster strutting around a chicken yard. Laurel follows him . . . suddenly he lunges towards her, offering an excellent close-up of his contorted face, grabbing for her and the camera. "Give me that . . . give me that camera!" She shoves him away from her, keeps filming. Another man jumps her from behind, she slips out of his grasp. But a third man manages to hold on to her as they converge and yank the camera out of her hands.



"You can't do that!" she yells. "OH YES I CAN . . . this is MY town. I'm mayor here and I can do anything I WANT!" he spits at her.

Nedra is yelling in peoples' faces around the crowd's perimeter: "Are we in America or aren't we? Is this a free country, or are you all crazy?" Marta is trying to calm the horses. Linda is having an animated conversation with the state trooper. Diane is still standing in shocked silence.

The young assistant pastor walks out of the church crowd towards Laurel and the mayor, wearing a maroon checkered

suit and shiny black shoes. His hair is cut in a military crew cut and he is overweight. "How do you feel now?" he smugly asks Laurel.

"Oh I feel fine, just fine thank you. Now I know exactly how Jesus felt when he was persecuted for saying what he thought. How do **you** feel? How does it feel to persecute, Mr. Reverend Man? You are ready to judge me and send me to hell . . . well I'm a free woman and there ain't nothin' you can do about making me shut up. Jesus and I would have been good friends and stood here together."

The young minister pulls a cross out of his breast pocket and holds it up to her as though she were a vampire. "You must see the error of your ways and repent and be saved! Call on Jesus and He shall hear you. You have sinned in the eyes of the Lord and must be punished!"

Laurel laughs. "That's the same thing you said when you burned nine million witches because they professed to love one another . . . oh, you S.O.B., you poor S.O.B."

"Did you hear **that**?" the mayor sputtered, waving his book of tickets. "Cussing a minister. Obscenities . . . that's another ticket, girlie."

"You know, Mr. Mayor," Laurel said, stretching her words out and projecting so all could hear. "You've got balls about as big as a dime, that's your problem, honey, you balls ain't big around as a dime."

The mayor starts toward Laurel in a killing frenzy but is held back by the sheriff. A man leaning against the sheriff's car yells, "Hey you little shit, watch what you're saying."

Laurel, now hopping mad, runs over to him but he jumps away from the car, swinging a punch toward her face. She ducks under it and brings her fist up in a sharp blow that knocks the man back on to the car's hood.

There is a low growl in the crowd. The state trooper grabs Laurel and throws her into the back seat of his car. Nedra runs over to the squad car window and bangs on it for him to open it up. "Are you taking her to jail?" The trooper pushes her out of the way, opens the door of his car, and as he grabs Diane and throws her into the back, he snaps: "Can't you see what's going on here? They'll be big trouble if I don't git them out of here NOW and you better shut up unless you want to go too. The jail's in Van Buren."

With that, he gets into the car, slams the door, and takes off, lights flashing and sirens blasting. □

MEDICAL HERSTORY



'MIDWIVES'

by Susan Cayleff

Susan Cayleff is a long-time seasonal and (sometimes) winter resident of Provincetown, with a permanent home here. Her academic work focuses on women's history, the history of medicine, sexuality and race and urban issues. In 1983, Susan received her Ph.D. degree at Brown University, completing a dissertation on women and the nineteenth-century water-cure movement (see WOMAN-TIDE, August 1982 issue). She is presently teaching and researching at the Institute for Medical Humanities at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. There, her work includes teaching medical ethics to first-year med. students, and developing a clinical affiliation with the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. She will be offering, this fall, a seminar for OB/GYN students, on working with lesbian clients.

Gynecological Exam

"The Touch", an illustration from a nineteenth-century gynecology textbook.

Through increased gender-consciousness, women have re-defined their reproductive powers as an asset which they have the right to control. The study of midwifery poses many questions regarding women's reproductive self-determination. Contraception, abortion, sterilization, single-motherhood, lesbian-motherhood or non-motherhood are all related to the broader issue of women's ability to control their bodies, their childbearing ability and the selection of an attendant.

But the history of midwifery, like so many other realms of female experience, remained virtually unexplored until the second wave of feminism ignited an interest in women's history. There was and still is a popular belief among many medical historians, that all scientific innovations were for the better: any lay practitioner has been viewed skeptically. Authors of medical histories have emphasized rationality, scientific training and detached efficiency, as the models of

health care to be emulated. Intuitive, experiential, nurturant modes of care have been portrayed as backward, superstitious and ineffective.

A nineteenth-century woman writes:

The country doctor of those days wasn't much help. . . . With any fair treatment, Lottie [her first lowan child] would have pulled through. But old Dr. Farnsworth gave her terrible doses of quinine and cayenne pepper. . . . When my little Lottie was dying I did just everything the doctor said. But after she was gone, I said to myself: "Never again!" When the next trouble comes it will be between me and my God. I won't have any doctor.

Maria Brown confided this painful episode to her diary in 1853 in frontier Iowa. One of a growing number of women who distrusted and feared allopathic medical therapeutics, Maria Brown held true to her promise, assumed responsibility for her own medical care, and bore her remaining children with the help of women neighbors. The resolution

she made was not atypical for the mid-nineteenth-century woman.

It is actually a fairly recent phenomenon that has relegated the birth process to a hospital-physician-sickness-management experience. In colonial America, midwives were the sole birth attendants, following cultural norms and traditions transplanted from Europe. Midwives were appreciated for their experiential expertise, which had been learned from other women. Aiding and comforting the woman during childbirth (and, oftentimes, before and after), midwives lent vital emotional and psychological support. Also, their reasonable rates and tradition of "catching" the baby (versus laying the woman down) contributed to their popularity. But perhaps most importantly, the mild therapeutics and drugs (e.g. ergot) that the midwives employed were far more conducive to women's patronage than the heroic interventionism and strong pharmacopoeia (e.g. bleeding, mercury, calomel, emetics, →

MIDWIVES cont'd.

cathartics and plasters) used by the allopathic physicians. So widespread was the acceptance of midwives that what little legislation governed their practice was concerned with the suitability of their characters, and not their medical abilities.

This generalized respect notwithstanding, others, like Anne Hutchinson, were disciplined for "familiarity with the devil" following the birth of a deformed baby. When this happened, midwives could be accused of witchcraft. This is one reason why midwives initially began to summon a physician: if a physician was present at the birth of a deformed child, it was far less likely that the charge of witchcraft would be levied, since the physician was male.

The central role of midwives was questioned, initially, due to innovations in eighteenth-century British medicine which had a great effect on American health care: the monopoly of the Chamberlen family of physicians over the obstetrical forceps, Dr. William Smellie's measurements of the female pelvic structure, and Dr. William Hunter's work on the gravid uterus -- all permitted male physicians to become involved in this female-dominated concern. Because of the introduction of these scientific devices, the concept of midwifery as an "art" began to shift to that of a "science." This new "science of obstetrics" stimulated male interest: consequently, a lying-in hospital opened in Britain, which increased the number of men who could attend both normal and abnormal cases.

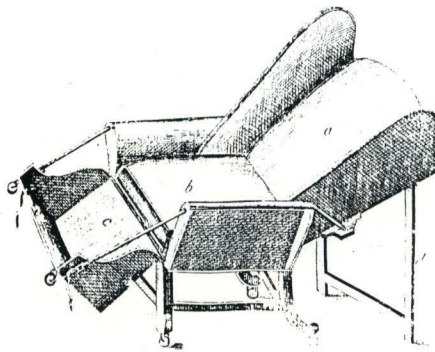
To explain this participation by "male midwives," as they were called, is not a simple matter. Physicians used the argument that childbirth was a "sickness," thus equating pregnancy with disease. Through this rationale, they presented themselves to the American public as the only trained scientists capable of competent pregnancy management, and secured medical involvement in childbirth.

By the early nineteenth century, the cultural centrality of female midwives was questioned, then threatened. This does not mean that women failed to resist, as the competition between Boston and New York women for the services of Mrs. Alexander (a well-respected Scottish midwife) reveals. Male midwives did meet with significant cultural resistance to the use of their scientific instruments. Midwives continued to be the preferred birth attendants, especially among working-class, ethnic and non-white women. The main asset university-trained physicians offered was that social status accrued to those families that used their services. Very early on, the male birth attendant came to represent two trends in

American society: increased class stratification and the professionalization of medicine.

This early transition from midwifery to obstetrics was marked by exclusionary tactics, which were employed to legitimize male participation. With a few notable exceptions, education was unavailable to midwives, and this was made more acute by a proliferation of State laws aimed at securing a preferred status for the university-trained physicians.

It is important to ask why these measures were necessary. First, despite their claims to "superior education," the medical education of a physician did not prepare him adequately for attendance at parturition, even when the curriculum included obstetrics. One nineteenth-century Harvard faculty member admitted that "most [physicians], by the time they had



graduated, had never seen a delivery and they, like midwives, had to learn on the job."

Furthermore, since women were unsure as to whether physicians actually provided better care, there was additional resistance, in the form of reluctance to subject themselves to the "improprieties" of male attendance. Since physicians were male, and required to function with modesty, observing "the delicacy of the sexes," initially they dressed as women, to minimize the incongruity of their presence in the lying-in chamber! Their examinations were held on fully-clothed women, and they relied on touch rather than sight, since it would have been unseemly to boldly view an exposed female.

But as authors of advice manuals and as respected members of society, physicians continued to argue against midwives, linking women's ability to pursue medicine (or any other intellectual work) with their physiological constitution; diagnosing all their ills as emanating from the womb, physicians claimed midwives could never obtain the proper medical

knowledge and training. Physicians asserted that women must be kept at home in the family, and separate from the "intellectual" realm of healing, because, according to their socio-medical analysis, all women were inextricably linked to their (troublesome) reproductive systems.

The socio-political dimensions of the nineteenth-century struggle between male physicians and female midwives, over who should be central in the lying-in chamber, were quite far-reaching. Several other factors played key roles in the eradication of lay female midwifery.

First, there was the formation of exclusionary medical societies. The best-known and successful of these was the American Medical Association (AMA), which from its inception in 1846-48 sought to exclude competing practit-

Mary Bais, Midwife,

From Boston,
BEGS Leave to inform the Ladies in this Place and in the Vicinity, that having been instructed and recommended by the Art Practitioners in Midwifery, in Holland; in Compliance with the Request of several Ladies, she has removed to Salem, where she intends to pursue the Business of Midwifery. — Any Lady who may favour her with her Commands, may depend upon her earliest and best Attendance. Enquire at the House of Mr. Osborn, the Corner of Prison Lane.

Advertisement for Mary Bais, Midwife, from The Essex (Massachusetts) Gazette, July 14-21, 1772. New York Public Library.

ioners, including midwives, who could not claim institution-derived credentials.

Secondly, since Black and immigrant women attended the vast majority of non-white and poor parturient women, opponents of the midwives did not fail to link Black "grannies" (vernacular for midwives) to voodooism. This fed the charge that midwives were superstitious and incompetent. Physicians, then, were acting as symptomatic reflectors of American fears of race suicide: the fear that non-white and foreign-born births would soon outnumber the "American"/white birth rate. Early twentieth-century medical journals do reveal physicians' disdain for foreign-born and Black midwives — while not indicative of the entire medical profession, this attitude and emphasis permeated much of the anti-midwife material that circulated at the turn of the century.

Thirdly, as many sectors of American society gradually embraced the exclusivity inherent in professionalism and prolonged educational training, physicians benefited. The Flexner Report of 1910, revealing the abysmally poor quality of

medical education in America, stressed the need to improve scientific schools: in 1919, Flexner persuaded the Rockefeller Foundation to set aside fifty million dollars for the purpose of implementing the report's recommendations. Money began to flow into a selected few of the nation's medical schools from the Rockefeller, Carnegie, Eastman and Brookings Foundations. This essentially signalled the end for nearly all competing practitioners' credibility and educational funding. A series of laws, originally aimed at licensing midwives, was then gradually expanded to exclude their attendance at all births.

All of this occurred **despite** much widely-known research that proved the actual equality or superiority of midwives' credentials and results in the lying-in chamber! In the medical journal debate which raged between 1910 and 1920, very few physicians denied this. Many openly acknowledged midwives' superiority, but went on to denounce them as non-medical people doing medical work.

The rise of gynecology, obstetrics and abdominal surgery as specialties, when combined with changing American attitudes towards hospital births and professional credentials, brought about the final eradication of lay midwifery. The loss of the female lay midwife signalled the end of a female stronghold in social medicine. It also severely impaired women's ability to control their reproductive lives.

But through the knowledge and self-awareness that the history of midwifery provides, women now can continue to reclaim their collective right to physiological and sexual self-determination. Along with a resurgent interest in home-births, natural childbirth and conscious (awake) childbearing, nurse-midwifery has enjoyed a new-found support and popularity in recent years. (Until 1968 only 1.1% of the recorded births in this country were delivered by nurse-midwives. From 1968 to 1972 this increased 14%.)

Nurse-midwifery, as we know it today, is radically different from the situation of the lay midwife of earlier times. Nurse-midwives, who have been trained through a regular medical college with additional studies in midwifery, have rights and powers which are largely circumscribed through legal and/or hospital mandate. Happily, as part of a trend away from the definition of childbearing as an illness, their numbers and influence are growing. No longer can they be called, as one nineteenth-century physician called them, the "worthless and presumptuous women who usurped the profession." □



“GOING SHIRTLESS IS A POLITICAL ACT”

Women on Provincetown's lesbian/gay beach at Herring Cove bared their breasts in support of Nikki Craft, who was arrested August 22 for refusing to put her shirt on when park ranger Anne Calbi ordered her to cover up. Two Federal vehicles and another ranger were called in to subdue her; she was handcuffed, taken to jail and held for several hours. The women on the beach collected \$35 to help with her legal expenses.

Ms. Craft told the rangers she was deliberately challenging the Federal regulation prohibiting nudity on Cape Cod National Seashore beaches. She distributed flyers protesting the discrimination based on sexist attitudes that make women's breasts a commodity to be displayed only for commercial purposes (e.g. topless bars and pornographic images).

“Women must refuse to collaborate in their victimization by silence. We cannot tolerate images of ourselves being bound and tortured for men's profit and sexual gratification. I am pro-nudity and sexuality, and against exploitation and sexual objectification for profit,” she said. She had previously been arrested 19 times for such acts as destroying a newsstand copy of **Hustler** magazine, throwing raw meat on the stage of a California beauty pageant and going topless at other beaches. “I am prepared to spend my lifetime on these issues,” she told **Womantide**. “I'm urging women to commit civil disobedience. Going topless is a political statement; it's the same kind of action as Black people in the South refusing to sit in the back of the bus in the 60s.”

According to the flyer, published by the Naturist Society in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, men were arrested fifty years ago in Boston, New York and elsewhere for going barechested; they refused the dress code and took off their shirts at beach after beach until the authorities backed down. The flyer declares: “The question is whether. . . patriarchal laws shall continue to strip women of the right to control our bodies. . . Wrapping women in shirts by compulsory dress code is unconstitutional; it denies equal protection before the law.”

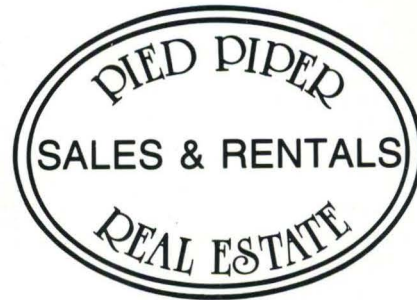
At the August 29 pretrial hearing at National Seashore Headquarters in Wellfleet, ranger Irving Tubbs tried to get a restraining order to prevent Nikki Craft from leafletting on the beach, but Magistrate Mullins agreed that this would be a violation of her rights under the First Amendment. Ms. Craft called the hearing a “kangaroo court” nonetheless, insisting that the case come up before a Boston court (no trial date had been set when we went to press).

Further information about this issue may be obtained from Cross Your Heart Support Network, P.O. Box 1729, Santa Cruz, CA 95061. In response to a question from **Womantide**, Nikki Craft remarked that in Provincetown, “gay women seem to be more militant about going topless”. □

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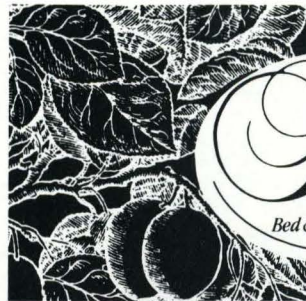
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PLEASE SUPPORT US WITH YOUR DONATION!

WOMANTIDE is your magazine, your forum, promoting the Provincetown lesbian community. With your donations helping us cover the extra costs of obtaining tax-exempt status, we will be able to put our current funds into the next issue. We thank you for your continuing support.

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