

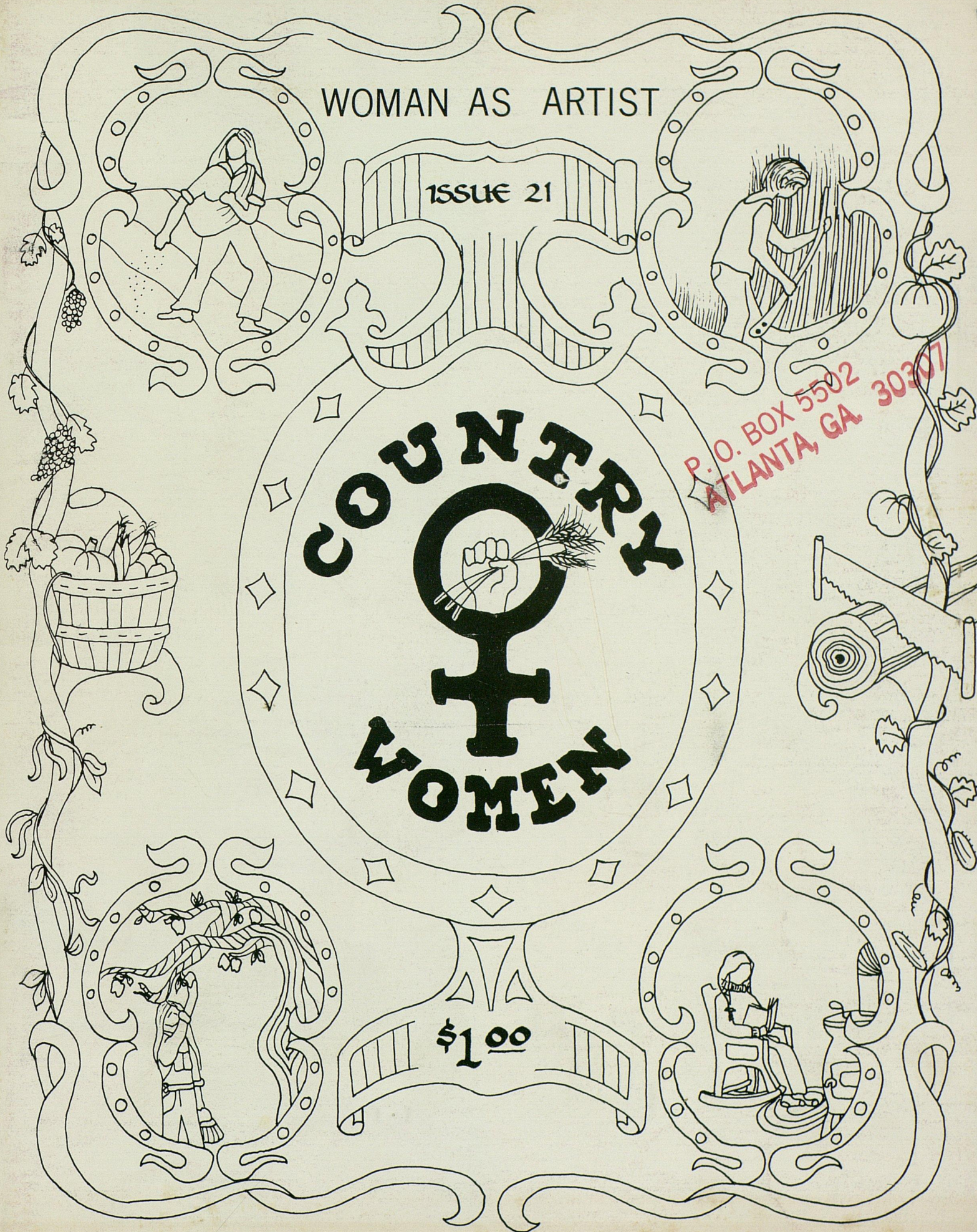
WOMAN AS ARTIST

ISSUE 21

COUNTRY
WOMEN

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Walking to the

I feel stifled
The walls are closing in
I'm hurting
I'm telling
He's too angry

to hear

I fling on my green pack
Take my tape recorder
two tapes
(Flack and Bok)
Start to walk

Town is 12 miles

At the corner a car
stops
I'm not going
the way they're going
She is taking her daughter
to baseball practise
She's very apologetic

I keep walking

I listen to music
Walk in rhythm
Like the space

Like my sweet sweat
trickling
between my breasts

I see a wild turkey
Bunnies bouncing
Scratch alot of ears
of friendly dogs

It's mostly
up hill

I'm going to be late
very late
for my meeting
I've walked two hours
I have 6 more miles
to go

No one even waves
They roar past

my thumb
Stones spin off tires
I have to hustle
for the weeds
At Colegrove Road
I see a car
pull up and wait

I steel myself
for the pickup hassel
but keep
moving

A faint voice calls
"Do you still
want a ride?"

It's the woman
who had stopped
before

She is going to town
to pick up her son
She had forgotten
she was going

She figured
I'd walk this way
She supposed I'd be
about this far
by now

She had decided
to wait for me

at least for a little while

It is clear
she doesn't usually
pick up hitchhikers

I feel nice

It is good
to sit down
As she drives
she tells me
about her children,

the son who doesn't
want college
wants to join

Women's Studio

the Navy
Did I think that was
okay?

Her other son
is learning to drive
That's why the car
is messy
She gestures
at the papers on the floor

Her daughter
likes baseball
a tomboy
but she hastens
to assure me
baseball
is good
exercise

She apologizes for talking
so much
Doesn't know
why she's telling me
all this
Assumes
she is probably
boring

I assure her
otherwise

She responds that
it's really going to be
strange
when all the kids are gone
I tell her
I have kids, too
and one
is sixteen

She is obviously
surprised
I'm a mother
but she doesn't
say so

In Ithaca
she takes me
where I want to go

She says

she has plenty
of time

I wonder
finally
whether she is really
meeting anyone
at all

I climb the two flights
to the studio
I tell them
I walked 6 miles
because
it was important
to come

Everyone
is welcoming

I sit down
sorta numbed
Take off my sneakers
Expose
my hot aching feet

I can't talk
about the woman
in the car
yet

Debbie takes
one stinky foot
into her lap

and massages it
for a long time

She works
every toe
I think about
"this little piggy
and that little piggy"
my childhood
my children

Debbie has
amazing
hands

They listen
and answer

Diary of a Mad Artist

Chinourd's Art Institute was only a mile from my childhood home and for several summers my mother protectively walked me, her little female Leonardo, there for lessons. It was a sunny and smogless L.A., home of the stars, and I stood out in my class like the Shirley Temple of Artdom. It was clear to everyone who knew me that I was going to be an Artist when I grew up.

My parents, aunts, uncles and friends all praised my earliest works. Even my kindergarten teacher expressed amazement over my eye for detail. My Gift, as they called it, was a surprise; not a single artist could be dredged up in my family's memory. We had prizefighters, religious zealots and midwives, but never any artists before me. We didn't even know any real artists.

Since I was a first my family accorded me certain advantages - not that they sheltered me from my fair share of primal traumas. But they did, for example, tolerate my little eccentricities - like painting my room dark grey and pink. My privacy was assured and a steady supply of art materials guaranteed. With the same gusto my mother reserved for her famous jello salad, I spent my childhood printing and drawing my fantasies secure in the knowledge of who I was and what I was to become. The Left Bank, fifties style French Poodle dogs and berets somehow all mixed into my projections for a bright future.

At age twelve I received the first warning that life might not continue so brightly indefinitely. My smiling mother passed by my easel, held out a yellow baby's jumpsuit she'd just fallen heir to and said, "Let's hang onto this." I knew she didn't mean her.

The signals came faster and faster. Puberty passed, and Dad no longer cared if I looked in on the Life Drawing class. By the nubile age of seventeen I was the proud possessor of a one and one-half carat emerald cut blue diamond with two baguettes in a white gold Tiffany setting. The only painting going on by then was my face and nails. My beatnik high school art teacher risked telling me I should apply for a scholarship instead of marrying a J.C.Penny's Manager Trainee, but I stood my ground. Being Art Editor of the school yearbook was enough selfless dedication to culture. I had a far more important mission staked out: The Good Life, to be specific.

But something stirred in me and without much explanation I resumed my artistic career. First I gave back the diamond. Then I got a job, enrolled in junior college, ran off barefoot with a four-cylinder motorcycle and its

mustachioed rider, married him, put myself through a M.A. degree in painting, divorced him, remarried (to an artist this time) and began rearing his three children. We collected welfare, learned the craft of stoneware pottery, opened a gallery and somehow survived. Now I teach art, make art, show art, see art, buy art, read art, write art, fart art and barter art.

Not once, not one single instant since the yellow baby's jumpsuit have I felt the peace and pure joy I knew as a child-artist.

Why? Because as an adult artist every creative act I perpetrate or even contemplate puts me one step closer to economic bankruptcy. My artist-mate and I share the same disease - terminal guilt, frustration and anxiety. Being full-time artists is a crime we are not ruthless enough to commit. Remember, crime doesn't pay. Well neither does art.

Our true work, our ecstasy, is depressed and degraded until it fits into our daily schedule. Like homesick natives of some remote, leeward island we have grown almost accustomed to locking our studios' doors and migrating back and forth into the lonely real world to send money back home. And still we manage to rip off a few hours as artists and cling to the hope of eventually integrating our work and our lives.

It's not that we're high rollers either. There's no chrome in our garage. We don't even have a garage. We plant a big, time-consuming garden each spring, the children are big enough to do their share now and we don't squander much. It's just that there's no money in "fine art." Zero. Not after you pay for materials, studio rent and so on. Even if you put the requisite years of struggle and game-playing in and become "recognized," you may still find your work unsaleable.

My parents are now more confused than sad about my chosen profession. They worry that we have no retirement plan or medical insurance and they wonder why teaching art, doing commercial art and dealing with other artists' work always dilates my eyes, makes me hit the Wild Turkey and talk poison gibberish.

I try to explain it to them. I tell them I am an artist and I've been frustrated so long I'm hellishly mad. I'm really angry. I'm pissed off that me and my colleagues' talents are underpaid and politicized and controlled by people who draw fat salaries at our expense. I'm angry at mint julip sipping museum docents and their rich corporate husbands. I'm mad at sexist museum directors and the price of cheese and pigments. I hate the star-system which de-

termines success. I reject movements, trends, styles from my vision. I hate Art Forum Magazine and all the intellectual anti-life, ass-grabbing crap that goes with it. I'm angry that big-time galleries take 100% while my gallery gets by on 25%. I'm mad about how little tax money is allotted the Arts in my home state (California is 49th in the nation for supporting artists and the 7th largest government in the world). Somedays I'm fed up that most Americans don't even know what they like when it comes to art.

It's not funny anymore having our noses rubbed in the mess every day. It's no fun watching our friends struggle. It's not interesting that Rembrandt and all the others died paupers and serious degenerates.

Please don't tell me I should be cold and hungry and wear a funny hat. Don't tell me not to have children. Don't tell me to move. Don't tell me that pain and poverty is creative.

That's a lie left over from another age.

Just pity the poor wild eyed artist and pass the hat. Parent us a little, patronize us again, please. It's undignified to go begging at our age. If you think schoolteachers are underpaid, consider artists; we're skilled and fanatically devoted technicians too, but we're not paid at all! Perhaps if I'd grown up a mile from a dental school instead of an art center I would now be earning money for an honest day's work.

Believe me, a little financial security won't put out my artistic fire. When I mumble to myself I say, "Listen, America, don't be so coldhearted and stingy. We need you and you need us. Just give me and my artist friends a modest guaranteed income plus materials, and without a hassle and we'll give you back more beauty, more excitement and more understanding than you deserve. We'll master the universe for you with steady, sweaty strokes. ♀



Each moment slides
 into the next one
 as birds glide through
 the air
 And what they carry
 with them
 is what I bring
 to share
 with others
 when we meet.
 This is my care:
 to leave behind the dross,
 to carry on the pure.*

TURNING STRAW INTO GOLD

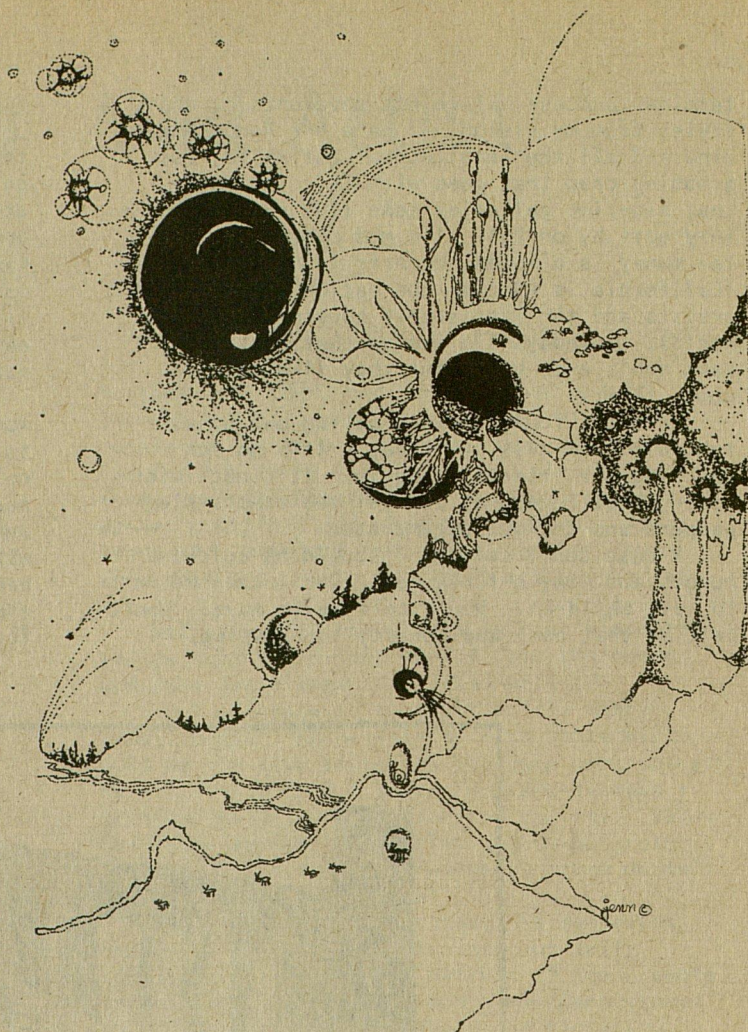
"It is not he or she or them or it that you
 belong to."

bob dylan

I don't listen to bob dylan any more but that line rings in my head, reminding me that above being a good violinist, or a good poet, or fiddler, dancer or artist, i am interested in becoming more whole; in uniting the disparate elements of myself. Continual birth, unification, process, yoga (which means to unite, to yoke, to join) - these are key words for me.

My poems are written quickly, and go unchanged except for a word here and there, placement of words on page, punctuation. This is less true with stories, which i mull over. But the physical writing down is preceded by invisible work - the bubbling of inner springs - just as the tones made on the violin are auditory expressions of delicate balances of muscular tension, emotional and psychic mood, all of which in turn express all that is as it converges on a moment. In each momentary expression i strive for a purity, which is achieved through refining away waste, excess, the superfluous. A pruning, a purification. Which in turn leads to a greater sense of wholeness and unity, increased resonance with the universe.

*Pure - interesting that pure, which in modern usage often connotes a quality of being untouched, or unmixed, unadulterated, derives from Sanskrit (the root tongue of Indo-European languages) word for wholeness or completion. And this is the sense in which i use the word in the above poem.



I am the instrument which resonates; i can feel the quality of my utterances in terms of how much and what kind of resonance they produce. For example, sometimes the words i speak sound dead, or false, or excessive to me; there is no charge to them, as some notes sound harsh and some body movements awkward and disconnected. But if there is a musical quality, a flow, a ring, to my sounds and movements, and if i feel very involved in the expression - i take these as positive signs, the signs of life-force. The time-test is the clincher. If expressions do not dull or corrode with repetition in time, i trust them. If they grow and breed subtle variation that is another good sign. Positive response from others is encouraging, but to be handled with caution. Some of my most beloved expressions must live on my love alone. It is of great importance to me to trust my own feelings about my work and to be aware of the immense subjectivity of others' reactions.

More and more i ask for unity of sound and symbol in poetry that is song, chant, dance. I am learning to speak my poems, to feel the resonances and nuances of my voice, to make speech song. My violin is another voice i am learning to bring into resonance with wordsong. The violin may precede, accompany and punctuate, or follow a poem, or a combination of all three. I have sung one or two poems in harmony with violin but this is difficult and will take time to develop. I am learning also to express

with my entire body the tao of each poem, for i see poetry as essentially musical, and music as an expression of the whole body.

I use a large mirror and a tape recorder, and shape my work into event, drama. I have done this three times over a period of two years. The first was called An Invocation of the Muses and was presented in a large hall on the night of the Cancer Full Moon. The elements involved were my poems and those of another woman poet, both of our voices and bodies, my violin, guitar, and a male flutist. Both flute and violin were used to accompany poems, which were presented in a dramatic sequence which had, i think a very rich texture. Costume and lighting were used to heighten the sensuosity of the event. Perhaps most exciting for me in that particular presentation was accompanying the other woman with violin throughout a long fantasy-tale. I was offstage. The flutist also entered into her tale by enacting one of the figures in it while she was speaking. We also did a fantasy-tale of my own that night in which all three of us were actors, while i spoke the tale, which was in rhyme.

Later, that same tale was elaborated and the flutist and i presented it at a benefit for United Stand, an ad hoc political group formed to protect home-made houses in our area from the doom of building code fascism. The poem-tale was an allegory about fighting the Dragon which threatened the peaceful homes of pastoral folk. As i narrated, i strode in long robes with a wooden staff, becoming the 'solitary bard of the slopes' who was advising the people how to deal with the Dragon. The flutist became the Dragon and also the Serpent who was the source of wisdom for the bard.

More recently, i put together a presentation to commemorate my seven years in the area where i live. i called it A Communion, and worked on it as i have never worked on anything before. Coming up with a sheaf of poems that lent themselves best to presentation, and writing some inspired specifically by the coming event, i spoke them aloud over and over into my tape recorder, and in front of my mirror. I waited for those precious moments when musical sounds came to weave with the words. I tried to imagine how the poems would appear in sequence. I thought about what it was i wanted to convey to others; how the poems would make people feel.

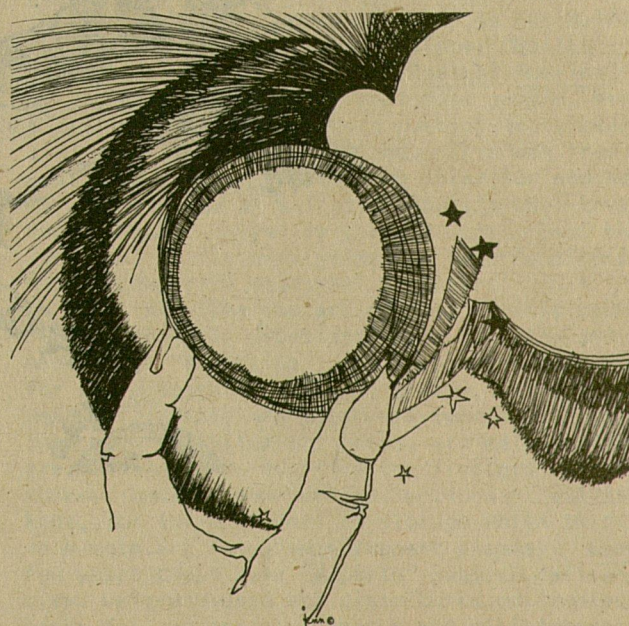
I knew that i wanted to share myself with others (communion means sharing); to part the veil of personality and project outward the deep self within. I wanted to project my vision of how to be more whole, how to be more at one with the universe, by being at one with myself. I feel that if i learn to love myself and project this, then others will learn to do so also and we will be more able to love one another. By 'loving myself' i mean just this process of self-unification which i determine in myself as i shape my work. To me the expression of this kind of self love is revolutionary. And exposure is for me the real meaning of art and it is exposure that differentiates art, which is revolutionary, from mere skill. Skill alone cannot plunge into the center to find what is

real and powerful. And what is real and powerful - my own uniqueness, my aloneness - is what (paradoxically) connects me with all living beings.

A woman friend came along to watch a dress rehearsal the week before the announced date. I was terror-stricken, seeing her take notes on what i was doing (which i had asked her to do); seeing her blank face, her lack of enthusiasm. I was crushed. She said: "you must break up the intensity - people can't take that much all at once." The next night we were practicing my Irish fiddle tunes, with her on Irish drum. I was still a beginner in this style and had never practiced with drum before, which forces one to keep strict tempo, no mean feat at high speeds. We practiced only five days, but on the night of the Communion the fiddle and drum served to vary, break up and discharge otherwise too-dense energies. I think that the intermittent lightness of these tunes made people more able to receive and absorb the energies of very-serious, sometimes angry, poems, which might otherwise have overwhelmed them.

I also played some short movements from Baroque music and a song on guitar. I sang one short poem a cappella. Another poem moved between spoken voice to song and mime, another included chanting. Before reciting a very intense and angry poem about the planned logging of the Albion River, i played America the Beautiful very slowly on my violin and i followed the poem by putting on a long skinny colonial hat with plumes and playing an old tune called Napoleon's Retreat. I was proud of my very new sense of how to use humor as a tool to deliver the all-too-serious, the all-too-sad.

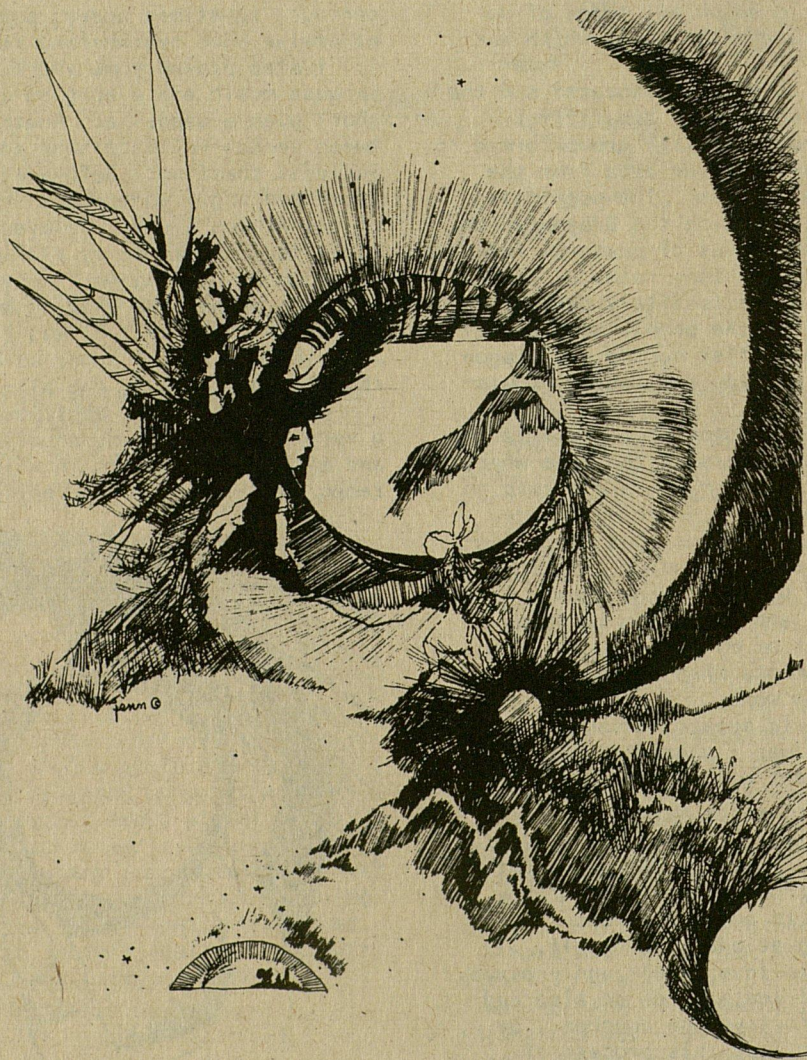
Perhaps the most ambitious piece i did was a very long tale-poem, an allegory about faeries and machine-age humans in which i used violin, rebec (medieval fiddle), bells, gongs, cymbals.



Doing this poem, which took about fifteen minutes, involved incredible focus, for, in addition to remembering the whole thing, i had also to put down and pick up instruments and remember the kinds of sounds (partly improvised) which were necessary to convey the sense i wanted.

I also like what i did with one shorter poem which describes a relationship in 'four positions' and which i ended by picking up two long knives and becoming the Tarot card, the 'two of swords'. That is, i drew the knives slowly outward in a circle, crossing them over my head, and bringing them to rest, wrists crossed, pointing outward from my chest. My drummer came up

behind me and blindfolded me. Later she told me that someone in the audience had gasped (undoubtedly a tarot devotee. I knew little about the conceptual significance of the card but learned a great deal exploring later what had been an intuitive connection). About 85 people showed up that night, and though i could not see them except for those in the front row, i could feel their great receptivity, mostly silent, despite intermittent laughter and applause. It was this silent receptivity that took away my fear and which told me i was succeeding in what i had wanted to do. ♀



QUILT MAKING:

RECLAIMING OUR ART

There was a time in my life that I would rather have been caught with a murder weapon in my hand than a needle and thread. These days, eight years later, I am never not found with needle and thread in hand, sewing little pieces of fabric together, secure in my heritage as a woman artist, knowing that I am making the strongest, most enduring, most visually stimulating art ever produced in this young sybaritic culture. As a quiltmaker, I have made my peace with art, some of the visions of my work-roughened foremothers, and our collective female consciousness. Quilts were and are strongly futuristic art.

Like most women artists in this misogynist culture, I am no longer waiting for an aesthetic (male) Godot to tell me what is and what is not ART. There is no question for me that piecework design, as it is expressed in patchwork quilts, is the first American art form, the undeniable gift of women's artistic genius to our culture. Needlework is the common denominator of women's art. The needle has been the brush and cloth, the canvas of women's art for most of civilized history. With a tiny needle women have created strong visual art; it has become an artistic tool as important as the sharpest chisel, the finest brush, the most sophisticated lens, the finest pigments. For most of America's herstory, it has been the only visible women's art. This is true of most other cultures as well.

Beth Gutcheon said in The Perfect Patchwork Primer that "A woman made utility quilts as fast as she could so her family wouldn't freeze, and she made them as beautiful as she could so her heart wouldn't break." This brings us to the story of quilts in America and how the art which women have contributed has been endlessly exploited and finally, absorbed into the male dominated art of a misogynist culture.

Despite the mute testimony of the thousands and thousands of exquisite quilts that our foremothers left to us and that are still being made everywhere where there are women, the sexist myth exists that the women who made quilts did not

know they were making art! This quilting-as-household-drudgery business has been around for a long time. It's a convenient way to dismiss women's art! Call it a household craft and imply that the women who made quilts were work-worn idiots with nothing on their anonymous minds but warm kivers. Are we supposed to assume that our pioneer foremother (or any woman, then or now) went to the enormous effort of cutting thousands of precise geometric pieces from carefully saved and scavenged and traded bits of cloth, set them together with infinitesimal stitches into an intricate design and then put several miles of tiny quilting stitches in intricate and sophisticated designs of feathers, plumes, etc. and then months or sometimes years later, her quilt a masterpiece of design and feelings, considered the whole effort some sort of particularly tedious household chore? Of course these women knew they were creating works of art! As Pat Mainardi points out in her invaluable piece, "Quilts - Women's Unrecognized Art" in Radical America, quilts were the only art that most people, especially the early pioneers pushing west, ever even saw, much less possessed. This was true of most needlework. Quilts were cared for and some were never used at all, so elaborate were they, and so highly valued by their makers. Thus the idea that quilts were primarily functional and only secondarily beautiful is absurd.

At this time the art critics in this country who are commonly associated with quilting and needlework "expertise", and thus those responsible for the misogynist myths so glibly invented to make quilting and piecework seem less viable than male-dominated art forms, are males. All are associated as curators or directors of large museums housing enormous collections of quilts kept, for the most part in storage while third rate male art hangs on permanent display. Every few years these same "experts" publish definitive, well-promoted and distributed quilt history books full of sexist opinions and misinformation which has little or nothing to do with the art that our foremothers so exuberantly produced and which we still produce today. For example

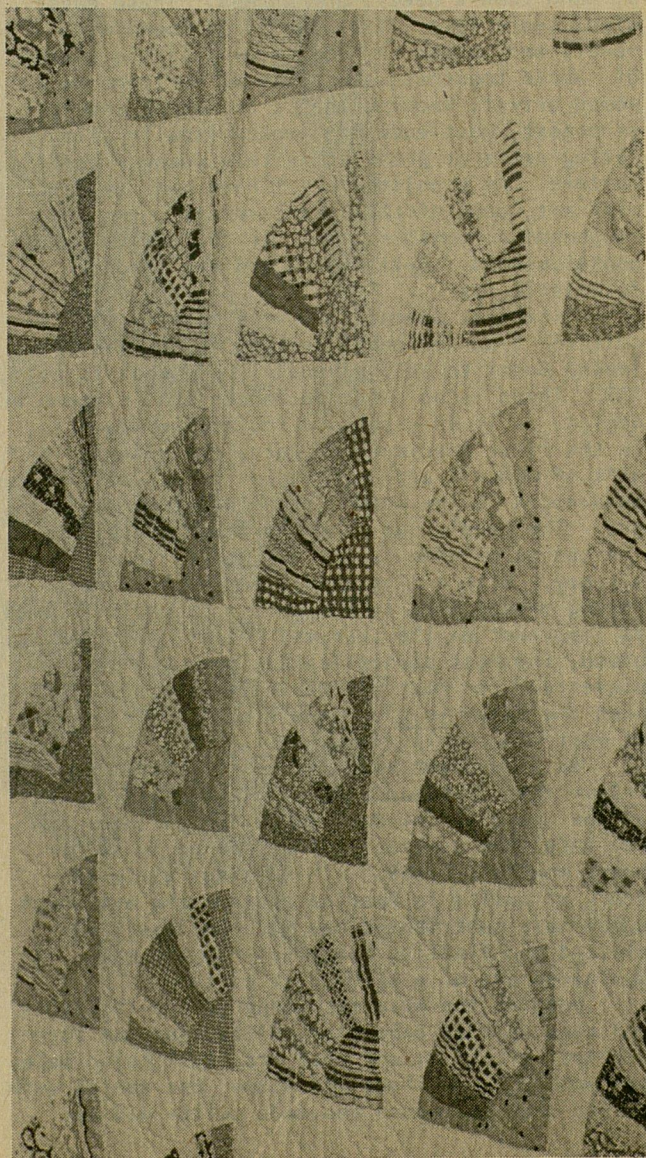
I quote Jonathan Holstein, (*American Pieced Quilts* 1972) who can blithely dedicate the catalogue of the Smithsonian quilt collection to "those anonymous (*italics mine*) women whose skilled hands and eyes created the American pieced quilt," and then go on to say "The finely realized geometry of the pieced quilt, coupled with this sophisticated sense for the possibilities of color and form, produced some works which mirror in startling ways contemporary painting trends. We can see in many such phenomena as "op" effects, serial images, use of "color fields", a deep understanding of negative space, mannerisms of formal abstraction and the like." The implication, of course, is that the quilts produced a hundred years before the modern male art somehow anticipated modern art, instead of the truth which is that many "popular" male artists freely "borrowed" from the design ethic of 18th, 19th and 20th century quilters. They still do so while many great quiltmakers starve.

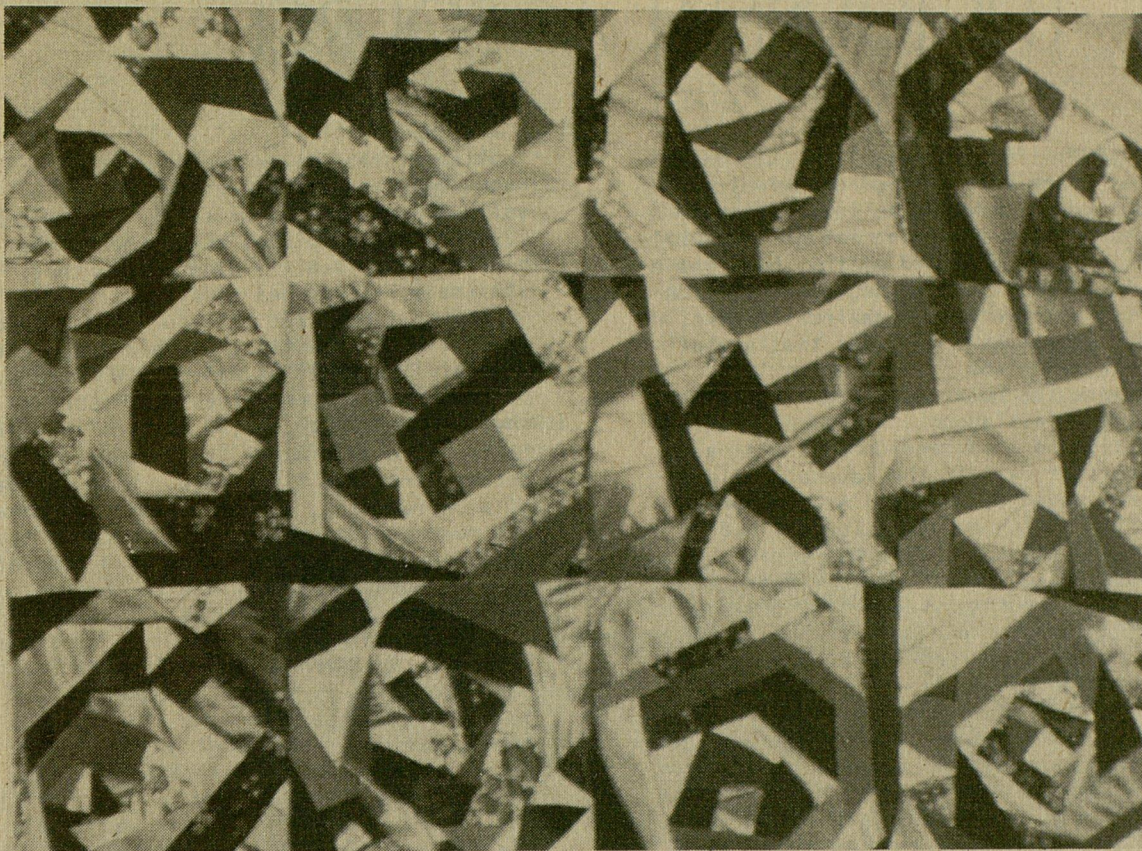
This analogy myth is only one of the myths deliberately associated with quilts and quilt-making herstory. There is also the myth that women made quilts collectively in the misunderstood "quilting bee". The truth is that quilts were made collectively only on special occasions, and even then, women usually designed and executed their own quilt blocks individually, coming together only for the actual quilting. Most quilts made in this country were made by individual women from the first cut piece to the last stitch. The real purpose of the quilting bee, popular in the 18th and 19th centuries was simple; it was a chance for women to gather together and exchange information. So while the quilting of a woman's top or a gift quilt was the ostensible purpose of quilting bees, there was much more than that going on. The quilting bee, especially in rural areas, but also in cities, was an opportunity for women to come together and discuss their common experience, to give each other the medical information that kept many folks alive in areas where women did the doctoring, to exchange gynecological and obstetric information, to share folk remedies, to discuss political issues important to women; to teach each other new skills, to give support to women who needed it, to spend time with older, more schooled women, to teach young daughters the fine skills of this most important of women's art forms. The actual making of the quilt was the reason for the gathering, but much more was going on at the quilting bee than taking little stitches on the quilt top.

Cloth is a natural medium for women I think; women's hands, since time began, have been at home with cloth: growing the flax, spinning the thread, weaving the cloth, making things, functional and artistic, with the cloth they have made. Cloth is a comfortable medium to work with; it is living, it breathes, it stretches, it is pliable and full of textural possibilities. Cloth dyes well and many early quilts were literally made from scratch. The woman wove the fabric, block printed it, dyed it, cut it, pieced it, quilted it...and slept under it. I know that many quilters today still follow this same ancient

process, from weaving to the finished quilt. For this and other reasons, quilting is perfectly developed as women's art. It is alive with color and the nuances of color are always part of woman's experience, past and present. It is no mistake that many early quilts were predominantly red, the color of fury, and that red still dominates most modern quilts. Equally interesting is the fact that although our foremothers were usually not given the opportunity to read and write, they still produced quilts of very sophisticated mathematical design. Quilting is meditative, deeply creative, very personal work. It requires sophisticated understandings of color, of texture, of tone and the use of space; its possibilities are limitless.

There were and are many other reasons quilts are woman's art. Sexist quilt "experts" say our foremothers made quilts to keep their families warm and to pass the time, it being clearly understood (by them) that no woman could have produced anything truly artistic. The fact is that women made quilts for the same reasons Rodin carved stone and Van Gogh painted on canvas.





Women made quilts because it is natural to the human spirit, female or male, to want to create that which is beautiful for its own sake. Many, many modern quilts and a good number of old quilts were never meant to be on beds, but were intended to hang, exactly as a painting hangs, and for exactly the same reasons.

Radka Donnell, one of the finest modern quiltmakers I know, who came to quilting from painting, which she found "limiting", says that we have no language to talk about quilts as art and she is right. Having been denied status as a viable art form, we tend still to talk about quilts as artifacts than as Art with a capital A. How unfortunate that the art form which encompasses so much of our woman's artistic heritage and was so much a part of our foremothers' everyday lives and their contribution to our culture, no less important than the "male" jazz and blues idioms, is so little understood.

I recently found a word in the dictionary that sang out to me; another womanword for us to reclaim. The word is "parapherna" and it means, according to the Latin derivative from which came the word paraphernalia, all of a woman's possessions beyond her dowry. Surely quilts and other needlework were our foremothers' parapherna; the only hold they had on art. As oppressed people have always done, they made art with what they had - a needle and thread and a bag of cloth scraps. Said one pioneer woman, speaking of her life on the frontier, the endless work and sickness, the loneliness: "I would have

lost my mind if I had not had my quilts to do". (She didn't find it necessary to cut off her ear.) So much of our foremothers went into their quilts. For many women it was the only outlet for beauty in a harsh male wilderness. But more than any other thing, quilting was the one way a woman could express her own understanding and experience, and that, despite what experts and textbooks say, is what art is all about.

If our understanding of our experience in art is ever to grow beyond the limitations of a sexist culture, women must begin to take back our art forms as our own and begin to see in the needlework that most of us have inherited or made, a huge part of women's art history and our own heritage. We must reclaim what is ours, refusing to let art be dominated by the male ethic that says what men make with the tools they hoard is ART and what women make with the tools they have invented is craft. We must demand that museums put their quilts on permanent display and accord them the respect they deserve. We must organize and promulgate quilt exhibits and we must take back from male art critics the voices that they have presumed to echo when speaking out of turn for women's art.

As women artists, we need to revere what our foremothers gave us, to collect quilts in our families and use them, to buy old quilts when we can afford them, to hang them for the appreciation of others and mostly to continue to make them. Quilting is women's art and we must reclaim it and define it for ourselves. ♀

THE JOURNAL AS SOURCE

April 1972: "A gift from Tom, this beautiful leather bound book full of blank white pages. Suddenly I'm moved to take seriously a thought that's been lingering for quite a while: to keep a journal, a record of this hard, painful, growing time. In my mind, somewhat ironically, is the title of a magazine - 'Women, A Journal of Liberation'. I guess that's what this is, my journal of liberation..."

Those were the words that began my first journal, four years ago. I had no idea then how prophetic the words would be or what a powerful part of my life the journal would become. I was moved by chance - a notebook arriving in the mail - and by a force I had no name for then: the compulsion to write. Like untold thousands of other women, I began to write my own story for myself only, trying in the writing to understand myself and my life more clearly. The journal now fills three leather bound books and is into its fourth. I haven't kept it steadily during these years - there are sometimes breaks of whole months. Gradually it has become as necessary as a drug and as effective as therapy; for the last year there's rarely been a break of more than two weeks. The journal has become my foundation. It is there that I hear my deepest voice; returning to the journal, I return to center. And from the journal has come an enormous gift, faith in my abilities as a writer. The journal is both a reflection and a creator, product of and changer of my life.

January 1976: This morning as we drove to the literature class Harriet told me that Pam was sleeping with Geba again and that Geba is on an indefinite visit. Every bit of me was screaming "no, no, I can't stand it". And then my hands reached out for the journal. I felt imprisoned in the truck, nearly panicked as I realized it would be hours till I could sit as I am now, journal, pen in hand. 'I can't get through this if I can't write it out' I kept telling myself, feeling literally as though I couldn't think if I couldn't write.

"Later in class, someone spoke of 'the poet's eye', always one step removed from the experience already transforming it into poetry. I feel like that sometimes. The writing is so intrinsically a part of me, that everything else I do is in some way getting ready to be written. Half of the living, the experiencing, is in the writing down afterwards."

The cathartic aspect of the journal, the actual physical getting feelings out of me and onto paper, was something that I wanted and expected from it. What has come as a continual surprise are the moments of revelation and epiphany that happen because of the writing itself. A turn of phrase, a metaphor flying from my unconscious onto the page, words my hand wrote faster than my conscious self could speak:

looking at these I learn from myself what I did not know I knew. The writer becomes my teacher, yet "I" am also "the writer". These moments of revelation, the places where the journal exclaims "Now I see! I didn't know that!" are extremely intense and always nourishing.

After I had kept the journal for over a year, I began the first visible step in relationship to myself as writer. We were working on the Living Alternatives (#6) issue of C.W. and, for the first time, I saw the journal as history and as a story, the prophecy, long forgotten, from the first page. With a great deal of embarrassment, a fearful sense of nakedness, and much hesitancy about its worth, I typed out selected passages, beginning with separating from my husband and continuing through my evolution as a feminist and as a lesbian. After rigorous pruning by friends less emotionally involved with it than I, this journal found its way into print first in the magazine and later in a book. But by the time it appeared, I had made a curious transformation: it was a story I had written, almost a work of fiction. "I" was the person writing now in "another" journal, another volume. Perhaps this was simply protection against such public revelation, but it was also my first taste of the writer's distance from the work. The work is not the self, but has a life of its own.

That article, "Visions and Revisions", touched many people's lives and made me aware of the potential of the journal as source. Yet this consciousness didn't seem to alter my personal, day-to-day confrontations with the journal. The only point of writing is to tell some truth as thoroughly as one can, and so the journal's worth lay in its ability to describe or reflect the truth of the moment. Both as a personal and as a writer's tool, this honesty is a necessity for the journal.

In the Health issue of C.W. I tried publishing the journal in a more consciously reworked form. I took the events from two different illnesses, recorded in two different journals, and rewrote them as a story. From the journal came concrete and graphic images, the feeling of a particular moment, the voice of a certain consciousness; from the distance and detachment, came the ability to weave it together as one tale, to create a coherent voice. This is probably the first step in a process yet to come: the journal as source for a novel. I am conscious these last six months that the drive of "I must write it down" has a double edge - personal exploration as always, mixed now with the thought that I may need this moment, thought, image for some future book. And one of the journal's functions is also as writer's notebook. Here, I consciously practice description, play with imagery, try out a story, learn about the craft.

April 1975: "This land is so beautiful these winterspring days, that I constantly feel the urge to try to 'get it down'. Yet its power defies the material plane, is more than every element of the physical reality. This beauty is a passionate love with me; I am all openness body and soul before it. It is perhaps the only passion I shall ever know that is without possessiveness or attachment. How can one possess the movement of light in the evening sky, the moon which has spread itself from the finest sliver to full roundness each night? Yet it is a passion with me, the richness and source of my being, this eternally transient, transforming beauty. Would that I could mirror it."

Leafing through the journals while writing this, I've found the voices of other women writers coming back to me from the pages, quotes from books, letters, articles set down for en-

couragement and support. And it seems no coincidence that the two most frequent voices also come from women's journals: Virginia Woolf's Writer's Diary and May Sarton's Journal of a Solitude. In my country isolation, the truthfulness of their private confrontations provides an essential mirror for my own work.

Without my journal, I doubt that my writing would have developed in the way it has. The journal speaks with my most real voice and forces me to look unequivocally at my experiences and feelings. When I give myself to it, it rewards me with both new insights and good writing. It is my hope that more and more women will pull out of hidden drawers the journals which reflect so richly our experiences and perceptions; and that those of us who read will come to respect the journal as one of the true, indigenous art forms of women. ♀



A Wink and a Smirk

Poised before a virgin sheet of white with a blob of acrylic on the end of my brush, I usually haven't any idea what to expect to see when I'm finally finished. I get a winking face or a suspended tomato, wings or a dangling pair of sneakers stuck in my mind, so I put them down in all their glory, complete with cateye-shaped sunglasses, the nubbly tweed overcoat, the polka-dotted scarf. I stare at the drawing table in my forehead until the next detail comes bubbling up. They resist arm-twisting of any sort, arrive at their own leisure and are not attracted by identity crises, anxiety, analyses, or time crunches. Only out of the delivery room do I start to get the messages. If I ask them questions too soon, they get confused by intellectual implications and go home.

The first paintings from my Guatemala trip were bizarre mixtures of all the new visuals that descended on me arriving in a foreign country. Yes, a red international Do Not Park sign superimposed over a juicy green ice cream cone dribbling between a pair of opened naked human legs - all dangling on a string from the teeth of a male face. Lots of weird things in Guatemala, but why those things? Could that be some comment on my sexual availability? Shall I confess that that male face is familiar? And this green virgin on her pedestal posing so modestly while little horrors spring from all parts of her being - frogs with hammers, flying boots, teeth on parachutes, a halo of soup. Even assuming a holy posture, I'm having a rough time concealing my inexcusable human weaknesses or locking up my belches, farts and other true feelings.

In fact, I noticed a painfully forced grin on all the faces I drew for years. "Oh yes everything's just fantastic!" I boasted proudly and plodded on in my solid-as-a-rock manner through domestic disheartenings and a ludicrous attempt at house construction alone in the rain, and wondering why all I could draw was monsters in my stomach, pies with teeth, and squeezed out toothpaste tubes.

Even on those days when no sneakers come to

mind and I just start swirling and scribbling, my strokes still expose me. There were harsh colors, thin scratchy strokes, angular forms, messy careless painting, incomplete most of them. When the ruins and deflations faded and a new lover came to caress my heart, the toothpaste tubes transformed into transparent pink clouds floating and rising. The forms were round and smooth, the strokes started flowing, full of water, blending and bleeding the colors and forms. Pretty nice.

Next move: conscious integration. If I can't help but paint myself maybe I can also consciously use my painting to try out a new me. In the gradual trusting of my brushstroke am I not learning how to trust any move that I make? As I move onto larger paper with bigger, more free and powerful stroking am I not expanding my horizons and my movement? While I'm fine tuning my sensibilities and sensitizing my brushstrokes and color choices, I'm also co-counseling my way through jungles of childhood distress and becoming sensitive and downright nice to the people I love, including myself. I'm feeling all parts of my life seep into each other, my art into my relationships, my co-counseling into my art, relationships into co-counseling.

The latest project is to focus on my flowing and spontaneous self. I am painting big billowing fountaining mushrooming forms on large paper with acrylics, four inch brushes, and lots of water. Dealing with these large sheets on the floor requires me to get all of my body into the movement. There's no painting over it anywhere or it becomes a muddy river so I've got to be accurate with each stroke. The paint dries rapidly so I can't ponder and dawdle and worry (activities I'd just as soon give up anyway). I must keep dancing and trusting my impulses. So far, they've been clumsy, lousy, labored and muddy, but improving. I even like some of them. I'll do more.

I want my painting to be a vehicle for developing and reflecting the highest me I can be. A wink and a smirk just came through the last one I did. Great! I wonder what's coming next? ♀



"Joseph's Coat" and The Process Of Crafting A Poem

Two rooms and a hallway
separate our bodies/ our bodies separate us
from one another
only when dragged from sleep.
Asleep, our bodies find their way back
to one another; your small fist
unravels,
knits itself
to the hollow of my hand.

What is it
that maims us out of loving?
If we have early learned
the lines of demarcation
and the weapons,
we each knew
there were reasons.

Old scars
in me leak open, too
like light
straining against the seams
of a closed door.

Somewhere, in another city perhaps,
a woman about forty in a store
cluttered with woven baskets
and small pewter teapots
is smiling, watching two younger women
who are looking at one another/ looking at quilts.
She hands them this one
My Grandmother's Fan
collected in Kentucky, 1920.
On a field of white on white
are patches of fabric:
blue with elephants, rocking horses and clowns
yellow with white flowers outlined in blue
geometric viridian and eggshell
tiny white wildflowers dusting a patch of sky blue
and another of burnt umber
red and white gingham checks
patches of faded denim blue, celadon, and a salmon
which must once have been as bright as the flesh
of Indian Red peaches.

Tonight, when it is the word "lesbian"
and not a lack of love
which keeps me from opening
closed doors
intruding on your grief,
and you cannot
let me clothe you
in this Joseph's Coat, this quilt
we both have loved,
it is her blessings,
the blessings of the woman
who watched us looking at quilts
which I do send.

If for me, as for many poets, much of the creativity involved in poem-making unfolds in the process of writing itself, of crafting the poem, I still need a catalyst to begin writing. The inspiration that writing engenders must be preceded for me by some emotional experience which makes me need or want to write about it. I stress going back to that private perception because often what's powerful in a poem is the specificity of one's private image of reality. A drawing of a hand is more palpable if it renders every odd contour, every knobby junction of bone, every fold and flap of skin, than if it were simply the matter of five loops, joining at the wrist. Similarly, the poet attempts to take us into his/her private world and makes us feel what he/she is feeling by conveying a specific experience as vividly as possible, instead of using abstractions and generalities, words like "anger" or "love" or "sadness".

When a dream, a visual fantasy, a walk in the hills, an encounter with another person or with myself triggers not only intense feelings, but strong sensory responses as well-- is so vivid that I can taste or smell or see or hear or touch what happened-- then I know I have the beginnings of a poem.

Just as a poem, to be effective, cannot be a handful of abstractions, neither can an essay on writing a poem. The craft of poetry has often been mystified. What I intend to do in this essay is to share with you in detail the process of how I came to write a poem called "Joseph's Coat".

"Joseph's Coat" is a poem which began with some seemingly unconnected visual images: a quilt, a woman in a quilt store, light seeping in under the door of a darkened room, a hallway which separated two rooms and the persons in each of those rooms. I was not sure what the relationship among these visual images was; only that

out of the infinite number of "objective" or "literal" observations which the mind can record simultaneously about a given moment in psychological time, these were the images which my mind had selected out, had seized upon. I began writing the poem in part to find out why these images had clustered together so intensely for me. I think that's why many of us write: because the poem, like the dream, tells us what we don't know we know. Or as Adrienne Rich puts it in "Pierrot Le Fou"

To record
in order to see

if you know how the story
ends
why tell it.¹

In the first draft of "Joseph's Coat," I made almost no attempt to control form or material. Lines which were embarrassingly sentimental, clichéd, vague, boring, or just badly written poured out. It was important not to block raw emotions or illogical images by censorship. Before I enter into the specifics of editing, I have to say that for me to write what I consider to be an effective and powerful poem, I have to duplicate my feelings in the actual form of the poetic images. Technique enables the poem, like the experience behind it, to be read on many levels, to be apprehended with all the complexity and ambiguity which any given moment holds for an individual. The following is the first draft:

I am not asleep, only still, hunched
under blue sheets and blue blankets
and the wonderous quilt we bought together--
the woman at Ninepatch who smiled, watching us
looking at quilts,
shared in our happiness
like a sister, like a mother
when we found this one,
My Grandmother's Fan,
collected in Kentucky, 1920;
she must have known from the way we looked
at one another
that we were lovers--
I am not asleep, only still
on a vast expanse of foam/blue sheets
we laughingly called
"the blue ocean"
when 3,000 miles separated our bodies.

Now two rooms and a hallway
separate our bodies/our bodies separate us
from one another
only when dragged from sleep.
Asleep, our bodies find their way back
to one another; your small fist
unravels,
knits itself
to the hollow of my hand.

I am not asleep;
the light from your study
leaks in under the door.
If the sound which tears through your body
is not a sound at all,
still, the walls in this house

bulge with its pain
like the throbbing
of a single blood vessel
against the brain.

I can feel the rage in you
tremble;
knowing the battle you fight
is not against me
does not matter. Old scars
in me leak open, too
like light
straining against the seams
of a closed door.

I am not asleep; only wish
I were dreaming,
that the battle were over,
that the wounded could heal
themselves.

The first major revision of this draft was to eliminate the entire first stanza. Everything which does not add to a poem detracts from it, and the first stanza set up the poem as just another badly-written love poem. Being psychologically closer when we (the two lovers) were 3,000 miles apart than when we were separated by just a hallway may have been an accurate assessment of our situation, but pretty clichéd. The woman at Ninepatch seemed arbitrarily yanked into the poem. The quilt seemed just another part of shared bedding which certified us as lovers. The second stanza I retained whole, eliminating only the first word "now" which linked the second stanza to the deleted first stanza. The poem clearly gains from thrusting the reader immediately into the core of the poem.

Separation/distance as a theme can be expressed for me with several techniques that I've used here. The psychological separation of the two women is mirrored by their geographical separation: the hallway which divides the two rooms. That separation is further emphasized by the use of the slash in the second line, which makes the two halves of the line echo, almost mock one another. Despite the fact that the line is enjambed--that is to say, its meaning is carried on to the next line(s) both by breath unit and by punctuation unit, every line to some degree appears end-stopped. One's eye pauses, if only for the briefest moment at the end of a line. (That is why poetry is written in lines and not paragraphs.) Because of this, the second line seems to suggest as a complete statement the idea "our bodies separate us." Breaking the line here heightens the irony of the seeming separation, for when the entire enjambed line goes on to read "...our bodies separate us/from one another/only when dragged from sleep," the reader is made to feel this separation as unnatural and violent. These bodies are not untruthful; they knit themselves together in their sleep; the closeness between these two women exists, but some as yet unexplained circumstances in their waking hours forces a separation. The sixth line of this

cont.

stanza echoes both the form and irony of the second line. It ends with "your small fist"--suggesting anger, withdrawal, separation, but the line is enjambed to images which suggest closeness, peacefulness. Therefore, the tension of images clashing forces the reader onward in hopes of resolution.

The third stanza, which is prosy and informal, unsuccessfully attempts an analogy between the light pushing its way through the walls, and the sound of a lover's sobbing also pushing through walls. I eliminated the stanza because it was badly written and redundant. The second half of the stanza which follows contains a much more powerful version of the same analogy. The lines "old scars/in me leak open, too/like light/straining against the seams/of a closed door" evoke the door, and by extension, the house, as humanized, as a psychological extension of myself. The house is vulnerable; its seams leak light like a body leaks blood, like a psyche leaks from psychic wounds.

By deleting lines which weakened the poem, I also inadvertently made the remaining lines extremely disconnected. In the second draft, I worked on transitions. I added the stanza which begins "what is it/that maims us out of loving?" to fuse together the stanza which now began the poem ("two rooms and a hallway") with the remaining part of the original fourth stanza, "old scars/in me leak open, too." I then indented the line "old scars" to emphasize its connection to the previous stanza as well as to the lines which followed. The indentation serves as a visual device to suggest as end-stopped lines both

"there were reasons: old scars"

and

"old scars in me leak open too."

In the final stanza of the original version of the poem, I continued the metaphor of the walking wounded, but I wanted a poem which instead was an affirmation of strength, of tenderness, of healing. In a later draft, the last stanza was changed but I was still dissatisfied with the poem, particularly the ending. Throughout five days of work on the poem, I had been reading and re-reading *Diving into the Wreck* and some earlier volumes of Adrienne Rich's poems, trying to get in touch with poetic form. I often read poetry extensively when I'm writing, for just that purpose. But in this instance, it backfired; the battleground metaphors of the last stanza were clearly too derivative, and threatened to engulf the whole poem. At this stage, the poem was still simply a "message" that all of us, women and men, should unite against the enemy: patriarchal society. And while that may be an accurate assessment of a deeply felt political belief, it is very far removed from the intensely personal grief I was feeling about the self-hatred of a lover who had internalized society's condemnation of lesbians, about my own sense of helplessness and loss over her estrangement from me, and finally, at the failure of the tremendous tenderness, concern, and protectiveness which I felt towards her to somehow lessen her own pain. I knew that if the poem was to come close to being a deeply felt statement, it had to become more

personal, to "reach" farther. I had to strip the poem of polemical statements which simply decorated ideas, and eliminate images that came from identifying with someone else's poems. I had to go back to the poetic integrity of the original four images whose relationship was still not entirely clear to me, and allow those images to discover themselves, their meanings. At this point, I dropped the second version of the last stanza, and left the poem temporarily without an ending. An unfinished poem seemed preferable to one with a mediocre ending.

I took a day off from working on the poem, and let my mind loosen up by playing with a number of verbal descriptions. Among them was an extremely vivid description of the quilt, or rather, of the colors and patterns in just two of the hundred-odd fan-shaped patches on the quilt. It occurred to me that these lines might someday become part of a different poem, but I never intended it to have anything to do with the poem I had been working on. When I returned to what was to become the final draft of "Joseph's Coat," I suddenly realized that the quilt description of the previous day was just the mystical connection which tied together all the various threads of the poem. Despite the fact that all mentions of the quilt or of the woman in the quilt store had been assiduously written out of the poem by the second draft, quilt-related words like "unravels," "knits," "seams," "woven," kept making their appearances in successive drafts. Freed from the burden of furthering the "argument" of a poem, the quilt description which I had thought of as merely an exercise, succeeded in conveying the tenderness and love which I had been unable, perhaps unwilling, to give voice to through a human speaker in the poem. Suddenly, the whole poem came together for me. Despite the many images of separation and estrangement in the poem, the poem was clearly a love poem, a poem about wanting to heal, wanting not only to braid together the lives of two women, but also to knit together a psyche at war with itself. The patched pieces of that quilt were somehow to represent that struggle for wholeness and integration. The "real" quilt meant something special to me in part because the act of the two of us buying it together was a ritual, a celebration, an acknowledgement of a sense of, if not permanence, then at least a deeply committed here and now in our relationship. And because the woman from whom we bought the quilt seemed to understand and affirm, without words, this celebration of the love between us, she became very much a part of the meaning of the quilt. Whether or not this woman knew we were actually lovers was irrelevant; her affirmation of the love any two people might share became a symbol for me of a world which could be accepting, a world in which a woman with whom I wanted to share the whole of my life with might be able to affirm the love of one woman for another, and the reciprocation of that love. Suddenly, the woman in the quilt store emerged in the poem as the one person whose warmth, whose unspoken blessings I could offer to heal the pain of my lover, and perhaps my own.

The poem implicitly concerns itself with

at least four generations of women: the woman who made the quilt, the woman in the quilt store, the two younger women, and by extension, generations of women who, because of the struggles being fought now, might be a part of a more enlightened society. The quilt became an almost perfect metaphor for a poem about relationships, for a poem whose present time is so infused with a sense of the past. Psychological time, memory, childhood, old scars, are juxtaposed against now, against the "tonight" which begins the final stanza.

The theme of generations of women lending strength and support to one another is also exemplified by the specific reference in the poem to Marge Piercy's wonderful poem, "Looking at Quilts,"² whose title appears intact in the lines "...two younger women/who are looking at one another/looking at quilts." Piercy's poem

The love of the ordinary blazes out: the backyard
miracles: Ohio Sunflower,

Snail's Track,

Sweet Gum Leaf,

Moon over the Mountain.

In the pattern Tulip and Peony the sense
of design matters the essence of what sprawled
in the afternoon: called conventionalized
to render out the intelligence, the graphic wit.

this quilt might be
the only perfect artifact a woman
would ever see, yet she did not doubt
what we had forgotten, that out of her
potatoes and colic, sawdust and blood
she could create; together, alone,
she seized her time and made new.

clearly influenced my own. The tradition of conscious literary theft, of poets lending and borrowing from one another, and yet creating something new from something old dates back to the beginning of written literature, and probably oral literature as well. And in an odd way, the evolution of every art form, including quilting, has something to do with that tradition of borrowing from one another. Borrowing is a patchwork way of continuing tradition, and the allusion to Piercy's poem emphasizes the theme of generations as well: she's an older generation of women poets lending strength and inspiration to younger ones.

In the section of the poem with the lines containing the quilt description, I made use of my familiarity with a painter's palette. In the line "geometric viridian and eggshell," I could have simply written, "geometric green and off-white," but the tone of the poem would lack the old fashioned and delicate quality conveyed in the line as written.

The colors of the quilt give the poem its title. "Joseph's Coat," the biblical Coat of Many Colors, was originally intended simply as a metaphor for the quilt as a colorful and much

cherished covering, but its meanings have begun to expand for me. Like the quilt, the coat is mythic, suggests tradition and generations. Both represent not only immense beauty, but great sorrow as well. The very love which caused Joseph to be given the coat also caused him to be treated as an outcast; and the quilt represents a love which also proves to be experienced as dangerous by its recipient.

In the final stanza, the implied closed doors which separate the two rooms of the first stanza, and the closed door of the third stanza are left unopened; but if the geographical distance between the two women remains unchanged, the psychological distance does not. The quilt, and the blessings of the woman in the quilt store, bring a resolution to the poem. They bind up the wounds of estrangement, and they bind up the various thematic and imagistic threads of the poem as well.

Having discussed the formal crafting of the preliminary and final versions of the poem, I want to make clear that while I work at poems, (even as I strive to make them appear effortless) while I have immense respect for effective use of technique, for discipline, and clarity, I also believe strongly in trusting instinct, impulse, and unconscious images and word choices to teach me what my own poems are about. I'd like to close by sharing with you a statement which Adrienne Rich made at a poetry reading in 1964. It explains much of what I feel about poetic process in general, and in particular, what I tried to do in this poem:

"Today, I have to say that what I know I know through making poems. Like the novelist who finds that his characters begin to have a life of their own and to demand certain experiences, I find that I can no longer go to write a poem with a neat handful of materials and express those materials according to a prior plan: the poem itself engenders new sensations, new awareness in me as it progresses. Without for one moment turning my back on conscious choice and selection, I have been increasingly willing to let the unconscious offer its materials, to listen to more than the one voice of a single idea. Perhaps a simple way of putting it would be to say that instead of poems about experiences I am getting poems that are experiences, that contribute to my knowledge and my emotional life even while they reflect and assimilate it. In my earlier poems I told you, as precisely and eloquently as I knew how, about something; in the more recent poems something is happening, something has happened to me and, if I have been a good parent to the poem, something will happen to you who read it."³ ♀

1. Adrienne Rich, The Will to Change, Poems 1968-1970 (New York: N.W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1971) pp. 25-28.

2. Marge Piercy, "Looking At Quilts," APHRA, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Fall, 1974) pp. 24-25.

3. "Adrienne Rich: The Poetics of Change," by Albert Gelpi, in "American Poetry Since 1960," edited by Robert B. Shaw (Cheadle, Cheshire: Carcanet Press Ltd., 1973) pp. 132-133.

I LOVE TO DANCE

A friend of mine and I were talking once about the life of an artist, and he said, "Some people never have to write poetry because their whole life is a poem."

It seems to me that the best art has the quality of being so subtle and so true that it can't be separated from the artist's personality, coming from her with as much joy and agony as a child. There are as many kinds of art as there are people in the world; we all create our own masterpieces. The greatest paintings in the Louvre aren't any more impressive to me than my mother's cooking, or Lulu's garden, or the way Linda can bring out the best in the people around her. There is an art to being tactful, and being high, and washing the dishes (I'm good at that one) and paying the rent (I still need practice). I think that an art is anything that we do with soul-expanding and conscious effort, so that it's a blend of body and soul, and we know we've gone beyond the mediocre into the heavenly by the satisfaction we feel.

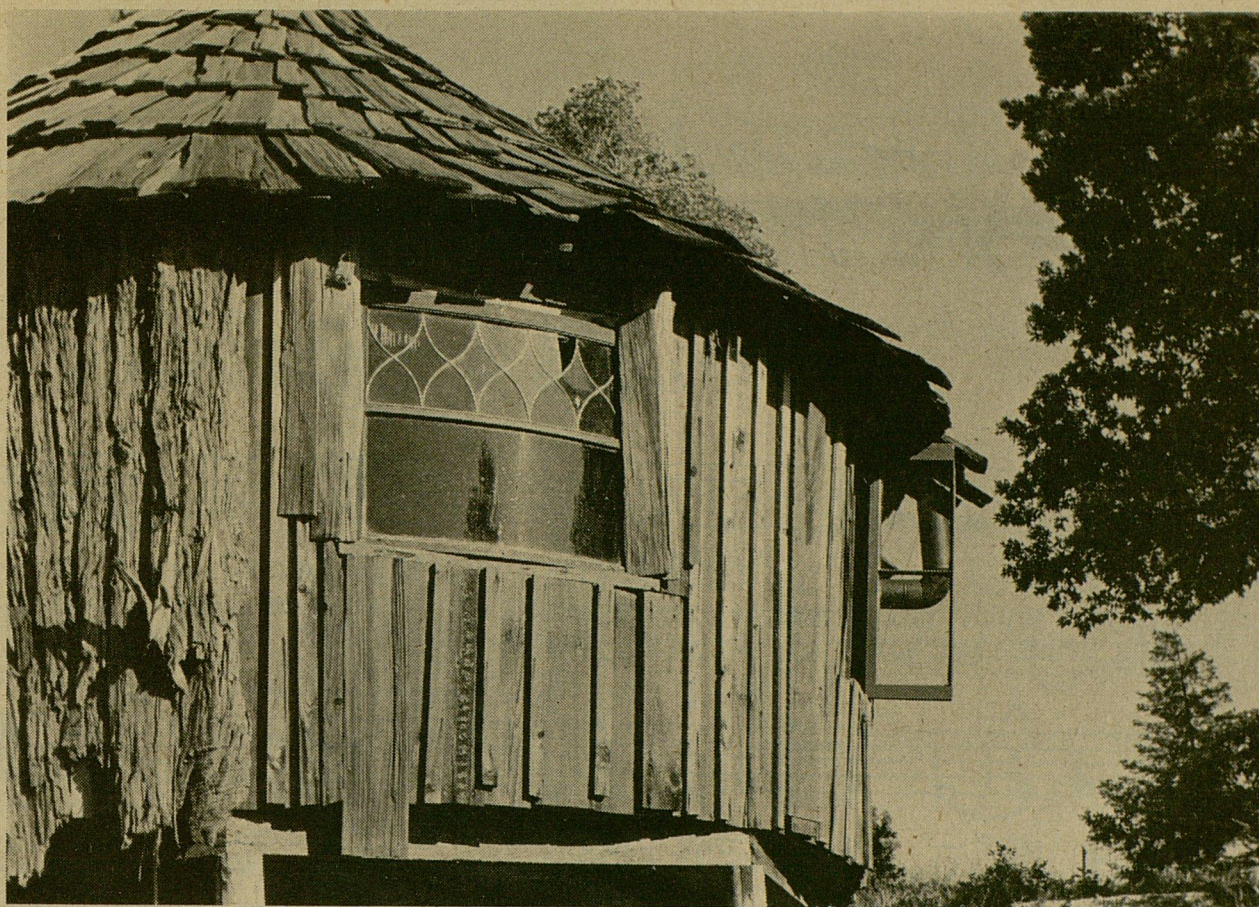
I like to dance a lot, it is one of my favorite things to do. It is amazing that I dig to dance so much because three years ago I was too self-conscious to make a monkey out of myself and I wouldn't try. When I went to gigs I would be debonair with a handful of joints and just sit around getting wasted, I thought that was a lot cooler than trying to dance and looking silly. But one night I went to this party and drank a lot of Cutty Sark and without even thinking of it I started to dance, I just jumped and twisted around the room. I became an addict...I started going with my girlfriends to dance bars, and then I started to dance to the radio and record player all alone in my room. A friend introduced me to rhythm and blues music and it was like going home to mother, there was something so primal and basic in that music. We would dance for hours. I made the transition from "one of those people who likes to dance" to a "good" dancer and completely lost my self-consciousness. I wanted to go out dancing every night and not to hit on guys or to get drunk but to dance. I didn't care what people thought of me or how I looked, it just felt so good to move to the music. When you are really dancing it's the finest feeling in the world, like making love

really well, or skiing, or a good gallop on a horse. You're just surfing on the energy of the music in a place beyond time and space, leading the music as much as it's leading you, unconscious of any physical or mental exertion. You don't think, well, now I'll move my left leg and now my right, you just move. It's really energizing; once you start you can't stop. When the mood is right I dance between songs and I dance in the car.

Once my friend Donna and I went out dancing, and when we entered the place everybody was sitting around with this blah let's-have-another-drink expression on their face. But Donna and I were so high that we couldn't stand still, so we started bopping around and within a few minutes the room was on fire; everybody was moving. Before the night was over people who I had never seen dancing before were shaking like crazy, jumping on the bar, nearly humping on the dance floor.

More than a year ago I decided that seeing as how I liked to dance so much maybe I should do it seriously, so I started to take lessons from a belly dancer and just recently I joined a troupe of belly dancers. I wanted the discipline of being a dancer, but I've found that there's a price to pay for it as well. Maybe my dancing isn't as spontaneous now, and I tend to get a little picky about the band I dance to. There are the problems of getting the money together to pay for lessons, and the costume, and getting along with everybody in my class, not feeling worthless if somebody's better than me or being a show-off if I'm better than somebody else. But the good points outweigh the bad: I'm in great shape from so much practice, it is a good challenge to my togetherness to perform, and getting together with sisters to dance is such a fine show of female strength. It's sexy and powerful.

I've always been aware of the spiritual undertones of dance. I think about Egyptian princesses dancing in the temples, and Indian braves doing a rain dance. In Tahiti women would dance in front of their lovers to turn them on. I love to dance and I never want to stop, but I'm not trying to be preachy: some people never have to dance because their whole life is a dance. ♀

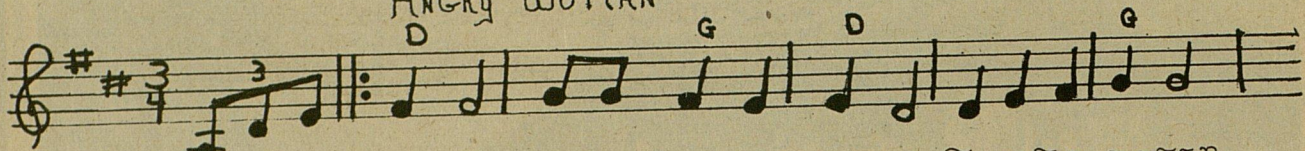


When I moved to the country nine years ago I had a large collection of graphic art among my most valued possessions. It remained carefully packed away during the three years of settling into the land and living in temporary situations. When my house was completed and I moved into it, the last treasures were unpacked. I was anticipating adding the final touch to my house with these beloved etchings and paintings. The house itself had been conceived of as a sculpture as well as a shelter. We had constructed it from both those points of view, exploring the conflict, trying to integrate the desire for a work of art with the desire to get the house built. As part of this process, we wondered about and experimented with the reality of a carved permanent door prop versus using any old stick every time it was needed.

Anyway, into this house I unpacked my precious pictures; and lo and behold, those square frames looked terrible on the bumpy, leaning, multiwood-colored, triangular walls. The glass in the frames was even worse. My eye was so jarred in confronting the protective apparatus that it was difficult to see the picture inside. So, with trepidation, I took off those expensive frames. The artwork was now exposed to smoke, sun, dust and dampness, and would inevitably wear under that exposure. But it also made an etching tucked and tacked into a wall space look beautiful. The next thing I discovered during this unpacking was that my house would only take one or two strong visual pieces at a time. So now, I choose the ones I want to look at and leave the rest carefully packed. I change them every few months.

This experience shed some real light on the question of the relationship between art and crafts and art and life. The Pieces of Art that I carried with me in their totally useless and totally static form would not fit into a home attempting to express the idea that every act is of a creative nature and every product an artistic creation. The logical conclusion of this concept, that these actions and products are useful, thus used, thus changed through daily life, is what forced the change in the physical form of the pieces of art. Once freed from the stance of art with a capital A, that sense of separateness and permanency which the frames had given them, the artistic visions, the pictures themselves, not only fit in but definitely completed and enhanced the interior. There is a minimum of separation between art and craft in this house. ♀

ANGRY WOMAN



I AM THE DAUGHTER OF AN AN-GRY WO-MAN, I AM THE SIS-TER
SEE ME, YOU'D - SEE MY AN-GER, YOU'D SEE MY FACE
PATIENCE WITH CHANG-ING SLOW-LY, I HAVE NO TIME



OF AN AN-GRY CHILD, I AM THE KINSWOMAN OF AN AN-GRY HOUSE-WIFE
IT'S FULL OF HATE, AND YOU MIGHT UNDER-STAND THE DAN-GER
FOR MIND-LESS TALK, IF I CAN CLIMB I'LL CLIMB MY HIGH-EST



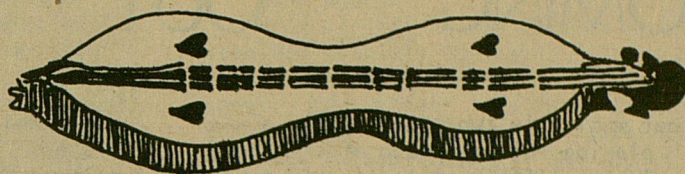
AND I WRITE - ON A DAY THAT'S WILD - 2. IF YOU COULD
OF BEING BORN WOMAN BE-ING TOLD TO WAIT - 3. I HAVE NO
IF I CAN RUN WHY SHOULD I WALK?

4. IF RAIN AND WIND THEY KNOW NO BOUNDARIES, 5. MY ANGER'S HIDDEN FAR TOO OFTEN
WHY SHOULD A WOMAN? SHE'S LEARNED TO RIDE I TURN MY HEAD, TRY NOT TO SEE
THE CRAZY TIMES OF STORMY WEATHER, BUT NOW YOUR LOOKS, MY VOICE WON'T
WITH A BURNING SOUL SHE CANNOT HIDE. SOFTEN

AT LEAST IN SONG IT'S REALLY ME.

© Trish Nugent 1976

The womansongs in this issue cover experiences of love, power, political anger, prayer, strength, country life - songs from our hearts are limitless. In transcribing the music, interesting discoveries were made. "Angry Woman" fits into an even musical pattern. It lends itself the most easily of the four songs to instrumental accompaniment. "Woman of Silences" was conceived for voice only and had no steady beat. In scoring it into measures, it was necessarily confined to a consistent meter. After getting the general rhythm of the song, let the notes sing themselves as long or as short as you feel them. "Singing for Power" (p. 35) is a chant, any part of which can be repeated or inserted wherever one is moved to do so. The measures written in chords can be sung on either note in the chord or both together with others singing. The singing notes work the same way in "Old Lovers" (p. 34). Melody line merges into harmony.



WOMAN OF SILENCES

DAF-FO-DILS - A LONG YOUR PATH CIR-CLE ROUND ^{your} CUP CAKE GOT-YAGE DOOR.

IN your EAR-LY MORN-ING DREAMS, BA-BY GOATS JUMP EX-PLORE. SUNSHINE

POUR-ING THRU your ROOF BECK-ONS - you To RISE -. PEO-PLE, PLANTS AND

AN - I - MALS LOVE TO GREET your EYES -. Wo - MAN OF

SI - LEN - CES - ROUND - NES - SES, COME SIT HERE, BY MY FIRE -

I TAKE A STICK OF RED RED-WOOD, BURN A FLAME TO IN-SPIRE

OUR MIND TO GO ON WAN-DER-ING TO THOSE PLA-CES YET UN-KNOWN.

I KNOW SOME WATER LONG-ING TO RIP - PLE. You've GOT THE STONE.

COMING OUT MUSICALLY

I came out musically two years ago as a "performer," playing ragtime piano after a confused and confusing lifetime relationship to the piano, and to myself as a musician. For twenty odd years I'd lived a life of short, passionate commitment, punctuated by long periods of pianistic celibacy occasionally broken by casual flirtations. With my emergence, I knew that I had to come to terms once and for all with this important force in my life. The many years of trying to starve it out had proved futile, so this time I decided I would let it survive, and feed it well.

I started doing technical studies, and discovered classical ragtime, which was musically and technically challenging enough to get me working again without taking on the classical repertoire as openers. In the last year I've moved away from ragtime (though I still play and love it) in two directions. I've felt a growing need to "create" (as opposed to "perform") and for the first time in my life have consciously "written" music. What comes easiest and most naturally to me is "pure" music, and I've been exploring forms and studying. I have written maybe a half dozen pieces which feel like beginnings, but exciting and satisfying nonetheless. My politics as a lesbian feminist and my growing need to have my art and politics integrate themselves have led me to writing songs in the past year - maybe eight - and all of them hard work. Personal politics have also led me to think and talk much this year with other feminist artists who are concerned with consciously evolving a new, feminist, working aesthetic. This process has led me into difficult territory. I've acquired many more questions than answers, but the direction of my path feels vital and exciting.

My core convictions about feminism and art at this time are that artists need to take a political stance, and that as a performing artist I am politically accountable to my sisters. This is a natural outgrowth of my feelings that as a feminist I am accountable in my life to other women. If my life mode is that of an artist, my art is therefore accountable.

The last several years have seen some exciting developments in women's power. We have women controlled media - publishing companies, record companies, event production companies. The fact that the "Women on Wheels" concert tour could not only happen, but could reach tens of thousands of women throughout the country is tremendously potent. It seems mandatory that we recognize the political potential of this new reality and use it with enough clarity and foresight to effect change.

Feeling this necessity is what has made me choose to write lesbian feminist lyrics that attempt to communicate my experiences to other

women and to expand my consciousness and my sisters' around shared problems and goals. I've written songs about non-monogamy, my relationship to the piano and to myself as an artist, the struggle of being an artist and a parent, the pains and joys of relating to women, a song poking fun at myself getting sucked into the romantic myth, and others. I'm trying to move toward writing songs with a larger scope than I've written so far - songs dealing with international and class struggles.

I know I've just set myself up for the classic comeback that all "real" or "great" art transcends politics - to be illustrated by that old chestnut of an example, the worst of Socialist Realist art. I'm not saying that all political statements can be made into "art". I am saying that art and politics can form a synthesis that works without one becoming subservient to the other. I feel my responsibility as a feminist artist is to explore and create forms which successfully integrate both. I struggle with my internalized assumption that what I'm doing isn't "art" all the time. I get frustrated and discouraged frequently. My intellectual convictions that I'm on the right path don't always bolster my flagging spirits. What frequently keeps me going is sheer stubbornness, and my belief in myself as a survivor, if not an artist. I have to give myself regular pep talks to stay clear that the ideas I've internalized about "valid art" come from men. They come back again and again, like persistent weeds, and I must continually uproot them if I'm to see my own garden come to fruition.

In developing myself as a lesbian musician, I've been paying close attention to "women's music" to try and understand what's happening and where it's going. Living half a day's drive from San Francisco, I've sought out feminist musicians and I know there are many women performing out there. I assume that this is typical of what's going on around the country. But, for country women, particularly those not near urban areas, "women's music" is largely recorded music. I'd like to take a look at some of these recordings - the ones that have found their way into my listening experience. These are the records recorded and distributed by Olivia Records, a collectively owned and operated women's recording company, and the records of Holly Near and Alix Dobkin, who each own the companies they record with. For a more comprehensive idea of recorded women's music, see The New Woman's Survival Sourcebook, Alfred A. Knopf, 1975.

First I'd like to say something about the existence of records, which provokes me again to a state of ambivalence. What is a record, first of all? A record is a piece of non-

biodegradable plastic which costs a few cents to produce materially and a lot to produce technologically, sells for \$5-7 and depreciates to a resale value of about 50¢ after it is played once. With the realization of what a record represents ecologically came reinforcement of my feelings that the content contained on this precious disc be politically conscious. Getting back to women's records, what feels like the most important transition to span now is from reflective toward directive - lyrics which help us create new models and self-images - new possibilities for ourselves. Therein lies the strongest force for change. I want to talk about records released so far in terms of these criteria, which are unabashedly my own.

The two recorded artists who have their own companies - Alix Dobkin and Holly Near - are clearly aware of their power and responsibility and are addressing themselves to me - to you - to change.

Alix Dobkin came out as a lesbian feminist musician early in 1974 with "Lavender Jane Loves Women" - recording songs which reflected women's struggles on the ascendant then - reflecting positive lesbian images; Balkan women's vocal exercises and song. (This singing tradition is strongly women's and reflects women's strength.) Her second record - "Living with Lesbians" mirrors her growing dyke consciousness in the two year interim. There are more Balkan yells and songs - visionary songs about dyke culture - songs about strong women, and more. Both albums have things I like and dislike musically, but the flaws feel minor when viewed overall.

Holly Near has undergone many changes between her first and third albums. She has moved along the political spectrum from pacifist to feminist, and recently has come out as a lesbian. Her political scope is the broadest based of anyone's under discussion here. She has an international and third world consciousness which she uses in her songs and in her audience rap to fulfill her self-defined role as a "cultural worker." She is a powerful musician, feminist, personality, political missionary, consciousness raiser, woman. I recently saw her in concert for the first time - the last of a 60 concert tour she did - and her realness and impact on me were overwhelming.

This brings me finally to Olivia Records and their apparent evolution. The first album, released in 1974, shortly after Lavender Jane, was Meg Christian's. It was then and remains now one of my favorites. Her personal and political clarity combined with exceptional musical skills have sustaining value. She shares with Holly Near that quality of personal honesty that cuts through the performer/audience barrier immediately. I have listened to her album many times and been moved each time. She is a lesbian consciously working politically with her music, and though her scope is smaller than Holly Near's, she is embodying a very real climate of change and growth within feminist America today. One song in particular - "Scars" - speaks to me again and again in my own struggles:

I am still caught unawares
By ghosts lurking in my nightmares
That mock our revolution.

With ancient loneliness
And ancient pain
And the old scars
And the old scars
Ache again.

Moon Circles by Kay Gardner creates some unresolved problems for me. It is an album primarily of instrumental compositions and several songs. Kay Gardner is a feminist exploring form and content in the realm of "pure music" and her approach is exploratory. She too is struggling with the need for her music to make a political statement in a non-verbal realm. By using ancient modes - the mode attributed to Sapphic energy, choosing instrumental analogues to the Ancient Greek flute and lyre, and working with a cyclical structure which expresses women's spirit in a way that male linear ones do not, Kay Gardner is striving toward developing a women's musical form. The main problem for me with this album is that I don't like the music much. A lot of this I'm sure is personal taste, and I know many women who find it pleasing, but it doesn't speak to me. I wonder if the forms she's trying to work with are unsuccessful without the jacket notes describing what she's attempting to do. As an exploration in form and content in women's music, I love it - and it is beginnings like this that will break the ground for subsequent explorations. Trying to work out how to make "pure" music feminist for myself, I doubly treasure this attempt.

The most recent album that Olivia has released is Cris Williamson's. Cris Williamson and Margie Adam seem to be the West Coast darlings of women's music.

A "star" system clearly comes from the male structure - it is hierarchical, divisive, and politically irresponsible. It is certainly not consciousness raising. How does stardom happen? It is a combination of things - charisma and talent - among them. But there is another dynamic that needs to be examined here, and that is the responsibility of the performer to choose or unchoose stardom. I recently heard a tape of a live performance which post-dates her album in which Cris refers to the fine women musicians doing the gig with her as "my band." The whole male phenomenon of "pop music" is based on the "star" system combined with music that anesthetizes the mind and ears rather than stimulates them. It's not a model to emulate.

Cris Williamson's music is very "listenable", probably the most so of all the albums. The music is generally "pretty" and polished; there's no doubt she's professional, but not very creative. There is not one song on this album that couldn't be recorded by an establishment recording company and performer. Mostly these songs ignore the issue of feminism in the guise of "women's music." Had this album been Olivia's first, perhaps, I might have been more charitable, though even 1974 is a bit late for this lack of consciousness. In 1976 it feels politically irresponsible to me on the parts of Cris Williamson and Olivia Collective, and it is up to me - you - all of us - to make our artists and media responsible to us, if we care. I care a lot. ♀

WOMANPOTS

March 15, 1975

I made an entirely new kind of pot today. The beginning of a woman-series on external form/beauty with gaping holes, on the falling inward of the vessel, on the curves and undulations of being a sensual-creating-pulsating-thinking-struggling being. It feels like a form with much potential, but a delicate tension: if I concentrate, it will get overplayed. The pots are emerging out of other forms, interests, foci.

April 9, 1975

What I'm really trying to write about, describe, make clear, are my feelings involved in moving from woman-role to person: the growing up sense of adjustment; the constant difficulty in doing something which feels right and makes sense; (men naturally do this; women assume their work is lesser, and that they must adjust to other people's needs); the internal demons which say we are not good enough, we are crazy, we are overestimating ourselves (the dominant culture which subtly erodes our sense of selves with its expectations and blindnesses; our brothers within the counter-culture who amaze us with their lack of understanding (after all these years); our sisters, in the movement and without, who protect their status quo by giving us bad vibes whenever we assert ourselves, our individuality, and/or the value of women.)

July 21, 1975

Womanpots: the technique of pulling the clay out beyond its physical limits, then squashing it back inward (pressing with both hands, holding and cradling it) until it forms undulations, is symbolic of the content. It represents to me the stretching and pulling and endurance a woman suffers as part of our culture, as a bearer of children, a sensitive being within a dominant mode which praises intellect and reason and pseudo-scientific proof to the near exclusion of intuition and feeling and reality. (Which dichotomizes.)

The basic forms I work with are round, tending toward closed - the external classic beauty; a following-of-the-rules for how pots should appear. Women are taught to look well, to force their bodies into a culturally approved mold. We all learn to hide our emotional states behind well-appointed masks. Thus a womanpot looks full and round and soft and gently inconspicuous.

The opening of these pots attempts to express feelings about both states of being and individual people. The cavernous, broken forms speak to pain. The open, more gentle undulations focus on women's struggles to be people, to create, to move out of their molds.

Beyond this, each pot articulates a particular set of feelings and observations. The words hardly do credit, for the making and shap-

ing is visceral, from my insides, from my whole.

November 7, 1975

Feeling nervous about trying for this show ('Woman Is...') at the Women's Art Center, but knowing I am doing good work. Maybe the problem is time - trying to get slides taken and printed in just a week.

I'm not sure what I want to send in - does it depend on how the slides look? I feel I need to talk some about what I am doing.

Women in our culture are contorted, bleeding, struggling, frightened, proud, yet most of us hide the deep things happening to us. Why?

Partly, we are conditioned to accept, submit - and it seems the external forms are the last to go (someone might see how I really am!). Partly, we/I have learned the slave's mask - it has always been easier to 'get away with' things (go unnoticed) if I 'looked right'....

Mostly what I see are multiple facets and faces of each person. There are categories, political and social, which aid in understanding, provide an intellectual framework, but my primary vision is of qualities. The wholeness or emergent form and struggle of a woman is symbolic of her culture, her politics.

When I first began the womanpots nine months ago I envisioned a dichotomy between inner and outer. The latter was round, smooth, masked, beautified - a form which clothed and hid the internal struggles. Sometimes those struggles were so apparent that they de-formed a part of the outside, became obvious wounds. But mostly they were symbolized by formal clay-contortions, rounded bulges which only began to reveal the depths of the pain and struggle.

What seems to be emerging in my work now is a much more complex vision. The wounds and pain and struggle are more overt, the facets are multiplied, and the shapes reflect the many levels of woman-existence. It is as if my own more open existence enables me to express myself clearly as a woman.

June 5, 1976

I have finally (under the pressure of time, and not with courage) sat down this afternoon to collect my writings about womanpots and to maybe use some of them at the Everywoman (local coffeehouse) exhibit.

I am incredibly nervous doing this - it is so scary to 'expose' myself, and yet I know and feel that I like my work. But that's different from showing it to other people.

I am obviously carrying around a lot of feelings from my recent efforts to put my pots in galleries - obvious because I didn't even mention in my journal the heavy rejection I experienced at the end of March, nor the disappointment about the 'Woman Is...' show. In fact, I haven't written about my pots since last

November; and I haven't even made any for three months. There have been a lot of "excuses" - but the truth is, I didn't deal with the feelings or do any work because I felt stuck.

Putting these pots at Everywoman is therefore symbolic. I want to move myself, push myself, to start working with clay again, and especially to pursue the sculptural forms I began in the fall. I know I can't, don't want, to work just with words (in my journal). My non-verbal self - and the forms which flow out of it - are equally important.

I have been these six months like the tiny piece of clay in the green womanpot sculptural form - it is trapped, helpless, ridiculously rolling around in that huge hollow. I want out.

July 10-11, 1976

In my womanart workshops I have begun to do self-portrait images which are overt in their concern with blood, with sexuality, with my insides, with my power - and with all the conflicting feelings I have about these subjects...

I've known these things were inside and wanted to get them out, yet it is scary to cop to this level of womanness. I feel very vulnerable. I feel like I am bleeding out in the open without the technical skills to protect

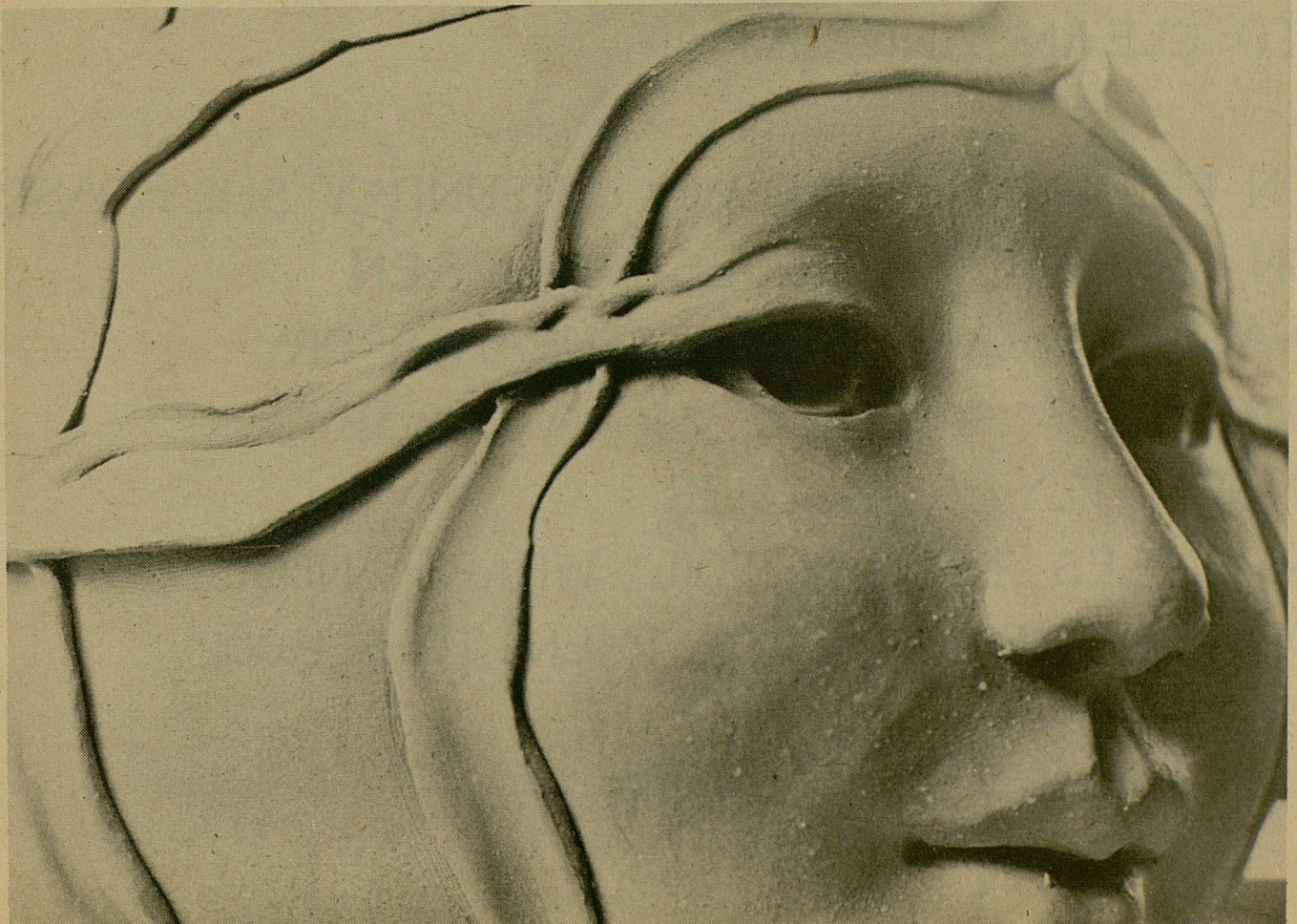
or present it in more careful form. Very frightening. I would like to work on this image in clay, yet I cower at the force of it...

On one of the days of the workshop my actual cramps somehow connected with the images I was doing, and I became physically overwhelmed. The pains got so bad I was moaning in the midst of people I barely knew, and it was all I could do to keep deep breathing so I wouldn't freak out...

This interconnection of work and feelings and physical health has much to do with babies, blood, giving birth, some pain which I carry around inside; and maybe my fear of being a woman? There is something about that Bergman image of the woman slashing her vagina with a broken mirror (castrating herself in front of her husband), something about the image I did yesterday with broken pieces of glass below the vagina, something about my internal feelings of being cut up inside. I get scared as I write this, want to cry. How much of it is also my feeling of barrenness? How much of it is old movies about not being loved, my mother telling me not to have children, my fear that I shouldn't/can't/want to/ will be destroyed if I do?

I want to try now to let these feelings keep coming out in my work, to try to find and explore the emotions which seem so deeply stored.

♀



THE NECROMANCER

HER KITCHEN'S A LABORATORY.

SHE HOLDS THE ODOR OF DEAD FISH
AND THE HEARTS OF YOUNG CHICKENS.

LIMP BODIES COMPEL HER.

THE POINT OF A KNIFE SHINES IN HER EYES
PLUMBS CIRCLES OF COMING AND GOING
TO CLEAN AND EAT.

ON FRIDAY SHE STEWS, ON SUNDAY SHE ROASTS
ON MONDAY PRODUCES CHILDREN
WAKES, SHAKES, BLEEDS HEARTS DRY
COOKS UP A SPELL
INSTANTLY A MOTHER
SWADDLES THEM IN FOIL, WRAPS AND
DRIVES THEM, DRIVES THEM TO SCHOOL.

WOMEN ARTISTS I'VE LOVED

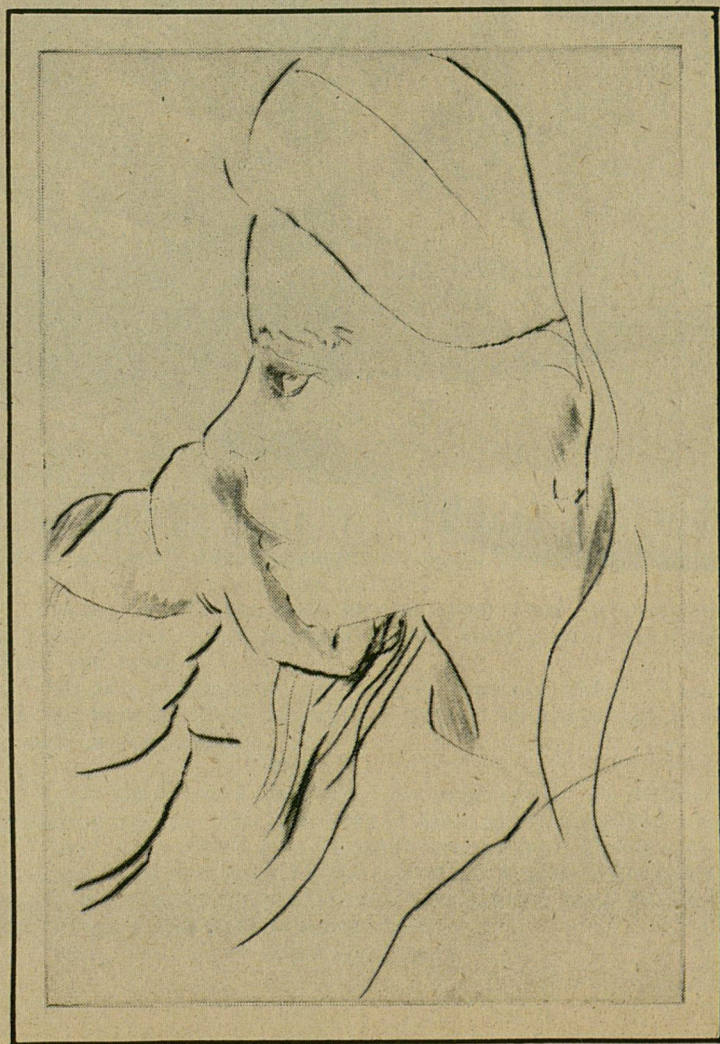
Well, I've loved Judith, even at her engagement party. No, not at the party, but secretly before and after it on the rug under her parents' piano. We were virgins and lovers and she is a poet. She is still a poet, eighteen years later and finally getting a divorce. And Elizabeth the musician who went quite mad, she was an artist too. Both before and after the madness. I loved her even in high school and before we had touched or spoken.

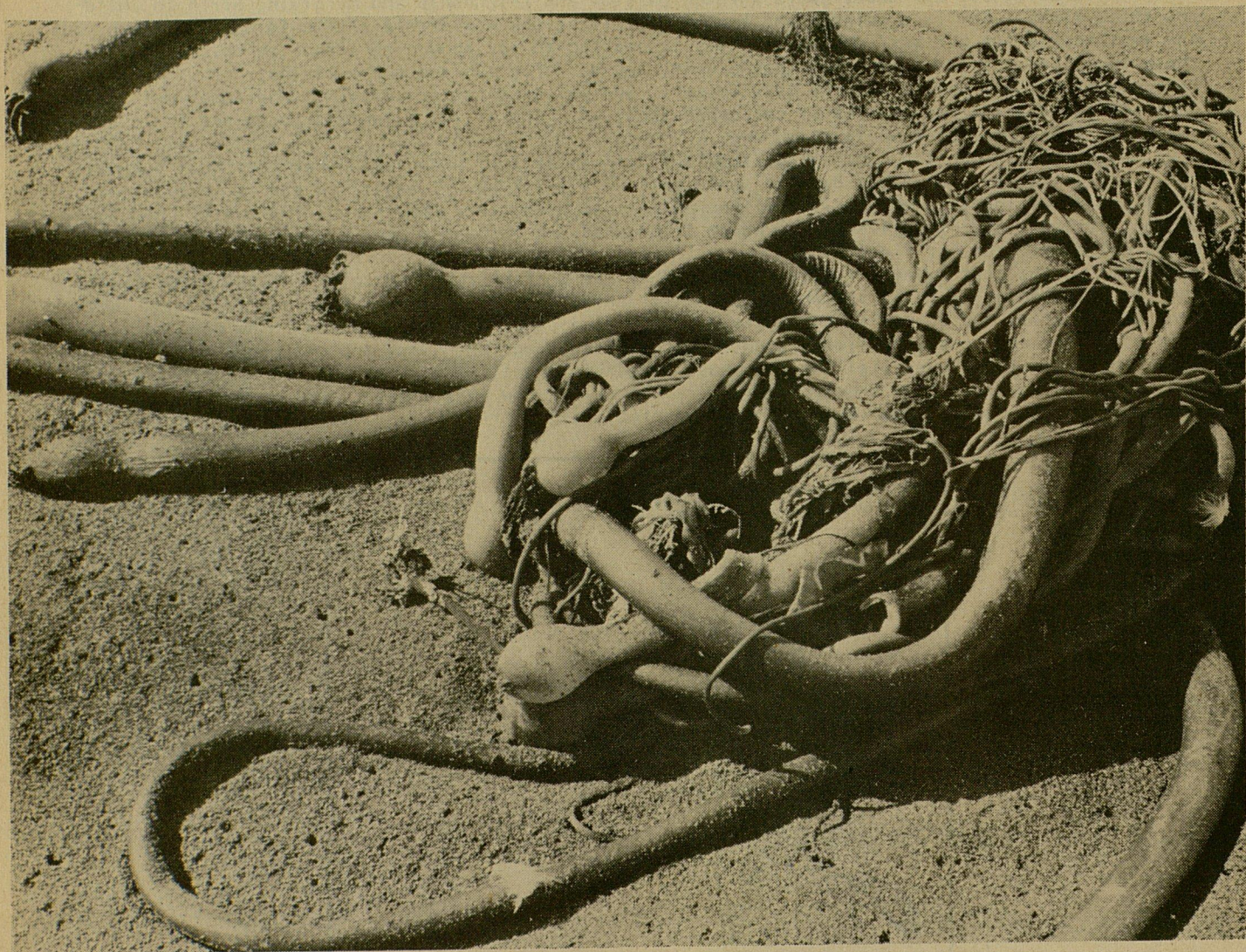
Jane I have loved for all these years through passion and friendship and my giving birth to children three times. She is a painter and a poet. At first she was afraid she would have to teach, but she just kept doing her art/work and finally it started to pay enough to scrape by on. I mean these women are artists, you know, that's what they do. For fun and for a living.

Recently I've loved Sherry and she is a writer. She writes about us sometimes and sometimes she says she can't write because she is concerned about us. She writes a journal too-- and it is as intricate and strong as a whole day.

I've loved other women too, not all of them say "I'm an artist" when asked what they do-- but my god, they all were. Sometimes Harriet would make me a drink when I was tired and it would be hot and I could not identify the individual ingredients as altogether they sang in my mouth. And Geba did an intricate and ritualized dance which frightened and astounded me every time she sucked my menstrual blood from her fingers.

And other women, that I haven't been lovers with-- the poets Miriam and Kathy and the other Judith who is trying to write her novel while caring for three children. I love them and they know that they are creators and so strive to create. Sharon is another woman I've loved. She does her art/work with dirt and seeds and living plants. She writes songs and sings too. I could go on and on about the women I've loved, telling you what incredible artists they were and are. But you'd probably have to experience them or their work to really know what I mean. As for myself, I'm learning to sing; I farm and teach school, I'm creating my life.





"SHE IS OUR SILVERSMITH"

"This is Ruth Roten and she is our Silversmith. We are so proud of her. Ruth, tell them about your work."

A caged shadow, bearing angry frustrated tears, crosses the room.

"Tell them about your work."

"Ruth, tell them about your work."

The feeling of no words tightens around my throat. The red of my throat spreads into my face flushing it purple.

"Tell them about your work."

Breathing deeply I calm my taut tattered nerves. What can I say? How can I tell them? A stranger is standing there waiting for me to transform my work into words.

Slowly I move toward the faceless flesh form, calming my blind anger by feeling my life's breath moving within and without. My moist clenched hands pressing against my sides reach out for the glass case displaying my soul.

"I usually work in sterling silver, brass, and copper. I use different techniques in fabrication of my pieces: raising, repousse, reticulation, fusing, soldering and others. Sometimes I incorporate other materials such as stone or wood, depending upon the mood I want to create. If you have any questions just ask."

The face blankly stares at me then moves to the glass case and looks upon the silver reflections of myself. The figure moves past me and strolls out of the exploding room.

"This is Ruth Roten. She is our silversmith. Ruth, tell them about your work."

The air is getting lighter. I almost laugh. The sunshine catches me daydreaming out the window.

"Tell them about your work."

"I usually work in sterling silver, brass, and copper. I use different techniques in fabrication of my pieces: raising, and repousse, reticulation, fusing, soldering, and others. Sometimes I incorporate other materials such as stone or wood, depending upon the mood I want to create if you have any questions just ask."

It is getting easier to form meaningless words and throw them about to satisfy the money minded.

The white skinned woman with water blue eyes is attracted to the sensuous silvered moonstone pendant. Her husband stands heavily beside her, eyeing his wife's delight. She gently fastens the silver reflection around her soft aged neck as he peers from beneath his short furrowed brow.

"I love it," she muses softly.

Taking it off she goes to the other room to look over the other cases. Her husband stands loudly until everyone leaves the room.

"Would you consider taking any less for this? I was thinking more of \$100 instead of \$125," he states as if speaking over a loudspeaker.

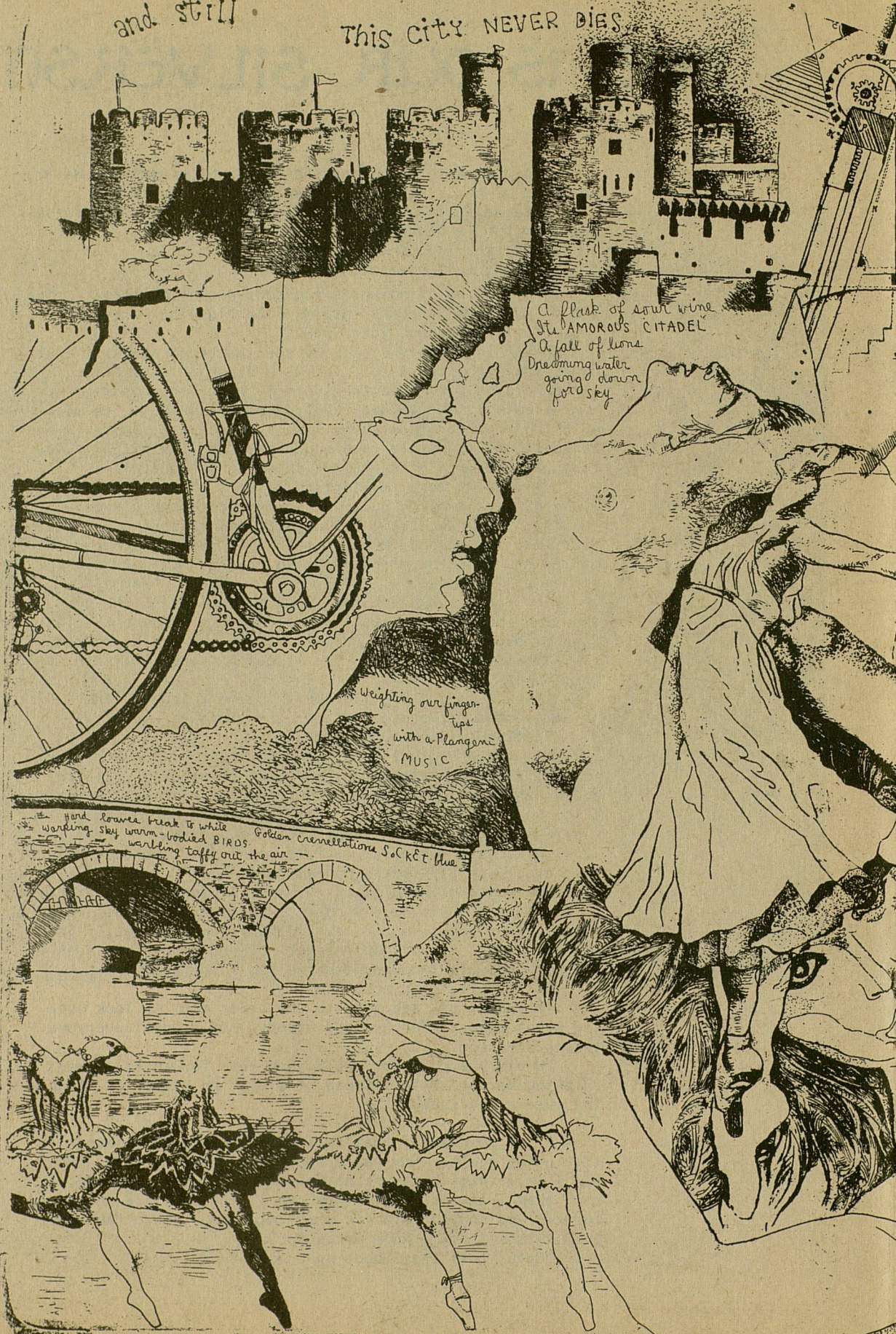
"No."

I sit down and I realize I am exhausted. My throat is tightening again. How can I tell them about my work? How can I tell them there are no words when I work? How can I tell them I am the Metal? How can I tell them I am hammered, formed, and shaped into visions, into moods, into feelings, into things I don't know words for?

"Ruth, tell them about your work." ♀

and still

This City NEVER DIES

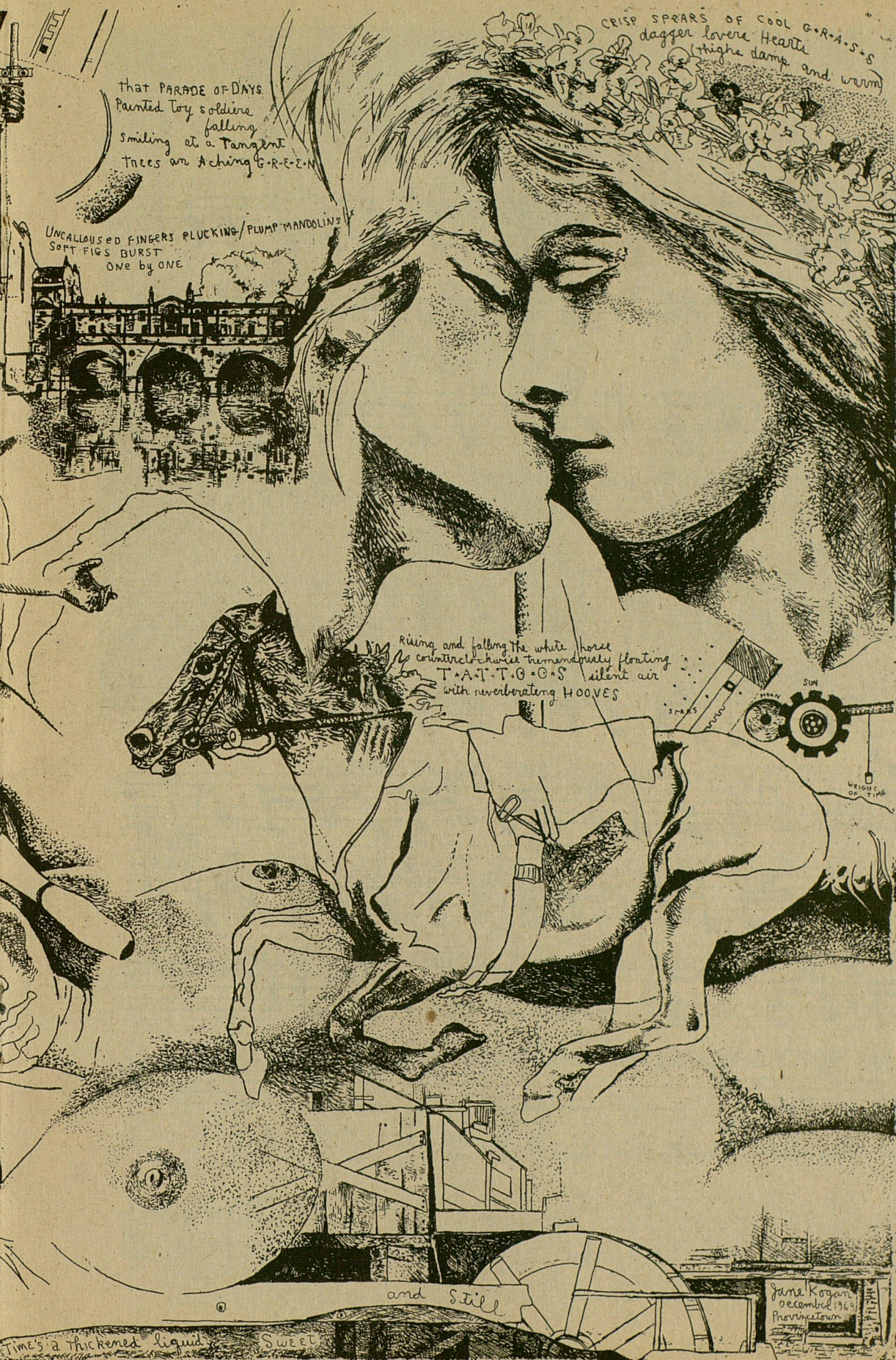


A flask of sour wine
St. AMOROUS CITADEL
A fall of lions
Dreaming water
going down
for sky

Weighting our finger-
tips
with a Plangent
MUSIC

Hard leaves break to white
Wandering sky warm-bodied BIRDS
wandering taffy out the air
Golden crenellations So K&T blue

This City NEVER Dies...



that PARADE OF DAYS
Painted Toy soldiers
falling
Smiling at a Tangent
Trees are Aching G-R-E-E-N

UNCALLUSED FINGERS PLUCKING/PLUMP MANDOLINS
SOFT FIGS BURST
One by ONE

CRISP SPEARS OF COOL G-R-A-S-S
dagger love Hearts
High damp and warm

Rising and falling the white horse
No counter-chances tremendously floating
T-A-T-T-O-C-S silent air
with reverberating HOOVES

SUN
WEIGHT OF TIME

and Still

Jane Kogan
December 1960
Provincetown

Time's a thickened liquid
Sweet

Jane Kogan

OLD LOVERS



VERSE

1. OLD LOV-ERS I PRE-TEND TO MY SELF I CAN'T RE-MEM-BER YOUR
 2. OLD PO-EMS I CAN'T RE-MEM-BER YOUR WORDS, BUT I RE-MEM-BER THE



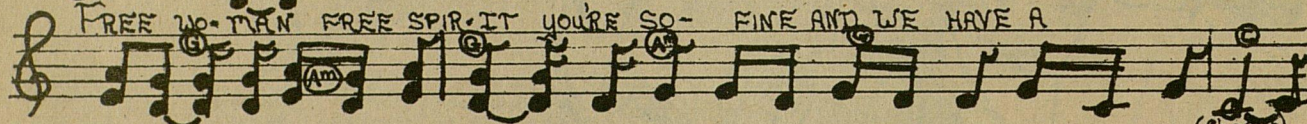
NAME BUT I RE-MEM-BER YOUR TOUCH I LOVE YOU SO MUCH. (CHORUS)
 DAY YOU WRAPPED MY MIND IN BEAUTY AND LEFT ME THAT WAY. (CHORUS)



Chorus:



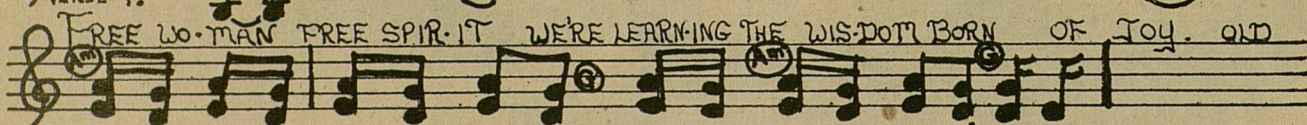
I AM A - LONE I AM A - LONE



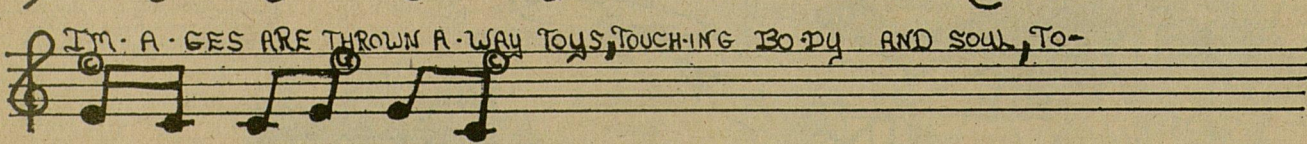
FREE WO-MAN FREE SPIR-IT YOU'RE SO- FINE AND WE HAVE A



GOOD TIME, BUT I'M NOT YOURS AND NO LIV-ING BE-ING CAN E-VER BE TUNE. (CHORUS)



VERSE 4. FREE WO-MAN FREE SPIR-IT WE'RE LEARN-ING THE WIS-DOM BORN OF JOY. OLD



IM - A - GES ARE THROWN A - WAY TOYS, TOUCH-ING BO-DY AND SOUL, TO-

GE - THER WE EACH GROW WHOLE. (CHORUS)



SINGING FOR POWER

I'M SING-IN' FOR PO - WER, I'M SING-IN' FOR LIGHT. I'M SING-IN' WITH
ALL - MY HEART AND MIGHT, MIGHT, SING THE SUN IN - TO THE SKY, SING A
SONG FOR THE STARS TO SHINE BY, SING A SONG SO THE PLANTS WILL GROW, SING A
SONG SO MY HEART WILL KNOW, I'M SING-IN' FOR PO - WER, I'M SING-IN' FOR
LIGHT, I'M SING-IN' SO I'LL KNOW HOW TO DO - WHAT'S RIGHT

Further Reading

THROUGH THE FLOWER, my struggle as a woman artist, by Judy Chicago, introduction by Anais Nin; Doubleday; 1975; \$8.95; illustrated.

Judy Chicago writes about her struggle to express her strength and her femaleness in her art and have that art shown in the male dominated art scene in Los Angeles. Simultaneously she has worked out a marriage of equal partners and started with other women a whole women's art education program and a "womanspace" in which women can make and show their female-source creations in a supportive and receptive environment. A heartening story.

Journal of A Solitude, by May Sarton; Norton; 1973; \$6.95.

This is a journal of May Sarton's 60th year, spent living alone in her home in New Hampshire. Read side by side with A Durable Fire, the poems she wrote at the same time, it provides remarkable insight into the life process of a woman writer.

Words and Women: New Language in New Times, by Casey Miller and Kate Swift; Doubleday; 1976; \$7.95.

This book, by two long-time writers and editors, offers new insights into the ways language directs our thoughts and affects our culture. Though I was already well aware of the sexism of English, I found the book thought-provoking and entertaining. Order it from your library.

Literary Women, by Ellen Moers; Doubleday; 1976; \$10.00.

This book is in the tradition of scholarly literary criticism; one has to reach a little to be comfortable with the style and tone. But once into it, I found it a stimulating analysis of many books by women from the 18th to the 20th century. Moers looks at the content, style, form, and plots of women writers, seeking what is distinctly womanly in their work, the perspective of the "other" half of society. Through her, we see the seeds of feminism and the strength of women even in early 18th century books. This book is both intriguing and stimulating, a useful companion for any woman seriously reading other women.

Women and Literature: An Annotated Bibliography of Women Writers, Sense and Sensibility; 57 Ellery St., Cambridge, Ma. 02138; \$1.50.

This is the best and most thorough bibliography of modern fiction by women I've seen yet. The descriptions are accurate, thorough and useful, and written from a feminist perspective to boot. Take this book to the library and you will discover dozens of talented women, lurking there unknown. (As I wrote this, an announcement came saying the expanded 3rd edition with over 800 books will be available Oct. 1st - Get it!)

The Lesbian in Literature: A Bibliography, available from: The Ladder; Box 5025, Washington Station, Reno, Nev. 89503; \$7.00 to individuals.

This is an exhaustive listing of every book in print (except destructive trash) which mentions lesbianism, has lesbian characters, or deals indirectly with women who could be considered lesbians. It lacks the annotative descriptions of the above two books and is a good deal more expensive (\$7.00 for a 96 page paperback), but it does supply the most complete bibliography of lesbian literature that's been written.

Women Loving Women (an annotated bibliography), available from: Womanpress, P.O. Box 59330, Chicago, Ill. 60645; \$1.50.

This bibliography is a nice complement to the Sense and Sensibility one listed before. This is a selected list of books having lesbian characters, with thoughtful comments and a brief description of each book.

The New Woman's Survival Sourcebook, ed. by Kirsten Grimstad and Susan Rennie; Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.; 1975; \$5.00.

From literature to law, from aesthetics to childcare, this is a complete and exciting catalogue of women's self-helping resources, mirroring the strength and richness of every aspect of the women's movement. Beyond this the NWSS has provided me with some of the most stimulating and wide-reaching ideas that comprise both the inspiration and philosophical discoveries that are at the basis of the growth it reflects. Specifically, in terms of the arts, I found that the authors' interview with poets Robin Morgan and Adrienne Rich is a fascinating, in depth exploration of sources of personal imagery and the role of the artist in this female cultural renaissance. There are also sections on sharing our poetry, feminist fiction, comics, the new science fiction, film and video, recording, and the performing arts. I have found it an invaluable tool.

Lesbian Images, by Jane Rule; Doubleday and Co.; Garden City, N.Y.; 1975

Jane Rule's book is a collection of the images of lesbians 12 women writers have projected in fiction, biography, autobiography and more. As distorting, disappointing and offensive as many of these images are, this book inspires me nonetheless. It is primarily because of her insightful introduction concerning her own personal struggles as a woman writer and early chapters which recreate the religious, psychological and social context which these writers/artists (and all of us) can never escape.

Although her selections of authors and their material are limited in depth, her conclusion of recent developments in the last decade of women writers concerned with relationships between women leaves me with a greater perspective and new sense of power and revolutionary honesty. Leaving old realities of guilt and grief behind, it feels like a fiction which really reflects the varied experience and life styles of lesbians in this culture is beginning to evolve. ♀



RAISING HOUSEPLANTS

This Guide is a result of 3-1/2 years experience in which I helped start and work in a cooperatively operated plant shop in Washington, D.C. Hopefully, the following selections from my booklet, A Basic Guide To House Plant Care, (copyrighted in 1976), will help the readers of Country Women select and maintain healthy plants. Any suggestions or questions you might have would be appreciated. Send them to: Ms. Bonnie Kraus, 1743 Chase Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45223.

SELECTING A HOUSE PLANT

The first, and most important step in plant maintenance, is acquiring healthy plants. Check the leaves to make sure they're clean and free of insects. Does the plant have a healthy appearance? Do the leaves have any brown or yellowing edges? Are there many leaves on the plant to begin with? Are the plants well groomed or do they have dead leaves on them or in the pots? Is the plant in the correct size pot with good soil? Another important consideration is how much light the plant will be in and then to select the proper plant for that location.

What is the 'feel' you get from the store? Is it run by people who obviously take time with their plants? Does the store guarantee its plants? (The store I worked with in D.C. guaranteed plants for at least two weeks.) Do the personnel know much about the plants they carry? If you purchase a plant in a discount house or grocery store chain, take extra care in selecting a healthy one.

Once you get the plant home, repot it if necessary (see next section), and wash it off carefully. Take special effort to clean the under sides of leaves, and then isolate the plant for up to two weeks. Any bugs or insects the plant may have had when purchased will be quite visible by this time.

REPOTTING

Plants need to be in the right sized pot with good soil in order to grow well. The right sized pot means one that is 1" larger than the base of the root ball. For example, unless a plant is tightly root bound, it should go from a 5" pot to a 6" pot (in diameter). If you go from plastic to clay, the pot size will be larger, since plastic is basically the same size top to bottom, while the clay pot is more cone shaped. I recommend using clay over plastic pots, since clay permits better air circulation through the sides. Plastic pots hold water too long.

It's very important not to use too big a pot for the plant. Many people think they'll give a plant lots of room to grow and save themselves time and effort by overpotting. However, they'll very likely kill it. Several things happen in too large a pot. All the energy of the plant will go to the roots as they seek the perimeter of their new home. In drastic cases, they don't have enough energy left to manufacture food. Also, soil which is not penetrated quickly by the roots turns stagnant and a chemical reaction takes place which will eventually be fatal.

I check my plants yearly in the spring. If they've been growing quickly, I check them twice a year. A few plants, such as the Cyperus, grow so quickly that they need repotting every other month.

How do you know if a plant needs repotting? First, check to see if any roots are coming out of the bottom of the pot. This is not always a sign that your plant needs a bigger pot, but it's generally a good indication. Is the plant

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pushing up out of the pot? Is it hard to water the plant, with water not soaking through properly? Are bottom leaves falling off and the stem becoming elongated with smaller new leaves?

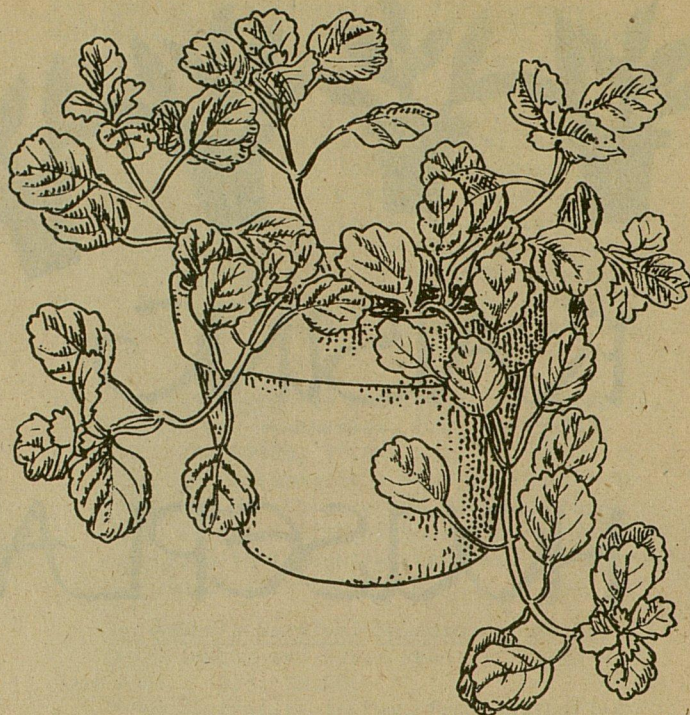
Begin repotting by placing one hand over the top of the plant with your fingers securely around the base. The other hand should be holding the side or bottom of the pot. Turn the pot over, and lightly tap the rim on a table or counter edge. Usually a few taps are sufficient to loosen the root ball from the pot; if not, use a knife to go around the inside edge of the pot. Now, firmly supporting the plant, lift it away from the pot. For large plants, have a friend assist you.

Prepare the new pot by covering the hole in the bottom with broken crockery. If the pot doesn't have a drainage hole, just put a layer of gravel and perlite in the bottom and sprinkle with small pieces of charcoal. In either case, place enough soil in the pot so that when the plant is lowered into it, the top of the plant will be 1/2" below the rim. Next, gently and firmly separate the roots. Do not by-pass this step, for without separation, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for the roots to reach into the new soil. The effect is the same as using too large a pot. When the plant is ready, place it into the pot and put soil around the root ball until it reaches the top of the old root ball. Firmly press the new soil down into the pot and add more soil until the new soil can't be pressed down any further. Tap the pot to enable the soil to settle evenly and to drive out any air pockets. In the case of succulents, don't put new soil higher than the old soil line, since rot might set in. If repotting is done at night, soak the clay first, pot up the plant, and water in the morning. Wait two days to water succulents.

SOIL MIX

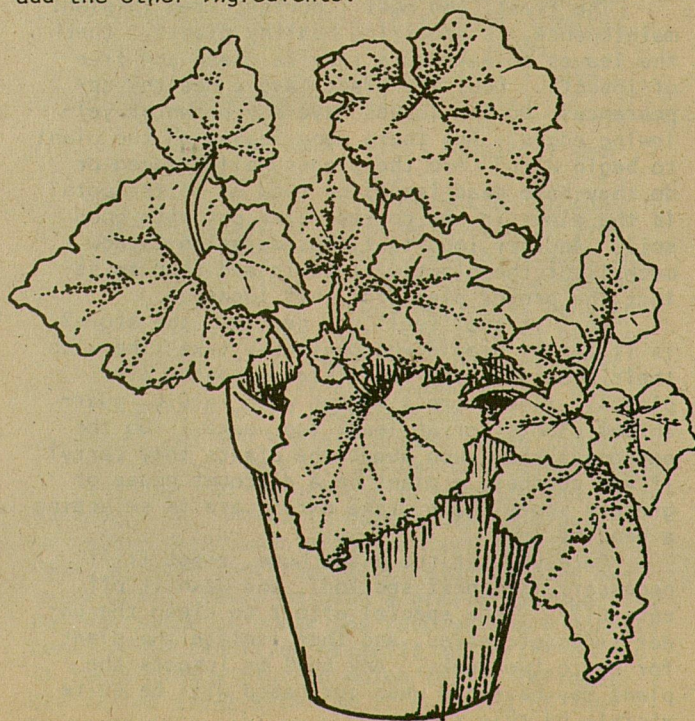
The soil mix I recommend for most plants is four parts of a good, rich basic potting soil, two parts sharp builder's sand, and 1/2 tsp. powdered limestone. The potting soil should be moist, contain peat moss, and appear like good forest dirt. The limestone is important because it will gradually neutralize the peat moss which is acidic. Be careful when selecting the basic potting mix, since most brands tend to be woefully inadequate (i.e., the soil is too loose, water runs right through, and it's nutritionally poor).

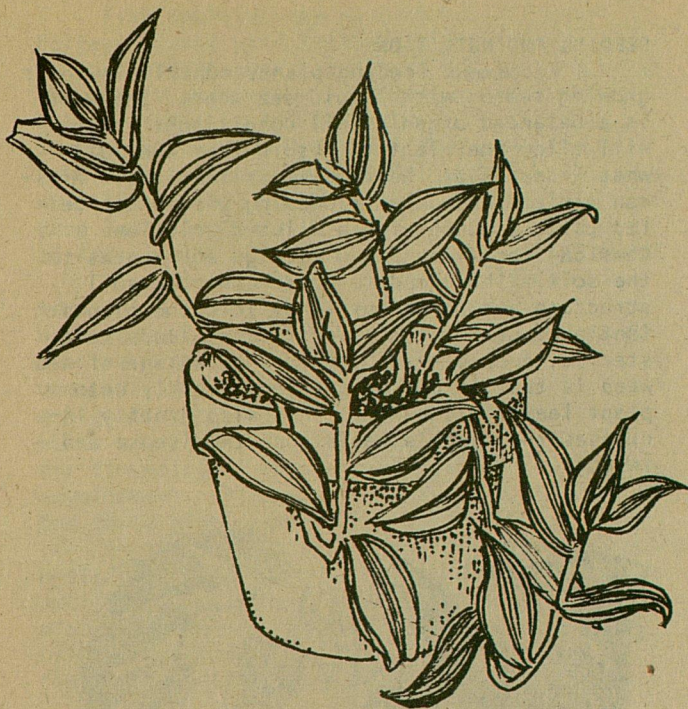
The final soil mixture should hold water and drain well. Squeeze a handful of dirt together and then open your hand. If the soil partially crumbles and partially stays together it is the right consistency for most house plants. For cacti and succulents, add more sand (up to even parts sand and potting soil), charcoal, pinch of bone meal, and small pieces of broken crockery. Ferns require more humusy soil (with organic matter) so add less sand or a little more peat moss. Gardenias and citrus like more acidic soil, so leave out the limestone. If a good rich packaged soil isn't available, you can get a reasonably good mix by taking four parts of the best



soil you can find, such as Fertilite, adding two parts vermiculite or perlite, four parts dampened peat moss, and 1/2 tsp. limestone.

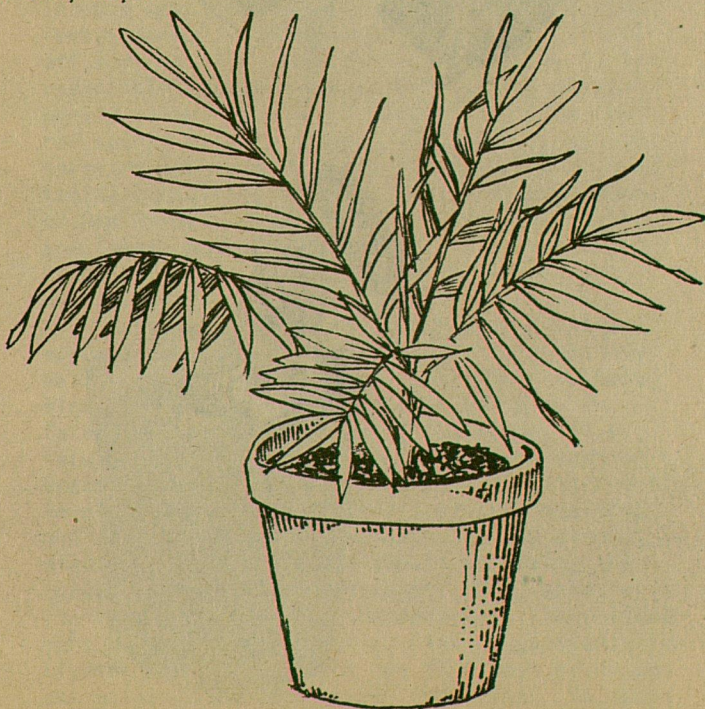
Another method of preparing a soil mix and one which is much easier for those in the country is to take good forest dirt and sift it free of stones, twigs, and tiny animals and then add sand and limestone. (Don't use soil from under oak trees, however, since the acidity there is too high.) This mix is not entirely safe, since harmful bacteria, eggs, and minute insects could still be in the soil. To sterilize it, just put the soil onto cookie sheets and put them into the oven at 180° for one hour. Let it cool and add the other ingredients.





WATERING, HUMIDITY AND TEMPERATURE

The most common cause of plant illness is overwatering or improper watering in relation to light, temperature, and air circulation. It should be noted that all of these factors are interrelated (i.e., the more light and higher temperatures the more you'll have to water your plants). One important thing to remember is to water them in the morning or early afternoon. Watering at night tends to cause root rot, since the water sets in the pot and can't be absorbed. This will also cause tissue damage to the leaves when the water is pulled up the stem the next morning. Plants also require less water on cool, cloudy days.



Signs of overwatering include soft, mushy stems, yellowing or brown soft bottom leaves or leaf tips, pale limp smaller top leaves, mushy veins, dark spots and loss of lower leaves. Take the plant out of the pot -- is the soil stagnant and wet? Have the roots lost their firmness and turned darker in color? Do they come off easily when gently pulled? A 'yes' answer to these questions means the plant is overwatered.

Care of overwatered plants includes removing badly affected leaves and dead roots, repotting in good soil, watering in the morning, and placing in the correct environmental conditions (i.e., light, air circulation, temperature). If the stem has developed rot, the only alternative to the plant's eventual death is to cut the good part off and try to propagate it.

Too little water is characterized by dry, shriveled leaves or stems, dry brown or yellow leaf tips and brittle roots which snap off easily. Treat by increasing watering, gently breaking off affected roots, repotting in fresh soil, and placing in the correct environmental conditions.

The way I recommend to correctly water plants is:

- 1) Most importantly, know the requirements of your particular plant. For example, a cactus or other succulent with delicate root structure likes 1/2 day or more of direct sun. Placing it in dim light and watering every other day is almost certain to be fatal. On the other hand, cyperus plants, which grow in bogs like sun and prefer saturated soil. Peace plants or Spatiphyllum like dim light and moist, but not saturated, soil.

- 2) Water in the morning.

- 3) Water your plants thoroughly (i.e., until water comes out the bottom of the pot). If the pot has no hole, carefully estimate how much water will be needed to get the root ball wet. Water should not, at any time, stand in the bottom of the pot, or in the saucer if the pot has a drainage hole.

A very general rule you can follow for most plants is to let cacti and succulents dry out thoroughly between watering, keep plants with dark glossy leaves such as philodendron on the dry side, and water plants with thin leaves when top soil is dry (i.e., down 1/4" of soil for small pots, 1/2-1" soil for 6-8" diameter pots, 1-1/2-2" soil for 10-12" pots).

Air circulation and humidity are necessary to keep leaves moist and clean. Proper air circulation will cause a lit candle to gently flicker but not to go out. Don't place a plant in front of a fan, air conditioner, or heater.

Humidity can be provided by misting a plant, setting it in a pebble-filled saucer with water, or both. I recommend misting and setting in pebble filled saucers those plants with fine foliage such as ferns, parlor palms, terrarium plants, etc., especially in dry weather or winter. In summer, however, don't mist these plants, but rather provide pebble wells and air circulation, making sure that the plants are set on pebbles above the water level, not in the water. Plants with thick, waxy leaves, such as philodendrons and scheffleras only need the peb-

cont.

bled saucer in dry weather not humid, since the waxy surface reduces the amount of water evaporating from the leaves. Misting such plants can cause fungus to develop. Cacti and succulents need neither pebble-saucers nor misting.

All plants periodically need to be washed off in the shower or kitchen sink. Be sure not to drench the soil for a long period of time, however, for necessary minerals and nutrients will be washed out.

Most plants prefer day time temperatures in the mid 70's and night time temperatures 8-10° cooler. If the night temperature is the same as the day temperature, the plant can't rest. That is, respiration or the burning of food, will go on at the same rate as food is produced leaving no extra energy for flower development or for full growth. In winter, keep plants away from the dry hot heat of radiators. At the same time, keep your plants away from cold night drafts.

LIGHT

The correct amount of light is extremely important for a plant's well being. While some house plants prefer low light, some bright light or part sun, and some full sun, all plants have a range of exposure to which they'll adapt. If you place a plant in less than optimal light, be sure not to water it as often, since it won't be able to absorb the water as quickly. Likewise, if a plant is in more than optimum light, you'll have to water it more often.

Generally speaking, cacti and other succulents need at least 1/2 day sun; members of the Adroid family, such as Philodendron, Aglonema, Spathyphyllum and Nepthytis like low light and can do with little or no sun. Ferns and terrarium plants like bright light with only a couple hours direct sun.

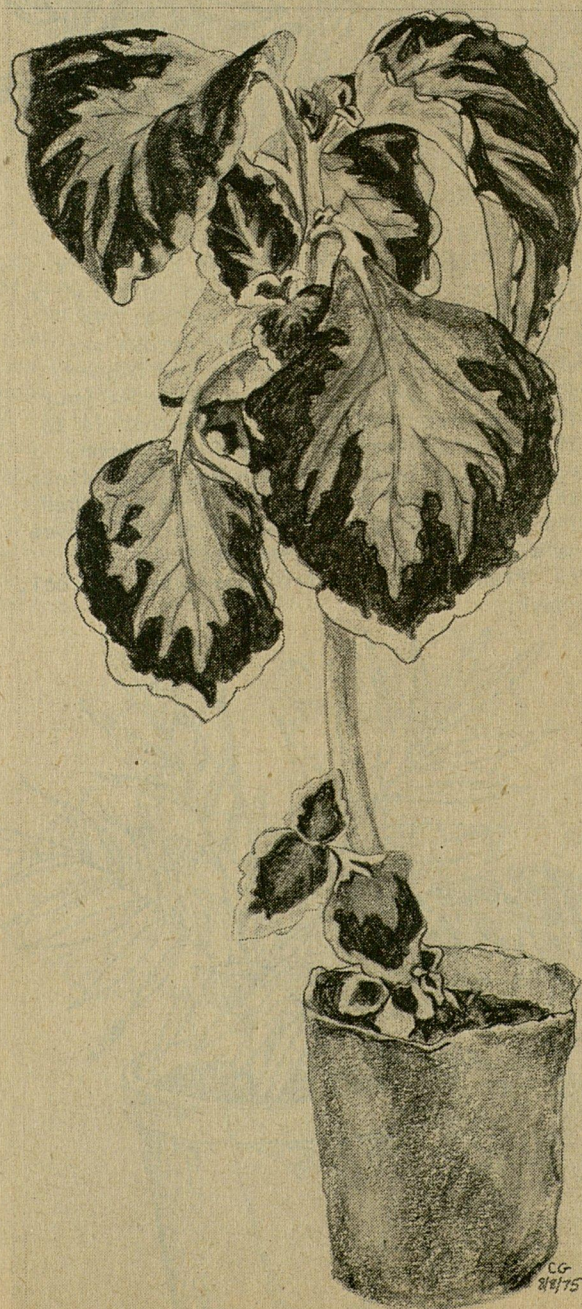
Signs of over exposure to light include dry, yellow or brown scorched leaves or edges and wilting. If a plant is in too little light, it will be pale and elongated with long stems reaching for the light source. New leaves generally appear smaller. Leaves will begin falling off from the bottom of the stem.

The simplest way to tell how much light is in an area is to observe the spot during different seasons. Note that the amount of light to the side of a window is not as much as directly in front of it. The rays of light coming through a window are decreased from 40%-60%. Thus, a fern which grows in fairly dim light outside will need bright light inside, though not much sun. In general, a window facing east or west with no obstructions such as tall buildings will get at least four hours sun a day; a south window will get 6-8 hours of sun depending upon the season; and a north window will get anywhere from poor to bright light.

Concerning artificial light, I recommend using florescent light or specially made incandescent plant lights but not the regular incandescent bulb, which is deficient in certain essential light rays. Fourteen to sixteen hours of artificial light should be enough for most plants, if this is their only source of light.

FEEDING AND NUTRITION

I recommend feeding plants monthly in their growing season with liquid sea weed. Sea weed is a balanced organic soil conditioner which will allow the plant to absorb from the soil what it needs at the time it is required. African violets and other flowering plants can be fed twice a month with a diluted solution. Chemical fertilizers add foreign substances to the soil. They tend to break down the soil structure and force nutrients into the plants. Continued use of these fertilizers leads to a sterile, packed soil. Another advantage of sea weed is that it can be sprayed directly onto plant leaves bi-weekly. This also greatly increases the plant's resistance to disease and insects.



Fish emulsion can be used to feed most foliage plants with the exception of cacti and succulents; however, it should not be sprayed on the leaves or used on plants you want to flower. Use an acidic fertilizer such as Mir-acid on citrus, gardenias and other plants which like acid soil. Since these plants will often become chlorotic (i.e., become yellow between veins and drop leaves), treat by putting powdered iron chelate in the water or spraying onto the leaves.

The labels on fertilizers have three numbers which indicate the relative ratio between nitrogen (N), phosphorous (P) and potassium (K). Thus, a 6-1-1 solution has six parts nitrogen to one part phosphorous to one part potassium. Use a high nitrogen solution to promote good healthy stems and leaves, a high phosphorus conditioner for flowering plants, and potassium for good root development. Again, I recommend sea weed except for those plants grown for their foliage.

Be sure not to feed a plant which looks sick until you're fairly certain that the problem is nutrient deficiency. Many people think that if a plant looks sick, it should be fed. However, unless you're sure the problem is nutrient deficiency, you'll very likely harm it.

DISEASE

The best way to prevent disease and pests is to select healthy plants, keep them well groomed and clean. However, even with the best of care, plants do get pests or develop diseases which can come from the air, other plants, clothing, and the soil. The most common pests are red spider mite, mealybug, aphid, scale and white fly.

Red spider mite is very minute; it is almost invisible to the naked eye. It generally develops on the undersides of the leaves along the midrib. The first sign usually is a very definite tiny whitish-yellow pin pricked effect. Turn the leaf over and a white dust is visible. In more advanced stages, webs are visible, the leaves appear very mottled and dusty, and fall off very easily. The mottled appearance is irreversible, since chlorophyll has been permanently sucked out by the mites. The cure for red spider mite is to keep the leaves clean, by spraying weekly with water and an organic insecticide containing rotenone and pyrethrum, such as Red Arrow. Isolate the patient from healthy specimens, and provide good air circulation, since the mites multiply much quicker in hot, humid areas where the air is still.

Mealybug is a small insect with a cottony appearance. Often the first sign is a cottony ball. Mealybugs can be very difficult to cure, since they often lay their eggs and grow in fairly inaccessible parts of the plant, (i.e., between the stems and leaves in plants such as *Dracaena marginata*). I recommend dipping a Q-tip in alcohol and wiping off all visible mealybug and cottony balls. Then, wash off the alcohol by placing the plant in the shower or wiping the leaves with a sponge and water. Now, spray with the rotenone and pyrethrum compound. This treatment should be done weekly. Mealybugs also often live in the soil, eating the fine root hairs and surfacing to eat the leaves and stems. So, take

the plant out of the pot, and check to see if the insects are present. If so, carefully remove as much dirt as possible, putting the plant in the sink and washing off with warm water. Repot in clean soil, being sure to surround all roots with soil, since air pockets in the soil will kill roots.

Aphids are small wingless sucking insects which crawl around the stems and leaves of a plant. They excrete a sticky substance and prefer to attach themselves to new shoots and buds. They can range in color from black, green and yellow to translucent. Treat the same as for red spider mite.

Scale are related to mealybugs. They are stationary and have hard or soft shells, and grow primarily on stems and the undersides of leaves. Pick one off the plant. If it comes off easily and is hollow, the scale is dead. If, however, the shell is filled, the insect is still alive. Treatment for scale, especially the hard shelled varieties is not as easy as for other insects. Picking them off, washing with water and then spraying with an insecticide to kill any remaining traces is probably the safest treatment. However, if the plant has too many scale or the plant has inaccessible parts you can spray with a deadly poison, such as nicotine sulfate, and put a chemical systemic in the soil. The systemic will be absorbed by the roots and go through the plant so that when the scale sucks the sap, it will die. Systemics take several weeks to be effective and I've sometimes found them not to work. So, for ecological reasons (i.e., using natural means instead of chemical ones) I recommend acquiring healthy plants and treating them as soon as disease is discovered.

White fly lay their translucent eggs on the undersides of leaves. The plant, if heavily affected will drop its pale, yellowing sticky leaves. Treat carefully by spraying first with insecticide. Move the plant as little as possible so not to disturb the insects which would then fly to other plants. Then, if possible, wash each leaf individually with water and Red Arrow to remove the eggs.

Mildew is most common on plants with thick fuzzy leaves which have too much water or humidity. Rex begonias, African violets, and cacti are prime targets. Prevent mildew by keeping leaves dry (I use a soft brush to clean african violets). Occasionally wash them with water but be sure they're then put into a light spot with no sun but with good air circulation. Mildew is discernable as soft, grayish spots on leaves or stems. Eventually the leaves will fall off. Treat by cutting off affected parts and dust with fine grained sulfur. Keep water off the leaves and when well, set them in a pebble filled saucer with water. These plants need humidity, but they do not like water setting on their leaves.

Springtails are very minute insects which live in the soil and eat root hairs. Gnats are tiny, black flying insects which also make their home in the soil. Treatment for both is the same. Water thoroughly with a lukewarm soap solution, making sure you use soap and not detergent. Then, rinse thoroughly with clear water. ♀

GLADYS WALKER'S RECIPE FOR HOMEMADE WHITE SOAP

INGREDIENTS

- 1 can lye (small)
- 1 quart warm water
- 2 Tablespoons Borax
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup warm water
- 2 quarts grease from cooking
- 1 cup ammonia

Dissolve lye per directions on can and allow to cool to 95 to 98° F. You should have a thermometer for the lye and one for the fat. Combine lye and 1 quart warm water in a non-aluminum container. Dissolve the borax in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup warm water. Melt the grease (collected from cooking drippings strained through cheesecloth) so it will be ready by this time.



CAUTIONS

Read directions on the can of lye before using!

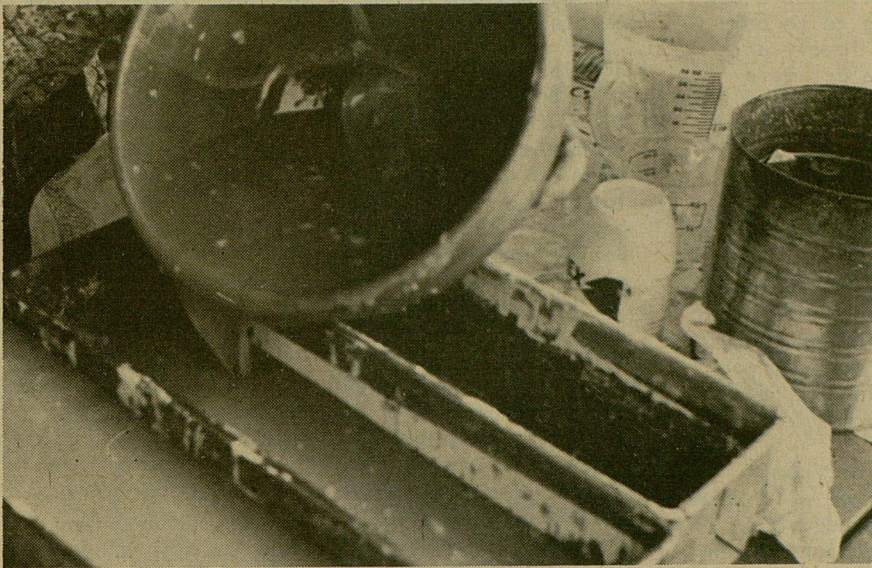
Don't allow lye to contact aluminum.

Do not use soap making containers for eating.

Make soap outside, because the fumes are quite strong.

It's best to use a wooden spoon for stirring.

When it has cooled to 95°, slowly stir the dissolved lye into it. Stir the mixture until it is as thick as honey. Then add the dissolved borax and the ammonia; stir for about 5 minutes longer, then pour into mold.

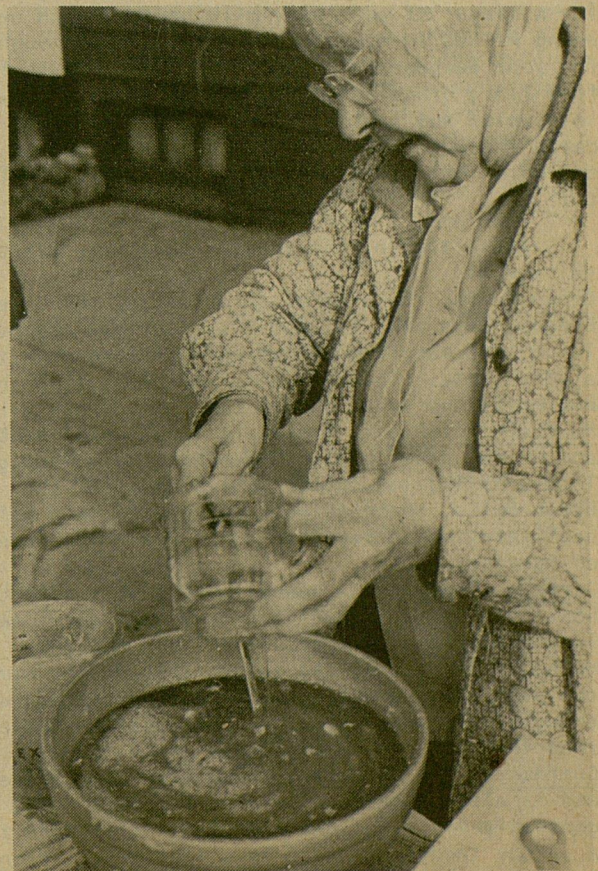


Do not use until about 4 weeks old; before then it is too strong.

Store in mouseproof place. Mice love to nibble it. To make perfumed soap, add 1 tsp. oil of citronella.

For years my grandmother, Gladys Walker, made this soap every six months. We used it to wash our faces, hair and bodies. It is not a harsh soap. It makes excellent suds to wash dishes and to wash clothes in wringer washers. It makes too many suds for use in electric washers.

I highly recommend the book SOAP: making it, using it, enjoying it by Anna Sela Bramson for more about soap. ♀



Raising A Milk Cow

If you are considering the addition of a cow to your family, you should be willing to be committed very closely to this fine and lovely animal. A milk cow needs attention once or, more often, twice daily, morning and evening, ten months a year. You will need two acres of year round, or as close as your locale can provide, pasture. You will need fences, either around your garden and orchard (if it's young) or around the pasture, depending on the closeness of your neighbors. If you don't have pasture, you will need a lot, 3-4 plus tons, of hay and 1-2 tons of grain yearly and a place to store this. Also, your cow will need at least 20 gallons of water a day. From these investments of the land and money you will receive a good friend, a schedule (!), a yearly cash bonus in the form of her calf, and lots of good food.

You can buy a cow at an auction or from a neighbor. If she has a calf on her, you will know that most likely she has no trouble producing. Try to find a youngish one, 4 or 5, that has been milked before. Her teeth (they only have lower ones) should be an inch or so long. Her bag should be well attached, not pendulous, and her milk white and smooth, not clotted or discolored. Strain her milk through a black cloth if you have any doubts. Hopefully her teats, the four functioning ones, will be uniform, about as long as your fist. There should be no lumps or hardened tissue. Check her eyes for sores and her gait for a limp. If possible, milk her or watch her being milked to make sure she is gentle enough for your purposes. Finally make sure she is free from T.B., brucellosis (bangs, or undulant fever in people) and leptospirosis, because you can catch these things from her. There should be a tattoo on her right ear, or if not, have a vet test her.

There are in this country four main kinds of dairy cows:

Brown Swiss: Records of this, one of the oldest breeds, date back to 1800 BC. The cows are quite large, ranging from almost white to brown, with a white nose. They are heavy milkers, high in butterfat and raise a good calf.

Holstein Friesian: These are large cows, black and white, developed in North Holland. They give lots of milk, low in fat. Like those of the Brown Swiss, these calves, especially when half beef, are more acceptable to buyers than Jersey or Guernsey.

Jersey: These are a beautiful brown, smaller and bonier than the preceding. They were developed long ago on the Isle of Jersey, off England. Being smaller, they eat less. They do not give the prodigious quantity of milk the Holstein does though it is much higher in butterfat. I have read the bull calves are quite nasty.

Guernsey: She is mostly brown with some white and is also a smaller cow than the first two. She generally milks (golden milk!) a little more than a Jersey though the milk is slightly less rich.

Her calves are slightly less objectionable commercially than a Jersey's.

HOUSING

Depending on the weather and your inclinations the cow will need a pen, a stable, or shed. If her calf stays on her, it will share the shelter with her and will also need a small fenced lot to spend the days in. If it is taken off her, it will need a stall or shed by itself. Besides providing shelter for her, you should consider shelter for her hay and grain.

A pen is acceptable accommodation for cows where the weather is not too cold for winter and no barn is handy. This should be 10' x 10' or bigger would be nicer, with provisions for milking: a chute, or a stanchion, or a rope, or perhaps just a bucket and stool if she is very gentle.

A shed is good shelter, 10' x 10' or more for her with additional storage for feed and equipment. Unless it is very cold this can be open on the south side, as cows like sun in winter. If it is enclosed, provide for ventilation with a window on the side opposite prevailing winter winds.

A barn stall or stable is also good. If it is a very narrow stall, be sure the sides are draft free.

NUTRITION

The process of digestion in a cow is different than in us. Microorganisms in the rumen break down plant tissue to obtain their own food. Further down the line these unsuspecting bacteria protozoa, and other microflora are digested to furnish nutrients to their host, your cow. So really it is these unicellular, protoplasmic symbionts you are feeding. They can synthesize all the essential amino acids from non-protein nitrogenous compounds or from incomplete protein foods. A pregnant cow needs about 20-25 lbs. of food a day with 7.5% total protein. A cow nursing a calf needs 28-30 lbs. of food with 8.5% total protein. To give you an idea:

clover hay is	12% total protein
oat hay is	8%
alfalfa hay is	15%
prairie hay is	6%
corn is	9%
cottonseed meal is	40%
soybean meal is	40%
oats are	12%
wheat bran is	16%
oat straw is	4%

The traditional way to feed dairy cows is to give a maintenance ration, enough to keep them fit, and then on top of that a production ration according to how much milk she'll give, or you want. Thus the figures above (20-25 lbs. for pregnant cow...) are for maintenance, usually given in the form of roughage (mixed fresh grasses or legume hay or grass hay plus 2-3 lbs. cotton or soy-bean meal). Then the production

ration is given in the form of concentrates - about 3 lbs. of dairy feed, or mixed grain, per gallon of milk.

Pasture quality is important; especially, legumes should be present. If not a cow may be susceptible to grass tetany, a magnesium deficiency. Also it will save you money in hay if your pastures contain both summer (Bermuda Bahai lezpedeza) and winter (fescue and white clover here in Arkansas) grasses. Other incidentals to know about pastures: wilted cherry leaves, say from a fallen limb, or sorghum of Johnson grass after a rain following a dry period or when succoring out after being cut, both contain prussic acid which will kill a cow in minutes. Nitrate poisoning from excessive organic or chemical fertilizer or the runoff thereof can occur causing a drop in milk production and Vitamin A deficiency symptoms and possibly death. Have your water analyzed if there is any possibility; it should contain less than 100 ppm.

Thirteen minerals are listed essential but plants take care of most of these requirements except sodium and chlorine. Salt therefore should be kept where your cow can get to it any time. A block or a little trough will do the trick. Calcium and phosphorus are the two most important minerals. You can be sure your cow is getting enough of these by feeding free choice a mix of 1 part each ground limestone, defluorinated rock phosphate and salt or 2 parts steamed bonemeal to one part salt.

The only vitamin deficiency likely is A when your cow is fed hay over long periods. Watering eyes and night blindness are symptoms.

Water of course is a necessity, 20 or more gallons per day.

DISEASE:

When you buy a cow she should have been vaccinated for brucellosis, T.B. and leptospirosis. Hopefully she will also have been vaccinated against blackleg, malignant edema and shipping fever as a calf. Once she has been given these immunities they need not be renewed (except leptospirosis). If anaphrodisia is a problem in your area with cattlemen, perhaps you should look into vaccinating your cow. This disease is carried by flies and after three years of age up to 50% of cows that contact this disease will die from it. Nasty. The vaccine is good for a year and does not affect the milk.

Bloat is caused by excess gas in the cow's rumen often from eating too much legumes especially when wet or frosted. The rumen which runs in front of her left hip will be extended and she will be listless or down. It is important to keep her off her side and upright,

even if she remains down. If you can get her up often all she needs is a run around the pasture. In more severe cases a stomach tube or a vet may be necessary.

Milk Fever occurs when milk first starts to flow and the cow's body donates too much calcium to the calf. Her eyes will flicker and she will sicken rapidly and go down. She might get up, but this is only temporary. Death is imminent. Immediate intravenous administration of an electrolyte solution containing calcium will bring a spectacular recovery. Call a veterinarian if possible for this. A cow with a history of this is a likely repeater.

Ketosis has the same symptoms as milk fever but is caused by a lack of sugars. Fortunately the treatment is the same too, the electrolyte solution replaces missing sugars. Supplemental sugar should be fed the next several weeks.

Mastitis is a dairy problem characterized by bloody clotted or ropy milk. Try to get a cow with a well attached bag who doesn't have mastitis and then take good care of her (don't let her fight other cows). If this has been a problem, get the veterinarian to treat each quarter of the udder when you turn her dry.

Keep your pastures clean, free of anything a contented cow could conceivably munch (inner tubes, nails, plastic bags and bottles, lead paint, hypodermic needles) or that could cause foot injury (glass). This could result in foot rot. Also keeping it clean of garbage etc. might lessen the preponderance of flies that will annoy the cow, sometimes enough to affect production. Many people feel that their cow's comfort is worth buying some insecticide to sprinkle along her backbone to control the flies, lice and ticks. Flies do spread disease: pinkeye is one for which fly control (prevention) is the only control. A dust bag hung where she passes regularly or a back-rubber are also effective.

This is all quite disheartening, the realization of her and your vulnerability, but truly it is unlikely that sickness will happen. But to be prepared you might consider having on hand:

- 1 intravenous injection kit with a quart of electrolyte solution
- 1 10cc syringe
- broad spectrum antibiotic
- 3-way vaccine when you need it, for calf can of scour medicine
- insect powder (Rotenone is good) and Smear 62
- a fly repellent for cuts
- balling gun with worm pills
- Also, especially if you are far from the vet or more knowledgeable neighbors:
- 60" obstetrical chain plus block and tackle
- fence stretcher

cont.

	Disposition	Calving ease	Feed efficiency	Longevity	Milking	Fertility	Average weight of calves at birth
Brown Swiss	2.00	3.25	1.66	2.50	1.25	3.00	96 lbs.
Holstein	2.25	3.00	2.66	2.50	1.00	2.25	90 lbs.
Jersey	3.00	1.00	2.33	3.00	1.50	2.50	75 lbs.
Guernsey	2.25	2.25	3.33	3.75	1.50	4.25	85 lbs.
1 is highest, 5 is lowest							



castrating knife or elastrator
rubber stomach tube and mineral oil

BREEDING

Thirty to forty-five days after calving (which we will soon come to) your cow will begin to act strangely; pacing, bawling, wringing her talk about, sagging in the loins. If you have other cows she will permit them to mount her for a period, 18 hours usually. This is called standing heat and you do not want her to breed with your or your neighbor's bull. Two or three days later you may note a little bleeding from the vulva. This is normal and useful to you, especially if she is your only cow, as it indicates she was in heat 2-3 days earlier. Make note: This whole heat period lasts about a day and a half; 18 to 23 days later it will occur again. Watch for it, mark it on a calendar or cupboard door. You want to breed her now if it's been at least 50 days since calving. However, you might like to change her yearly cycle so that she calves in the fall or spring as these calves generally do better than summer calves. You have two choices - 1) Take her to a neighbor's bull immediately. She can be bred from the start of standing heat until about 12 hours after it has ended, usually a space of 24 to 30 hours. If you have no other cows, the milking she comes up shortest is a good indicator, though just by observing her 24 hours of peculiar behavior you will probably know when she is in heat. Or 2) Call your local Artificial Insemination person, also immediately. If you are hoping to raise another milk cow, get dairy semen, but if you plan to sell or consume the calf, beef semen is preferable. Keep in mind the size of the calf that the cow is designed to bear, and that the bull will influence this. Jerseys bring small calves, Guernsey medium, Holstein and Brown Swiss, large. Consult the AI person about this. Usually the wider the cross

the more hybrid vigor the calf will show.

CALVING AND CALVES

283 days after conception your cow will bring forth an amazing perfect little cow. To assist this wonder, dry her up about 2 months before she is due. Some slacken gradually and some just quit milking. Use your own discretion. A half a day or so before birth there will be a change, a loss of spring, in the cow's flanks as the calf moves into position. Also the muscles around her tail will sag. Often she will leave other cows and act a little peculiar. Leave her alone unless it is extremely inclement weather and you feel she should be protected.

Most likely, one morning you will get up and go out and there will be your cow, proud and smiling and her calf, and you, proud and smiling too. The rest of this paragraph pertains to those other rare occasions. Interfere only after four hours of hard lying-down labor for a cow, three hours for a heifer (a first-calf cow). The difficulty may be in the presentation of the calf. The forelegs should come first. Reach into the cow gently and try to arrange it so, with the nose down between the forelegs. If the calf is sideways, when you first see its shoulder blades, rotate the calf 90°. If it is to be a breech birth (ass first), you have only 60 seconds once the top of the hips are exposed as the calf's umbilical cord is most likely pinched and it is getting no oxygen. The difficulty may be that either the cow is too fat or the calf too big. If this appears to be the case gently pull its forelegs out, tie a cord on it and pull hard when she strains. If two people can't pull a calf with all their strength, call the veterinarian (that's a quote from our veterinarian...). Also call the vet if the afterbirth is not delivered within 72 hours in winter or 48 in summer.

When the calf is born it is imperative it

start breathing immediately and the mother will usually lick its nose to that extent. If it has trouble breathing, or doesn't, tickle its nose, put a finger in its rectum, or grab it by the hocks and swing it.

Next comes the quandry. There are many schools of thought - 1) completely and immediately separate the new mother and her calf; 2) leave them together 4-7 days, the advantage being that the calf gets the colostrum milk which transfers immunities via natural antibodies. The calf's ability to absorb these decreases rapidly after its first 24 hours so be sure it gets this good stuff. (It's a good idea to freeze some colostrum milk in case of a mother being sick or dying in delivery.) 3) Let the calf suck in the morning and you milk at night. 4) In some other way share with the calf; take what you want and leave the rest, let it take what it wants and you take the rest (it will get the larger share, I think), or determine how much she gives and then milk enough to leave the calf one gallon daily when it's under 3 months and 1-1/2 gallons if it's over that. Or you can let it suck while you milk. 1) and 2) necessitate feeding with milk or a milk substitute or reconstituted milk (not lowfat) and contending with bucket or bottle feeding. This also applies to raising a motherless calf. To teach it to feed from a bucket, lead it in with your milk soaked fingers. This is frustrating for you both, and requires patience. Or you might use a nursing nipple bucket (in a pinch you can use a rubber glove with a small hole punched in a finger). Also you will have to contend with the scours, the symptoms being: depression, loss of appetite and brown diarrhea. (Similar symptoms but with white and/or bloody foaming stools might indicate infectious scours which require immediate veterinary care.) Slack off on the milk or completely replace it with water or glucose and water and give it some good scour medicine. Keep it warm and dry. When it's better, gradually get it back on its full ration.

5) A final alternative to the calf raising quandry: as soon as your cow calves, find another new calf or three. Keep all the calves indoors and bring the cow in twice a day, tie her up and make her let them suck. Some say this is easier if all the calves smell the same (vanilla, V05?). If you put a rope around her belly and loins and pull tight she won't kick. The advantage to all this is economic.

When the calf is 6 to 8 weeks old, vaccinate it for blackleg, malignant edema, and hemoragic septazima (shipping fever). These all come together in one shot, a "three-way".

When the calf is three months or so old, start providing some good hay, water and grain. As it must be penned from the cow, try to make it comfortable in a well fenced lot with some shade and grass or bedding straw.

When the calf is 4-6 months old vaccinate it for leptospirosis, if it is a problem in your area. Have the calf's fecal matter checked for worms. Castrate the bull calves now if desired. A knife does the cleanest job. Smear 62 or some other fly repellent should be put on this and all open wounds to prevent fly infestation. Elasticators or clamps are easier, but not so highly

recommended because of the infections that set in the wound made by the bands. Dehorning is also recommended now, to increase market value and decrease injury to other animals and people too. There are two ways to avoid dehorning: use a pure polled bull, or apply a caustic paste when the calf is less than 10 days old.

Wean the calf at six months or so. Sell him, put him on grass with his usual grain (in a separate pasture from his mama) or keep him in the lot for a week or so with hay and grain till he seems adjusted then turn him out watching to make sure you've been successful. Continue the grain for a while, gradually decreasing the quantity. If it's to be for personal consumption perhaps you might continue the grain. If it's a heifer you plan to milk eventually, keep her separate from any bulls till she's 18 months or 500 lbs.

The three way vaccination given before should be repeated at 12 and 18 months. At 18 months also give a replacement heifer a vibrio vaccination and a leptospirosis vaccination, both of which will help prevent infertility and abortions. The leptospirosis shot is given yearly. Keep records of this.

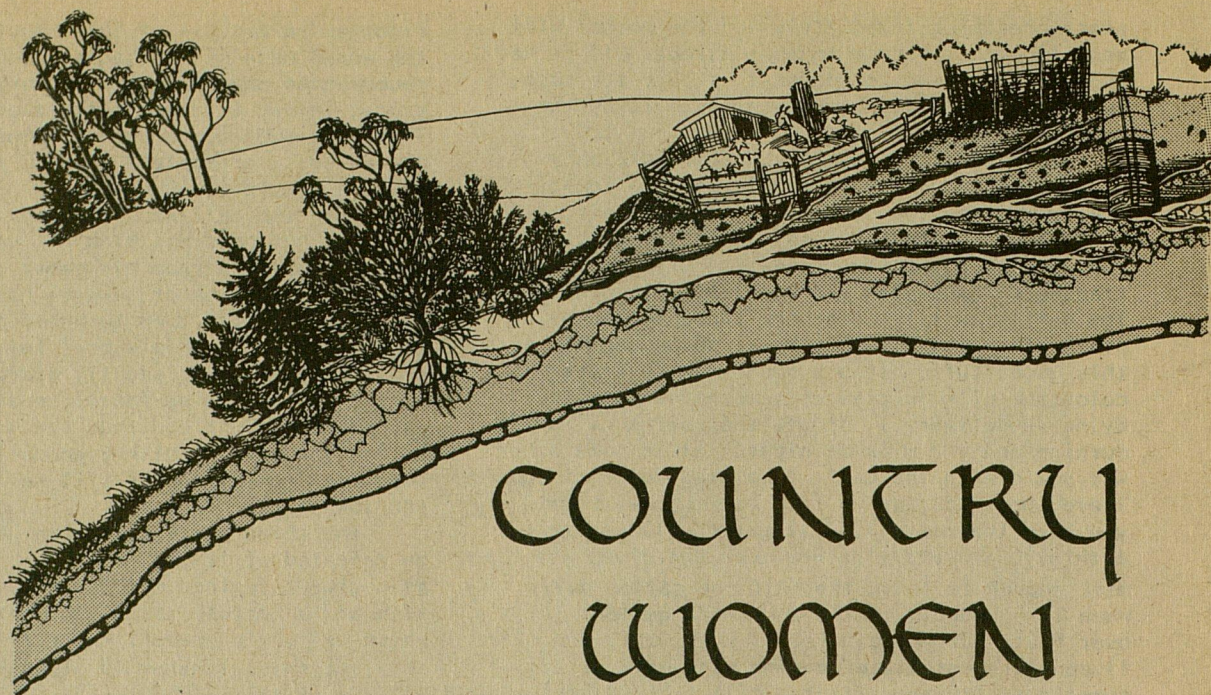
MILK AND MILKING

Routine is important in milking. Anything extraordinary will cause adrenalin which tightens the sphincter muscles. Feeding will put her at ease. Many wipe the teats with warm water and treat them with salve or lanolin if they are scratched or cracked. This also relaxes the udder muscles. Pinch the top of the teat with thumb (either extended or bent "thumbs in") and forefinger to prevent milk from escaping back to the udder. Squeeze downward with the rest of your fingers. The cream comes last and is extracted by stripping, which is simply grasping the teat with thumb and forefinger and pulling down. Don't be worried about hurting the cow; watch the calf. Be sure all teats are being emptied by you or the calf as infection may develop.

Strain the milk right away into a sterile container and cool it. If you feel you should pasteurize it, heat it to 142° for 30 minutes or 161° for 15 seconds, then cool it as rapidly as possible to 50° or lower. This kills germs and also destroys some enzymes. Rinse all utensils in cold water and then wash with soap and water. Now you are ready for milk, cream, butter, whipped cream, sour cream, buttermilk, cream cheese, yogurt, cottage cheese, Devonshire cream, kefir, hard cheese, ice cream. Lots of things!

A cow is your liason with the earth. She can take a piece of land and turn it into food much easier than you can. She will help you towards self-sufficiency immeasurably. Her gentleness and patience are lovely to behold. And the way the days become entities with a beginning and an end, and you watch the calf grow, and the new one swell... It gives you perspective, a good perspective.

To everything turn turn
There is a season and a time for every
Purpose under heaven. ♀



COUNTRY WOMEN

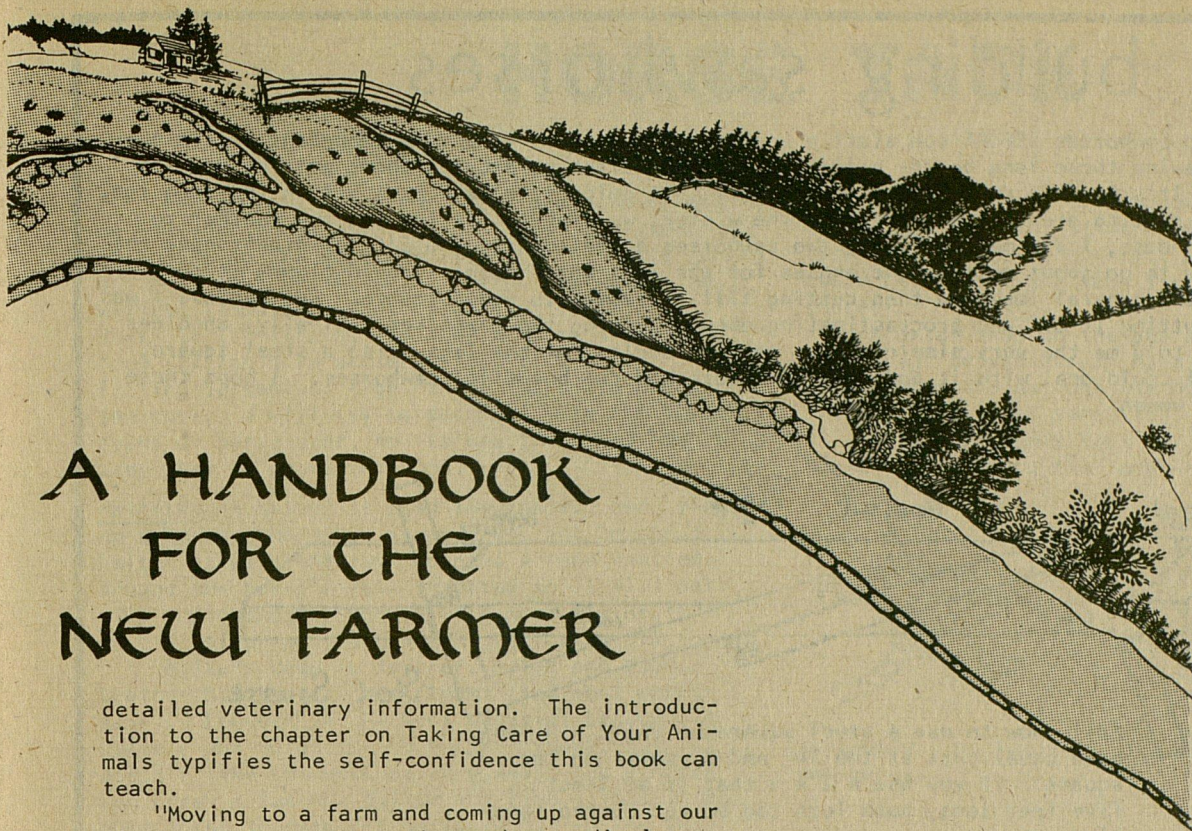
Country Women: A Handbook for the New Farmer
by Jeanne Tetrault and Sherry Thomas
illustrations by Leona Walden
photos by Sally Bailey
380 pages; Doubleday 1976

It was inevitable that the Back-to-the-Land Movement and the Women's Movement would someday come together because they are both made up of people attempting to reclaim power over their own lives. Homesteaders seek the power to supply their most basic needs of food, shelter and energy in ways not destructive to the earth and not dependent on an alienating capitalist system. Women demand the power to be full and equal human beings. But the meeting came late and is still uneffected in many parts of the country. While feminists were emerging from other radical movements (i.e. black and left) of the late sixties and early seventies, the only role of woman on the homestead was Earth Mother. I'm sure that to many city radicals it looked, and still looks, like nothing more would come out of the homesteaders than a few individual solutions and some new zucchini recipes. Fortunately there were many women not content to take on the limited drudgery our grandmothers had cast off. Some of us began to heed the Women's Movement through our early experiences in country living. I hauled 50 lb. feed sacks every day and then one day the man at the feed store grabbed the sack from my arms because I was too "weak" to carry it. Suddenly it dawned on me that my emerging physical strength and self-sufficiency were not within the cultural definition of "woman". We began to stretch and strain and break those limits. Other women are now coming to the land because of the Women's Movement. Learning to take care of the basic human needs gives anyone a huge sense of confidence. How important that women feel that confidence.

Country Women magazine was the first tan-

gible evidence of women struggling for freedom in the country. It has grown and changed as we have grown, in numbers and political awareness. But the focus always remains the same. It is, in fact, an editorial policy. One half of each issue is reserved for practical information, for that is the source of our strength on the land. Learning to do it all and thereby freeing ourselves from dependence on men. Country Women: A Handbook for the New Farmer expands this section of the magazine into 380 pages of solid, readable information, beautifully illustrated and photographed. Jeanne and Sherry were two of the three women who began the magazine. They live their theory that knowing how to cope with all the details of one's physical life makes for incredible strength. It is the careful writing of this knowledge that makes this Handbook a prize. Many men will read this book and find it the best source of information on homesteading yet printed. This is no light compliment in view of the hundreds of books now flooding the market. Most are pretty and pretty shallow, too. They are written for city dreamers more than people out there doing it. But this book was written most especially for women. For we are the New Farmers, exploring not only gardening, veterinary medicine and plumbing but our inner selves. It is as important to us to learn how this culture formed us, bound us, and how we can undo this damage, as it is to perfect splitting wood.

The book is layed-out in three sections. "Beginnings" includes chapters on those first encounters with Chainsaws, Outhouses and Developing Water. There is also a chapter on Our Clothing, Our Bodies. Section Two is "Taking Root": some simple building and much gardening information. Section Three is "Animals and Poultry". The information and diagrams in this section are noticeably different from all the other homestead books I've read. It is thorough and imaginative, not just a rewrite of someone else's experience. There is also an appendix of



A HANDBOOK FOR THE NEW FARMER

detailed veterinary information. The introduction to the chapter on Taking Care of Your Animals typifies the self-confidence this book can teach.

"Moving to a farm and coming up against our first animal emergency, I acted accordingly - rushed down to the nearest phone and called the local veterinarian. He wouldn't come out to the farm and wasn't interested in seeing an injured sheep in his office. I learned then to start relying on my own abilities to diagnose and deal with routine illnesses in our animals, to act in emergencies, to have the basic confidence to take care of our own. It was a process begun out of necessity, and one that has taken many many years to develop. With the help of some very good books, a lot of talking and exploring with other first-time (and old-time) farmers, and some advice and lessons from willing veterinarians who aren't out to mystify their profession, I've come to a place where I can trust my understandings and intuitions about the animals I live with. I believe that you can be your own veterinarian a lot of the time if you are willing to really work at learning, and if you have an active love for your animals."

There are also a number of excellent poems and a journal. It is woven throughout the text of the book, set off by beautiful borders, and describes the parallel psychic growth that happened to Sherry as she gained all these physical skills. I would like to quote from the first entry and the last.

"Living in the country has meant beginning all over again - like a child learning how to survive. Nothing that I know from twenty-four years in cities and three years in college feels useful; everything that I don't know feels necessary. My self-confidence is shaken, and I look to Peter to lead me and direct our life."

.....

"Driving home today, I suddenly realized

that this really is going to be a sheep ranch, that I have done, and am doing, and will do it. That I'm making my livelihood from the land. The canyon is fenced now. There are sheep out there on pastures that were open hillsides two years ago...

"I'm only at the beginning now, and I know there are many struggles to come and overcome and come again: Someday I too, like my neighbors, will be counting carcasses killed by a marauding dog" (an eerie prophesy that came true last fall when eighteen of Sherry's sheep were killed by dogs) "or watching the spring oats wash away in an 'unheard of' late storm. No matter how prepared I am, there is always that vulnerability - to the weather, other animals, disease - that seems to strike when things are finally going smoothly. But inside me there is also this incredible joy. This life is real and good, and it has made me strong and real and good too." ♀

Books are available directly from the authors (so that they get the percentage usually given to bookstores). Order from:

Country Women Book Sales
Box 54

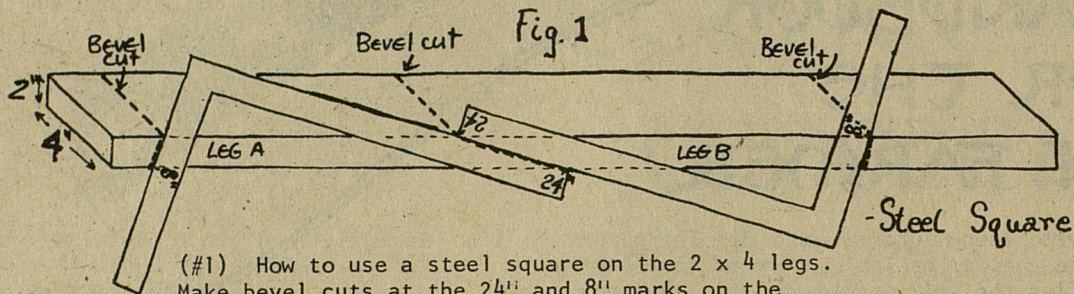
Albion, Ca. 95410

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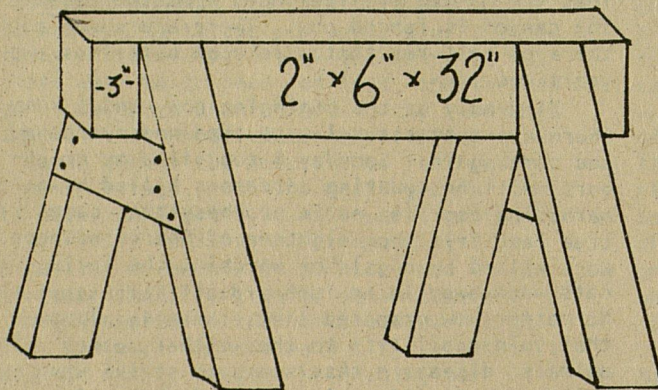
Hardbacks: \$12.95 plus 75¢ postage

building sawhorses

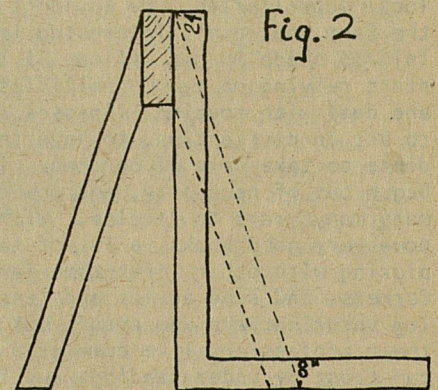
Building two sawhorses BEFORE you start a construction project is a very important preliminary step and makes sawing those long boards a lot easier. I'm often so excited about getting on with the project that it's hard to do the preliminary work, but doing it always pays off in the long run. Last year, while sitting around a wood fire in the winter, waiting for spring and the weather to start building a house, I did make building two sawhorses a preliminary project. I didn't have the faintest idea how to go about getting the angles for the legs but thought I could figure it out, somehow, having the general idea and then cutting till it seemed to stand square. But because I was unsure, I kept putting it off and procrastinating about building the sawhorses. Finally, an older carpenter friend told me the very simple way to get the angles for the legs using a steel square. It became easy; I could deal with it and in a few hours had two beautiful sawhorses. I hope these plans help other women.



(#1) How to use a steel square on the 2 x 4 legs. Make bevel cuts at the 24" and 8" marks on the square. If you use a 2 x 4 that is at least five feet long, both legs can be cut at the same time.

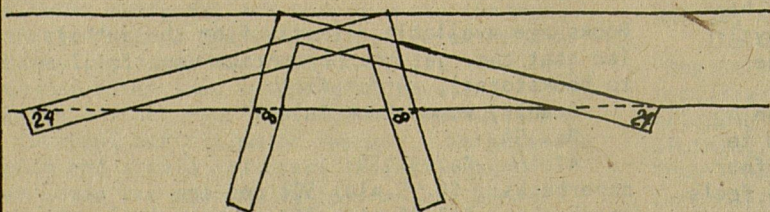


The completed sawhorse.

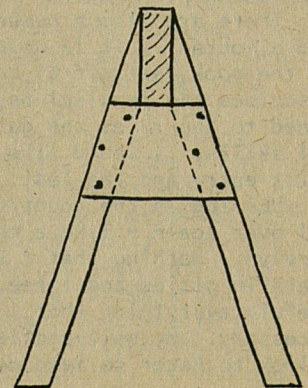


(#2) The angles of the legs, again using the steel square.

Fig. 3 Reinforcing (use any 1x6 or 1x8)



(#3) The reinforcing piece. Using the same angle on the steel square, you can get the first cut. Then either measure across and cut the second or nail (or screw) the reinforcing piece on the legs and cut it even with the other leg.



HORSE TACK

The equipment you use has a profound effect on how your horse will handle. Most tack touches the horse on the most sensitive parts of its anatomy - the mouth, chin, behind the ears, the withers (shoulders) and back. Equipment that's stiff or ill-fitting can make a horse anywhere from irritable to berserk, just like a poor-fitting garment or tight shoes can drive a person nuts. I will try to describe here the basic types of horse gear, how to use them, and how to keep them in good condition.

Halters: A halter is used for leading and tying up a horse. While it is possible not to use a halter at all, and just to have a rope knotted around the horse's neck (knotted so it will not slip and choke the horse), it's much easier to have a halter and lead shank. (Picture #1)

Halters come in leather, nylon and rope. Leather halters are the finest (and most expensive). Leather is the best material because it softens and molds to the horse's shape, but it doesn't take the weather very well, and a horse can break a leather halter any time. This is a good thing in case the horse is out in the pasture and gets hung up in brush, but bad if you are trying to teach the horse to stand tied.

I like the strong nylon web halters because they're unbreakable. You know if you tie up the horse it's not going to get away. Rope halters are not very safe. A woman I knew lost her horse when he put a hind foot through the halter while scratching his head. He couldn't get his foot out, panicked and broke his neck. I've heard of other horses also strangling on these things.

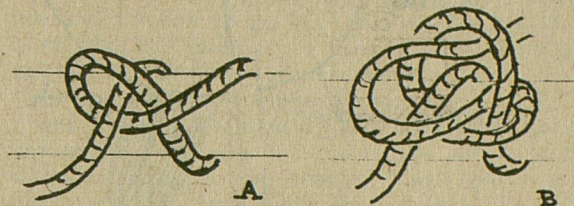
For the above reasons it's not good to turn your horse out in the pasture with a halter on, unless the horse is really hard to catch and then the halter makes it easier.

Don't try to lead the horse with the halter. You need a lead rope to give you a little room. I learned this when I tried to lead a little stud pony away from his favorite mare

with only a halter. He pulled back, and then reared up, striking at me with his front feet, just about breaking my arm. With a rope, I could have given him some slack and still kept control.

A metal snap on the end of your lead rope is a great convenience. Make sure it is a very strong snap and not one the horse can undo by rubbing it against something.

Here's a simple knot for tying up your horse. By pulling the loose end you untie it



instantly...no fumbling with the knot in an emergency.

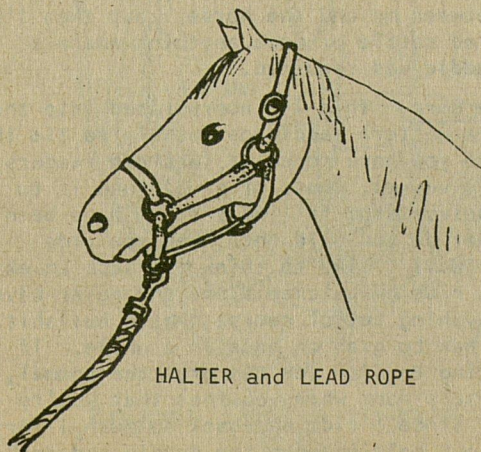
English or Western? In the U.S. people who ride usually adopt one or the other style of riding, depending partly on what's available, their ability, and the type of work they want to do. I started out riding bareback and went to work for people who rode English, so I took up the English style.

If you are going to be cutting or roping cattle an English saddle would be (pretty much) useless. Many people find a western saddle more comfortable for riding long hours. However, people who fox-hunt and some endurance riders use English saddles, and they are usually mounted all day. For long-distance travel, I like my old English jumping saddle because it only weighs about 10 lbs. and is so easy to put on and off.

When you go to buy a saddle, a good used one is often a lot cheaper than a new one - not always though, because a lot of people don't like a squeaky new saddle. It takes time to break it in. Feed stores, tack shops and newspapers are the best places to look. You can also get tack through nation-wide mail-order tack distributors like Miller's; these are advertised in almost all horse magazines.

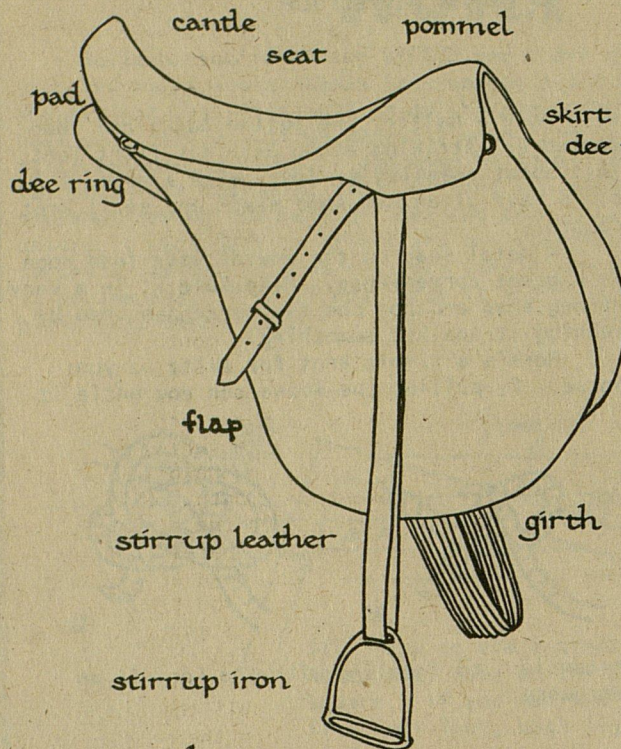
It's best if you can arrange to try the saddle before you buy it, either on your own horse or one who's built similarly. If the saddle is too narrow it won't sit down right on the horse's back - the back will look pinched. If it's too wide, the pommel will rest too low on the withers and will eventually make a sore. There should always be some space between the pommel and the horse's withers.

Before you buy a saddle check the condition of the leather. Look for any rips. Especially check out the straps that hold the girth because

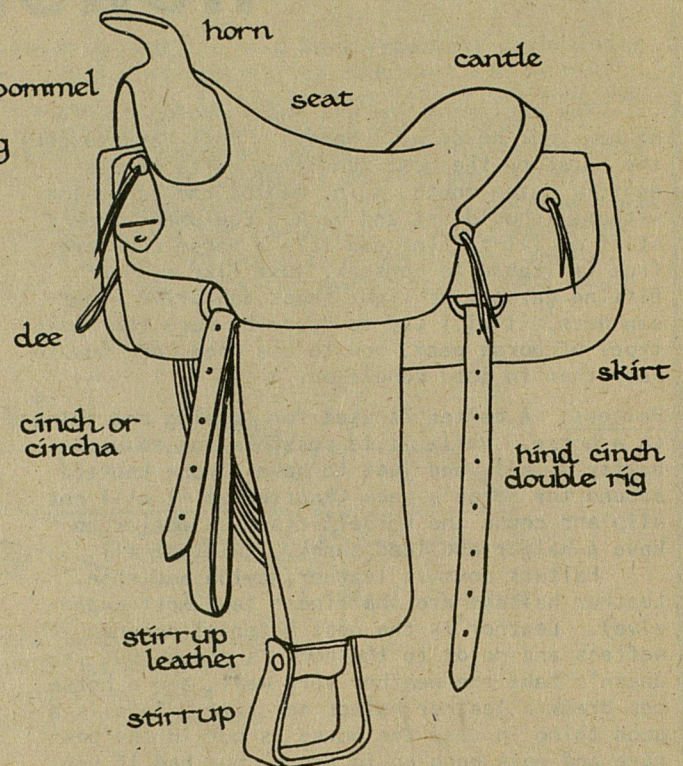


HALTER and LEAD ROPE

PARTS OF A SADDLE



Forward Seat
English Saddle



Western Saddle

those attach to the tree (inner frame of the saddle) and are the hardest to fix if they get broken. To test the strength of a strap, take it and twist it hard. A bad strap will crack or start to shred.

Sometimes leather will look bad because it has been neglected, but is still strong and if properly restored will give good service.

Saddle Pads: On a fat horse with a nice round back you can use a light pad or blanket. A thin horse with high withers needs 2 light pads or one heavy one. I like hair or felt pads, but you can use sheepskin, wool, Indian blankets or anything that suits your fancy, just so it protects the horse's back.

Make sure there are no wrinkles in the pad, or burrs, or anything that will irritate the horse's skin. When you put on the pad, place it forward from where you want it and slide it back until it's in the correct place, smoothing out the hair.

The Girth or Cinch: English style usually calls it a girth - Western, a cinch. Some horses have learned to suck in air and expand their tummies while the cinch is being tightened. This is usually because it has been tightened too fast. Do it a little bit at a time. Tighten it part way, lead the horse a few steps, and do it all the way.

A too-tight or too-loose girth makes sores.

It's harder to keep a saddle straight on a round-backed horse so you have to pull it a little tighter than if you have a skinny horse with high withers to keep the saddle in place. When you try to mount, if the saddle slides around, it's obviously not tight enough.

You can't girth up an English saddle nearly as tight as a western one. Cowboys need a saddle that will not slip no matter how much strain is put on it. So they have saddles designed for this. I humbly admit to knowing little or nothing about western riding. I've ridden western a few times and felt there was way too much leather between me and the horse...but then I've never worked cattle or done anything where a western saddle was required.

The Saddle Horn: This is incorporated into the design of a western saddle ostensibly to tie the cow to once you have roped it (western readers, please forgive me). Lots of people use it to keep themselves from falling off. I have been asked, "What do you hold onto when you ride English?" Well I like to think I'm such an expert I can ride by balance alone and never have to grab anything but of course that's bullshit. Everybody has to grab on once in a while. If you're riding English you can grab the pommel, or the horse's mane when you feel that you're slipping. Since I ride bareback so much, I forget all about holding onto the saddle and grab

for the mane. But what do you do when the horse has no mane?

Bridles, Bits and Hackamores: A bridle consists of a bit (the metal thing that goes in the horse's mouth) and a headstall (the leather straps that hold the bit in place) and reins.

The headstall can be anything from a simple strap that goes from the bit around back of the ears, or it can be very complicated. Actually a headstall with a browband and throatlatch is better because it keeps the bit in a more stationary position.

I just got a new horse who is a little bit hard to bridle. She doesn't like having the straps pulled over her ears, so a simple headstall is easier for her to take than a complicated one with lots of straps.

Bridling: When you bridle a horse you don't stand in front and try to jam the bit into its mouth. Go to the horse's left (near) side and put the reins over the head first, keeping something to hold onto if the horse ducks away. Then unbuckle the halter, slip it down over the nose and re-buckle it around the neck.

Then take the bridle in your right hand and put the headstall over the nose, bringing it up until the bit touches the horse's teeth. If the horse doesn't open its mouth, take your thumb and finger (your hand under the horse's chin) and slip them into the sides of the horse's mouth. Rummage around and you find a space on each side where there are no teeth. Feel the horse's tongue and nine times out of ten the horse will open up (yech! What awful tasting fingers!).

Try not to clank the bit against the horse's teeth. Then gently bend each ear forward in turn and slip the bridle over it. Make sure the browband hasn't slipped down over the horse's eyes, and fasten the throat latch loosely. Don't forget to unfasten it before you take the bridle off.

Bits: The bit is the instrument of communication between horse and rider. In order to communicate the horse must be comfortable, so it's important that the bit should fit right. The mouthpiece should be the same width as the horse's mouth. Too wide or too narrow a bit will rub or pinch the horse's mouth.

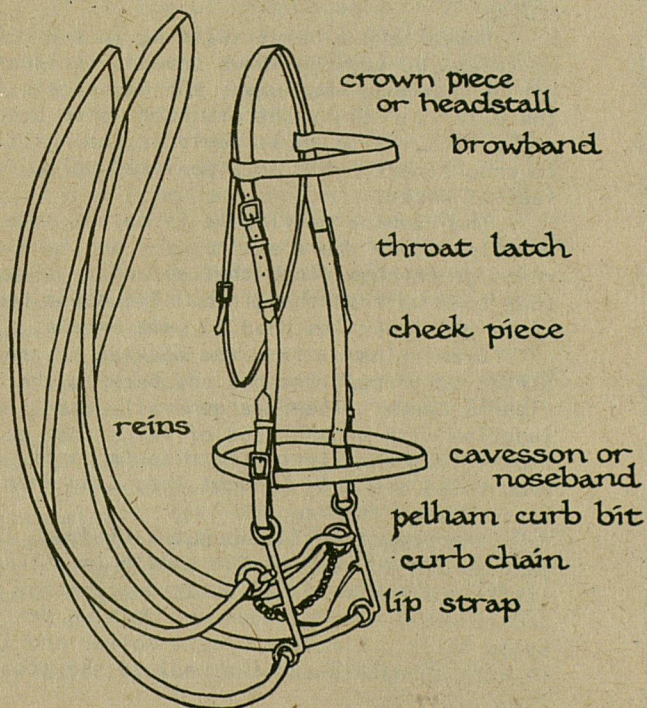
A snaffle bit is either a straight or jointed bar with a ring on each end. It's a mild bit and usually used for starting young horses. A tom thumb bit is a variation of this with little "thumbs" to keep the bit from being pulled through the horse's mouth.

Adjust the headstall so the bit is in the right place. It should just barely wrinkle the corners of the mouth. Too loose and it will be clanking against the teeth. Too tight and the horse will be "smiling" (not a smile, a grimace).

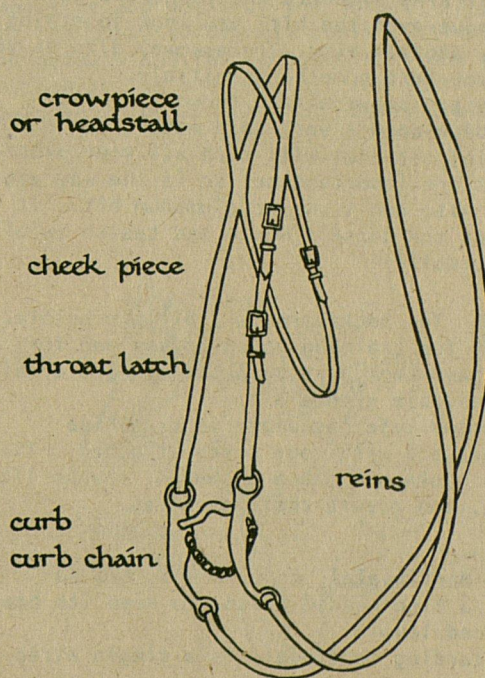
The curb bit is a bar with shanks or levers on it. This works on the bars (the gums) of the horse's mouth and tends to pull the head downward. The curb fits lower in the mouth than the snaffle. When you pull the reins, the levers tighten the curb strap or chain under the horse's chin. Some horses that cannot be controlled well with a snaffle respond to a curb (and vice versa).

Some English riders use a double bridle, that consists of a snaffle and curb, both at the

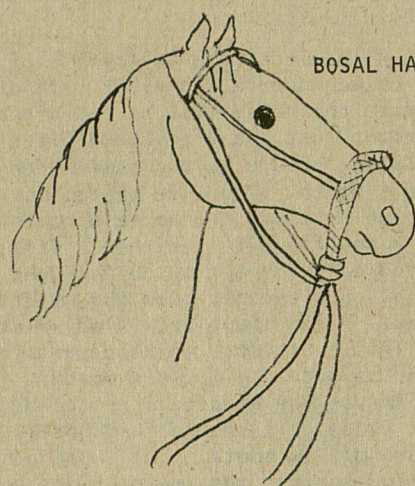
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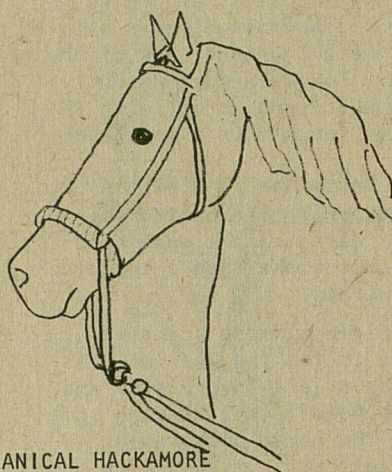
English Double-reigned Bridle
Pelham



Western Bridle



BOSAL HACKAMORE



MECHANICAL HACKAMORE

same time. I trained show horses to go in double bridles. Used properly the double bridle produces an elegant, refined head carriage. It takes some time to learn how to use both bits without getting the horse totally confused.

There are endless variations on the basic snaffle and curb bits. Going to a tack shop and looking at all that stuff will boggle your mind. There's a kind of bit to suit almost every horse. If your horse acts like his/her mouth is uncomfortable, if s/he slobbers and yawns and puts his/her tongue over the bit, you know something's wrong. Try another bit. Try as many bits as you can until you find something suitable.

If you are heavy-handed though, or your horse has developed a very hard mouth, don't look for a special bit that will cure all your problems. Bits are important but so is the way you use them. Also don't use an aluminum bit. It will dry out the horse's mouth and tastes awful (try it yourself!).

Hackamores: The hackamore is a bitless bridle. It is handy for training young horses and for those who have been hurt by a bit and are afraid or uncontrollable with a bit.

The bosal type hackamore is a rawhide plaited noseband with rope reins attached. The mechanical hackamore has a noseband, shanks like a curb bit, and a curb chain or strap.

Tiedowns: Martingales, or tiedowns, are designed for a high-headed horse, to keep its head at a balanced level.

The standing martingale is a simple strap

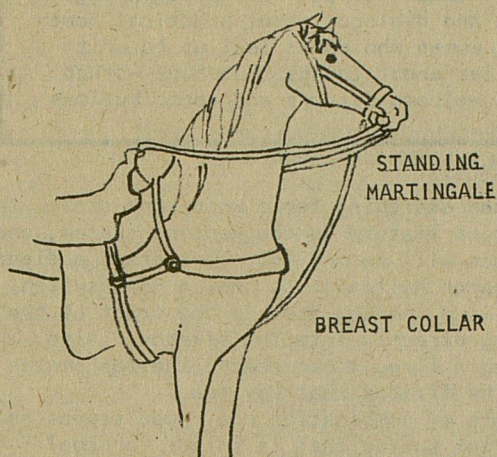
running from the noseband, down between the horse's front legs and attaching to the cinch. I would use it only as a last resort on a horse that throws its head a lot. People who play polo or gymkhana games tend to use martingales. They have to make so many fast turns and stops the horses usually get their heads way up high. When you first put a standing martingale on a horse, lead the horse around some first and let it get used to the restraint before you start riding.

Never take a horse swimming in a martingale. My friend Bo says he knows several incidents of horses drowning that way. The horse gets into the water and can't get its head up to breathe and panics. I think it would be real difficult to undo a martingale on a panicked horse in three feet of water.

The running martingale is on the same principle only there's more give and take as the reins go through rings that attach to straps that come up from the girth. The horse can raise and lower its head to some extent.

Draw reins go from the buckles of the girth, up through the bit and back to the rider's hands. They are generally used in conjunction with another set of reins that go directly from the bit to the rider's hands. Draw reins are only brought into play when the horse tosses its head.

The breast-collar is not a tiedown, it's just an aid to keeping the saddle in place. My little mustang mare had a narrow rib-cage and the saddle would slip back on her when we went up steep hills. I made a breast collar and lined it with sheepskin and that solved the problem.



This is all really general information on tack. I haven't mentioned driving harness or vehicles, or training equipment because I plan to deal with these things in subsequent issues.

Condition and Care of Tack: The condition of your gear is super important, not only for the comfort of your horse but for safety. Particular stress points are reins, stirrups and girth straps. If any one of these breaks on you when you are working at high speed it could mean a bad wreck. I knew of a woman who rode jumping horses. A rein broke just as she was coming to the jump. The sudden change of tension at high speed caused the horse to flip around crashing broadside into the jump and the woman was killed.

Look over your tack before you ride, and clean it when you're done. The best way to clean leather is with a damp (not wet) sponge. You can use saddle soap but wipe it off afterwards.

There's some stuff available at feed and tack shops called Lexol. I don't know what's in it but it sure works wonders on stiff old leather. I use it on all my equipment about once a month, and more if I'm trying to restore something old.

For brand-new leather that is stiff and still light-tan colored, use neatsfoot oil. Rub it in repeatedly until the leather darkens. This softens and waterproofs it, prevents cracking and prolongs the life of the leather tenfold. But don't use neatsfoot on old leather. Use Lexol. Neatsfoot seems to make old leather rot faster.

If anything shows signs of cracking or

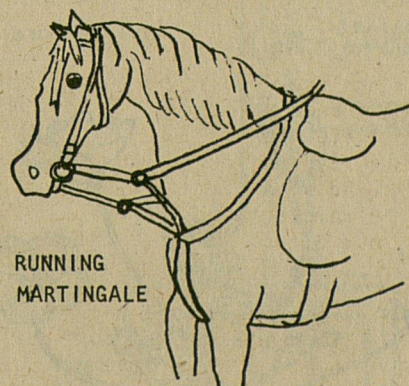
tearing, replace it, don't take a chance. Fix it or take it to somebody who can fix it before you have an accident.

As a final note after all this talk about paraphernalia, I would say the less of it you need the better. If you are a good rider and/or your horse is well mannered you can ride bare-back with a halter and rope. Of course, it's nice to have a saddle. It's more comfortable if you are going to be mounted all day. It gives you a place to stick your feet and something to which to tie your stuff (sleeping bag, saddlebags, rope, etc.). Riding a horse with a pack on your back is a drag.

But the more straps and contraptions you have, the longer it takes to put it all on the horse and the more cluttered the poor horse is. It's also better to rely more on your skill than on mechanical contrivances. So before you add another piece of gear, think about whether you truly need it or if it's just a fetish. If your horse goes OK with what you have, why complicate matters?

Among some people who ride in shows and spend lots of money on equipment, there are fads. All of a sudden people will be changing to a new type of saddle or bit, then the style will change again and some other kind of bit will be real big.

The main thing with horses is to have a good time and not hurt the horse. If you have all the money to buy all these little gimmicks and gadgets and fads and fetishes and still keep your horse fed and healthy, then far out. That could be a lot of fun too. Happy trails. ♀



'Farm Notes. Farm Notes.

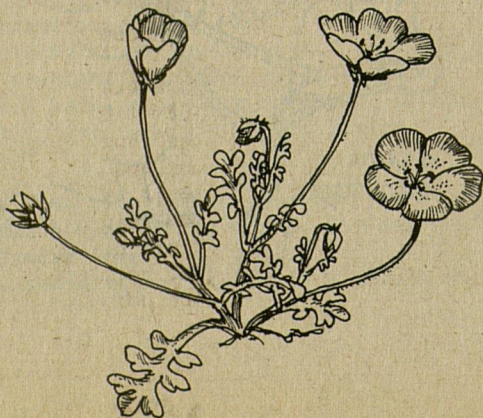
This space is for comments on practical articles which have appeared in COUNTRY WOMEN, questions about practical matters for other readers to answer, and short notes and articles which don't fit into our usual format. We're beginning this column because we want a place for feedback and dialogue about practical homesteading information. We also want to encourage women who don't feel up to writing a whole article to send us letters with stories about things that have worked well for you or problems you need help with. We welcome letters and contributions to this column!

GEESE

I want to tell you about my experiences with geese. We got four newly hatched goslings on June 16. What incredible creatures geese are - so sociable when new. For the first week when they are open to imprinting it is best to go talk to them 5 or 6 times a day. We ended up sitting in the pen with them for long periods. They are the only animals we buy feed for. They must have a non-medicated starter. Within two weeks, they were eating grain and fresh alfalfa and grass cuttings. By their third week, they spent all day and night out. They don't seem to feel a need to go inside at night. In fact they began to sleep right out side the kitchen door. We were all mama to them. Except for a little grain as a treat which they would eat out of my hand, all they need is free access to drinking water and grass. They now weigh 15 lbs. apiece - there are two ganders and two geese. One gander will be Xmas dinner and the remaining three will form the start of a continuing flock. The cross breeds are not as prone to pairing. One gander will take 2 or 3 mates. It's the Canada goose who mates for life.

The first laying season they are not very fertile - but by the second year they should be able to reproduce well. Now that it's winter here we keep them penned with a deep layer of straw. A ration of grain and lots of warm water is all they need. They don't mind the cold or snow.

Leni Ashmore



WOOD STOVES

When searching for a wood cook stove, the most important feature is the venting system, and the way wood will be put in. I've drawn a diagram of my Monarch Malleable to show a good system. There is a loading door in the front of the stove opening directly into the firebox. Also, when setting a fire, I can remove the top plates and fill the firebox that way too.

Lots of combination coal-wood stoves have a different set-up that is better for coal - you must open one large door in the front, and then another door to the firebox. No good. Takes too long to load in. (It's okay for coal I guess since you don't have to load very often, and the outer door makes things look nice and neat.)

Then the vents. My stove has a front vent right below the loading door, which automatically works a back vent too. It has a side vent which looks directly into the firebox. Finally there's the damper which you install in your stovepipe. Once you learn to work all these vents and the oven lever, you have a fantastically versatile piece of equipment.

Try to get a stove with all these vents. The stove lever is important too. Other hints when choosing a stove: don't buy one that has only major broken iron parts. Too hard to repair. If your stove has a water reservoir at the right, it's wonderful. Doesn't matter, though, mine doesn't, so I just keep a big pan full of water on the back of the stove.

Installing the stove

Yes, two women who lift with straight back and take the first push with their legs can carry an iron stove (with all removable pieces removed.) It's easier with four. When you get it inside where you want it, put a level on the top of it, and stick shims (small pieces of wood or whatever) in where needed until the top is level in both directions, side-to-side and front-to-back. This is worth doing, as later on things will cook evenly...

Use blue regular 6" stove pipe. You should install a section with a damper in it right above your stove. There are all kinds of stove pipe pieces you can buy to turn corners, go from 7" to 6" etc., until your stove pipe reaches the chimney. There is furnace cement you can use to cement all the parts once they fit together right.

Farm Notes • Farm Notes •

Hopefully you have a good tight chimney that goes up beyond the peak of your roof, because that makes for a good draw. Now your stove is ready to be fired up.

Wood and making a good fire

To start a fire in the stove: first I open all the vents - side vent, front-and-back vents, damper open. Check your damper to understand it (peer inside). Open means the inside circle of metal is turned up so smoke can easily go up the pipe. Closed means the circle is turned to close up the pipe to keep the hot air down.

The oven lever should be set so that the fire will draw directly out into the stove pipe. See my diagram. You may have to take off your top stove plates to see which way is which for your stove. There are two outlets into the stove pipe, at the back of your stove, marked A and B in the diagram. In my stove, when the lever is down, the top outlet is open, and this is the best for starting a fire, because the fire can be drawn most easily into the stove pipe and up the chimney. Later, when the stove is hot, you can "turn the oven on" by pulling this lever, which shuts this outlet and makes the fire go all around the oven and out the lower outlet (B), thus heating up the oven from all sides.

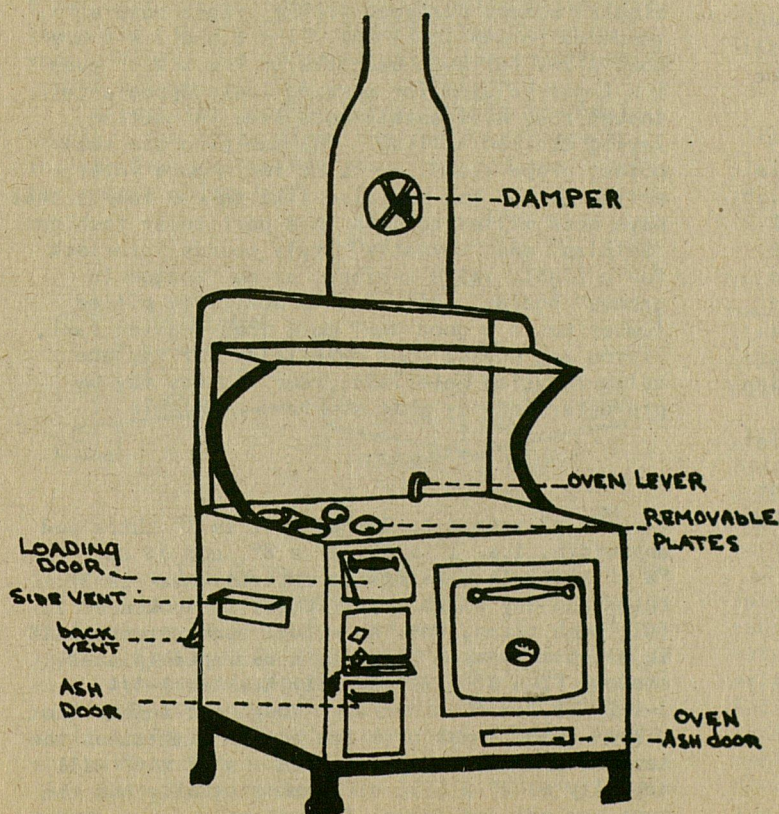
When the stove is going well, first I turn

the damper down, to keep the hot air in the stove. Add some wood. Then pull (or push) the oven lever to make the hot air circulate all through the stove. Do a few things...add wood (big wood). When the stove is really hot, shut all vents and it'll stay hot and a pretty even temperature for long periods, and from this point on you put in the biggest pieces of wood you can, and check the fire every 20 minutes or so.

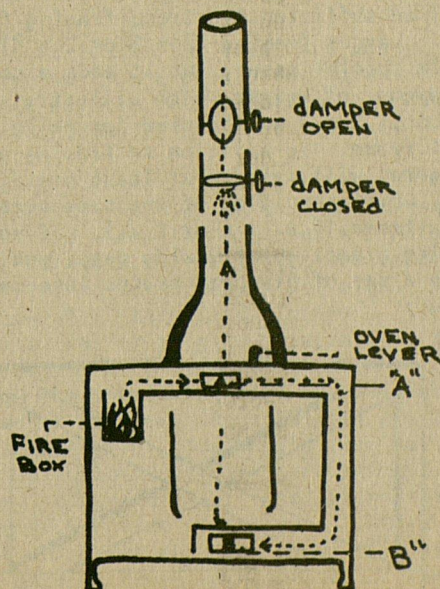
Wood stoves are amazingly good stoves to cook on. Once a stove is going, you have a variety of heats, very hot over the firebox, cooler toward the right side. I personally never take the top plates out to put a pot directly over the fire - it doesn't seem necessary. I use iron pots and pans a lot, and try to put all the pots I'm going to use, plus water to boil, on the stove when I start the fire, so when I begin to cook, everything's warmed up. Canning with a pressure cooker is easy...baking is majestic. Fudge never burns. Souffles puff. You can make tortillas on the stove top itself (adds a little iron to your diet).

The queen of wood stoves is the Home Comfort, with its warming ovens above and its scrolly chrome decoration. But my plain old yellow Monarch Malleable is just as good, a fine object, warms you while it cooks your dinner.

Mahala



FIRE draws to OUTLET A
IF OVEN LEVER CLOSED (down)
IF up, FIRE HAS TO go AROUND
OVEN AND OUT OUTLET B



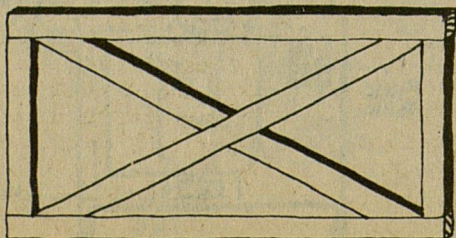
don't fence me in:

GATE MAKING

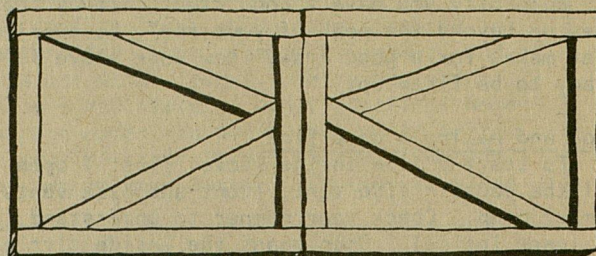
Whether you are fencing a garden, enclosing a pasture, or just hoping to protect some flowers around your house from free-roaming chickens, building a gate is a project you may find yourself facing. Gates are simple to build and are a good introduction to carpentry. With a little extra thought and work, a gate can be beautiful as well as sturdy and useful. A carefully constructed gate should last many, many years, amply rewarding an afternoon's labor and a relatively small investment.

The first step in gate building is to plan out the entire process, deciding what materials (lumber and hardware) you will need, and what type of gate best suits the situation. Any gate that you build will consist of two basic member types: the framing or "rails", and the siding. The frame is usually built of wood and the siding may be wood or wire. The wood frame and wire gate is quickly built, cheap, and very light weight. It works well as a garden or poultry yard gate. A wood-sided gate will be stronger and more durable, with more general uses. You will usually want to use 1 x material for siding, and have a choice of 1 x or 2 x for the framing.*

Smaller gates (3' or so in width and 3'-4' in height) may be built entirely of 1 x material; larger gates (over 3' in width; over 4' in height) will need a stronger frame of 2 x material. 2 x 4 will be sufficiently strong framing for most gates. Larger framing (2 x 6 or 2 x 8) may be used in special cases, but it adds a considerable amount of weight which will strain hinges and post. 2 x 3 may be used for an intermediate weight frame. In addition to framing and siding, most gates will require at least one diagonal brace, which should be of the same size material as the frame (i.e. 1 x or 2 x). If you are building a particularly wide gate, you may want to use a set of diagonal braces intersecting one another:



For a pair of wide gates (at the entrance to your farm, for example), you might like to run the braces to form a pattern:



In calculating the amount of material you will need, it helps to sketch out your gate to approximate scale so that you can see all of the framing, and see how the gate will look when it is put together.

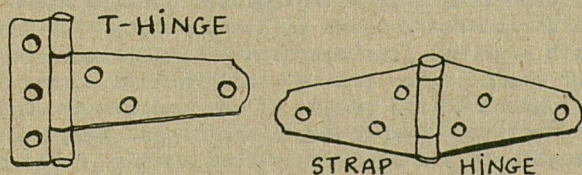
If you are planning to run your siding vertically (generally most pleasing to the eye), you should plan to extend the siding an inch or two above the top rail and below the bottom rail. How closely you space your siding is a matter of gate purpose and aesthetics. If your gate leads to an animal pen or pasture, be careful to space the siding so that an animal can't get its hoof caught. If you are fencing in a garden, don't leave enough space for ground squirrels or rabbits to squeeze in. You might like to use boards of varying widths for a nice affect, or run siding in a diagonal or herringbone pattern. Be cautious about choosing very wide (1 x 12 or bigger) boards for your siding: these have a tendency to cup (curl up). 1 x 6 and 1 x 8 are good sizes for most gate siding. 1 x 4 or even 1 x 2 may be used for more delicate appearance, though they will entail more time in cutting, laying out and nailing. You can also use small poles, grape stakes or lathe for a more interesting gate. You may also like to use boards that have been milled to join in a particular fashion. "Shiplap" and "V-Rustic" style boards interlock for a tight, solid surface, as do "tongue in groove" boards. All of this specially milled lumber costs a good deal more than regular 1 x, if you are buying your materials. If you are using recycled materials, your choices may be pre-determined by what you have available.

*1 x" refers to lumber that is 1" thick and any width, i.e. 1" x 6", 1" x 8", and so on. "2 x", likewise, refers to material that is 2" thick and any width. New lumber is spoken of in full inch terms, but the actual measurements will be slightly less. That is, a surfaced (planed smooth) "2 x 4" will actually measure 1-3/4" x 3-1/2" or 1-3/4" x 3-1/4". Rough cut lumber (not planed smooth) may have its actual dimensions the same as its nominal dimensions - a "2 x 6" will actually be 2" x 6". Old lumber usually has the same nominal and actual dimensions.

If you are buying materials, you may have a choice of rough or surfaced lumber. Rough lumber is a little thicker, therefore slightly sturdier, than smooth or surfaced lumber. It is splintery, so it's a less desirable lumber to work with or live around. Usually it sells for a few cents per foot cheaper than surfaced lumber of the same size, grade and type. The type of lumber (i.e. species of wood) you choose for your gate will depend upon the area you live in. Choose a wood that weathers well and is known for durability outside. Some wood types tend to rot, crack, or warp faster than others. Douglas fir, cypress, pine, redwood and oak are recommended for gate building in the carpentry books I have. In my area, redwood and cedar are used for gates that will not be painted; Douglas fir is used if protective painting is done. If you are buying wood for your gate, choose a fairly inexpensive grade of wood. "Common" rather than "select" lumber is what you need. Avoid the lowest grade, really cheap, "bargain" lumber, as these "specials" are often virtually unuseable. If you have a local lumber store you trust, ask them to recommend the most suitable grade and type of lumber; if not, do some research beforehand (see references at end of article).

Next you should consider the nails and hardware that you will need. All nails that you use should be galvanized. These have a rust-resistant coating for outdoor use. They are almost twice as expensive as ungalvanized, interior-use nails, but are absolutely necessary. Buy box type nails (thinner shank) if you want less chance of your wood splitting, common type (thicker shank) for the sturdier nail. Usually, commons are used for rough framing, and box for finer work. Eight or ten penny nails (also written as 8d, 10d) will be good for fastening on your siding. Use 16 penny nails for constructing your 2 x frame.

Hinges for outdoor gates come in two basic styles. The strap hinge has two equal leaves, and the T-hinge has one long leaf and one smaller, rectangular leaf.

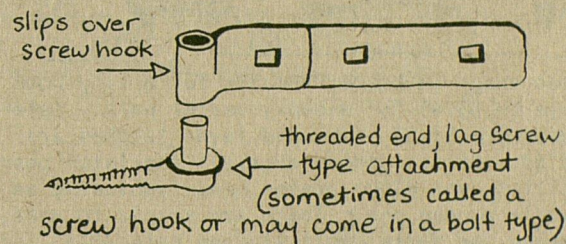


Generally, I find the T-hinge more suitable. The rectangular part is fastened to the post and fits perfectly on a 4" or 6" wide post. The longer leaf is fastened to the gate. The strap hinge is used when you are fastening the gate to a broader surface - to your barn, for example, or to any solid surface. The elongated straps distribute the pull of the gate over a greater area, but they have to be bent around to fit onto most gate posts.

Hinges come in various sizes, weight and length. They will be stamped "light" or "heavy". Unless you are constructing a very delicate or extra-small gate, choose the "heavy" weight hinge for wooden gates. A six inch hinge will support a wood frame, wood sided gate in the 3' wide, 3' or 4' high size range. You will usually have a choice of buying your hinges pre-packaged with screws, or buying hinges and screws separately. It's better to buy them separately so that you can choose the length of screw that will fit the material you are building with. Normally, your hinges should be attached to your gate where the horizontal rails run. Choose a screw size that will not extend all the way through your siding and rail. You can go to bolts if you want an extra-strong gate/hinge connection, but these are usually not necessary unless it's a very heavy gate. The screws that attach your hinge to your post should be long enough (an inch to an inch and a quarter for most medium sized gates) to make a strong attachment. You may want to use lag screws here if your gate is heavy. Always choose zinc-plated or other guaranteed rust-resistant hinges for your gates.

If you want a gate that will automatically swing shut after you, you can buy "spring loaded" hinges. They are a bit more expensive and not as generally available, but very useful where a gate gets a lot of traffic and not enough attention to closing. You can create your own self-closing gate with an inexpensive spring or home-made weight/pulley system.

If you'd like a gate that can be easily, temporarily removed (for whatever purpose?), there is a type of strap hinge which looks like this:



The strap is bolted to the gate, and the screw hook is attached to the post. The gate may be lifted on and off the hook attachments. These hinges are particularly good for very wide, heavy gates.

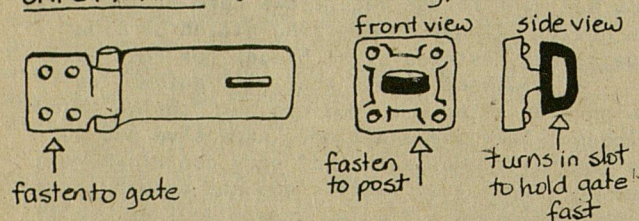
Ornamental hinges in black or brass are available for very special gates. These usually run two to three times the price of a similar-size "plain" hinge - but as hinges are priced in the two to five dollar bracket, you might like to splurge on that fancy garden gate...

The final matter in gate materials is the latch. There are many types to choose from, ranging from the simple hook and eye to elaborate ornamental handles. Most latches are surprisingly inexpensive. You should pick out a latch that is suitable to your gate and its projected uses. Ring and lever type latches may be opened from either side of the gate. There is a thumb latch which can only be installed when the top of the gate is flush with the top of the

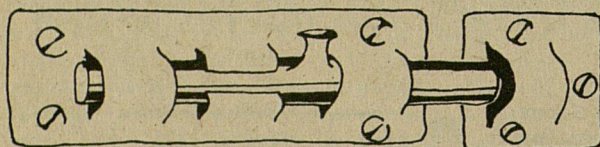
cont.

post. Barrel bolts (slide across and flip to lock in position) can only be opened from one side of the gate, or by reaching over, so that they are limited in use to low gates. Ring and lever latches and barrel bolts can be opened by a curious and determined animal - so beware! One of the best latches for general farm use is the simple "safety hasp". One style of safety hasp has a turning part which is stiff enough to defeat the most clever goat - and for extra security you can clip a little toggle switch through it. Another style has a fixed part that must be secured with a toggle switch or padlock. These hasps come in many sizes and strengths. They are inexpensive, easy to install, durable and strong. Another good all-purpose latch is the spring-loaded hook and eye. This simple device will keep your animals mystified and enclosed. Unfortunately, I've only been able to find them in very light weight, tiny sizes.

SAFETY HASP with swivel-type latch



BARREL BOLT



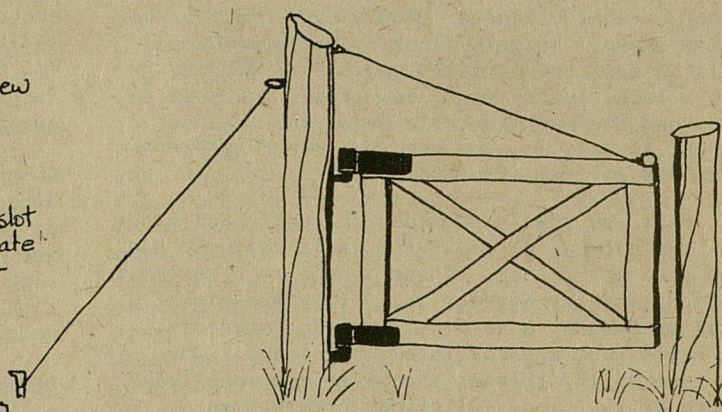
Latches range in price from 39¢ for a tiny hook and eye to \$3.49 for a heavy barrel bolt. Safety hasps are \$1-\$3; ring and lever latches are about \$3. After looking over all the latch possibilities, you might prefer hand-fashioning an old-style wooden one. These are simple to make, following the barrel bolt sliding principle, and look very handsome on a handmade wooden gate.

With lumber, latch, hinges and nails gathered or bought, you are ready to build and hang your gate. The tools you will need will probably be: a hammer, a saw (hand or power), a combination square, a tape measure, a pencil and a level (for checking plumb of posts). Optional tools may be: a bevel for setting angle cuts, a coping saw or jig saw for making curved gate tops, a surform for rounding post tops or smoothing cuts, and a drill or brace and bit for setting screws or bolts. Sawhorses or a work bench and a clear, fairly level work area should complete requirements. You will probably find that building and hanging your gate takes less time than gathering materials!

Before you begin, check your proposed gate posts for plumb (they should be level vertically), and see that they are well set (a post that gives when you pull on it should be re-set). If your posts are badly out of plumb, you should dig them up and re-set them. The post that the gate will

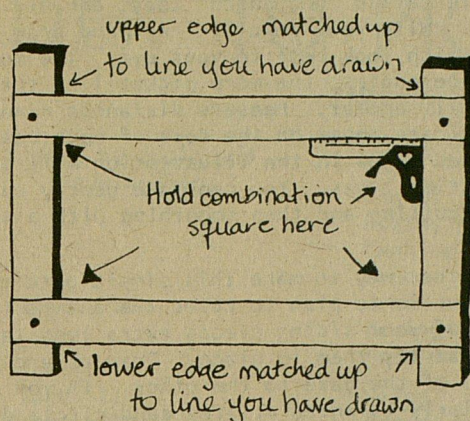
be hinged to is subject to a lot of strain and should be particularly strong. Both posts should be firmly tamped in place with gravel and earth, or set in concrete. They should sit squarely opposite one another. You may want to run diagonal braces to the next posts in line for additional support. Usually, you will want your posts to be flush with the top of your gate or to run a foot or eight inches above the gate. If you are planning to hang an extra-heavy gate, you might want to put in an extra-tall gate post so that you can run a supporting diagonal cable or wire to take strain off of the hinges. In this case it is a good idea to also brace the post in the opposite direction.

Cables or wires with plate-type attachments and turn-down tightening devices are available for this purpose.

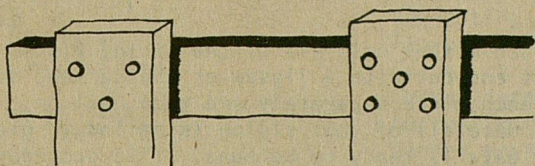


Cables or wires with plate-type attachments and turn-down tightening devices are available for this purpose

A simple gate to construct is one made entirely of 1 x material. It is lightweight but sturdy, and can be used in many places. The vertical boards at either edge of the gate serve a dual purpose as siding and vertical rails. This type of gate looks a little rough on the back as nails come through the 1 x rails and are clinched over. It will look better with age (nails and boards seem to blend together). To begin, cut the four boards which will serve as your frame. The vertical rails should be cut equivalent to the height of your gate. Remember that you have to leave ample space beneath the gate to let it swing - four to six inches will usually do (more if the ground is uneven; less if you are penning small creatures in or out). Take each board and mark a line two inches (this is arbitrary - choose whatever looks good to your eye) from each end. Make all your cuts and lines square, using the combination square, so that things will fit together well. The two lines on each board will help you to place your horizontal rails. You will need a half inch to an inch on each side of your gate to allow it to swing. Your two horizontal rails, then, should be cut an inch or two inches shorter than the distance between your two posts. Lay out your four framing boards as shown on the next page.

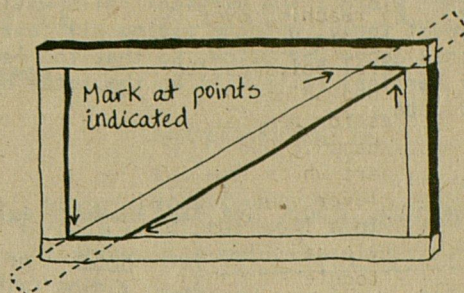


Square everything up by placing your combination square in each interior corner and place one small (4d or 1-1/2" long - or smaller) in the center of each joint as shown. At this point your frame is roughly held together but everything can still pivot. Turn the frame over. You will now be nailing from the front of the gate, and can nail each corner in place. Check your square as you go, using the combination square as shown. Nail three 8d or 10d nails per corner in a triangle, or five nails in an "H" pattern.



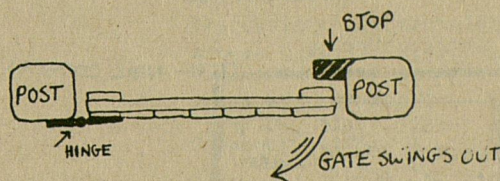
You should drive these nails through both pieces of wood and into the ground. With your frame nailed together, you can fill in with your other vertical pieces. Use a template to keep an equal space between the boards as you set them. If you have to rip some of your boards to fit the width/spacing of your gate, plan ahead to place them in a symmetrical pattern. When all of your boards are nailed in place, turn the gate over and clinch your nails. Clinching (banging them over flat) greatly increases the holding power of the nails and hence the sturdiness of the gate. Dalzell's Carpentry book (see pg 62) suggests clinching the nails perpendicular to the grain of the wood.

Next you should measure and mark a board to serve as a diagonal brace. Always run your brace from the bottom of the side the hinges will go on to the top of the side opposite the hinges. This will help to counter the gate's tendency to sag and pull off of its hinges. Use your bevel to get the correct angles on your diagonal, or simply lay the board in place as shown and mark at points indicated. Connect points to give your cutting line, and you should have a perfectly angled, snug fit.



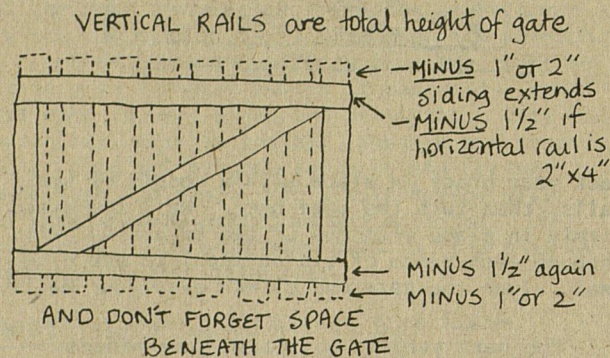
Tack your brace in place with a couple of small nails, then turn the gate over. Nail the brace firmly in place with one or two 8d or 10d nails through each piece of siding and into the diagonal. Turn the gate and clinch over your nails.

The next step is to attach your hinges. They should be attached to the front side of the gate, and positioned so that they are fastened through into the top and bottom rails. Now you can stand your gate in place, putting it up on blocks or wood scraps to allow swing-space below. Remember to leave a half inch or so between your gate and your post. Make sure this space is consistent from top to bottom so that the gate hangs fairly level and plumb. Fasten your hinges to the post and remove the blocks - your gate should swing freely. The final step is to install your latch and, if you like, put on a stop for the gate. A stop is a strip of wood fastened to the post opposite the hinges. It runs vertically just behind the edge of the gate, and must be wide enough to keep the gate from swinging in past the post and pulling off its hinges. Viewed from above, the stop is here:



A second type of gate is built with a heavier frame, and is more versatile and sturdier. You will probably want to use 2 x 4 for your frame, and 1 x for siding. You can run your siding diagonally or in a fancy pattern. If you want a simple wire and wood gate, follow frame-building instructions and attach wire instead of siding. You can substitute light poles or 2 x 3 material for your framing. The 2 x frame gate is cleaner appearing than the previously-discussed gate because the nails which hold the siding do not extend through beyond the rails. The procedure in building is basically the same as that just described, with a few changes. cont.

First, cut your horizontal rails to the desired gate width. The vertical rails will fit between these, and the siding will extend a few inches above and below, so that the length of your vertical rails will be the total height of your gate.

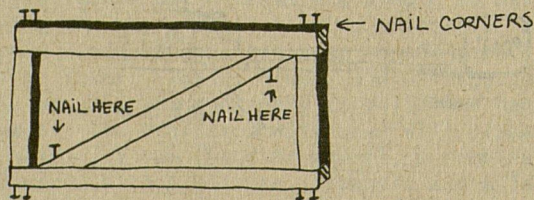


Compute out and cut your two vertical rails. If all of your cuts are square, you can lay out your frame and nail it together (with 16d nails) - two nails per corner should be enough.

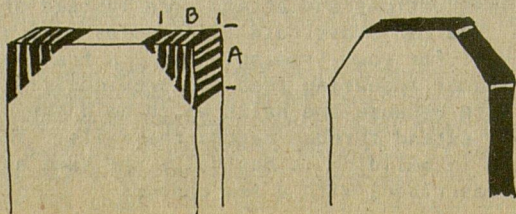
The joint you have created is a simple butt joint. You can make a half lap joint here, which is harder to make but is considered much stronger.

Wilson's carpentry book (see below) has a very clear description of this joint, or you can have a carpenter friend show you. I've always found the butt joint to be plenty strong except when I've used poles. Here, a half lap joint is almost necessary because the curved poles can't be nailed tightly.

The next step is to lay your diagonal in place, mark and cut it. It may be nailed on with 8d or 10d nails placed as shown.

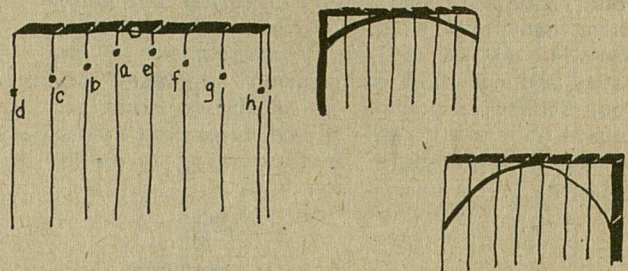


Now you are ready to cut and attach your siding. You might like to make the gate a little fancier by shaping the tops:



These are called "dog eared" tops, and are easily created. With your pencil, free-hand draw the angles which look best to your eye. The more severe the angles, the more picket-like the boards will appear. Measure distances A and B, and duplicate these on the tops of each board. The dotted lines in the illustration will become your cutting lines. You can make gently curved tops by cutting and then smoothing with a surf-form.

Another way to make this simple gate more attractive is to plan to curve the entire top. Cut all of your siding pieces extra long (a foot or so) and lay them in place. Draw an arc from one side of the gate to the other. If you aren't particularly talented at free-hand circle drawing, make it easy for yourself as follows. Make the center of your middle board the high point of your arc. In progressive steps, drop down a half inch (or whatever) for points a-d and e-h. Connect all points with a nice relaxed line and you'll have your arc.



You can either nail all of the siding pieces on first and cut with a jigsaw or coping saw, or cut each piece separately and then nail on.

Once all of your siding is nailed in place, your gate is ready to be hung. This procedure is exactly the same as described for the first gate.

Making a simple door is much the same as building a gate, so that you can proceed from pasture gates to barn doors - and so on.... Much of what you learn building gates can be a foundation for your carpentry skills - choosing materials, handling tools, being patient and accurate, and planning things out. Your gate might be an opening to a whole new (pre-) occupation!

Some carpentry books with relevant information:

Practical House Carpentry by J. Douglas Wilson. McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc. 1957 paperback costs \$2.95. Available through Whole Earth Co. One of the clearest general carpentry books I've seen.

Repairing and Remodeling Guide for Home Interiors by J. Ralph Dalzell. McGraw-Hill,

1973. Hardback costs \$7.95. Very good section on woods and another good one on fasteners. The rest is geared toward remodeling, but these two sections are well worth reading for general carpentry.

Fences and Gates is a Sunset book put out by Lane Magazine and Book Co. It's inexpensive (\$1.95) and has a lot of photographs of different styles of gates. Fairly decent basic workbook. ♀

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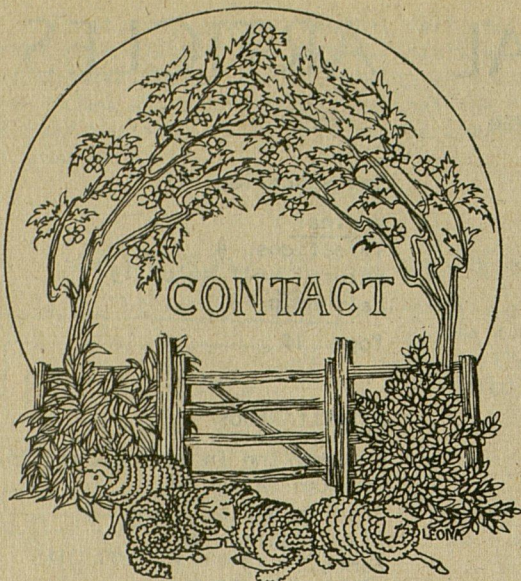
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In the past year over one hundred women have come together and worked to find ways for women to be in the country other than by having money or close friends with money. The Oregon Women's Landtrust has bought 147 acres near Canyonville (Southern Oregon), of which 80 is pastureland, complete with a large house, barns and spring. The land will be used for ceremonial grounds, camping, country retreat, and as limited residential land. We want to acquire land collectively, thus eliminating owner/tenant power divisions among us. We want to be stewards of the land, treating her not as a commodity but as a full partner and guide in this exploration of who we are. We have raised enough money for the down payment; the total cost is \$65,000 plus interest. We're hoping to pay this off as soon as possible in order to buy more and varied pieces of land. Write if you wish to schedule a speaker, a caravan stop or a benefit in your area. Come and see the land! Write to: Oregon Women's Land P.O. Box 1713 Eugene, Oregon 97401.

70 acres of beautiful wilderness in Oklahoma is opening soon to accomodate women who are seeking a space on the land working together with other women in areas of recreation, farming and general growing, camping, and/or year-round living. Women in residence will maintain their own shelter and be responsible for their own life-support needs. A community garden will be the major food source. Monthly rate for any number of days spent on the land is \$5.00, payable on or before each new moon. Money is being raised to expedite the negotiations. We are a non-profit association and any donation is tax-exempt. Write to: Sisters of Diana, Inc. P.O. Box 2863, Norman, Oklahoma 73070.

I'm putting together a Women's Carpentry Book and would like to contact other women who want to contribute. I envision a book that will cover the basics of carpentry pretty thoroughly - from choosing and using tools to actually building a structure. Whether you're a professional carpenter or a first-time builder, if you have something you'd like to share, please write! I'd like longer articles on specific matters (i.e. 'how to frame in and hang a window') and short pieces on special tools you've discovered, etc. I'd also like photographs by women of women building and of women-built structures and things. This book should be a celebration for us all and an alternative to all of those "he's" in existing carpentry books! I do professional carpentry for a living and co-authored the Country Women "Handbook." Will be able to pay for all articles and photographs used. Please send material, photographs, questions, etc. to: Jeanne Tetrault, P.O.Box 51, Albion, Calif 95410

Collections of the Women's History Library (now dispersed) have been published on micro-film by the Women's History Research Center of Berkeley, Calif. WOMEN & HEALTH/MENTAL HEALTH (14 reels, \$32/reel), WOMEN & LAW (40 reels, \$32/reel), and HERSTORY (women's serials, 90 reels, \$28/reel). Urge your library to order these extraordinary resources! Write or call collect about the special savings to the Center's distributor, Research Publications, 12 Lunar Drive, Woodbridge, Conn. 06525, attn: Tina Stableford.

Lady-Unique-Inclination-of-the-Night - A Journal of the Goddess. Subject is women and religion reflected in psychology, archeology, poetry, mythology, folklore, history, science. Articles desired anytime. First issue, Summer, 1976. P.O. Box 803 New Brunswick, New Jersey 08903.

HERESIES: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics. We believe that what is commonly called art can have a political impact, and that in the making of art and of all cultural artifacts our identities as women play a distinct role. We hope that Heresies will stimulate dialogue around radical political and esthetic theory, and encourage the writing of the history of femina sapiens. It will be a place where diversity can be articulated. \$25-\$50 will be paid for articles. For information, write: P.O. Box 766, Canal Street Station, New York, N.Y. 10013.

COUNTRY WOMEN still seeking pen and ink drawings, wood or linoleum block prints, etchings, engravings, sumi brush drawings, and black and white photographs. Clear crisp reproduceable material is what we need. Please put your name and address on the back of each graphic you send.

FUTURE ISSUES

CITY/COUNTRY, COUNTRY/CITY What motivates the movement between them? Feelings, problems, experiences while in transition; Possibilities of developing real connections between them (Deadline - October 25)

CLASS: Your Values, prejudices, ethics as related to class. Does change of lifestyle change your class realities? Functions of class in society. (Deadline - November 25)

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, women and women, in society.

We welcome articles and poems for these issues. We also are in serious need of graphics and photographs.

BACK ISSUES

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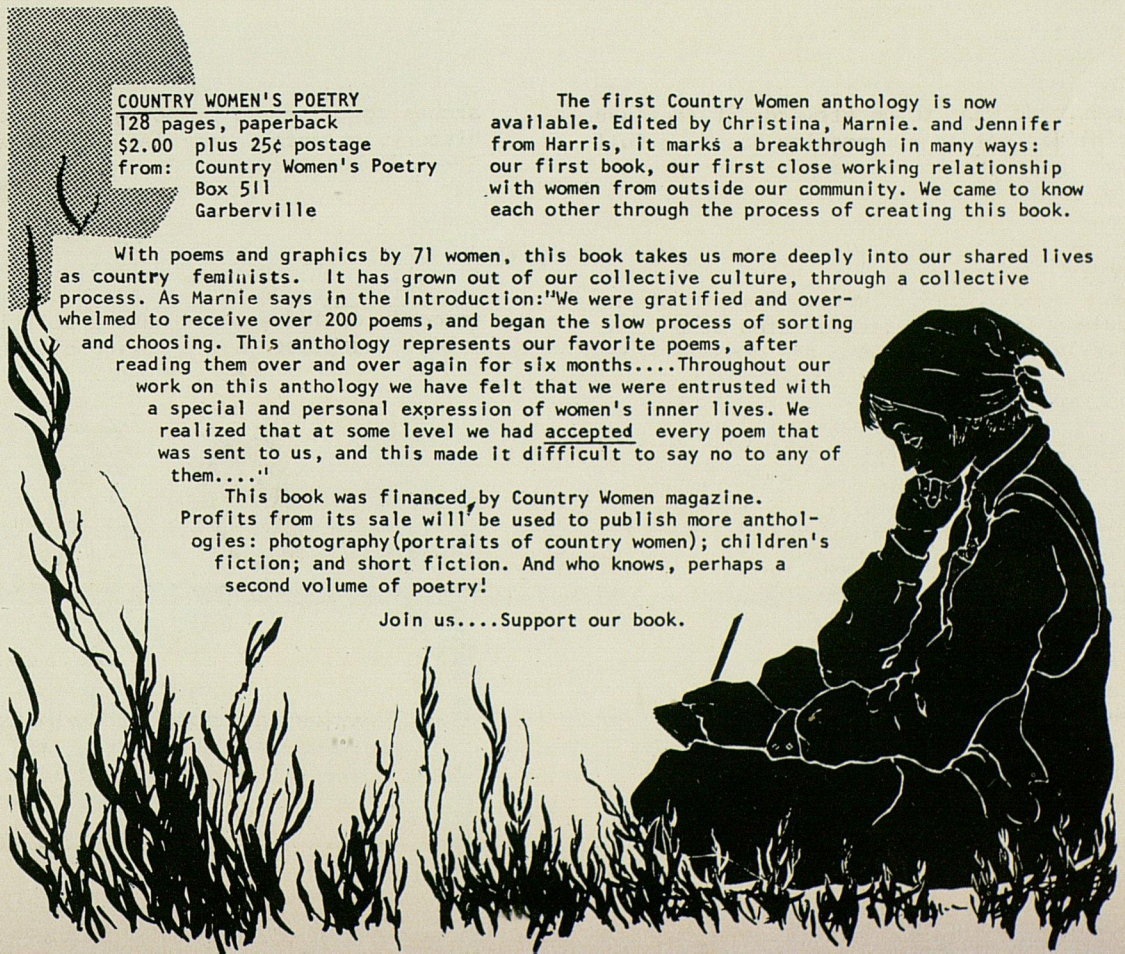
COUNTRY WOMEN'S POETRY
128 pages, paperback
\$2.00 plus 25¢ postage
from: Country Women's Poetry
Box 511
Garberville

The first Country Women anthology is now available. Edited by Christina, Marnie, and Jennifer from Harris, it marks a breakthrough in many ways: our first book, our first close working relationship with women from outside our community. We came to know each other through the process of creating this book.

With poems and graphics by 71 women, this book takes us more deeply into our shared lives as country feminists. It has grown out of our collective culture, through a collective process. As Marnie says in the Introduction: "We were gratified and overwhelmed to receive over 200 poems, and began the slow process of sorting and choosing. This anthology represents our favorite poems, after reading them over and over again for six months....Throughout our work on this anthology we have felt that we were entrusted with a special and personal expression of women's inner lives. We realized that at some level we had accepted every poem that was sent to us, and this made it difficult to say no to any of them...."

This book was financed by Country Women magazine. Profits from its sale will be used to publish more anthologies: photography (portraits of country women); children's fiction; and short fiction. And who knows, perhaps a second volume of poetry!

Join us....Support our book.



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