

MENTAL AND
PHYSICAL HEALTH

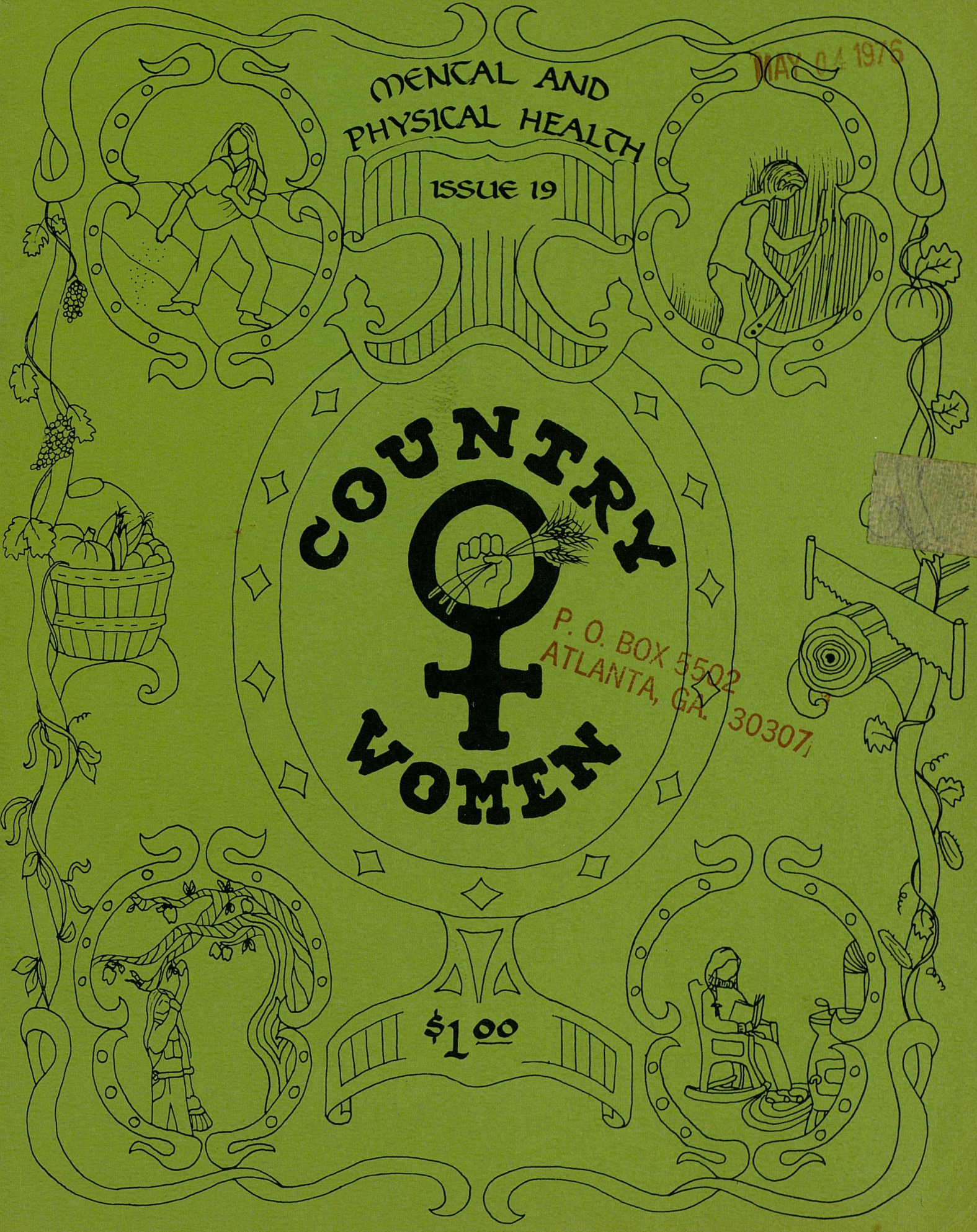
ISSUE 19

COUNTRY
WOMEN

P. O. BOX 5502
ATLANTA, GA. 30307

\$1.00

MAY 04 1975



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ATLANTA LESBIAN FEMINIST ALLIANCE
P.O. BOX 5532
ATLANTA, GA 30307

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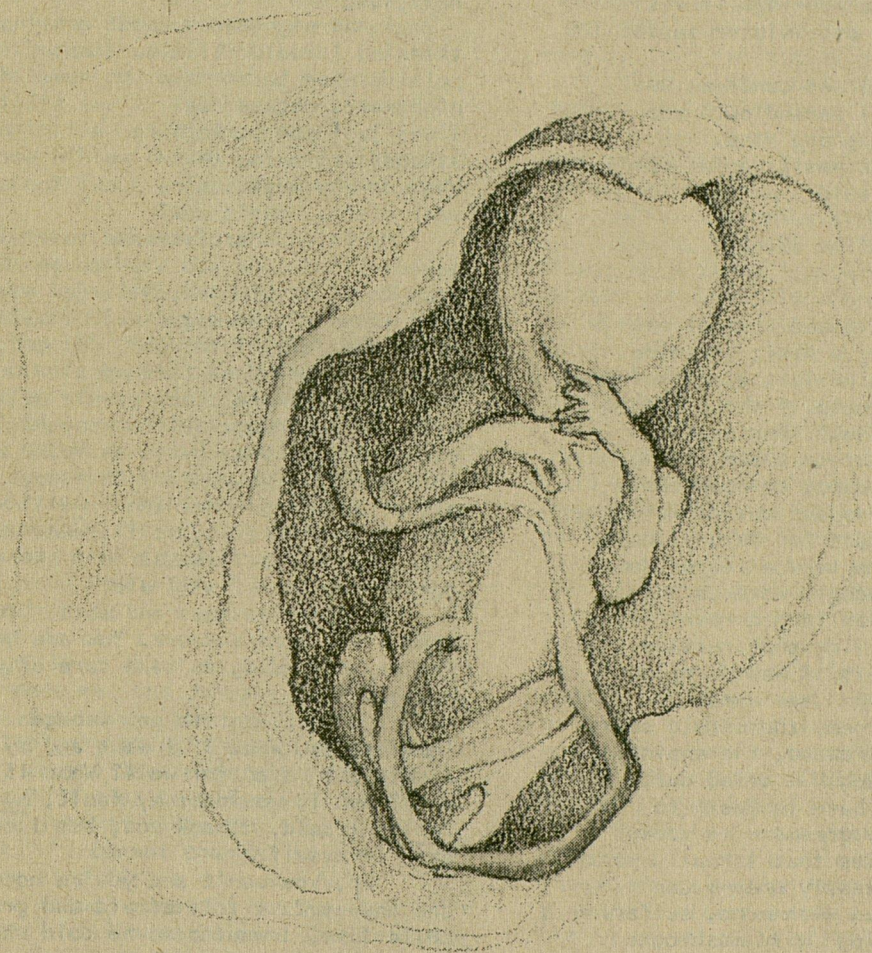
Calligraphy by Slim

Subscriptions are \$4 for six issues.
Published 5 times yearly: January, April, June,
September, November.
Copyright, March, 1976, by Country Women

Second class permit issued at Albion, Ca. 95410

Printed by Waller Press
2136 Palou Ave.
San Francisco, Ca.

Published by Country Women
P.O. Box 51
Albion, Ca. 95410



Being Sick / Being Well

"I know my own body well enough to tell if I'm sick or not," I said. "This is just a little sore throat. I just feel a little tired." I kept on working. It was late fall: firewood to cut, winter garden to plant.

One day, helping to set concrete well rings in the new well, I passed out. When I got to the house, the phone rang.

"The blood test was positive for mononucleosis," the doctor said.

"What should I do?"

"What do you feel like doing?"

"Sleeping."

"Well, then. . ."

At home, I stayed in bed (except when tending the fire, fixing a meal, cleaning the house). I wanted to be left alone and didn't like to ask for help. I thought that I was taking care of myself. For days I was tense and too nervous to sleep. Lying in bed, I felt anxious about my book that was due at the publishers and not finished, my lover who I hadn't seen for several days, my job that I had had to take a leave from, my animals that other people were caring for. One afternoon, I lay in bed rewriting a section of my book, calling that resting. I began to weep intensely. I was worrying about everything I could: the unmailed magazines in the next room, the unsold sheep fleeces, the unsplit firewood, the unpicked apples. "This is too much!" I cried out, speaking to myself. "I have to learn to separate myself from my dreams - to accept only the responsibilities that I really want to carry, and to say clearly when I can't." There I was, sick in bed with mono, suffering from guilt about "wasting" wild mushrooms which were perfectly innocently and contentedly pursuing their own life cycle in the woods a half a mile away!

Lying in bed that night, trying to rest, I saw car lights on the wall. I thought that it was Pamela coming to visit, and I felt a momentary joy, but the car passed on down the road. I was afraid, lying there; I felt a failure, a nothing, gone, forgotten. I thought that if I looked at all my fears straight on that I would be free of them. So I began to make a list. I saw that I felt insecure and unworthy of love, diseased, despised. I told myself that many writers go through agonies final editing and letting go of a book whose imperfections they know too well. I looked at myself and knew that I had a long way to go before I could like myself sitting still absolutely naked. No five blue ribbons from the swimming race every Saturday morning, no straight A's every six

weeks to prove that I'm O.K. Just me. Just my self. I kept looking at all the fears, but I was not free. It was a bad night and I did not sleep.

I had nightmares about getting well, thinking I would still be trapped in the compulsive need to achieve, to never fail. The nightmares became real. I was still trapped, I was just not performing well. I hadn't stopped believing that I should perform well. What do you mean you're sick? You can still wash dishes, can't you?

My friend Harriet came to visit and asked, "If you're too sick to go away on your trip, as planned, will you work on the next issue of the magazine?" I said, "Yes." After she left, I thought, "My god, what am I doing? Where does this egotism come from - this need to make other people believe my myths of my indomitable strength? I can hardly even move, my body hurts so much. Where from this terrible insecurity that says I must always be doing something - well? Where from this fear of sitting still, even when I'm sick and need stillness? Do I think god will punish me, that I will die?"

One day Pam came and said, "You cannot stay alone here anymore. You are getting sicker. I'm going to take care of you at my house."

I didn't want to go. I began to worry immediately. What if I went and my animals didn't get cared for well? What if they all died? And it would be my fault, my fault, my fault. I said, "Thank you, but I can take care of myself."

"No, you can't and you're not going to," she answered. I felt afraid and grateful; child-like, I wanted to be told what to do.

That night I had a dream. I was holding a baby in my arms and it was crying and crying. I had no milk for it and the ground all around me was bare and brown. The baby kept crying and crying. In the morning I was crying too. I thought that this was like walking voluntarily into hell. I kept hoping that understanding what I did to myself was a path towards being more free. But I felt no more free, only less blind. I didn't believe I could change; I beat myself with a mental whip of hopelessness. My body was in pain and I was still driving it to finish writing the book, wash the dishes, be responsible, and, if I couldn't do anything else, at least worry and agonize. I was not ready to take care of myself; I didn't even know what it meant. And if I couldn't take care of myself sick, I was sure that I couldn't do better with the rest of my life. It was the blackest hopelessness I'd ever known. I wonder if there is

anything worse than believing yourself incapable of change.

Pamela came back and took me to her house. She put me in bed, built fires, and brought me meals. For two weeks, I slept and dreamed, woke and dreamed. I could not move. I could barely talk. My thoughts were incomprehensible, my body in pain and exhausted beyond all its limits. I remembered few of the dreams, was grateful for the food she forced me to eat.

When I was able to sit up again for a few hours, I talked with a friend who came to see how I was doing. She offered me herbs and advice on getting well. When she left, I began to cry. Pamela found me and rocked me in her arms.

"Do you want to talk?" she asked.

"They keep telling me how to get well.

I don't want to get well. I don't want to get well."

"You can stay sick as long as you need to. It's O.K." she said.

I stopped crying but she kept on rocking me. "I can stay sick! I don't have to get well. I don't have to be like I was!" I told myself. Much later, I thought that she was either very brave or very wise.

Days and days passed. I could read or see a visitor for an hour at a time and then I would sleep three to recover. The dreams continued, sometimes like hallucinations. I was often in terrible despair. I poured out my nightmares to Pam. "I cannot change," I said. "I hate myself as I am. I hate myself. I must do something to be a good person, but if I do it then it can't be any good, can it?"

"I can't change. What can I do differently? The magazine needs me; the animals need me; I have to work for money; and I want to write books. The only thing I can give up is writing books, what I love most. It is hopeless, hopeless." "I must have money. I am in debt. I hate my job. It kills me. I am sick and can't work." "I cannot change. It does not help to see clearly; it does not help."

"How will I get enough money to buy hay next year? Next year I will have 30 more sheep; the barn's not big enough to hold the extra hay I can't afford to buy. The sheep will starve and it will all be my fault, the death of these sheep I don't even have." I cried a lot.

With my strength from the rest, I finally realized that this must be a time to learn about all this. I had demanded more and more of myself, until there I was in a state of physical collapse. I talked to Pamela and she said, "You can learn from the sickness itself. You have to stop fighting yourself, your body, all the time. Let these destructive fantasies come, look at them for what they are, and let them pass through you. Far better you should play them out as fantasies than that you should live them out!"

The sickness became a healer. The permission to never get well was a source of hope. For the first time in memory, I felt within me a craving for stillness, for being centered. I remembered how I felt ordinarily,

driving myself so hard that I walked through life half blind and half deaf in order to produce what I thought I needed to. The stillness of the illness reminded me of how I felt at my very best - productive and relaxed. I remembered quiet, rhythmic hours building the fence, silent intuitive hours writing. I laughed at my former self as though she were a simpleton. "The way to measure achievement," I told her, "is not by quantity but by quality, the feeling of the doing." Suddenly the newly emerged self, who was justified simply by her existence, not by her deeds, felt infinitely precious to me. My own child, birthed after a hard labor and I needed to nourish her. I felt then a tremendous desire to get well, to be at ease, no longer diseased. I could not remember ever having been well.

After six weeks at Pam's house, I could walk again, and sit up for three or four hours at a time. I returned home to recuperate, but soon discovered I was not ready to be at home. The old patterns were strongest there; the guilt and the sense of failure began to return. I left on another extended visit. I did not return home until I felt well, at peace with myself, nearly two months later. When I came home, I decided to get help with the farm work and to get the magazine to pay salaries so that I would not be working two fulltime jobs. Six months later, I had a partner on the farm, and a job with the magazine, but I had not written since I finished the first book and I was nearly crazy with pain from jealousy within my longtime love affair. I told myself often that I had to have stillness, space to write and that I did not want to be out of my mind with pain about a relationship. The days continued, much more relaxed than the year before but still too busy.

A little over a year after I came down with mono, I was out in my fields feeding the sheep, checking for newborn lambs. It was a picture postcard sunset, almost too vivid, but my heart stood still in homage. I felt joy in this place, in this life. While my back was turned, one of my rams charged at me and smashed me into a fence post. I came to lying on the ground, very dizzy; my glasses were bent so crooked that the world looked upside down and my forehead was cut and bleeding. The child who was with me asked over and over, "Are you all right? Are you all right?" I couldn't figure out what to answer. As I started to sit up, pain shot up my spine. "You had better get help," I said. I lay still until Slim came. "Give me a hand up, I'll go back to the house and you can finish feeding the sheep."

"Do you need help getting back?" she asked.

"No, I can walk."

Out of sight, I began to cry. Every step sent a pain shooting up my back. But my legs still moved. I could walk. Blood was running down my face, making me feel afraid. I wanted

Cont.

to call out to friends in the house, but instead I told myself, "Don't be a baby." When I got to the house I must have looked like a revolutionary war veteran, stooped and limping, bloody handkerchief around my forehead. My friends helped me into bed. "The cut is minor," one said. The pain in my back lessened but remained constant. Finally, I decided to drink a lot of bourbon and try to sleep.

The next morning, Slim called the chiropractor, who said I had to get x-rays first. Sitting up was intense pain. Maybe a cracked rib, I thought; I wanted it to be something that could be fixed. I wanted to be well by the next day. Slim and Pam decided to take me to the hospital; I felt a little foolish. As I got up, they stood by solicitously.

"I can walk," I said.

At the door of the house, they said, "Enough of this," and carried me to the car.

In the car, I began to get frightened. This was not a hypochondriacal fantasy, I realized. I really was in pain. When we got to the hospital, I was loaded onto a cart and wheeled in. "Can you walk?" the doctor asked.

"Yes."

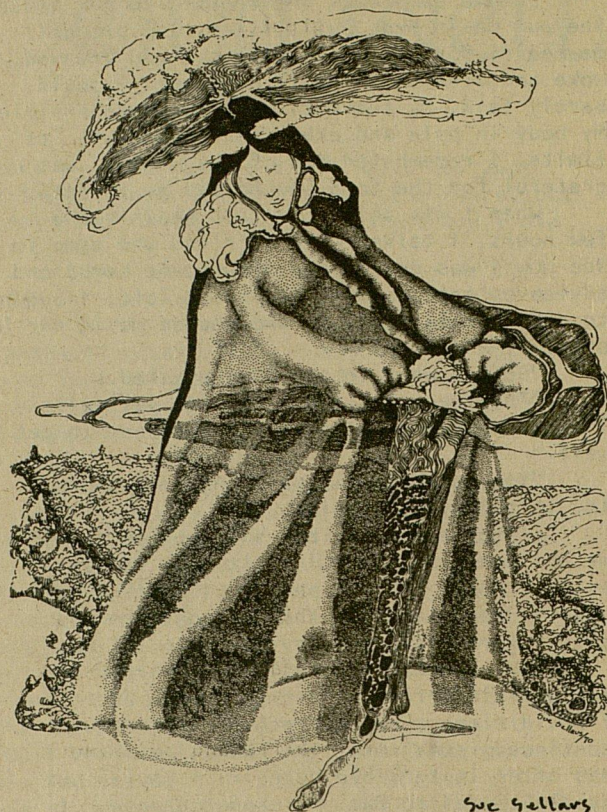
"I would say no," Pam responded. I can walk, I thought, it just hurts.

"The x-rays show nothing broken. I think it is a bruise, bleeding in the muscle tissue." I was wheeled into physical therapy. They applied heat packs, ultrasonic and electrical massage. Pam and Slim came back to get me. Sitting up, I realized the nurse expected me to walk. I stood up and nearly fell over, so she went and got some crutches. "I'm not a baby; I won't ask for a wheel chair," I told myself. Halfway down the hall, I felt about to faint. "I can't," I said. Slim and Pam lifted me up and carried me to the car.

"So much more simple," Pam said. "They are afraid to touch people here."

Getting into the car again, I twisted my back, another sharp stab. This one was too much, the breaking point. I began to sob. The pain had become a disease in itself. Every cell of me was afraid. Each stab of pain was not only itself, but also the memory, the residue, of all the ones before. Pain so intense that I lost all other consciousness. I sent Slim back to the doctor, "Yes, please, I will take some pills after all."

That night I lay in bed and thought about the pain of the afternoon, a memory now that the codeine had reduced it to an ache. I realized suddenly that I had caused myself most of that pain. The pain came from moving and I chose to move. The fear and confusion I felt in the hospital when I found the doctor couldn't cure me began to make sense. I moved; I felt pain; I felt crazy. I didn't know how to not be in pain. Suddenly, I had a blazing revelation: if it hurts that badly to move then I should not move; that it is all right to choose not to suffer; that this is not a indulgence. For the first time, what Pam meant when she said that I can't walk became



clear to my Protestant ethic blinded eyes.

Stoned on codeine, I began to look at what that meant. When I felt emotional pain, could I choose to not voluntarily cause myself more pain? The pain in my back did not help me, but became another disease. Could I remember in my emotional life that pain is dysfunctional, not a protection? Putting myself in pain only helped me if what I wanted was to feel crazy, to believe myself helpless, a victim. I thought about when Pamela had made love with Gina the week before and realized that I did not have to pretend that I hate Pam or that I would not see her again. I did not have to sit and envision what they were doing every moment. I did not have to feel rejected and left out when I actually wanted the time to be alone. If I did not have to walk down that hospital corridor, could I also not try to kill myself and our relationship whenever I felt threatened? Did the pain ever help me? Was it really better than the unknown future I thought I was protecting myself from?

Craziness in the madhouse were the words that came to me when I woke up. I lay there immobile, suspended, my life stopped. "I really don't trust happiness," I said to

myself. Hmm. I looked at that and at the ceiling for a while. I was attached to pain, chose it; pain and struggle seemed to me the source of growth, of greater depth. Happiness seemed like mediocrity; I felt that creative work could only come from pain. I realized how often and on what different levels I create it for myself: through overwork, in my relationships, physically. I had little experience of that thing called "joy". Could I find some stability and peace within myself? Strike a balance with the never satisfied self - add a little love and tenderness to the destructiveness that is creativity? I wanted to experience a joy that did not deny intensity.

I found myself liking being in bed. Since the revelation about moving, I had learned how to keep my back still, to minimize the discomfort. There I was in bed with the stillness, the silence, the free time that I had been craving for months. Then guilt passed through me. Was I making this all up to get what I wanted? I decided to get up and fix my own food. Sharp pain ran through me again as I twisted slightly; my hands began to shake. To whom was I proving that I was tough? Convinced, I got back in bed. The bed became a haven, place of my dreams. There beside me were the first winter narcissus, a pot of tea, Virginia Woolf's and May Sarton's books, my journal and notebooks. The illness was again giving me lessons I had wanted to learn. Stillness: time and space. That was the source of freedom and growth, not pain. Pain was the signal of the need to grow. Through the illness, I was paring my life down to the bare bones. No distractions to keep me from my deepest work, my writing. Silence, thinking, writing, reading, those were at my core.

As the days passed, I began to be able to move a little if I was very careful. Did I dare say it? I wanted to lie still. I thought of the mono the year before and felt the deep contrast between that illness and this - lying still this time, I was not in pain, not sick. My head was clear, vibrantly alive. I felt the spiral of growing healthiness in that year. Then, I had been struggling against killing myself; now, I was struggling to express my richest self, to let my creativity emerge. I had not become so ill that the mind and body could only cry for rest; I had merely injured a part of the body that needed stillness to heal. But on the deepest levels I could feel my whole being needed stillness to heal. I realized that it was the freest space I had ever known. I felt stimulated on all levels and absolutely guiltless about doing what I wanted to. After all, I was hurt and couldn't do anything else. I was plunged into solitude and writing as I had been yearning to be and afraid to be for the last year. I wanted to carry this space with me into being "well"; I had to learn to love myself enough for there to be room in my life for my work, for myself. Was it really illegitimate and invalid for me to be myself?

Invalid/invalid. Lying hurt, I felt I was myself; the sickness was freedom. But I had learned about pain. I did not want to have to hurt myself to reach my deepest places. Lying there, I was absolutely inspired with the richness of hope. A precious start had been made on the novel and it too had a life of its own now. Oh joy.

Later, I wondered what was the point of lecturing myself again and again on how much and how deliberately I hurt myself? To say I've learned my lessons? The instinct was so strong - to reject help, to withdraw from love. I told myself that the only person who would not harm me was myself, while I was in the very midst of hurting myself and those "enemies" - my lovers - were not even there. I thought, "You have such a mean soul. Pettily careful of yourself." Looking at myself with the clarity of solitude and illness, I had no defense against seeing the tortures and self-destruction there in the depths.

With the morning light, came a gentler clarity. I looked at how deeply I had rejected love - from myself and from others. I had pushed away intimacy with Pamela, not because I might get hurt more, but because I might get loved more. I still believed that creativity sprang from pain, that all support threatened my work. I realized that this recovery period was a critical time in my life. I still had the free space to struggle with my creative self, with my writing. I began to see that if I could truly believe in and trust my creative self, then I would be able to allow myself stillness and solitude in my "real" life. The writing that came out of this illness was showing me that joy was not destructive and torture was not the only path to depth. I admitted to myself that writing was a necessity in my life, something I must do. To be truly well, I had to let the writing become so firmly rooted that a little simple happiness or the pressures of everyday life could not threaten it.

By that night, I had drafted two more chapters of the book. I was filled with a wild excitement.

My back began to heal again. I could again walk and move if I was careful. The two weeks of illness, rest, silence, work, were nearly over. They had been more nourishing than most of the last year, healing wounds that lay deep inside. I did not know if I had chosen sickness but I surely knew how to use it well. I took an illness of the body to rest and heal the spirit. Listen to the inner voice and look clearly.

It is the present moment now. I am well. More deeply well than I have ever been. I wake up in the morning and all day I do what I want. I find that there is plenty of space for stillness, for writing, and for what I always called "real work". Last year, I was sick for two months, this year for two weeks. I hope during the next year to not need to use illness of the body to keep the soul healthy. ♀



Taking Our Bodies Back

"At age one i had polio, and although the active virus lasts only ten days or so i have been categorized as 'unhealthy' ever since. Throughout my childhood i was a surgical guinea pig, paraded naked before hundreds of doctors (to show them what a 'real polio' looks like) and generally treated as a 'disease', not a person. Then, i was totally powerless to fight back."

This is a common experience of many disabled women. From whenever disability begins we are seen in a special, very narrow way called "unhealthy". This label smothers all the other visible parts of ourselves. We are often treated as though we have no intelligence, need constant help, and have no sexuality. These attitudes permeate all class, race, and political lines.

Even those of us who are disabled have learned to internalize these assumptions.

Everyone is afraid of "sickness". We are all taught to want "it" to go away. Due to doctors' monopoly on defining who is healthy, what health is, as well as their controlling treatments, very little honest information about disabled women ever reaches the community at large. As a result we are locked up in hospitals, special schools, rehabilitation centers, nursing homes, and our families' homes.

Doctors view disabled women as mindless children. We are constant reminders that they

don't have cures for everything. We are often told, "Don't you worry your pretty little head about that," (as are many other women) in response to questions like, "What effects will this surgery have on me?" This reinforces all of the powerlessness of childhood.

We are also aware that the more disabled we appear the less intelligence is assumed. We have all been conditioned to see disabled people as a source of discomfort. If a woman walks with leg braces and crutches she is considered mentally and physically more able than if she is in a wheelchair -- even if the wheelchair allows her greater mobility and independence.

One of the most powerful shapers of attitudes about disability is the media. We have yet to hear about or see any media situation where a disabled person comes in and is seen "just like everyone else." Instead, we have frequent images of beautiful, innocent "invalid" women waiting for the "right man" to come along -- a doctor who cures her, then mar-

ries her. OR the bitter wheelchair-confined woman who spreads unhappiness into the lives of those around her. Usually the plot focuses on the "poor" husband, who wants desperately to marry a "nice girl" but has to wait until his wife dies (to have sex, of course)! OR the Super-Crip -- always a man -- who overcomes incredible odds to prove that he's "still a man"!

These are the oppressive stereotypes that we, as disabled women, live with every day. Even when we try to live independently, finding an apartment, getting a job, or even grocery shopping are incredible hassles. These are basic problems for everyone, but physical barriers and attitudes about disability really compound them for disabled women. It's not only our lack of mobility which is the problem, but also our physical appearance: wheelchairs, leg braces, crutches, and canes are not attractive to a potential employer, landlord, or lover.

Also, many disabled women are not noticeably disabled. These women often have progressive diseases (cancer, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy) or internal disabilities (heart, kidney, lung). Since we are taught that physical disability is unacceptable, we often try to hide it so that we will appear "normal". And in the process we internalize the attitude that something is "wrong" with us (instead of society).

Because there are rarely any strong women role models for disabled women (Helen Keller was the only one we could think of), living with these stereotypes makes it very hard for

us to see ourselves in any positive way. We are attempting to see ourselves as healthy and strong women. The fact that any of us makes it past the medical, family, educational, and physical barriers is amazing.

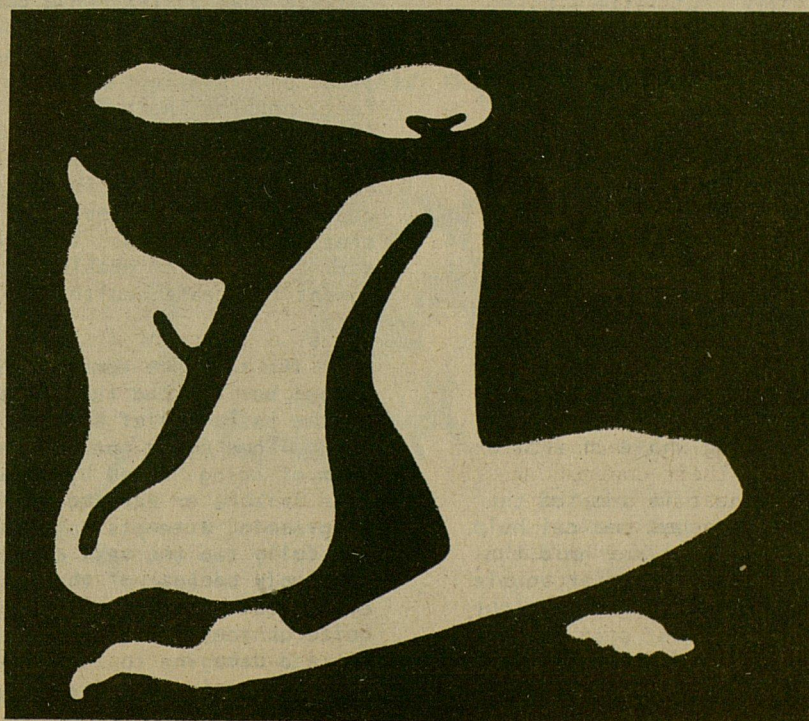
We have begun to redefine "disability", to focus on being strong and living independently, supporting each other, talking about what "health" is for us.

We've been getting in touch with the years of being taught to hate our bodies for being "defective" while we were trying to live up to some medical definition of "normal".

Those of us who are disabled feminists have been struggling with our beliefs that we are full strong women with needs for sexual relationships. What little information/literature is available on sex and disability is almost all about men. The one line on sex and disabled women reads, "Even after a spinal cord injury a woman is still fertile and can be a passive partner [to a man]." We are fighting against this role, and are exploring our sexuality for ourselves. We are discovering our lesbianism, bisexuality and straightness.

We're learning to feel really good about our bodies, finally accepting who and what we are and growing to like ourselves.

We're writing to tell you this because we are truly a hidden community. We want to hear from disabled women and interested non-disabled women everywhere. We are interested in building a network of disabled women for support and strength. We can be contacted at: Disabled Women's Coalition, c/o Corbett, 2427 A Tenth Street, Berkeley, California 94710. ♀



Beliefs

You must accept for the purposes of this writing, some basic precepts. One, that our physical existence is an extension and materialization of a creative force and consciousness that exists quite apart from our three dimensional production of "life", and two, that we fully control, as individuals and by way of mass agreement, the physical properties of this production. What advance or improvement upon the quality of life has been made without the foundation stone of a strong concept, or the development of a new concept? And three, that one's health is more dependent on one's beliefs than on physical variables such as viruses or food.

An infant consciousness, before its introduction to the physical world, has existed on a purely intuitive level. In this sense, it is quite wise at birth on a mental plane and continues to exist on this level until exterior input in the form of three dimensional reality concepts pushes this facility "underground" forming the so called "unconscious" or "id" and thus releasing creative energy to the physical sphere. It begins to learn to operate within the laws and rules that are generally agreed upon by those individuals within its frame of reference. Most of us are born into a family with a strong reality concept of illness, and with strong concepts about physical limitations. We all agree that if baby is dropped, its head will crack open. Baby cooperates with this overwhelming consensus and obliges by messily expiring to the horror of those present.

The undoubtable reality that physical disease is psycho-somatic may be hard for most of us to swallow. Quite certainly, most of us have been programmed, since infancy, to fulfill the concept of illness. This is not to say that this concept and the resultant illness are fully non-functional. We, in our human manifestations, have become so separate from that part of ourselves termed "spirit" or "soul" and from the knowledge of our real purpose of existence that our production has become sloppy, and detached from the natural state of health and creative force that we all enter this existence with. Pain and illness are physical realizations of that state of separation.

Certain religious sects have adopted the notion that one should never seek medical help or undergo medical treatments. They hold the seed of positive thought, but are often unable to operate within it. A particular sect might say that if you are sick you must pray to God; another might say cure yourself with positive thought. We must be very cautious of such an

attempt. We would not become ill if we had not already incorporated the concept. If our belief system dictates that we must take an antibiotic to destroy rampant negative cells in our body, nothing short of that will do the trick. A few of us have not lost the ability to concentrate energy in a manner capable of extinguishing the rampant cells, but the programming most of us have undergone has eliminated this method as a practical or effective process. Once creative energy has expressed itself in this manner it must proceed within the framework of agreed upon physical laws. Therefore, people will continue to suffer and die from cancer until medical researchers create a concept of CURE. Once enough medical people agree that CURE is found, cancer will no longer be an avenue of negative expression. Unfortunately, this tactic is equivalent to continually patching up a disintegrating dam. Millions of dollars and immense positive energy is channeled into just this type of research, when in fact, the ultimate cure lies elsewhere. The great cosmic joke is that the medical practitioners are highly revered and encouraged by enormous financial reward. And what could be more self-less and positive than devoting a life to caring for and curing diseased bodies? However, once we are thus programmed, only medical "hypnotism" in the form of "cure" can save us. Another alternative open to some is faith healing. If I fully believe that Sister Annie can cure my arthritis this very act of total belief can accomplish results. Most of us have become too jaded and intellectual to be susceptible. In fact, nothing short of totally changing my belief system can cure my arthritis. I must first believe that it is my arthritis, then see what its purpose is and finally I must accept that basic precept that consciousness has created and continues to create physical matter. That belief enables me in the present moment to create health as I have created illness.

The sad fact remains that once an individual has reached the age of three or four most of the basic belief systems are fully incorporated. Some of us opt for re-programming in the form of being "saved by Jesus", others assimilate Krishna or Rev. Moon. Any of these re-programming attempts may prove helpful but none can fully tap the vast creative energy within us simply because of the inherent limitations of the belief systems imposed upon us. It is quite unnecessary and even, at times, distracting and damaging to look beyond yourself.

Obviously, the answer to solving the prob-

blems of mental and resultant physical disfunction lies in prevention. All of us possess tremendous creative energy that we have materialized ourselves to express. Through introspection (some might say "meditation") we must contact and control this creativity and channel it consciously. Negative feelings are as valid as positive ones, they will manifest, and it is more efficient to deal with them directly. Sometimes people are helped by "psycho-therapy" simply because they are forced to recognize negative feelings, accept them as such, and deal with them on that level. Negative feelings are not bad, what you create with them often can be.

Those of us who are programmed have a difficult road to travel but this road can be made easier by broader beliefs. If "eating well" or "stopping smoking" is your concept of health follow it through, but by all means incorporate health into your expectation. And - it is important to maintain this awareness when communicating with an infant consciousness. Try to keep in touch with your intuition and help the child integrate these beliefs as s/he learns to manipulate in this world. The use of intuition and the imprinting of this creative belief system will provide a strong foundation for future physical and mental health. ♀

Prisoners

we are prisoners of
mind and body

we are slaves chained
to yesterdays

we are hostages of
our fears

we are victims of
our violence

we are caged within ourselves
never realizing
the door is open



New Approaches to Health

I get very excited thinking about new approaches to health. I have seen so much in the last few years that has shown me how great a part we ourselves can play in our own healing process. In fact I have seen much to indicate that if we don't play an active role in our own healing that healing is greatly diminished, if not altogether unavailable.

I began to be interested in natural healing several years ago. To me that meant the miraculous use of energy channeled to someone ill to make them well; learning the uses of herbs, diet, bodywork and pressure points to bring them back into harmony. Only by working in these ways and watching others more adept than I, did I realize that even these new therapies didn't seem to do it forever. Often the person would improve for a while, but then eventually reproduce the symptoms or create new ones elsewhere. It seemed more and more evident to me that the person themselves had to enter into the healing process in an active way. They had, in fact, to consciously make certain basic changes in their lives in order to realize permanent healing. When the new healing approaches were used in combination with self-help techniques the patients seemed much more able to really retain their healing and make it fully their own.

Perhaps as an example I'll offer up my own minor case history. I had had chronic bladder infections (cystitis and urethritis) for 10 years. At least 4 or 5 times a year I would have a full-blown and very painful bladder infection. Like a junkie I would rush desperately for medication to reduce the pain. If I didn't have any I'd freak out and call the doctor to phone the script into the pharmacy. Only once I got the Pyridium into my system and out the other end could I relax somewhat. Then lengthy rounds of antibiotics followed. Tests were done in the hospital to find out why. One kidney was slumped, they said, so a corset and propping up the foot of my bed were suggested. Having no success with that I was sent to the urologist who every couple of months stuck a hideous instrument up my urethra, twisted it to make it expand and tore open the urinary passage. He explained that there was so much scar tissue from past infections that the urethra was blocked causing urine to be retained and somehow breed infection. Needless to say I felt violated. Even then I sensed this system was all wrong. How could traumatizing an area repeatedly help to cure it? The doctor agreed that it didn't make much sense but explained that that was all they could think of to do. I had reached a dead end.

As I began to investigate new approaches to health I learned how prolonged and frequent

use of antibiotics tends to rob the body of its natural resistance to infection. I was horrified. No wonder I had constant problems with infection! By then even bug bites got infected. Again I had cystitis. This time I went to a Chinese acupuncturist in Chinatown. Practicing without benefit of an M.D. to his name he was secretive about his practice, but much respected in his community and quite helpful. I went to him in real pain and he managed to make it go away. He scrawled an herbal prescription in Chinese and I got it filled at a nearby herbal shop. A bitter brew! Drank it faithfully but to no avail. The pain returned in a couple of days and, desperate, I rushed to the urologist again begging for more pills to quell the pain and the infection.

A few months later at a healing seminar I again had a bladder infection. I asked the speaker, a respected psychic and herbal healer, to work on me. She did and I felt better for a few hours but rotten when I got home.

That summer I was really beginning to become deeply involved in natural healing. I felt I really wanted to learn to help people to health. I was at a healing circle when I once again had the beginnings of an infection. I wanted to go home and to bed. I mentioned it to a friend experienced in psychic healing and he channeled me some energy by laying on of hands. Suddenly I felt totally relaxed, free from all discomfort, radiant, happy and pleasantly energized. I stayed through the circle, subsequent theatre excursion and hike and ended up visiting friends until one in the morning. No problem. Apparently an energy approach worked better than a strictly physical one for I had no more infections for 6 months. The very joy I found in the presence of these people dedicated to healing and serving others and the new hope and purpose I had found to my life probably did much toward helping me retain that latest healing. I was happier, more fulfilled. My life was moving somewhere.

However it still was not enough. Six months later a new bout with cystitis seemed to be beginning. By this time I was deeply involved in the study and practice of psychic healing myself, becoming quite versed in it. Of course, I had utter faith in its effectiveness. Until, that is, I needed it myself, and then I began to waver. I channeled energy for self-healing and went to close friends to be worked on in this way. Still the symptoms increased. I began to freak out again in the old way, but refused to take medicine. Finally I was sitting in a hot bath crying in pain when my companion came in to try and help. (He too was into the healing arts). He noticed that I was, in fact, creating my own experiences. My symptoms were just preliminary but I was rapid-

ly manufacturing a full blown infection out of my past memories and fears. I had rehearsed and performed that old script so many times that I knew it by heart. A beginning symptom, a twinge even, need only appear for me to rapidly fill in the rest of the act with what I feared were the inevitable results. Fear controlled me. I had gotten totally taken in by a pattern and didn't know how to turn it off. (Apparently this happens many times with chronic complaints and really compounds the difficulty. Through memory of past chains of events people reproduce whole patterns of dis-ease when one beginning element shows up. They have to learn to break the pattern.) I could see that my friend was right, but the pain seemed very real and all that rather academic. He proceeded however to guide me through a process of burning up old mental "tapes" - "reels and reels of bad movies", pictures, as he put it, related to the area. Pictures of past urethral traumas (I'd had plenty), infections, a couple of not-so-fun abortions, guilts, fears, terrors and anxieties plus a few negative sexual relationships from the past. What a mess! Everything but the kitchen sink seemed to have found its way into that area of my body. No wonder it broke down! The strain was too great. Finally having cleared away the refuse of past years and past tears he channeled healing energy and lo! the infection and its symptoms retreated. Not to return again.

But! That's not all due to him. Oh, no. I've since put quite a bit of energy into keeping it that way. Daily at first and a couple of times weekly now, I mentally concentrate on the bladder-kidney area, by visualizing crystal clear light clearing the area. I imagine a totally clear unobstructed passage. I ask that these organs be tonified to do their job perfectly. Thus I substitute positive direction and care of that area for fear and painful memories. It sounds simplistic, doesn't it? But it's a powerful healing technique. In fact several cancer clinics around the country are having patients use this kind of physiological visualization with admirable results. Also, and this step is extremely important, I keep track of how I run my energy. I came to see that I was storing not only painful memories and stress-related to the bladder area there, but also any stress, anxiety or fear about anything else would go directly there. I think most people do this. There seems to be a favorite little nook or cranny in each person's body where they stow their woe. Obviously the weight of it all tends to weaken and damage that part of the body. (Emotions cause powerful chemical reactions in the body; repeated tightening and tensing of an area creates blocks to natural healthy energy flow and serves to constrict and exhaust). Now when I notice a twinge of pain in that area I see it as a signal that I have tension. I consciously relax myself as much as possible, look at what's causing the tension and deal with it myself. It's not worth it to let my bladder take the rap for me. Not when I can take responsibility and actively get in touch with the causes of tension and dissipate

it at the beginning. Anything to avoid those hideous infections! (I'm sure anyone who is subject to them would agree.)

Thus my illness has been my teacher - teaching me to take responsibility for my emotions and my life. Now my bladder serves as a warning signal and I do listen to its messages and take action! I have since quit the stressful job that led to much of the tension I experienced and that has been a wise move in many ways. I have also eliminated the kind of draining, frustrating relationships I had been into before. Not worth it! Now I have relationships that add joy and deep value to my life, relationships which are mutually supportive.

This is an example of a kind of change, a process I have seen accomplished by many people in different circumstances. All of them gained control over their health largely through self-understanding and subsequent real efforts at transformation. With support for such endeavor much can be gained. It works well alongside more physical approaches too. One woman I know whose legs were paralyzed from infancy has learned to walk without crutches or braces. This work involved looking at past self-images as the weak helpless one and learning to throw them aside; dealing with others' images of her and learning not to take them on; learning to love her legs and accept them as they were while still working to improve them; working through fears of facing the change in identity such a total healing would mean; doing physical therapy such as deep massage, hot baths and exercise (all of this structured by her at home and outside), and much work with visualization - seeing herself whole and well, able to jump and run. She even saw herself dancing and running on the beach in dreams! No doctor could do this work for her, though she did have 10 weeks of regular massage and received psychic healing treatments on several occasions. Sheer will did most of it. It took about two years. Thus even with congenital problems our will and our power to re-create our circumstances are incredibly strong! It can be done.

This is an extreme case. Many situations are not so dramatic. However, even if you are pursuing a strictly medical approach to a problem, this inner approach is a priceless adjunct and really helps the healing to be much more effective.

So what seems to be operating here? The fact that the way we run our energy - the pattern of our personality - can produce either dis-ease or harmony in the body. Recent research points to the fact that there exists a "heart patient personality", and a "cancer personality." What does this mean? That certain stressful personality functions, if repeated over long periods of time, build up so much stress and tension in the body that serious dis-ease can result. Different types of stresses affect the body in different ways. And just as we can create dis-ease with our mind and emotions, so we can create ease, or harmony. By changing the energy input we

Cont.

change the result. The recent research with plants shows that they are extremely reactive to thought and feeling emanations. Positive loving thoughts produce beautiful healthy plants. Negative, critical thoughts directed at the growing plants tend to weaken them and produce ill health. Our bodies are much the same: organic, sensitive, made up of living cells, each with its "cell mind" - its reactive aspect. Our bodies turn to our minds for direction and receive very definite energy impulses from our emotions. Let the mind and emotions help the body to health.

But how to accomplish such radical changes? It seems impossible. A first step in doing this would be to let the illness be your guide. What is this dis-ease telling you about yourself? See it as a call for attention or help. It is saying something is not right, and you must fix it. What needs to be done? Often in listening and in doing what it demands we change more than the physical complaint. In fact, some say that unless a healing encompasses a spiritual step forward that healing will not remain. How do we let a dis-ease speak to us? How can we receive its information?

There are many ways to find out the cause of your dis-ease and its message and through exploring you can find the ways that seem to work for you. One way to get a clue is to look at what part of the body is affected. The legs? Perhaps there is something you just can't stand, or maybe a situation you'd like to run away from but don't let yourself. (Unresolved stress). The stomach? I was once physically nauseous for days after the split up of a relationship. I couldn't stomach the situation. The eyes? Maybe you just can't see your way clear. A sore throat? Is it unexpressed anger or sorrow or love, or too much expression of negativity or something else? Each situation is different.

A good technique for really going in and getting answers is:

1. Close your eyes, relax, breathe deeply. With the in breath take in vital life force, with the out breath release any tension. Do this for 5 minutes.

2. Put your attention on the area of concern. Breathe through it. Let the vital life force of the in-breath infuse the area. Let the out-breath carry away tension. Do this for several minutes.

3. Let this part of your body speak to you in pictures and feelings, telling you what is aggravating or causing the problem. Allow time for this.

4. Let the pictures fade away once you've looked at them and understood. Again breathe through the area as above, breathing in vital energy, breathing away tiredness and tension.

5. Once again center in the area and speak to it, this time asking it what needs to be done, what the solution to the problem might be. Let it answer you in pictures and feelings. Give it time.

In this way we take responsibility for ourselves - we open up body-mind communication and from there begin the work of unification

or attunement (at-one-ment) that is important in real harmony and health. Once seeing what is causing or aggravating the problem and what needs to be done to alleviate it we can sometimes become very discouraged. How to accomplish what seem like major changes? Often a total personality overhaul seems to be called for.

It is very important to accept and love ourselves as we are while still working to evolve. It is also extremely important not to repress any "negative" feelings but to cop to them and get them out as they come up, thus clearing the way for the new. At the same time, however, we just keep our minds on the goal and realize we can change. Our personalities are merely constructs that have been created by us to help us survive. As children we learned to mold ourselves to gain maximum benefits and avoid hurt and punishment. These personality constructs are not us - we created them and if they have outlived their use we can change them. The old ways were a habit, a pattern. They took some years to solidify. We can learn to experience ourselves and our energies in new more fulfilling ways but it takes practice.

One way to begin this practice is with the following exercise. It takes a few minutes.

1. Get comfortable. Close your eyes. Breathe deeply, vitalized by the in-breath, relaxed by the out-breath.

2. Now think of how you wish the change. What do you wish to attain, to eliminate, to become? How do you want to be?

3. Look at what has prevented this. Just be aware of it and then put that knowledge aside.

4. Now suspend your doubt and imagine yourself already being the desired way. Feel how it feels to be this new way. How does your body feel? How do you feel? Imagine yourself going through your day in this new way. How does it change things? Be this way for 5 minutes.

5. Still with eyes closed, step out of this new way and resume your ordinary way of experiencing yourself. Feel the difference. Now return to the new way again. Compare. Go back and forth until you can switch at will.

6. Once more center in the new way. Relax and breathe deeply. Open your eyes and remain in this new way as you go on to your next activity.

Thus you will have learned to feel what the desired new quality feels like; to be in that space and then to compare it to your usual space. Now the trick is daily practice. Just 10 minutes a day is enough, or 5 in the am and 5 in the pm. Then begin to catch yourself when the old patterns and stresses take over and bring in the new quality to even things out. Put on the new act, be it self-love, relaxation, the ability to act with confidence or whatever. Thus practice begins to make it second nature and you will eventually own the new quality.

These are some very simple techniques. Once you become interested in this kind of transformation you can begin to seek out other

helpful approaches to further boost your growth. Even being around people who have the thing together that you're trying to get together is a good way to learn. The main thing is the desire to understand yourself and to evolve. It seems that once we truly with all our heart and soul want to change, doors open and change just begins to happen. Patterns may recur but with less and less force. When we're alert we can see them coming and use that opportunity to practice our new way.

It all seems so simple, though it is in-

deed work, rewarding work. This kind of approach brings the whole person to bear on the healing, working from the inside out. When we realize how powerful a force we are in creating our own health and harmony we will no longer fall prey to feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, feelings which by themselves can totally block the healing process. When we fully realize the enormous effect we have on our own bodies we begin to really want to take responsibility for our own health, both in achieving and in maintaining it. ♀



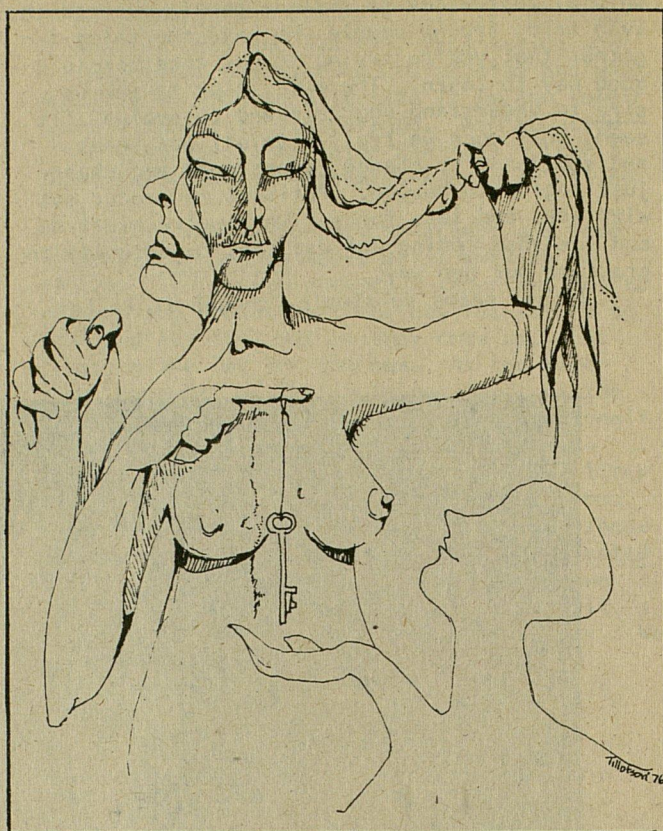
STRUGGLE FOR REBIRTH

It's been ten years since a now nameless shrink said to me, "Either you're going to jail or to the hospital." These words were the beginning of my career as a patient, one that took two years as an inmate and many years following as a drug addict and full time "sickie."

Small girl child; sick, frail, pale blond, migraines, eczema, too sick, too emotional, too difficult; and always off to the doctor. At age eight, an exploratory operation resulting in an ovarian section. The operation was disguised as an appendectomy until I was in my twenties for fear I couldn't handle it. "She can't handle it." My parents seemed to encourage illness and weakness; there were limitless rewards for a headache in my house. Simultaneously I was supposed to be pretty and popular. Do well, be smart, get good grades. And I wasn't developing right. Small, no periods or titties. As friends grew into puberty I stayed visually at age 10. Being in an immature body became torturous, padded bras, pretending, pretending -- so much embarrassment.

Somewhere growing up I began to hear a shadowy voice, coming from the grays lurking in the corner of the room, always low but audible sounds. "You're not doing good enough," "Watch it girl, I'm watching you." The voice distracted me with its accusation. I began defending me against me. Andrea was the one who went to school, walked from class to class with her friends and laughed. When she stayed home in bed she was Andy, preoccupied and exhausted by the judger who hated her. Enter the therapist -- vague recollections of his admonition, "You're in the major leagues," he said, and I now find out that's a euphemism for schizophrenia. From therapy, whisked to the college aptitude tests; often Andrea wouldn't come and I'd have to deal with Andy and the judger, and they didn't like to take those tests.

At home, my mother insisted my father loved me but all I could see was his love of money. As I got older, he began beating me to make me love him. I was supposed to be happy and knew that was bullshit. Remember the Principal reprimanding me for having black friends; "Stick to your own kind," he said, and I wondered who my kind was. I felt different and strange all the time. Slowly the Andrea one became more



passive and the Andy one surfaced. She began running; New York, Chicago, Michigan, New York, buses, planes, leave stuff, get stuff, get raped, starving, going fast, going too fast, can't talk to strangers, can't get off a bus once on, feeling dead inside. Eighth floor hotel in New York, cutting my wrists not to die but to see if I was alive, blood flowing was aliveness.

But I got caught -- went to the first of three hospitals; my parents said to their friends I had gone to the mountains.

That autumn I hung up my coat, put away my boots and wallet, and closed up like a clam for nine months on the 2nd floor locked ward. Barefoot, in a dress big enough to allow for my rapidly expanding body, I stayed on my bed, my world was patients and nurses and doctors and social workers and lots of drugs. I fought the hospital with non-co-operation, I stopped talking, didn't say "yes." "You were good to have fought the hospital so," my shrink told me some years later. I have little memory of the time except occasional flashes, T.V., People's Park, a cop in full riot gear, helmet, mace, on his knees yanking up marigolds and later committing murder, and I was locked up. Lost my sight, gained many pounds, couldn't shit or piss, more and more side effects from drugs and I thought they were from my being so sick. No privileges and I still hadn't talked.

One day late spring, staring outside through heavy screening, felt like I was seeing daylight for the first time in months. I wanted outside and began to say what they wanted me to. I would say yes to the shrink when he asked me if I had sexual fantasies about him.

"Yes, I dreamed I had your cock in my mouth" and I shortly got the Friday night to the movies with Jerry. I set my hair, asked my mother to get me a new dress, began crying and confessing to the nurses, took my meds without struggle, allowed myself to be tested and began to get "well." I developed a distasteful relationship with the OT because I knew they wanted me to be just like her, lovely married Jewish professional. I stopped talking politics, SDS, civil rights and began penis envy. I had to cop to penis envy and be **repentant** for homosexual fantasies; my relationship with Cynthia always suspect; mine with Al, encouraged. It was so hard. "Yes" to the once-called Mrs. Eichman, social worker, now her real name, Mrs. Bichinbaum -- for you a sweet, sweet smile. And how to survive in this wasteland? In the emptiness one learns to rise to the sound of keys walking down the hall, to want meds and feel like they are helping. Being institutionalized is being "upset" and "acting out" and how can you say, all I want is to get out of here. It's running away and getting picked up by the police and brought back to seclusion, a cell, a mattress on the floor, light on all the time. It's not being touched by anyone ever. And this is a therapeutic environment and here's where you get well. I said I was sick, I said I was sorry, so many times sorry; I said I'd be good. And they said we'll take two years from you and make you better. I went to the rehab center, pegs in holes, then a job straightening jewelry in a store, only the boss knew I was "crazy" and I couldn't tell anyone my address. And the getting out. My father went bankrupt and I had to leave. They said I wasn't well enough to be set free and encouraged a state hospital. "She'll kill herself as soon as she gets out" and I was put again in seclusion so as not to run away. But I was ready and pushed for a court case, my parents helped with non-complicity. I got out, against Medical Advice, without the stamp of sanity. "You're not gonna make it" they said in parting.

After hundreds of days locked up she's free, a scared woman, enough pills in her purse

for 100 suicides, a total dependency on the shrink who by this time is plaguing her with sexual innuendos and she's so lonely for a friend she can't stand it. And she can't think and wonders how she used to remember things and speak her mind. She's quiet now, reads cook books and she's very much into drugs. She's lonely, meets a man, gets married -- the shrink and husband shake hands; therapy over, she's cured. Still lonely, she has a baby, a second generation baby of a momma force-fed drugs; born with fingers and toes webbed and the momma thinks "Thank goodness that's all." She knew like women in Vietnam know -- our children are being poisoned by white men. Men have always feared our wombs and the power of birth. And the pills she took, stellazine, thorazine, prolixin -- they are money, they are power, they are death.

In giving up pills I began to no longer identify with sickness. My long struggle for rebirth was started. I went to live way back in the mountains with a bunch of wonderful people. The ranch became my first home. In the hospital I couldn't climb a flight of stairs, couldn't stop shaking, felt I was incapable of learning and that love would never come to me. Now I cut down trees, fix chain saws, make cheese, milk goats, do kids, make love -- I found my voice and I fit in so good. Being alone, walking high up on the ridges, naked in the late spring sun; that's Ahn!

I learned to celebrate my powers, celebrate my fantasies, and listen to my voices. We were burned as witches and now they say that doesn't happen. And how different is burning by fire than burning by electroshock? We have to learn to celebrate our daughters' puberty and our own psychic powers. If that had happened to me I need never have been sick. Instead of knowing the self-hater, instead of being the one who couldn't fit in, I could have learned to love the beauty of being me. The pressure to be what I wasn't was too excruciating; I assimilated a constant judgment that was never satisfied. I could never be good enough. Funny to say that now when I often feel like I can fly. ♀

This article was one of ten autobiographical statements we received for this issue. In each one, the writer expressed feelings that hospital experience was detrimental to her health.

WAPA (Women Against Psychiatric Assault) is a political action group open to all women who are opposed to forced psychiatric treatments and the ideology of mental illness. One of our projects is a support group for women ex-mental patients/prisoners. We can be contacted through:

WAPA c/o NAPA, 2150 Market St., San Francisco, Ca. 94114
phone (415) 626-6111 or:

WAPA c/o A Woman's Place Bookstore, 5251 Broadway, Oakland
Ca. 94618 phone (415) 654-9920.

Institutional Injustice In Rural America

It is difficult for me to believe that twelve years ago I was a completely dependent wife who thought the world would end if I could not save my marriage. I was also a high school dropout. Something snapped and I realized that it was the end for me. I could not take any additional beatings, I was sick of being a sex object and I was fed up with in-laws who only spoke to me when they wanted favors done. I walked out and never looked back.

There I was, six years later, still quite naive but confident that my Master's Degree combined with my commitment to do-gooding would assure me success in helping to change the lives of desperate, depressed persons. I became a feminist psychologist working in the country, especially interested in helping women. My father flew the coop when I was two and so did most of my uncles when their lives became burdened by the birth of children. It was the trapped, shattered women men such as they left with responsibility but few resources, and the children of these parents who would get the mixed messages of love and resentment from their mothers, that I was concerned with.

My first position was at a state school and hospital. It was a "captive collective" of females of childbearing age. In other words, an isolated village for females who had been expelled from their home communities. Occasionally their offenses included homicide or burglary, but most of the time the records revealed that their sin was that they or someone else had discovered their clitoris and it was decided that institutionalization was an excellent way to practice birth control.

These girls and women aged 11 to 63 had usually been labeled incompetent in order to make the process legal, but it did not take long to discover that hundreds of them were neither insane nor were they feeble-minded. I looked forward to going in to work each day as it was

interesting to share their hopes and dreams, but it was sad to be able to offer them so little comfort and to realize that their rights and freedoms had been denied on such biased grounds. Most of them wanted to return to the community. Usually, the community did not want them. Some were victims of incest: the brothers, fathers and grandfathers who had betrayed them were still in the community. It was Eve's fault -- she tempted me.

Over 200 of them were blacks from a city over 150 miles away. The geography of the institution (smack in the middle of lily white rural America) guaranteed that they could be immediately identified if they ran away. I have been told that not too many years before I worked there all of the girls' heads had been shaved in order to limit their ability to escape.

I am still haunted by the face of one beautiful black girl. She had been married. One day upon returning home from grocery shopping she found her infant son dead in his crib. Her husband who was supposed to watch the child was gone. She was accused, but never convicted, of the murder. Instead, the judge sent her to us. At the end of three years we were convinced that her story was true and that her husband was the killer. However, no attempt was made to locate him and our attempts to reunite her with her mother were futile. Her mother loved and wanted her but the community did not and she was given two choices: accept life at the hospital or face murder charges in a hostile community. She was still at the institution when I left.

Another woman who had been there for more than half of her odd years also might have been doomed to a life of "slavery" if I had not been able to enlist the aid of an influential University professor to back up my protests. She

was successfully employed in the community and had been for years, but was given very low wages, was not permitted to seek other employment and was still on probationary status, although the usual procedure was to discharge after one year of successful community placement. Finally after much investigation on my part I was able to piece together the following story. She had been sent to the institution as a beautiful teenager following complaints by her mother that she was having difficulty controlling her behavior. Shortly after her admission one of the employees who lived on the grounds discovered another very highly placed staff member in bed with her. The employee who was caught went on to professional work elsewhere, but it was decided that she should never be given a complete release for fear she might talk. We won that one.

Since our population was all female, we naturally had lesbianism. In fact, some of the girls had been committed for "perverse" sexual behavior. One of the joys of being a night attendant was that one could sneak up, observe, and report upon sexual relations. The voyeur was further rewarded by seeing the offender placed in isolation, often stripped of her clothing and other privileges.

Runaways and suicide attempts were common. Sometimes they were successful, but more often than not they just resulted in complicating the inmates' problems. One girl broke her back when she jumped from the roof of a building. The only way for a woman to escape without money or clothing unfortunately was and usually still is on the coattails of a man. Women have not learned to love, trust and recognize each other in emergency situations, but one can readily find a man who recognizes a desperate female and will provide a bed (with him in it) and a few meals until he gets bored and goes on to something new.

As a result, most of our runaways bargained with their bodies. First would be the truck drivers or salesmen who often slowed down when they passed by knowing full well who the captives were and what they would pay for a lift. I say young women, because by the time our women reached thirty five they were usually too burnt out to run away anymore.

Most of the runaways were soon dropped off and picked up by police who returned them to the institution. Often they were pregnant. They were pressured into giving their babies up for adoption. A very high and cruel price to pay for several hours or days of freedom.

I eventually left these institutionalized women to work at a psychiatric clinic, hoping to reach women before they got locked up. I found myself in a very patriarchal little clinic. My male colleagues had first choice in selecting the patients they wanted to work with and the last word in deciding how cases would be handled. They gave me only the shit cases to work with and I was just banging my head against a wall trying to change their attitudes about women. The one other woman on the staff was elderly, sick and only worked about six months during the

two and one half year period that I spent there.

Whenever the staff proposed that a young girl having lost her virginity should be sent away, I tried to point out their prejudices. They seldom even showed any interest in interviewing her sexual partner unless marriage was proposed. In all of my years of study and practice I have yet to hear of a young man being banished from the community simply for having intercourse with a female of consenting age. Rapists are more tolerated than unwed mothers in many instances.

The usual consensus at that clinic was that if a woman was unhappy with her husband she was psychoneurotic; if it was her second marriage she probably had a character disorder; if she had more than one lover she was a nymphomaniac or had such poor judgment that she should be considered incompetent; if she masturbated she was obsessive compulsive; if she turned to another woman for comfort she of course was schizophrenic; if she tried to go it alone she was a schizoid personality.

I suppose I am exaggerating just a little, but I think you get what I mean. I left the clinic for an administrative position, hoping to implement my ideas more effectively than I had been, but I found myself hamstrung by a bureaucracy that devoted the majority of its energy to paperwork and administration, not to the people for whom it was created. So I took a 40% cut in pay and here I am working as a consultant, evaluator and counselor. Our new director (male of course) recently arrived from one of those nations where the women still walk two steps behind their husbands. Do I feel effective? Draw your own conclusions.

Just remember one thing. Many of your sisters are in prisons, schools for the retarded and mental hospitals not because of their behavior, but because of their biology. If they had been born with a penis instead of a clitoris, society would tolerate their acting -- in fact would encourage them to act -- curious, adventuresome, experimental and aggressive. I cannot speak for city agencies, but rural agencies, at least in my experience, are still using the double standard.

When you read those statistics that claim more women than men are neurotic, take heart in the fact that diagnostic labels have been mainly developed by men, for use by other men or by women who have been taught by men and may currently be obtaining supervision from men.

If you have problems that require a psychiatrist or psychologist be sure to ascertain information about their philosophy before discussing your problems. Lists of feminist therapists are available and no legitimate professional person will refuse to answer reasonable inquiries you may have regarding their lifestyle, training and whether they will be working independently on solving your problems or with another individual. Also, it is my firm opinion and that of many others including some pretty liberal swingers that if your therapist becomes sexually involved with you, she or he is probably not concentrating on solving your problems. In fact, you may be the victim of a rip-off. ♀

Midnight Lake

Always remember this lake, moveless in moonlight,
Tranced under the white full moon,
Hushed air startled by the mouse-quiet bat's flight,
Hushed water frightened by the loon.

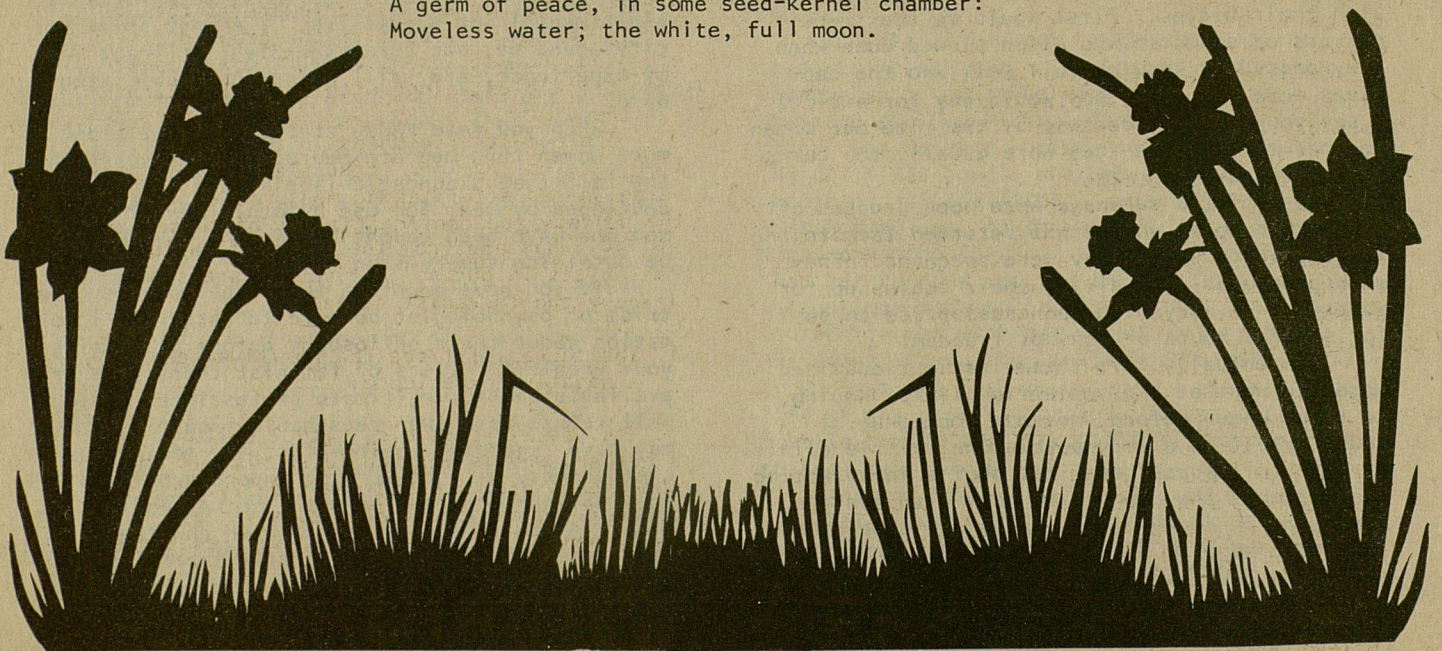
Remember the owl killing without anger
Stealing no calm from the lake,
Leaping fish, though they leap the threat of danger,
Caught in a peace they cannot break.

Remember this lake, remember the marvel
Of the million million years
The cedars' shadow, moon-changing, eternal,
Has cooled the shore where the rock wears.

Remember though you may not hold the tranquil
Tranced hour, too small for the sublime
Echo of peace struck from eternity's anvil
And the lake's wide curve of time --

When you are on the hurried highway, running
To a more strident, swifter clock,
Quickened to the hard-cruel market cunning,
The fevers of the flock;

Though you have left this lake of calm, remember:
Plant it deeper than your life's noon,
A germ of peace, in some seed-kernel chamber:
Moveless water; the white, full moon.



- Can new therapeutic models based on feminist goals and equalitarian techniques lead to faster and more important psychological change?

- Alternatively, is the traditional therapeutic model still valuable and necessary, requiring only a deeper understanding of woman's problems?

A Statement on Feminist Therapy

Our group has been wrestling with these questions for most of this year. Though we consider ourselves **feminists**, we have explored a number of schools and approaches which do not address themselves directly to **feminist** issues, and we have discovered elements which we both retain and reject. At the same time, we have attempted to distill and clarify the influences which our individual feminist perspectives have brought to bear on our work.

We find that we do not totally reject the traditional model. Like traditional therapists, we "listen with the third ear" for overt and covert messages; we pay attention to language, themes, and the ebb and flow of anxiety; we try to bring into awareness that which has become repressed, disowned, or distorted; we make use of transference feelings to help separate the past from the present.

At the same time, we find ourselves listening with a fourth ear, the feminist ear. We realize that our own feminism does influence the issues we respond to, the way we might interpret or pass over comments our clients may make, and often the way we feel about our clients. We acknowledge that like all therapists of any persuasion we do have certain values, and that these play a part in what goes on in the therapy hour. Through sharing within our counseling collective, we come to a clearer understanding of what those values are and how they influence our work.

What we present at this writing is work in progress. What we have chosen to address is the theme of power, a theme which has arisen consistently throughout our discussions.

When the concept of power arose in our group our first associations were to words like domination, control, authority, and coercion. We had all been on the receiving end of that kind of power and had experienced the feelings associated with it -- impotence, helplessness, worthlessness, lack of confidence, and lack of self-esteem.

As we explored this theme we saw that we well knew how passive means could be used to achieve power - ranging from diplomacy to

seduction. But what about the active sense of power? Recently women have come to know about the power of sisterhood, the power of healthy resistance, the power of endurance, the power of group rejection of certain cultural values.

As we thought of this, new associations to the word power began to emerge in our group: potency, competence, efficacy, mastery, and responsibility - and with these we feel more hopeful. We begin to ask, how can power be redistributed in the therapeutic relationship and how can we help put a client in touch with her own individual powers? As therapists we want to grapple with the issue of power, because people come to us in search of our capacity, or power to help them.

In our collective, sharing critical incidents in our work and in our personal lives has been our technique for exploring our assumptions. From these incidents we have derived some "principles" by which we sense power is shifted and/or equalized in the therapeutic relationship. We know that they do not illustrate any "new" or unusual techniques, but they are our attempts to call forth, inform, and confirm the growing, emerging, potent woman. We will now present some principles, along with cases illustrating them.

The moments recounted in these simplified versions of long interrelationships are being shared after taking measures to insure the privacy and confidentiality of those involved. They are from the cases of various therapists in our collective and are summarized by the therapist herself.

1. The therapist finds the positive seed in a negative experience.

G. is 27 years old, with 2 children and a husband who is very childish himself and who treats her with extreme cruelty. He is controlling and physically abusive, and verbally annihilates what little self-esteem she has. Her mother, sister, friends, etc., keep telling her to get out of the marriage. She knows the situation is bad, but is unable to leave. I felt that it was important to help

her see where he is indeed wrong, to understand how she contributes to the interaction, but also to encourage her to stand up for herself and to acknowledge her power to do so. In spite of this, the problems continued, the neurotic behavior persisted, and it was clear that the environment would not change. She apparently did not have the strength to change herself or her situation at the moment. One day I said, "You know, you have a great deal of strength to hold a marriage and family together the way you have." Her eyes brightened, and she said, "I know, and no one has ever recognized it." From this point on she has slowly taken steps to enlarge her world and to be more open with me about her own pain and confusion. It is my sense that the power and respect awarded her at this moment gave her the courage to accept and acknowledge her weaknesses and pain, and to trust in the therapeutic relationship.

2. The therapist acknowledges the client's strengths as well as weaknesses.

K. first contacted me following her third suicide attempt. She was about to be released from the psychiatric wing of a local hospital. She had refused to return to her previous therapist, and was told she could not leave the hospital until she had found a new therapist. Her marriage was disintegrating, and she was depressed and anxious. She brought with her all of the labels which had been applied to her by previous therapists, her husband, and her parents: that she was weak, incompetent, an unfit mother, inadequate, too dependent, etc.. Physically she was disheveled, depressed, and trembling. As she told her story I was struck by her ability to fight back, to absorb her husband's rejection, to go down so far but to keep trying to withstand the criticism by others of how she handled her children and yet to deal with them from the heart. I found myself in awe of this woman who had been through so much and was still trying. As the session ended, I remarked, "You know, underneath all this I think you're pretty tough." Her response at the time was, "Well, maybe, but will you be here if I need you?" I reassured her that I would. Later she told me that that had been a real turning point for her, to realize that someone believed in her. She continued to grow stronger, divorced her husband, separated herself from her family's influence, and is currently trying to organize support groups in a small, conservative midwestern town.

3. The therapist is willing to give immediate tools for dealing with a behavioral problem before searching with the client for the reasons for that dysfunctional behavior.

Ann, a 28 year old married white woman and mother of two exuberant sons, ages 3 and

5, sought out counselling because of feelings of severe depression, accompanied by suicidal thinking. She felt that she was "going downhill" because of her intense dissatisfaction with her marriage and her inability to control her anger with her children, which led to physical and verbal abusiveness. "To tell you the truth," she said, "I may be too far gone for a counselor."

Of all these problems, the one that Ann could label as the one for which she needed immediate relief was her abusiveness toward the children. "I feel like a freak for carrying on with the kids like I do. But they mess up all the time and always want something. They make me so mad!" she said.

In order to reassure her that she was not really so different from most mothers with small children, I did some personal sharing. I told her that my children had made me so angry at times that I had the world's worst thoughts about them and what I could do to them. However, thoughts were not deeds. We could begin, together, to help her check her anger so that she would not lose control with them.

First, I gave her my phone number. I explained that as soon as she felt herself losing control with one or both of the children, she should stop in her tracks and call my number. My hope was that by diverting her attention and refocusing herself on a different activity, the rage would dissipate and the situation which provoked the anger might change slightly in the interim.

Further, by making myself more accessible, I was offering her additional support at a difficult time for her and a potentially dangerous time for the children.

Second, I suggested that she construct a punching bag out of simple materials, something the boys could use as well as Ann, as an outlet for anger and energy. She accepted these suggestions, subsequently implemented them and reported the following week that she had found relief. With the pressure off, we were able to explore the underlying causes and meaning of her anger, and to explore further solutions.

4. The therapist with a feminist perspective is aware of and honest about the unique influences of culture and society on women today.

B. is eighteen years old, a divorced mother of two. Before her divorce, she had pressed charges of assault and battery against her husband on several occasions. She always ended up dropping the charges, feeling that the beatings she was receiving were somehow

her fault and that, because of the children, the marriage relationship should be maintained.

Finally she went through with the divorce and began taking many positive, self-affirming steps, such as enrolling in a basic education course and involving herself and her children

Cont.

in a behavior modification program. When she returned to court, it was with a sense of having been wronged and a determination to be heard in order that her ex-husband be prevented from further brutality. In court, it became obvious that the court officials were not ready to bring her ex-husband to trial, justifying their hesitancy to take action by citing that she had previously backed down. She left court feeling crushed and powerless.

We examined together the attitudes and values she had experienced, and she began to realize how easy it was for her to believe that she had "asked for it". She expressed frustration that the court officials could not understand the situation from a woman's point of view; she felt as hopeless and powerless as she had felt in her marriage. We examined how she could use what little leverage the court had left her to her advantage, without being intimidated by the seemingly condemning manner of most of the officials. (Her probation officer had said to call whenever her husband harassed her, and now she does, much to his consternation.)

She began to talk about other women she knew who were physically abused by their husbands and how isolated and therefore helpless they are. We talked about ways of reaching these women without endangering them, so that they might learn, as she had, that it is not their lot in life to be beaten and imprisoned by a husband or boyfriend.

She understands more fully now how the culture around her, and the institutions which perpetuate that culture, help to foster her weakness and indecisiveness; and she is struggling to nourish instead her newfound sense of potency by challenging what she once might have accepted and by helping other women in her situation to recognize that they have the power to do the same.

The Cases just presented are only a few of the many discussed in our collective, in many stages of development. A few more of the "principles" we found ourselves illustrating in this exploration are:

5. The therapist allows herself to be affected by and to share her reactions with the client.
6. The therapist encourages the client to take risks and implement change.
7. The therapist validates the client's experience in order to help her/him test reality. (this is especially relevant in connection with a feminist view of "reality.")

All of these examples highlight moments when the locus of power seems either to be in the relationship created in the present, or when the therapist taps a sense of power in the client.

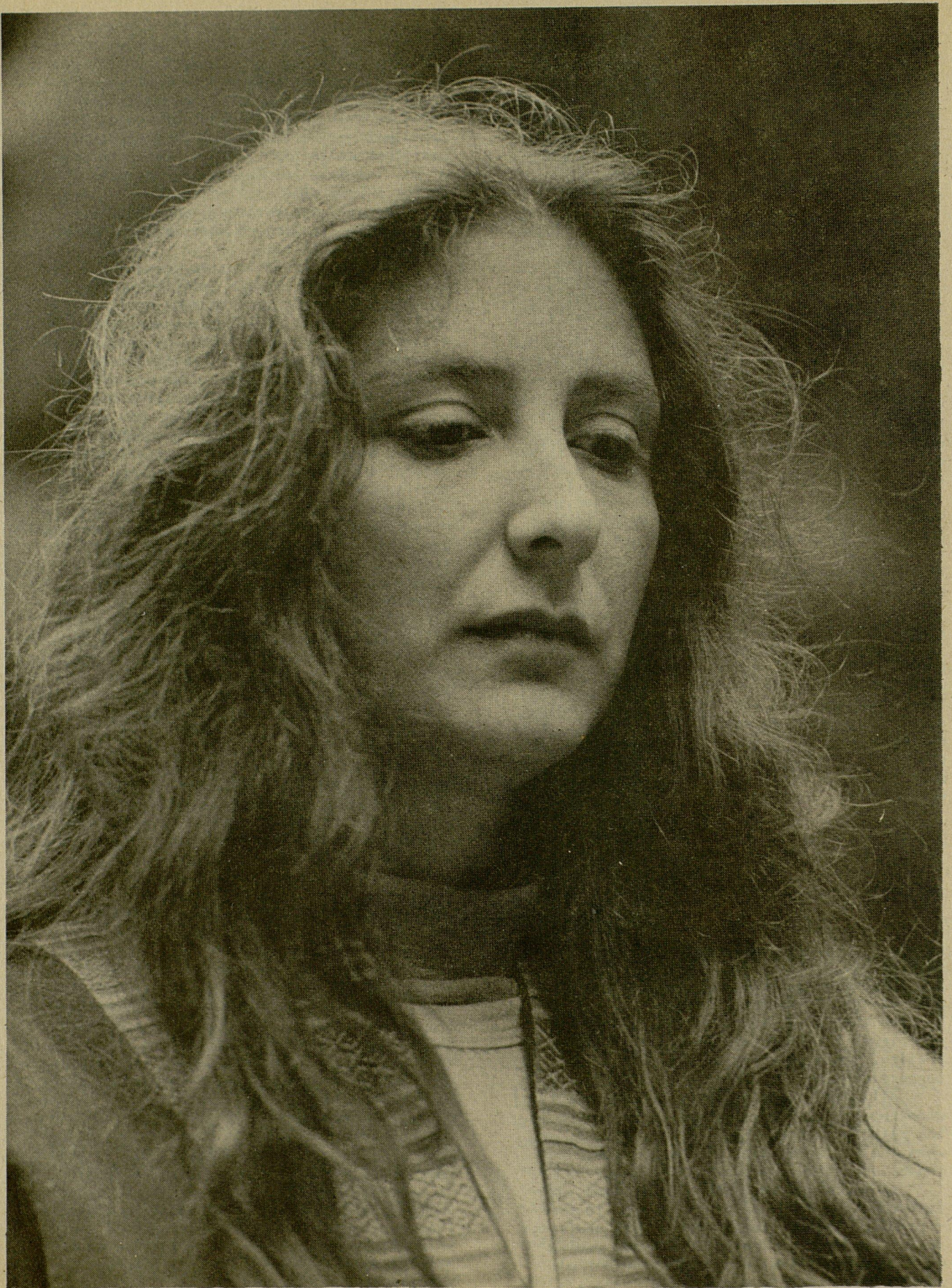
In reviewing the initial questions, we feel that the first will be answered in time - that is, as more female therapists challenge the current definition of health and evolve more ways of affirming a woman's potential, we can begin to assess our effectiveness

through our clients' growth. As far as the second question is concerned, we have difficulty with the use of the word "only", concerning a "deeper understanding of woman's problems." Woman's problems are not unrelated to what society thinks of women. The fact that we just might have some control over that definition is a new thing to most of us. The data are hardly in, nor will they be for a long time. It is difficult to imagine any therapist who seriously undertakes a deeper understanding of woman's problems not becoming a feminist.

The therapist holds, is granted, or assumes the authority to describe or label a any given behavior, attitude or feeling as healthy or neurotic. All of us are familiar with the nonsense perpetrated by sexual stereotyping in the mental health field. To the extent that such attitudes grow out of the "traditional" model, we must reject that model. Our client's bad feelings may well originate from a neurotic misperception - but may also be a reaction to an all too clear perception of a stultifying and crippling reality.

On the other hand, there is a danger inherent in a model which ascribes all feelings and behaviors to the influence of sex-role stereotyping. This robs the individual client of her unique experience and the adventure of coming to terms with her life as she sees best. We need to let the client know that her experiences are personal as well as shared, in such a way that she feels personally validated - not merely a piece of flotsam on the seas of socialization. Our goal is to help her become the author of her life.

In conclusion, we would like to say a few words about our collective. We think of the collective as a unique continuation of our training - unique because as women who are coming to claim and value our being, we are both teacher and student. The textbook has not been written. We are the source material. Here is a place to share our experiences, doubts and triumphs. Through sharing we learn new perspectives and gain support for taking risks in our work. Through sharing we come to see ourselves in each other and can be both observer and subject. We begin to see how we've internalized the cultural definitions of woman and even the way we distort new information which challenges it. Understanding and appreciating the conditions which shape a pattern of behavior, however, is not sufficient. As therapists we know how long after insights old patterns hang on. It is one thing to say - "No, I don't want these stereotypes" - it is another to begin to value our being female. To be part of a feminist community is especially important in a society (and in a professions) where the male experience is the norm. Above all, the collective helps us remain open to change and growth in ourselves as well as our clients. ♀



Edith Dying

though dying, they expect her to play out her role
family peacemaker: provide Sylvia emotional support
gentle Florrie's caustic tongue; and Herbie?
don't know what her function is with him
the youngest. He won't visit
calling this a deathbed vigil

death frightens Dad who spends as little time
as possible. Here physically, he's emotionally
in flight. "Optimistic," that's his word
as he refuses to believe she's dying

I flew in thinking there'd be something
she might want to say, to voice her fears
or leave an only daughter some last words.
Perhaps I was too late.
When ill she's simply ill, wiped out
when well she says Don't pick your face
or Why are you so hostile? same as ever
I take comfort in familiarity

what did I expect?
some recognition, dignity in death. Wrong.
Instead, as if by pact, they all say nothing
act as if what's happening will go away
and life resume much as before

Mother is the first of her generation to die
Sylvia goes on about her life, edged with
incipient recriminations; Florrie's soft
and blurred with tears; Herbie absent
Dad blandly sure a cure will be discovered
I am pragmatic, capable, and younger. I do
what I can to comfort them, do what I can
that must be done, feel myself moving
into a new role: my mother's daughter

at night we all go home
eat dinner, watch TV or call our friends
while Mother remains in hospital alone
with a body that betrays her, and
thoughts unshared now at the end
they say she's not dead yet
but surely this is death

What my friends said as

ROGER (letters from Provincetown)

I wish your mother a happy death.
I suppose such a thing is not possible.
I can't imagine it anyway except as an escape from pain.
I hope all goes well with you, though I don't see
how that is possible either.
I'm not ready for the summer to end, but end it has.
I wish I could think of something to say
but it sounds like a horrible ordeal
with no consolations or reprieve but the end.

LYNNE (letters from Australia)

Darling, I was shocked to learn of your mother's condition. What can I say, I feel terrible for you. Wish that I were there. The only time I was closely involved with someone with cancer was with Pepi, Fatima's daughter. It was discovered that Pepi had a sore place like a bee sting on her leg which did not go away, so she was taken for Xrays. Xrays revealed that her thighbone was completely eaten through with cancer. They couldn't understand how she had continued to walk around on it. We went with Fatima to the hospital. Pepi was in a wheelchair with red lines drawn across the leg. Within a week they had amputated it up to the hip. During her recovery and subsequent examinations in the hospital it was discovered that she had it in both lungs. She was treated with radiation therapy which had all the dreadful side effects that one hears about and seems to me as bad as the disease itself. She died about 9 months from point of discovery, she was ten years old. It was a very fast process and absolutely awful. Pepi tried to make it easy for Fatima. We were all there at Christmas, she gave everyone presents and said Mother, don't be unhappy when I am gone. She died less than a month later. Fatima was crazed with grief and tried to kill herself and wound up in Bellevue. I so hope the chemotherapy will be more gentle than radiation and if the disease does not take a reversal trend and stop itself that it is very speedy. That is the best one can hope for.

You seem quite naturally totally consumed by your mother's illness and the events surrounding it, the emotional and physical demands. I would like to wrap you in my arms and let our vibrations talk because words are not enough. So glad that you are finding your strength in the midst of turmoil. I think I know what you mean about your mother's impending death causing an irrevocable change in your attitude towards life. However, won't that change too, fade a bit and become a trace of sadness lodged in a cell somewhere in your mind, which isn't really anything more than a general appreciation of the conditions of life. We are all alone, as you say, and have to face that.

Darling one, summer is over. I know exactly how you must be feeling, not sleeping, anxiety dreams, exhaustion, lack of appetite. I don't know what to say, nothing seems ~~adequate~~. Sometimes I dream about it, you and your mother. I know it is terribly hard and painful. There is some part of you which is unique. Only your mother can affirm that part of you, so of course you feel the loss now. You know that people die in degrees, it doesn't just happen in minutes, no doubt the whole process of dying is occupying all her strength and courage and prevents those loving vibrations from getting through to you in the way you are accustomed. The final irony is that with family you suffer personal invalidation to some extent when they are around and the same when they are gone.

I had a dream the other night that I was dying of cancer and the dream was all about coping with my own death. I was forced to spend more energy on supporting other people's fantasies than on my own recovery--which seemed hopeless anyway. Most of the dream was made up of your expressed feelings about your mother and in the midst of the dream it became clear that I was really your mother and you and not myself at all. It was strange and somehow very real. I woke up.

Darling, I'm so sorry. Went through a week of nightmares about your mother. Your letter with details of her death and your own feelings really moved in on me. You sound as if you are coping very well. Surely the passivity you speak of is the result of a prolonged period of emotional turmoil, and is to be expected. Don't rush into anything, give yourself time. I've planted the tree for your mum. Much love.

mother lay dying and dead

PAM (letter from California)

I don't know what to say except share from here what I can --- want to know how you are --- send much love and care and can't remember your mother's name. Touching you.

JUDY

Remember in Fellini's 8 1/2
where the hero is at his parents' grave
he says Don't go father
not yet, I'm not ready
there are so many questions
we never really talked.
That says it all

SYLVIA

I played that game. It sucks.
I hope for your sake
you didn't go through all that shit:
eat this, take your pill, this will help.
She knew of course; I'll never forgive myself.
When my mother died she had to be
manually cleaned out. They were going to operate
but by the time they opened her up
it was too late. They were surprised
the cancer had already spread all over
she was full of it, there was nothing to do
so they just closed her up again
but ruined her rectum. After that
I had to clean her out with my finger every day
I wore a glove but it was awful, I had her here
2 months, I couldn't stand it: the kids were little then
My brother in Pennsylvania was pressuring me
finally I took her down there
he said he'd have a lot of help: of course he didn't
That trip was something else
ambulance to the plane, stretcher
up the ramp, ambulance the other end
the whole works. In two weeks she was dead
They didn't call me till it was over
I regret that
it's not that I don't understand
I don't blame them: how could they have known
until she was in a coma, and then it was too late
No, I'm not really sorry to have missed it
there was no point my being there
Still, I should have had the choice

ANNE (my landlady in London)

Jane Dear, I have not been very well. My nephew came and took me back with him for a couple of weeks. My Aunt has been playing up quite a bit again, I keep an eye on her. I am very sorry to hear you lost your dear Mother. You have got my sincere sympathy, God bless you both. Would you like to come back? You know dear I told you when you left you could always come here. Do hope you are not having too bad a time out there. I have a friend of mine taken to hospital rather quick, we do not know what is wrong with her yet until they get the results of the xrays. She has it in her mind it is cancer. We really hope it is not so. ♀

spirited healing

By uniting our thoughts, we more than multiply the quality and quantity of energy available to us. Our healing collective has been meeting since May, and has been experiencing a reaching out into group consciousness. Our concepts of health are wholistic; rather than treating a specific ailment or dis-ease in the body or mind, we try to understand what is causing the disharmony. We have found that the best way to encourage self-healing, which is ultimately the only type of healing, is to raise the energy level of the person. This can be done physically through massage, diet, singing, dancing, laughing, hugging or just touching; mentally, by surrounding the person with love, light and other thoughts which will help create the reality the person is seeking; and spiritually, by opening ourselves up as channels and allowing the cosmic healing energy which surrounds us all to flow through us to those who need it.

Some of us had individually been studying healing for the last few years. It was a major step to realize that we did not have to reach outside of our own community to share our consciousness of health, that we could ourselves become the healing group we were each seeking. At our first meeting 6 people showed up. We meditated, shared foot massages, ate nettles, and enjoyed the spring sun. During our next few meetings we did a lot of physical activities - massage, a sweat lodge, clay packs from the river and yoga. Although we struggled with the form our meetings would take (to plan or not to plan, to have a leader or not) we did agree that a sense of commitment was vital to develop continuity and help integrate us.

After several months, we felt the need for more structure in the group, something that would renew our enthusiasm each week. We decided to take turns leading the group, choosing a different topic each week and showing how it related to the process of healing. Through sharing our experiences, knowledge, innermost thoughts and even our dreams we grew closer. We moved out of the physical plane into more etheric realms, exploring color, sound, auras, past lives, dreams and visualizations. For many of us these explorations are very new and it was necessary to let go of our sense of limitations and our own cynicism.

We spent one meeting trying to see and feel auras. One person sat against a dark background in a mostly darkened room with the only light source being directly opposite her. The rest of us tried to just look and be open. To our delight and to the surprise of those of us who always feel blocked in "psychic" realms, many of us perceived energy around her body. It was very supportive to discover we

all saw similar energy patterns surrounding her. We then paired off and tried to feel the energy around each other's bodies. Again, by allowing ourselves to be open to the exploration, we were all able to feel the energy around our friends.

A number of times we have talked about the use of color and healing and have made attempts at transmitting and receiving colors. In this exercise we usually pair off and have one person "send" out a color image and the other person try to "receive" it, or we've had one person transmit and then the rest of the group receiving. Another time we wrapped up a few dozen colored objects in newspaper and tried to see if we could receive the color. These experiments were enlightening in their results: we were often able to pick up a color when it was being transmitted by a person, and much less often when trying to receive it from an object. It was a clear affirmation for us of the power of directed thought. We are beginning to share our dreams and more and more often are appearing in each other's dreams.

One important discovery we've made as a group is that joy and laughter are a main part of our healing process. Sitting together sharing songs, we often feel bathed in pure joy. We realized that we don't always have to be serious, and usually we wind up doing whatever "feels good".

It's been interesting and insightful to watch the progression of our group consciousness, to see how our uniquely individual personalities merge to form one mind. This is felt most strongly during our meditations.

One member writes, "For me, the most important part of the work we do is our group meditation, and I would like to share some of that experience. We sit in a circle, close our eyes, breathe slowly and attempt to clear our minds and consciousnesses. During these meditations I sometimes feel a physical current of energy or electricity flowing through our hands. There is a sensation of floating outside of or above my body - all of us floating and flowing together. Sometimes I feel my consciousness of myself as a separate being disappear and am absorbed into vibrational integration. These times I believe are when the cosmic energy flows through us the strongest and healing and channeling of this energy happens easily. We take time to direct energy to those beings, things and places we feel are in need of healing."

Another member adds: "This weaving of ourselves usually brings us to a place of smiles and wellbeingness, but most of all instills a sense of oneness. Personality differences give way temporarily to a pulsating, flowing

feeling of love with each other that seems to extend itself in every direction, not unlike a star."

At some point during our circle we affirm who we are and what we want to do. Affirmations are an excellent way to concretize vague thoughts and hopes. We keep a notebook in the center of the circle containing names of people, places and things in need of cosmic healing energy. We also maintain a journal, which helps new members see where we've been and the direction we're headed. The journal keeps a record of our growth and development.

Many other activities have sprung from our weekly meditations and meetings. First it was necessary to find a place to meet when the weather didn't permit us to meet outside. A room was found, a stove installed, pictures hung and a massage table put in. The opening ceremony included a blessing for the room, lots of singing, and a sharing of delicious home baked cheese bread and fresh squeezed

apple juice. Since then, a library has been created for us to share our books with anyone who is interested. Twice we visited a local hospital (once to bring wildflowers and melons, and once to sing Christmas carols). On Tuesday nights we cook dinner at the community center, allowing us to keep the group energy flowing in another environment. We are trying to remain conscious of bringing our love and good vibrations into the world in a concrete manner.

One of the most positive things that has come out of the group has been our supportiveness for each other. By encouraging each other in a loving manner, we are able to open our hearts more to ourselves and to others. The weekly meetings are times for us to recharge our energy storage batteries. The fact that our collective mind has become a tangible reality strengthens our belief that thought creates form and that we are what we think we are. ♀



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IMAGES OF HEALTH

September 3

Met with a group of friends to talk about health. By the end of the evening I felt depressed. The women there seemed so unquestionably committed to being healthy. I am ambivalent to say the least. "Healthy" is being thin, tall and athletic, none of which I am. It means being like Esther and jogging miles every day, or doing yoga. It means watchfully eating food that is good for you, and lovingly caring for your physical form. There is no way I can fit this image of health. Can you be healthy and fat? I don't know. Health is a big finger pointing at me and telling me I'm BAD. I feel angry because I don't want to be committed to trying to be something that I can't. Health seems like a "should", a "have to". What could be worse than a feminist not taking care of herself?

There is an image of myself which I try to drown. It is a mesomorphic personality. A slow, bovine, uncreative, animalistic creature that lumbers around in an energyless state. She is lifeless and unappealing, boring and bored. She chases after me saying I am you. I run. I run as fast as I can. I do what ever I can to keep busy so she can't catch me. When I stop for too long she's at my back holding up a mirror and all I can see is her. Though I have killed her many times she resurfaces. I hate her and am terrified of her ruthless mirror.

September 5

I do a co-counseling session with Diane. "I hate health," I scream. "Fuck health. I don't want to be healthy in their terms."

Diane: Who's them?

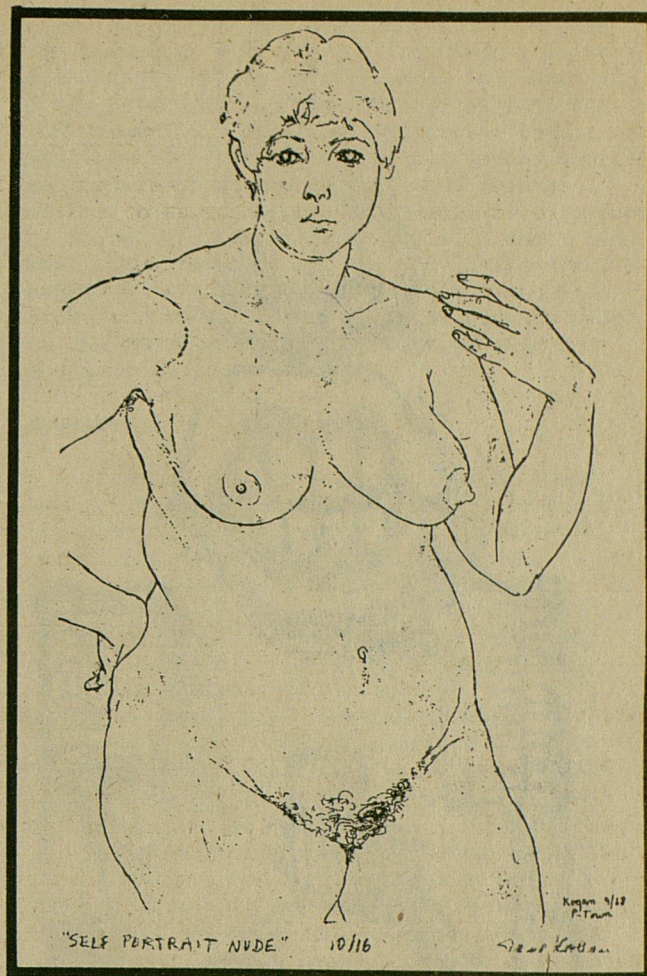
Rene: Everybody, the whole goddam world that tells me what I should eat, what I should do, how I should brush my teeth, how I should look. I hate them. I refuse to let them make me feel bad about myself.

Diane: Reverse it. Tell me how healthy you are.

Rene: I am very healthy. I really enjoy and appreciate my health. I take excellent care of my body.

Diane: Tell me the parts of your body that are healthy.

Rene: My feet are healthy. My legs are healthy. They carry me around and take me to where I want to go. My back is healthy. My vagina is healthy. My arms are strong and healthy. My mind is quick, sensitive and healthy. My hair and eyes radiate health. (As I am telling her these things I feel better and better about myself. More like I want to be healthy. It becomes a possibility that I could achieve.)



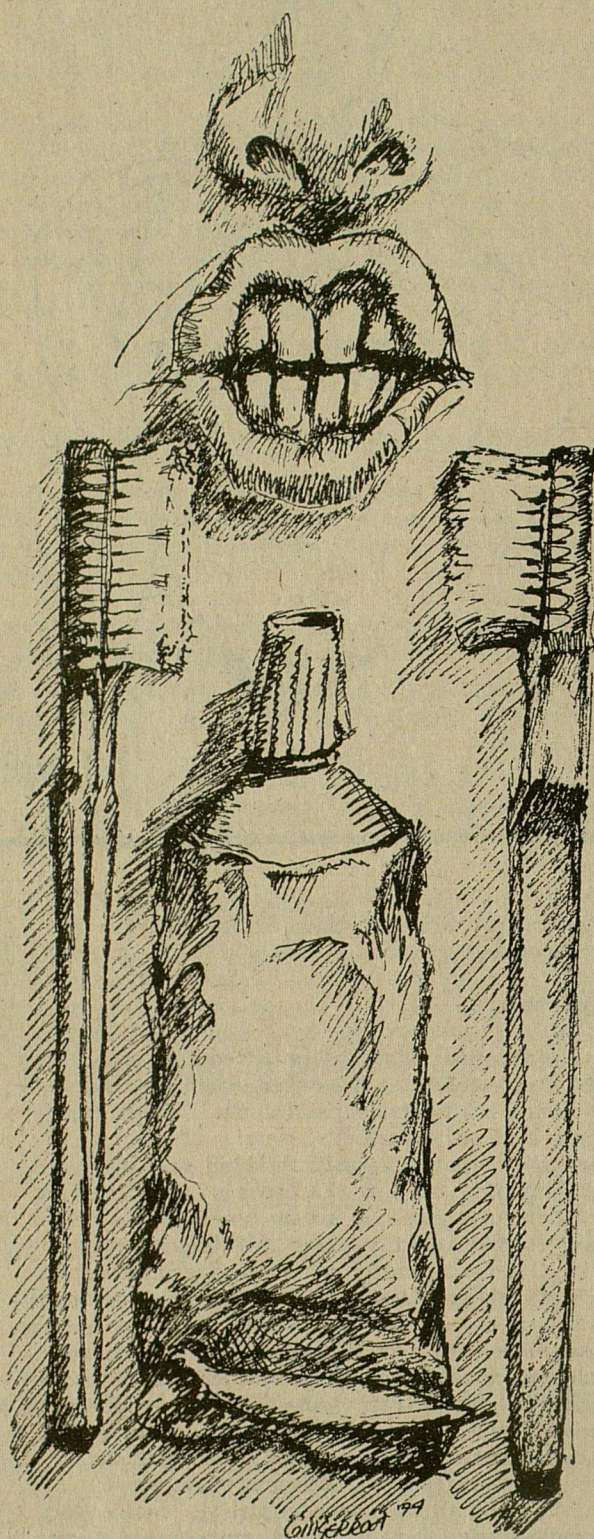
Diane: You are healthy. I can see your healthy energy.

September 15

Inspired by a vision of health, for the last two weeks I have tried each morning to be aware of my eating patterns. To eat sensibly and only when I'm hungry. Sounds healthy. I watch myself failing each day, turning off, as I fail. Losing consciousness as that hand goes up to my mouth again and I know it shouldn't. I feel willing to recognize the fact that I am often in pain because of self consciousness about my body. I can't walk across a room of friends without feeling awkward and silently judged. I imagine the judgment to be that my body reflects a sloppy uncontrolled spirit. I have chosen these last three years to not deal directly with this pain because I didn't want to accept patriarchal standards of health or beauty; I didn't want to validate and give them power. Nevertheless, internalized oppression hurts too, and I feel ready to face the compulsion that has so much control over me and causes me such pain. I am tired of hiding and want control of my life.

I am ashamed of my "bad health habits". Flash back to first grade report card. Ex-

Cont.



cellent in everything - but unsatisfactory in habits of good health. I carry an image of myself as dirty. Why don't I want to take care of myself? My "self" being my physical body. I take care of my psyche. I take care of my economics. I take care of my environment. I don't brush my teeth. I have been told by dentists since I was 7 that if I don't brush and floss my teeth they will fall out. I believe them. I don't want my teeth to fall out, but . . . I take a bath once a week when I wash my hair. It is a good thing that I really like clean hair because I don't really relate to and am not disturbed by a mildly dirty body except that I am afraid that it is considered anti-social. People who bathe everyday make me feel paranoid and unclean. I wash because I know I should, and I can't accept a concept of myself not washing, but on some level I don't really care and certainly if I lived alone in the woods I would probably wash a lot less. Although I am repulsed by "sleazy types" I feel like I understand where they are coming from and it scares me that I understand.

My mother did not relate much to my physical body. I don't remember her ever bathing me as a child. Perhaps she was **embarrassed**; perhaps I was strong willed, and pushed her away. In seventh grade it was a friend's mother who told me that I should start using deodorant and that I often had a dirty neck. I probably still have a dirty neck even though I try to scrub it dutifully when I bathe. Did my mother's discomfort with bodies affect my perceptions about my own? She brushes her teeth. God, why didn't I just learn that stuff like everybody else?

I want to be naturally elegant and clean. I desire this for myself like I desire it for my environment. The desire of how I want to be seems in conflict with my basic personality makeup and again I am "unsatisfactory." It blows my mind I feel so much negativity. I guess that 5000 years of Judeo-Christian tradition, thoroughly steeped in **misogyny** does not disappear with four years of feminism. Does a woman labeled "unclean" during menstruation ever escape from that taint? The roots of self-contempt are deep. In how many ways is self-contempt transferred?

Like my mother, I realize that I have a difficult time relating to my children's physical bodies. I stopped bathing my son early and rarely comb his hair, although I like him to look neat and clean and will comment when he doesn't.

Another aspect of not relating fully to the reality of my body is that I take sickness and physical hurts in myself and in my children with a suspicious amount of unseriousness. We rarely get sick but if we do I assume we will get better and there is nothing much to worry about. I don't do the proper soaking of infections or swellings, and I am not a good nurse which is why perhaps my son rarely gets sick. I also have a high pain tolerance but paradoxically I am extremely sensitive to the visualization of inflicted pain.

Violent movies I avoid or condemn. Real life violence I face with disbelief and anger. The purposeful cruelties of war are products of supposedly healthy minds and bodies. Can a body be healthy if the mind is diseased? Who makes the judgments? Lesbianism until recently was considered a disease or perversion by the psychiatric association. It was judged not to be by a very small majority. Obviously those in power to judge have askewed vision. What is health?

September 23

Bodies, bodies, bodies. Alone I often like my body a lot. Small breasts, slim waist, very large rolling buttocks. Sometimes I look like a very beautiful Rubens. Sometimes I like my weightiness. It says, "Yes I'm here, try to move me, you will see I am not one to be dealt with lightly." But the grace of a slim figure is aesthetically appealing to me and I often feel overwhelmed by the beauty of other women's bodies. Comparisons pervade my reality. It seems impossible that anyone else could really love my body. Tears well up as I write this for I don't want to believe it. I know my lovers love me, but I do not trust them not to be repulsed by my fat body, my bad smelling cunt. "Your cunt doesn't smell bad," my lover says, smiling, destroying my worst fears.

September 25

I will take care of myself. I will get thin. Eight days ago I started the Stillman diet. This is a very unbalanced "unhealthy" all protein diet. I wanted to jolt myself away from my fixation on food. I am very high over being in control. I would like to lose 35, 20, even 10 pounds. I realize sadly that I would give up all my worldly possessions just to be and stay thin. I know that this is not only "sick" but politically incorrect as well as socially irresponsible. The line between self objectification and insuring good strokes is painfully confusing. The politics of fat liberation operate more like repression in me.

October 15

I must be mad. There is no other way to explain the huge gap between my outwardly successful, rational, respected self, and the intense cravings of my interior landscape. Rather than Jekyll and Hyde both parts seem to operate simultaneously. Yesterday I spent an outwardly pleasant day with Mary talking, working, shopping. At the same time that I knew I was trying to control my eating, I stuffed myself so full of nuts, dried fruit, cake that I made myself throw up when I got home. I did buy a tooth brush - bone handle natural bristles. Tried brushing and liked it. Called the dentist for a teeth cleaning and felt virtuous.

Rachel, also overweight, told me that she could not believe her lover really wanted to

make love to her and would therefore repress her sexuality when she got into bed. I understood that feeling totally. Made love with M., a new relationship, the other night with the lights on. At first it was difficult to not want to hide. I felt exposed but forced my whole self to remain there rather than get lost in the feeling of lovemaking. Felt joyful at being able to validate myself. I don't know what the purpose of all this confusion about health is. Is it something I must conquer in order to feel wholly good? Is it time to undo my childhood body karma? I want to care for and nourish myself.

November 2

I have begun tentatively sharing these notes I thought would be impossible to share, begun to reveal the shame. First reading I cried; the second I spoke up a bit, and by the time I read them to our whole group I felt differently. My concept of myself as "unclean" no longer held a heavy emotional axe over my head.

I am probably no dirtier than anybody else and unlike some madame Macbeth's "damn spot" water will do wonders. Since I stopped identifying myself as a "fixed type" it has been easier to relate to the details of taking care of myself.

The exposure of these feelings was healing. I now see the old images as a paranoid fantasy conceived not only in my mind but in the collective women hating unconscious. The fear of the power of women's bodies and the desire to condemn them as unclean began before Eve and still manifests itself today. Robin Morgan draws an analogy between women and colonized people. The oppressed are robbed of their history, culture, roots, and are forced to accept the standards and values of the oppressor. As women our bodies have become alien territories, used for their natural resources, sex and children, and mystified by a hostile patriarchal medical institution.

The road towards rational eating however still seems full of boulders of confusion and contradictions. I confess I still want lightning to rip them asunder and let me emerge a size 12. Actually I am realizing that it is not that I can't accept my body; it is that I can't accept the social powerlessness that goes along with being fat. I do see though that in not being able to depend on my body for social approval and validation I have strengthened other aspects of my personal power and created a keener, wiser, more effective self. This essential me, I would not trade for thinness. I deeply value what I have struggled to become and wouldn't exchange it for a thin body. Did I just write that? Yes I did and it's true. Go back and underline it, celebrate, get the champagne. Perhaps in understanding the part my body has played in my evolution, I can really begin to appreciate and care for my whole self in a healthy way. ♀

Health: A Political Issue

What are my real health needs? How dependent on medical technology must I be? Can I really understand health or disease without relating it to my total social/political environment? Can true understanding of health be achieved in a culture grounded in exploiting its natural resources, human resources and those resources beyond its own boundaries?

I ponder these questions. I read: 3/4 billion dollars are spent by the drug industry in this country on advertising and promotional material alone in one year. I read: Hospitals are big business. Hospitals employ more workers (over 2.9 million) than either the electronics, automobile or electrical industries. They absorbed \$47 billion in 1975. What is the potential for egalitarian health care in a capitalist economy?

I'm privileged to have almost completely avoided dealing with the medical system of this country for a number of years. I investigate herbal remedies to appease colds. I search and research my psyche for traces of negative thinking, worrying, pushing, which might bring physical breakdown upon me. I am gaining a new understanding of my body through massage, polarity, homeopathy, self-help. That knowledge feels incomplete, however; my budding and newly found control over my body and mind health doesn't feel final. It implies for its continuance and growth, control over the institutions which define life options in this society, for myself, for all women, for all races, for all classes. It appears that the biggest obstacle to sensitive health care in this country is the medical profession and the public health care system it has created.

The classic role of women as conceived by the men who control the medical research sciences has been well documented. It is enough to make any female "sick." Adherence to that role (my how passive, helpless, indecisive, emotional, submissive, other-defined, you are) evokes criticism and paternalism, revolt against it often culminates in social ostracism or incarceration. Women are traditionally viewed as physically weak in a culture which values physical strength. Women have been rendered culturally impotent because of their biology. Doctors' views of women both make them sick and provide a powerful rationale for women not to be the people involved in public actions or decision-making. They have contributed to

the myth of the inferior female being.

Illness can become a social phenomenon. In this country between the years of 1851 and 1910 we can witness the occurrence of a mass illness. Prevalent in the women's culture of the middle and upper classes was "female invalidism" and "hysteria". TB was at the same time striking down twice as many young women as men. Affluent women were believed inherently sick, incapable. Working class women were seen as inherently healthy, able to put in long hours in abominable sweatshops with poor nutrition, no rest and no childcare.

Our culture condemns women as weak and defective when it needs them passive, strong and capable when it needs them in the labor market. Affluent women in the aforementioned 60 years were being forced into the role of invalid-bedridden, frail, sickly, hypochondriacal. Women were not permitted to act in other ways. These myths about women's health played directly into the financial interest of the American Medical Association. Newly formed, the AMA at this time had no monopolic control over medical practice. The myth of female frailty helped disqualify women as healers as well as made them perfect clients. Women were forced to be increasingly dependent on men - their husbands for the income to afford doctors for expensive medical care. Women were "reproductive beings". According to medical theory prevalent at this time peoples' bodies contained a limited amount of energy - only one organ of ability could be developed at the expense of all others. Mental energy could atrophy the uterus. The reproductive organs totally commanded women. Higher education, intellectual pursuits were ruled out. Uterine and ovarian disorders were believed to be behind every complaint. Many women who did not fit into the medically contrived concept of womanhood were susceptible to having their ovaries removed, or having leeches attached to the walls of their vaginas to bleed them of disease.

Working class women's "biology" kept them separated from women of the middle and upper classes. The poor in general were feared as carriers of illness. Poverty was believed to be a natural disorder to single out the unfit. The working people were classified as inherently pathological and inferior. Rebelliousness, violence against the inhuman working or living situations of the era were considered "sick". Epidemic disease among the poor was not connected to the result of the industrial revolution's preponderance of ill-equipped

working and unsanitary living conditions for the poor, but rather was considered naught but an instrument of natural selection.

The medical system in this country and the public health system it has created act as powerful agents of ideology in our culture. Doctors pass judgment on who is sick, healthy, strong, weak, whole, incomplete, sane, mad, as well as whose complaints are psychosomatic or "real". Medical sexism has helped shape the social positions and lifestyles available to women. In the name of science and biology, all kinds of social inequities, such as racism and classism, have been justified. A political system shapes the kind of research technology developed and arranges priorities for them. Our culture encourages people to express resistance as disease, defines rebelliousness as sick.

Beginning with Freud we find the medical view of women shifted from physically to mentally sick. One's psychology became no easier to escape or change than one's biology. The question of public health care seems to me a question of transforming human relationships, developing an interest and responsibility toward the client and patient that rarely exists in a society like our own, where health care is a big business.

For eight weeks I sat on the collective that produced this issue and tried to focus, center on what it is that is really important for me to explore about health. At one point in our meetings I became sicker than I've been in a year - raging cold, aches and fatigue. Interesting, I mused, the connection between the growing health consciousness I experienced working on the magazine and getting sicker than I've been for a long while. I feel that my explorations took me to this place: The root of disease is traceable to a diseased culture, a political system which denies myself (as a woman, feminist, lesbian) and others access to the tools which would allow its members development of their total human potential. If ill health be seen as a blockage of the natural healing energy which flows through us all, then indeed denial of the ability to make decisions directly affecting our lives individually and collectively leads to the same. Frustration at my lack of impact on this country's internal and external policy making, the lack of a collective vision of change that encourages using science and technology to improve life on this planet, and a growing connection to liberation struggles worldwide which pit themselves against the country I live in all contribute to a mind out of touch with its body, a people out of touch with their environment.

A system which cannot produce adequate housing, or nutritional food for its population and tries to stop-gap it with overpriced, inhuman medical care feels unhealthy. In conclusion, I would like to share a story I recently read concerning an aspect of public health care in China. Of 151 parapalegic patients treated in three years by the Peking

Hospital (and these are back injured, paralyzed, heretofore incurables) 124 can now walk with crutches, 15 get about without any aid, eight have gone back to work. The patients were encouraged to help themselves - long periods of hospitalization, surgery, doctoring, benefits no one because no one makes a profit off illness. The patients' belief in the medical attention they received, their belief in a collective vision (i.e., the Cultural Revolution) to which the contribution of their own energy was considered important, all seemed crucial to them regaining their health. Through working on themselves, with Chinese traditional and Western medical practise, acupuncture, herbs and modern knowledge of nerves, muscles and the skeletal from, successful treatment was evolved by health workers. Incurable illnesses of the past are curable today through individual effort and a culture which values the health of all its participants.

Books which inspired me:

Complaints and Disorders: The Sexual Politics of Sickness, by B. Ehrenreich and D. English. Excellent pamphlet on the social role of medicine, particularly focused on women and medicine in the late 19th and early 20th century. Some really startling facts and figures, incredible photographs. From The Feminist Press, box 334, Old Westbury, N.Y. 11568

Witches, Midwives and Nurses: A History of Women Healers by B. Ehrenreich and D. English. Put me back in touch with the traditional role of woman as healer. Real exciting and scary. Exciting because of our past, scary because of all the oppression and repression since.

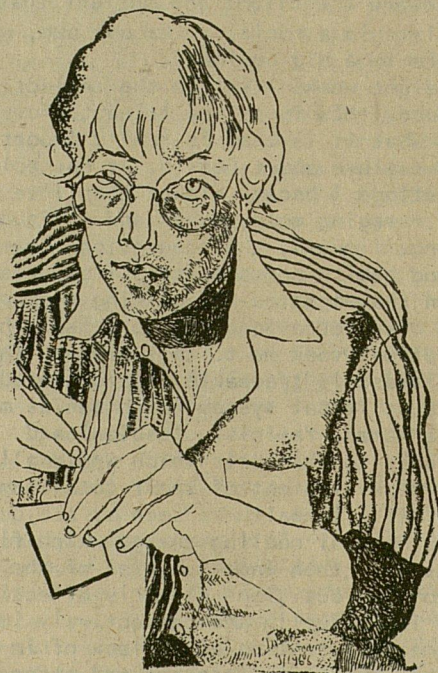
The Yellow Wall Paper by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. From The Feminist Press, Box 334, Old Westbury, N. Y. 11568. An incredible short story by an extremely creative and active feminist and writer of the early 20th century. Over 50 years old, the story still speaks to me strongly. Gilman was the author of much non-fiction dealing with the social and economic status of women.

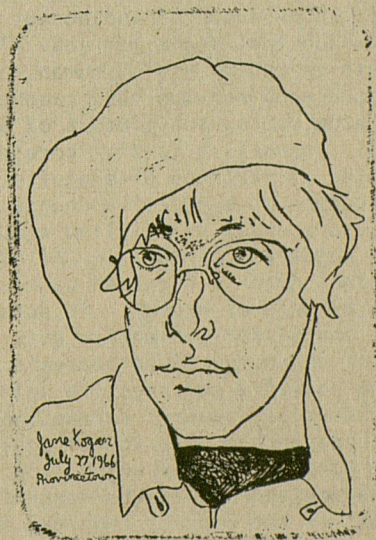
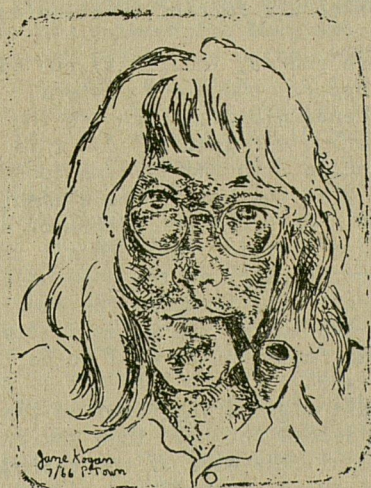
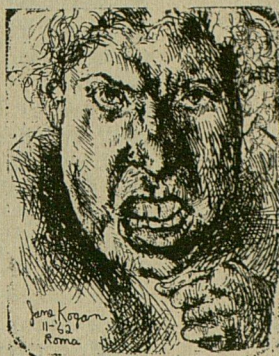
Women and Madness by Phyllis Chesler. It took me a very long time to get around to reading this book. I'm glad I did. Frightening as the facts of the author's research are, they are important ones. Really well thought out visions and analysis of female psychology, past, present, future.

Cuba's Revolutionary Medicine by Willis P. Butler, M.D. Excerpt from Ramparts magazine, published by New England Free Press, 60 Union Square, Somerville, Mass. 02143.

Serving the People with Dialectics. Foreign Languages Press. Peking. ♀

SELF STUDIES





CENTERS OF ENERGY

The human body is a receiver and transmitter of energy in many forms. We can visualize it as we do an atom, the microcosm; or a planet or universe, the macrocosm. As within these systems, there is a constant movement of electromagnetic energy currents both inside of and surrounding each of us. When this energy is flowing without obstructions or resistances, we are healthy.

I would like to present an image of the human body as it connects to the stream of universal energy which surrounds it, and to discuss some of the connections between the physical and non-physical or energy bodies. The physical body which we perceive with our senses is only one level of the energies which converge to form a human being. When I talk about energy direction and flow within the body, I refer to the etheric double or energy body which is the vehicle through which streams of vitality flow into the physical plane. This energy body directly surrounds and permeates the human form. Matter and energy are interchangeable in this system. Both the effects of blocked energy on the etheric plane and blocked energy on the physical plane must be dealt with in order for us to become healthy people.

This image of the body's energy patterns is a compilation of many theories (predominantly those of Dr. Randolph Stone, who founded Polarity Therapy, and Alice A. Bailey), and much reading and meditation. It is important to stress however that you should use your own intuition. Allow this image into your brain, visualize it, think about it and accept those parts of it which feel right for you. There is no one path to understanding human energy flow and we are each our own best teachers.

In the atom, we have a picture of energy encapsulated. There is a central core of energy consisting of neutrons of a neutral charge and protons of a positive charge. This core is surrounded by swirling electrons which have a negative charge. In the human being the spinal cord is regarded as the neutral or central axis of energy. It acts as a reservoir of energy for the entire body. The neuter pole of an energy field attracts and forms its own positive and negative poles. The spine is the vertical neutral current which divides the body into a polarity of positive and negative energy currents which flow around and become harmonized within the neutral axis. The right half of the body is regarded as having a positive electrical charge; this manifests the outgoing, creative and active parts of our being. The left half of the body is seen as having a negative charge and this is our more receptive, intuitive half. (Note: Friends of mine who are left handed feel as though their left sides are positive and their right sides are negative. Follow your inner

voice on this.) Energy is constantly being transmitted, through our "positive" sides and received from our "negative" sides. We can use an understanding of these positive and negative currents to harmonize ourselves and others by learning to balance our "creative" and "receptive" natures.

In the physical body the spinal cord is the central organ of the entire nervous system. It supplies the conducting path for impulses sent from the brain to the body and from the body to the brain. Within the etheric body we can imagine the spinal column as a continuous channel of light which extends up out of the top of the head connecting us to the "heavens" and down through the coccyx (the bottom-most vertebrae) and into the earth. This image can be used in self healing work: imagine this channel of light coming all the way through your spine and extending above and below it. Begin to breathe, concentrating on and fully experiencing this image. Now, take all your depressions, fatigue, diseases and distress and imagine that you are sending it down that channel and into the earth where it will be absorbed and neutralized. As you inhale, feel yourself drawing in positive healing energy through the energy connection at the top of your spine and feel it pouring down and suffusing your body and spirit with light and health.

Along this channel of light there exist seven vortices of energy which are called the chakras. These centers of energy exist in all of us and are in constant motion, moving at different speeds depending on their clarity or openness. They are the major points of energy connection between the physical and non-physical realms and it is through them that the physical body receives and transmits most energy. Within the physical body, these centers govern the endocrine system which consists of the ductless glands producing the hormones which influence the correct functioning of the human body.

The base chakra, located at the bottom of the spine supports the other centers. It governs the adrenal glands, which are the ones which act during emergencies, and this is the chakra connected with the elimination of solids and liquids from the body. The element functioning within this center is that of earth, and it relates astrologically to all the earth signs and to the parts of the body which are ruled by earth signs (taurus, the neck; virgo, the bowels; capricorn, the knees). The kind of energy it manifests is the will to be, to survive, to exist.

There are alternating views on the location of the second chakra. Some sources say it is located in the area of the reproductive system and that it controls and directs this part of our bodies. Others say that it is located in the area of the spleen, the part of the body which manufactures white blood corpuscles, and stores both iron and energy from the sun. The second chakra relates to the element of water within us and to the parts of the body which are ruled by water signs (cancer, the

breast; scorpio, the reproductive organs; pisces, the feet). This is the center which relates to our sexual energy and to our desires; and to our understanding and use of these energies.

The third chakra, located at the solar plexus, is a major point of connection in the body as it is the collection point for the gathering of the energies in the lower centers and their distribution into the centers above the diaphragm. The gland it rules is the pancreas and it is responsible for the proper functioning of the liver, stomach, gall bladder and intestines. It corresponds to the element of fire within us and relates to our ability to transmute and change our energies in ways that feel positive to our own growth. It is the center that relates to emotions and to an understanding of how not to be controlled by our desires. It also governs those parts of the body ruled by fire signs (aries, the head; leo, the solar plexus; sagittarius, the thighs).

The fourth center is the heart chakra, located in the area of the heart. It governs the heart and the thymus gland, which controls proper growth in children. It corresponds to the element of air within us and relates to the air signs and their body parts, (gemini, the shoulders; libra, the kidneys; aquarius, the ankles). This is the center dealing with love in its pure form and our relationship to that love. This is the kind of love that is understanding, non-possessive and non-attached but which flows freely from one to all. The energy of this center is a transforming and radiating energy which brings joy to all who come in contact with it.

The fifth center is the throat chakra, which governs the thyroid gland, which is responsible for our metabolism, or the rate at which chemical reactions happen in the body. The parts of the body it rules are the bronchial area, the lungs and the vocal apparatus. It is the bridge between the body and the head, or between spirit and matter and relates to the element of ether. It deals with the distribution of creative energy, our ability to let this energy flow through us, and with learning to express our true feelings, thoughts and ideas.

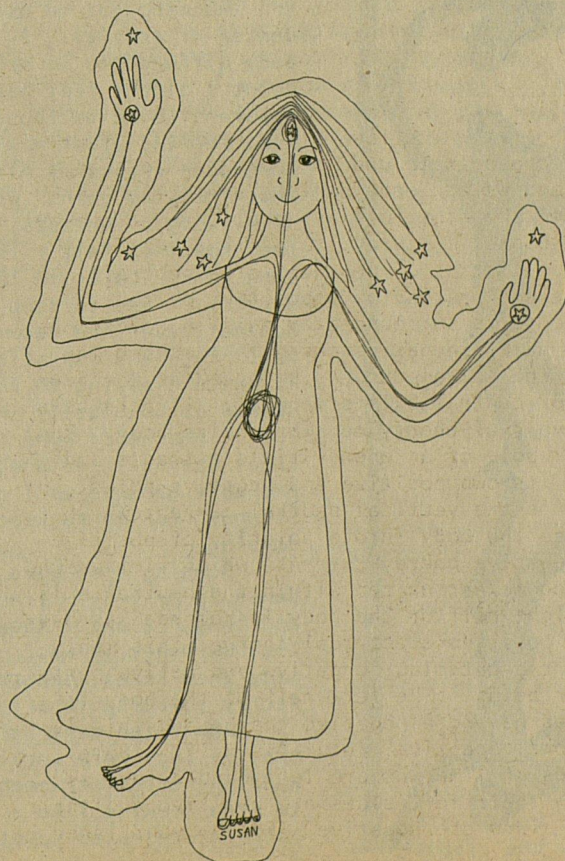
The sixth chakra is located between the eyebrows and is sometimes called the third eye. It governs the functioning of the pituitary gland (the "master gland"), which produces hormones to stimulate the production of the hormones in the other glands. The parts of the body it controls are the eyes, ears and nose. The type of energy we deal with here is that of creative imagination and spiritual perception. Ideas and the intention to create begin within this center. It is the center of idealism, where our eyes are open to spiritual concepts of unity.

The seventh or crown chakra is located at the top of the head. It relates to the pineal gland and to the brain. It is the center of fully functioning spiritual expression in which we realize our full potential and divinity.

We can use our understanding of the reciprocal relationship of the body and the chakras in healing ourselves and others. For example, if someone is suffering from severe liver problems they can change their diet, drink tonic teas, etc. They can also try to understand how the third or solar plexus chakra is influencing their bodies. Are they blocking or over-using the fiery aspect of their natures? Are they caught up in working through their emotions? This multidimensional approach to health can be very revealing. Often just trying to look for and understand the causes of blocked energy will help us to begin to unblock it.

We can focus on whatever level or levels we feel most in rapport with. Working directly with our own physical bodies through Yoga, T'ai Chi, breathing, Do-in, or other disciplines, and working with others through massage, polarity therapy or acupuncture are all ways that will unlock both physical and non-physical energies. Working with understanding energy (how and why it is blocked), and seeking to understand the emotional or psychical causes of blockages will help to release the physical body as well. We can imagine or visualize a chakra we feel is blocked as being bathed in light and health and as being a clear channel for energy. This will in turn affect the parts of the body corresponding to that chakra.

In this way we enrich and deepen our image of ourselves and our ability to become fuller more self-realized and self-identified beings. ♀



Running Through A Pregnancy

Since I had been running as exercise for several years, it seemed only natural to keep on going while I was pregnant. When Rebekah was born, she had been a passenger on four- or five-mile runs almost daily.

Running through those nine months yielded such incredible experiences-- physically, emotionally, and spiritually, that I thought of addressing an article about running's merits for the pregnant mind and body to the medical community. But doctors often make a woman a passive agent in her own pregnancy, issuing decrees on weight gain and allowed activities. How many would advise their pregnant patients to run?

Perhaps it's not for everyone, but on a physical level, running is a fine and unique way to experience all the new sensations and changes that serving as food and lodging for a growing little being produces.

Just the dramatic weight change -- in my case 32 pounds -- can be something marvelous to feel, and running is a great way to become involved with it. I knew I had a good balanced diet. I had always had a morbid fear of losing my thin body, but instead of becoming anxious about all that added weight, I let myself enjoy it. I knew I could "carry" it, and I knew I could run it off later on. In a non-pregnant state, I have found that running decreases my appetite, aside from burning up calories.

Also, leg exercise has long been recommended if there is a tendency toward varicose veins. My mother and other relatives have them, but my legs only bothered me during pregnancy when new running muscles were developing.

Running got me used to that amazing shift that pregnancy produced in my center of gravity. By six weeks I could already feel that I was holding my body differently in order to accommodate that being inside of me. At that point I didn't feel heavy as much as I did full. That fullness was really apparent to me on those runs, and I enjoyed tuning in on it. It was like that feeling after making really fantastic love. The fullness that slowly developed around my middle, erasing my waist, was slightly painful the way that "growing pains" were at 13 or 14. While running, I would select a part of my body -- breasts, stomach, hips, pelvis -- and just allow myself to feel how they felt. There was always plenty of time to find out on those long runs. Later in the pregnancy, when there was a lot of pressure on my bladder, I had to stop running every half mile or so in order to urinate. However, everyone recommends a few deep knee bends as practice for labor anyway! Even the sensation of my bladder being pushed around was a good one. It was a blessing to be in touch with those internal organs that have always seemed so absolutely inaccessible.

I had heard women say they felt their stomachs had sunk down to their knees during later pregnancy. I never experienced that demoralizing feeling, probably because as I got heavier, my thigh and groin muscles had to get stronger for me to keep running. Those muscles do hurt a little as they develop.

Running also gave me self-confidence and developed a sense of confidence in my body. I knew there was something I could do to keep my mind and body fit and I knew that my body could take me a long distance no matter how heavy it was! It never ceased to amaze me that using my muscles made them relax, and that on a cold day, my shivering body would feel perfectly comfortable after just a few minutes on the road.

About ten days before Rebekah was born, I set off on a run only to find that my legs were working sideways instead of forward. I had always thought waddling pregnant women were out of shape, but there was nothing I could do to stop looking like a running duck. It turns out there is a hormone called relaxin, released sometime in the last few weeks of pregnancy,

that relaxes ligaments around the pelvis. What an incredible thing to feel your body actually softening and spreading to deliver the baby!

As to breathing techniques, which are such a help during labor, running is one sure way to get in touch with your wind and how breathing differently affects your body. Running really taught me how to use my breathing.

Running allowed me to tune in on all the different levels of this thing I call my "self". Running along, I could get involved with a thought, my breathing, an ankle, a nagging problem (run it into the ground, maybe?), or the hill coming up. Focusing in on the physical changes made me feel "at home" with my body. It must be such a frightening thing to feel that your body is foreign to you, and that could easily happen during pregnancy.

On a psychological level, the biggest help that running offered was the assurance that I could still do what I had always done despite the huge change in my life. I could incorporate this new life into my old one, and by doing it slowly, it made it much more real. Through really getting into the changes as they came up, I felt like my life had continuity. It wasn't a matter of not having a baby, and then all of a sudden having one. Rebekah felt very real to me on those runs. Those hours of loping through the countryside allowed me to think not just about the changes she was producing in me, but also about the dramatic ones she was going through at the same time. I could feel her growth.

Running helped keep me centered, especially during those mind-boggling mood swings induced by pregnancy's hormonal changes. I have never felt higher than when I was pregnant, and I have never felt lower either. But running was something I could do with my body during those hormonal upheavels to clear my mind, with the added bonus of making my body feel better. It taught me how to move troubling thoughts or feelings off of stage center by concentrating on something else -- an excellent tool for labor. My labor lasted 12 hours, with contractions every two minutes during almost all of it. But running had helped to prepare me, having taught me endurance, pacing, acceptance of a little fatigue, and the discipline to push on to that marvelous second wind. Perhaps I had an "easy" labor and delivery, because essentially what I went through felt like a gentle 12 hour earthquake.

I think that the mind can categorize labor sensations as either positive or negative. I had learned while running that tiredness often did not come from the body at all, but a bored or bothered mind. The amazing thing during running at those times was that once I consciously refocused my mind to something more pleasant, the fatigue often went away. This was another great tool for the birth process.

Spiritually, who's to know what is going on in that unborn child. Plato spoke of giving the infant as much movement as possible, since the external motion helped to soothe the confusion and chaos in the soul. Why not start a little ahead of time, I thought. I do know that Rebekah has always been an extremely mel-

low and alert baby since she emerged, and I also know that running does soothe my soul.

Besides, running delineated for me the distinction between the Rebekah growing in me as a totally dependent being and the Rebekah I was toting as a passenger, a passenger who would be "getting off," who was already involved in that universal quest for independence. I think running gave me special insight into both those relationships -- dependent fetus and freedom rider.

There are all sorts of theories about how many "vibes" a baby absorbs before it's born. I feel really good about Rebekah's prenatal experiences. What could be better than country roads, the beach, full moons -- and trotting around London and Paris for a few weeks to boot? Rebekah was lucky because she was accompanied by two people who were really glad she was along for the ride.

A true luxury on those runs is a supportive partner, and I had Peter, Rebekah's father. We had always enjoyed running together, and I had wondered whether we would have to start going separately because of my slowness due to the added weight. Peter began to carry rocks of increasing size to slow him down. His last rock weighed in at 28 pounds. Those hours spent running were a precious way to share the pregnancy. Peter was as involved with the pregnancy as much as anyone could have been who wasn't under our same "roof". We are still very much a threesome as runners -- except now it's Peter's turn to carry Rebekah.

On a practical level, if you are not running now but are pregnant and want to try it, I would suggest getting into it slowly. Working up to a mile in a few weeks shouldn't be too difficult, and once you can do a mile, three or four or five come pretty easily. Find a speed that suits you and doesn't make you out of breath. I ran very slowly, starting at 8 minute miles and going to 11 or 12 minute ones. You certainly won't win any races except maybe a few metaphysical ones. Age shouldn't be a problem. I was two months short of 30 when Rebekah was born.

There is no fancy paraphernalia involved with running. A loose pair of shorts (my last pair was pretty peculiar looking) and a loose tee shirt is what I wore. I bought a very expensive pair of running shoes which wore out in three weeks. My \$6.00 replacements did much better.

Listen carefully to your body's signals. If running hurts, and it's not muscular, change what you are doing, see a reasonable physician, or stop doing it.

The day before Rebekah was born, we went on a long run on the beach in the fog. I felt like a huge friendly cloud about to burst as I lumbered along. Peter was doing circles around me, disappearing into the fog only to reappear seconds later. He said I looked like a voluminous pillow floating through space. We found a perfect sand dollar that day, jumped into the icy ocean, had dinner out, and went to bed early. The next morning, labor began, and we were off and running. ♀

PERENNIALS

Perennials - plants that last year after year - were the very last thing that I planted in my garden. After growing up to rented homes and serial jobs, it was hard and even frightening to feel settled down. Even having bought the land and talked a lot about living here for "a lifetime," the actual growing of a plant that wouldn't even produce for three more years was a very alien act. It was hard to dream in three year terms, much less to plan or act. So it was the third year on this land that I began the asparagus bed which might by then have been feeding us. And it is now, in the fifth year, that we have an abundance. Gradually in those years, the perennials have filled up the whole original garden. I have come to love them best of all - their fruitfulness and faithfulness and persistence. And their taste, for they are among the most special of garden delicacies: artichokes, rhubarb, strawberries, asparagus, raspberries and blueberries. There's something so satisfying about plants that keep growing and multiplying for years and years, almost literally for a lifetime. It gives me pleasure to know that whether or not I stay, these plants will be here and will transcend my presence - a fine gift to the land.

The only real secret to growing perennials is the same as that of all gardening, good soil preparation, only more so since these plants will be growing in the same soil for ten, twenty, maybe thirty years. For whatever perennial you plant, as much cold or well-rotted manure and compost should be dug as deeply into the ground as you can. It should be the richest, most fertile soil you can make. I also mulch around the plants with a thick manure straw mixture each year. This mulch later decomposes, becoming fertilizer for the succeeding year. As with my other plants, the ailing or slow growing perennial is revived with doses of manure tea. Fill a bucket half full of manure and the rest with water; let it steep overnight and then feed it to plants. Because perennials are just that, they'll be there year after year, you should plant them all in one section of the garden or along fences so that you can easily cultivate the rest of the garden. Be sure to also leave room around your perennials for expansion as you will want more and more and they will keep increasing. I try to water the perennials that need it with a long, slow, steady trickle for deep saturation which encourages deep rooting and stronger, more productive plants.

All perennials need to be divided and thinned periodically, so flourishing, long time gardens are often a good source of new plants for your garden. There's a limit to how much of even a good thing any one family

needs. When I do have to buy new stock, I prefer to do it from one of the large and reputable seed companies which guarantee their stock and will replace roots that don't grow.

Strawberries were the first perennial in my garden. Following the advice of a long-time gardener, I valiantly let them grow a whole year without bearing fruit (I pinched off the blossoms). I have since tried both methods, letting the young plants fruit or not, and have verified from experience that it is worth the wait. The second year plants are large, hardy and abundantly productive. The ones I let bear early have never in succeeding years reached the same size or production as the first batch. If you can't bear to wait, I'd advise doing some each way, so that at least part of your patch is a good perennial one.

Strawberries will grow and expand for years if they are well tended, so leave room beside your first plants for future growth. Strawberries may be gotten from friends who are thinning their patches or bought as young plants, but they are most often bought as roots. The roots arrive looking dry and brown - very dormant, if not dead. But a few days after planting, bright green leaves begin miraculously appearing from those dry crowns. Strawberries, like all other berries, are acid lovers, so acid soils should not be corrected and base soils need to have leaf mold or sawdust added (add extra manure to compensate for the nitrogen taken by the decomposing matter). Roots or young plants should be planted in wide deep holes, with the roots extending vertically and slightly spread. Only the crowns should protrude above ground. Once the plants are growing well, I mulch heavily with a manure-wood chip combination to provide nitrogen and acid. Strawberries are very heavy feeders and need a twice yearly manuring to meet their needs. In addition, I give any plants with yellowing leaves regular waterings with manure tea (the mulch makes its own tea too). If the top layer of mulch is mostly chips or sawdust, the growing berries will have a clean dry place to rest and will be less likely to rot.

Strawberries may be planted in hills (one foot apart) or in rows (two to three feet apart). In the fall of each year, old plants will send out "runners", new plants at the end of a long lead root. With the row system, these runners are allowed to fill in the area between the rows, forming a solid patch. With hills, the runners are removed and transplanted to new hills each fall. I find the hill somewhat easier to mulch, water, and pick, but there's no particular virtue to either system.

Strawberries come in several varieties

- everbearing ones and ones with specific fruiting dates. The usual plan is to plant all everbearing plants or a succession of the specific types (a few June, mid-summer, and late bearers). I have chosen the everbearing type and they have done well for me. I get two heavy crops (late May-June and September) and a respectable harvest the rest of the summer. I began with twenty five plants which is enough for two normal consumers or one strawberry junkie; now I have fifty plants plus their runners, being myself a very confirmed strawberry addict.

The second perennial that I put in the garden was artichokes - a wonderful vegetable for west coast (mild winters, mild summers) inhabitants. The plants grew very quickly and soon became my very favorites in the garden. Large, exotic, jungle-like bushes, that first summer they produced artichokes from every stalk.

Artichokes are easily acquired from friends as they must be divided regularly. They can also be bought as plants. If planted in rich, not acid soil, they will bear the first summer and every spring and fall after that. The first artichokes of each season are the largest; after that they gradually diminish to the "twenty for a dollar" size you see in vegetable stands. An artichoke is ready to pick when the leaves first begin to open slightly - like a bud unfolding (which in fact it is). After that, they grow tougher and many of the leaves are wasted. Watch this on the last small ones of each season as it is easy to wait hopefully for them to grow larger, while they remain small and grow tougher. It's important to give the plants long, deep waterings during dry spells too, to prevent the artichokes from tasting bitter. And just once, after you have eaten more than you ever thought you could, let one artichoke open all the way into a lovely purple flower.

Artichokes are favorites of gophers as well as humans. If you have the energy, digging a two foot deep by two and a half foot wide trench and lining it with fine mesh screen will protect your plants forever more. I didn't do that and have learned the hard way (a beautiful three foot high bush vanished overnight) to check constantly for gophers and keep traps set.

Because artichokes are so bushy, they should be planted two to three feet apart in rows three feet apart. Six plants will feed four people well. They are by nature communal and new plants should be set in clumps of two or three depending on size. As the plants grow, they send up new plants from their roots and the clumps become more and more dense. Every three years, these groups should be divided and the smallest plants removed to new rows. Try to thin the groups back to the three strongest plants at that time.

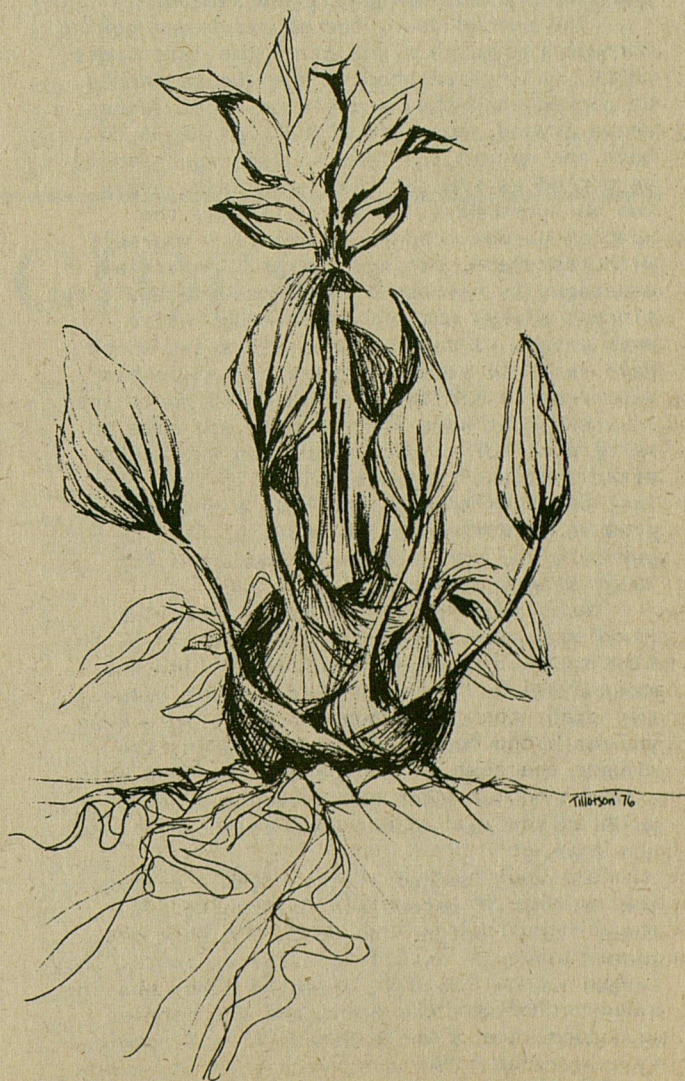
Don't worry if your plants seem to die back in the summer or winter. If the leaf color is still good (gray-green but not yellow) and they are getting water and nutri-

ments, this is a natural process. New artichoke-bearing stalks will shoot up amazingly quickly at the start of the next season.

Asparagus came to the garden with berry bushes the third spring. It takes more dedication than strawberries or artichokes, as it is much slower to produce. Asparagus may either be planted by seed or roots, either of which will probably have to be bought. With seeds, you may take a light cutting the third year and steady cuttings each year after that. The roots you buy are already two years old and will produce a light cutting the second spring. Asparagus beds last a long time once they are started and grow denser and more productive. I still remember picking asparagus as a child from the corner of my uncle's corn field. That patch was bearing well when he and my aunt bought the farm and they had been there seventeen years.

I chose to buy roots rather than seed and have been glad I did. I followed a rather elaborate planting procedure recommended by "Organic Gardening" and have had wonderful results. My second year stalks were large and tender and plentiful enough for many dinners. I have seen other gardens where third and

Cont.



fourth year stalks are thin and spindly. First, I dug trenches two feet deep and a foot or so wide, two and a half feet apart from each other. The first few inches were the richest manure I could scrape from the goat shed. (You may use a hot manure in this first layer; after that, use a cold or well-rotted hot one). Next came an inch of dolomite lime (or crushed limestone). Then several inches of topsoil (or compost humus) mixed with rock phosphate or bone meal. Then I put in six more inches of manure, another inch of lime, and a thick layer of compost humus and phosphate. Repeat the layering one more time if you need to, until you are six inches from the top. Then, I planted the asparagus roots in the trenches, twelve inches apart. I put in twenty five plants which has fed two of us well, but it's hard to have too much asparagus and I'm planning to get twenty five more. As the plants began to grow, I gradually filled in the trenches until they were even with the ground. That first year, the shoots were very thin with fine, feathery leaves. I just let them grow and watered occasionally, very thoroughly. Asparagus will root four feet deep, so after the first year, it is unnecessary to water the plants even during the dry season.

The second year, the shoots began poking through the mulch right after the last frost, thick, full-sized shoots. The shoots should be picked when they are six to eight inches above ground, but before the tips begin to open and spread for leaves. Asparagus should be picked as soon as they are ready, every two to three days, or you will lose the special garden tenderness and find yourself with tasteless, stringy stalks. Commercial asparagus is harvested below ground level, but since I always cut off those tough white ends anyhow, I don't bother. In areas which have rain all summer, asparagus can be harvested until mid-July and then let go to seed. In areas that have dry summers, you have to be careful not to pick more than two weeks after the last reliable rains, so that one last batch of shoots will have a chance to grow to maturity. As the years go by, you will get more and more shoots in your rows for long, steady cuttings.

Asparagus requires lime to grow. The first two years are amply provided for by the lime in the trenches. After that, lime and manure should be dug in every spring between the rows. Use a good deal of lime, more than you would for any other plant. During the winter, the rows should be well-covered with a manure-straw mulch which can be pushed aside in the spring and used to mulch between the rows.

Raspberries and blackberries are among the easiest of perennials to acquire. If their fruits weren't so good, I'm sure the plants would be readily classed as pests. They spread really rapidly, aided by birds who inadvertently cast the seeds, and the berries will take over a whole garden if not ruthlessly controlled. They also need thinning every year - so almost any gardener who has some

will gladly pass on a bunch (one should be warned by such ready generosity). The life sustaining properties of berries are amazing. I've seen "dead" brown canes pulled out of the ground in October spring back to life when replanted in April. So take whatever you can get. I've had no such luck with blue berries, which grow on neat, orderly bushes and are most easily acquired with cash.

All berries love acid soil, so I work manure and wood chips (sawdust, peat moss, leaf mold or any other acid producer will also work) as deeply into the beds as I can before planting. The best source of this combination I've found is horse stables which often use the chips for bedding. But if worst comes to worst, I've been known to scramble around on my knees scraping up chainsaw gleanings to mix with my own purer goat shit! Raspberry and blackberry canes should be planted in beds with two and a half to three feet between each plant. This spacing is somewhat arbitrary, though, as they will rapidly fill in that and any other available space. Blueberry bushes should be planted in rows with three feet between each bush. They come in many varieties, with different fruiting dates, so it's a good idea to get several kinds of early summer to fall crops.

There were about a dozen raspberry plants growing here when we first came and that first spring we just sat back and waited for the crop to appear. It never did. Next winter, I mulched heavily between the plants, transplanted another dozen runners and the plants did produce that spring (actually, July is our berry month). They begin ripening almost on the first of the month and stop almost exactly thirty days later. I don't water the plants at all, ever, and doing so might prolong their season. Anyway, that second year we had berries, but they were small and not too tasty. Also, I hadn't really grasped the concept of a biennial plant and didn't understand why my transplants hadn't produced. This last winter, I happened upon the really crucial aspect of berry culture - thinning between the plants so that they are really two feet apart, at the very least. Also the crop doubled as the last year canes of the transplants filled with berries. The younger plants seem to produce more heavily, so every year I will start a few more. But my ruthless thinning (even had to take out whole three year old plants that had grown up too close) paid off in larger and tastier berries.

Every spring, any old dead canes should be pulled out. The plants should be pruned back to three or four feet high at that time, too. These second year (or older) canes are the ones which will bear fruit. Most of the new shoots should be dug up and transplanted or given away to friends. Once the bed is thinned, I spread as much manure and woodchip mulch as I can.

Blueberries require much less effort than the other berries. They need to be pruned every few years to keep them a reasonable height and to keep their energy into berry

producing. In the spring, I dig manure in between the rows, being careful not to chop off roots. And I keep a year-round mulch down of woodchips or sawdust and manure.

Rhubarb is the latest perennial addition I've made to the garden, having discovered it on a visit to Iowa last summer. As an intolerant child, I refused to even try it. "Oooo, rhubarb" I would groan; now I sigh instead, with pleasure, and eat it as often as I can as sauce or custard or by itself in pie. The rhubarb plants have a special meaning to me too - they were brought to this ridge in 1906 by my neighbor's mother, transplanted to Oregon after her death in 1947, and returned to this ridge (and my garden) by her eighty-four year old son in 1974. "It's nice to have Mother's rhubarb back," he said.

From my limited experience, rhubarb grows easily and well. The plants are a lovely mixture of red and green with floppy elephant ear leaves. It is a heavy feeder and needs lots of manure, in the soil, as mulch, and as tea. Rhubarb also likes a moderately acid soil. If you buy roots, they are planted much like strawberries, in deep holes with only the crowns above ground. The plants should be at least two feet apart as they grow very large leaves, very low to the ground. Rows should be about two feet apart.

Rhubarb needs lots of water for abundant stalks and should be watered well and often. It grows something like artichokes, with new plants shooting off from the base, forming clusters. The stalks are ready to eat when

they are large and red (sometimes the base is deep red, shading to green at the leaf). The books say the stalks should be pulled, not cut from the plant. If only full grown stalks are taken, the plants will stay strong and keep on producing for many months. If the plant starts to flower, those stalks should be broken off and discarded. (Rhubarb leaves are poisonous to animals - and people as well - so watch where you put them.) During the winter, the roots should be protected from freezing by a thick straw mulch.

I have been told by my neighbors, though I have not tried it yet, that the plants should be divided every five years. Then, the large clumps should be dug up and separated in the fall. Reset the groups of several stalks each - one bunch in each of the original holes and the rest in new rows.

The only other perennials I have grown are flowers and herbs, and I love them almost as much as the vegetables. They are useful as companion plants and make beautiful borders or alternating stripes among the vegetables. Though the vegetable garden seemed an unlikely place for flowers when I first came, I've come to love the splashes of color among the green. The herbs in the garden have now grown large and shrublike with delicate flowers and richly green leaves.

What more can I say about perennials except, "Grow them!"? They become dependable old friends, always to be counted on for winter color, early spring growth, a little something alive in an otherwise barren garden. ♀

HERBICIDES

A withering rain of chemicals termed herbicides is steadily pounding down on our country's forests, farmlands, and rights-of-way. Manufacturers and users of a substance called 2,4,5-T assert that this herbicide is merely a weed-killer, but, in fact, many members of nature's community, especially women and unborn children, are endangered and victimized by its use. What is 2, 4, 5-T and what are its uses? 2, 4,5-T (2, 4, 5-tetrachlorophenoxyacetic acid) and 2, 4-D (dichlorophenoxyacetic acid) are chlorinated hydrocarbons and have the effect of hormones on plants. They stimulate plant growth until the veins and bark burst open, causing death and rapid decay. Applied by helicopter as a spray to be absorbed through the leaves or injected directly into tree trunks, these defoliants are commonly used in the United States for weed and brush control, and to clear cattle pasture. They are also sprayed directly on food crops; apples, rice, oranges, pears, grapefruit, peaches, lemons, melons, plums, grapes, rye, cherries, blueberries, cranberries, onions, strawberries, raspberries, peppers, sugarcane, sugarbeets, sorghum, lettuce, cabbage, beans, beets,

potatoes, mustard, wheat, soybeans, corn, barley, alfalfa, timbertrees, oats, and hay. One sample plot of land sprayed indicated the chemical present at 88% to 96% of its original intensity for more than 467 days after being sprayed. The run-off from sprayed land has contaminated water supplies for more than five years. Drifting spray is another serious hazard - the possibility of drift is 50% to 80% even with the most favorable conditions. A California laboratory found traces of 2,4,5-T in the tissue of 2,4,5-T victims five years after exposure. These chemicals were created during World War II at Camp Detrick, Maryland, the Army's center for chemical warfare research. In Vietnam, a generation of deformed children is being born to women who drank contaminated water in areas heavily sprayed with Agent Orange (a mixture of 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D). In Arizona, 10- and 12-year-old women suffered premenstrual hemorrhaging necessitating hysterectomies and women over 65-years-old suffered swelling, rashes, and post-menstrual bleeding when nearby Tonto National Forest was sprayed. In Arkansas, a field was sprayed above a spring supplying water to 20 people; six out

of eight babies conceived there have resulted in miscarriages, one severely deformed with a cleft head and no legs.

Dow Chemical Company, one of the major manufacturers of 2,4,5-T, asserts that the tetratogenic (birth-defect producing) agent is not 2,4,5-T itself, but rather dioxin, the "contaminant" of 2,4,5-T. Dioxin is ever-present in 2,4,5-T, inseparable from it, and even produced by "pure" 2,4,5-T under specific conditions. Dr. Jacqueline Verrett, a Supervisory Chemist for the U. S. Food and Drug Administration, says, "Dioxin is 100 to 1,000,000 times as dangerous in producing birth defects as the notorious thalidomide."

Thomas Whiteside in his book The Withering Rain (Dutton 1970) points out that 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D belong to a family of chemicals known as polychlorinated phenolic compounds. They are also used in such common products as soaps, paints, laundry starches, deodorants and asphalt, and have been shown to be in some cases highly toxic and potential sources of dioxin. Users of 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D as herbicides are warned by a long list of precautions not to inhale the fumes or spill the chemical on their skin, not to spray near lakes, streams, or dwellings, not to plant crops until 3 months after treatment or until the chemical has disappeared from soil. In Organic Gardening Without Poisons Hamilton Tyler comments on growth-regulating herbicides: "The point to remember is that when these compounds break down, they become a part of the soil until there may come a time when nothing will grow in your garden

Certain chemicals of either natural or synthetic derivation are known to have a doubling effect on the chromosomes when they penetrate a normal cell. Cancer consists in doubling the chromosomes in a few cells. Growth-regulating herbicides work by penetrating plant cells, where they either rearrange or destroy chromosomes. There is now evidence that baby chicks may be killed by eating corn from a field sprayed with herbicides like 2,4,5-T. Rather than being a garden help, herbicides could very well be another step into a hopelessly poisoned world."

The Bionetics Research Study by the National Cancer Institute was motivated by the widespread use of 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D in Vietnam. It revealed that "all dosages, routes, and strains resulted in increased incidence of abnormal fetuses" in laboratory rats and mice. Fetuses miscarried with no eyes, faulty eyes, cystic kidneys, cleft palates, enlarged livers, damage to heart, liver, skeletal musculature, lungs, and reproductive organs.

In a U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare publication, Environmental Health Perspectives, Sept. 1973, a so called objective history of the research on 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D, and 2,3,7,8 (its chemical name is tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin) was presented. Many articles, often signed "anonymous", were originally printed in publications devoted to chemical sales such as Chemical

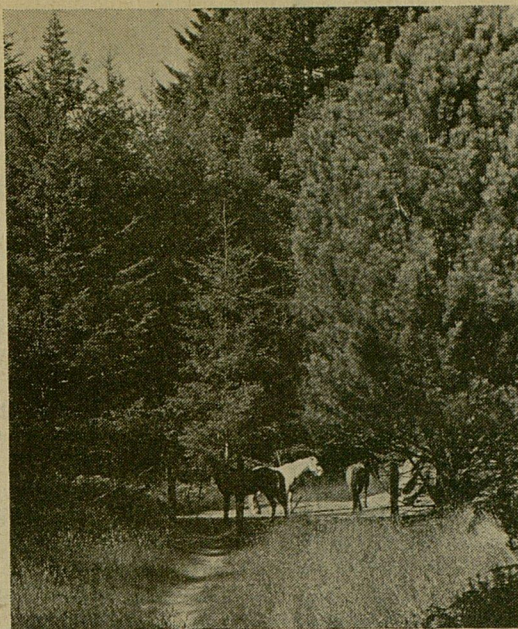
Engineering News, Weed Science, and Down to Earth (a Dow Chemical Company magazine) and found little dangerous effect of dioxin, if, if, if. . . Other scientists, not paid by chemical companies, have found such effects as: chick edema (accumulation of fluid in the heart sac); gross kidney and liver damage in chicks; fetal deaths in rats receiving dioxin; cleft palates and cystic kidneys in rats receiving 2,4,5-T; concentration

of dioxin in the liver of rats; that dioxin was persistent and immobile in soil; 2,4,5-T caused chromosome disturbances in flies which could cause sterility; that dioxin has a pronounced inhibitory effect on the enzymatic systems as do some carcinogens (cancer-causing agents); and, if that isn't already enough, found that so-called "pure" 2,4,5-T can release dioxin under certain conditions of heat and light.

Why, then, is 2,4,5-T being used? In 1971, President Nixon, upon advice from the scientific community, banned the use of 2,4,5-T for the military and the Environmental Protection Agency severely limited its domestic use. But, after an EPA "cancellation" of the registration of a chemical, the producing company can appeal the decision. Dow Chemical Company appealed the ruling and continues to distribute 2,4,5-T despite hazards to the public. Multi-billion dollar businesses with legal staffs and paid lobbyists have the quickness inspired by greed. Federal regulatory agencies are burdened with the slowness of bureaucracy and are heavily influenced by vested interests. Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz, who did not back up the EPA decision on 2,4,5-T, is a director of a company which is a major producer of agricultural chemicals.

Manufacturers and users of 2,4,5-T enjoy considerable economic gain from chemically induced, unnatural rapid growth. Application of 2,4,5-T is an inexpensive way to clear land for cattle pasture, to increase food-crop yields for greater agri-business profits; to transform national forests into timber-farms, replacing natural hardwoods with faster-growing, higher-profit producing pines - a treatment at the expense of not only every living thing in the rudely disrupted woodlands but at great expense to the American taxpayers who lose their national forests while a few businessmen capitalize on the lumber. 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D mean lower costs, higher profits to business with the financial means to legally manipulate government controls. In addition to domestic exploitation, the U. S. State Department is currently endeavoring to sell "Agent Orange" to South American military forces who are "developing" the people's land without their consent. Both at home and abroad, the 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D propaganda is designed to deceive the people that they are safe poisons "to control unwanted vegetation."

It is a deadly and devious misrepresentation. These poisons are being sprayed on your food, on the banks of your water reser-



voirs, on railroad rights-of-way, along electric power lines, gas lines, along the highway, on the farm, around dairy cattle, in your national parks and forests, into your air and into your future.

What will future generations be like with this subtle poisoning? Our concern and our energies are all that will thwart the herbicidal devastation of the planet and the maiming of our bodies by men more concerned with dollars than sense. Think on these things.

President Ford signed the Geneva Protocol Agreement of 1975 that calls for the "Prohibiting the Use of Chemical or Biological Agents in War" on January 22, 1975. In a public relations announcement, he said that all chemical warfare agents used by the U. S. had been destroyed.

The Air Force is sitting on a surplus stockpile of 2,338,900 gallons of Agent Orange (2,4-D and 2,4,5-T) according to Science magazine (April 6, 1973). Some of it is highly contaminated with dioxin. A million and a half gallons sit in barrels on Johnston Island (the highly radioactive site of atomic tests); the remaining is stored in Gulfport, Miss.

In Weeds Today, Spring 1974, Donald E. Davis, a proponent of herbicides, says, "With about 2.3 million gallons of Herbicide Orange on hand costing about \$400,000 per year to maintain, disposal is a real need. There has been much discussion about methods of disposing of this material, since it has a dioxin (birth-defect producing toxin) content varying from 47 ppm to 0.05 ppm. Options for disposal include sale or donation to foreign nations, sale to domestic markets, chemical conversion to other salable chemicals, fractionation so that the 2,4-D fraction can be sold, incineration, and biodegradation. All have inherent problems, but the need for disposal continues."

"Herbicide sales probably will reach \$1 billion in 1970 and are expected to climb 30%

during the next five years. By 1975 they may account for 60% of agricultural chemical sales." Dr. Samuel Epstein, Environment Magazine, August, 1970.

HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF AND FAMILY FROM 2,4,5-T?

1. Avoid being exposed to drift, drinking contaminated water, or burning contaminated firewood. Tell your friends and neighbors of these dangers.
2. Recognize the signs of herbicide poisoning (often mistaken for the flu): abdominal distress, nausea, headache, sore or swollen throat, respiratory difficulties, visual blurring, dizziness, fatigue, skin eruptions, irritability, anxiety, loss of appetite, decrease in sexual drive. In women, special symptoms include non-menstrual vaginal bleeding, miscarriages with fetal deformities. Do not be intimidated by doctors or nurses who may not be familiar with this poisoning. It is a documented reality; urge them to investigate.
3. Avoid eating foods high on the food-chain, such as animal fat, organ meats, and animal tissue in general, since this is where toxins accumulate. Do not gather berries or herbs in areas that have been sprayed, especially along electric lines and railroad rights-of-way, and along banks of reservoirs and irrigation canals and roadsides.
4. Use other means of weed and forest control, such as mulching, mowing, sawing, and dozing. Use beneficial insects and cultivating to control weeds. Investigate the profitability of selling hardwood as lumber or firewood instead of poisoning it. Investigate old and new methods of agriculture which do not use chemical poisons.
5. Avoid use of 2,4,5-T products. Read the label! Do not buy Weedone Chickweed Killer; Greenfield Broadleaf Weed-Killer; Scotts Plus-Two; Sears Superfine Weed-Feed; Real-Kill Spot Weed Killer; Ortho Weed-B-Gon; Ortho Poison Ivy Killer; Ortho Chickweed and Clover Killer; and any others which list Silvex, 2,4,5-T, or 2,4-D, or 2,4-DB on their labels.
6. Plastic signs which say NOTICE - ABSOLUTELY NO SPRAYING ALLOWED are available for 50¢ plus postage from Knobs and Valley Audubon Society, P.O. Box 556, New Albany, Ind., 47150.
7. Encourage non-chemical farming education at your state universities and colleges. Insure your own health by buying only organically grown produce, or by growing your own food in yards and vacant lots. Organize community gardens. Get your city council to donate unused public property for community, organic gardens. This land is our land, if we make it so.
8. Plant two 50-foot rows of tomatoes, okra, grapes or cotton on your land and qualify as a commercial grower; the Forest Service and others won't be able to spray within one mile.

We need your support. The Women's Center Committee on the Environment. For more information contact: 210 N. Locust, Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701. ♀

Power Tools

Power tools might not be as aesthetically pleasing as hand tools (to some people) but they sure do get things done fast. While it might take several minutes to cut through a 2x6 by hand, a power saw does it in seconds, and for cutting plywood or ripping boards, they're indispensable.

When purchasing a power tool, it's important to have an idea of what type of work you'll be doing. The biggest isn't always the best for the job. If you're buying a new tool, check out several different brands. Hold them all and if possible try them out. Select something that feels comfortable, maneuverable and not too heavy.

Portable power tools are generally categorized as:

- light duty - for intermittent use and light work
- general - for intermittent use and heavy work
- heavy duty - consistent power
- super duty - operate for long periods of time doing heavy work

The three most commonly used portable power tools are the circular saw, saber saw and drill.

Circular Saw

Saw size is indicated by the diameter of the blade, which ranges from 6 1/2" to 10". The smallest size will cut through a 2" thickness while the largest can cut through 3 1/2". Most circular saws are adjustable for depth of cut and for any angle of cut up to 45°. The upper part of the blade is guarded by a fixed housing for obvious protection but the lower guard retracts automatically into the upper one as you start cutting. This means that the blade underneath the cutting surface is exposed so don't ever stick your hands under what you're cutting while the saw is going.

Some saws have just one handle, others have a knob or handle in front too, so you can use both hands to guide the saw. Make sure the weight of the saw rests on the bulk of the work, not on the portion being cut off. Figure out a way to keep the whole thing steady - the material being cut as well as the table or saw horses it's sitting on. If you're lucky a friend will hold the board while you cut, but you may hold it with one hand (and the saw in the other) or even with a knee. This unorthodox method is particularly convenient for us left-handed minority; otherwise we're forced to hold the saw in our untrained right hands. A good solid place to cut is on the ground, if it's fairly level. Place 2 x 4's on the ground, one at each end and one on either side of the cutting line. Set the saw on the board to be cut so the blade is hanging over the edge. Adjust the depth of cut by pivoting the saw up from its baseplate (first loosen the adjustment screw or level usually found on the back of the saw) until the bottom of the blade is about 1/4"

below the wood. This will ensure that the blade won't cut into the ground. Also it's most efficient for the bottom of the saw blade to be just slightly below the level of the wood being cut.

The teeth on a saw blade are alternately pointed to the left and to the right. The width of the line the blade cuts is called the kerf. When cutting, be sure to keep the kerf on the waste side of the line, or else your cut will be short. There are V-grooves on the front of the baseplate to help you guide the saw but I find it's easier for me to watch the blade itself. At first it may be difficult to cut a straight line freehand, but the use of a guide strip will help immensely. The strip should be as long as the cut you're making (any width and thickness) and have one straight edge. It may be clamped or tacked on to the material being cut. Measure the distance from the edge of the baseplate (parallel to the blade) to the inside edge of the saw blade (measuring to one of the teeth that point inward). Secure your guide strip that distance from the cut line. Remember this distance so that any time you want to fasten a guide strip to the work you'll know exactly how far from the cut line to place it. While cutting, be sure to hold the baseplate of the saw against the guide for the entire cut, and you'll be guaranteed a straight edge. This method works particularly well when cutting plywood or ripping boards, where you want a long straight cut. Most saws come with "rip guides" which are inserted through slots in the baseplate and secured with screws but they are only effective for ripping a few inches.

Now you're ready to cut. Stand behind the saw and make sure the cord is behind you, well out of the way of the saw blade. Hold the saw slightly away from the board so its teeth aren't touching the wood and start the saw by pressing the trigger. When the motor has revved up to full speed, move the saw straight forward with a steady motion. Don't let the noise freak you out, just tune in to what you're doing. Listen to the motor as you cut, it should keep a consistent hum. Feel the saw as it chews a path through the wood. If you hit a knot, slow up a bit, don't force the saw through it. If you're pushing the saw, either the blade is dull or you're not cutting straight. If the saw starts to bind (from not cutting straight) pull it back a short distance before you continue forward or it may kick back.

The blade rotates counter-clockwise so it cuts on an up motion. This means that the side of the board nearest you will be the most splintered, so to get the cleanest edge, cut with the "good" side down.

To cut a bevel (angle), tilt the saw by loosening the adjusting screw usually found on the front of the saw. Most saws have a

sliding scale for the angles so you just tilt the saw until the adjustment screw is next to the angle you want, then tighten the screw. Unfortunately, these scales aren't always accurate so it's a good idea to make a practice cut and check it with a protractor to make sure you've got the desired angle.

It's possible to start a cut within a board, say a sheet of plywood or paneling. It takes a bit of control, but it's not really difficult. Basically you tilt the saw forward on its base plate so the blade clears the board, and you retract the lower blade guard. Start the saw and while the blade is turning slowly lower it into the wood. When the baseplate is totally sitting on the wood, you can move forward.

Using the right blade for the job will definitely prolong the life of your saw. Keep your blades sharp. You can have them sharpened by a professional or do it yourself. The basic types of blades are:

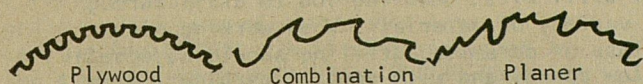
Combination - coarse teeth; for all around work, does ripping and crosscuts.

Planer - also rips and crosscuts but leaves a very smooth edge with no splinters.

Flooring - made of special steel to withstand cutting through nails; good for cutting up used lumber.

Cut-off - fine teeth; for smooth crosscutting; holds a good edge over a long period of use.

Plywood - for splinter free cuts in plywood.



To change blades, first UNPLUG THE SAW. Unscrew the nut in the center of the blade until it comes out. Take off the washer (noticing which way it goes on) and old blade. When replacing the blade, the teeth should point in a counter-clockwise direction.

I have just learned how to sharpen blades and have only done it a few times but it does not seem too difficult. It's best to put the blade in a vise where it can be held steady while you work on it. Face the blade so that the center hole is in front of you and the teeth are pointing clockwise. Notice how the teeth alternate pointing towards you and away from you. Notice also how each tooth is set at a slight angle. The surface of the tooth is probably dull in color if the blade needs sharpening.

Start with the teeth pointing away from you. Hold the file against the blade and with a steady stroke file the tooth, moving the file away from you. You should notice the tooth getting brighter (sharper) after just a few strokes. Try to keep the file against the entire surface of the tooth at all times to ensure a smooth finish. Continue this procedure, sharpening every other tooth (only the ones pointing away from you). When this has been done, turn the blade around so the teeth

that have just been sharpened are pointing towards you. Proceed in the same manner as above until the rest of the teeth are filed.

Saber Saw

The saber saw is definitely my favorite portable power tool. It enables you to cut curves as well as straight lines in a variety of materials. You can purchase a saber saw for as little as \$20.00 but if you're planning to make lots of intricate cuts, you might want to invest in a scroll saw (which may cost \$50 or \$60). A scroll saw is basically the same as a saber saw but includes a switch which enables you to turn the blade independent of the direction the saw is going. This makes it considerably easier to cut tight curves.

New saws are usually accompanied by a rating of their cutting depths. An average saw can comfortably cut up to 2 1/2" in softwoods (possibly more with an extra long blade) and 1" in hardwoods. Ratings are also often given for aluminum and steel. Even the cheapest saber saw can cut up to 1 1/2" in softwoods and has a tilting base for cutting bevels up to 45°.

Some saws move the blade straight up and down while others move in a small orbit. The latter moves the blade forward on the up or cutting stroke and backs the blade away on the downward stroke. This reduces friction, thus prolonging the life of the blade.

The variety of blades available can turn your saw into a versatile instrument. There are fine, medium and coarse teeth blades for wood, also special blades for sheet metal, fiberglass, plastics, plywoods and sheetrock. The single most important factor is the number of teeth per inch. For rough cutting lumber a blade with from three to seven teeth per inch is ideal. Smoother cuts for hardwoods or plywood will require 10-14 teeth per inch. There is a special knife-edge blade (looks like a razor blade) which cuts through leather, cork, cardboard, styrofoam and rubber. Metal cutting blades are also available from aluminum and copper to iron and steel.

With a multi-speed saw it's possible to match the correct blade and speed for the job. It's best to use low speeds for tough jobs and high speeds for easy ones. Once again you can tell by the sound of the motor if the saw is being overworked.

Normally a narrow blade works best for cutting curves. Blade lengths vary from 3" to 6"; try to choose the shortest blade that will do the job. Not all blades fit all saws, so when buying a new blade make sure the shank end is the same as your old one.

As with a circular saw, saber saws can make internal cuts without having to first drill a hole, and the procedure is very similar. The initial contact made between the blade and the cutting surface should be with the bottom teeth and not the point of the blade or the saw will jump all over. Contact between the baseplate and the work must be very firm or you'll bounce around, so hold

Cont.

on tightly! Remember you can always drill a hole to start the saw in the middle of the board if this method leaves you jumpy.

Vibration in either the saw or the work must be avoided. If you're working on something too small to hold down tightly with your hand, it should be clamped. To keep the saw still, firm pressure should be applied forward and downward. Avoid sideways pressure as the blade might break since it is only attached to the saw at one end.

Again, like the circular saw, the blade cuts on the up stroke, so keep the "good" side of the wood (or whatever you're cutting) down to prevent splintering.

A rip guide is provided with some saber-saws (or you can buy one separately) but you can always use a straight piece of wood as a guide. For cross-cutting, a simple tri-square can be used by holding it away from the cut line a distance that is equal to the measurement from the edge of the baseplate to the inside edge of the blade, and keeping the edge of the baseplate in constant contact while sawing.

Drill

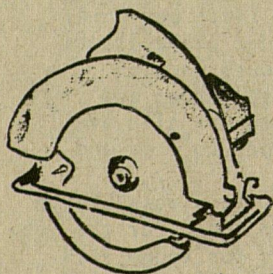
The drill is the most commonly used portable power tool, and probably the easiest to operate. Because of its popularity, there are many drills on the market and someone purchasing one for the first time might be overwhelmed by the variety offered. The most common sizes are 1/4", 3/8", and 1/2". This indicates the maximum diameter shank that can be gripped in the chuck (or opening). The 1/4" drill is the most lightweight and is capable of cutting through 1/4" steel or 1/2" hardwood. The 3/8" drill can cut through 3/8" steel and 1" hardwood. The 1/2" drill has

if it has a variable speed control. How the drill feels in your hand is an important consideration as drills may weigh from two to six pounds. Generally speaking, the more power a tool has, the greater its capacity and the more it will weigh.

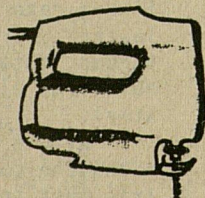
Using a drill is very simple, but there are some basic things to remember. Always center the drill bit in the chuck and use the chuck key to tighten the chuck. Don't leave the chuck key in the drill while drilling or it might fly off and hit you in the head. If you loop the chuck key around the electric cord coming out of the drill, it will always be ready for use and you won't have to spend hours looking for it.

To start drilling when working with a variable speed drill, place the tip of the bit where you want to drill and start at minimum speed. Apply pressure and maintain a slow speed until the cut is started, and then you can increase the speed without worrying about the bit moving around. For a single speed drill, it's a good idea to start the hole with a punch, to keep the drill bit from wandering. The correct speed for drilling is one which keeps the drill cutting consistently, yet without getting hot. If you don't see any chips or sawdust, speed up; if smoke is coming out, slow down. Generally speaking, use high speeds for small holes and low speeds for big holes. Keep a piece of scrap wood underneath or behind the hole you're drilling so the back of the hole won't splinter.

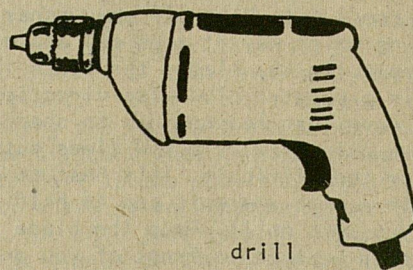
As with saber saws, there are many types of drill bits, enabling you to drill through a variety of materials. When working with glass or ceramics, drilling should be done at slow speeds and with special carbide-tipped



circular saw



saber saw



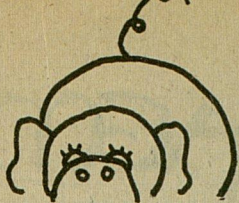
drill

still larger capacities and can drill for longer periods of time without getting hot. The greater the capacity of the drill, the lower the drill speed will be. For example, a 1/4" drill may go from 0 to 2,600 rpm's (revolutions per minute) while a 1/2" drill may be limited to a maximum of 700 rpm's. If you plan to use your drill only occasionally to drill holes for screws or to drill through a wall into a stud, a lightweight drill will suffice. If you plan to use it fairly often, for long periods of time, or for drilling through masonry or metal, I would recommend something with more power. I think the 3/8" drill is a good all-purpose drill, especially

tools. There are also accessories that can be purchased to turn your drill into a screwdriver, sander, grinder or polisher. These usually come with information as to optimum operating speeds.

Some things to watch out for: be sure to hold the drill perpendicular to the material being drilled or you'll get a hole that's at an angle. It helps if your eyes are level with the drill. If you're drilling through a wall into a stud, make sure there are no wires in the way.

With these three simple tools you will be amazed at the amount of work you can accomplish efficiently and quickly. Enjoy! ♀



PIG FEEDING



We butchered our third pig yesterday. Each time the process has gotten smoother and less tiring.

We made the decision to raise and kill all the meat we eat last year and except for beef hamburger we've stuck to that decision.

As if to get us well started, two neighbors gave us six runt pigs. With the pork market so high this year that's not likely to happen again. It's still well worth your time to talk to any farmers you know who raise pigs to see if they have any runts. Some pigs called runts are just slightly smaller than the rest of the bunch and will feed out to the same weight - we got three of those last year. But three piglets were real sickly tiny creatures that had no chance without personal care. One of these was a pig with a condition called bull-nose. It's a hereditary condition that produces a pig with a shortened bull-like snout which makes the animal more susceptible to respiratory diseases.

Even with warm milk, bulgar, eggs, and brewer's yeast, the tiniest piglet died. At three pounds she just couldn't get over the colds they all had when we got them.

Keep your eyes open for cheap sources of feed. We made a deal with a friend to exchange a fully grown pig for 35 bushels of mixed grain he had cleaned out of his bins. In January we found 2000 pounds of mixed grain at the dump! It took three very chilly hours at -8° bagging the grain, but it meant no feed to buy until summer!

The man I live with drives a grain truck during the harvest and in September was given free for the hauling a 60 bushel spill at the local grain elevator.

Pigs will eat practically anything so you only have to make sure they get enough protein, whether it comes from grain (such as wheat, corn, millet) or from milk and milk by-products, or guts and offal from fish or a combination of any of these. We use wheat and millet because that's what we got free.

If you feed grain you will need about three pounds of grain a day at 40 pounds, four pounds a day at 80 pounds, and five pounds a day until butchering. Any extra protein will add that much more weight that much faster. A pig can have one to one and a half gallons of milk (skim or whey) a day.

Young pigs and older pigs eat the same diet. They also enjoy pasture if it's available.

Along with providing protein, milk also seems to help prevent some kinds of intestinal parasites. I don't have a cow so I'm using a method of parasite prevention I read in Organic Gardening and Farming. Pumpkins contain a natural vermifuge, especially the seeds, and it was suggested feeding sheep

and swine one whole pumpkin apiece a day for thirty days in the fall. I had such a successful pumpkin patch this year (30 hills of pumpkins) that I'm still feeding the daily pumpkin. Also, cider vinegar is added to the daily feed (about three tablespoons). I had no luck growing garlic this year but if you have it a whole bulb a day is supposed to have antibiotic properties. I planted a large patch of mangel beets for winter feed.

Pigs are excellent converters of grain into meat but it helps to soak the grain overnight in hot water. We fed the pigs what came to be known as Pig Salad. In a large galvanized tub we put three days worth of grain, hot water to cover, and mineral salts. This mineral salt can be added to the mixture (three tablespoons to a five gallon pail) if it isn't being offered free choice. To this base we added a chopped up mixture of meat scraps, lettuce and cabbage, old onions, pumpkins and fruit that we found at the dump, thrown there by the local supermarket. Because of the cold weather these foods were always in good condition except for being frozen solid. We'd bring it in the basement one box at a time to defrost. Chopped up fine the pigs would eat oranges and onions. Our pigs flourished on this diet and at the end of January we butchered our first pig. The pig had weighed thirty pounds when we got her and we weighed 186 pounds of meat when we were finished. Except for fuel to go to the dump once a week or so we paid no cash for food or for the pigs themselves.

If pigs are allowed to have a place to root and wallow they will absorb a great deal of needed minerals from the dirt.

The tail on a healthy happy pig will stand up curly. They will be quick to come running when you come to feed them. You can raise a pig alone, but they do like company so put it near your other animals and talk to it a lot when you feed it.

We built a pen for the six with a special side section for the smallest to creep into to eat without being shoved around by the larger three. We use an old shack that is in the middle of the field where the pigs are fenced, with an electric fence. Pigs do need a house of some sort. With a floor if possible so they can get in out of wet. If you give them a bale of straw they will make a nest.

One last thing. We were told that an uncastrated boar would have a bad taste to the meat when butchered. That's a lot of bull. The primary source of canned picnic hams is boar pig. Boars are usually far cheaper to buy and the only difference we've found in the meat is that it's very lean. From our last sow we got 37 pounds of lard, from the boar none. So the meat is drier and needs some added fat and/or water to tenderize it.

Good luck! ♀

ME & MY DIAPHRAGM: LOVE AT THIRD SIGHT

Early last fall, a new friend worked up her courage and confronted me about my health, actually about my failure to care for my physical self. It was such a loving, consciousness-raising and tearful talk that since then I have become increasingly committed to my health. And I have learned that there is no such phenomenon as physical health without my mental/intellectual involvement. This fact became clear to me around the issue of birth control.

The current state of the art of birth control is more a political reality than a medical reality. Millions of women and I have been abused as experimental victims in the (re)search for population control. For years, every time I had to go to a doctor or clinic for "birth" control, I would end up in a vibrating rage. The rest of the time I would struggle to ignore the effects of the Pill or the IUD that lived in my body, distorting, always distorting, my relationship with my woman-self, my monthly cycle.

When I began bleeding again, a week after the end of my usual 15-day IUD-style "period," I blew up. I decided to abandon my expectations of justice in birth control, and resigned myself to getting a diaphragm. My friend Jenny had been talking and talking about how good it could be and all the specifics of making it good. So with her words and warmth in me along with the IUD pain, I made the appointment. This was the beginning of the (self) love story.

At the clinic, my friendly woman paramedic, Nancy, and I talked for a while about what was going on, and agreed that the diaphragm should be fitted before she "pulled" the IUD. We tried one kind and it wouldn't fit; tried another and we both could get it in and out, and it fit properly. Success. The use of the word we is crucial. I was a participant, not a patient or a victim in this process of fitting my diaphragm, just as I am when I use it to prevent conception.

This was the third diaphragm in my life, but my first as a feminist and my first with supportive information about its use from women. It is the first diaphragm I have loved.

Both before and since I began using this diaphragm, I have had a number of conversations with women about it. One night, I was joking about past experiences with my diaphragms. When my lover and I had watched it sailing around the room like a flying saucer as it blasted off like greased lightning from my hand. When I had dripped goo from the moment I put it in 'til three days later. When my diaphragm had been only a source of annoyance and repulsion. Judith

laughed and I laughed. The next day, it emerged that while she thought she was using hers properly, she sometimes had trouble getting it in, and always drip, drip, drip. My old tales alive and awful in another woman's life.

Here lies the integrative link between mind and body in diaphragm use. Unless you have or are ready to develop a good relationship with your own vagina, unless you feel you have assumed or are truly ready to assume responsibility for yourself, your sexuality, and your life, unless you have a supportive and openly communicative woman-source for information, diaphragm use can be uncomfortable, sloppy, and even risky. If you do have all of the above, diaphragm use can be a regular source of self-affirmation and self-validation. If you can trust yourself, you can trust your diaphragm.

Within two months of the removal of the IUD, I had returned to a "normal" cycle. It is now five months since I began using my diaphragm. I no longer bleed half of every month - I have a five day period with one day heavy and crampy. In contrast, what I used to call the "discomfort" from my IUD, I can now see as real pain. Pain that I could not acknowledge because I would have had to take responsibility for myself by using a diaphragm. Responsibility not annually but consciously and clearly every single time I wanted to make love. Now, as with other responsibilities in my life, through genuinely and thoroughly accepting the responsibilities of diaphragm use, I am freed. My friend Tui once suggested that I make friends with my IUD, as she had with hers. I couldn't, but I have made friends with my diaphragm, and through that, made friends with myself, an integration of mental and physical health.

PART TWO: ON THE PRACTICAL SIDE

I would like to share some of my feelings and knowledge and resources for information on diaphragm love and use. The main resource, to be used before switching, is long talks with women who use and love their diaphragms. The essence of successful use is being ready and willing and committed to paying attention: ---willing to spend time practicing putting in the diaphragm, to discover your most comfortable and reliable position for insertion. (I crouch, insert most of the way, take a few deep breaths to relax the vaginal muscles, insert the rest of the way, stand up, then check to feel my cervix on the other side of the diaphragm. The whole procedure takes about three minutes, once you are sure of yourself.)

---willing, if something feels funny, to stop love-making and check that your diaphragm is in place. (30 seconds.)

---willing, if you make love more than once, to insert an applicator full of jelly or cream before the second time around. The handy little applicators come in certain labelled packages of cream or jelly; screw into the tube and squeeze until full. You can fill the applicator when you insert your diaphragm, and keep it next to the bed. There is currently considerable medical debate (see reference below) as to the need for the second application of spermicide for the second lovemaking. I do not want to become pregnant so, until this is resolved, I will use a second application, on the advice of my clinic.

---committed to use your diaphragm every single time you might be exposed to sperm. This means having it with you whenever there is one tenth of a chance you might want to make love with a man. This means not making love if you don't have your diaphragm properly in place.

---ready to be aware of when you are running low on jelly and cream and buying it before you think you need it, just in case.

Here are some clarifications of common misinformation and some practical tips for enjoying diaphragm use.

---You do NOT need to fill the diaphragm with cream or jelly NOR do you need to squeeze a whole circle of it around the rim. This was the cause of my flying saucer and drip, drip, drip . . . Both my para-med and my successfully using friend recommended just over a teaspoon of cream or jelly placed INSIDE the diaphragm, and a thin layer of it spread evenly around the rim with your finger. This is enough spermicide for one ejaculation. This is why you apply a second application with the applicator WITHOUT REMOVING THE DIAPHRAGM, for a second ejaculation.

---Jellies are more lubricating. Creams are less lubricating. Jellies seem to become more liquid from body heat. Use what is best for you. The long term effects on the body of such spermicide use are not known. Some brands USED TO HAVE mercury in them, but they have been removed from the market. (I use Koromex II Contraceptive Cream, which doesn't over-lubricate me and barely smells at all. It's like a nice hand cream.)

---I keep a few of those pocket moist-towel-ettes in the little case with my diaphragm, cream and applicator wrapped in a paper towel. If I accidentally get cream around the opening to my vagina, I wipe it away and wipe just inside too. This can also be done with toilet paper, if handy.

---If, after being carefully fitted for your diaphragm, having all your questions answered, and practicing insertion right there and then, you get home and feel insecure, call for another appointment. Before this appointment, practice putting in and removing your diaphragm until you feel comfortable doing it. Go to that with your diaphragm already in-

serted to the best of your ability, and then ask for it to be checked for proper placement. This avoids an often shaky attempt to insert it in a strange place, or feeling (justly or unjustly) rushed. I went through this process with my second diaphragm at the suggestion of my (male) doctor. It really helped in terms of my confidence, though I wasn't ready then for the responsibility.

---Get a new diaphragm every year and have your diaphragm checked for fit with any weight change - up or down - of ten pounds.

---I check my diaphragm for holes or tears every time I remove it, by holding it up to the light after I've washed it with plain soap and water. This saves time when putting it in, and is as safe as where you keep your diaphragm.

---Between uses, always keep your diaphragm in its case. To help the rubber stay fresh and flexible, I was advised to dust it with cornstarch between uses. (Since this is organic, I just brush it off before putting the cream on. Talcum powder can be used, but I would wash it off and dry the diaphragm before putting the cream or jelly on.)

1. After intercourse, do not remove the diaphragm for six hours. This allows the spermicide to work.

2. Do not douche until six hours after intercourse. Then do so, only if you wish. It is not necessary.

3. Most important, if you have questions or difficulties, ask both a successful woman user and your doctor or para-med.

Some readings I've come across on the diaphragm and other alternatives to the Pill or IUD:

---Paula Weideger, "Diaphragms: A New Look at the Old Standby," Ms., August, 1975. An excellent information source, especially for the new user. Really the factual companion piece for this article.

---Barbara Seaman, "The New Pill Scare," Ms., June, 1975. If you are trying to talk yourself off, this should help.

---Most every family planning clinic has a give-away flyer on diaphragm use. Call and ask them to send you one.

---Louise Lacey, Lunaception: A Feminine Odyssey into Fertility and Conception. New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, Inc., 1974. Introduction by Barbara Seaman. "Birth control doesn't really control birth. What is accomplished is a reduction in the birth rate at the expense of gross bodily manipulation." With this assumption, Lacey begins her odyssey into self-controlled conception, via regular temperature charting combined with special lighting while sleeping to recreate the lunar cycle in our oft-removed from-nature lives. Again, extensive paying attention and careful action are women's tools for "seizing the means of reproduction."

--- Eugen Jonas, M. D. Natural Birth Control. This technique combines astrological charting with rhythm charting, and has been successfully used and tested in Czechoslovakia. ♀

NATURAL SELF-HELP

The concept of self-help is basic to our lives as free, strong women. Since Carol Downer first demonstrated vaginal self-exam with a plastic speculum to a women's group five years ago, more and more of us have been reclaiming the control of our bodies that comes with shared knowledge.

If you haven't made contact with the women's health center nearest you (The New Women's Survival Sourcebook has a list of addresses), obtaining a speculum from them can be a good opportunity to get more information about gynecological self-help and to experience the excitement of this blossoming branch of the women's movement. Other sources for this simple yet revolutionary tool include family planning and other community clinics. Is it time for your regular check-up and Pap smear? (It should happen at least yearly.) You can learn to insert the speculum yourself and, if it's plastic, take it home instead of seeing it thrown away.

To examine yourself, you'll need a mirror (I use a magnifying mirror), a strong light source - high-intensity lamp, flashlight, candle or bright sunlight - and possibly a lubricant such as K-Y jelly (NOT Vaseline), or simply warm water to dip the clean speculum in before insertion. Most women find it easy to use the standard, medium size, but smaller, narrow-bladed speculums are available, as well as longer ones.

Be comfortable and relaxed; lying back on a pillow, legs apart is probably easiest, but I knew one woman who used her speculum standing up! Breathing deeply into your vagina will release any tension; or pull down on the lower muscle with a finger to help it relax. I insert my speculum straight, handle up; others do it sideways, then turn it. Hold the blades together and slide them in following the slope of your vagina till they touch bottom (that's your cervix; looking at a side-view diagram of the pelvis will help make this clear). Now press the handle together and lock it, by pushing down on the outer part in the groove meant for your thumb (there are different types of speculums, so it's a good idea to practice locking and unlocking yours before using it). Once you've arranged your light and mirror at the proper angle - the speculum should stay in place by itself - the historic moment has arrived: you're gazing at your own lovely round cervix! The os (opening into the uterus) may even seem to be smiling! If all you see is vaginal wall, don't get frustrated; though I've been doing this regularly for a couple of years, sometimes I have to start over at a different angle. The uterus is not fixed. You may get the cervix to pop into view by pushing down with your pelvic muscles, or by moving the speculum out a bit, then in again. But to re-

move it, unlock it and pull out gently at the same angle, allowing the blades to close gradually to avoid pinching yourself.

The ideal condition for self-exam is with a supportive group of sister-women, with whom we share past gynecological experiences and the joy of all our unique inner beauty and visions of its future flowering - nourished by our growing love and power. The variety of colors, shapes, textures and smells of our vulvas and vaginas is dazzling; you may find yourself inspired to celebrate this in some artform. If you decide to meet regularly, the common pool of information from your observations, experience and research will provide more answers than you ever hoped for. Contacting feminists in the medical profession might even lead to the evolution of another women's clinic, as you learn to do pelvic and breast exams, Pap smears, blood tests. . .

Collectively or alone, do keep a clear, detailed record of exam findings. Note cervix and vaginal color, position and condition of the os, consistency and amount of mucus; after removing the speculum, smell, taste and feel your discharge. Soon you'll learn what changes accompany your personal ovulation cycle and which are the early symptoms of infection. Descriptions of the different types of vaginitis are readily available (see bibliography). My focus here is on preventive care of our sexual systems and natural treatment of their disorders. If some of this seems obvious, remember that ignorance of our deep body-wisdom has been the cause of many imbalances.

VAGINAL ECOLOGY

Keeping your vulva clean, cool, dry and aired is basic in avoiding or curing infection. Wash daily with cool, clear water, especially after love-making. At home, I splash with rainwater after peeing and dry off with a towel reserved for that purpose; it feels better than using toilet paper! Try newspaper, leaves (thimbleberry's great), grass or moss to wipe your rear end and always do it from front to back to keep rectal bacteria away from your vagina. Be careful with soap in the area; it can disrupt the acidity of the vagina, allowing normally present bacteria to multiply causing infection. Adding vinegar to your bath water is a good idea. Excessive douching can also destroy your normal, healthy vaginal balance. It's unnecessary, unless you have a recurring infection; if you do, use one or two tablespoons of vinegar in a quart of warm water, every week or two, as a preventive. The best time is after your period and at midcycle (also recommended times for your monthly breast exam - it's more important than the vaginal).

Wear loose clothing and cotton underwear, or none; don't pile on more covers than you need at night. Mother Sun will help any female problem, so bathe in her rays whenever you can. Rest well, exercise too; drink plenty of water and eat what your body requires for well-being. If you have a chronic problem, you're likely to be ignoring one of these common-sense basics. Constipation or a poorly functioning liver can result in difficulties or pain in your reproductive system, as can a vitamin or mineral deficiency.

Be aware of holding tension in your pelvic area; allow those muscles to be soft. Yoga, Tai-Chi, dance, massage are all wonderful ways to let go and become open. Once your life-energy is free-flowing, any imbalance can be corrected. Specific Yoga postures for toning the uterus and ovaries include the shoulder stand, bow, plough, and cobra (the last two relieve cramps). May Bethel considers the knee-chest (fetus) position "a preventive and cure of pelvic disease in women." A favorite of mine is squatting, elbows inside knees, palms together. Flexibility in your ankles and wrists is important, since they contain reflexes to the sexual organs. Apply as much pressure as you can stand to any sore points on the anklebone (the uterus connects to the inside, the ovaries to the outside) and for chronic problems, massage up from the heel. The jaw and top of the bridge of the nose are other related tension areas you can work on yourself. Massage exchanges with others are an ideal healing method!

Now to plunge into the vastness of herbal lore, ancient and new, with the reminder that as in body-work, the key to healing is focusing your consciousness on the desired state of being, visualizing your organs functioning perfectly, and using whatever method you choose with patient, responsible regularity. You alone can give yourself wholeness; but other beings will gladly help.

As a reminder of what we're working to replace, Flagyl, the standard treatment for trichomonas vaginitis, has recently been found to cause cancer, gene mutation and birth defects, in addition to the previously known side-effects: nausea, dizziness, diarrhea, cramps, darkened urine, and yeast infections.* The alternative suggested in Healing Yourself is garlic suppositories: peel a clove, being careful not to nick it, and wrap it in a piece of gauze, about one foot long and three or four inches wide, folded in half; dip it in vegetable oil before inserting, and leave a tail to remove it. Change every 12 hours for three to five days. Rest and diet are also emphasized. One friend advised using cloves cured in oil for 10-14 days, to remove the burning properties (cured garlic works wonders on cuts and sores, too, so it's good to have on hand). Another reported using garlic suppositories and douching with vinegar on alternate days for 10 days.

This garlic treatment can be used for

any vaginal infection: the oil pressed from one clove may also be added to the douche with two tablespoons vinegar for non-specific and hemophilus infections, and cervicitis. This is used twice daily for three to five days.

A vinegar douche can stop a yeast infection if used when you notice the first signs (the speculum enables you to see it before you start itching). The other wonder substance for dealing with Monilia is yogurt, now prescribed by doctors! If you must take antibiotics for any reason, eating two tablespoons three times a day is advised as a preventive against yeast infection; women very susceptible to yeast should also douche daily with four tablespoons to a quart of warm water to maintain their bacterial balance. Use only plain, natural yogurt, preferably with acidophilus. If you develop a yeast infection, use this douche twice daily for five days, or until the symptoms have been gone a few days. Another method is to insert two tablespoons of yogurt on or followed by a tampon, twice a day. Eat lots of it too!

Other general advice for treating vaginal infections include eating more greens, less carbohydrates, and using lemon juice. You can make a chlorophyll douche with any unused greens; as always, be gentle with yourself - make sure the liquid is flowing in very slowly to prevent forcing the infection up into the uterus (don't hang the bag more than two feet above your pelvis).

You could also try any of the herbs recommended for leucorrhea (abnormal discharge) as a douche. These include solomon's seal, wintergreen, golden seal, and fenugreek, a good mucus-dissolver; mallow helps soothe irritation.

MENSTRUATION

Water pepper and blue cohosh can be drunk to increase the menstrual flow, periwinkle to decrease it; and the root of the lovely trillium, coming up around my house now, is a remedy for "all uterine troubles." Three astringent herbs effective as douches for leucorrhea, like all those just mentioned, also act to decrease the menstrual flow when drunk: yarrow (also given for the opposite problem, seems to generally regulate the system), uva ursi (good for cervicitis and "all female troubles,") and black haw. The latter is recommended for cramps, ovarian irritation, and as a uterine tonic as well. It grows in central and southern states. Keep in mind that a heavy discharge may be due to a calcium or other deficiency, or to fatigue, depression, or illness.

Teas to relieve cramps which may also increase your flow are: camomile (has calcium), catnip, valerian, motherwort, rue, black cohosh, and lemon balm ("for female disorders"); others include pennyroyal, peppermint, passion flower, cramp bark, skullcap, red clover, sweet flag, juniper berries and comfrey root. You can try lying in the sun, rubbing your abdomen with essence of pepper-

mint oil, soaking your feet in hot water, or having an orgasm (separately or all at once!). An acupuncture point four inches above the inner ankle bone, where the muscle meets the bone, can be pressed as hard as possible, until cramps disappear (also good for other lower pelvic problems).

Cramps and the premenstrual syndrome (tension, nervousness, headache, depression, water retention and insomnia) can be caused by a lack of calcium. Increase your intake of it as much as ten days before your period; that's when the blood level begins to drop. If you want to do this in pill form, take calcium lactate, not dolomite. Sesame seeds, kelp and dandelion greens are three good sources as well as being high in iron; others are horsetail, toad flax, coltsfoot, and chickweed. Magnesium and vitamin D are needed with calcium to help assimilate it. Bioflavonoids, in the whites and pulp of organic citrus fruit and in green peppers, help prevent cramping and regulate periods. If your menstrual flow is too heavy (menorrhagia) here are more teas. Three containing calcium: shepherd's purse, plantain, red raspberry (also for cramps), and bayberry or wax myrtle bark ("for uterine problems").

For suppressed menstruation (amenorrhea) the list is much longer: aloe, nettle, wood sage, fennel, marjoram, basil, gentian, elecampane, spikenard, angelica, wild yam, life root, myrrh, sumac, feverfew, peppermint, black horehound, good old garlic, and parsley (seed), sage, rosemary and thyme. Vervain is another herb "good in all female troubles"; mentioned often are tansy, ginger (wild or not, it tonifies the system), and last but definitely not least, pennyroyal, especially in combination with mugwort and southernwood. Although some herbals specify that these emmenagogues work only when colds and other ailments retard and obstruct menstruation, pennyroyal has been used as a contraceptive by Native Americans and pregnant women are cautioned against drinking it and others in that list.

Meredith Bear writes: "If you feel you are pregnant, the herbs mentioned for suppressed periods might help to bring on your period, but you must be extremely careful. Seek help from an experienced herbalist. It can be very dangerous and the later you use the herbs, the more dangerous it is." She recommends drinking pennyroyal and kish-wuf (osha or wild celery root) regularly for irregular periods, and the following for three days before your period is due: one ounce kish-wuf simmered in a quart of water for 20 minutes, with an ounce or more of pennyroyal added to steep; drink a quart a day, spread out over the day. If you haven't begun your period, take two to three cups of blue cohosh, simmered 20 minutes, on the fourth day.

Here's another tested recipe for the same purpose: simmer a tablespoon of black cohosh for 20 minutes, add a handful each of

pennyroyal and tansy and at least four inches of an aloe vera leaf. Drink two quarts a day - if you can! These teas are strong, bitter brews. For maximum effect, fast for three days while drinking them, and don't add lemon or honey.

A variation of Meredith's recipe includes ginger (as much as the osha or less); it calls for a quart or quart and a half a day, and a quart or so of blue cohosh on the fourth. Trillium and black cohosh are advised in case of hemorrhage.

Another reader, Carol Burns, suffered nausea for half a year; it vanished instantly when an Indian woman prescribed prince's pine and rosemary, six strong cups a day. The latter was to regularize her periods, which had gradually gotten as far apart as 49 days; after two months, the interval is 34 days. Rosemary "should not be drunk by women who are or want to be pregnant, but may be drunk at the time the baby is due to bring about an easy labor; it's also good for helping complications of menopause."

OTHER HERBS

Other herbs beneficial to female organs include dandelion root for uterine obstruction, star or unicorn root for prolapsed or engorged uterus and strengthening the organs, pleurisy root, saffron, squaw vine, sage and false solomon's seal (both have been used as contraceptives). I was fascinated to learn that star and licorice root have estrogenic properties; also rich in female hormones are marigold, dog rose, and nasturtium flowers.

Two final recipes: May Bethel's female tonic - equal parts black cohosh, star root, motherwort, black haw and camomile; also a tonic and normalizer, to restore the estrogen balance, notably after the Pill: equal parts of sarsaparilla, holy thistle, cramp bark, licorice, and squaw vine - steep 40 minutes and drink four to five cups daily for two weeks, slowly tapering off for another two. A general rule is a teaspoon dried herbs to a cup of water; for roots and barks, bring to a boil and simmer 10-20 minutes. Leaves and flowers are covered with boiling water and steeped 5-10 minutes.

As I end this compendium in pale, cold dawnlight, with hail melting strangely white into the redwood duff, I give thanks to the plants that gave me energy through the night, brewed on my woodstove. I feel my link with healer-women, witches and mothers of many times and spaces, caring for themselves and their people with the power of the elements and all growing beings. My New Moon prayer is that each one who reads this will feel the love of green plants around her and be guided to learn their magic, for the healing of us all.

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BRAKES; CYLINDERS & SHOES

Brakes usually need relining every 30,000 miles or so. As you keep adjusting your brakes, due to the drum wearing down the linings, you eventually will have very little lining left. At this point the brake shoes themselves come into contact with the brake drums (metal on metal) and your brakes begin to scrape, causing scored brake drums. If you hear this scraping sound of metal rubbing against metal when the brakes are applied you can bet you need to replace the brake linings immediately. If you wait too long and continue to use the brakes in this shape you can severely damage the brake drums beyond repair. Brake drums are costly to replace.

Another way to determine if the brakes need to be relined, is to see if the car continues to pull to one side after you have adjusted the brakes. There might be worn out linings on the side opposite the one the car is pulling towards. You should definitely check your brake shoe linings if you have any of these symptoms.

Let's assume you are going to reline your brake shoes and rebuild your wheel cylinders. Before you start you have to remove the brake drum in order to get to the brake shoes and wheel cylinders. This procedure - taking off brake drum - was covered in the last issue of Country Women - "Politics". You'll have to refer to that article throughout this one, so get yourself a copy if you don't have one.

With the car in gear and emergency brake on, block all wheels and jack up car and

put some blocking (4x4's) under front axles, so the front wheels can spin freely. When jacking up the rear of the car put blocking under rear axles, and make sure all is steady and secure. Be sure to take the emergency hand brake off when working on the rear wheels. You can leave the car in gear while rebuilding brakes but when adjusting them the car must be in neutral with the emergency brake off so the rear wheels can spin freely.

When car is secure remove the brake drum (see article in "Politics") and mark the drum to the wheel it came off (for example, right front wheel = R.F.). Check to see if brake drum is scored or grooved. You can tell by running your hand over the inside of the drum. It should be smooth. If there are lines or grooves you probably have been riding on worn out brake shoe linings which will need to be replaced. After checking out the drum for smoothness you should carefully inspect your whole brake assembly. Before going on it is a good idea to write down or sketch where the brake parts are in place and in what order they will come apart. Be sure to draw in all the little springs and pieces so you won't get freaked out when you re-assemble them.

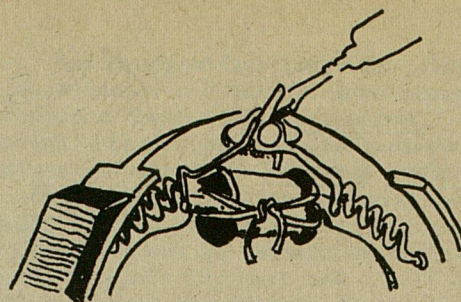
Look at the brake shoe linings. They should have at least 1/16" thick of lining. If the brake linings are less than that they will have to be relined. Be sure to remember that brakes always have to be relined in pairs: both front or both rear wheels. If you do just one wheel's linings, the braking will be uneven. Relining your brakes means

Cont.

replacing the brake shoe and worn out linings with brake shoes which have new linings. You can trade in your worn out shoes for new ones at an auto parts store. Always take your brake shoes and brake drums in to the parts store together because the shoes have to be arced (fitted) to the exact brake drum. After the shoes are arced to the brake drum be sure to keep them with the drum they are arced to. The machinist can tell you if your drums need to be turned. This is grinding out grooves or hard spots with a lathe. If you are told your brake drums are too badly scored and cannot be turned you will have to replace them, which can be very expensive. If so, I suggest you try to locate some used drums at a junk yard and have them checked out and turned, this will save you quite a bit of money.

Next, inspect the brake linings to see if they are stained with grease or brake fluid. If so you can try to sand it off with medium coarse sand paper. If you can't they will have to be replaced. Also, see if there is a hard glaze on the lining. This is usually a sign that the brakes are heating up too much. The glaze can be sanded off but you might try switching to a heavy duty brake lining to prevent overheating. After checking the brake linings, inspect and study the rest of the assembly. See what shape the springs are in - if they are rusty or weak, replace them - they're cheap. Next check out the wheel cylinder by lifting up the rubber boot. If fluid leaks out you need to rebuild the wheel cylinder. If fluid doesn't leak out but you can see rust and gunk, the cylinder might be frozen, in which case it has to be rebuilt. This has happened to me. I thought because there wasn't any fluid leaking that the cylinder didn't need to be rebuilt only to find that the wheel cylinder was frozen solid, preventing the brake shoe from moving. It's a good idea when rebuilding brake cylinders to replace them all at the same time. This way you know that the job is done right and at the same mileage. Brake cylinder kits are cheap, about \$1.00, so it's worth your while to rebuild them all.

Assuming that we are going to replace or rebuild all the wheel cylinders and brake shoe linings, it is now time to dismantle the brake shoes and wheel cylinders, provided you made a detailed sketch of your brakes and continue to fill in and mark the parts as they come apart.

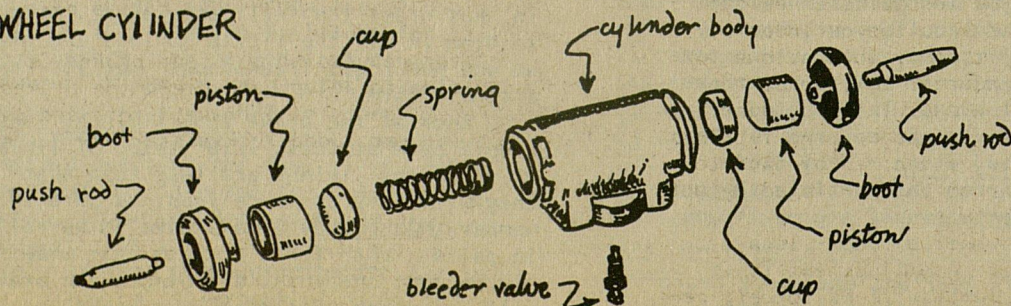


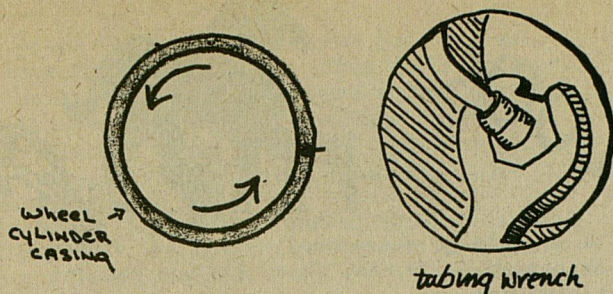
First remove upper spring-brake return spring with a screwdriver (easiest way to put them back on too). In lots of American made cars the brake shoes are held in place against the backing plate by a small spring (hold down spring) and can be removed by pushing these small springs in and twisting. Don't bother trying to take off the bottom spring, just grab the tops of the brake shoes with your hands, pull outwards (towards yourself) and the whole assembly will come off. On the rear brakes the hand brake assembly can be detached after the rest of the assembly is removed. Make sure you sketch or jot down how the emergency brake was attached first.

When the brake shoes are off, put them in the correct brake drum and put all the springs and parts for that wheel into the hub cap and set it aside.

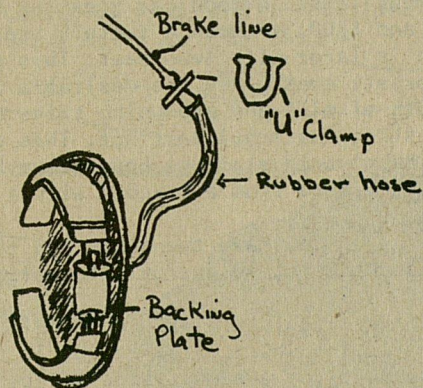
Once the brake shoes are removed you can pull off the rubber boots from the wheel cylinder (see diagram), push the pistons, cups and springs out with your finger. Place these parts in a baggie. Now with a clean rag and hand, clean out the inside of the cylinder walls. The wheel cylinder should be perfectly smooth inside so as to allow the rubber cup to form a perfect and tight seal against the cylinder wall. If gum, grooves, or rough spots are present fluid will leak out causing brake failure. With a fine piece of emery sandpaper sand the cylinder wall in a circular motion (called honing out). Make sure you have a smooth, continuous circular motion. This is very important (see diagram). Not up and down or sideways back and forth, but only circular. After honing it out by hand stick your clean finger into the cylinder and check for smoothness. If rough spots or grooves are still present then try to sand it out again. If that doesn't work you will have to replace that wheel cylinder. If the wheel cylinder becomes smooth after honing it out then you can rebuild it with a cylinder kit.

WHEEL CYLINDER





To remove the cylinder you will have to disconnect the brake lines that are connected to the cylinder behind the backing plate. These lines and fittings can be damaged easily so I suggest you use a special tubing wrench designed to fit evenly around the brake line fitting (see diagram). If you need to replace the front wheel cylinder there are flexible rubber hoses that have to be detached. I would detach the hose from the brake line first. The brake line and flexible hose screw together and are usually held in place by a U-clamp (see diagram). Undo this brake line fitting first, then unscrew the rubber hose from the wheel cylinder. Be sure not to lose the copper washer that fits between the rubber hose fitting and the cylinder. The flat side of the washer goes towards the wheel cylinder. Now disconnect the rubber hose and brake line from the cylinder and unscrew the two bolts holding the wheel cylinder in place. Put these aside to take to the parts store later on. A new wheel cylinder will cost around \$10 or so and will already be completely rebuilt and sealed, so all you'll have to do is bolt it back in place and re-hook up the lines - repeating the above procedure in reverse.



On the rear wheels, unscrew the brake line fittings all the way before unbolting the cylinder. When you install the new cylinder, screw the fittings to the cylinder by hand before bolting it down. This allows you a little more play in order to line up the hole to the brake line. NOTE: It's important to remember that when the brake line fittings are rigid they should be started by hand to prevent the threads from being damaged by not lining them up properly.

Rebuilding the wheel cylinder is a tricky operation where good judgment is needed. Get an experienced friend to help de-

cide if the wheel cylinder can be rebuilt or not. Be sure to always clean the parts in brake fluid or alcohol. Other cleaners like gas or kerosene will deteriorate the rubber parts.

Now go to the parts store with your brake drums and shoes and a list of what wheel cylinder parts need to be purchased. Bring the wheel cylinder assembly, rubber cups, spring, boots, and the metal pistons, to make sure the new kits are the same size. Exchange your brake shoe linings for new ones and have them arced to your brake drums (see if your drums need to be turned first). Then buy your wheel cylinder kits and, if needed, a wheel cylinder. Also, pick up a couple of cans of brake fluid and a few sheets of emery sand paper.

To rebuild the wheel cylinder make sure everything is very clean. Then apply the brake fluid to the inside walls of the cylinder and all the rubber parts. The wheel cylinder kits usually contain a tube of very pretty purple goop to coat the rubber cups and the cylinder walls. When reassembling the wheel cylinder the spring is inserted first, the, very carefully, the rubber cups are inserted on each side of the spring (for a dual cylinder). The concave side faces inward (see diagram). Make sure you do not pinch the outer lips of the rubber cups when putting them in or the cylinder will leak. This is the trickiest part, so be real careful and/or have a friend who knows how help you. Next slide the metal piston in with the flat side going against the rubber cup and the indent or prongs facing out (so brake shoe can hook on). Then, put the rubber booties over the end of the wheel cylinder and insert the push rod through the rubber bootie. You have just finished rebuilding one wheel cylinder. Reassemble the brake shoes and springs following the same procedure for removing them, only in reverse.

Once the brake shoes are in place clean all dirt and grease from the linings and brake drum with emery sandpaper. Now adjust (see article in "Politics") the brake shoes close together so the brake drum can slide over the shoes. Brake linings and drums must be clean or they will not work. Review the whole brake assembly, checking that the springs are secure, brake linings and drum are clean and wheel cylinder is not leaking. If all checks out O.K. you can put on the brake drum and reassemble the wheel. (Refer to article in "Politics" issue). Then move to the next wheel to be rebuilt.

After rebuilding all four brakes it is now time to adjust and bleed the brakes. Be sure emergency hand brake is off and car is not in gear. Good luck sisters!

Fixing Cars - A Peoples Primer is a good resource book and the one I used for information and diagrams in this article. ♀

FOLLOWING THE FLOCK



Elna lives in a community near the coast in a house she built herself. In the past to support herself she had to commute long distances which pulled her from country life. A few years back she decided to raise sheep so she could spend more time on the land.

Raspberry: Why did you choose sheep to work with?

Elna: We had sheep and cows on the ranch so I was already peripherally involved in their care and had time to discover if I was in harmony with them. My present living situation requires that I not be tied down with milking chores and I did not feel close to beef cows. I felt in tune with the sheep, a certain rapport for their gentle space.

There are remarkable things that happen when you become close to them, approaching a kind of Zen experience. I can walk into a pen with thirty sheep, look at one that I need to bring out - and if the Zen thing is happening, I can walk toward that sheep and mentally say, "I want you to go through that gate" - and that sheep will go through the gate. I have done sheep drives with calm people who loved and respected sheep - all at once we would silently recognize we were all in a magic space together. Those drives are joyful and work perfectly.

Raspberry: Once you decided to work with sheep, how did you proceed?

Elna: I wanted to apprentice myself to someone as that's the best way to learn but no one was available so I did the next best thing: I bought some sheep and then I went to my neighbor, a very successful rancher with about 400 head and watched what he did. I asked questions constantly and he was very generous with his time and advice - he taught me almost everything I know.

Raspberry: You have taken apprentices - is it necessary to have helpers?

Elna: Yes, I have been able to find occasional helpers who come up from the city, who appreciate the opportunity to be in the country. I do need the help and folks around here don't have enough time to spare away from their own chores. Since I don't have a good sheep dog I need two other people to help me bring the sheep down off the hills and into the barnyard. During lambing I need another person on hand pretty much all the time. When I mark lambs (cut off tails, castrate, brand and give them their shots) it takes quite a few people to be at all efficient. (I now have all the helpers I can use for years to come. I know there are lots of people out there looking for an opportunity to relate to the country in this way, so I should say I simply cannot absorb any more into my space here, much as I would like to

be of help to everyone.)

Raspberry: How many sheep are you responsible for?

Elna: I have 50 ewes (potential mothers) and hope to get 60 meat lambs from them. I'd prefer to have 100 ewes because there wouldn't be that much more work and it would double my income but that's all the pasture space I have available. I had the ag agent out before I bought the sheep to help me decide how many the pasture would support. Since we have good grazing land in our area, it worked out to one adult sheep per 1 1/2 acres.

Raspberry: What kind of a monetary investment do you have in your animals?

Elna: I didn't have a lot of capital so I started with 50 ewes that had been culled (pulled out of the herd to be sold) because they were getting old. I took a big risk buying old sheep but I got them for \$10-\$15 a head compared to the \$45 to \$50 I'd have to pay for a young ewe in good shape. I got my flock in June because that's when sheep trading occurs, the ranchers sell their lambs then and change the size of their flock before breeding time in August. Since I had 50 ewes I got one ram - ideally I should have purchased two but it worked out all right in my case. When I could afford it, I bought another one. I believe in investing in a good ram because his size determines the size of the meat lambs. A good ram goes for between \$150 and \$300. I chose a Suffolk breed ram which is large with lean meat. This cross with my Dorsett ewes gives the desirable qualities of lots of milk and producing twins as well as a strong maternal instinct. This cross also has hybrid vigor. I bought the best ram I could afford from a breeder with a good reputation.

Raspberry: You have the flock and the pasture and the people energy. What else do you need?

Elna: Fencing is crucial for handling animals. Sheep fencing which is 32" high, is fine for ewes who seldom are motivated to jump fences. With the rams it's a different story; you need two strands of barbed wire in addition to the sheep fence. A barn makes a big difference when the lambs are born especially since they come during the rainy season and often need shelter. A barnyard is essential for sorting out and treating the sheep throughout the year.

Raspberry: Could you discuss your work cycle from breeding to market?

Elna: Rams are kept separate from the flock so that when they are turned out in August the ewes come into heat rapidly. Hopefully they all become pregnant about the same time and will then all lamb in January. Since ewes are in heat about every 16 days they will usually

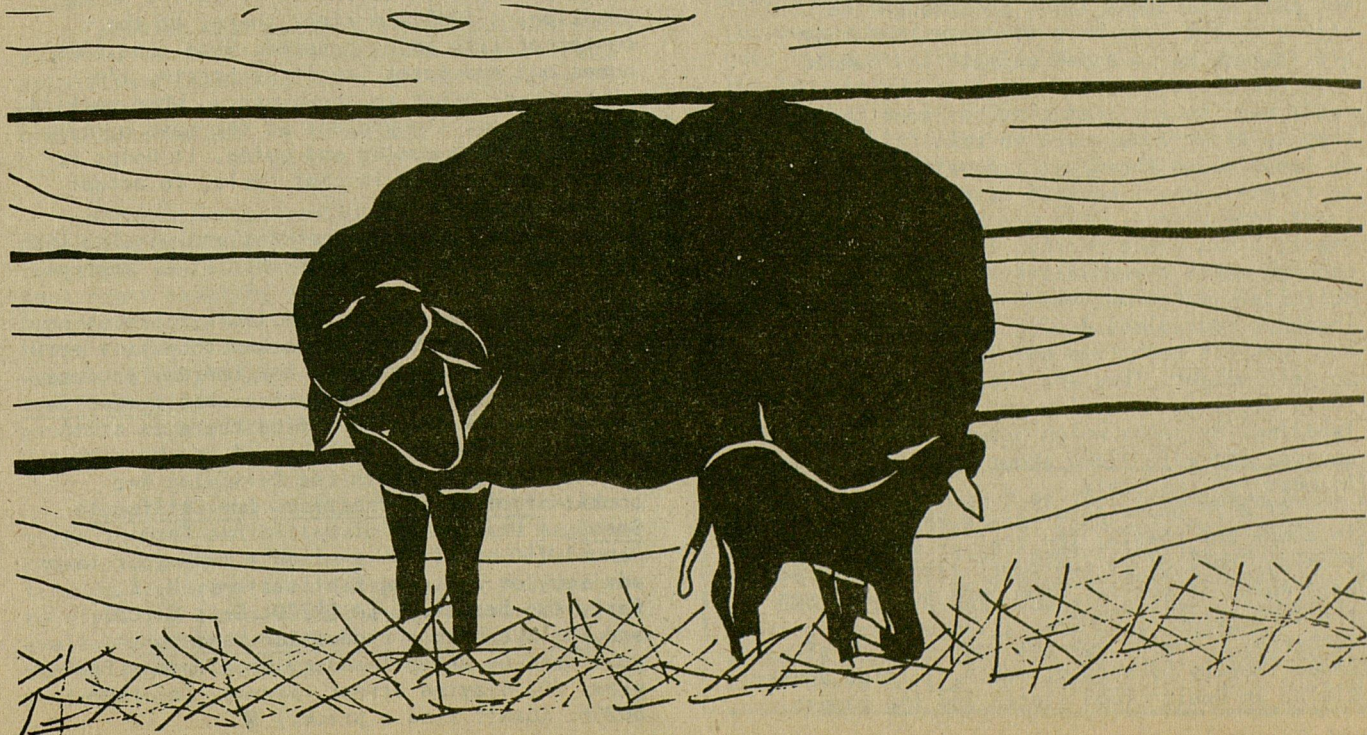
all breed the first month; but just in case, I leave the rams with the flock until October. Two weeks before the rams were turned out, I put the ewes on the best possible pasture after worming them. This extra spurt of good nutrition (called flushing) seems to cause more twins.

Then I just enjoy looking at my flock until December, at which time I start preparing for the lambing ahead. I obtain all my feed and medicines, bedding (straw or wood shaving) and prepare my head for the hard work ahead. I lamb through the barn rather than just letting nature take its course up in the hills, because I believe I save more lambs and ewes this way. During lambing season I spend about \$200 on supplies having the flock in the barn but I save much more by saving the lives of sheep and lambs that need assistance at birth or who would succumb in the cold wet weather if they weren't dunked in warm water and helped to nurse. This year I assisted four lambs who were in the wrong birth position. Had they been alone I would have lost both them and their mothers. If a ewe should die I give her lamb (or bummer) to people who will love it and raise it on a bottle. This year I had no bidders, but I had a ewe who gave birth to triplets who were too much of a drain on her. I "grafted" one of the babies onto a ewe whose lamb had died by putting them both in a tiny pen and holding her so the lamb would suckle. I did this four times a day and after a week she took the lamb like her own. This year, for the first time, I "grafted" a baby onto a ewe that already had one lamb, which is much harder to do. I searched for her real lamb's afterbirth and rubbed it all over the lamb I wanted her to take, which caused an instinctive reaction in the mother. She started to lick the new

lamb and since I'd removed her true lamb for the time being, she thought this was her own baby. Once I knew she had accepted the new lamb, I put her own lamb into the pen and she accepted them both.

The month of January is a time of intensive care for my flock. I bring them all in and separate any lambs that have been born early by running them through a dodging chute (double gate). This allows me to pick out those mothers who have lambed early in the hills - by the fact that they baah for their lambs. I then steer them to the pen with their lambs. The remainder go into a separate pen. Those yet to lamb I herd into confined quarters and examine their milk bags. I mark all the ones with large bags which indicates they probably will lamb within the week. I run all the ewes through the dodging chute one last time to separate out the sheep who are due soon so I can keep an eye on them in the barnyard. The rest go out to pasture. When my last born lambs are one week old I bring them all in for marking, which means I cut their tails, castrate the males and vaccinate for enteritoxemia and sore mouth and give tetanus shots (an antitoxin which protects them for two weeks while wounds from docking and castrating heal up.) I castrate with rubber bands which cut off circulation to the testicles so they atrophy. Now I turn all the animals out to eat the good pasture that will grow better and better from now until June when it will start to go dry. When it's convenient I'll bring the sheep in to worm them as worms are most active in the wet months. I'll trim their hooves at the same time as we do not have rock ground on which they would be worn down naturally. My sheep are prone to foot rot which is like tooth decay and equally as painful. If I dis-

Cont.



cover foot rot I cut open the decaying area in the hoof and expose it to the air so the bacteria can't live; I also medicate the feet. In May I shear the sheep and get them ready for market in June. I also cull the ewes that I don't think can make it through another winter. This I do by looking at their general condition and checking for broken teeth. I cull "broken mouths" because these sheep cannot feed themselves adequately. When my sheep are shorn I send the culls to auction where they are usually bought by people who make dog food. I get about \$14 a head for these old ones, slightly less than I paid for them originally.

Raspberry: How do you handle your wool crop?

Elna: I have professional shearers come in because shearing that many sheep is heavy on the back and an art I've yet to master. My ewes usually give eight to ten pounds of fleece each shearing. There are only two big wool buyers in our area, and as we have no bargaining power I have to take what they offer, which last year was \$.50 a pound for lamb's wool and \$.55 a pound for sheep's wool. Wool prices are so depressed that not much care goes into preparing fleeces. Like most of the ranchers I stuff my fleeces into very long burlap sacks. I sell or give to hand-spinners my very best fleeces because I think the craft is so neat. After expenses I make about \$200 from my wool.

Raspberry: What is your procedure for taking meat lambs to market?

Elna: I watched what the commercial ranchers did and it didn't set right with me at all. They take all the lambs at once to the nearest large stockyard where they are holding an auction. There are between 30 and 40 thousand lambs processed through this one stockyard every week from May through June. Not only must these lambs go through the stress of the long trip to market but they are introduced to a new climate and dumped into overcrowded pens to await slaughter. I don't want to eat meat that has gone through such an experience and I certainly don't want my lambs to go through it. I sell my lambs to friends, and I wait to butcher them until I get some orders. They are butchered in a small, clean place nearby. I feel this extra concern makes the meat taste better - it definitely makes me feel better. I take them in about four times during the season, taking the heaviest each time and leaving the others to gain weight. They are slaughtered, hung for 10-14 days, then they're cut, wrapped and labelled. My lambs weigh between 100 and 120 pounds, and will yield about half that weight in meat for the table.

Of a 50 pound carcass, 40 pounds will be in chops and roasts; the rest is good stewing. Most of my customers live in the Bay area which is not far from here so I deliver the meat to their homes.

Raspberry: How do you get your customers?

Elna: Mostly by word of mouth. I tried advertising in health food stores and the papers,

but found that calling up people I already knew worked by far the best. My customers are happy because they get well cared for organically grown meat at less than supermarket prices. My first customers were so pleased that they told their friends and the word spread. Now I have a mailing list of about 35 people to notify about this season's crop. I sold my lambs last year for \$50 each. If I deliver I charge a bit more because of the cost of dry ice, gas, and my time. I derived that figure by finding out what commercial ranchers got for their lambs and added a bit more because mine are very well cared for, raised without chemicals, and I do a lot of the work of the retailer. The butchering costs about \$10-\$12 which includes slaughtering and wrapping for the freezer.

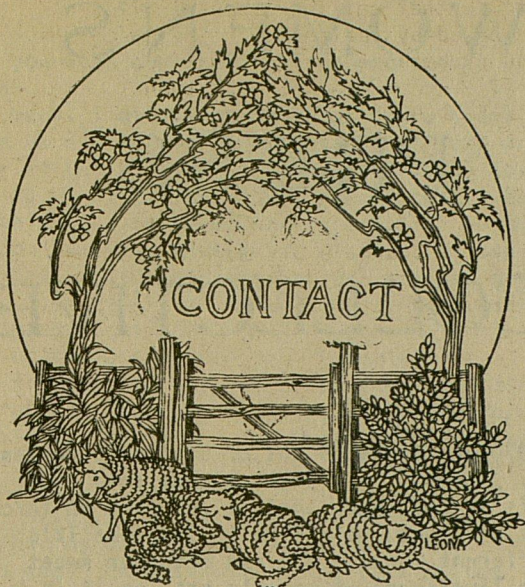
If I used the prices of meat in health food stores as an index, I would be charging twice as much. But I don't want to exploit the new consciousness about organic foods. I want to encourage it. I am trying to provide healthy food that people can afford.

Raspberry: It seems you have been very successful in making a "just enough" living and providing a service. How have the sheep changed you?

Elna: I find myself in a new place philosophically after working closely with the sheep these last several years. In spite of humans having bred these animals only for the characteristics that we want - you notice we've done away with horns and survival instincts pretty neatly - in spite of that interference, there is still a lot to wonder and marvel at in the natural instincts of these lovely creatures. I marvel at that force which is manifesting itself in the form of sheep. When I reach into the womb of a sheep to pull a lamb that is in the wrong position, I feel I'm right there, at the center of life being created. When that lamb comes out and takes its first breath, I'm right there, next to the mystery. When we kill a lamb to eat I'm present at the same mystery. The life force coming and going. It helps me to accept my place in that cycle, to accept my own death.

Raspberry: Other than talking and working with experienced sheep ranchers what other sources have helped you?

Elna: Many books and trade journals focus on all the ways science has worked to make a very natural process unnatural and thereby produce more lambs. I resist that bias when I read informational books, and I find there is still a lot to be learned by those of us who care for natural process in the following two books: Production Practices for California Sheep, A University of California Farm manual #40. (This is available from your farm advisor, or write Ag Publications, U. C. Berkeley, Berkeley, CA 94720. Cost \$1.00) and The Sheepman's Production Handbook, published by Sheep Industry Development Program, 200 Clayton Street, Denver, Colorado 80206. (Can't find a price.) ♀



Wanted: to get in touch with women planning women's healing festivals or events this year. Meredith Bear, Box 645, Forks of Salmon, Ca. 96031.

This spring we'd like to have a gathering of women living/working communally or collectively, to share experiences and ideas. A continuation of the brief session that began at the Country Women festival. Send ideas, energy, questions to Judith Redwing, Rte. 1, Box 191, Oroville, Ca. 95965.

Feminist Craftswomen: please contact me. I'd like to compile a catalog of our work and establish a communications/marketing/distribution network. Laurie Fuchs, CREATRIX, 910 Clarendon, Durham, N. C. 27705.

Women's Health/Mental Health microfilm available from: Women's History Research Center, 2325 Oak St., Berkeley, Ca. 94708. Thirteen reels covering physical and mental health and disorders, biology and the life cycle, birth control, sexuality, black and Third World women. Also available: Female Artists Past and Present, an annotated directory/bibliography. Urge your local library to order these.

We are 2 women and a child living on 20 acres in Humboldt Co., Ca. There is a lesbian community here but no other children. We'd like to encourage other mothers and children to visit and perhaps stay on our land or buy available land in the community. Write Rixanne Wehren and Kristi Gochoel, Box 655, Garberville, Ca.

I'd like to hear from other women in the dairy and hog industries. Karen Kinsella, Rte. 289, Lebanon, Ct. 06249.

Woman managing mail-order service in meditational/Buddhist/Hindu and related articles needs live-in woman apprentice. No tobacco, alcohol, meat or killing. Apply via letter to: Mani Trading Co., Arnoldsburg Star Rte., Box 57, Spencer, W. Va. 25276.

Information and connections desired to make possible a film on woman-built domes and other structures. Write: Jennifer Inga, P.O. Box 385, Cotati, Ca. 94928.

From May to September I will be on the road, seeking out and photographing unusual quilts and the women who have made them for a forthcoming book. I'd be happy to trade quilting lessons and herstory along the way in exchange for whatever; to share information, resources or energy, write: Patty Chase, 14 Bowdoin St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

I have a 5 acre homestead in NW Arkansas and would like to share the experience with another woman. Can provide room and board in exchange for help with the homestead and weekend craft and garden produce sales. Your crafts, homemaking or building skills could provide spending money. Write first: Lynne Smith, Rte. 1, Box 115A, Pea Ridge, Ark. 72751.

I'm 43, living in a mixed community with mostly younger people. Our group is working for more honest communication, but I feel a need for more strong, self-motivated women. The land is 520 rugged acres in the Ozarks. We're dividing it into community land, wilderness and private use areas. We're working out a land trust agreement. Write: Diana Rivers, Sassafras, Ponca, Ark. 72670.

A small collective farm run by a woman and two men needs more people. Write: Trinity River Farm, Star Rte., Willow Creek, Ca. 95573.

CORRECTION: On page 7 of the Foremothers Issue a postcard photograph of Constance Markievicz and Maud Gonne, Irish revolutionaries, was published anonymously; a mistake antithetical to our desire to reclaim women's history. Women's history postcards available from: Helaine Victoria Enterprises, P.O. Box 5747, Ocean Park Sta., Santa Monica, Ca. 90405.

In a letter she said:

Congratulations on Yesterday's Lessons.
A big leap in reclaiming language and literature and our pasts for women - us.

Making a new language.

What does it really mean when they say we're murdering the King's English:

We're murdering the King's English.

Reclaiming the language.

The same way we are reclaiming our bodies for ourselves - and our minds.

WOMEN'S PRESS COLLECTIVE

"The Women's Press Collective has been around since 1970 and operates out of Oakland. Oakland is where Gertrude Stein once said 'there is no there there.' Ahhh. . . . Someone once said that printing and distributing books was like running guns. This is the West. And if you want to throw a little glamour on this business . . . we'll just let it be. But, we'd like to say that it's far more exciting to print THE word as it is written by different women. You can bet your sweet ass it is. . . . So at the press we're trying to stress the liveliness of women's art, as it is developing, the realness of it all. The poet is an artist of words, a politician who connects common life and brings out the political implications with exactness."

The Women's Press Collective wrote the above statements about themselves. What it doesn't say is that they are responsible for printing some of the finest works of prose and poetry published today. They have consistently remained true to their purpose, to say what they HAVE to say, and to say it well and without compromise. The results are stunning and could only have emerged from a small press run by women who drew no lines between their lives, their work, and their art. As women we have stopped waiting for the critics and institutionalized publishers to tell us who to read, to define our art, to mirror our hearts. The renaissance of women writers today is sparked by and in turn sparks the feminist revolution. Their words are carried to us by the growing number of women's presses and publishers and because we believe that work to be not only vitally important but holy, I present this as third in a series of reviews of women's presses.

For me this is a special review. Since my first introduction to feminism five years ago, the books from Women's Press Collective have been like manna in a desert of literature that was divorced from my reality. Edward The Dyke and Other Poems, by Judy Grahn, one of the founders of the press collective, became like litany and in re-reading it I realized that I still know half the poems by heart. They are poems of incredible strength:

"I'm not a pearl
I'm the Atlantic Ocean
I'm not a good lay
I'm a straight razor
Look at me as if you had never seen a woman
before
I have red, red, hands and much bitterness."

They are angry poems of battle worn women who endure, who fight to survive, who become scared, who shine with inner beauty, and who will triumph. Included are several now famous portraits entitled, "The Common Woman". Here's Nadine:

"She pokes at the ruins of the city
like an armored tank; but she thinks
of herself as a rip saw cutting through
knots in wood. Her sentences come out
like thick pine shanks
and her big hands fill the air like smoke.
She's a mud-chinked cabin in the slums."

The whole book is a tour de force, but even so, I was in no way prepared for A Woman Is Talking To Death which is Judy Grahn's second book.

A Woman is Talking to Death is a long, intricate but direct, exquisitely beautiful poem. It explores our relationship to responsibility in a violent society that kills women. It is a "testimony in trials that never got heard" and like the author each of us is on trial. Death surrounds us in many forms, squeezing life slowly from us, threatening and murdering us, causing us to abandon the struggle for life, to abandon a raped woman to indifferent police as we abandon love:

"we left, as we have left all our lovers
as all lovers leave all lovers
much too soon to get the real loving done."

To cheat death we must absolutely embrace love:

"my lover's teeth are white geese flying above
me
my lover's muscles are rope ladders under my
hands"

and:

"Have you ever committed any indecent acts with women?

Yes, many. I am guilty of allowing suicidal women to die before my eyes or in my ears or under my hands because I thought I could do nothing, I am guilty of leaving a prostitute who held a knife to my friend's throat to keep us from leaving, because we would not sleep with her, we thought she was old and fat and ugly; I am guilty of not loving her who needed me; I regret all the women I have not slept with or comforted, who pulled themselves away from me for lack of something I had not the courage to fight for, for us, our life, our planet, our city, our meat and potatoes, our love. These are indecent acts, lacking courage, lacking a certain fire behind the eyes, which is the symbol, the raised fist, the sharing of resources, the resistance that tells death he will starve for lack of the fat of us, our extra. Yes I have committed acts of indecency with women and most of them were acts of omission. I regret them bitterly."

The book is beautifully printed and the quality of the graphics by Karen Sjöholm is superb.

Yesterday's Lessons by Sharon Isabelle is a joyous and frightening autobiography covering 26 years beginning in the mining hills of California, through the bop years of the 50's, to a stint in the army, to coming out. It is the writing of an "uneducated" working class lesbian, unadorned by metaphor or imagery but eye opening and powerful in its ability to convey the social realities that some of us never see and the emotional realities that all of us know. I have not met anyone who was not moved by this book.

Unfortunately you probably will not find these books in your local library or bookstore; the vision explored here is not shared yet. Nor will you find Pit Stop and Child of Myself by Pat Parker, a black woman who writes with a searing, explosive honesty. However, if you send a stamped self-addressed envelope to The Women's Press Collective, 5251 Broadway, Oakland, California 94618, they will send you descriptions and prices

on all their books, and regardless of what Gertrude said, Oakland is where there are life blood books there.

♀



Country Women is All Of Us

Country Women operates within a dual structure. There is an ongoing "editorial collective" and there are "issue collectives" which disband once an issue is finished. While the issue collective has complete control over its issue, it also receives basic guidelines from the editorial collective which selects and somewhat defines the topic of each issue. The issue collective continues developing the theme, creating and voicing a collective vision which adheres to Country Women policies. These are somewhat vaguely stated, but are based on the idea that within the context of feminism, the magazine is committed to expressing a wide range of womens' thoughts, feelings and experiences. This is sometimes a difficult policy to follow, especially in a womens' movement that has become fragmented. It is also a policy which has frustrated some issue collective members, who would have preferred to take a more limited and specific political stance. But Country Women is a magazine for all country feminists and that, by definition, presents us with a wide spectrum.

Lately, we have been talking more than usual about who our readers are and how much consideration we should give to that when we put an issue together. This is a question that comes up with every issue, but it became particularly acute during debates on the tone, content and perspective of articles for the politics issue. Staying honest to ourselves seems to be the crux of the matter, since the magazine depends on meeting the real needs and encouraging the growth of the women who work on it. If we stop growing with the magazine or if the magazine ceases to reflect our growth - then it will begin to die, being only a monument to something that worked in the past. But still, we do talk about you, our readers. The vast majority of our mail from you is strongly positive about what the magazine is and does. We really appreciate that support even though we welcome criticism just as much. In fact, we would like more critical (not necessarily negative) responses to each issue. Criticism and comments help the writers and the issue collectives. The criticism we receive now mostly falls into the category of "you are too...". From some heterosexual women we hear that the magazine is a magazine for lesbians and has little relevance to their lives. From even more lesbians, particularly lesbian separatists, we hear that the magazine has little material relevant to their lives. We'd like to respond publicly to these criticisms since we spend a good deal of time writing letters about them. Since the magazine's policy is to print a broad spectrum of feminist material, we do this as best we can. But each individual article (even though it is a part of the whole theme for that issue) expresses only the opinions of the author. If the article states that monogamous couplehood

or lesbian separatism is the best and most fulfilling way to live, that is the author's opinion. While we have rejected articles because they do not represent a clear enough feminist point of view, we have never rejected any material because it was "too radical".

If you don't find your perspective or opinion reflected in the magazine, it is more likely because we haven't received it than because we have chosen not to publish it. We actively want more contributions from readers (and to that end are announcing the rest of the topics for this year in this issue). In particular, we would like to encourage more older women to contribute.

Lesbianism is enough of an issue that we'd like to say a little more. Some of us who write for and work on the magazine are lesbians; some of us are not. It seems to us that the question of whether one is heterosexual, bisexual, or lesbian is sometimes extremely relevant (as in an article on the politics of sexual choices), but quite often it is not. Most articles in Country Women by lesbians or heterosexuals are not about lesbianism or heterosexuality; they are about, for example, working for the forest service, being fat, or the death of one's mother. While lesbians look to lesbian writers to express their particular experiences and concerns, they also know that they share a body of common experience with all women and that articles by non-lesbian feminists often have much to say to them. It seems important now that non-lesbians begin to recognize that lesbians have just as many things to say to other women too.

We'd also like to let you know what's happening with us on the more material plane. We now print 11,000 copies and are sold all over the U.S. and in Canada, Australia and England. We are able to print this many copies partly because of using a middle man in New England who is able to sell 2800; this is an experiment about which we have extremely mixed feelings. Because of a temporary grant, we are now paying salaries for business work that are closer to our ideal visions. These range from \$25 a month for opening and sorting the mail to \$225 a month for filling subscriptions. By this August, when the grant ends, we need to have increased our sales enough to continue and hopefully expand these salaries. But for now, several women are no longer working straight jobs for money while working the magazine for love. That is a positive step we're committed to continuing. We are also excited about branching out into book publishing, though we may have done it a little prematurely. We have been in a tight cash-flow bind ever since we printed the poetry book. So the photography book will await publication until we have enough money from poetry book sales to pay for it. ♀

FUTURE ISSUES

FOOD: Production, distribution, consumption of food. The realities of small farmers and homesteaders. The connections with agribusiness. Alternative food distribution systems. Nutrition. (Deadline - May 7)

WOMEN AS ARTISTS: How we relate to our creativity and to our products. Relationship to media. Artist as identity, personal and social. (Deadline - July 25)

CLASS: Your values, prejudices and ethics as related to class. Does change of life style change your class realities? Functions of class in society.

PERSONAL POWER: Searching for it, access to it and expression of it. Images of success and failure.

ANGER AND VIOLENCE: The relationship between the two. Positive and negative ways of relating to each. Anger within the family, between men and women, in society.

We welcome articles, photographs, and graphics. Please label your work with your name and address.

BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE from Country Women, Box 51, Albion, Ca. 95410 and we'll pay postage.

- #10 Spirituality 75¢
- #11 Older Women 75¢
- #12 Children's Liberation 75¢
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Library and Institutional Subscriptions, \$7/yr. Foreign countries please send U.S. dollars only. Bulk rates available on request.

This material free on request to feminist publications. We are on file at Women's History Archives, 2525 Oak St., Berkeley, Ca. and on microfilm at Bell and Howell in Wooster, O.

Anthologies

Country Women's Poetry - 125 pages, paperback. \$2.00 plus 25¢ postage. Available from: Country Women's Poetry, Box 511, Garberville, Ca. 95440

Photography - portraits of country women and their lives. Will be available soon.

Fiction for Children - short stories or works. Send to: N.O.T.A. Ranch, Star Route 1, Box 38, Covelo, Ca. 95428

Country Women's Fiction - short stories or fictional prose. Send to: Box 508, Little River, Ca. 95456

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