

LIVING ALTERNATIVES

75¢

SPECIAL ISSUE

COUNTRY
WOMEN

NO. VI

Gay Women's Resource Cntr.
c/o University YWCA
4224 University Way N.E.
Seattle, Washington 98105

noncirculating

[June 1973]



- 2 Reflections...Barbara, Carol, Kathy, Tania of Covelo
6 Legacy...River
8 Poem...Meg Jarvis
9 Poem...Lynda Koolish
10 Visions and Revisions...Jennifer Snow
18 On the Meadow...Bobbi Jones
19 Poem...Jean of Mt. Grove
20 A Room of my Own...Patsy Sun
21 Poem...Caroline Hall
22 Celibacy...Jean of Mt. Grove
23 Poem...Harriet Bye
24 Slings and Arrows...Harriet Bye
25 Knee Deep in Sexism...Star Knee Purple
27 Retrospective...Barbara
29 The Next Step...Jeanne Tetrault
35 Poems.. Meg Jarvis
36 Now What?...Slim
38 Am I My Sister's Daughter's Keeper...Jean
of Mt. Grove
40 Search for Harmonious Existence...Diney Woodsorrel
44 Poem...Kathryn Kilgore
46 Gardens: Watering...Leona
48 Building: Simple Siding...Collective
50 Alternative: Free Wood...Abby Marier
52 Book Review: Les Guerilleres...Anne Warner
54 Animals: Good Goat Keeping...Jeanne Tetrault
57 Country Skills: Cream Separator...Carmen Goodyear
58 Food: Cheese...Lynn Lorenzo
61 Tools: Changing the Oil...*
63 Reviews: Momma...River
Amazon Quarterly...Carmen Goodyear
64 Consciousness Raising...Catherine Ironwode

*We unfortunately lost the name of the writer of this article.
Please let us know who you are so we can credit you in the
next issue.

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

Copyright, June 1973, Country Women
Publications. This material free on
request to feminist publications.
We are on file at Women's History
Archives, 2525 Oak St., Berkeley,
Ca. and on microfilm at Bell&Howell
in Wooster, Ohio.

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

Published monthly

2nd class permit applied for,
Albion, Cal. 95410
Postage paid at Albion, ca. 95410

Subscription to Country Women is \$7.00 for
twelve issues. Bulk rates and consignment sales
to stores. Please indicate which issue to begin
subscription with.

Collective for this issue: Arlene, Ellen, Harriet, Jeanne, Jenny, Leona, River
Sherry, Slim.

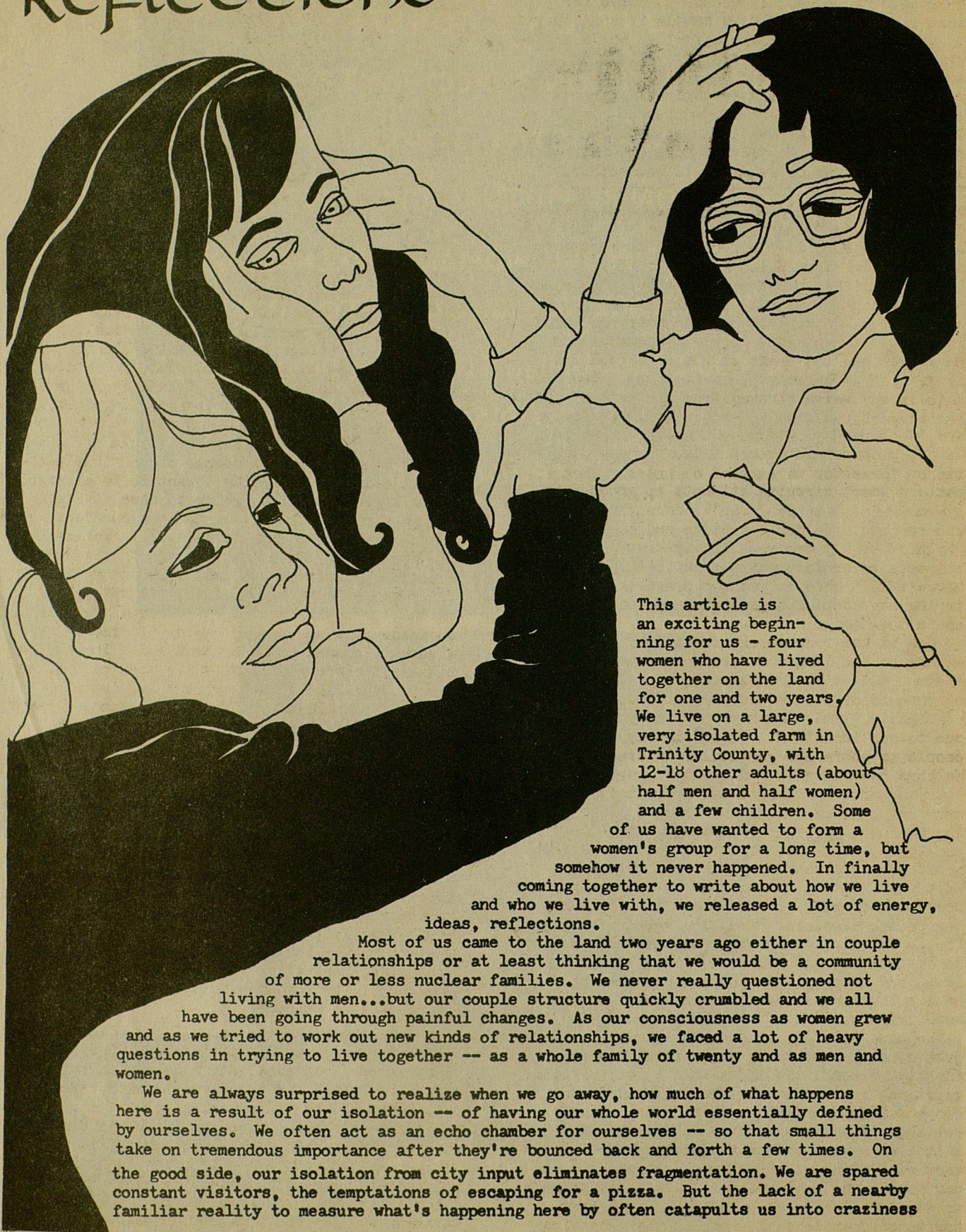
Help from: Carmen, Helen, Sally

WHY LIVE TOGETHER ?
IDEALISTIC VISION ? ACCIDENT ? NEED ?
WHY STAY TOGETHER ?
AFFECTION ? MUTUAL GROWTH ? INERTIA ?
HOW DOES YOUR WOMAN AWARENESS GROW
IN THE PLACE YOU CHOOSE TO LIVE ?
ARE YOU STRUGGLING TO BREAK DOWN ROLES
TO DISCOVER YOURSELF ?
ARE OTHERS STRUGGLING ...
OR MERELY VERBALLY SUPPORTIVE ?



WHAT IS IT WE'RE LEARNING LIVING
TOGETHER ?

REFLECTIONS



This article is an exciting beginning for us - four women who have lived together on the land for one and two years. We live on a large, very isolated farm in Trinity County, with 12-18 other adults (about half men and half women) and a few children. Some

of us have wanted to form a women's group for a long time, but somehow it never happened. In finally coming together to write about how we live and who we live with, we released a lot of energy, ideas, reflections.

Most of us came to the land two years ago either in couple relationships or at least thinking that we would be a community of more or less nuclear families. We never really questioned not living with men...but our couple structure quickly crumbled and we all have been going through painful changes. As our consciousness as women grew and as we tried to work out new kinds of relationships, we faced a lot of heavy questions in trying to live together -- as a whole family of twenty and as men and women.

We are always surprised to realize when we go away, how much of what happens here is a result of our isolation -- of having our whole world essentially defined by ourselves. We often act as an echo chamber for ourselves -- so that small things take on tremendous importance after they're bounced back and forth a few times. On the good side, our isolation from city input eliminates fragmentation. We are spared constant visitors, the temptations of escaping for a pizza. But the lack of a nearby familiar reality to measure what's happening here by often catapults us into craziness

and periodic crises. We become so sensitive here that the abrasiveness of the city becomes overwhelming to us. If we had to leave the womb of our land, could we handle it "out there?"

How do we become a whole family, while at the same time we frequently feel alienated from some of the men here and don't feel like relating to them at all -- especially when they don't seem to want to understand our liberation or their own? Living with men has slowed us in some ways from breaking down learned patterns of relating to each other. Too often we have reserved our heaviest or most intimate feelings for a man and maintained superficial relationships with the women we live with. This is changing now, but probably would have changed a lot sooner if there hadn't been men around. We are fuzzy about what kinds of relationships we want with the whole group. How close do we want to be with everyone here? In trying to achieve a 'perfect' community we no longer had the peace and calm to feel the land, to feel ourselves, to be happy. Perhaps this is why we've strayed from the path of our highest goals -- in order to live happily and function day by day. Since our group is large, people fall into shifting groups of two or three for warmth and openness. That pattern short circuits attempts at group closeness and in fact really accentuates the separations. We don't want to end up in a group of highly evolved individuals. Early attempts to explore group relationships here haven't felt good -- yet our present lack of trying may keep us drifting along, and we'll end up in the same old patterns.

One of the rude shocks for all of us after moving to the land and forming a community was that we all still felt lonely, even though surrounded by people who were supposed to be our family. This loneliness is only partially due to our isolation. We are lonely for people to share our particular interests with. We have never really had one unifying philosophy or wish to bring us all together. It's more our love of our land that ties us together. For a time everyone talked about being lonely and there was a tendency at first to feel the group wasn't measuring up if someone felt that way. But we've stopped blaming the group for the most part. Perhaps one is more aware of her cosmic aloneness here, living more simply. Though we all feel that way at times, it's easy to forget that and think everyone else is loved and happy. The stubborn presence of cosmic loneliness makes the want of a soulmate more intense.

We have all felt alone here sexually. There just doesn't seem to be much sexual energy floating around. So if we aren't in a physical relationship we often become oblivious to our own sexuality. Yoga, physical exercise help... but there's still something we miss there -- a lack of a warm and sensual atmosphere. Don't know really why it's that way -- maybe it's our upbringing, maybe we all have a lot of shit to work out there, maybe we just don't know how to be open to each other in that way without getting into an "involvement".



Tania

Dinner is over and I've retreated into my room again, to sit curled up in bed sucking my thumb. My little fire chugs along, a lamp and candle light my way and incense spices the warmth. This room and bed are my haven and the time spent here, in the evenings and early morning, is most precious. I'm never really lonely in here. It's where I have come to really treasure the integrity of sleeping alone.

I've been living in the country for a whole year now, on this commune. I came freaking out of my last monogamous relationship two years ago. I was sure only Kenny could stop my aching, but he wouldn't/couldn't. That left only me to make myself happy. After a couple of horrible weeks, I realized that if I didn't want to be miserable for a long time, I was going to have to start caring for myself. It was a conscious decision-- the most important one in my life I realize now. I had gone through a long string of "living-together" relationships, all based on my search for someone to take care of me, yet after the initial rush was over, I would become hostile, stagnant, and unhappy, dreaming of freedom. Always it seemed to be a black and white choice between freedom and love, while needing both so much. My decision that spring that I truly cared enough about myself to work at being happy led me that fall to an incredibly important extension of that decision -- to leave New York and head west to California in search of myself as a complete person.

Just the beginning of writing this has given birth to a real change. One really exciting thing is that four of us have started meeting together as women. And in going over what I want to write some important parts of myself are being made clear to me and I'm having an opportunity to create something out of those parts that I treasure. Sometimes I find myself feeling really isolated here and fall into old fantasies, forgetting where I'm really at and how good I feel about myself. Writing this is helping me to remember.

I started relating sexually to women not long after men: when I was fifteen. Several years later I got involved in a lesbian relationship that lasted for three years, with a really good woman who was into taking care of me. The roles were clearly defined as butch and femme, which felt alien to me. I was unhappy in my femme role, and had a lot of butch fantasies, but mostly I wanted to relate to women without roles. Instead I got involved in the anti-war movement and for the first time started to believe that men were human beings too. I found

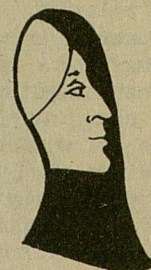
continued

that I wanted to relate sexually to them again, and felt that unless I actively sought out a gay trip there would be no women in my life who were sexually open to me. So I became passively bisexual, in fact relating only to men sexually for four years; Sometimes forgetting how I felt about women, sometimes fantasizing a lot, generally becoming more open about my feelings, yet always paranoid of frightening straight women I was close to.

Last spring, after a year of being on my own without a dependent relationship to gain my identity from, I was learning how to enjoy myself alone, how to live with myself. I had been out here for a couple months, and everything in my life was changing. I was moving, in steps, back to the land. I was down on the Big Sur Coast, on the verge of deciding to stay and make California my home. I met two beautiful young women one day through a man we all knew. We were in a little cabin in the mountains, three men and three women. We women were drawn together immediately and went off walking, to find a spot to sun ourselves and to talk about how we were all drawn together as women; all coming from different places, all wanting to relate to women as lovers. Slowly, timidly, with some embarrassment, we all brought that out, finding much to our delight that we were all saying the same thing. Happily, the men left that afternoon, and that night the three of us slept together and made love. It was an exquisitely beautiful time. We were all overwhelmed. It was a real rebirth. I was heady with the rediscovery of such an intimate part of myself-- my love affair with womanhood.

But changes of all kinds were sweeping my life, and a week later I found myself here, in love with the land and communal living, separated for a time from many of those parts of myself that I want to bring forth. Here we have no community to relate to other than our own. The people are diverse, wanting to go to many different places. It's a place where you can find the dearest parts of yourself remaining at the fantasy level. The element that binds us most strongly together is the land; walking down to the ever-flowing river today through meadows of yellow and purple and salad green, I feel anew the intensity of my relationship with this land. There is a tie that prevents me from going to seek out people with whom I can share myself fully. I have been very alone here, my intimacy coming from my increasingly close relationship with myself and my everloving dog. I have been celibate for the last four months (only coming out of that place twice two months back to sleep with a man with whom I really wanted to be close). I deeply love some of the men here, and have slept with a goodly number of them, but I really don't want to relate to any of them sexually now. I am coming to value my celibacy and aloneness more and more, loving the peace and evenness, the lack of intrusion, that it brings to my life. I am hoping soon to move away from the communal area into my tipi, where I can have real solitude and more intimacy with myself and the land. But there's no denying

that aloneness is sometimes lonely. Although I feel increasingly close with some of the women here, (that closeness really being brought out for me by our women's group), that which I want so much -- to live intimately with women as lovers -- is totally missing. I have come to block out that part of myself because I want to get into my present reality and not spend my life in fantasy; but I also long to fully give birth to that part of me that can only be shared with other women.



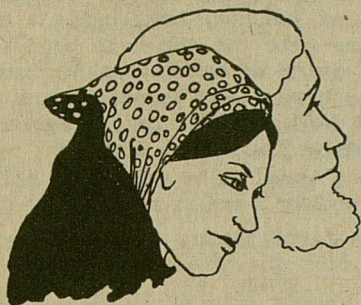
BARBARA

After two years of living together, I feel the twenty of us have evolved into a real family. We work, play, sing, laugh and cry together; we've faced the fact that we're very different people, yet we love each other and want to live together. It feels good and warm and deep.

The first few months here were tremendously exhilarating for me. The joy of being on the land, of planting a garden, of working together, was overwhelming. I was living at that time in the living room of one of the houses and my life was an indistinguishable part of the "group life" in a way that hasn't happened since. It felt good at the time, to lose myself in the flow of group energy, and in a way I'm sorry that time came to an end. But after the initial exuberance of being here had peaked, we all found ourselves going through big personal changes, and the easy flow of those first rosy weeks turned into a whirlpool. I suddenly felt confused and scattered; time with others that had been a celebration of being together became instead unsettling. I realized I needed to be alone for awhile. At the same time, I felt the loneliness that is now familiar, that one has even (or maybe especially) in a close living situation, when some of the deepest parts of oneself aren't shared with others. For me, it was a realization that I wanted to live closely with nature, more primitively than most of the group, and that I had to live that way, really to get in tune with the forces within me.

So I began the slow and often painful process of finding my own space within the family framework. I decided to build a yurt away from the main dwellings so that I could live as simply as I wanted. Working out my separation brought out lots of conflicts in me. I questioned why I was separating myself -- was it an escape from the difficulties of living together or was it a positive step in my own growth? I felt guilty for "turning away" and felt the pressure of group censure for being "uncommunal."

At the same time, I knew that what I was doing was right for me. Living at the yurt has brought my life together and I grow from my roots now as never before. And I am peaceful and happy with myself which in turn of course makes me more open to and happy with the group. I spend less actual time with the others than before, but now I am really there when I do, and not walking through the meadow with my mind while my body goes through social forms. The group, too, has changed: the intense drive to be "together" has relaxed or at least taken other forms. I guess we've all come to measure unity in less tangible ways than time spent together. I know that I now feel a unity with the group in a way that is new and special. The tension between alone and communal time is still there. It's not always clear to me what feels right at any given moment. But often now I can be alone without feeling that I've turned away. I can go to the yurt and carry the spirit of the group with me.



carol

Luggage - Mirrors - Reflections. I can make no "clean" breaks; every experience, every relationship is brought into the next. I have always carried around a lot of guilt in my baggage, along with an inability to let the past be resolved. It isn't so much that I live in the past, but my present-presence always contains myriads of reflections, through my dreams, through what I do, a sudden recollection while planting a tree or talking in our women's group. I am very strong. I have always had a clear sense of Me, of who I am. My relationships with men have never been dependent or particularly oppressive, at least in the classic male/female way. I have also not been alone for several years. For four years I was married, though I never felt "married". We were living in Venezuela. We were both incredibly alone - culture shock upon culture shock - both of us unconsciously assuming the exaggerated male/female role of our new environment, and neither of us feeling comfortable with them. Because of our cultural, physical circumstances I felt pushed into a weird kind of dependency and ego loss that I had never experienced before. It was, perhaps, the beginning of my women's consciousness.

When we came back to the States I was bursting to break free, though not at first from my husband. Later he became the symbol of my inability to soar unafraid, as I had before (or at least I had seen myself that way.) Yet, after

we moved to the land and finally separated, I felt no anger, no resentment, only love and hurt for the both of us. How could I have ever thought a break, an ending was possible? Many times in reading women's literature or any liberation literature I have wished that I could feel that kind of personal rage against a clearly defined oppressor. When I was married I used to fantasize about the perfect people that I wished would walk into my life. It was very convenient; my problems, my insecurities, my unhappiness could all be attributed to my marriage. But even while these feelings existed on one level, I was never really able to believe in them. And two years ago when we moved to a very isolated community of twenty people (where I still live, and which he had to leave) all my negative feelings about monogamous relationships came into very sharp focus. I had to break out of it!

I was incredibly high that summer; completely in love with the land, my work, with every plant I helped to grow. I wanted to be alone, on my own, committed and responsible only for myself. Then in the midst of all this euphoria, I fell in love with Ranger, who was as high as I was about being in free multi-relationships.

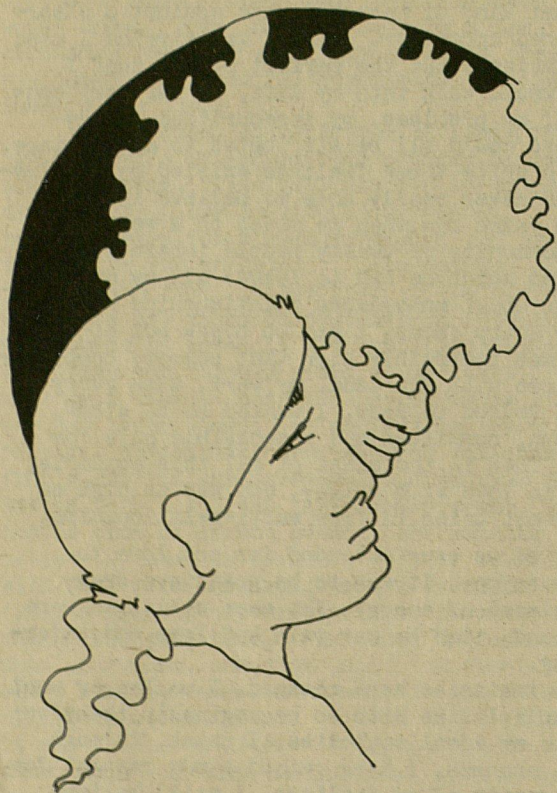
Neither of us ever intended for our love to destroy anyone. It was to be positive, creative release of energy. Yet once again, we were earthbound, tied by our pain and love and understanding.

My fantasies have changed. I no longer want the people I live with to be magically transformed into my ideal soulmates. I think, through all the changes, I have gained a new respect for the intensity of my feelings. I still believe in multi-relationships and that love should only release positive energy; but I have lost my naïveté that it will come easily. And so my husband left and my love for him did not die, as I thought it would, but is always part of my life.

I have found new freedom in my relationship with Ranger. We are both committed to change and growth and it is good. I have my own space, my wonderful little chicken coop, and separate interests, but I have rarely felt the kind of peace and evenness that comes from really living alone. I want to grow and live intimately with people. I am struggling to keep my wholeness and peace together in the process. One thing I have come to know in the last year is that I no longer want the conflicts of relating to other men intimately. The need and desire to be there for the group, for my lover, for the children and for the women comes first, and I feel a lot of new energy for these relationships. But at the same time I want to maintain a strong commitment to myself and my work. I am struggling for a balance.



LEGACY



Some very basic assumptions form the ground on which I build my answers to the questions, "how do I live, and why?" Who am I now? Am I satisfied with who and where I am? What do I want? What about

security?.....stability?
contentment?....chaos?
adventure?.....excitement?
sharing?.....self-sufficiency?
commitment.....flowing?
simplicity?.....stimulation?
comfort?.....culture?
love?.....honesty?
learning?.....letting it be?

...and on and on into every corner of contemplation. Consciously, but mostly unconsciously, I follow my inclinations toward my unique destination - hoping I will know it when I get there. Like the frog in the well who knows not the ocean, I catch my contentments where I can, but the intimations of infinity keep me searching, wanting to feel my part in the whole, wanting to experience immensity.

Looking back on my life, I recognize with a wince or a shrug and a sigh the vast amounts of my energy and time spent seeking and sustaining security. Somehow knowing all the while the futility of it, but caught in the quest. Obviously, our culture cultivates, encourages, extols the search. The more docile compliant consumers we crank out of our people factories (schools), the more 'stable' and grow-

ing our economy - the soul of our society. Gradually coming to see that all for the giant rip-off it is has made it relatively easy to simplify the more superficial aspects of my life. No more days wasted, waiting for the repairman to come. Nothing to repair! What is left, we learn to fix for ourselves, each remaining convenience a constant painful reminder of its costliness in human terms.

The process of stripping down to the bones of living bares the soul of the search for security. And the sharp, bright light of awareness shines on questions honestly asked. There are no easy answers. And the questions most often burst forth out of pain. Like the time, a couple of months ago when my desperate desire to find my true self kept crashing constantly against the real and imagined demands of living communally. Found weeping by my oldest son, Salmon, I poured out my pain - shared my need to go off in search of myself. He responded honestly. He wept. He was afraid.

"I am afraid of being alone. Of not knowing what to do...of freaking out, being a baby, having to hang onto you for help because I can't make it. Of dying of embarrassment because I seem to be so strong and together, and I'm not, I'm not. Of needing you. Of not needing you, and then finding I'm really alone."

"I know! I know! I'm afraid of all those things or probably I would have never had a family in the first place. And...I'm afraid of being afraid."

"Me too!"

"And I'm afraid I can't live with other people. At all. Just can't stand all the hassles between this one and that one, don't want to have to deal, constantly, with what Josh needs, what Leona wants, what Robert thinks, and on and on. I often wanna run away from home. Be a hermit. Think my own thoughts without all the time trying to figure out what you want and what he thinks and what we want. Just wanna do what I wanna do. You know?"

"Yes. I do."

"And..."

"It scares me, River. I'm afraid you'll leave. And I want you to be able to leave if you need to, if you want to, but I need you! I feel so insecure. I want you to be here! I couldn't stand it if our scene fell all apart! No! I couldn't! I need people to talk to, I want to feel good, eating together, sitting around in the evening, stoned, singing, telling stories. I like that. I like you. I would miss you if you went away. I know you don't like doing so much shit work. And I know you don't feel appreciated. But I appreciate you. And I'll help a lot more. I'll..."

"You don't have to, Salmon. I mean, you already do. More than almost anybody. Really. It's not that. It's not anything anybody can do anything about, really. It's just - I need time and space to find out who I am and to be me, whoever that is."

"I know! I know! But couldn't you stay here and do that? I mean, if me and the other kids

and Max and Leona and Robert and all did the work, couldn't you stay here and do what you need to do? I feel so insecure when you think of going, I can't stand it."

Salmon wept. I wept. We held each other along time, saying nothing. I knew I would not leave this honest son of mine nor the others, not now. I told him so. I felt the depth of my love for him, my desire to see him grow strong, to grow together. Felt my strength pouring in through the depths of this exchange. Trusting enough to love. Loving enough to trust. To work for the necessary changes. I would be like the mother bear who knows when the time is right to send her cubs up a tall tree, and then leaves - trusting that they are ready to come down to earth and make their own way. In the meantime I want to learn with them that the only true security dwells within; that no scene is ever safe. That the only constant in life is change. In the meantime, my burden is everyone's. Finding myself, my own uniqueness. Going through the pain to find my joys, in the midst of what is given. Doing the best I can.

I also want to learn when and how better to live with others. The commitment to stay with my current family has grown stronger and surer. I am taking time for myself - not an hour or two here or there like before - but whole blocks of time - sometimes, whole days - for writing, reading, wandering over the land, finding new places to sit and dream. From the self-space I make spring peace and clarity, and a wondrous new joy in my sons and my family.

Robert
and I and
Salmon
and Buck
just

returned from our second "Experience of Wilderness" trip up the north coast - one of Robert's classes. We all: me, Robert, the boys, the students, planned the structure for the trip - an egalitarian experiment that resulted in a tribal game designed to help us all into the consciousness of, say, 100,000 years ago! No language. Minimal consciousness, as we know it. An open invitation to deculturate. To transport ourselves to times past beyond words. And we discovered that to allow ourselves to be transported changed us deeply. Me, River, the loner, a privacy freak, falling in love with my tribe (which as fate or karma would have it consisted of 4 young men and me!). Loving putting myself up against a commitment to stick with my tribe - no matter whom, no matter what - to learn what happens when deciding to hang in with people not of my own choosing. I came out of it feeling that because I put my total weight into my tribe, I gained a space equal to the others, and that our openness to each other made for joy, ease and incredible lack of roles or games. I never felt like the mom nor like the protected darling. I felt like an equal, and realized how seldom in my life I'd felt that way!

Robert, usually gregarious and over-busy, played a much more alone game. Finding he did not feel welcome in his arbitrary tribe, he elected to go into his own space, play the idiot, the fool, the madman, the magician. On his own trip, he learned his own lessons of magic, power, and loneliness.

And Salmon, afraid, remembering the legacy of fear left from last year's trip almost didn't go. We talked a lot. Me struggling to keep from

continued



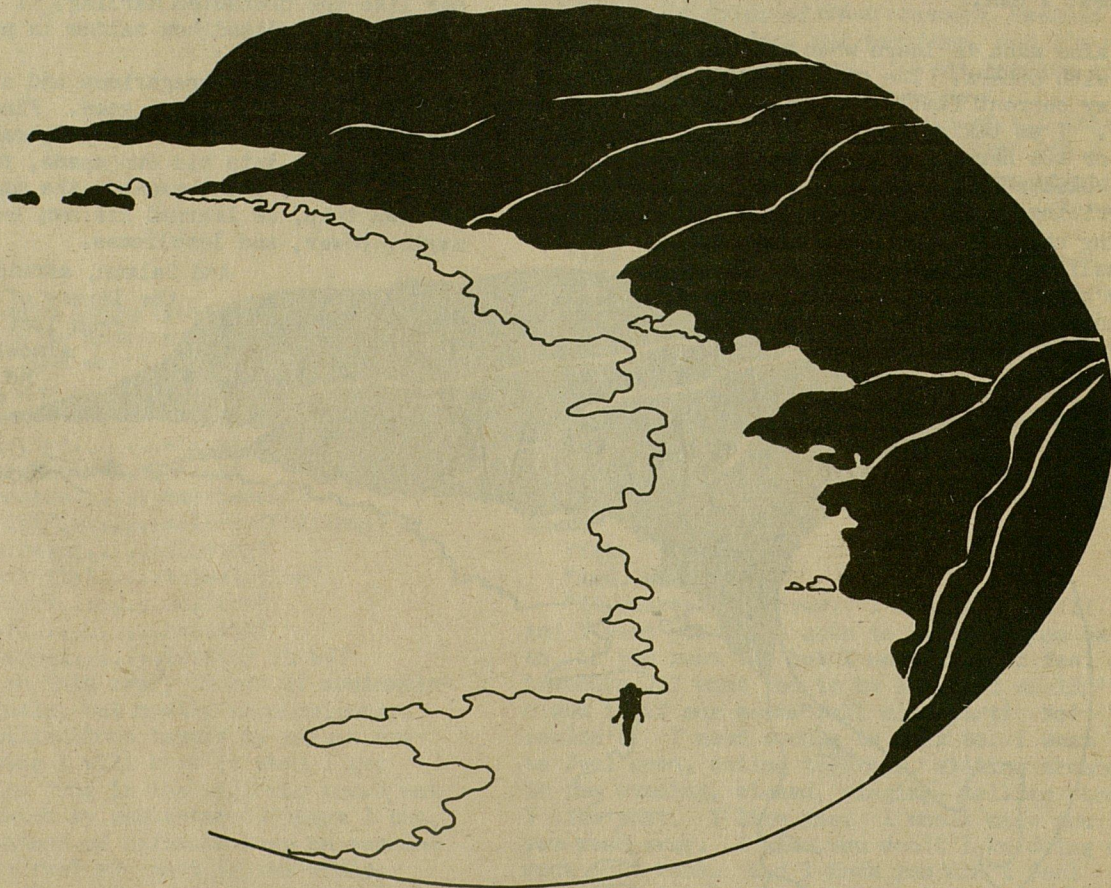
continued

pressuring him. He struggling to go, knowing he'd never overcome his fear til he faced it. At the last minute he decided to go. And he spent the first week unsure, hesitant, reliving the painful past experience - his fear of freaking out. Then, on the first night of the game itself, before our days alone and our coming together into tribes, as all were finishing our silent, final meal together at dusk, Salmon walked up to me, touched his chest, pointed north, and headed up the beach into the starlight. I took a deep breath and went south, making camp by a huge driftwood log, which became the back of my firepit. Thus the game began, and how it went was magic.

Attention, awareness, sharpened - grew. Complex thinking slipped away, making room for simple, mindless wandering, watching, listening. The tribes came together as they would in their varying ways and we were all transformed in our own ways, in those days. At the end, returning in silence to the larger tribe, we soon held one another, amazed, laughing, crying,

touched beyond words. When Salmon found me and we hugged I knew at once that he'd made it through and out of his fear. His smile was of peace and joy and pride. Robert told me later, when the game was over and we were back into talking again, that he'd camped far north up the beach past Big Flat - and late at night as he sat by his fire a ghostly figure darted past him - something hastening on its way. It was Salmon, hiking to Hadley Creek at midnight. He slept there and for the next three nights, too, without his sleeping bag, having decided to go as simply as possible in order to grow as much and as strong as he could. He's making it down out of his tree - proudly - and humbly, as befits him. I love his courage and determination. I wouldn't miss growing and learning with him for anything.

And I'm feeling grateful and full and great with the richness and excitement of this life. It is neither simple nor peaceful most of the time, but I can construct my quiet corners now. And it is good ground for growing myths and magic. ♀



Northern California Coastal View from a Grove of Redwoods at Night

Sometimes I wish I were free, I'm not; men and children are in my life, part of the human trip. But no child, no man, stands, or can stand, between me and the infinite. That I have to cope with alone. Asia is over there, and in here, the ocean only joins us. The closest star

is twenty-four trillion miles away, but space circles back and links us. This tree was born before me, will die, I hope, long after, yet I can touch its bark and it feels me. Time has introduced us. The infinite is lost in me, I take it home, curl up with it. My bed is warm.

There Comes an Unfolding

There comes an unfolding
this night of the winding sheet.
Let me be gentle with myself,
for the primitive lady within me
is raging against this knowledge
that I was hyacinth;
I asked of you perpetual spring

for sunstreams
and rainstorms
a fecund earth
in which to sink my sad roots

for great petalfuls
of serene wind
embracing that fragile thing
which is my body - the stem.

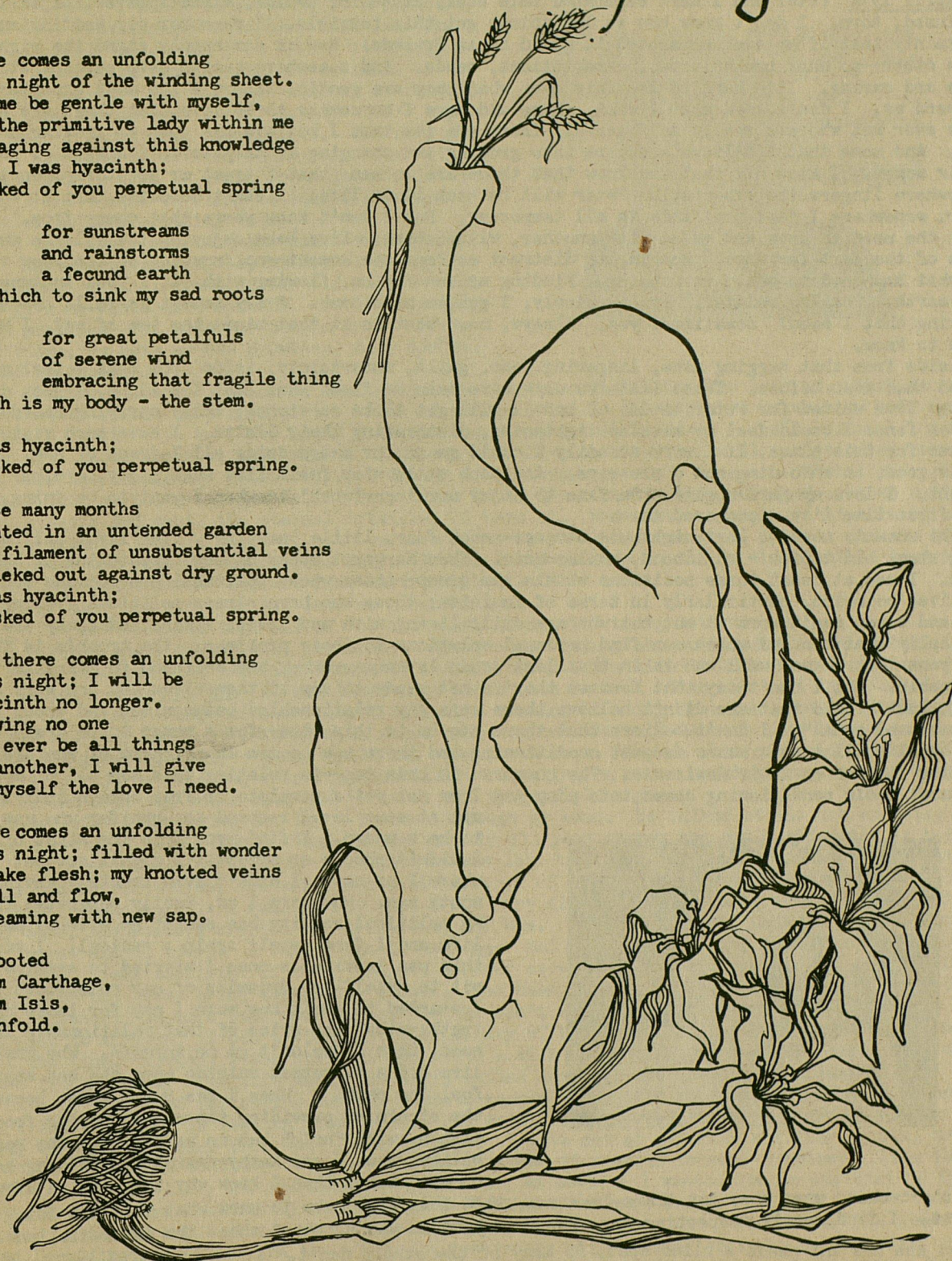
I was hyacinth;
I asked of you perpetual spring.

These many months
planted in an untended garden
the filament of unsubstantial veins
shrieked out against dry ground.
I was hyacinth;
I asked of you perpetual spring.

But there comes an unfolding
this night; I will be
hyacinth no longer.
Knowing no one
can ever be all things
to another, I will give
to myself the love I need.

There comes an unfolding
this night; filled with wonder
I take flesh; my knotted veins
swell and flow,
streaming with new sap.

Uprooted
from Carthage,
I am Isis,
I unfold.

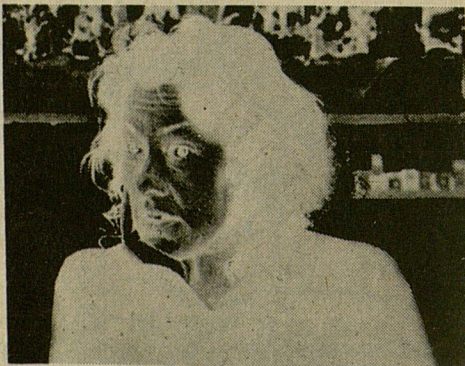


Visions & Revisions

April 1972 Peter and I have separated this week, maybe for awhile, maybe forever. I feel hurt, confused, torn. I don't know how we let things get this terrible. I remember our wedding and my certainty that if we ever separated it would be as friends. Now we can hardly stand the sight of each other--so many broken hopes, expectations, needs. And somewhere buried deep perhaps still some love and caring. It's hard to meet his eyes when they are gentle: there's too much experience there between us. I don't know what I want. More and more I am coming to believe that there are no men I've ever met who are really self aware. There are few that I believe are open to growing and changing. And none that I believe would be into growing and changing if they weren't afraid of losing their women. I know all that and know that there are no men that I trust or get turned on to. Yet somewhere lingers the expectation Peter will be back in my life. I can't conceive that it would be over; somewhere I feel that this is all temporary. But I don't know where that comes from. Maybe just the need to love and share with another, with others. I've been enjoying the silence and slow pace of the last few days. Nothing to distract me from the moment--no focusing on tomorrow or dinner or what happened in bed this morning. Finding my own rhythm, flowing with it, I feel in tune with the earth. Totally relaxed. Moving slowly, I get so much done. Every moment is full. So is it sharing that I need? Sometimes, yes. Always, no. What is it that binds the two of us? I hope some-time to know.

Aside from that nagging ache, lingering fear, guilt, uncertainty, aside from that I feel more centered than ever before. These last few days have been so fine. Now that I'm alone, I just do all the things I've waited for Peter to do. I know I will get to be so strong; today carrying boards for the garden fence I could feel my muscles tightening, discovering their limits. I have such visions, such dreams for this place. If I work steadily I could go on for years doing all I dream of now. But that feels good, an unfolding not a pressure. And each small step feels like such a joy, a clear accomplishment. I love my garden gate. So fine to enjoy working--"work" is what I want to be doing. This is the first time I've discovered that.

The women's meeting last night was strange--much fear, little "meeting". The first half was chatting about old topics - childhood, adolescence. Then Margaret spoke of how threatening it has all become. I see at least three positions within the group--those whose political convictions and personal lives coincide, particularly in terms of feminism; those who have strong political feelings that men and women can't work it out but who are still living with and loving a man; and those who feel basically that men and women can find personal solutions to their problems. The trouble is that everyone that I know well who is in that last group is compromising her selfhood to maintain that relationship. But I can't say that because they're not ready to see it themselves and are very defensive. Judith said that she didn't believe there were any relationships between men and women that were "honest and equal". I don't believe that there can be in this time--for a woman to be truly honest and equal challenges a man's deepest conditioning and there are no men that I know of who are able or willing to give up their dominance. The converse is true too--in relating to a man all of my deepest and most basic conditioning comes into play and I am not yet a complete or free enough individual to



not at some level respond as Jennifer who was raised to be a woman. I find myself in the midst of changes I didn't choose or expect. I didn't set out to be where I am now. I didn't even remotely envision it a month ago. But here I am, really separated from Peter. My political reality has caught up with my personal life and I find myself again a radical. I suppose all this was inevitable once I started to examine and admit to myself the dynamics of our relationship. Once I started to admit how much I pay for those half truths--that the price of that relationship is my selfhood, then I couldn't go on anymore. Who wants to live out a perpetual suicide once she has started to feel the pain? When I see Susan tense because of the strain of providing the meals, buying food, doing dishes, with "help" but no relief from the responsibility, when I see Kathy obediently molding her life to suit Danny then I know why they are so afraid of

Judith--because when they let themselves see, then they will have to know what they are doing to themselves. I find myself respecting Margaret more because she's honest about the contradictions. She knows she has and needs a blind spot. So many of the others don't. It is so incredible--I have heard Susan, Kathy, Lynda, Holly, Jessica all admit the pain of the sexism in their lives, but they are afraid to remove it from the isolated incident--to generalize, to make a political statement.

May 1972 Peter came back to visit late this afternoon. I talked to him about all the things I've been thinking about us and he really heard me. For a few minutes he struggled with feeling hurt and rejected. And then he caught himself. The whole talk was good, not painful. Tentatively communicating. I think he is trying to grow, to reach out and change. There are many problems though. He is only warm when he is playing -- I don't think he knows how to share intimately, seriously. He's so much more at home with easy going superficiality. I wonder sometimes why I care so much, how I became so involved. I don't know yet if it's possible to have a deep relationship with him, much less an "honest and equal" one. But I am giving it energy aren't I? So much for my radical convictions.

June 1972 I live all the time with my awareness. Can't not know and not see what I am and what's happening to me. I can't turn my mind off. The only way out that I can find is to find someone to share it with. Otherwise I will go crazy from ultimate isolation. But I don't want to cling to romantic images of someone else being everything to me.

The old ways don't work and the new ones are slow to come. Must be created by us, by me. They can't just be found. I still dream of the old ways -- want Peter to give my whole life meaning. Yet I know that those old promises were made for people in a different time and place. We have no new promises, only doubts, fears, and searchings.

(While writing all this I realized that deep down I believe that Peter has left me. That he waits only for another female body to fill the void. I always exist in this divorce between my body and my self. That's why it's so hard for me to deal with sex, a physical caress, I can't believe it is meant for me. Those breasts, that vagina, I disown at will-- years of cultural conditioning make me hate and fear the femaleness of my body. I disown mine, live separately from it. Wish I was ugly, deformed, a man, anything but female. I never know if it is me who is being touched or some cultural fetish -- breasts and cunt, the eternal triangle. I hate it. When Peter sleeps all night with his hands on my breasts I don't sleep at all, am in a state of panic and terror... I don't want to be The Breast (Playboy and Reubens rolled into one). I wish I had no body at all so that I would know that each caress was meant for me and not some abstract Female.

Whew, that all just came pouring out, no premeditation.

June 3 I just realized that all of the above has to do with being heterosexual.

June 5 Susan and I talked well yesterday. Among other things she spoke of Jim coming back to live on their land and said she didn't want to let him because she didn't think he was responsible, that she couldn't count on him (I use those same words with Peter). Then she said "what's this counting on?" I don't know either-- can't tell when freedom is being free and when it is taking without giving. Why do women care so much about counting on? Perhaps because they always end up stuck with the responsibility-- home, children, money, whatever. Are so well conditioned that they never leave freely, never shrug away responsibility. Counting on means knowing someone will take on half the burden that you would have had to carry all by yourself anyway.

Something Peter said during the fight bounces through my head. He talked of his job as being in a perpetual state of flux, change; that if you gave it all your energy you could ride with it but if you didn't it was chaos. He said our relationship was like that now too-- always changing, never static, not to be counted on. He said he needed a source of stability, a home to come back to. Interrupted him, became angry. I realize now that I was very afraid. That source of stability used to be me, my home, the world I created and maintained for him. Dimly I realized that and that was part of why I forced him to leave. I wanted him to want me-- not what I stood for, not the security of wife and home. I was terrified of being trapped forever as wife and home. Loving him, not wanting to be separated but never being wanted for myself. Now when I hear him speak of wanting a home that is not me, I panic. Am sure that once he has that he won't want any part of me. I AM SO AFRAID that he won't want ME anymore. I can't stand the possibility of having to live with that pain next door to me all the time. Already I see him next door with a wife and children saying "oh yes, Jenny and I are good friends now." The wife has curly hair, smiles serenely and doesn't make demands.

Anne came to visit and was saying how she expects people to be mind readers and resents it when they don't know what she is feeling despite what she says. I just realized that I almost always give Peter the opposite cues from what I really want. I live out my paranoia and fear on him, hoping against hope that he will say it's all untrue. Instead it usually becomes prophesy. Like that fight two days ago, yelling and accusing him of hurting me because I wanted him to say that he loved me. Such tortuous ways that nearly always lead us further from each other.

I've been thinking about what I wrote this morning (it's night now) and I flashed on the times Peter or I makes an accusation and the other one interrupts with a quick "but you do that too" and shifts it right back onto the speaker. It seems it is all part of that being a mirror trip. We are always being mirrors of the worst of each other. So that when he says "you do..." and I jump back with "but you do too!", I am doing it because I see him doing it or am afraid of him doing it. This

continued





continued
sounds very confused now but I know I've seized on something very important. We are so afraid that we have stopped being ourselves and have become bad parodies of each other--thereby losing each other. I know everytime we fight I don't say what I feel or want--I usually say the opposite, hoping he will figure out what I need and do it, which never works. That is partly why our fights have the quality of melodramatic farces--because they are not real!!! Not who we are, just our crazy attempts to get our needs met, or acting out our paranoia.

So I come to that. I really want a relationship with him. I want to be lovers, whatever. I love him and want him. I am sure part of it is the void in me that cherishes intimacy and has only ever found it with him, Jeff, Alice and Carolyn (who will not be my lovers). But it is also wanting to be close to him, loving him. What I want is for him to build a house here and us to work out being and not being together. I would have to feel very sure of his loving me to be able to handle it without jealousy. I need to feel that there is some kind of tie, commitment. But different from before because I want to be able to have Jane here, go to Christine's, do whatever I want to do and not feel guilty. I don't want to drop my life with women, all the things I am learning and doing. My life is bound up in doing the women's festival and that is as important to me as Peter.

September 1972 I am feeling crazy and pressured all the time now. Peter has come back to live here, supposedly building a house but mostly just being here needing me. I am earning all the money, working overtime to have enough for

both of us. I resent him constantly: resent his not earning any money, am angry at his feeling free about spending money while I work and save and scrimp.

I am spending most of my time with women now these last few months, always going to meetings or going out. I have the women's group, the weaving cooperative, open women's meetings and now I am beginning to work on the magazine. I am so excited about it and have such hopes for how good we can make it. I feel such peace being with the women in my group: communicating openly without feeling threatened, working together comfortably without hassles.

With Peter there is always tension-- he says that I give him nothing, that I am never here for him. I am frightened by his dependency, by his need for me to reassure him. And I feel angry that all I do is not enough. That even though I support us, he wants me to devote myself to him and our home, to give up all my time spent with women. I can't do that--it's too important to finding who I am. I feel worn out with all the work and struggle, with always having to allay his fears.

November 1972

Alone again after months of focusing on people, interacting, reacting, acting, acting. Always a little off balance, my energy given to and altered by those around me. Only now, alone, I am rediscovering my center, feeling how ever so slightly crazy I become when I am relating to someone else--always a little off center, a little out of touch. Yet just a little, so little, that I never really know. I give my center away so easily; no one even has to try and take it from me, I'm already there, hands out: here it is. I abdicate, you can direct my energy as well as yours. Here, now, feeling the incredible serenity and peace of aloneness, of being self-directed, I want to learn how never to give that up. I hope someday to feel that harmony so closely that I never lose it, even when I am with people. But it seems I will need much aloneness to get there. For now I have several months until Peter gets back from his trip and then I have to choose...

I feel like looking for broad views now, stepping back and reassessing. I see the first four years with Peter as a major shift in my life. An unconscious and almost total abdication of my self-direction. Unthinking devotion to the structure of couples and relationships. I wasn't like that at all at college or when I was working, and now I wonder how I could have done it. It seems that getting married was after all only a symbol for me accepting my conditioning. But I must not have done it all so unthinkingly or so well, for I did join the women's group and thus end it all too. I see this last year as one of transition--beginning to assess what I can do well and what I like to do. Now at the end of it I feel much more sure of my capabilities and even more than that, I know now that there is much I want to do, am unafraid of self-direction. Instead of finding myself in a great

void, I became involved in the women's festival, the weaving co-op, the magazine, relationships with people, my work on the land. Looking ahead I see more time consolidating my skills, stretching my awareness, exploring myself. I know someday I'll be ready for a big jump: a woman lover, a deep communal life, a living out of all my beliefs. For now, it feels good to keep growing at this pace, no great leaps but a slow spiral.

I am frightened by how I am changing. I am finding myself really turned on by women and repulsed by men. I have always had a hard time desiring a man sexually, have had to sublimate my feelings of love and try to force them to be sexual. Now after years of unsatisfying lovemaking and the constant, unending pressure on me to have intercourse, I am unwilling to subject myself to it any more. I can no longer force myself to idealize a man's body or his use of mine. For a long time I have been thinking and fantasizing about making love with a woman, testing in my imagination that possibility and knowing I am attracted by it. I have always had a few friends I have loved and felt closer to than even my men lovers. I have been having sexual dreams about women in the group for months now. Yet I am very afraid of those feelings. So afraid that I haven't been telling anyone. So unsure about whether I should just come out, say this is who I am: I am gay and love women, or whether to keep hedging, getting the security of being married from Peter to make my life easier. Whether to keep alive in him the hope that it will all be all right. I dislike myself when I do that. I feel dirty and dishonest. For the first time I don't feel torn about him, don't regret what we have lost. Yet I wonder, is this really where I am, am I really a gay woman, is this how I want to live my life? Since that blinding revelation when Margaret said "could I live on your land?" and I realized that there was another path for my life--since that day the conviction has been steadily growing. And though it terrifies me, I'm beginning to wonder whether I don't indeed want to follow that other path, that way of most risk and most gain. If I don't want to live with and love other women.

Talking with Tory this week has helped me a whole lot to understand that it is all right to be weak sometimes, that I don't always have to have it together. I am overwhelmed by all the hostility and rage I feel for men right now. I understand it, but I am very scared by it. I know all the good parts--the part of me that feels that Peter and every other man has no right to come through all this shit free, no right not to confront and experience his oppressiveness. I will no longer be a willing victim. It is more, than that too-- it is my rage at my own complicity making me hate men; hate them not just for who and what they are, but also what I do to myself in order to be liked by them. I don't like being in this extreme position, but being in it feels inevitable and overwhelming. It is a constant silent struggle now--who could I share it with and get support? Yet perhaps others are struggling too? How many other women see and are

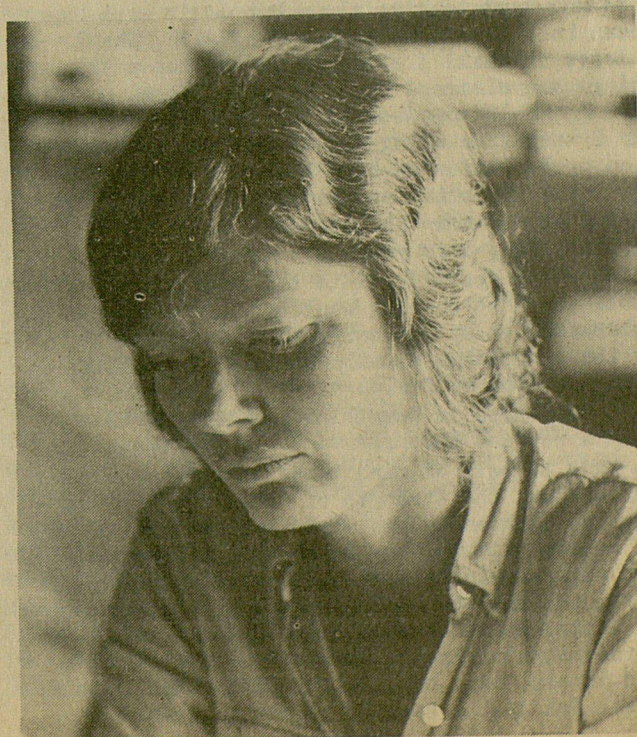
terrified by what they know?

I feel that my individual relationships with women are really good and strong. I trust them; I know that I don't love Alice, Tory, Margaret because I need a substitute for a man. That my relationships with my friends here and in the women's group are growing because we care about each other. But somehow paradoxically I feel that if I end up gay for the rest of my life, it will be because it is impossible to relate to men, not because I have chosen to relate only to women. That sounds terrible. I don't mean that I would rather have a relationship with a man, just that right now my ideal world would be a bisexual one where I can love women and men, neither one more than the other. But realistically I may never see such a culture and so I find myself more and more forced to relate only to women, rather than be subjected to the daily pain of always being less than equal, a female. Never have I so clearly felt the oppression of it, never before have I so clearly wanted to be free.

December 1972

In the city visiting Tory. We have been talking about how much status and privilege one gets from being heterosexual, from having a man in this society. As I was talking to her about my feelings about really severing my relationship with Peter and openly saying I am gay, I realized that everytime I said Peter's name, a picture of my parents flashed across my mind. That everytime I fight with Peter, my parents' imminent arrival looms before me. How can I face them without a man to back up my identity?

continued





continued

I know that I cannot go on living here alone, with women friends but not much closeness. I came back from the city, looked around, and knew I wanted something more. The love, support, community of Tory and Alice's house, the intensity of loving Margaret, the struggle to live here alone in wintertime, all make me need something different; and make me realize and fear this new rupture point. There seems to be no way to be on this land and make my life good. I do not want to live alone but don't know any women here I want to risk living with. Shall I leave or shall I struggle to survive until things are clearer? Can I, staying here, remain strong and independent in relation to Peter? Can I keep from using him to relieve my isolation or to buffer me from these hard times?

Sleeping with Margaret was an almost shattering experience--so intense that my nerves are left raw, deep yearnings unleashed, and nothing has resettled into the same place. I awoke the next morning wanting only to caress her, embarrassed by my own body, by my uncertainty, by the surprising passion and the incredible tenderness of my feelings.

Now there is something new between us--both a new and stronger sensitivity, body tuned to body as well as mind tuned to mind. And something else: the strength of these feelings making me weigh and judge words and actions. Making me hesitant in my honesty though no less honest yet. I begin to be afraid of "caring too much," afraid of letting my feelings run full for fear of losing my independence and detachment or worse yet of frightening her by my intensity. And afraid, like her, of the difference in our ages. Not in the reality of our togetherness;

there I know we are equals. But in the reality of the gap, all those years of her living with and loving Jim that I cannot erase or change and that may make it impossible for her to risk a full relationship. So I find myself disengaging from my feelings, harnessing them to keep them respectable and acceptable. Yet not wanting really, no not wanting at all, to not feel so as to not be hurt.

So here I am, nerves all taut. I cannot go on for long living here alone. My energy is drained by the strain and the isolation: the struggle with goats, garden, water lines frozen, wood, car; of country survival alone and unsupported and the simple yearning for the joy of sharing. It has been so long since I have known the pleasure of shared work. I am remembering Tory saying that loving was discovering she didn't always have to be strong. And here I am separating myself from others because I fear the vulnerability of my weakness. Somehow I have to find a way to share my uncertain parts, my feelings, doubts, fears, needs, weaknesses. To be a full person with others and to learn that it doesn't mean caving in, doesn't mean becoming dependent and a leech. Because I fear those old ways, am terrified of the dependency I once felt, I don't allow myself to be open about all the parts of myself. I wear only my strong face, saying "see, I really am independent," yet never test the depth of that independence by being whole.

January 1973

I am learning to cry again. Am beginning to feel again. I haven't cried in a year, everything just dried up. Now I feel threatened by

floods, am afraid of the wave of feelings that is engulfing me. Having opened up with Margaret and felt both love and desire between us, I can no longer be just a casual friend. I can no longer moderate my feelings to the appropriate embrace and friendly farewell. Do not want to invest my desire and love in a woman who is committed to a man. I have come to really understand the pain of gay women--a relationship with a woman nearly always gets sacrificed to one with a man. I know what you get from loving a man, and what a fearsome place it is to give up that identification. And I know that I cannot risk loving and trusting a woman who still has it--if she herself has not gone through that painful risk, she will not do it for me.

So, I find that touching Margaret has unleashed my sensual self a bit and made me long for gentle moments of loving. For the freedom to caress a head, trace veins on hands, brush bodies with silent words. To escape from the world of the loverless--of the forbidden gesture and taboo phrase. To rediscover the joy of caring for someone else, to rediscover all the selves I have buried in my repression. And in my need I mistrust all my gestures, am afraid any touch betrays me: that everyone I touch can feel the fire of my need in my burning palms, can smell it in the sweat of my armpits. Am afraid that feeling, desiring, needing now, I will find myself still further from the women I am close to--that I will frighten or alienate or be too needy. I feel like a deaf mute so often now, watching myself and all the world, sitting on a rumbling volcano of feelings and thoughts that threatens daily to erupt.

I now face a future alone, for the first time admit the no going back of it all, the hopelessness of hope. Think of a Peter I cannot love or befriend and who cannot help me, of a husband who will no longer quietly buffer me from family and society, of the economic struggle to survive without his income. It's not that I regret what is or yearn for what was lost--for what is is as real and true as I can be. It's just that I am scared to death. It's just that I have cut all the most rewarded and supportive props this society has to offer out from under me--pushing the saw back and forth, back and forth, always hoping that somehow there would be a reprieve--an easy way to be who I am and do what I have to do.

February 1973

I am feeling a change in myself and how I relate to others. For the first time I understand what gay women have been saying about straight women--can feel when a woman's energy is for herself and other women, can feel how powerfully a heterosexual relationship affects a woman and the direction of her energies, am conscious of the dominance of male energy in a heterosexual group and the difference of woman energy. There are no words for this new knowledge. Something powerful has shifted in my perceptions. I don't need men, have given up hope of a relationship with a man, and I experience women differently than before.

These pills, the doctor said, will make it hard for you to perceive pain--she must have meant some other kind. Why is it always so hard? Will it always be like this, will there never be any comfort, stability? It is as though the walls are all caving in around me. It is all I can do now to keep myself together. Every bit of my energy has to go inwards. Alice and Tory are moving apart. That house is breaking up. Like a kick in the stomach. I feel another root wrenched loose--how badly I needed the security of that home, of having women I could love and share with; how worried I am about becoming so estranged from Alice, not understanding her commitment to John, of losing Tory to her love and security with Karen.

I feel such a failure. I wish my life could be normal, simple, secure. I wish to god I had no consciousness and no honesty to myself. I feel like becoming a recluse now. I don't want to see anyone or go anywhere. I feel like I must nurture and care for myself. I need and deserve the attention--otherwise I cannot go on.

I am apprehensive about telling my parents about Peter and me, of breaking all the myths I have made about myself and him. I feel like I am admitting failure and defeat. I need their support and approval so badly now--I am terrified by how much power I give them, him, my father, living my life as Electra. I cannot bear not to be perfect. I feel this need to keep everything together, to do everything on a superhuman scale. I set impossible standards for myself and never quite measure up; I always somehow feel I've failed. I want to be normal and to be great and am neither.

I am realizing how hard it is to be a gay woman--how little I can trust other people's responses to me once they learn that I am gay. Because this whole society is threatened by homosexuality, it sees it as a disease, an aberration--then I, a gay woman, become crazy in its eyes. And when almost everyone I know is responding to me just a little bit differently than before--I begin to doubt my perceptions and conclusions, begin to wonder whether I can indeed trust myself in the face of the rest of the world. When a woman I have known and been close to for years now says that I pressure her sexually, it is hard for me to remain sure of my knowledge that I have not pushed her, to feel strong in believing that it is her doubts that pressure her, her fear that makes me threatening. My being open to the possibility (only that, such a simple thing) of a relationship with a woman, makes me totally vulnerable to being seen as sick or crazy, to being thought a sex-craving maniac, to being a threat to every heterosexual woman's doubts and to every man's identity. So here I am alone in the country, and isolated from all but the few gay women here. I suffer constantly from self doubt, don't know how to defend myself against the subtle inferences and withdrawals of old friends, my family, my husband, my community. I accept their judgments, feel myself a failure, question all

continued

continued

my perceptions and awareness. Yet through all this, I go right on being what and who I am; I have no other choice if I am to live honestly. I am a woman trying hard to love myself, a woman loving other women.

April 1973

Tory has been here for five days; the women from her gay women's group were here for the last two days. I felt so comfortable and at ease with them. I have never lived as easily with someone as with Tory. I talked with her about how insecure I feel and she helped me to understand how connected it is to being gay. How hard it is not to hate myself for being a misfit, a societal failure. It is hard for me, here, to have any perspective, to know that most gay women go through this too, to know that I can feel anger at a world that makes me hate myself for being truly who I am.

I know that I am going to need some contact and communication with people to keep myself from feeling crazy. I need to try to understand what is happening to me, to check my perceptions against some kind of reality. To learn what is my particular personality and what are common problems whose weight I do not have to carry alone. Tory said that it is all right that I do not trust my perceptions as I used to--that they are probably no more inaccurate than they ever were, but I am probably more honest than I was. This is partly true, but I also know that my fears and needs are making me exaggerate antagonisms and separations: that my hostility towards Christine, Maggie, Margaret is somehow in proportion to my disappointment in their not being what I needed them to be for me.

Kate and Judith are the only people here that I trust or want to be with right now. Because they have been gay for a long time, they understand my troubles and my feelings. I think that they want to be with me and that my friendship matters to them too, but I worry about being too needy, am embarrassed by the newness of my changes. I am worried about my relationship with Judith, am afraid of how much I need her approval and support, by how much she turns me on. I don't want to destroy what is beginning to be an honest friendship with my neediness.

I was feeling very attracted to one of the women who came up here and it helped me to realize that I am partly projecting so much on to Judith because she is the only woman here I could love--because my world is so limited and my need is so strong. It is not that I don't genuinely love Judith, but that I don't want to project my sexual desires onto her. It has helped a lot to meet the women in Tory's group, to find gay women with whom I have an immediate rapport, whom I trust and can talk with as I cannot with most of the women here. To know that I am not a miserable introvert unable to tolerate people, but someone living in a place where there are few people I feel commonness or warmth with. In a city, I might never have even met some of the women who have been my friends here. I

don't have to castigate myself for not feeling close to women who are so very different from me.

One of the best parts of being with Tory has been being able to struggle with each other enough to criticize and respond honestly. No one has helped me to question myself and to grow in a very long time. Though I found it so threatening that I wanted to run away and cry, it also helped me a lot. When she criticized my driving as too fast and I lashed back at her that I would slow down only "because she was scared", she made

me see how macho it was to make her feel weak and inferior because of my defensiveness. I am loving giving free reign to all the "unfeminine" parts of myself. To me, being gay has meant learning to love all the parts of me that I have kept hidden or half-expressed, because they were not "womanly". When I was a child, my father said I walked like a girl-scout leader and my mother said if I'd just walk more softly, I'd be more of a lady. Now I am finding the length of my own strides, can take pleasure in my stomping. But I need to learn how to become strong without losing my sensitivity to others, to be strong enough to admit my imperfections and my mistakes. Tory loves the dykiness of my growing knowledge and self-sufficiency but she does not let me become strong by making her feel weak.

My sensuality feels reawakened and I am afraid of it just withering up in the desert of my fears and isolation. I worry that I will become a dried prune of a celibate forever. I don't know how to find or begin a relationship with a woman, am afraid that my reticence and hesitation and embarrassment and FEAR will hold me captive forever. I find Carol fascinating and attractive but make no move or gesture. Do I want to risk the devastation of a casual affair? Do I want the commitment of a relationship? I hope that time will help, that this isolation is not my destiny. It is so strange to call myself gay, to feel so close to and loving of women, yet to be so very determinedly alone. Celibacy is dangerous for it leads to an absence of all sensuality. I am going to have to take some risks. I have to learn to say what I feel.

Rick came yesterday from Chicago, spent the afternoon and night, left again this morning for Chicago, leaving me deeply shaken and touched. He is the first man I have trusted or believed in in a year, a man who seems to find sexism as deeply his problem and struggle as I do. He shocked me with his openness about himself and his empathy with my changes. I kept thinking if only he were a woman, if only he were a woman. Then feeling tortured by that thought--what does that mean, how can I love the spirit and personality of him and wish it came encased in another body? I know that there is some quality of woman-ness about him that makes me love him: his gentleness and tenderness, his intuition and sympathy, the beauty of his face. If he had been a woman, I would have plunged head long into a relationship with him. But he is he and I am too terrified of risking believing in a man and of losing the only love and support

I get now--from gay women. We talked until almost midnight, me feeling as free as I feel with Tory to talk of myself and my perceptions. Then we began to softly, gently touch each other. It felt so good to be touched with love and tenderness and to touch. I began to cry with the pain of how difficult and conflicting my life is... loving him and feeling afraid and unwilling to make love with him. And loving him even more for not just not pushing me but for saying "I love to be with you. I don't want more. Don't cry, I am not worth your feeling all this pain." I was deeply moved by the trust and closeness, by the incredible warmth of being caressed and stroked again. I want to do justice to the beauty in him and not to shut myself off from him, though I cannot be with him or give myself to him in these times. I wish he were a woman, for she would be sitting here beside me now. But I also know it is no coincidence that I am not afraid to reach out to him as I am with women.

Working in the garden yesterday, I suddenly understood why Lisa's letter had upset me as deeply as it did. She said "I always felt guilty about your loving me because, you see, I always had Eric." The implication is that I loved her more because I did not have a man and that she loved me less because she did have one. That loving a woman is a secondary substitute for having a man. And I intuitively felt the judgement implied in that letter, accepted it, and judged myself as "too intense". Seeing it now, I understand that this is what gay women must learn from each other: to stop hating ourselves. That we must teach the world that -

loving a woman is second to nothing, a wondrous thing for which there is no substitute.

I finished reading The Well Of Loneliness last night. At the end of it, the heroine, Stephan, out of love, forces her lover, Mary, to leave her for a man. She knows that the struggle of being a Lesbian in that society, an "alien and perverted creature", will turn Mary into a bitter and self-hating person. Again I felt the need for all gay women to stand together so that we may learn to love each other and ourselves. So that we will not ever again need the protection of even the most gentle and understanding of men. For to accept that protection is to accept society's structure and values.

All this has made me understand better my conflicts about Rick. It is too easy for me to love Rick. There is no terror and no risk. My family, friends, community would be relieved and a little more comfortable with me. Sure, she sleeps with women, but she can still love a man. I feel safe and the world feels safe.

But to love him and to choose to be with him would be to choose an easy way out of what is my struggle too. For what I love in him is the "womanliness" of his being; from him I can get most of what I get from women without having to say "I love women and that is no secondary, inferior act of loving." For to find a woman in a man's body and to love him though not loving that body is a cowardly and safe act. Another compromise with society. I must take risks for the sake of those few women I love and they must take risks for me. Only by standing together can we be free. ♀



Our meadow has been an answer to the close ties of an extended family without the usual hassles. Our meadow has six houses consisting of three women alone raising children, two nuclear families, our own extended family, and one man and woman without any children. Although our meadow has approximately three acres separating each house, the distance has only allowed us to share more experiences and be so much closer than neighbors who live on top of one another in the cities. We have many shared experiences, whether planting in the garden, feeding animals, or our weekly laundry and day twenty miles north in Fort Bragg.

So often a nuclear family is cut off and secluded. Here on the meadow we live in separate houses, but share those things that allow us more freedom. We all feel the freedom that comes from knowing we can go on vacations or weekend trips, and leave home, animals and children with our neighbors.

Our meadow has had coexistence problems also, such as our donkey eating neighbors' flowers and our sheep shitting in neighbors' houses. We are all on the lookout for dogs chasing any of the animals (especially chickens), and the most comical sight has been our fiascos herding escaped goats back to their pens. Whether one of us owns an animal or not makes little difference, as we all feel the responsibility to deal with any problem as if the problem were our own; if it's a friend's, it's ours. Through helping each other and laughing over animal escapades and meadow picnics, we have evolved into deep relationships with our neighbors. The meadow is a large family in which any personal problem can be discussed or anyone called upon for any kind of assistance, and yet the problems of extended families which destroy relationships are lacking. We all respect each individual's identity, and no matter how different our life styles, the fact that we can depend on one another and help one another have more free time has lessened any differences created by our values.

Our large meadow family not only allows the adults more freedom, but our children have thirteen adults with whom to experience life. Certainly better odds for our children's growth in independence and understanding of life than simple mommy-daddy role identifications. Whether they want food, drink, or attention, they have six houses to go to instead of just one. As each of us is different, so our children see all the close relationships and interworkings of living with a lot of people. Through living on our meadow I am enabled a freer spirit and my child can see love and happiness in life from many people. We laugh to discover that the children have sometimes eaten two breakfasts or lunches, but I know if I want to sleep late Geoffrey will eat breakfast with someone else, so I don't have to hassle getting up and feeding him. We can borrow each other's tools, cars, or advice freely and openly. Our meadow seems to answer my idealistic dream of living a fulfilling life with many people and at the same time living without the conflicts inherent in a shared household. ♀



ON OUR MEADOW



To My Daughter

God, how I wanted you!
For your birth I married
That nice man all gentle
And spineless,
And wrapped myself in guilt
And duty and confusion
And years of working at
Denying myself.
And God, how I feared you!
Small-monsterish inside me,
Large head and vacant eyes
With thin pale fingers
Sucking at my strength,
Determined to live--
No matter about me.
God, how I worshipped you!
So perfect, so complete,
So content to nurse my breast
And warm me with your little
Buddha head
And miraculous smile.
And how I hated you!
Fussing, crying, screaming;
Always wanting me
Even when I had given everything
I had, when I was sick,
Miserable, exhausted.
And you were innocent
But wanted me some more.
And how you pleased me
With your eagerness to crawl,
To reach, to learn--to grow
Healthy and bright,
To struggle to your feet
Again and again, and triumphant
Walk.
How you bored and drained me,
Endless day after night
After day for years.
Pulling at me with questions
Picking at me with demands
And how you destroyed my image
O good mother,
Reducing me to tears
And rage
And blows
With your sharp words,
Never punches
As I did so as not to harm
Your coalescing strength.
You aimed for my chink
And I exploded violently,
And then the helplessness
And guilt.
Later you sank in these too
And day after day
I picked up your sagging self
Dried your tears
Listened to your woes, your dreams
Your fears, your accusations,
Waded through your trash
Your treasures, and picked up

And put away and washed up
And ironed and mended and cleaned
Though you were taller than me
And when night came and I was
Worn out.....you danced and
Joked and leaped around,
Possessed by energy which
Awed me.
When you yelled at me or
Hugged me, I felt so far away
Just a body there for you
To work out on, as you
Had clung to or climbed on
As a baby.
Still a thing for your growth
Like a trellis or a jungle gym.

Now you are gone.
Your letters come
Sometimes quickly,
Sometimes long.
My days and nights are long
And full and calm.
I see your beauty now
And I am finding mine.
I see your growth,
No longer my parasite.
In this new space
We are persons,
God, how I love you!

And now I shake and
Find a flood of tears,
Sobs for all the years of tension
Between us womanpersons.
That was how it had to be:
Mothers and daughters
Locked in on each other
Expecting everything.
Demanding' disappointed.
Dear lovely innocent
Young womanperson
Do not believe
It has to be like that
For you.
Do not let men flatter you
Deceive you
Into that suffocating box
With marriage ring
And motherhood
Where you would struggle
Not to strangle
The love you bring
Let there be no babies
Not till gentle men
With spines and tenderness
Humility and guts
Let womenpersons breathe
And grow and move
In strength and dignity.
This is no world
For babies
Till it is womansafe.



A ROOM OF MY OWN



I live alone.

I don't really live alone. Every other week I live with my 3 year old son. (On alternate weeks he goes with his papa.) We can afford to do it this way because we grow our own food, live simply and neither of us has a straight job. A few days each week we all spend together. Half the time I live in the city in a room in the basement of a student cooperative amongst alot of people I am not very close with. I'm not even a student. The other half I live in the woods in a log cabin I helped build, with trees and a river and little birds and animals I am very close to. I say "I live alone" because that is what I am struggling with. Its new to me and alternately exciting and scary.

Getting the room was something I did for myself. It is mine, no one elses. Getting the room was very hard. For a year and a half we all lived in the cabin. After living with Bob for nearly 8 years in communes it was really fun at first. We had never before lived as a family. The 3 bears, the mama, the papa, and the little baby in their cabin in the woods. We have always liked doing things together and enjoyed our work. At night we'd sit around the fire reading to each other or playing guitar and autoharp. A few days each week we'd hitchhike to the city to see friends, work at the food co-op or on the underground newspaper. We grew our own food; cut our wood. Watched the seasons change. Our life was simple and holy and sane. Only after awhile we started going crazy. More and more there were tensions, fights, emotional outbursts and guilt about Kiya having no kids to play with.

And then some how I got this idea of a room of my own in town. Its the first room of my own I've had for 8 years. Once I began to fantasize about the idea there was no turning back. I felt I had to have physical and emotional space. It was not just the pressure of the last year living so closely without day to day relationships with other people, but the whole 8 years of accomodation to US, to Our Life Together, which in my case meant so often doing what he wanted because I didn't really know what I wanted. Getting the room was something I wanted. It was full of implications. For me it meant not just a place of my own, but a life of my own. Bob was both threatened and supportive. I was torn but determined. I felt I was "destroying the family" cutting off my only source of love and security, hurting my dearest friend, giving birth to myself and committing suicide all at the same time.

Now four months later none of what I feared has happened. Our alternate week child care system with planned family days is providing us both with precious time to be responsible only

for ourselves as well as time to really tune in to little Kiya and each other when we're together, in a new and more intense way. Kiya has not flipped out but seems to handle the situation with the kind of cool that only a kid has. Bob is no longer threatened but digging his new independence. Though there is still alot of shit between us that I don't understand, we're working on it and sometimes we feel close and more excited about each other than we have for years. Most important, slowly, very slowly I am finding new sources of emotional security and nourishment.

The hard part is something I didn't really anticipate, the loneliness. The people I am really close to, except for Bob, are all 1000 miles away in New Mexico, Kentucky, Conneticut, India, Alaska, and California. I had never spent much time alone; family, school, college, communes. I had always set things up so that I was well supplied with companions, if not friends. Consequently I find myself now, very shy and uptight and unskilled at getting it on in a regular social way. Most of the people I work with on projects don't know I'm shy. I appear confident and friendly. If I don't reach out, it must be assumed I choose not to, my life must already be full. Alot of people don't know of the change in my relationship with Bob. I go home to my room alone, or out to the country. It's strange, in the woods I can be alone, but I'm somehow filled up. In the city I fill myself up, fill my time writing, meditating, drawing organizing myself, relishing those solitary things that for years I've not had enough time for. I work amongst people, I live around people, but it's not uncommon to pass several days without a meaningful personal conversation. That's when I begin to get scared. I lose my confidence to meet my own needs. I begin to withdraw more and more into myself. I withdraw and then I hit bottom. The panic comes in the city. I begin to think of the future. It's not that the present is so intolerable, but I begin to think..."What am I going to do? I can't go forever like this. I'm too lonely, I've got to do something! Go to my friends in Kentucky. Find people somehow around here that I want to live with. Make up my mind to be alone for a long time..."

I touch bottom in the country. I touch bottom and what I find there is me, and the god in me and everything is fine and I understand that this struggle is necessary and good, that I have grown and am growing; that this is something I have never had to do before and that even my pain is a kind of gift that is strengthening me. I remember then, an old Chippewa Indian saying. "Sometimes I go around pitying myself and all the time I am being carried on great wings across the sky." ♀

Liberation has its price
I can no longer fuck or get fucked

But
What is love?
How do I fill that need to touch-
I call out to my sisters
All those beautiful women
That I love so much

But
It's too soon
There are too many changes now-and-
Patience is

So
A year of celibacy.
My year of finding my sexuality.
Hey are you there?
Do I objectify you oh need to love?
Are you my orgasmic fantasy conceived from
Years of conditioning?
Ah-reach out, touch my flesh here,
My body is warm currented flashing electric

But
You can't touch me now.
We're still bound by our changes
Caught in transition
So I turn-

And
He found me
When I was wearing my vulnerability out in
the big world
He was attracted by my need,
My passions, and my power.
--We did our dance--
There was little fear of our touching flesh
to flesh

It had all been worked out centuries ago
But

New fears came where old ones stood
And I asked
Do you objectify me?
Do I objectify you?

Are you

I we
Honest, open and
Do we really share?
Your love does me well and
We are trying so hard to trust
Feel and talk things through

But
In the night,
After love has gone
And sleep sets in
I dream you are a woman
A woman who knows without words
I reach out to touch you
Where are your breasts so soft and warm?
Why have you no compassion
for my pain?

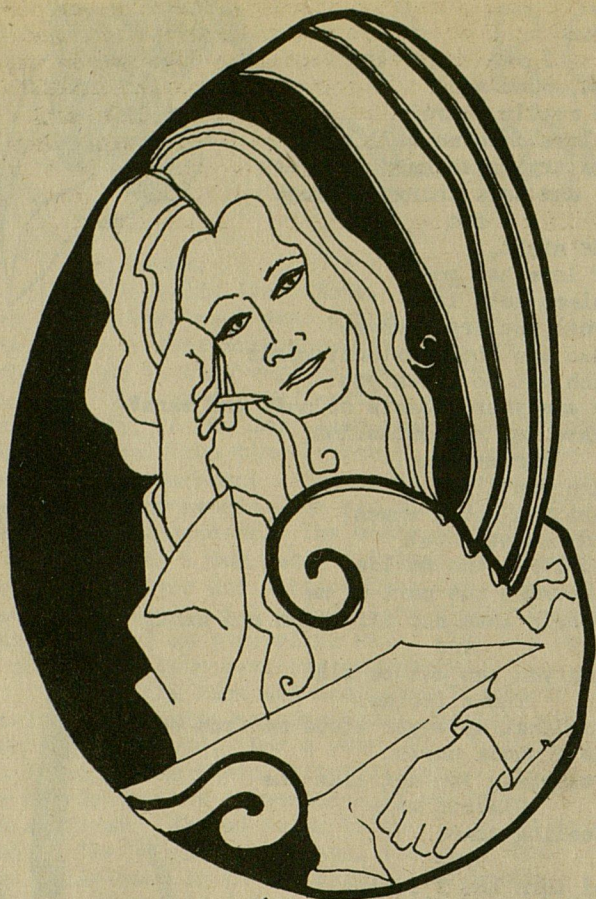
Who are you?
Why are you not a women?
My body screams out
Torn between two worlds
Torn between the part of me
That needs love and affection and wants you
And

Knowing you can not be all
There for me
Knowing that my anger stops me from seeing
You as a whole person
Then watching you act like the
Classic male

And feeling shame
And
I feel torn and I feel all
That pain and I still
Feel the joy of your love

And
I struggle blindly through
Making some light in the
Confusion
Seeking some peace and compassion
And
Seeking the end of this battle





celibacy

Celibacy: Withdrawal from sexual experience by choice.

Everywhere in the counter-culture we hear that sex is GREAT GOOD and imperative to a full life. Slick magazines are assuring us that we women can have countless orgasms and are practically sexually insatiable. I feel pushed around by this view. The voices telling me that love is necessary for my fulfillment are faint in comparison. Love as commitment, partnership, exploration of depths as well as height is not so IN as sex. I wonder why all this push, and I push back. I have even come to wonder if a fuller, more realized life would have less focus on sex.

If we were encouraged, or even allowed, to develop our inner creative natures would we crave the release and fulfillment of sex? If we were relaxed about our worth and our bodies, would fulfillment be easier, less anxious, more playful—one of many fulfilling pleasures, one avenue to ecstasy, instead of the sole apogee of indulgence? I want to say to my surrounding shouting voices, "Cool it. I'll get to sex when I want to and that may be rarely or never." I have plenty of ideas of where my energy could flow into exploration and fulfillment. There is so much creative thought and work to be done.

Orgies may be the modern "bread and circuses" of the new Amerikan Empire. "Give them sexual license and they won't ever think about the direction or import of their lives. We can take care of history for them."

"Make love, not war". Of course it is preferable to copulate than to kill (unless the act is rape). There are huge areas of humanness not included in that bifurcated choice. It no longer seems so radical to choose sex over war -- especially since so much of the former is so dehumanizing.

Perhaps it is again a matter of co-optation, a matter of turning a partial truth to false uses. For women, who usually have been objects in all this copulation, it is of course some advancement to take the initiative in a situation where we have traditionally been passive. But it isn't freedom. It is only breaking the first bond. Freedom is to consciously choose between healthy alternatives, to deliberately move in the direction of one's growth -- which includes growth for others too.

Women now can choose to place their energy and attention where their growth leads, after consciously and sensitively examining their needs. For me, I prize the option of celibacy. The saying NO to the social pressures which define and direct me as a sexual being feels like saying YES to a more inclusive view of my person, to the inner urges which draw me to politics, writing, relationships, dance and other creative expressions.

I want to relax into the direction my growth leads, conserving my energy without that anxious inner voice mimicking the outer ones, "But what about your sex life; have you had any lately; aren't you desireable any more; maybe you'll dry up and shrivel into pain and impossibility." Worry worry worry.

The view that a perfectly healthy, normal loving person could be uninterested in sex for extended periods of time-- who believes that besides me and some really antisexual religious fundamentalists? I'm not antisexual, I'm pro-fulfillment. Sex is not parallel to vitamins. You don't have to have some every day because it's good for you and you'll be sick if you don't.

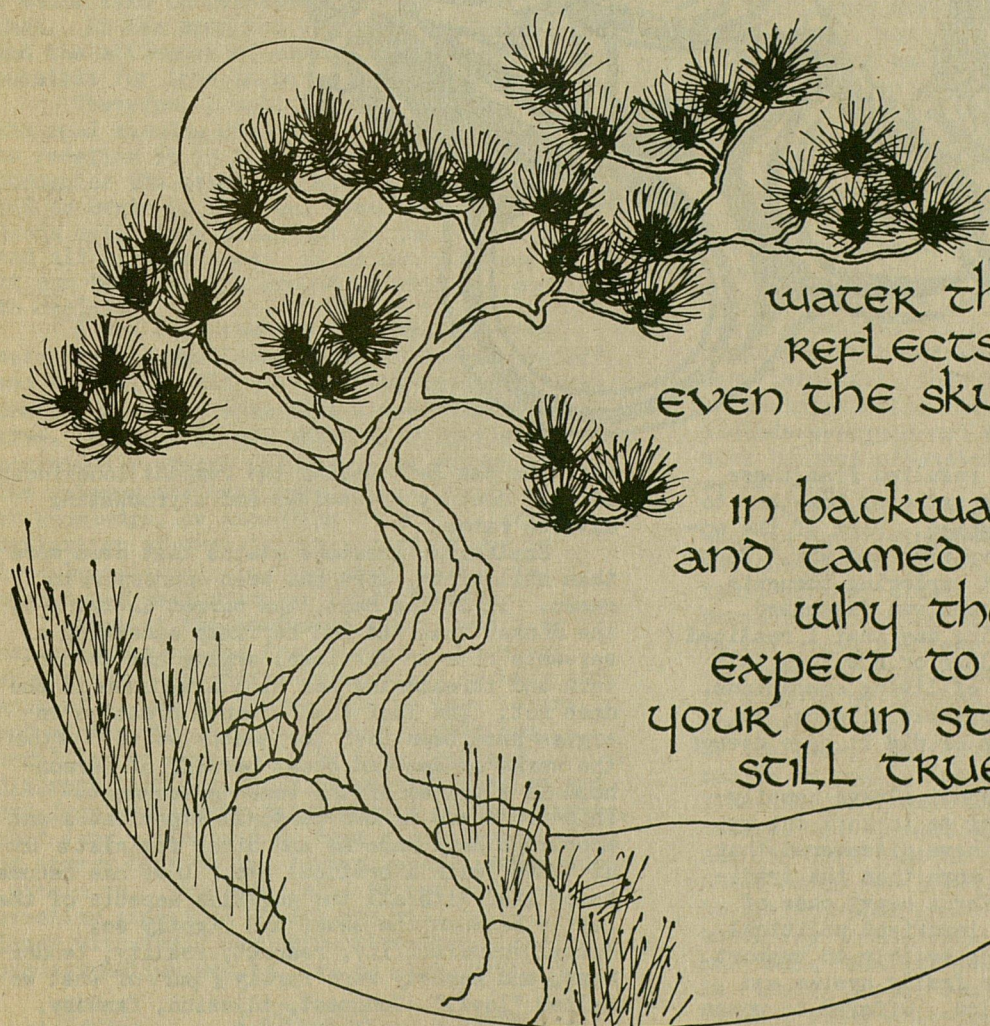
If you're really spontaneously turned on to desire (without the external push of rock music, girlie ads, porno movies, etc.) then go with it. But love and desire are different; both may include each other and each may be separate. I have a loving partner and I love her very deeply, but sometimes I am not desirous. Heavens, what can that portend? Deep neurotic problems!

I asked my unconscious and got a dream of moving into a beautiful expensive new development. It took all my money and I had none left to furnish the place, but I was happy with it anyway. My partner thinks this means that some inner direction is unfolding which requires all my energy so I have no surplus for sex right now. She feels loved by me and is eager for me to realize this "new development."

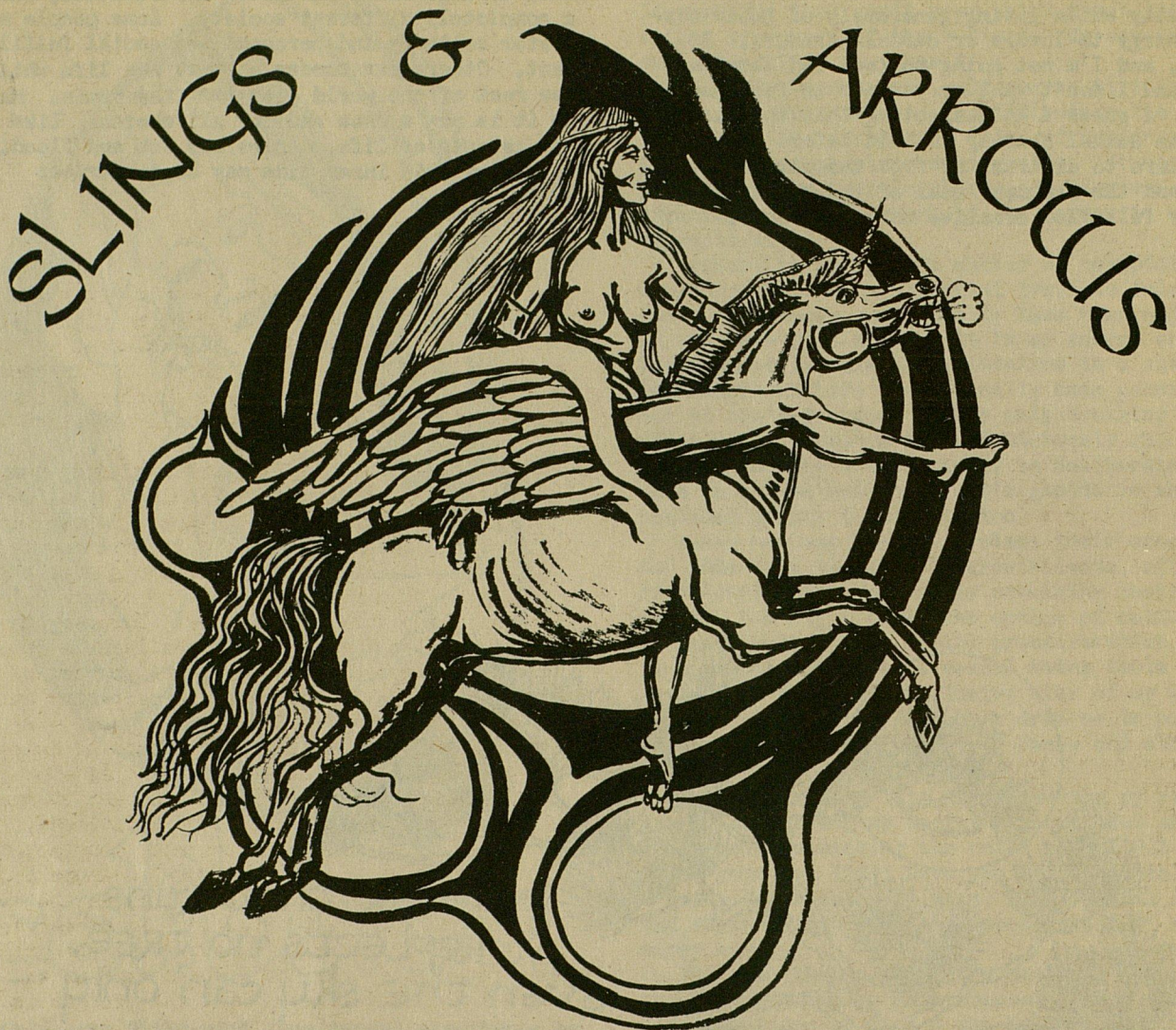
So in my own life I am trying to disentangle my real feelings from what I am supposed to feel and to affirm my real feelings as valid and healthy.

Maybe other women really are lusty all the time and can nurture their creative selves into actuality while giving generously of their sexual energy to lovers or casual partners. I can't, and I'm not going to feel bad about myself and I don't want my partner to feel bad either. I guess I am suspecting that the beauty of true sexual sharing is held before all women as a lure to distract us from the more dangerous, and the ultimate goal of the beautiful life of our fulfilled creative unique persons.

This goal involves politics, changing our social arrangements, the power distribution, and a completely different society. Some people may prefer celibacy and personal and social fulfillment. Others can choose a great sex life while the rest of the world goes down the drain. Maybe it is not a once and for all choice. Like other aspects of life, desire may ebb and flood. To follow this inner tide may be our truest guide. ♀



water that runs
reflects no tree,
even the sky can only
be seen
in backwater ponds
and tamed estuaries.
why then do you
expect to see in me
your own still face
still true?



The following article resulted from these circumstances: Eight women gathered together to begin issue #6 of Country Women. Part of the working theme was "Who we live with and why." Each of us had written our first exploring thoughts. The meeting was long, and much was discussed. It was not till the following day that I realized no one had even mentioned love or how they felt that affected their choice of living companions. Was this absence an uncomfortable silence, an unnoticed coincidental slip or did it have deeper roots? My musing began.

I am living alone now-not always happily-but in a way that is forcing me to sort out my priorities. In doing so I have discovered that love, intimate relating, is more than the traditional placebo prescribed for a heavy case of ennui. It is more than an important political tool used by a very unloving society to support its over consuming nuclear family system and thus assure its continuation. Offered to woman as her *raison d'être*, "Men live for their work, women live for love," Venus has proven to be a rather ephemeral bird. Quickly fleeing from the unequal power-oriented relationships assigned

her, she has left behind the rampant loneliness of 20th century housewives and skyrocketing divorce rates.

Shulamith Firestone states that even more than childbirth, love has been oppressive to women. It is the bait, the carrot in front of the donkey that has led her into accepting a servants' role in marriage, urging her to conform and threatening her with loneliness if she does not. The fact that women's creative energies have been used for centuries to further the works of men and cheat herself of personhood is a truism of the women's movement. This truth and my own personal experiences and knowledge have made me and other feminists look at "love" with a critical eye. Love has become associated with all the negative aspects of the battle between the sexes and rightly so. Mutual vulnerability, respect, reality, tenderness, and honesty were rarely a part of what we called "love." Conquest, illusion, fantasy, guilt, a quiet knowledge that we were escaping the pressure of being whole, fear of being fucked over and usually being fucked over anyway was the reality of love. In our desire

not to be caught in "the tender trap" we have turned off to love and its ugly ramifications.

This closing off is personally reinforced by my fear of being dependent, of objectifying others, of being responsible for someone else's ego, and most of all of needing. The very word itself loosens avalanches of anxiety, for I, like others, feel that I am concealing within my dark center a gnarled cankerous growth, an insatiable monster of need, and that if I were to look at it, to really acknowledge that neediness, it would consume me. I would no longer be able to see myself as a honorary S.I.W. (strong independent woman); my self-image might crumble. Thus I have not dealt with the parts of me that want to love intimately, to share, to touch and be touched; it is just too painful.

And although the theories of not loving are intellectually valid, the paradox is that on the gut level I see myself and my friends wanting the contact, joy, inspiration and communication of loving. We should not, like most men, have to cut off our feelings in order to maintain our freedom. Would I really turn back into a swooning adolescent, a love sick chameleon, a custom-made woman? I doubt it. I would like to believe I've come too far for that. It has been the structure of society and the attitudes of women that have made it possible for love to be so oppressive.

Therefore I want to come to terms with the real meaning of love (Are you kidding?), to redefine it in a feminist mode, to begin to recognize the needs within me, without fear, and to begin to risk and reach out to have those needs met. Love would not be the be all and end all of existence. It is not a panacea, but it can be a fertile ground on which to continue to explore.

I see huge numbers of women who have sexually and emotionally turned themselves off, and the safe, cold, devitalized existence they project does not seem like a positive alternative. Note, I am not speaking of the women who consciously choose celibacy, but rather of the unhappy shutting down that comes from fear, or knowledge, or accepting society's limited definition of what is attractive, of who is lovable--internalizing the youth cult. It should not be a price paid for freedom.

Part of the confusion about love I am experiencing arises from trying to work out my own sexual identity--integrating my body and my head. I am no longer able to make lovers out of men who culturally seem unable and unwilling to love. "It is from need and distress that new forms of existence arise and not from idealistic requirements or mere wishes," said Jung. The need to have a positive sharing of energy between two loving equals is embedded within us. That need will be our salvation, creating armies of lovers who will be able to teach with their nondestructive love a peaceful nondestructive way to live on this earth. ♀

KNEE DEEP

IN SEXISM



I live with five other people--another woman and four men--no children, no dogs. If this group seems a little over-balanced on the male side, it's true, and though they're some of my favorite men, I experience loneliness for like-minded sisters and hope some will come live with me soon.

We all share all the work including chopping wood, cooking, cleaning, gardening, etc. Our work ethic may seem ridiculous to some, but we operate on the belief that no one has to do any work they don't want to do. So far, someone always seems to want to do a task, and what is odious to one is fulfilling work for another. However, the harder work, and more traditionally male jobs like building and car repair, are sources of more struggle. I've participated in carpentry and building, learning along the way. Roof work is still hard for me because I'm afraid of heights, but that's getting better by taking it slow. The differences between me and the men are sharpest in terms of strength, skill and efficiency. If the men set the pace on a project, they could (and do) easily phase me out just because I can't keep up with them and start getting in the way or lagging behind. This situation is, of course, grossly unfair because it means that the job is more important than the process--and we all agree on an intellectual level that the process is to include everyone and to learn by doing. Otherwise, work becomes alienated labor, and that's not what we're about.

Yesterday I told one of the men I didn't want to work jointly with him because his pace was too frantic for me and I would be more comfortable working alone. I felt good about that because six months ago I would have tried to work to his speed and been frustrated the whole time. I'm learning that once I acquire a basic skill, it's up to me to find my own level, my own pace, and that men don't necessarily set the standards or the pace. In fact, I see them losing themselves in goal oriented speed and production that I really don't want any part of. My standard evolves to: I want to be able to do my share of all the work that is required for our survival, and find my own level of output. It comes down to sort of home-grown Marxian . . . from each according to her ability, to each according to her need. But, it's a struggle to assert myself in "their" areas; sometimes I'm up to it, sometimes I sadly melt away from the situation and berate myself for not hassling it out.

This is where self-criticism comes in, and I don't feel we've been lax in this area. Be-

continued



continued

cause this community doesn't particularly share my/our goals of eliminating sex role stereotypes, we don't get constructive criticism or suggestions from the outside, and really need to work harder to confront our sexism as it happens.

So, having these ideals, we come to the issue of car repair. Ugh. The men do most of it; the other woman here does some and is learning more. I do none. I don't have any desire to do it, but spend energy feeling guilty because I'm copping out and letting the men do it, and because I'm not learning to take care of my own survival needs. I know more about vehicles than I did last year, but I still don't like grease and electricity and the moving engine itself still scares me. The whole situation is not a source of pride for me; I mostly push it out of mind, hoping sometime to actually want to clear up this deficiency.

Decision-making seems to be the area of our life the least affected by sexism, and more affected by our individual personality styles--i.e., some people (not necessarily men) are more verbal than others (me for example). Making a decision requires having the necessary information, and distributing it to each person. Once this is done, we all have pretty much equal say in the decision. Compromises happen all the time, but their nature is unclear to me. We don't have a formal structure; these decisions about what to buy, where to build, how to plant, etc., are made conversationally. I, at least, sometimes forget my position voluntarily because it seems more important to someone else to do something another way, or because I don't want to hassle. Line of least resistance. I guess

I feel least threatened in this area of our life because I'm hip to verbal sexism much more than the sexism involved in work.

Aside from work, an important communal issue we have dealt with is the allocation of space, since we don't have private space for each person. When we arrived in September there was only the main house which was built for two people, so we built another small two room house. Rather than allocate that to certain people as we had originally planned, we have used it as private space available when anyone wants it. We don't have regular sleeping places, but do a Bedtime Shuffle every night. Sometimes it's a drag, but we've decided that each different sleeping spot has its own attractions, and like the variety of sleeping in different places, each with its own mood. Each person has to say what she/he needs or wants in terms of privacy, quiet, or alone time. When systems are running smoothly, we aren't oppressed by close quarters, but when there are many visitors or too many days of rain, the demand for privacy increases. Two private spaces for six people doesn't seem to be enough; our future plans are to build more private places, though not necessarily personal, individual houses. Single people want privacy as much or as little as couples do, and we are only beginning to define the overlapping areas of our personal and communal lives.

Though the people I live with support me, I'm beginning to understand the difficulties of making it in this country lifestyle without a supportive group of women. Coming from the city where much of my life was woman-centered to a community of women and men who don't share my

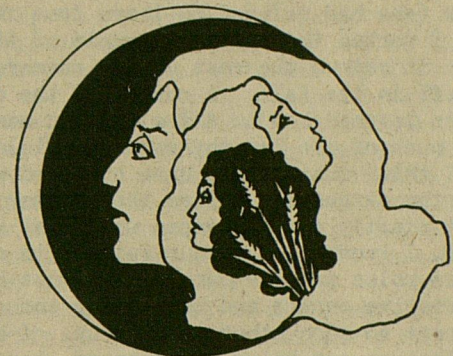
woman's consciousness has been lonely and frustrating. I feel separated from the other women by the differences in the roles we have chosen, and yet need them for female companionship that I miss. But I need an interchange with women who are also trying to acquire (male) skills, and emotional support to be female strong and not adopt the machismo style. Communication falters. Their conversation reflects their realities. Can I spend the energy to create the environment I need to live in? I've always had difficulty talking about women's liberation to women who didn't first express an interest, or at least a dissatisfaction with their roles

I'm reluctant to just lay out a rap on anyone and so now find myself in the uncomfortable role of a closet feminist.

Foundering somewhere amidst all this is my still young and unsure gay sexuality. I feel fragmented not nurturing these parts of myself, looking for signs that somehow this situation will change because I can't change it by myself. I grow here and like this life, but ultimately I can't sacrifice my female consciousness. In the meantime, I become silken strong and carry my vision of country liberation in the front pocket of my overalls. ♀

RETROSPECTIVE

Feminism and the Unconscious Collective



Two years ago I moved to a rural commune in the northern midwest. I wanted to live in a commune because I felt that sharing energy and resources was in tune with the politics of living unoppressively. The ratio was 4 women to 7 men. I didn't feel very good about that, having discovered in Chicago that the women could get it together and be strong much easier when the ratio is at least even or better yet when there are more women. I did not discuss my feminist feelings and expectations with the whole group before I moved there, which might have been a mistake. I rather assumed that certainly the women and the men at least intellectually would be in favor of struggling toward non-sexist relationships and work habits.

It didn't take too long before I discovered that my assumption was false. My first confrontation came with R, also a newcomer. I had walked into the kitchen remarking that I had just come upon the section in the I Ching on the family, which very clearly and traditionally defines the roles of men and women, and that I had also recently read of a woman who'd stopped reading the Ching because of its views on women. R defensively replied that the I Ching was a sacred and ancient book of wisdom which I had no right to criticize; that if I found something in it that I would see as inaccurate, it was my interpretation that was wrong; it was all in my own head. In the following discussion, he said he couldn't understand why I was so concerned about women's rights in the group, for there was "no oppression of women on the farm."

Of course, he hadn't asked any of the women about that. And of course, we had a different story. We were at various stages of being uneasy, resentful, or angry at the general work habits, the weight our opinions had in meetings, etc. We were having a hard time uniting in support of each other, partly because 2 of the women didn't get along with each other at all.

Work patterns were never rigidly defined by anyone, but the men tended to do the more traditional men's work - mechanics, animals, carpentry, running the chainsaw..., and the women were less aggressive and did things they already knew how to do. Most of the women wanted to learn new skills but were afraid to take the initiative on a project, and sometimes just didn't want to learn from a man who had a patronizing attitude. It's really hard to build a cabinet in the living room in the midst of two or three men who are competing with each other on who can turn out the most beautiful piece of woodwork. Well that's a bit exaggerated, but they did fall all over each other when we got the tractor. We bought the tractor at the end of the summer, just before I left for the winter. There had been a number of discussions about machinery and how much of it we wanted to have around. We finally decided that we really needed it to properly use the 20-30 tillable acres.

I was pretty apprehensive about the tractor issue. I already knew how to drive one, having had to plow, springtooth and bale hay when I was a kid. But I always hated it then. I was afraid of the tractor and I had no intention of being a farmer's wife. Since then I have often wished I had been into learning how

continued

continued

to farm so I would intelligently make all the decisions about growing a field of wheat or soybeans or whatever, and know how to run all the machines involved. Here was my chance to do that, maybe. If I could get the courage to fight through the bullshit of who can be the best tractor expert, and be on the tractor long enough to get accustomed to its peculiarities, plus get over my fear of working on hillsides. Well, it didn't happen. As soon as the tractor arrived some of the men were all over it, checking all the lines, driving it around a lot, and then offering to teach the women how to drive it. Which is almost an insult - it's a small Ford and just as easy or easier than a car.

When I returned in May I taught M. how to plow (she had refused to learn from the men) and I worked the fields a couple of times. Then it rained the rest of the summer, and I left in the fall. A couple of the other women learned how to drive it, but women never did much of the lengthy extended field work.

I think what should have happened was some lengthy discussion before the tractor came on what exactly should happen with that kind of work. I know a lot of our failure in changing those roles was our own fault in not being aggressive enough and not giving enough support to each other as a group. I blame some of that on our being outnumbered, however that is certainly not the whole story.

Another factor dividing us was the large number of people coming to visit the farm and the resulting confusion. Cold, lonely winter days had prompted the original 5 people to invite their friends to come and stay for a while in summer. Which they did, sometimes deciding immediately that the farm was now their home for as long as they pleased. We couldn't agree on a limit to the population on the farm, or whether it was fair or right to turn people away. Again more men came than women. By this time the original group of women had collectively agreed that we needed to limit the number of men and increase the number of women. However, some of the new women visitors didn't agree. Two of them in particular viewed women's meetings as something akin to tea and gossip parties. All this time, as the number of men increased, there was a premium on "unattached" women - the men wanted more women to come also, but for different reasons. So as each new woman arrived we watched the men get into gear for competition - who could charm her, win her, and later drop her if a more exciting "chick" came along - while we hoped she wouldn't fall for the games and would instead be someone we could work with. If we tried to explain to the men that they were playing dishonest games and using the women, then we were jealous because we weren't getting enough attention or were just being "bitches" again. And we didn't know how to tell the women they were being used if they didn't know it.

(I should say that not all the men at the farm were into that competition game. There

were 3-4 men who agreed with us when we pointed out what was happening and would occasionally give some verbal support if the subject came up at house meetings.)

By the time summer was over and the frosts came most everyone felt bad about living there and most of the visitors left. I also left for the winter, not sure I wanted to return. Remaining were the original 5 people plus 2-3 more men. The population kept changing thru the winter as some of them travelled and other people came thru; a few new women who were thinking seriously about living there.

I returned in May feeling hopeful - for about a month. We began monthly women's weekends with a number of women from other farms in the area. We spent some time working together and a lot of time talking. Several of us had learned to drive the tractor and take care of the goats, and there were 2 more of us. One was a rather shy and quiet person whom the men pretty much ignored (as far as their competition games). The other woman, B, who was not sure she wanted to stay permanently, was a strong and independent woman to whom the men were super nice and charming at first. Then another female visitor arrived and the race was on again. B was appalled - she realized they had done the same thing to her, and immediately came down on them for their dishonest flirting games. Two men in particular were extremely threatened by her open and insistent criticism, accusing her of being jealous, of driving the new woman away from the farm, of being "too independent", of being the kind of woman who made them say things they didn't mean...she left in a few weeks.

The whole summer was a series of complex relationships and events, some of which I felt encouraged about. But it was this incident that made me decide to leave. I had really bitter feelings about B's leaving and tried to talk about it in a couple of house meetings. One of the men who had been so hostile to her refused to admit that he had anything to do with her leaving, claiming that she never really intended to stay. He also refused to discuss our charges of sexism in his and some of the other men's work habits and expectations of women. I left in October, feeling angry and frustrated, guilty about deserting the women, wondering if I should have been more aggressive.

Since then I have spent a lot of time thinking about it all. I spent the winter earning money thinking about building another house on the farm and considering buying some land. I am much more cautious in making plans to live communally, wanting to live with a small number of people whom I know well and feel I can trust. I do not expect to get into another situation in which the men greatly outnumber the women, and I will spend a lot more time talking about everything involved in living together. I feel like I've learned a lot, having made many mistakes in dealing with frustrating situations. I'm not sure if I feel confident about the future, but I feel that I am a stronger person. ♀

"WOMAN-IDENTIFIED COLLECTIVES ARE NOTHING LESS THAN THE NEXT STEP TOWARDS A WOMEN'S REVOLUTION."

Rita-Mae Brown

My friend Ryon once wrote that she wanted "to gather up all the people that she loved and and live with them near the ocean forever." We tried that one. To our California farm we tempted friends we loved from all corners -- Brazil, New York. We imagined we could live with anybody, so when they brought along friends, husbands and lovers, we assumed harmony and compatible lifestyles would evolve naturally... We would make our family of diverse beings melt into one communal pot....

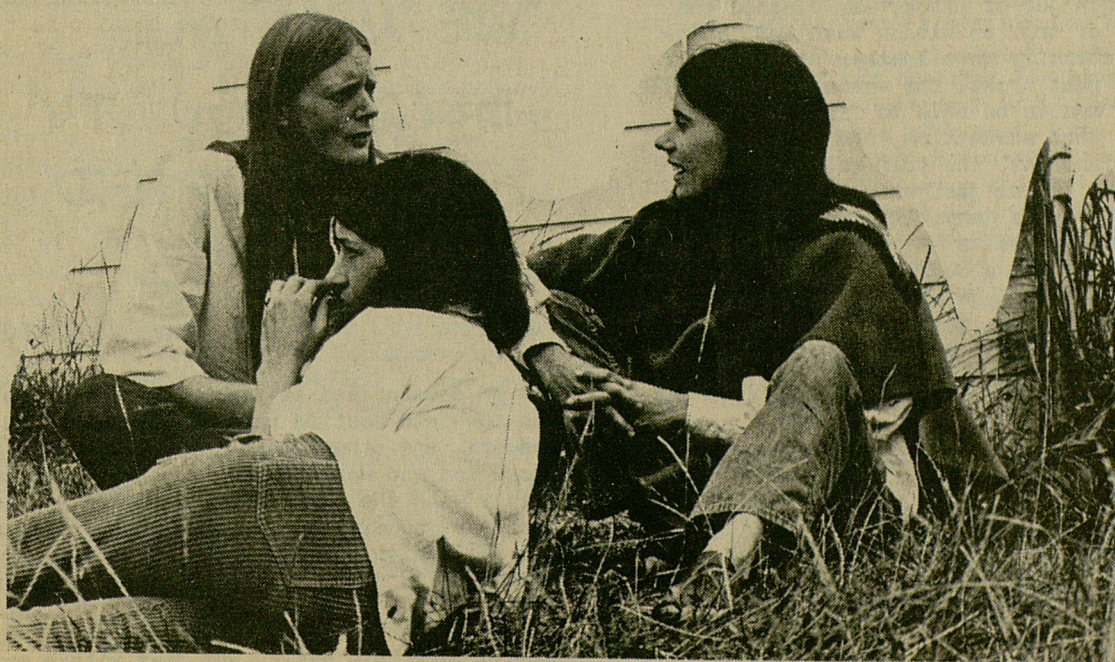
Ah, yes...

One liked the other but not the third. Two could stand only one of four. Three were fine together; five jarred. Divisions. One to one, it worked. But it was always five to one, or three to three, or two to four. It never worked. On the surface plane it sometimes flowed. Where it was rough, we made rules to live by -- and this made the surface smooth again but underneath things rumbled and quaked. It all blew up eventually. Sometimes it would be piece by piece, until we were distant and alienated from one another. Sometimes there were great steaming scenes. Some retreated inward, others to Vermont. More entered. New equations, new combinations, new results.

We learned that it is really difficult to

live with other people, to create and sustain honesty in relating, to work out all the things that must be worked out. Living together in a deeply sharing way means giving a great deal of energy to one another - and having a great commitment to stay at it. We always lived very closely in physical terms -- sharing all of our meals, our work, our time. Even the physical realities of our living together weren't easy to work out. We struggled with different paces, different priorities, different approaches. We tried to work out all of our differences without really grasping the fundamental problems. On any deeper level, our attempts to communicate weren't serious. Not because we didn't want to but because we didn't have the tools. We moved in polite spaces, trying not to suffocate, offend, or terrify each other. We withdrew from confrontation as though it were the very demon that would bring it all tumbling down. We sometimes touched obliquely. There were times we let defenses fall and stood heart-to-heart or fear-to-fear. High times, sharing and warmth. Not enough to teach us how to really touch, though. We turned away from intensity and vulnerability and didn't understand our turning. Our politics were very slow in developing, but were to give us some of the keys -- always retrospectively -- to what was happening.

continued



continued

It was my impulse to write just about living with women, because for the last two years I've lived just with women and living with men seems remote and irrelevant. But because part of my decision to live just with women came from realizations about living with men, it seems worth a few thousand words...

We lived mostly with men who were attached to the women we wanted to live with. Not a good beginning, for sure. But we were fairly open to it -- not separatists, then, at any rate. Not very feminist-conscious, though we were lesbians and certainly oppression-conscious.

From the very beginning, the women who lived on the farm took a primary part in the building, fencing, animal care, gardening and so forth. All of the multitude of skills and basic information we had to learn were taken on by anyone concerned or excited enough to take the initiative. Most of the men we lived with were seriously into writing and this (pre)occupation often limited their interest in and energy for the farm. Most of the women were very much into learning to farm...so things were balanced in a slightly different way than in most other commune-ities we knew. Still, we managed to fall into some classic traps. For a time all of us - men and women - assumed that the women were the primary housekeepers. It took some struggling and rule-making to equalize work.-- and it was never wholly equalized. The men, without exception, simply didn't have a house-keeping consciousness. And (understandably) they had no desire to develop one. So while they would take turns cooking and dish-washing, and even floor-sweeping (sometimes willingly, sometimes grudgingly), the hundred-thousand other details of keeping home together and functioning for a family of five to eight fell predictably upon the women. No man ever noticed that the tomato paste was running out, canned a single jar of preserves, cleaned the toilet bowl, or took on window washing! Machines and electricity were another pitfall. If the electric pump broke, the women automatically expected the men to be able to fix it - or the men acted on that assumption, and though we were all equally ignorant, the pump was their problem. (It took living just with women and one day a broken pump to demystify that one for us). Cars -- broken chainsaws -- anything mechanical -- we women took a cursory look and faded away... It seems strange now to see those areas where we presumed incapability -- they are so classic, it shocks me...but I'm still struggling with it in myself, forcing myself to look at it and deal with it.

Working together was sometimes a pleasure, more often a hassle. We usually worked in twos or threes or alone -- group projects always felt difficult to get together and sustain. It was impossible to share skills with many of the men -- they simply couldn't learn from a woman even though she knew how to do something they didn't. A good example was shingling the house -- two of us (women) had learned how from an old-time

carpenter friend, and had done a good part of the house ourselves. Of the three men we tried to teach our knowledge of shingling axes, measuring strings, 7" lap, etc., three went on to space shingles at every conceivable variance, work without the strings (so that the shingles career in arcs and angles), and generally disregard everything we suggested. This was a simple case of politics -- but we weren't seeing it that way then. We wondered at what was happening, realizing they would have listened to our (male) carpenter friend, and saw it as some peculiar personality problem... When we worked on a building project, the men inevitably related to it in contractor-fashion. There would be a boss -- a foreman who (though he be only slightly less ignorant than anyone else) would direct the workers. Building with other women was a cooperative venture -- we shared our ignorance, worked together to learn -- no boss, no need for one. These differences were felt but not explicit. We knew they were happening but didn't examine the whys.

Most difficult to live with was the inabil-



"WE MUST ALL
BECOME GUILTY
OF ATTEMPTED
APOCALYPSE."

- Robin Morgan

ity to communicate emotions that sent some of the men into hostile rages, others into sullen tempers, and others just into themselves. Those men who were halves of couples related mainly with the women they were with -- and mostly at her initiative. We found individually and collectively that the women were always having to force the issue of talking feelings with the men: "How are you feeling?" "What's happening with you?" "How do you think we should work this out?" Not just within couples, but within the group as a whole. For a

long time we each saw this as a personal-problem-in-relating-to-one-man. Gradually, it became clear as a pattern. The men themselves saw it too and either couldn't or wouldn't change it. The women always took it upon themselves to deal with it -- or lived with the silences. The men worked together, lived together as part of a family, but rarely talked about themselves with each other and rarely touched.

When the women of the farm became part of a women's consciousness-raising group, we began to learn a new kind of communication, a new method of sharing and thinking about our experiences. Woman to woman, there had always been openness -- not perfect and not without distance and difficulty -- but there was a mutual willingness to talk, to explore feelings, to try to reach each other. Simultaneously, a lot of love and tenderness grew. In the painfulness of our first woman-awareness, we came close to one another. We experienced the first breaking open of roles and patterns -- the delight in reading "The Politics of Housework" and recognizing home, the anger of realizing "oppression" was not just a rhetorical phrase. We grew woman-high, woman-conscious.

At the same time we began to understand the politics of living with men. The hierarchical work structures, the issues of control and power that had been seething under the surface. We came to see that an inability to talk out feelings wasn't just one man's personal problem -- nor was resorting to physical violence (actual, threatened, or implied). We began seeing how we all related to one another -- woman to woman, woman to man, couples and singles, as a group and as individuals. All of these elements that determined how we lived day to day pivoted on the basic man/woman relationship. Personal, political, cultural, psychological -- very, very deep. Working them out would take more and more energy and time as we became more and more conscious of their depth and complexities. Our continuing to live with men would have to mean giving primary energy to working out these problems. We could no longer not see them, and we could no longer excuse them as personal trips. All of the time that we were still struggling through this, the men talked about beginning a group of their own -- and never did. If they were pushed by the women, they would talk of it --but by themselves, they had neither the incentive nor the need. They were alternately sullen and withdrawn when we came home really high from our group -- or they were supportive and encouraging. The sullenness and the fact that they never attempted to deal with their own consciousness-raising made us suspicious of the "support".

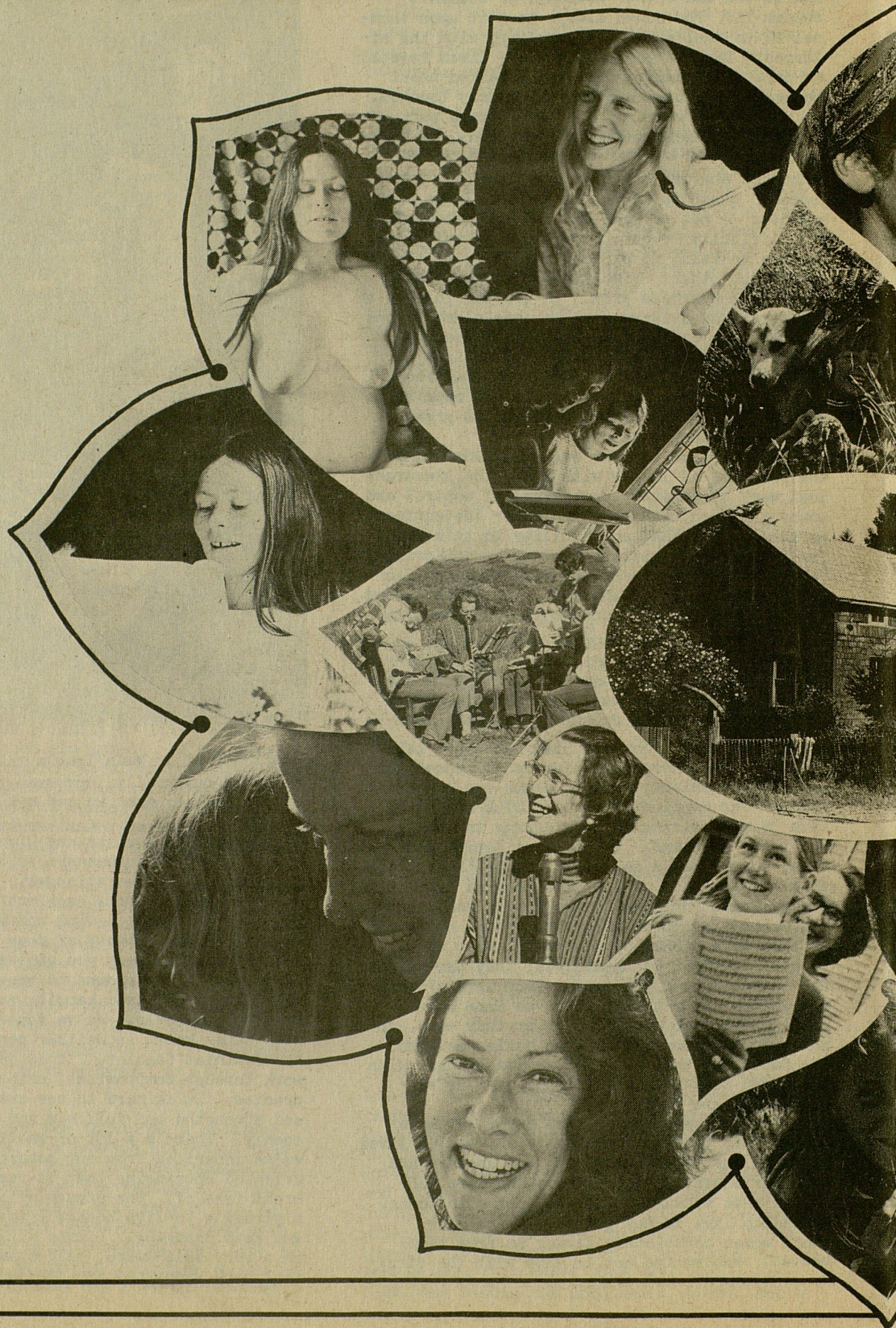
As we came to understand ourselves more and more in the relationship to the men we lived with, in our relationships to one another and to other women, we became more and more conscious that we wanted to live just with women. Wanted to live in the growth that happens among women consciously trying to free themselves. And wanted not to live with the strug-



gle inherent in male/female relationships -- a struggle culturally impressed for centuries and as real as ever in our new new "hip" counterculture. We knew that we wanted to give our best energy to our sisters, focusing our lives on our woman-consciousness as the way to grow the most and be the strongest. And besides, it was the space we were happiest with and highest in. Loving women, living and working together in the comfortableness of deep understanding... sisterhood, whatever you choose to call it.... It gave us a new ground to grow from.

"And they lived happily ever after..." Well, not exactly. We've found that living with other women is neither perfect revolution nor feminist Camelot. It is just as hard to work through compromises, priorities, idiosyncracies. It is hard to see one another's needs and strengths and failings and always respond openly. There's a lot of emotional bondage we've inherited from our heterosexual couple-oriented upbringing that is really difficult to break free of. The struggle is still real -- a struggle to live honestly together, to grow and keep changing. Living with women puts me in a very self-aware, self-examining place. I feel both supported and challenged to make

continued







continued

steps in new directions, to really unearth myself from all those years of American-woman upbringing. There is a sense of comfort living with women that is like the comfort of a close woman friend -- being able to talk and hear and be heard -- understanding in your heart, in your head, where she's coming from. There is a lot of love and sensitivity in women -- conditioned as we are to serve others, we must have developed some supersensitivity to other's needs. This allows us to live together in a state of what I'd call loving anarchy, and what a friend rephrased "responsible anarchy." We need neither structure nor rules to live together. We find ourselves sharing the work freely, being aware of what things must be done and what can be let go for more important priorities or frivolities... we can move freely and balance our needs with each other's. The equality of a woman's household is centering -- living with people must involve self-love, for women all too often end up self-sacrificing. Women living together can encourage self-love, understanding that it is critical to self-respect and wholeness. If we encourage each other to demystify all the areas of living that have been closed to women, we do that best by living together and having to/being able to deal with them all.

Phillippe, aged 7, who comes to stay with us, looked around the kitchen one morning and asked, "How come it's only ladies here all the time?" "Women," I corrected, many flashes simultaneous in my head. After my explanation of how we liked being with other women, working together and living together, he concluded "It's not fair." A seven year old's version of "You're separatists!" For a long time that one stopped me -- until I realized that yes, I am --

we are -- separatist. That for me, right now, separatism seems the best and most realistic way to women's freedom because separatism is the quickest and most workable way for women to unlearn limitations, to find out who they can be, to become whole. Not only do I feel separatism to be a viable political lifestyle for women -- I believe it's the basic means toward a women's revolution. That seems very rhetorical, written out that way. It is grounded in my years of living communally with men, with women and children, and now, just with women. I feel that my most growing, exploring, and changing has been done when I've lived with women -- that I've discovered more of who I am, and learned to do more, to rely on myself, to have confidence and courage. For me, separatism means living apart from men -- either alone or with other women -- in an attempt to find that wholeness, for myself and for all women. Separatism means giving primary energy -- intellectual, physical, emotional -- to my sisters, to myself.

Today I live with one other woman (and assorted creatures, plants, objects, unformed free energy). Two years ago there were four of us, and we called ourselves a "woman's collective." Now we call ourselves a "woman's farm." We imagine we will again be a women's collective or perhaps we still are. This summer there will be eight or nine women living here. The numbers seem irrelevant -- we live in, take part in the creation of a woman's space. It feels good and positive -- a place where we all can push our limits, a place of woman-energy and woman-imagination. A friend sent us her hand-made card last December. "Celebrate Sisterhood this Season", it said. It is still on the kitchen wall. The message is clear and simple and stays with us. I believe in it. ♀

Dear Sisters:

Really like your magazine. Last issue was great. Although I'm a nomad, a migrant and not a settled farmer, I still consider myself a "country woman".

Do you realize what you're doing? Civilization obviously has to go back to the old drawing board, this time her drawing board. Which is nothing else but agriculture, that basic underlay which made the whole trip possible. Woman initiated most of the crafts, men coopted them- to the point where even the housewife is only a cog in men's technology. She has lost control of her environment, all she can do is "maintain" it. When women leave their suburban houses or city apartments to take jobs they are still and even more in a man-created environment; even if they rise high they are still cogs. The only way out is to start from scratch, literally, in the soil, to build up a whole better system. May take a few generations but what we can't do our daughters will. My own three plan to make their lives on the land.

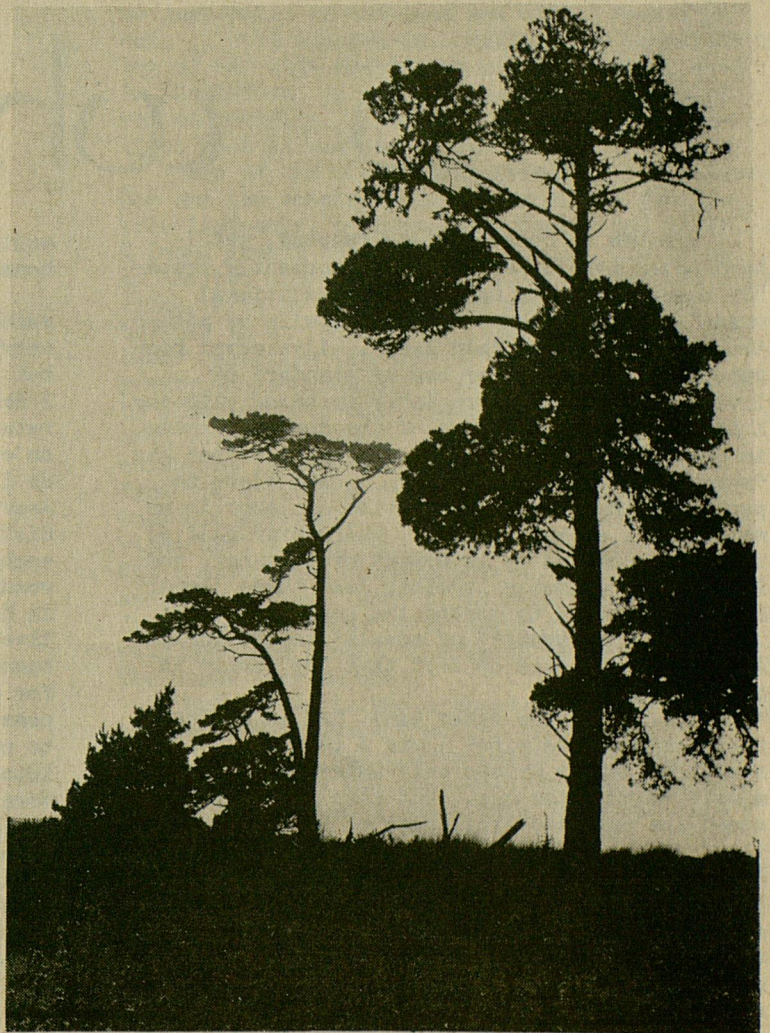
Love, *Meg*

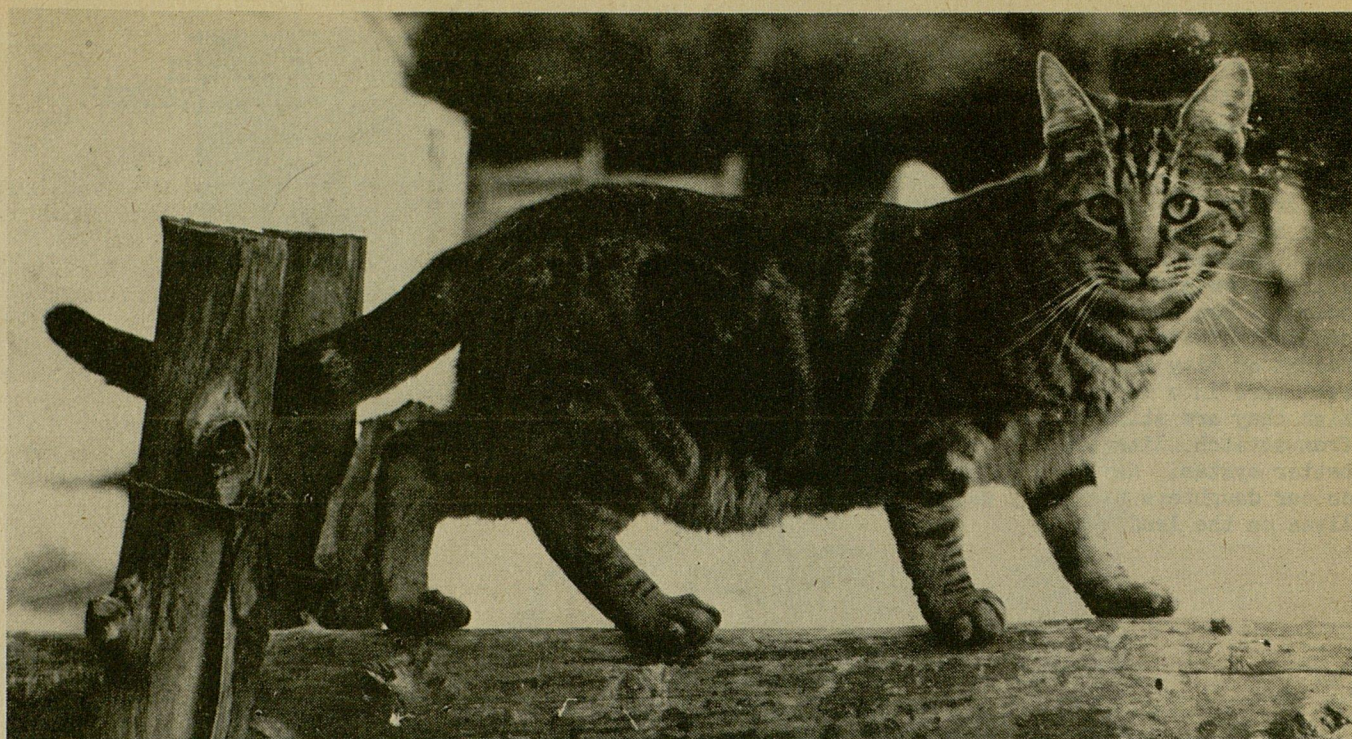
TRIP TO THE CITY
FOR CULTURAL PURPOSES

Steps echo
on marble
I touch
smiling
centuries old
athlete
find guess what
chewing gum

LOVE POEM

You exhaust
yourself
my friend,
your frenzy
leaves me
polite.
The lightest
touch on one
cheek by another
has meant
more.





now what ?

I'm new to consciousness raising, yet I have never participated, and consequently probably never shall, in many of the traditional woman's roles. I have not been a wife or mother, though I've been an "old lady". I've never been supported by a man, nor has my standard of living been raised appreciably by being with one. I have never taken charge of the domestic scene in order that my man might be free to pursue his "more important work", though I came close to participating in such a division of labor in my most recent extended family, where over half of us were supported by an absent breadwinner, and kept home and family together lest these jeopardize his freedom to spread the good news about living in a "community of equals" to the world. And I've never said or felt that "my family is my whole life."

I have, on the other hand, had an old man whenever possible since I was a teenager. I've sought to better my own self-image by attaching myself to an alter-ego. But I've also experienced the pain and challenges of being alone, the constant effort just to hold myself together, the surge of emotional fullness I enjoy when new growth is seemingly rewarded by a new love, the slacking off and then disappointment when I discover that the struggle is not over; and I have never carried it beyond that point. I have not lived alone without looking to the next relationship, and I have not lived with the same person or people for more than two years at the

most (usually much less) since I left my parents' home.

I was asked some months ago why I've lived such a vagabond, discontinuous life, and finally answered, "It just happened." Not each choice, but the totality. About a year and a half ago, I decided Enough of That. No investment, no returns. At that time, I was beginning to consider an extended family ideal for myself and many of us learning our way out of what is sick in Amerika. I believed that it helps temper the distorted perspectives of two people focused on each other, that it provides a way out of the romantic or role-defined love that usually ends in divorce or its alternate-life-style alternative. So I joined an intimate extended family committed to remaining together, but we broke up for sociologically predictable reasons: no purpose to hold us together beyond a commitment to personal growth and change. While I had come into the family alone, I left with a man. We were still committed to living in an extended family, and were invited into a second one with more externally directed purpose, as well as fantasies of intimacy, land, planting and growth together. Now that has come to an end for me and for the two of us. I have twice undertaken living in an extended family, and twice willingly abandoned these families in favor of living with a man. Like a woman after her second divorce, I am questioning the very institution of extended families.

The choice has been difficult because Hoo, the man I've lived with for nearly two years, felt more certain he wanted to leave this family than I did. We started out in the autumn on a completely undeveloped piece of land Robert was buying (we would all be equal owners one day), and we included six adults, (Robert and River, Max and Leona, Hoo and myself), six boys and a little girl. The family seemed to offer all my last family was lacking -- maturity (boys already closer to being adults than many of the men in my previous family), intellectual stimulation, commitment -- but especially security, the carrot that has tempted me right through to my present wistful second-thoughts -- the security of a home, of not being alone (each of my encounters with River feels so valuable that it is tempting to keep doing the laundry with her as a less vulnerable way of soliciting her friendship), even of career guidance and possibilities (once the institutions had abandoned me and vice-versa, I found that they had done little to prepare me for making it on my own; I haven't felt I can do

right by myself if left to my own resources.) I stayed through the winter seeking these things from the family, and just as spring and finally a water system were arriving, decided to move up the street with Hoorenga.

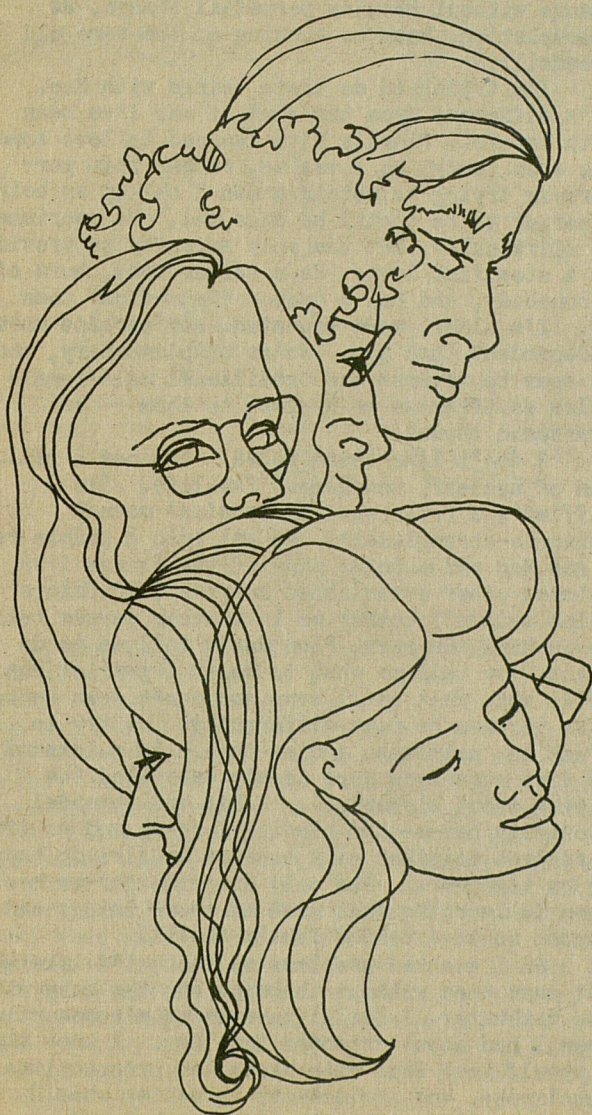
Now I wonder why? The worst winter in seventy years, through which we had not facilities adequate for aesthetic subsistence, through which we were all thrown together, six boys and the rest of us, in one ugly, dirty room night after night, while we tried to enjoy our dinner? The immobilizing lack of money that was (for the first time in my life) no longer a choice once we decided to live in this county? I'd like to think not, that I can buck up under such temporary physical deprivation; I have before.

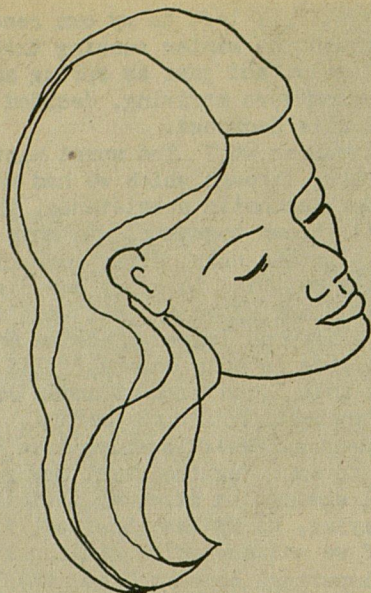
The personal relationships were much more important to me. For the first few months, I was almost stunned to discover that this family was not saying, as my last one had, "You and me and all of we and how we're getting it on are the most important concern I can think of." Instead we actually said, "You take care of your shit, I'll take care of mine." I soon managed to formulate reasons that this was the only feasible way to live communally and not get bogged down in one another's needs. But instead of flowing along parallel (peaceful co-existence), we just built up tensions and didn't work them out. I felt engaged in a subliminal, competitive tug of war with people who couldn't admit, even to themselves, that it was happening; a tug of war so insidious I had to doubt my own perceptions that it was happening.

One of the most severe frictions was between Hoo and the unacknowledged head of the family (the landowner, professional, father and elder.) I found myself caught in the middle, listening to the two sides of the story, both true and both false, with my bias favoring whomever I was talking to at the moment. I couldn't integrate their realities into one of my own, so I felt pretty schizophrenic. I couldn't or didn't want to dismiss their realities, because I didn't want to dismiss them. Sexual undercurrents quickened the tension, but Robert's withdrawal from Hoo's obvious hostility provided a kind of band-aid solution. I didn't feel cheated, since withdrawal was my inclination also, but neither did I assert the independence and autonomy I assume are mine. Many of my relationships in the family were colored by my being so closely allied with Hoo, and I made no attempt to escape that. The issue lies dormant.

Each of us talked a great deal about equality as one of our *raison d'etres*. Of course, we tried to divide the chores and decision-making along non-sexist and non-adult chauvinist lines. But we were unable to extricate ourselves from a gross inequality while we were dependent upon one man's nearly twenty years of career pursuit that provided us with material needs most of the rest of us couldn't have paid for ourselves. We called the condition temporary; it was also premature. I was as indebted as the average credit-card holder, and the only repayment I could find (no winter employment in these parts), was "back to the kitchen (laundromat, grocery store, school run, etc.)."

continued





continued

Perhaps I could have found a more creative way to do my part. Max and Robert are (to overstate it) non-pragmatic quasi-geniuses, and seem to escape some of the responsibilities the women bear. Leona supports their abstract fantasizing ("I'd hate to think I'd done anything to crush his enthusiasm, it's one of my favorite things about him,") despite the increased maintenance this sometimes demands of her. River has fought steadily for her own space and priorities, though the temporary needs make for slow progress. It's not that any of us have had to work terribly hard, especially by country standards, or that the men worked less hard. It's just that I see the men in typically masculine pursuits, and the women trying to break out of typically feminine pursuits, namely the roles inadvertently created by the men.

One role I was eager to adopt was that of surrogate mother. I thought it would be great to share the wonder of childhood without the commitment and responsibility of being a parent. Instead I shared much of the daily drudge, while for their good times the kids went elsewhere. In fact, everyone in the family did that, and that reminded me a lot of how it was back in the tract with my parents. We almost never, ever got high together (singing, dancing, worshipping, building, coping, loving, rapping, travelling, anything), and it sometimes seemed like our only contact was confrontation. So we let honesty and being upfront fall by the wayside, and just did what was needed to keep the family together. "Just like home."

I don't feel guilty for leaving the children, despite Leona's talk of commitment to them, or talk of their having opened up and become vulnerable to us. Only with Juli, Leona's daughter, did I experience real growing together. But she has her own mother, and doesn't govern my choices any more than any other friend. I like her and I like to play with her.

And I like the other people in the family. I've just been talking about why I'm not living with them, about the roles I rejected. To quote an old and useful communal attitude: "I love

you, I just don't want to live with you." I feel keenly the ambivalence and confusion that accompany a parting of ways, leaving people and land I have touched only briefly, but I feel new energy and new possibilities with this change. This change may not seem terribly radical, since I've decided to remain in a very traditionally structured relationship through it all. Yet I've felt peculiarly alone and willing to take responsibility for myself in this choice, even though it now includes Hoo.

When I try to understand and express my reasons for "living with a man", (staying with Hoorenga), I'm faced with a multitude of dichotomies, and honoring the yin-yang of reality, I admit that both conflicting aspects may be true, though I feel that as we live through this newborn choice (to live with each other alone), one or the other side will emerge more strongly. Right now I want to change my pattern of leaving behind or running away from failures, without dragging out a failure. I want to work through our difficulties, without hanging on to a stultifying relationship at any price. I want to choose a path that will allow me to grow and change without letting perpetual change, as incompleteness, keep me running on the same old treadmill.

I'm trying to do these things with Hoo. He's different from the kind of men I've been with before. Finally I've learned to love someone even though he loves me, rather than perversely trying to obtain a man I set up as being superior to me (until he digs me). He nourishes me spiritually, but the only security he provides is a steadfast love. He a better cook, more of a homebody, and has a deeper "intuition" than me. I'm older, more educated, and perhaps more independent than him. We're complementary, and we seem to reverse the traditional male/female roles as often as we conform to them -- or transcend them.

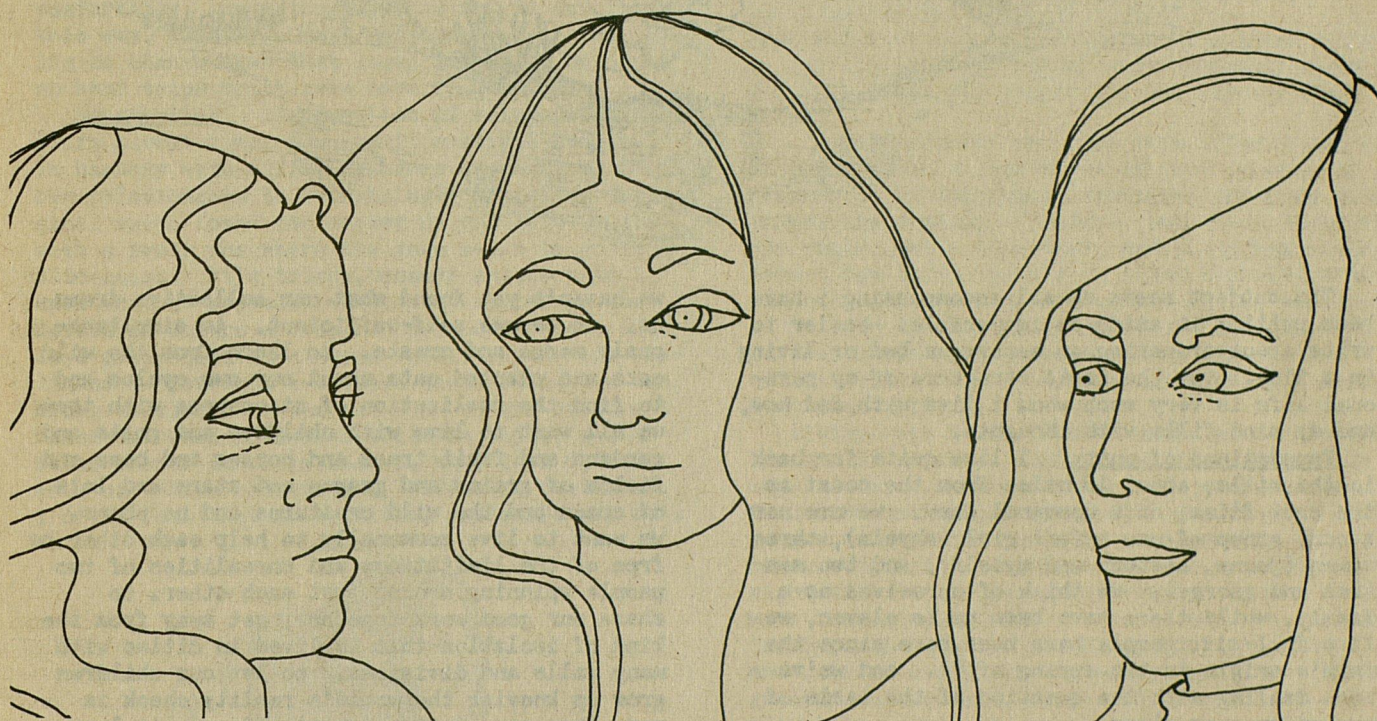
I don't like those roles. I'm not a real fan of nuclear, monogamous families. I'm baffled and frightened by couples' mutual entangle-stranglement. We get into a couple rut. I see Hoo and me doing many of the things I've watched other established couples do. Things which wouldn't bother me in another person bother me in him. He says, "You don't tell me to do right, you tell me what to do." I predict how he'll act, what he'll say, and can't even recognize it when he does differently. We try to break the patterns, and as though in quicksand, we find ourselves more deeply embroiled (we bicker about bickering). Habit and physical proximity become the binding forces, and we find ourselves together only because we already happen to be together. The only surprise for me has been in learning that most of these things can happen in an extended family as well.

So I see the problems we face; I'd like to get past them without throwing out the baby with the bathwater. I feel I have fewer misconceptions than I had about extended families. I know that I myself must deal with distorted perspectives, loneliness, and aimlessness no matter whom I choose to live with. So today with Hoo feels right. Tomorrow . . .

Am I My Sister's Daughter's Keeper?

I live with a woman. We want to live together and we each try hard to keep each other happy. This includes being upfront with the irritations which arise between two people who are close. But I also live with her daughter. We don't want to live together and we don't work on keeping each other happy, and we are not upfront about the irritations which arise between us. She feels stuck because she is afraid to live away from her mother. She has adequate income from child support and handles her own money. But there is no precedent for eleven year old girls to live independently. She could live with her father, or in the community lodge nearby. But she continues to live with us and I feel oppressed by her. She is a fine, intelligent, imaginative, capable eleven year old. If I didn't have to live with her, or if we could live on a more equal basis, I would enjoy her a lot more.

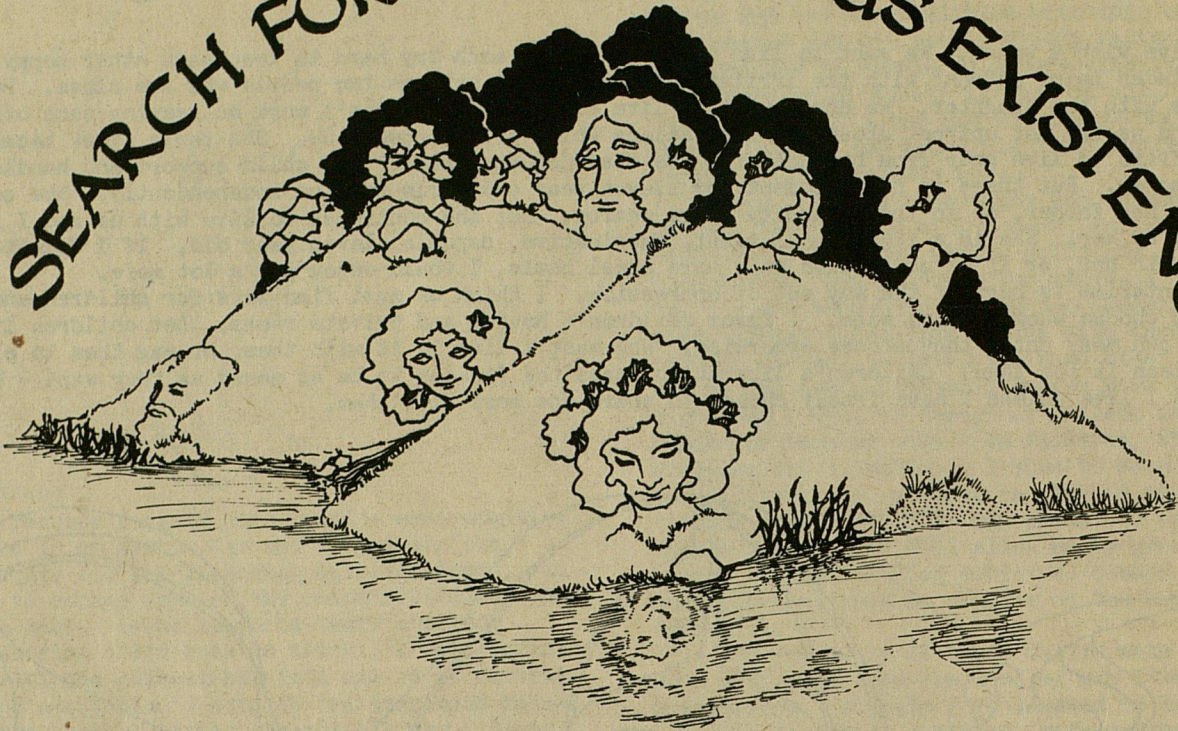
Voluntarism is part of the way out of oppression. I think we must find ways for children and adults to choose whom to live with. I favor children's houses and private rooms. Let children live in their own mess until they choose otherwise. Why must I live in it with them, or nag them to clean it, or clean it for them? Children's liberation means the freedom to be as messy as they want - but not where I live unless I have freely chosen to share the mess with them.



I recognize that I am not especially interested in children at this time --her's, mine, or anyone else's. I am interested in my growth. To me that means learning skills, releasing and channeling my creative energy, studying politics,, being with women in the movement. My children both live away from me, one at boarding school and one only 200 feet away at the community lodge. I noticed that I enjoy my children more and interfere with them less when they don't live with me, when they visit me by choice. Because of what I am learning through the women's movement, I am not into martyrdom or servanthood any longer. I went through a two day guilt crisis in January when I faced every motherhood cliché and decided that my growth as a person was important to me, maybe eventually to the children. I probably wasn't neglecting or damaging them as I was fearing, though I certainly wasn't acting like my mother did or as I have seen my friends act. I insisted on privacy, on time to work without interruption, on not being playfully or angrily cuffed around, and I quit hovering and placating. Whew! What was left was a strange feeling of distance and respect. At first it felt empty but as I got used to it, I find it feels good and it leaves lots of space for me.

My friend's daughter is unusually mature. She doesn't cling and whine. She is generally cheerful and busy with friends and projects. She and I are in conflict because neither of us feels she chose to live with the other. I resent her lack of cooperation in the work around the house and her carelessness with her debris. She resents my attitude of ownership and my nagging. We don't see how to escape each other until she leaves home. She is planning on building a tree house this summer. I hope this gives us some of the space we each need.

SEARCH FOR HARMONIOUS EXISTENCE



The subject seems so all-encompassing i have been putting it aside as impossible. easier to write about preparing an asparagus bed or living in a tipi. yet the basic structure of my personal life is very much whom i live with and how, and my mind fills with thoughts.

Foundations of unity I live quite far back in the hills, about 18 miles from the coast as the crow flies, on a communal farm. we are now a core group of one infant girl (shyela), three women (jenny, heather and myself), and two men (bob and george). we think of ourselves as a family. while there have been up to eleven, we five full-size people have been here since the farm's origin in the spring of 71. and we've been dealing with the question of the basis of our union ever since.

we are brought together by a strong love for each other, by a dedication to a somewhat tribal lifestyle, by love and respect for the natural rhythm and growth of the country. we long to get back in touch with the basic elements of our existence, to play and work hard with the life of the earth and her cycles, to live harmoniously with whatever it is that brings us further awareness! so far we are succeeding as a commune. the direction is definitely growth rather than decay. the energy is positive hard work, not slack. the farm emerges from the land as we work with that human power to mold and create with a consciousness toward ecological and spiritual harmony.

whose dream is emerging? that is unclear. there is no leader with a dominant dream. none of us that i'm aware of has a vision of the total farm as something specific. in long term

we haven't yet found what our collective dream is. to become self-sufficient. to simultaneously merge and create. to learn from the wild oats and planted oats about our own cycles and to find the realization of at-oneness with them. we all want to live with children and goats and gardens and fruit trees and horses and bees and fields of grains and grapes and stars and lots of space and the wild creatures and no phone. we want to live communally to help each other be free of the limitations and unrealities of two people spinning around just each other. to share our good work together, get away from the kind of isolation that is lived in cities with many walls and divisions. to let our children grow up knowing the world's reality check is more than one or two parent's ideas. to learn how to love openly. to have a family that does not grow stale from the same leadership.

so many people come and tell us that they've never known such a "together" group. we recognize that and also wonder why we still then have so much struggle left to play out.

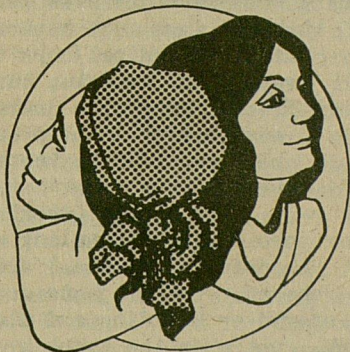
partially it is that in the making of a farm there are practical dream-thoughts to actualize. and though our love and bonds are strong, we are quite different in each mind's perceptions of reality and in how we each see our role here. and when those visions differ, what happens? some people have left when the visions were distinctly different. we are very isolated without any power or phone, and community (town) relations are rare and difficult. to be happy here, one really has to want to live "out there."

Format our physical set-up centers around the community cabin. this was the only building

on the land when we came here, serving its original purpose as a hunting and logging shelter. we completely re-did the insides and built it into a large kitchen room and a smaller library/music room. no one sleeps here. it is the central place of all the farm activities and of all the meals. we eat dinner together every evening. scattered in the trees on the waves of this mountaintop land are our individual dwellings. each quite different from the others and very much in tune with its builder/dwellers. jenny and bob have a redwood shake cabin, heather a yurt, and george and i a tipi. this set-up works out very successfully, as it encompasses a central focus of unity with the very real need for privacy.

financially, we operate as an entity. an inheritance from my parents' death has bought us this life on a mountaintop. incredible. although most of the money came through me, it is for us all and under everyone's jurisdiction. we operate on a budget and keep detailed accounts. everyone contributes what they can. we live very comfortably. even though it is not in our heads this way, legally i have most power. we are trying to change even that legal set-up to be equal so head trips don't even have to crop up.

Metaphysics the question of metaphysical beliefs always comes up. is it possible to live in harmony with differing basic assumptions about our relationship to Everything? two of our original seven found the answer no and left to live with a group who share the same means to god-consciousness. it's tricky, because on one hand i know that we are all religiously united in the Spirit of Nature and share perhaps our most intense group high in singing spirituals of many religions. yet when i believe that meditation can bring us closer to the answers of our culture's upheavals when political activism fails, and another thinks it an avoidance, that is a difference of entire orientation, different realities. i often feel that my spiritual needs are not met.



we look at one situation and can see it in five different ways. we can do the same job and one puts the emphasis on result and expediency, and another on carefulness and completion. that can sometimes appear as irreconcilable differences when the one wants efficient modern tools to do a job quickly and easily and then have more time for other creative activity such as writing, the other understands and agrees on some level, but finds it a power-over-natural-rhythms trip and therefore offensive. when the other wants simple means to do a job thoughtfully and with as

much contact with the participants as possible (i.e. a mule driven harrow makes one more aware of the earth than a truck-driven one), the one can dig it, but finds it wasteful to our limited time. so where is our unified direction? toward sane use of technology or total non-participation with it.

Children. We all love children very much, yet on the question of which is most important between breast feeding and the complete sharing of answering an infant's hunger needs, we are divided.

Shyela. I watch her grow and realize how much i feel a vital part of our life here is children... regeneration and pure love taking new forms. living the revitalizing cycles. the goat kids and foals of our own kind. I am crazy about children. and yet i seriously wonder if i would give birth to or adopt children if i lived alone or just in a couple (which seems somewhat alone as well), both for myself and the sake of the child.



my pregnancy and labor were experiences of miracles (with a fair share of pain to keep it earthly!), of finding my seemingly separate self become the reality of unity. her birth involved the whole family plus some, and i was not alone. then a new life. myself in quiet blissful mind at this beauty who joined us and in the ability of my body to create, produce, and sustain with perfect health and happiness the life of this child. child whom i know is not mine, yet to whom i am devoted.

living here these days i am the most into child care in general. george and i share equally shyela's care. bob, heather and jenny put in much love and enough care that i do not feel burdened and have time to do my other work. they however do not have the energy for spending the night with her or being interrupted by her needs more than occasionally. we all say boo nuclear family, yet even in this extended family where she relates constantly to all of us, there is the grouping of her and george and me which we all play into. this is one of the most complicated issues of all. my direction is for all of us to be free of the mother/child, parent/child limitations. the unresolved thoughts in my mind say both that i want to be a focus for her if and when she needs one and maintain ultimate responsibility for her; and also that she should grow up with the freedom to choose whatever focus she wants without having that focus pre-established. so many factors come into play. when she was first born there was much discussion about sharing her care and responsibility and how much of a total community child she is. it was a horrible time to discuss it because i had been away for the last part of my pregnancy, and all the changes about childcare ideas in everyone's thoughts were unspoken until immediately after she was born. i wanted her to be breast-fed as i would every infant. sharing the feeding for a newborn is a delicate issue because bottles at that stage

continued

continued

can cause self-weaning by the baby and insufficient production in the mother. so the infant becomes dependent on one person to satisfy her main need. the fear is that already that begins to establish an irreversible bond of dependence. my faith is that a fully satisfied nursing baby has the opportunity to complete without frustration her dependence on the body that was once her, and become then a more independent, more healthy, and happier child.

much pain was involved those first long weeks. i felt that some of my sisters and brothers were not compassionate with my position with this first child born from me and first born to the family and were pressing me to make a gargantuan leap of unattachment in our first experience with children. this at a time of emotional and physical instability having just begun recovery from pregnancy and childbirth. they felt i was being possessive and exclusive and setting up a limiting basis for shyela.

now heather, jenny and bob are finding they don't have much energy for her after all, and sometimes i have had to plead for some reprieve from childcare. quite ironic. it seems that two things are operating. one is the realization that they misjudged their childcare energy now that. for the first time, or once again after many changes, they are seeing what is involved. (george on the other hand is much more into it than he had thought). the other is that during those first weeks when there are not a lot of obvious ways of relating to an infant other than feeding, perhaps their energy line got cut off.

now that she is seven moons old and it is spring, there are infinite ways of relating with her and it is much easier for everyone to be involved. as many bottles as people want to give her now is fine with me and with her (true since about three months old).

if there had been others with milk, sharing the feeding that way seems ideal. when that's not possible, other women letting the infant suck when not hungry fulfills a large part of the nursing needs. i feel that is closer to nursing than feeding her from a bottle - and it allows both to share a very uniquely beautiful non-platonic relationship.

whatever our particular complications, shyela is already a very healthy, open to everyone, happy child -- and i attribute a huge part of that to her communal life, a life which is infinite and circular by its very nature rather than limited and definite. so back to dreams -- mine include a lot of children. those born of people who live here and those adopted. i am learning how possible it is to live with children and not be drained of the rest of your life in the process.

Compromising compromises must always be made to live in harmony. but as jenny says, when the compromises outweigh the beauties of group living, we fail. when one thinks compromise and sacrifice make for spiritual growth and another thinks it is self-limiting in a closing way, is

this too great a difference for true unity? when one feels the sexual oppression of men over women victimizes men as well and that on a very high but nevertheless obtainable level we are the same and another feels there is no ground for true and deep communication between women and men -- is this just too incompatible for successful unity?

our union here usually feels very good. sometimes it is horrible and we get tremendously paranoid of each other. over and over it's "let's keep the communication wide open, completely out front and we can't get hurt." but how tremendously hard that is to sustain. if someone had asked last november, i would have said "i don't know why in hell i'm living with these people who make me so unhappy and don't believe in natural raising of children." i think the more basic we become, the higher and more in touch we get with all that is vaster than we. others don't think that basic is necessarily preferable. we got through that time-- still with flashes of bitterness and unresolved questions-- yet closer and more understood. i think. the optimist of the group.

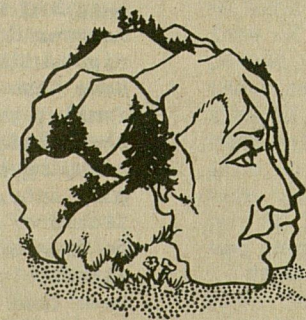
Sexism three women and two men working honestly toward an end to sexism in our lives seems like a good balance. more women would be even more balanced. more men without more women feels off-balanced at this point. heather verges on going where there are no men. role liberation we all see as vital to sane and healthy living. it is a point of basic importance to our group function. the road is long and hard, yet we are all on it, at different stages perhaps, armed as we may be with our defenses. it makes me aware of our separateness as well, which is sad in conjunction with my search for at-oneness. george sings in a song for my birthday, "...find the quiet

central eye/where we are all free/only in this space of hearts can woman and man be./ o it's a long sweet journey leading home/from darkness into light/ when our ways must separate/they later will unite./ours the necessary road/ we take, our will is free;/ and in the journey we must learn/ to help each other be./ we shall be free my sisters we shall be free."

the chores (cooking, diapers, animals, hauling water, chopping wood, etc.) are all shared. the projects are all

shared -- building and planting and such. yet when the truck breaks down the men do almost all of the repairs.

the women have to find things for the men, who are much speedier. and so many trips are still laid down (of course -- we have an entire culture to overcome). shyela gets presents and i write all the notes. bob makes threats of violence when angry. i am not at the point, except in flashes, of booting all the men off the mountain. i think our collective efforts are true ones and progress exist however slowly. it is still true that i work much better and more evenly with the



women. yet my love for these men makes the efforts worthwhile- we are all willing to learn from and teach each other. what we haven't overcome are the initial ego responses to criticism and our egos are not only individual but sexist.

Sexual sharing and what of sexual energy? people of older generations and many others often ask (amazing the frequency of the phrase), "what happens when two people look at each other across the dinner table and the fire lights up?" well, we have shared our love making in different combinations of 2 and 3 and 4, and everybody goes thru some changes every time. jealousy and uncertainty crop up and yell or quietly probe. yet, even though we approach the subject differently, we all want to free ourselves of those emotions which limit us and each other and bring us down. i know in myself i am making progress toward not only granting my partner freedom to love and express his love as he wishes, but to love that energy myself. when i am angry and hurt, our relationship gets burdensome. when i am accepting and happy about it our relationship flowers. and the incredible thing i'm finding is that these emotions are controllable. i can let myself wallow or i can say 'fine' and turn my thoughts and energy elsewhere. this is new- i've done quite a bit of wallowing and when i take a deep breath and accept actively, i find myself closer as well to george's lover. and next time i don't even have to take a deep breath. this is not to say that my emotions are what determines the atmosphere. they combine with those of the other people involved-- but when i am in the position described, they are very powerful.

a large part of it is how i feel independently about the new lover. if the love is there between her or him and me ourselves, a sexual sharing with george is quite fine. if i don't feel that love in myself i get disgusted and think lowly of george. such judgements. slowly, slowly, the judgements begin to fade as i realize more fully the transient and arbitrary nature of them (a judgement about a judgement). so when that fire between other-than-couples happens among the family, i generally feel quite happy about it. however, a factor here is that the people involved are there all the time, which makes it quite different from the visiting lover who soon leaves. we still all live together and must live with those emotions and their resulting emotions. that's much of what's hard for some of us when others get together. plus, the women have not yet really explored our love sexually. obviously it's harder to begin-- sexual sister-love is much newer. does the sexual intimacy make my relationships with my brothers stronger than with my sisters? i strongly think not. and i believe it's because for me a sexual experience with someone i love is very intense, but no more so than when we get blown away singing spirituals together or when i dance. for others, it is a stronger experience. this is also new for me. when george wants to make love with someone now, it strikes me as a means of expressing love that is there-- not stepping into a new dimension.

when i am with heather or jenny or other close sisters and the love is flowing intensely, it may never get into a sexual direction. but with men i almost inevitably get that vibe as if it's the only way to express the love, and that's often not the way i feel at all. so far the only sexual sharing i've had with sisters has involved men, and then the focus is much different. the whole area is very exciting to me--finding freedom, not to be open to any 'groovey' man who wants a screw, as is the case with so much of what men think the new sexual freedom for women is, but to be finding new sharing of a magnificent expression of already existing love.

growing together

the problem that keeps coming up in this writing is so many subjects that could be covered--so some just get breezed over. i do not mean for them to sound simple. communal living is very complicated. indeed it would be far easier to live alone in some ways--do everything the way you want, no interpersonal hassles and miscommunications and upsets. yet my strong belief is that this lifestyle, if worked on and believed in, can be much more freeing for each person involved. we try to give each other the freedom to do whatever each chooses, knowing we share an internalized awareness of the community's needs and projects.

in living together, we can share our lives with all these plants and animals and projects that no one of us could do alone. most areas take on one or two people's leading energy even if everyone is involved. this way, my concern for the goats, for instance---even to spend time with them---feels taken care of by j and h's direct responsibility; and i can pump mine into the garden. i can spend an afternoon dancing or wandering and know other needs are being fulfilled (although for me personally it is very hard to take time off from community work because there is always something that needs doing) i don't have to empty the shitter whenever the job comes around. and what joy there is in doing something all together---the energy increases by geometric leaps. and when we sing....

living together also means being a part of what appears to be someone else's disruptions. sometimes others don't want to be bothered; sometimes others are drained and interrupted by one's personal distress and come on quite incompassionately. i think we have much to learn about compassion. but usually, when the initial period of pain and paranoia and avoidance peaks out in a burst of shared emotion, everyone's energy starts coming together to work it out. but we still go through those self-important avoidance periods where communicating seems an impossibility. negative energy has a way of being heavier than equally positive energy. so we all walk around bummed out for awhile. i am so affected by what's happening in the air at the moment...it is hard for me to be realistic about other times. this spring has generally been quite happy and smooth and uni-

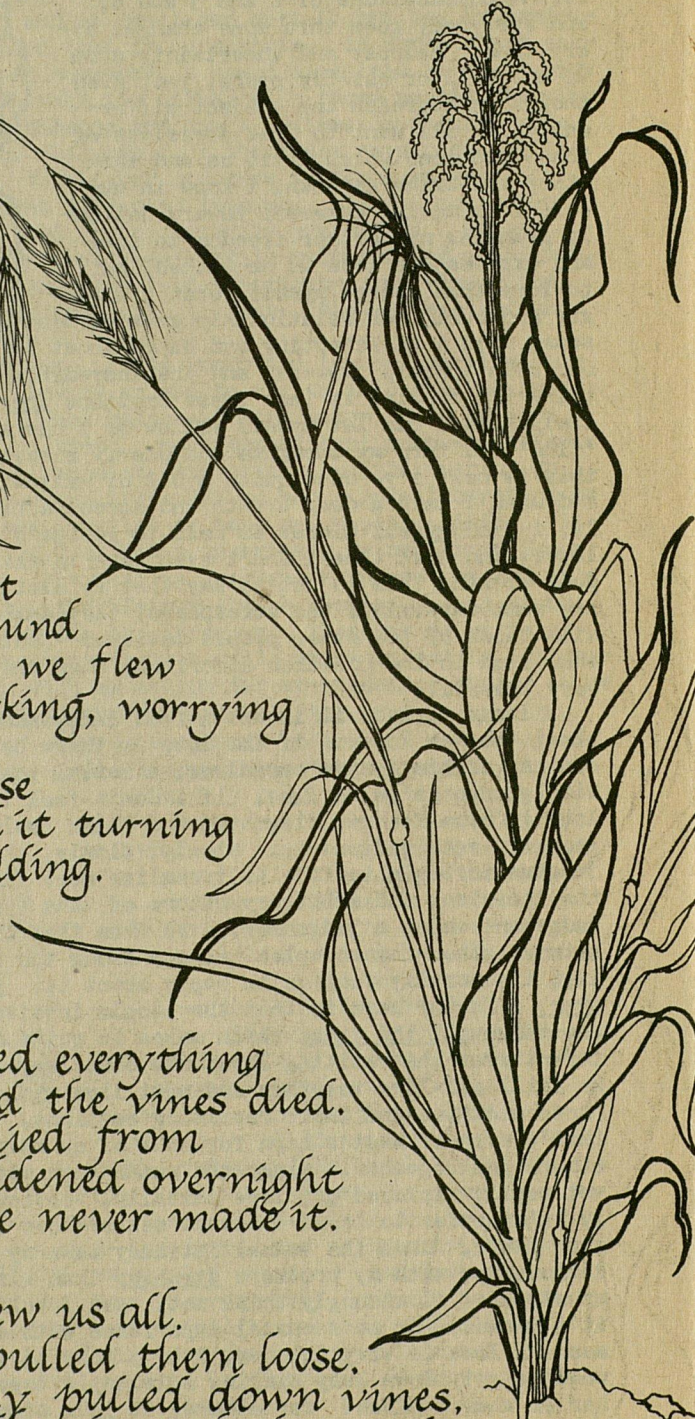
continued

continued

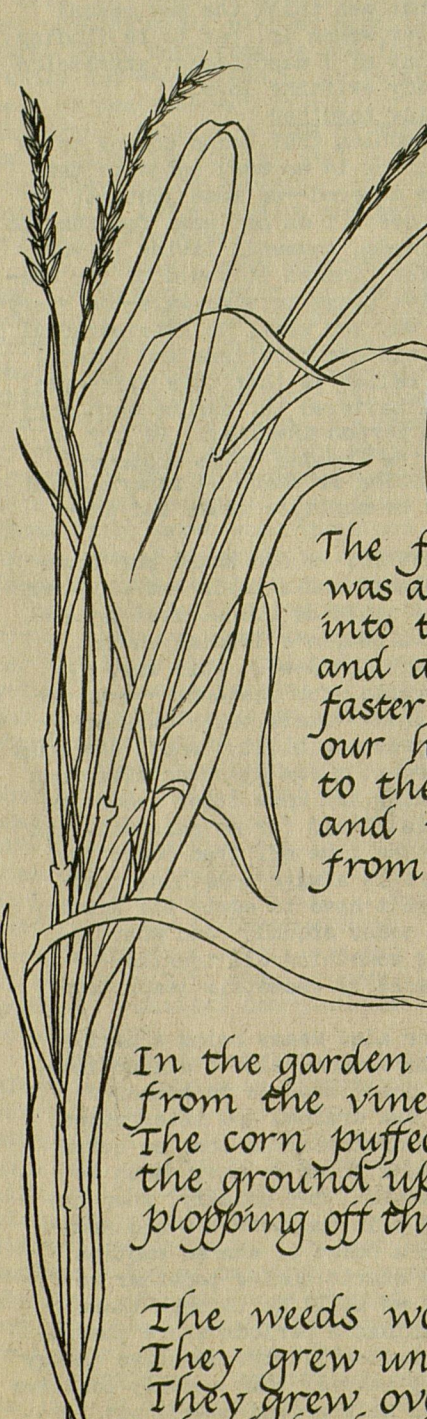
fied after a comparatively tumultuous winter. even now there are new interpersonal difficulties. yet to me our love is growing strong, and i feel no pain of separateness as i did early last winter.

we were recently discussing the possibility of two friends coming to live with us. h told of her hesitation in terms of her concept of one of the friend's look on life, which she finds

largely objectionable; and the description sounded just like me! i asked her why then does she want to live with me, and she said, "you're a special person." the balances work for her and for us together. and it seems so far that that is much of what binds our many differences ---a strong sense of the specialness of each other and the potential for growth in ourselves by expanding from what we learn about one another.♀



The first summer
was a funnel; we swept
into the center and around
and around the house we flew
faster and faster working, worrying
our heads confined
to the size of the house
and the trees around it turning
from witches to pudding.



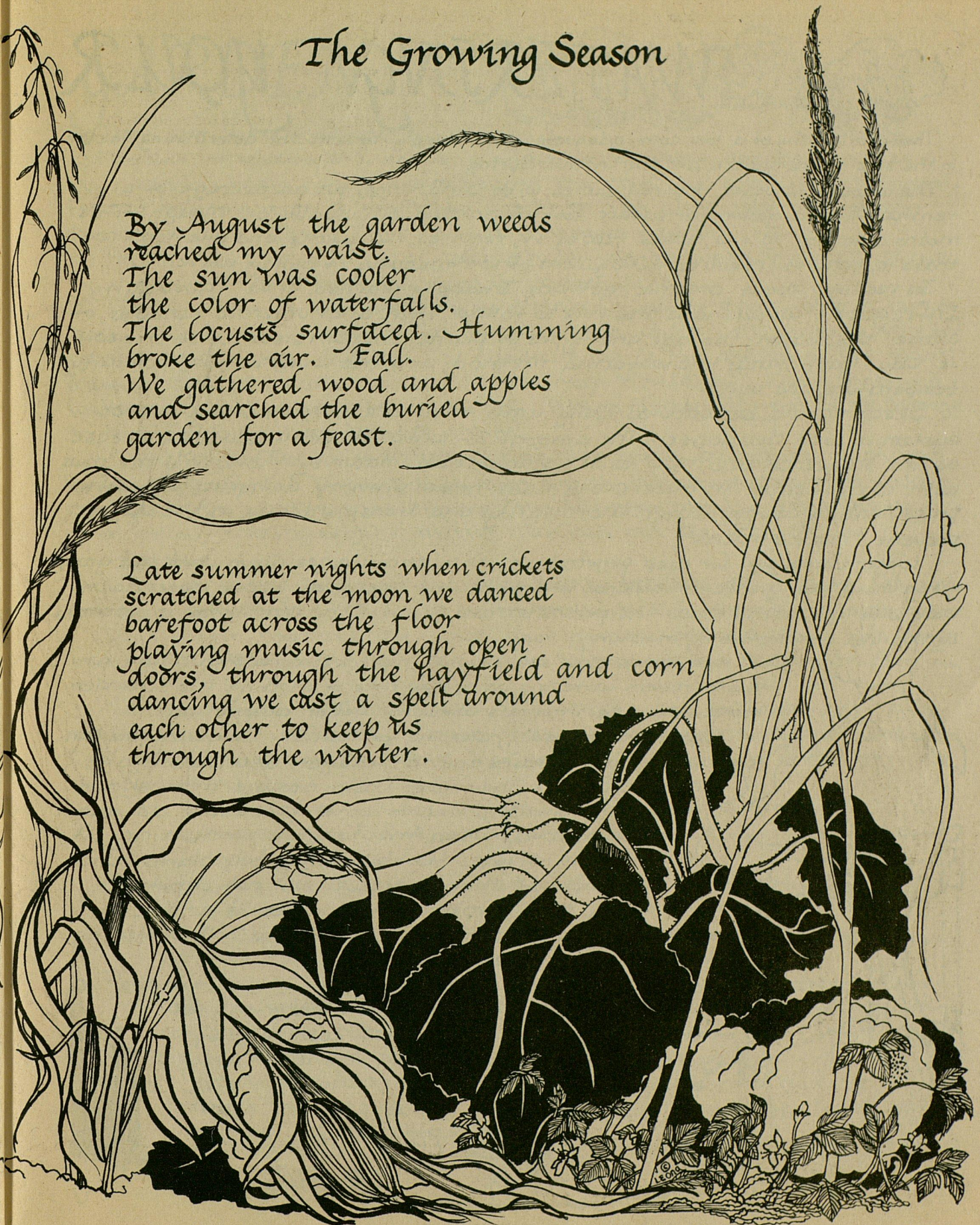
In the garden the squash sucked everything
from the vines like straws and the vines died.
The corn puffed up ears and died from
the ground up. Tomatoes reddened overnight
plopping off the vines. Lettuce never made it.

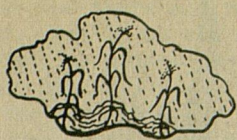
The weeds won. They outgrew us all.
They grew under roots and pulled them loose.
They grew over the ears, they pulled down vines,
shaded the leaves and finally buried the garden
in a heap: a crop of thin brown stalks.

The Growing Season

By August the garden weeds
reached my waist.
The sun was cooler
the color of waterfalls.
The locusts surfaced. Humming
broke the air. Fall.
We gathered wood and apples
and searched the buried
garden for a feast.

Late summer nights when crickets
scratched at the moon we danced
barefoot across the floor
playing music through open
doors, through the hayfield and corn
dancing we cast a spell around
each other to keep us
through the winter.





WATERING YOUR

The availability of a low cost, adequate water supply became the determining factor in the size of the garden we put in this Spring.

The amount of water required varies with conditions, but an average of six-tenths ($\frac{6}{10}$) of a gallon per square foot of garden will usually be enough. This means a garden 30' x 40', that's 1,200 sq. ft., requires 720 gallons and one 100' x 100', that's 10,000 sq. ft., requires 6,000 gallons of continuously flowing water.

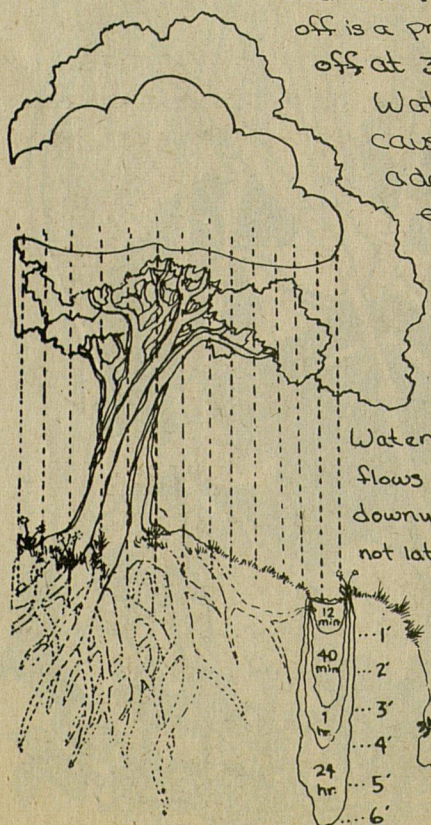
In reading about organic methods, I happily learned that Thorough, Infrequent watering is the rule to follow. There are numerous variables, of course: the season; the age and types of plants; the consistency of the soil i.e., clay-loam-sand; the watering method; and the weather, i.e., humidity, temperature, and wind.

Seeds should be watered daily until they are sprouted and a root system is well developed. The amount of water should gradually increase as the frequency decreases as the plants reach maturity. Covering the rows with waxed-paper in these early days helps prevent dehydration. After transplanting always water thoroughly; and transplant late in the day to prevent "heat stroke".

Water thoroughly for deep penetration, this encourages downward root growth giving the plants greater resistance to draught and freezing. Water moves downward with little lateral flow. The perimeter and depth of the root system is determined by the area penetrated by moisture.

Our nonporous clay soil requires more water less often. Where run-off is a problem watering at a slow rate or shutting the sprinkler off at 30 minute intervals allows for better absorption.

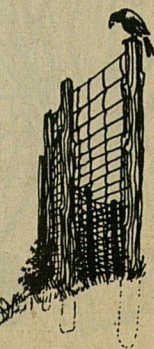
Water infrequently, allowing for rainfall. Over watering can cause fungus diseases and rot, oxygen deprivation, and added expense. The water basin around trees should extend to the drip line to water the entire root area. For vegetables, when the top $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 inch is dry, it is time to irrigate. For deeper rooted plants, when a sharpened stick or trowel will not penetrate easily to a depth of 3 or 4 inches, it is time to water. (You can use a commercial soil sampling tube or a Tensiometer.)



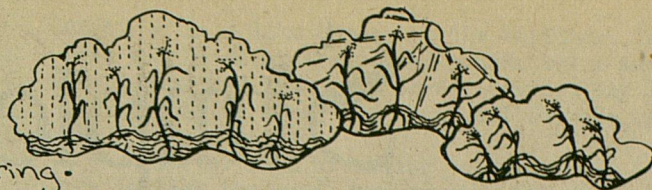
Days Between Waterings

	Sand	Loam	Clay
Shallow root	4-6	7-10	10-12
Medium root	7-10	10-15	15-20
Deep root	15-20	20-30	30+

1" of rain penetrates



GARDEN



There are three methods of watering.

- 1.) Flooding or soaking in furrows is effective for large shrubs and trees. Dig a shallow basin a few inches beyond the drip line and water thoroughly. Furrows between rows of vegetables should be flat and wide to prevent damage to root systems. This method conserves water.
- 2.) Perforated plastic pipe or porous hose laid between the rows allows slow soaking and is especially good for heavy soil.
- 3.) The sprinkler is the best way to distribute water evenly over a large area. Inexpensive bar sprinklers are available which will cover a 40' x 50' garden in a single sweep. The disadvantage is the potential for plant diseases such as mildew caused by the high humidity. Early morning watering is best to allow leaves to dry. A fine spray will not cause damage to big leaved or large headed plants.

Mulching conserves moisture during dry spells by cutting down on surface evaporation. It slows down weed growth, protects plants against sudden changes in the weather and improves the soil structure by decomposing from below, replacing organic matter leached out by irrigation.

Hints:

Don't use soapy or greasy water or highly treated city water, (fluoridated or chlorinated) as it will interfere with the essential growth process.

Don't water haphazardly - plan your garden well and know the water needs of the various plants. Remember infrequent but thorough watering is best.

Combine careful watering with year-round soil improvement. Add organic matter: Compost, turned-under cover crops, and plant wastes. This will improve soil drainage. Use natural ground rock fertilizer for mineral enrichment.

Corn can stand a considerable draught early in its growth cycle, but needs water just before, during, and for a while after tasseling time. (Irrigate when the corn wilts by 10:00 am.)

Tomatoes and Peppers like frequent watering at first, then a little or none during fruiting; this is true for nasturtiums as well.

Spinach, lettuce chard, radishes, celery; all require ample water throughout their growing cycle to insure quick growth.

Peas and Beans should be soaked well at seeding then watered moderately (to prevent the seeds from rotting before sprouting). Begin watering regularly while pods fill out.

Onions like continuous moisture in the top 8" and good drainage.

Fruit Trees produce best when watered after the fruit has set. Cut the grass at the base of the trees for mulch, leaving a few broad-leaved weeds as wilt indicators.



Simple Siding

In the last issue of Country Women (Homesteading) I described how to frame a simple building. Finishing the walls is an even easier task--and a satisfying one, since the walls go up pretty quickly and turn a collection of poles into a "real" building! It took me most of one day (with a six year old helper) to put up the walls, roof, doors and windows on a 12 X 12 goat house (my first building)--one of the most exciting days I've spent. That was using plywood--boards would have taken more time and care.

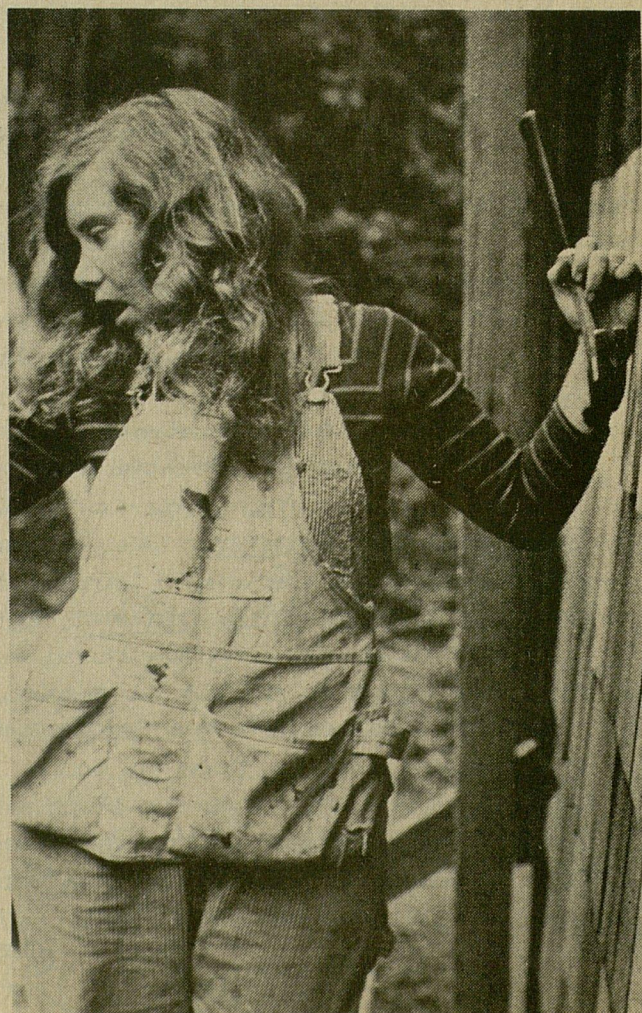
The first thing to decide is what materials you want to use for siding. This will be determined primarily by cost and what is available in your area, though you may want to consider aesthetics too. The basic choices are plywood, (left bare, painted, or shingled) and one inch thick boards of various dimensions (1 X 6, 1 X 8, etc.) Boards may be new lumber or old siding salvaged from some former building and may be anything from pine to oak, depending on your area. But, it is important to know what kind of wood you're using and what its properties are. My first year of carpentry experience was in Pennsylvania and I was using seasoned oak boards. After six months I could still set only one nail out of three, and try as I might, I still could not "feel" when I was hitting it wrong. It was a shock to send my first nail through a piece of California fir and discover that I could indeed nail quite well! Hard wood (like oak) and poor quality nails, are a bad beginning for a carpenter--it is too easy for a woman to assume that she and not the materials is at fault.

A few brief words on nails: they vary a lot in quality, and if you are having a lot of trouble with bending nails, you might reconsider the ones you're using. In Pennsylvania, we thought ourselves lucky to find an ancient case of rusty nails in our mill. It wasn't until that case ran out and we were forced to buy nails that we discovered how many of our problems were attributable to weak nails. Here in California I often heard my husband swear at "Japanese butter nails", thinking it was only his usual blaming of materials and tools instead of himself. I have since learned that cheap Japanese nails do bend easily, and are frustrating to work with. Buying good quality nails of the right size for the job is well worth the initial expense, when you can set every nail which is properly hit.

Plywood is the easiest of all siding to use, and it is a good choice if you live near lumber mills where "blows" are available. Blows are sheets of plywood having some fault, which are sold at half price or less. They must be carefully chosen (don't buy blows which are coming unglued between the layers) but work just as well as regular plywood. Plywood for outside

walls must be exterior glue (most blows are but you should check this). Siding should be at least 3/8" thick and preferably 1/2" or 5/8". Roofs should be 3/4" thick though 5/8" will do where there is no snow.

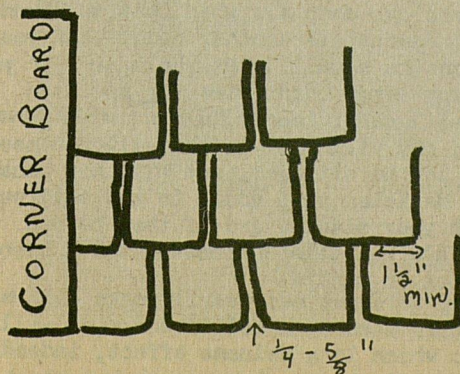
If you are going to use plywood, plan your building so that you can use whole 4 X 8 sheets (either horizontally or vertically) wherever possible. Frame your building with your studs on 2' or 4' centers (meaning the 4' point is at the center of the stud) so that the sheets of plywood fit the frame. Plywood should be nailed every ten inches to the studs and the top and bottom plates. If you are using uneven poles for your frame, place your nails quite closely together in the bumpy places. Plywood has the advantage over boards of being fairly flexible, and a



well set nail can force it to fit tightly on an uneven surface. It springs back when hit and the nail will have trouble penetrating unless you keep the plywood pressed against the stud.

Exterior plywood of good quality (not coming unglued at the edges) may be left exposed to the winter for several years--but it is not indestructible when left unprotected. The simplest and probably cheapest method to finish plywood is paint and sealer. "Wet patch" is a black plastic roofing cement and should be used along all top edges, especially where the plywood is coming unglued or is nailed over uneven surfaces. Wet patch is a sticky gooeey mess that is easily applied with a stick. It forms a good flexible seam and never hardens completely. The price of wet patch varies considerably among brands, so make sure that you don't pay more than \$4/gallon. (Some are \$12 for the same product.) Painting is not really necessary for protection, but it certainly does improve the looks of plywood and wet patch!

The more expensive, more permanent, and most beautiful way to finish plywood is to shingle or shake it (see CW #3 for how to make shakes.) Shingling can only be used when you plan to put up interior walls or the tips of the nails will stick through the plywood. The plywood should first be covered with tarpaper stapled to its surface. Begin at the bottom of the wall and work up, lapping each layer over the one below by a few inches. It is all right to have seams in the tarpaper since it will be covered by shingles anyway. You begin shingling (or shaking--they are put on the same way) with the bottom row. Nail your shingles next to each other leaving a space of $\frac{1}{4}$ "- $\frac{3}{4}$ " between shingles. This will allow them to swell without cracking in winter. Now, cover the first row with another row directly on top, making sure that the spaces between the second half of this first double row are at least $1\frac{1}{2}$ " from the spaces in your initial row. Using a double row on the bottom and over doors and windows will insure a long-lasting, leakproof fit. Now, using a chalkline, mark 10" for resawn shakes or 6" for shingles from the bottom of the first double row. (These figures are according to the building code, but for non-code structures you can fudge a little.) Place your second row of shingles next to each other with the bottoms along the chalked line. Again, leave a small space between shingles, and do not allow that space to be closer than $1\frac{1}{2}$ " to the space in the row below:

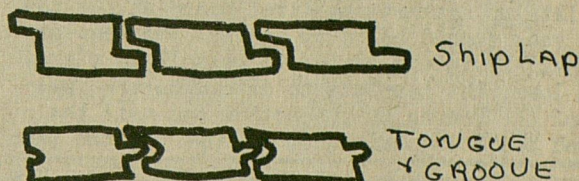


Continue in a like manner up the building. Corners can be alternately overlapped, but a much simpler method is to put corner boards, say 2X4 or 2X6, on the ends, and then just shingle up to them. Very neat!

Whatever kind of siding you use, you should try to have the roof overhang the top of the wall by several inches to protect the top seam. If you didn't allow for overhang, use roll roofing and bring it down onto the surface of the wall so that water runs down the wall and not into the seam.

Boards: The greatest problem with using boards is to be sure you get a water and wind-tight seal between them. Before board siding or plywood is applied, tarpaper can be stapled to the bare studs as described in the shingling section. This additional step will provide an adequate weather barrier, as in "tarpaper shacks" that can protect you from the harsher elements like cold. Tarpaper is not expensive, and I recommend its use in animal shelters as well.

The easiest and most expensive way to insure a tight seam is to use milled siding--shiplap, V-rustic, tongue and groove, etc. These are boards that have been specially milled to form a crackless exterior. Viewed from the top, shiplap looks like this:



Like interlocking jig-saw pieces, the boards will fit together. Milled sidings can be used horizontally or vertically.

Unless you have a lot of money or have made a very lucky score, you are unlikely to be using milled siding. Regular boards have the problem that they do not fit tightly together when simply nailed up side by side. There are two ways to deal with this--using board and board or board and batten techniques.

In using board and board construction, two boards are nailed vertically alongside each other with a space left between, and a third board is nailed over with an equal amount of overlap on either side of the space. It is important to use well seasoned lumber or your wall may shrink, buckle, and gap as it ages. If you have to use unseasoned lumber, add several extra inches of overlap to allow for shrinkage. Old boards taken off existing buildings make the best walls, as they will not shrink or warp more than they already have. They do, however, tend to split easily when nailed.

The top board should be overlapped at least an inch and preferably an inch and a half on either side. The closer to the edge of a board you nail, the more likely the board is to split. The overlap must be sufficient to allow you to nail through top and bottom boards without being so close to the edge as to split either one.

continued

continued

Your nails should be thin (box have thinner shafts than common nails) and just long enough to go through both boards and set well into the top or bottom plate. Hitting each nail once on the tip to blunt it helps prevent splitting. A sharp nail works as a wedge, splitting apart the grain of the wood; a blunt nail bores a hole through the wood. Nails should also be set at a slight angle so that they cross the grain of the wood rather than going between it and making it split.

It is important to make sure that your boards are put up straight and parallel to each other. A slight crookedness in one board will quickly become a gap that can't be covered. The best way to keep your boards straight is to cut a 2x4 to act as a spacer or template. The template should be the length of the space between the boards. For example, if you are using 1x8 boards overlapped 1½" on each side, the space between boards would be 5" (8" - 3" for overlap). The template would be cut 5" long.

The underneath boards need only one nail placed at top and bottom centers. This is because the nails for the top boards also go through the bottom boards, helping hold them in place. Nail up the first board on your wall, keeping it straight on the end stud. A level might be useful at this point. Then hold your template up against the first board at the top, butt your second board up against the template and nail it in the center to hold it in place. Then lower the template to determine the spacing of the boards at the bottom and nail the second board in place too. Always use the tem-

plate top and bottom; don't rely on your eye to determine when the boards are parallel. Continue all across the wall placing bottom boards. Then go back and nail up the top boards, overlapping them carefully and equally on both sides.

If you're using boards of varying widths, make several different templates for each size gap. Work across your wall in groups of 3 - two bottom boards then one over the gap - to be sure you have enough boards of the right size for each gap. This is slightly more time consuming but worth it.

Board and batten walls are made by nailing boards up side by side across the wall, fitting them as well as you can. Then thin boards or batten are nailed over each seam. These may be literally batten or lath (very thin strips of wood about 2" wide) or 1x2 or 1x4 lumber.

An unorthodox but proven way to use siding, especially if you're going to have an interior wall, is to nail boards up horizontally, each one overlapping the one below it. Tarpaper can first be stapled to the studs. Starting at the bottom, nail the first board flush to your vertical studs. Lap the next board at least an inch over the first and nail it only at the top into the studs, not at the bottom. The pressure from being forced out should hold the top board firmly against the lower one. There will be air gaps at either end of the wall so leave space on the end studs to hammer a board vertically flush up against the siding. 1x-- lumber should be wide enough to use as this end piece since your siding will probably not be wider than 1 inch. ♀

Free Wood

We found a free (or almost free) source of siding, firewood and garden mulch-slabs and sawdust from the sawmill. Slabs are the parts of a tree that are cut when it is squared-off for lumber.

Our local sawmill usually throws these slabs away---so, we approached the owner and got permission to haul away as many as we wanted, for free! We do a brisk business with him however, and some mills might charge a minimal fee.

Siding: For siding an old shed, pick the straightest slabs of fairly even length. They should be fairly fresh/not rotted. When the bark begins to rot in a few years, strip it off and paint or stain the bare slabs. They make a fine siding that will last for years. A point to remember is that slabs work best over tar paper or tar-impregnated craft paper, which sort of wind and water-proofs the place.

To begin siding your shed, slabs should be sawed to the length for the area it is to be used. You can use a "master" length of slab for this, using it as the standard measure for that particular area. Then nail them in place (spikes are best for this). First frame the doors and windows with appropriate lengths of slab. Work

out from these points, placing the slabs as close together and evenly as possible. Make sure they are straight, using a level.

Firewood Back of the sawmill, we discovered huge piles of weathered, uneven slabs. "Ah ha", we said, "Free firewood!" Sure enough, after inquiring about the pile, the mill owner said "Take it away!"

We hauled slabs on our trailer back to our cabin---at least four cords of free, pre-cut firewood. Admittedly it does burn faster than logs. But who can complain when it's so abundant.

Mulch Sawdust is another goody that you can get from the sawmill. Ask the owners if you can haul away large quantities for use as a mulch and soil conditioner. They probably have no use for it, and will let you take all you need. Sawdust is low in nitrogen, but will not cause a nitrogen deficiency if added to the soil surface. Watch your plants, and if they become yellowish, add a little cottonseed meal, blood meal, compost or manure.

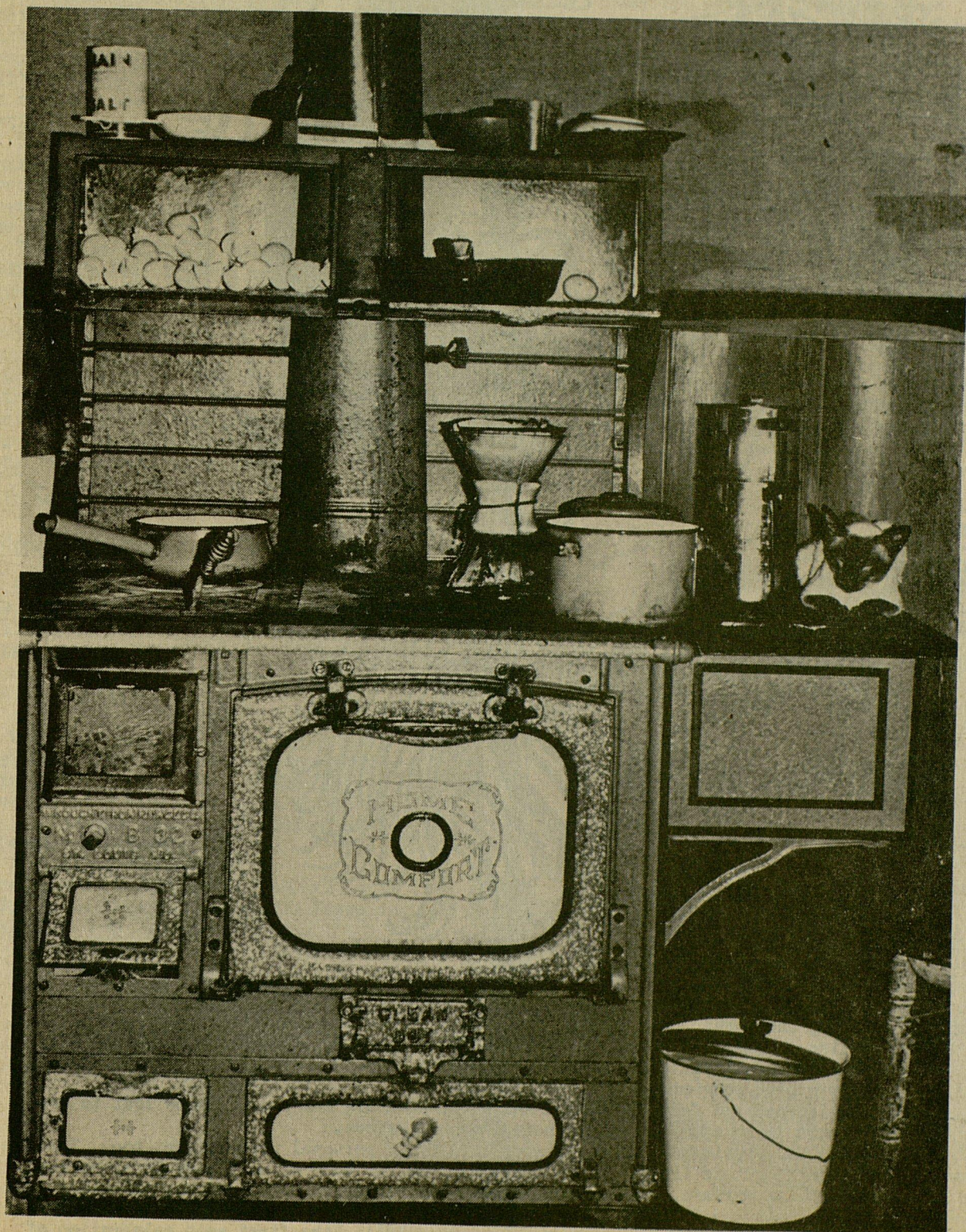
Sawdust will not necessarily make soil more acid. If it is used on alkaline soils it will help neutralize; which is a welcome effect, indeed!

To use sawdust as mulch, cover the planted

garden with sawdust about 4 inches wide and 1/4 inch thick on top of each planted row. It will reduce crusting of the soil and allow seedlings to push through easily. When plants are 2 inches high, put a 1 inch layer of sawdust over the entire area between rows, weeding first. Some weeds will

push thru the mulch, but these can easily be pulled out by hand. Do not work sawdust deeply into the soil, as this will destroy it's value as a mulch.

Good luck at the sawmill! ♀





Les Guerilleres
Monique Wittig

Bantam Books 1.65

Monique Wittig is involved in the French Women's Liberation movement. Her story was copywritten in 1969, and first published in English in 1971.

The story she tells is beautiful and unique. It is her story, your story and my story. It is real and fantasy, symbol and sign, pleasure and pain. To be lost in her words for a few hours is an experience like none I've had before.

Other people who have reviewed Les Guerilleres have their personal perceptions, too. Some fit mine, others don't. It is truly a personal experience for each of us. Mary McCarthy sees it as "...an epic of sex warfare, (suggesting) the exotic barbarian beauty of the untamed female in her natural state - an extraordinary leap of the imagination into the politics of oppression and revolt. The New York Times Book Review calls it "the first epic celebration of women ever written." One male reviewer for the Listener feels that the book "asks for a

curious kind of submissiveness in the reader, perhaps especially in the male. But to so obviously remarkable a writer it's worth submitting." Being a woman, I felt no need to submit. Ms Wittig has my mind and mood totally. What is this book really? I am not sure. My perceptions can only satisfy me. Yours may be different. Following is what I see.

A society of women is portrayed in detail, color, sound, symbol, metaphor. Their way of dealing with their physical environment is described. Their commitment to each other and their sisterhood is felt. In other languages, it is called patriotism, nationalism. Ms Wittig describes aspects of this culture which seem unique. The women carry small books which they say are "feminaries". There are several copies of one or several kinds. Feminaries contain inscriptions, descriptions referring to their femaleness. They are defined in metaphor by their genitals. The feminaries contain blank pages for each woman's journal. There are pages with words in the center, written in capital letters. Ms Wittig herself uses the center of many pages of Les Guerilleres as space for women's names - names from ancient times, mythology, Biblical times, sounds that my sisters have been called. Beautiful words. The women want to create a new identity based on their "person-ness" rather than the uniqueness of their genitals.

The women engage in games and leisure activities. Their games involve animals and some aggression towards these smaller weaker creatures. Other games pose a series of liturgical questions. "Who says, "I order it, my will must take the place of reason"?" or "Who must never act according to their will?" There is a game of beauty, colored rings flying through the air.

The women celebrate their existence by rituals of beauty. They celebrate nature, their bodies. Colored liquids are taken during each full moon. There is a security in the drunken euphoria they explore together. The children guide them and watch over them.

These women pass on stories, "present legends" of other women, goddesses. Stories that teach, symbolize their particular kind of chatter or gossip-news. The story Ms Wittig tells progresses through a kind of cultural evolution which ends after the revolution. The women search for another identity to replace the genital symbolism, the outworn language and create a new language with new symbols more fitting to their existence. They attempt to recall past times, replace their matriarchal beginnings where women had strength and power. They train for the attack. Anger and war is their response to what has been taken from them, their lost heritage. They sing anger-chants in preparation for war.

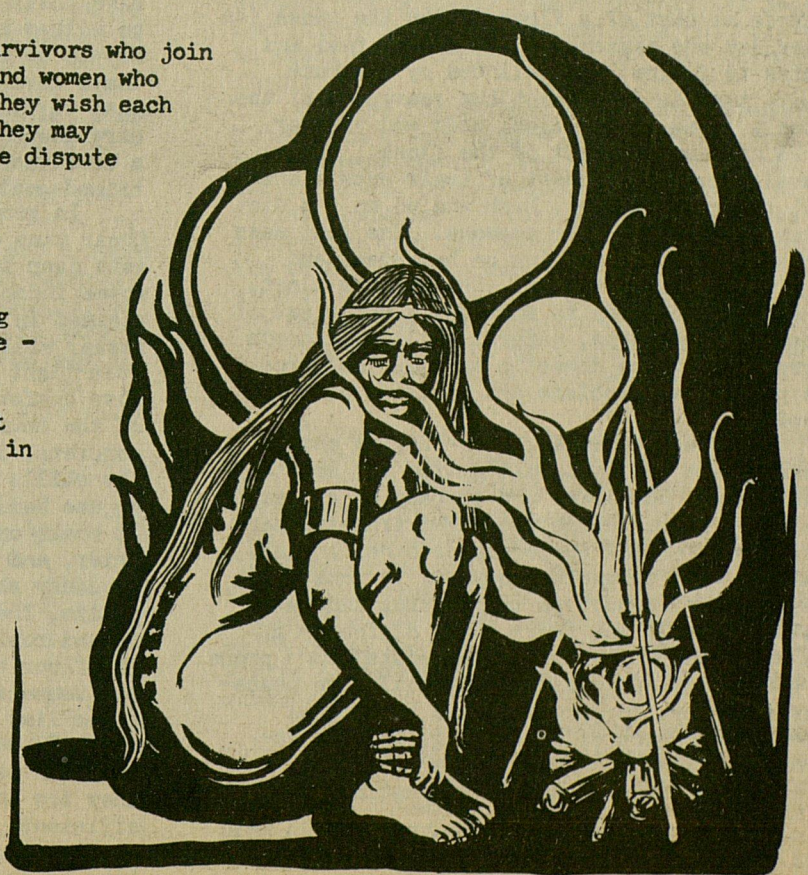
"Vile, vile creatures, for whom possession is equated with happiness."

"Oppression engenders hate."

After the attack there are some survivors who join the women. These survivors are men and women who will become part of the new group. They wish each other "love strength youth so that they may form a lasting alliance that no future dispute can compromise."

What more can I tell you about Les Guerilleres but to take part in their ritual and beauty. Feel it for yourself as I have. It is an exciting journey in our contemporary literature - a beginning for us.

(The book is available in paperback at Codys in Berkeley and A Women's Place in Oakland.) ♀



GOOD

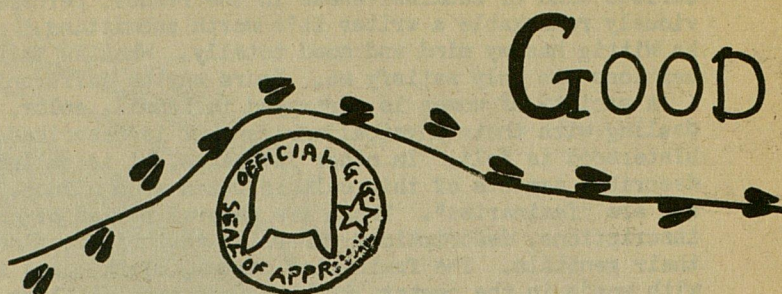
Goat keeping is not a simple matter of building a shed, fencing a pen, and buying a goat. You soon find yourself in a complex relationship with an animal whose nature is truly "capricious". A goat may be gentled into domesticity and fed and bred into productivity, but she remains of an independent and surprising nature ...

"...on top of that problem is her insane personality - I've never met a goat like her; lying down while in the stanchion, trying to get the milk bowl so she can drink her own (or any other goat's) milk! (She doesn't self-suck, I think she was pan-fed as a kid and is hung up still.) She has a food fetish; one day it's only pure oats, then she switches to corn and molasses, then mixed grains, then pure corn - everyday we run through this whole routine with her, offering handfuls until she chooses her entree, fill the bowl, start milking, bite her 6 or 7 times (hard!) when she tries to lie down, try to rescue the milk at the same time, offer her dessert (usually the entree with molasses) 'cause she won't ever finish off a bowlful of grain unless she's really hungry. At the very least one has to stir it around to reattract her interest .. and she's such a pretty animal too, very fine boned and high class in appearance. She has a water fetish also! She will only drink from a white pail or sink. The water must be from one of the 3 ponds (none of the other animals share her preference) and it must be immaculate, fresh, and, in winter, warmed to room temperature..."

The wild goat is a nomad and browser. She travels as part of a flock led by the queen (an older doe who searches out the best feed and routes to follow) and followed by the buck (whose task is to protect the rearguard of the flock). Does of all ages, kids and younger bucks make up the rest of the flock. They travel together in quest of their subsistence diet of brush, leaves, bark and so on - a diet which changes with the seasons. The goat uses her horns rarely, relying on her speed and agility to escape danger. She must be alert, sensitive and hardy to survive. A whole set of behavioral patterns, natural skills and needs carry over in the domestic animal. They create the particular problems and delights of goat-keeping.

Life as a communal, free-ranging animal doesn't make the goat well suited for solitary confinement. She likes the company of at least one other goat, though she might transfer her sociable affection to people or other animals. Goats do well in small flocks of various-aged does. Some care must go to see that kids and smaller animals get their share of food - at the hay feeder or grain trough goats aren't prone to generosity. Generally, they will live peaceably together. In larger flocks the social order is a source of quarreling. This is determined by head-banging jousts which try strength, endurance, and determination.

Once established, a social order will hold until a new goat is introduced or a young one begins to challenge her elders. Goats are us-



ually extremely gentle and tolerant of kids. At any rate, the kids become agile quickly enough to avoid the nips and bangs of bad tempers.

Bucks should be kept separate from the does to prevent random breedings and most important to keep the "goaty" flavor out of the does' milk. The buck's odor (extreme in breeding season but noticeable year-round) is picked up by the does and will ruin the flavor of the milk. Buck kids at the age of three months are capable of breeding - they should be separated from the doe kids (who can be bred at two months but shouldn't be until much older).

Bucks enjoy the company of other bucks and will live compatibly with others of approximately the same size. They engage in a lot of mock-fighting so a smaller buck might take too much punishment from a larger one. A wether (castrated buck) might be kept as a companion.

All goats - does, bucks, kids - have similar basic needs. They must have a good shelter, sufficient food, clean water, salt, and enough space to exercise. Periodically they need to have their hooves trimmed. The milking doe should be milked twice daily at regular hours. Kids may be on a three-bottle-a-day feeding schedule. Goats love to go for walks, to be brushed, and just to visit with their people. Their daily care doesn't take a great deal of time, but is a commitment to a regular schedule and a sustained goat-keeping consciousness.

In good weather, goats will spend most of their time outdoors. When it rains, snows, or gets damp and foggy, the domestic goat flock moves indoors. A simple shed (such as that explained in C W #5 "Pole Framing"-continued this issue) will do. It should be as draft-free and rain-tight as possible. Two to four goats can live comfortably in a 12' x 12' shed. The floor of the house may be dirt, wood, or concrete. If concrete, it must be deeply bedded to prevent the chills that concrete holds. It's a good idea to use bedding on the floor of any goat house. It soaks up the urine, keeps the goats cleaner, drier, and healthier. You can use sawdust, pine or cedar shavings, straw, or even uneaten alfalfa stalks. The bedding should be regularly cleaned up and replaced. Sprinkling hydrated lime on the floor before putting down fresh bedding cuts the ammonia odor of the urine and disinfects (this lime can be bought at most feed stores, about \$2.00 for 50 lb.) We clean our goat house as often as twice a week and use pine shavings - they are the easiest to clean up and seem most efficient. (goat manure and soiled bedding make wonderful garden mulch. A good precaution to take is leaving the bedding in a pile for a day

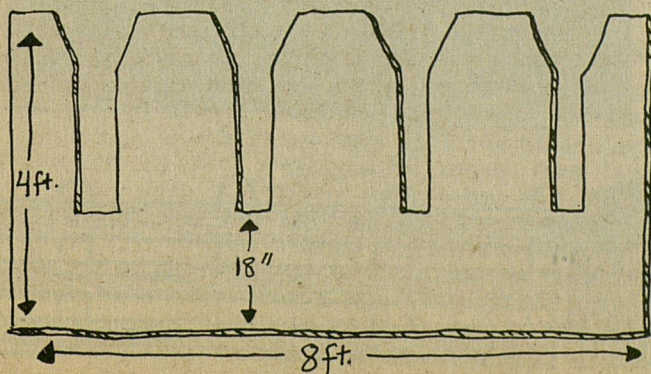
GOATKEEPING

or two before applying as mulch, the heavy ammonia content can "burn" young plants. This evaporates after a day or two. Goat manure is "cold"; it decomposes with little heat and so can be applied directly to the soil and plants. It's very rich and well-balanced.)

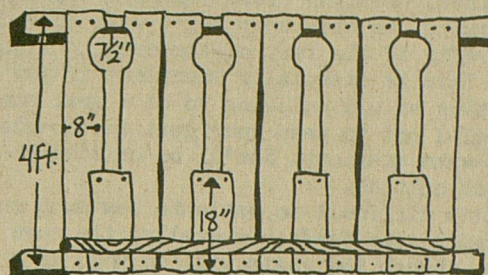
Along one wall of your goat shed you should build a sleeping bench. This is simply a sturdy 12 inch or wider board from 4 to 10 (or more) feet long raised 12 inches to 2 feet off the ground. Many goats will sleep up on this bench rather than on the ground.

Windows will add light and a feeling of space to a small goat shed, but be sure to protect them from inquisitive hooves and noses. Sturdy, fine mesh screen or chicken wire stretched over each side of the window will protect glass or plastic. Or you can place windows well above the goats' reach. We got a tremendously light space in a small buck shed by using a panel of corrugated translucent fiberglass in the roof. It was a center panel lapping over sheets of tarpapered plywood on either side. We drilled holes in the fiberglass with a small hand drill nailed it down gently and with standard roofing nails, then tarred all the seams generously. It is quite leakproof but tends to condense and drip some in cold, rainy weather when the animals' bodies heat rises and hits the cold fiberglass surface. The light makes the house feel twice as big.

Building a keyhole feeder as part of your goat shed will save you a lot of hay. Goats are notoriously fussy about food that's been dropped on the floor and "contaminated" (their natural way of browsing provides them with clean, fresh feed). The keyhole feeder is designed to make any dropped hay land safely and cleanly back in the feeder. There is almost no "waste". The simplest design is a piece of plywood with slots cut as follows:



Follow the measurements accurately. A full-size sheet of plywood will hold four keyholes. You can also use boards to make a sturdy, good-looking feeder. Use a coping saw to cut the rounded parts.



The goat must lift her head up through the large opening to get in and out of the feeder. While she eats, she is effectively caught. Rarely will a goat lift her head up and out the large slot with a mouthful of hay to drop on the ground. There are, of course, exceptions ... most goats will use the keyhole feeder according to the book. If you have smaller goats who can't reach the upper slot easily, nail a small pole along the lower edge of the feeder (6 inches or so above ground level). They learn quickly to stand up on this with their front hooves in order to eat. (Don't let pregnant goats in their last month or so stand with their hooves up on this though - the angle will put tremendous pressure on the vagina and may cause it to prolapse). The alfalfa stems that collect in the feeder should be removed regularly. Feed them to sheep or horses or use as bedding or in the garden. Periodically remove the alfalfa leaves that filter to the bottom and pile up. They're an excellent protein source for your chicken flock.

Besides the keyhole feeder and sleeping bench, you should have a salt lick for your goats. These come in two sizes - a 50 or 60¢ and a \$2.00 block. Color indicates additives. A yellow block has sulphur added, a light red is iodized, a deep red has trace minerals added, the white block is pure salt. We feed the trace mineral block to prevent any slight deficiencies. The small-size block can be wired to the wall or the larger block put in a specially built wooden box. Don't forget that kids and bucks need salt too.

In bad weather your goats will appreciate indoor water. Put the buckets up high enough to keep it clean and secure it so that a playful romp won't dump it over. Change it at least once daily - empty and rinse the bucket. Goats like fresh water and milkers will produce more if you indulge them this way. In cold weather goats supposedly like their water slightly warmed. We've never indulged ours this far - but our winter climate stays pretty mild and the water never gets icy.

Most dairy goats have short coats and thin skins. They keep warm by eating and digesting roughage - the breakdown of this roughage acts as an internal heater. If goats are kept in a drafty shed they are not only susceptible to chills (which can lead to diseases such as

continued

continued

bronchitis and pneumonia), but they must use more energy to keep warm and therefore put less into milk production. Your feed bill goes up, your milk production goes down. Drafts are caused when air can enter at one point and leave at another, creating cross-currents up and down drafts. An open door won't make your goat shed drafty if the rest of the shed is tightly built. This is especially important if you're converting an old building to be a goat shed. Be careful not to keep your goat in too-close or too-warm quarters. She'll be chilled when she goes outside.

It's difficult to estimate how much outdoor space each goat needs. Generally, the more the better, though the goats will do well in a fairly small pen. Goats like to wander, investigate, and browse. A large area with brush, trees, fallen logs and such would be ideal. If you keep the goats in a small area, taking them out for walks will provide them with exercise, supplemental feeding and diversion. With exceptionally good pasture land, you can graze four goats per acre. Tethering is a poor alternative to penning. We've heard of at least two goats who strangled this way (one a kid, one a grown doe) and the tethered goat is at the mercy of dogs, sudden weather changes, etc.

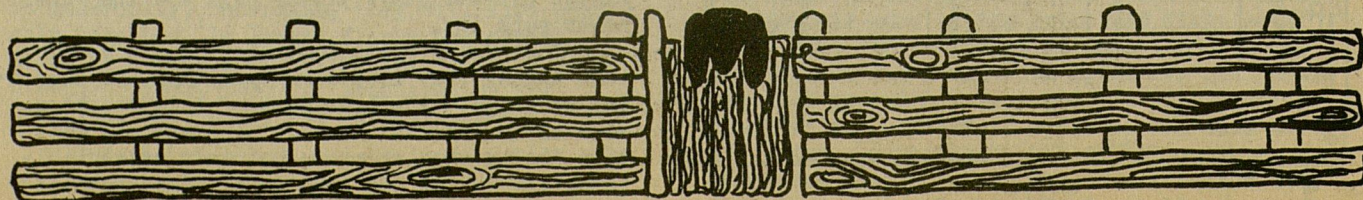
The smaller the goat-yard or pasture, the better the fencing must be. Well-stretched, medium or heavy weight 36 inch field fencing will keep most goats in. You can run boards or piles along the top to protect the fence when goats stand up on it, and they do frequently, and to increase the height. Horizontal boards or poles make good fences if they are spaced closely enough so the goats can't squeeze through. Avoid using barbed wire - goats can catch and tear ears, udder or skin. Trees within the goat-yard must be protected or they will be gnawed on and bark-stripped. You can fence them or "paint" regularly with a goat manure/water mixture.

With her quick intelligence and insatiable curiosity, the goat is easily bored with life confined to pens and schedules. She learns the schedule easily and well - knows when you'll be coming to milk, feed, or water her. Beyond these routines she needs something to do besides eat and lie about in the sun... Given a few simple elements - a seesaw, a pile of rocks, a large stump or log - goats invent and play a variety of games amongst themselves or with people. They also make use of any opportunity to create new games. The wheelbarrow you use to clean their house is perfect for leaping in and out of and hopefully overturning. Complicated latches challenge the mind and mouth (goats can undo most any, give a fair chance). Breaking the fence brings you to fix it - with all manner of

fascinating tools to be nosed about and both-ered. Visitors are to be nibbled, jumped at, and generally exploited for affection. Goats are forever trying to understand things - what is it? How does it taste? What play can I make with it? Learning to communicate with them, share in the their romps and games is one of the delights of goat-keeping...

Next issue: Goat Feeding; Hoof Trimming; Milking Stanchions, etc.

(Thanks to Catherine Yronwode for her words - paragraph on Snowball, the Missouri Saanen. And to David MacKenzie for information on the life of the wild goat.) ♀



 HOW TO
 OPERATE AND CARE FOR
 A HAND CRANKED CREAM SEPARATOR

*
 * SETTING UP *
 *

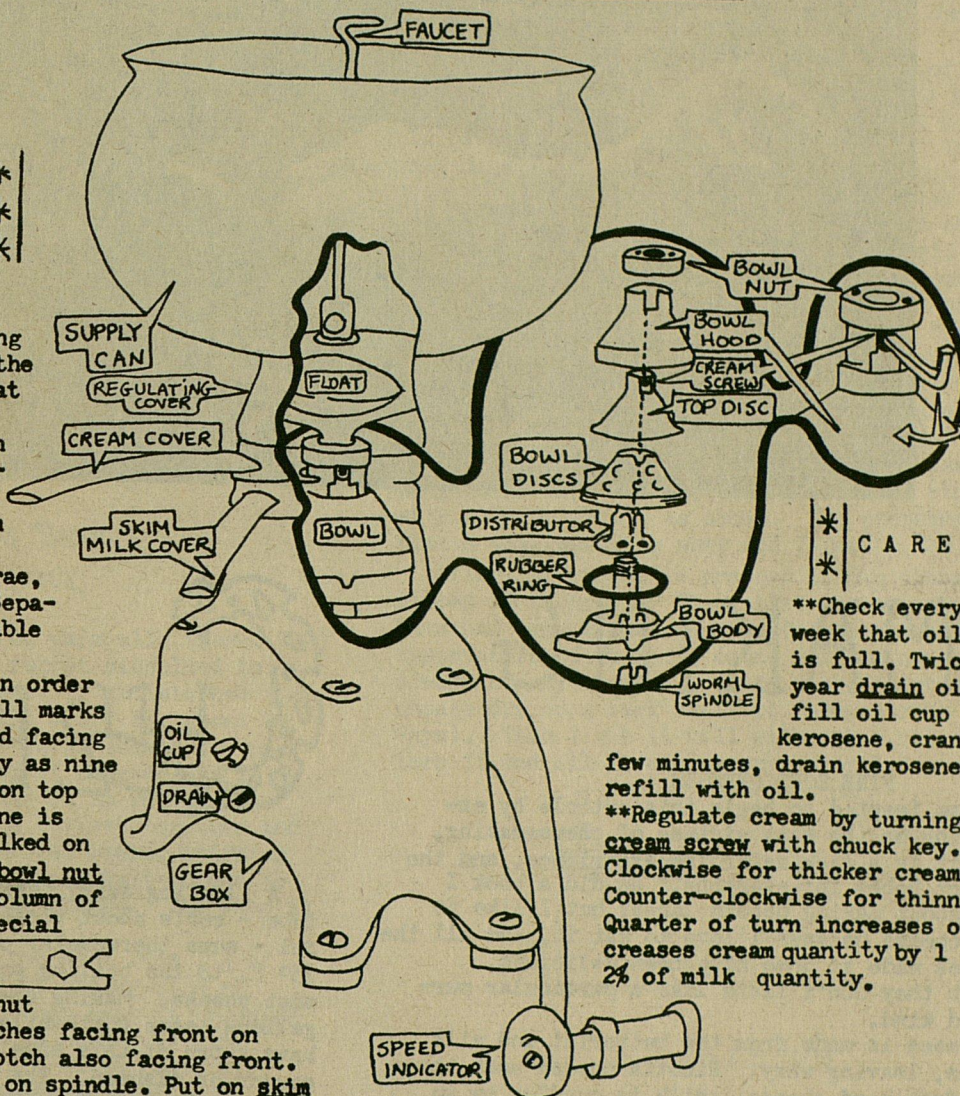
**Secure gear box to a level, steady platform with screws. A vibrating separator will damage the parts as they revolve at high speeds.

**Fill the oil cup with a light motor oil (preferably special separator oil-available from Laval Pacific Co. 201 E. Millbrae Ave. Millbrae, Ca. Parts for DeLaval Separators are still available from them.

**Assemble bowl parts in order shown in diagram with all marks and notches lined up and facing front. There are as many as nine bowl discs fitting one on top of the other. The bottom one is sometimes specially caulked on both sides. Secure the bowl nut tightly on top of the column of the bowl body with a special spanner these pins

fit into holes on bowl nut

**Set bowl with all notches facing front on worm spindle with its notch also facing front. Bowl should settle down on spindle. Put on skim milk cover (usually the shorter spout) then cream cover, then regulating cover, then float, finally supply can.



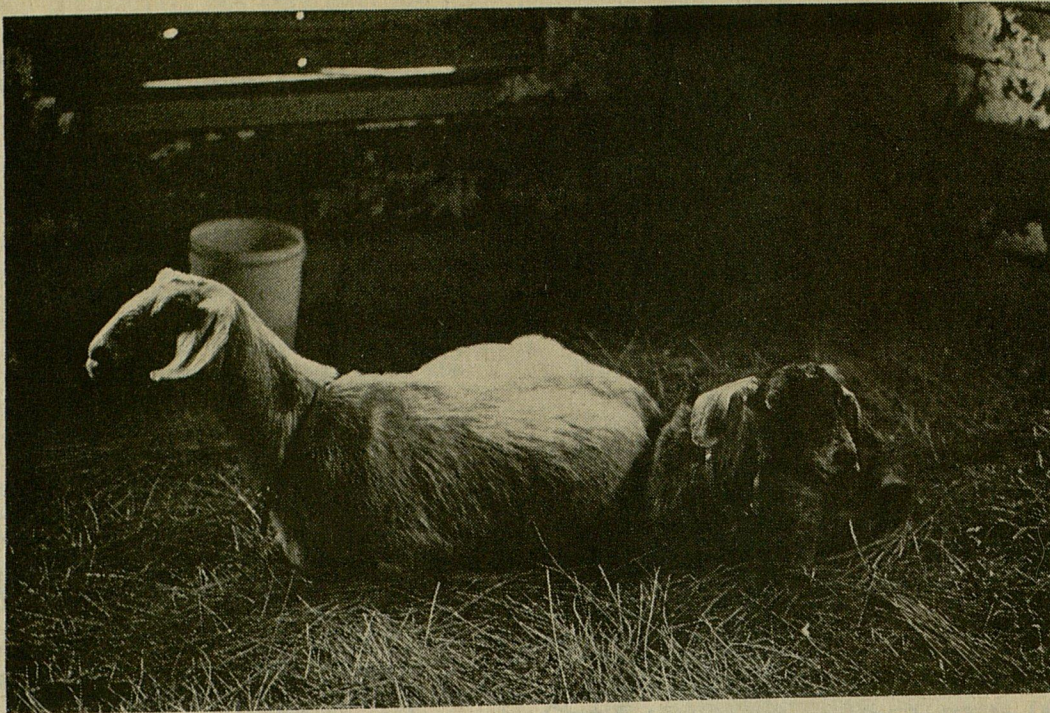
*
 * CARE *
 *

**Check every week that oil cup is full. Twice a year drain oil, fill oil cup with kerosene, crank a few minutes, drain kerosene and refill with oil.

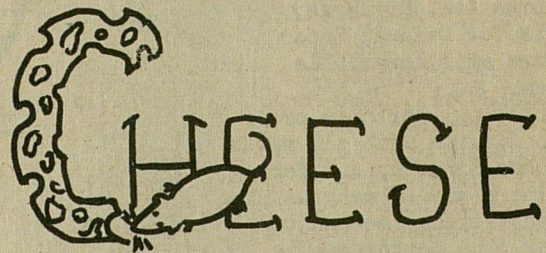
**Regulate cream by turning cream screw with chuck key. Clockwise for thicker cream. Counter-clockwise for thinner. Quarter of turn increases or decreases cream quantity by 1 to 2% of milk quantity.

*
 * OPERATION *
 *

**Milk must be warm (85-95°). Pour into supply can with faucet closed. Commence cranking and increase speed until the bell (speed indicator) stops ringing (on our model- 60 rpm.) Too fast will result in less and thicker cream. Too slow-thin, milky cream. Open faucet. Be sure you have a container under cream spout and skim milk spout. When all milk has been separated, close faucet, pour a gallon of hot water in supply can and run this through to clean left-over cream off parts. Then let the spinning bowl run down by itself before dismantling. All parts that have had contact with milk should be washed immediately in hot water and washing soda and air-dried.



MAKING



FINE SOFT CHEESES

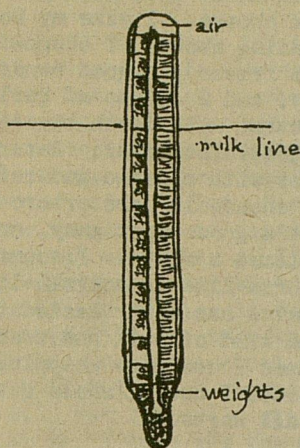
I am tempted to begin this article by expounding on the many virtues of cheesemaking, "how it is a rich rewarding experience, and the perfect hobby for everyone," as did a book I read about making bobbin laces; but I like to make cheese because I love to eat it, and all the cheeses made at home have been delicious, though they don't taste like a particular purchased kind.

Cheese is made from the butterfat and milk solids, leaving whey. Ricotta cheese uses the whey from hard cheese. Milk is curdled by an acid; natural souring, or addition of buttermilk vinegar, lemon juice, rennet or a cultured starter. In making hard cheeses, the curd is cut, heated slowly to a specific temperature, held there for a time and slowly cooled. Then the whey is drained, curd salted and pressed. Variations in time, temperature, pressure, and starter used make different kinds of cheeses. A good cheddar-type cheese recipe is printed in "Making Cheese at Home", free from C. Hansen's Laboratory, Inc., 9015 Maple Street, Milwaukee, Wis., 53214. They sell cheese rennet and commercial cheese cultures. "Home Cheesemaking", (fifty cents or a dollar) from the Dairy Goat Journal, Box 836, Columbia, Missouri, 65201, has a recipe for parmesan (probably the best for storing) and several other cheeses. Goat Husbandry, by Mackenzie, also has some European cheeses.

A floating dairy thermometer (a sealed glass tube - costs about three dollars) is very helpful - some thermometer calibrated from about 75° F. to the boiling point is necessary, for most cheese. Making cheese in amounts of 2-4 gallons seems worthwhile, though you may not have a pan of this size. We've used an enameled canner or dishpan. The only other special equipment needed is a press and mold, and cheesecloth. An empty can with both ends removed is a good enough mold for many cheeses. A gallon of milk usually makes slightly less than a pound of cheese. One tablet of junket rennet will probably replace $\frac{1}{4}$ tablet of cheese rennet - junket is much weaker and works more slowly. Here are some good recipes for soft cheeses.

Alpine Fried Cheese: heat 1 gallon of milk till nearly boiling. As it begins to boil, add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vinegar. Remove from the heat immediately (If it continues to boil after the vinegar is added, the curd will be tough). Stir until the curd is formed. Cool for about half an hour - until it's easy to handle. Strain through a double thickness of cheesecloth. (This whey is not good for anything; some dogs like it). Add $\frac{1}{2}$ t of soda (to neutralize the acid - it also seems to change the texture). Heat 1 or 2 T

of oil or butter in the pan. Add the cheese, and a little whey if necessary to thin the consistency, and bring to a "boil" (it bubbles). Salt to taste (maybe 1 or 2 t). This is my favorite, good warm or cooled, on bread, with apples. It can be pressed, though I haven't tried it. The size of curd seems to vary with how hard the milk was boiling when vinegar was added.



A FLOATING DAIRY
THERMOMETER

Cabin Cheese: to 1 g. of warm milk (about 900) add one tablet of junket rennet dissolved in about $\frac{1}{4}$ c cold water. Leave it undisturbed (in a coolish place, or it will sour) for about 24 hours. Cut the curd into large chunks and pour it into a double thickness of cheesecloth in a colander or strainer. Stir it to release the whey. Tie the cheesecloth corners together and hang it up to drip for several hours, stirring occasionally. Catch the whey. Salt cheese to taste. This is a very rich cheese. The whey is good for making ricotta.

Ricotta Cheese: heat the whey from 1 g of milk. When you see a slight creamy film on top, add 1 c whole milk. Then heat it (slowly) without stirring, till it is nearly boiling and curds form on top. Then either skim off the curds and drain in cheesecloth or add 2 or 3 T of vinegar, remove from heat, stir, cool, and strain. Salt. Ricotta can be made from the whey of parmesan, cheddar, and other hard cheeses. Never throw their whey away. (Soak grain for chickens in leftover ricotta whey - it has lots of riboflavin.)

Once I made the best cottage cheese from soured milk. After it had thickened and separated (in a warm place) I heated it to over 100°, then drained it in cheesecloth and rinsed it 2 or 3 times with boiling water - that takes the sour taste away. But the next time I tried it was a miserable failure. But it seems worth trying again, especially if you have some sour milk.

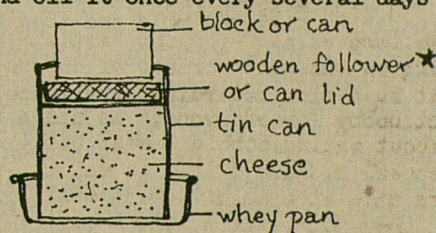
AGED CHEESES

Aged cheeses can be made from the basic

Fried Alpine Cheese (unfried, however). I have gotten all kinds of results from aged cheeses - some spectacularly good, a very few hardly edible. Aging cheese is fun and exciting, the only problem being its unpredictability. Once I cut open a cheese and found a fine "bleu" cheese when I thought I would find my usual sharpish goat cheese - with no idea how the mold got there or how to do it again.

Once the curd has been formed, drained in cheese cloth and salted the cheese needs to be pressed for 1-3 days. It can be packed into a large can open at both ends (as shown). Or it can be shaped into a round of cheese (about 3 or 4 inches thick and as big in diameter as you have cheese - you really need to use at least 4 gallons of milk for a good aged cheese). The round should be shaped by hand to be as smooth and free from cracks (which can mold) as possible. The round of cheese gets a cheese cloth "bandage" wrapped tightly around its circumference and pinned in place. This bandage keeps the cheese from spreading and flattening as it is pressed (and from ending up like a pancake). The cheese can be pressed between two boards with heavy weights on top (bricks, a tin of flour, etc. or with a lever press, as shown. The pressing drains the remaining whey and firms up the cheese).

After the cheese is pressed it can either be dipped in parafin or kept oiled during aging. I have had trouble heating parafin to the proper temperature so it won't crack off and now I always oil my cheeses. To do this, I let the cheese dry on a rack until it forms a rind (1-2 days). Then I rub it well with salad oil and turn it and oil it once every several days after



A TYPICAL PRESSING
ASSEMBLY

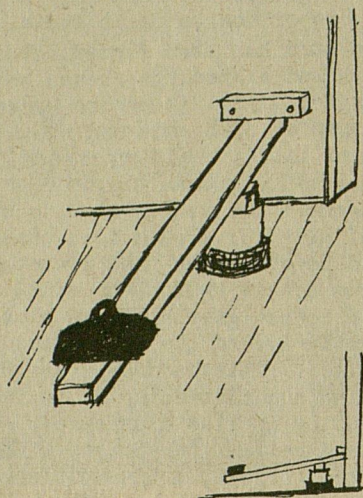
either pile weights on top of this, or use a lever-type press. usually press for 24 hours, with about 20-30 pounds [books, bulk foods, etc.]

★ not made of pine or oak - they cause bad flavors.

that. The cheese should age from 3 weeks to 3 months, becoming sharper and harder as the time goes on. A three month goat cheese is very similar to parmesan. Very fine lasagne can be made with a fresh alpine cheese, sliced 3-week aged cheese, and grated 2-3 month cheese.

continued

Some of the best cheeses I have ever made have had sauteed sesame seeds or onions added to the curd before pressing. I think they are better because the oil used in sauteeing moistens and improves the texture of the cheese. Carraway and cumin seed and garlic powder may also be



A LEVER-TYPE PRESS
requires less weight

added to the curd if you want. If the cheese gets mold on it during aging, it should be wiped with vinegar to kill the mold and then re-oiled.

And from a friend, Deborah, living in the Bay Area, the following:

I visited the Marin French Cheese Factory, and they suggested writing to the government people for camembert starter. But I have been making a very nice herbed cream cheese; the recipe originally appeared in Sunset I think. The most obvious comparison is to Boursin, though it is definitely not that refined a cheese. But it is mighty tasty on crackers, or on bagels with smoked fish, and disappears as fast as I can make it. Here's how:

You need
 $\frac{1}{2}$ g whole milk
 1 pt. half and half (non-sterilized - it should say sterilized if it is)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ - 1 pt. whipping cream (non")
 $\frac{1}{2}$ - $1\frac{1}{2}$ c powdered milk
 2 T buttermilk

The consistency of the cheese will be better if you do not use absolutely fresh milk; I usually let it keep in the refrigerator for a week or two before using.

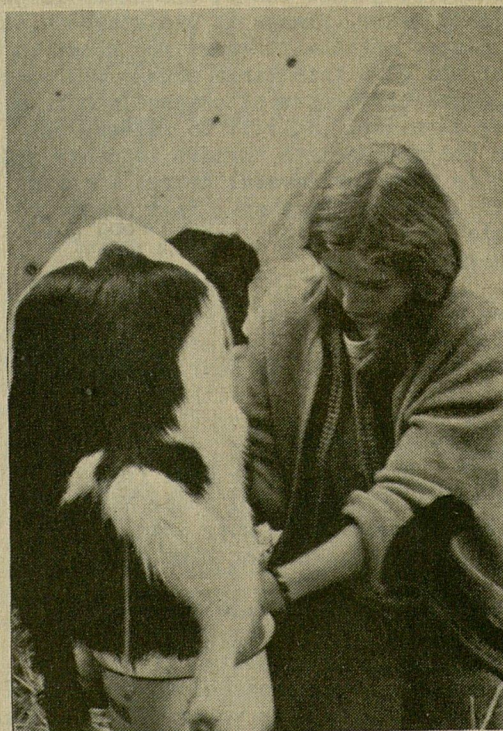
Combine milk, $\frac{1}{2}$ & $\frac{1}{2}$, whipping cream, & milk powder in large pot & heat to about 90°. Pour into glass or crockery bowl, add buttermilk, and cover with plastic wrap. Let sit in warm place 18-24 hours until it clabbers. This part is like making yogurt, and the clabbered milk has the consistency of thick yogurt.

Line 2 colanders with 2 layers of cheesecloth and set in sink. Pour in cheese and let drain 10 or 15 minutes. Then set colanders in large bowls or pots with some drainage room. Lap cheesecloth over cheese (this prevents a 'skin' from forming.) Cover the top with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 24 hours. Be sure to pour off whey if it begins to cover the cheese.

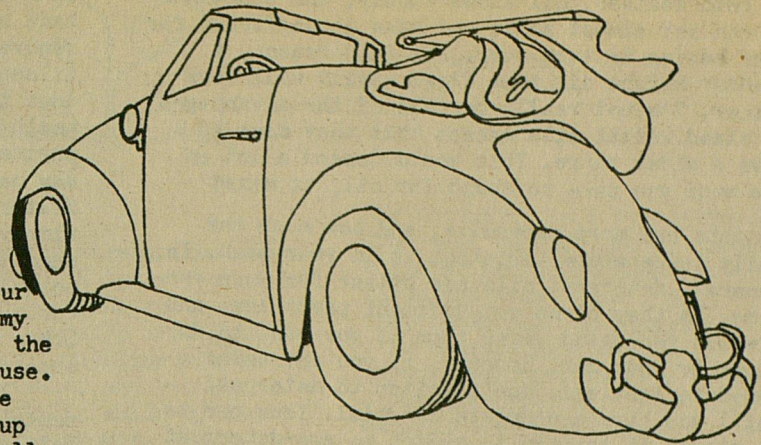
Turn cheese into bowl & season according to taste. If you add about 1 T. salt you will have a very rich cream cheese. I make my Boursin-like cheese by adding about 3 T chopped chives (you can buy them frozen), a good handful of minced fresh parsley, and 2 cloves of garlic, pressed.

Line one colander with fresh cheesecloth, put in cheese, lap cheesecloth over. Return colander to bowl, cover with plastic and refrigerate 24 hours. Store cheese in jars or crocks in refrigerator. It's good right away, or you can store it for at least a month. Presumably it develops into a Brie-like or Boursin-like cheese as it ages, but mine has never lasted that long.

The amount and kind of milk one uses is very flexible; sometimes I use more whipping cream, sometimes less; once I used a whole quart of buttermilk - it all works. ♀



Changing Oil

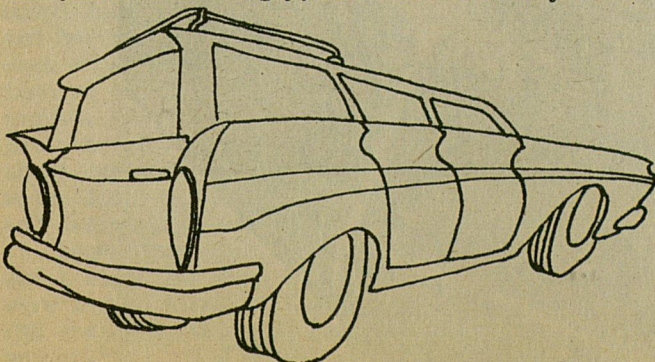


I have lived on a farm for the last four years, but I never owned a car or truck of my own. I started out wanting to share some of the responsibility for the vehicles that I did use. At first this consisted of mainly taking the cars to the garage when they needed a tune-up or a grease and oil job. But, I remembered all the years our family second car was an old beat-up '54 Chevy, and my father always changed the oil, and he always insisted that I be responsible for checking it and filling it when it was needed. Being imbued with the myth that women couldn't possibly know anything about cars, I waited a long time before I asked anybody about how to change the oil, but I finally got around to it and, power to me, I beat all the men of the household by doing it first. Once they learned that it was so simple a woman could do it, I hardly ever got the chance to do it again. But, this summer I finally got a car of my own.

Basically, changing the oil is a simple procedure and pretty much alike on most vehicles. It consists of removing the plug on the oil pan, letting the old oil drain out, replacing the plug, and adding new oil to the engine. The plug is usually underneath the engine and will look something like this:



It's a bolt that screws right into the pan, located between the wheels, usually in a fairly convenient position. If you have a good set of wrenches, see which one fits the bolt. You may have to hammer lightly at the wrench to get the bolt started; do this cautiously, as you don't want to strip the bolt. I usually try to park right over an indentation in the ground and lay something underneath so that if I spill, I don't have to lay in the oil to replace the plug. By parking over an indentation, I have room to get beneath the car and maneuver sufficiently. When the oil is drained out, remove the pan of oil, clean the plug in a good solvent like kerosene, and put it back snugly, but don't strain your-



self. Before replacing the plug, some people like to pour in a quart of fresh oil and let it drain to flush out additional dirt, but I've never done this.

After replacing the plug (too tight is as bad as too loose), add your clean oil. On my old 6 cylinder car, the oil filler is right on top of the rocker arm cover. I have seen some V-8s where the oil can be added from the top of either rocker arm cover. It's pretty easy to find, and generally the cap looks much like the radiator cap. Most cars take either four or five quarts, depending on whether or not you change the filter. If you don't have an owner's manual, which will give you crankcase and filter capacity, you can get it from Motor's Auto Repair Manual, found in a good library. Look for something like "specifications--crankcase" under the model and year that you own. It's just as harmful to have too much oil as too little. Changing your oil should be done whenever the oil looks dirty. Most car manufacturers recommend changing it every two months or 2,000 miles, whichever comes first. Regular maintenance in this area will keep your engine clean and prolong its life.

About disposing of your dirty oil--an ecological dilemma to be sure. You could save it for mixing with Penta for the next batch of fence posts to be treated. Most of us change oil more often than we need posts, and what I usually do is drain it at the county dump.

When changing oil, consider the anticipated temperatures for the next four months:

<u>Anticipated Temperatures</u>	<u>Viscosity Number</u>
Above Freezing (+32 F.)	SAE 20W, SAE 10W-30
Below Freezing and above 0 F.	SAE 10W, SAE 10W-30
Below 0 F.	SAE 5W, SAE 5W-20

This chart was plagiarized from my owner's manual, but let me give you a brief explanation. The weight of oil is related to its density, and for different weather conditions you need different weights. For warm to hot weather, a denser oil works better in your car, because warm oil flows more easily, necessary for smooth operation. Too light an oil in the summer and it seems to go away faster. I'm not sure if the engine burns it or if it evaporates, but it does seem to disappear.

continued

continued

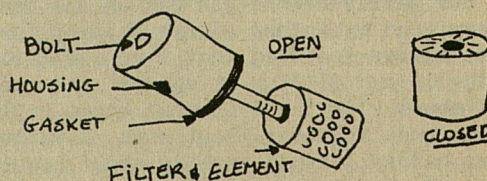
In cold weather, oil flows slowly, and sometimes it can get almost solid and make it difficult for your engine to turn over. For this reason, a lighter weight oil that flows easily will work better. I'm not really certain of the advantages of mixed weight oils except that they seem to have a wider range. This would depend a lot on how much you care to spend for oil, as mixed

weights are more expensive, and how much the daily temperature variation is in your area. In general, detergent oils are better for your engine, as they clean out sediment particles, and I would recommend using them if you want to do right by your car. However, if you are using a non-detergent oil, don't switch to detergent until you have a complete overhaul. Your car is at stake! It is okay to switch to non-detergent from detergent, however, without worrying.

Your oil filter has to be changed regularly too. My owner's manual says to change the filter the first time the oil is changed, and thereafter every other time I change the oil. This depends also on what kind of filter your car uses, and driving conditions. There are two kinds of filters--a throw away filter that is just one unit, or a filter replacement unit that fits inside a housing unit that is part of the car. Different brands have different numbering systems for their filters, so unless you have a particular brand in mind and know the number, you'll have to look it up. Usually there will be some kind of reference guide such as: Chev. 1972-1970, V-8 (all except 396 cub. in.), type of filter P-141. The filter's purpose is to trap some of the engine dirt, and not changing it seems lazy to me. I would rather buy a cheaper brand and change it every oil change, than a more expen-

sive brand and change it alternate times. I have been told that a good way to judge is to remove the filter and feel how heavy it is. If it seems very heavy (with dirt) it is a good idea to replace it. Most oil filters are underneath the hood (as opposed to underneath the engine). If you have the disposable kind you may need a filter removing tool because dirty filters are oily and hard to turn. The tool is simply a metal strap that can be tightened around the filter and then pulled on to give you more leverage than just your hands, so you could try to improvise one or just try your brute strength. Directions for installation are explicit and come with the filters.

If your car uses a filter replacement element, all you'll need is a wrench to fit the bolt. They look something like this:



A word of warning--make sure that the old gasket is off and the new one on correctly. Some manufacturers recommend lubricating them lightly with oil to make a better seal. Again, don't put it back on too hard.

A few miscellaneous tips to wrap it all up--when you're done, start the car and let it run to check for leaks around the oil pan plug and the filter gasket. Also avoid using an adjustable wrench unless you're really handy with it; mine has a tendency to slip and wear on the corners of my bolts. ♀



MOMMA

The Newspaper/Magazine for
Single Mothers

Momma	Momma	Momma
Gimmie	Gimmie	Gimmie
Help	Help	Help

Any momma anywhere who has felt the awful anguish and anger of ceaseless caring will want this paper to read, to share, to delight in, to weep with...

"My baby brought me into the world of feeling, caring, fear, inadequacy, anger, frustration, loving & happiness."

And women struggling with questions of living alone or together and attempts at equality will find strength for the struggle in Momma...

"My main and maybe sad conclusion from all this, is that I obviously still don't know anything about love. I'm still so unused to meeting men as genuine equals that I simply can't do it very well. Under

the slightest stress (that enchantment which takes you past affection into the realm of "man" and "woman"; into myth), there I am, groveling and serving once again, and getting angry about it, while my beloved starts growing fur and fangs, turning into the proverbial beast my mother always told me about."

So will women who wish for wholeness at all ages and stages of life...

SUBSCRIBE
Box 567 Venice, Ca. 90291
35 cents each 3.00 year

"My situation is a bit different from most because now my three children are grown and have flown the nest. How I wish that there had been something like MOMMA when I was going through the post-divorce years! ...my daughter (23) is in the same situation as I was - trying to make it alone with two babies. How can I help her to adjust..."

and

"Mine Mom is a meaner. When I think of my mother I hate her so much I feel like killing her. When I'm mad at her I feel that way. I hate that newspaper the first time my friend read it to me. I tore it and got mad at it. I was embarrassed. I wish she had asked me if it was O.K. to put my secret in MOMMA. That was a personal thing between us."

oooooooooooooooooooo

oooooooooooooooooooo

AMAZON QUARTERLY

A Lesbian-Feminist Arts Journal

There have been three issues so far, each one fuller than the other. Excerpts show best what lies between its pages...

...In issue two-portions of Rita Mae Brown's unpublished novel Ruby Fruit Jungle. She and her best friend discover each other in the cockpit of the jet on the children's playground. "If I was worried I got over it. All I could think about was making love with Carolyn Simpson, head cheerleader and second-year chaplain for Ft. Lauderdale High School... and a cinch for prom queen. We were in the plane half the night coming in the wild blue yonder."

...Distinctions: The Circle Game by Laurel. "I'm beginning to see these new dyke distinctions as a circle game... that is, if you go far enough you end up where you began...and isolated to boot. Man-hating as a full time activity seems to me no more admirable than man-loving as a full time activity."

...From the poem "How to Make Love to a Woman if You're a Woman" by Jennie Orvino. "Think of yourself/and what you like/ then do that./Ask her/ what she wants/then please her."

...From the autobiography of Margaret Anderson. "If you ask me what I consider the supreme reward in friendship-love, I will answer: its absence of con-

flict. It may contain challenge, criticism, controversy, the exhilaration of disagreement, but between friends conflict is senseless. It may be alright between the sexes; it is all wrong between friends." and "Freedom is the only bond that could ever utterly bind me to another human being."

"The important factor is that it (AMAZON QUARTERLY) be in some way a launching out from all that we as women have been before into something new and uncharted."

One year subscription - \$4.00
Amazon Quarterly
554 Valle Vista
Oakland, California 94610

Consciousness Raising Starts at Home

Dear Country Women,

I wrote an article on quilting for the "Women and Art" issue. It is my art. It was published as a "country skill" in the "Making a Living" issue. That hurt me some - the same damn tears in my eyes I get when some complacent man or old broken woman looks at a quilt in progress and says, "how nice; a quilt for your family; how domestic you are; most women today are so pushy--it's good to see a real HOMEBODY. Damn it! Damn it! Damn it! Why is pottery, weaving, sculpture, painting an art and quilting a god damned country skill! Damn it all! Is it because men have made pots, woven, sculpted and painted and called these ART while "only women" quilt and you believe the same damn lie - as Sally Garoutte wrote in a recent issue of "Quiltmakers Newsletter", "the feeling on the part of many women that if an art was only practiced by women it didn't have much value."

This is apart from my ego - I don't care which issue an article I write shows up in, but that heading - it's the hideous self-maiming of women by women which brings me to rage and sorrow. "Yes, girls, now that yer livin in the country you better learn how to make up some nice coverlets and keep yer menfolk warm of a winter." - Damn that image and I hope you'll see that you didn't only hurt me but yourselves as well - all of us need to see ourselves with fresh eyes - not the old cultural stereotypes. It hurt me a lot to realize that any quiltmaker in the world knows she is an artist in her inmost self - but that her artsy-fartsy "sisters" think she's just a skillful needleworker. I don't know how to end this letter - I'm crying and furious. Maybe we have to try again and again until we learn to be right and true and good. I hope we'll get better.

-Cat

NEXT ISSUE

Next issue we want to explore more deeply our relationships with the land - both pragmatic and mystical. Practically, we need to demystify all that's involved in finding and buying and developing the land we live on (or hope to live on). For that part we need to know your experiences and what you've learned about everything from deeds to building a simple water system. Articles on land trusts, access laws and such, and choosing potentially productive land in different parts of the country would be welcome! If you know about building codes, developing alternative power sources, evaluating soil--share what you know. By sharing our individual experiences we can demystify all this and learn together. We also want to share our feelings for the land -- thoughts, flashes, poems, pieces from journals, and so on. How do you experience the land you live on? What is it that holds you there? How do you envision the growth of that relationship? We hope to discover together what it means to us as women to return to the land...

Please send articles and ideas as soon as possible! If you send poems, photographs, etc. that you want returned please send return postage. If you send an article, please tell us how you feel about our editing it - edit freely, edit only with specific permission, etc.



Before I came to Berkeley 3 months ago, I was living in Oregon. I want to raise my child in the country, but not in isolation. I'd like to buy land with several people, preferable who have children, in an area near an existing local community. My idea, is to become settled, find a balance in the daily life I'll be living and the people I'll be living with, and then begin drawing in children - city children or emotionally unbalanced children, I'm not sure yet who or what ages.

For a start, I was thinking of Foster children over 16 who are about to be cut loose, have no training, no idea of what to do, and are easy victims for the army, jail, unwanted pregnancies etc.

The government doesn't require a license for people to take foster children over 16, and pays \$80 a month, so it's a realistic possibility economically, too.

If you know anybody interested, please ask them to contact me, or, if you have any suggestions, I'd like to hear from you.

Write to Ursula, c/o Country Women
Box 51, Albion, Calif, 95410

Gay women in the Minn.-St. Paul area are opening a Lesbian Resource Center in Minn. to better serve the needs of lesbians.

The center serves several purposes, with the goal of building a lesbian community in the area. A small library exists which will eventually contain all periodicals and books concerning lesbians. There is a lounge to allow women to drop in, look at the literature and meet other women. One important function is that of acting as a clearinghouse and facilitator for any groups, activities or actions which women want to do - providing a place to meet and finding other women who are also interested.

We definitely want to be in contact with other gay women's groups and centers across the country. A monthly bulletin will be done describing activities and giving general information. If anyone is interested in exchanging ideas and support please write to us and we'll send you our bulletin. Also, anyone who is going through the Twin Cities is welcome and encouraged to drop by. Our address: Lesbian Resource Center, 710 West 22nd St. Minneapolis, Minn. 55405. We also have a bibliography of lesbian related material. It's free but please send a self-addressed stamped envelope.

We (Jack, Sue, Scott, and new baby Zachariah) are looking for a woman or a man and a woman to share with us our house, our farm, our work, and our expenses for summer or longer. We've just moved onto a 72 acre farm in Northeast Ohio, and we're feeling short on help (and short on company, too!).

Please write if you are interested:

Sue Sandler,
803 Atkins Rd. RFD #3
Geneva Ohio 44041

Country Women is a working collective. We do not live together and are not a woman's commune.

XX

Photographs:

Sally Bailey...10,13,14,35,center fold,56,58,62,
Ruth of Mt. Grove...12,17,26,34 back cover
Lynda Koolish...48,51
Linda Rhodes...36
Jenny Tiemann...60
Bobbie Jones...18

Graphics

River...2,6,8,21,22,37,38,39,67
Leona...9,20,21,25,27,30,40-48,61
Slim...23
Carmen...57
Janet Wolfe Stanley...24,52,53

