

submitted their writing and artwork—after all, the assumption that the work was out there was why we got started—but gathering those pieces for Number 1 awed us just the same. On the business side, we made lists of all the feminist and lesbian publications we could, and wrote to them to exchange ads. Talented lesbians held fundraisers. We sold t-shirts, and talked about it to everyone we could. The preparation definitely needed ten months!

An early stumbling block was the magazine's name. We had no idea what to call her! Long lists of powerful, female, mythical, evocative adjectives and nouns were compiled. In desperation one meeting we consulted the Ouija Board, and asked the spirit who seemed to be answering to go look around in the future and tell us what the name of our magazine was. After only nonsense ensued, someone asked if the spirit could read. The needle slid directly to NO, so we went back to the lists. The situation was urgent because *Sinister Wisdom* was announcing the birth of the magazine in her Spring issue, the deadline for which was December 1.

Eventually we became sure of two things. The word *Lesbian* had to be in the title: this was going to be an Out Magazine. Second, we wanted to use the word *Common*.⁶ In the end, we simply combined two suggestions, *Common Lives* and *Lesbian Lives*, which together emphasized our vision of bringing to print and to light the existence of lesbian experience in all its forms.

By the time the magazine moved to Iowa City, we had a little bank account, subscribers, enough material for a 112-page issue, and a waiting collective.⁷ In Iowa City, other lesbians volunteered to help network, collate, mail out, and keep books. The momentum and support proved to be important, as they helped carry the magazine through the deaths of Anne Lee, in July 1981, and Linda Knox, in February 1982.⁸

6. Carol Seajay was the direct inspiration for this word, with Judy Grahn's "Common Woman" poem providing the cultural referent.

7. Members of the first Iowa City collective were Linda Knox, Cindy Lont, Nancy Clark, Cindy Cleary, Tracy Moore, and Anne Lee.

8. See issues #2 and #4 for more about these women and events.