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MAIZE

A LESBIAN COUNTRY MAGAZINE

FALL 9991



Jeanne Wallace

MAIZE IS BY AND FOR LESBIANS

MAIZE invites Lesbians to contribute articles, graphics, photos, interviews, letters, comments, news of Lesbians on the land. Cassette taped interviews and discussions are accepted for transcription. Transcriptions will be returned for editing. Editing on any piece will be done only in cooperation with the author. If you wish to have your work returned, please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Please note if the work you send has been submitted or published elsewhere. Please include a biographical note.

Letters to the editor may be published in full or in part, unless specified "not for publication". Names will be used unless you request your name withheld, as well as place of residence.

The contents of MAIZE does not necessarily reflect the viewpoint of the editor. Debate is encouraged. Editor: Lee Lanning

We will run free announcements of particular interest to country Lesbians and free classified ads by Lesbians especially for country Lesbians. Display ads: \$10 (4 1/2h x 3 1/2w)

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More if you can, less if you can't

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Mau Blossom
Doniphan, Missouri

Creating Money for Lesbian Dreams

By Jeanne Wallace
Serafina, New Mexico

In August, while attending the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, I met several groups of Lesbians wishing to create communities on land. Many of these womyn have worked toward their dreams for 3, 5, 7, even 10 or more years. For all of the groups I met with, lack of financial resources (and fears relating to money) were the major factors holding them back. And while most of us wish to leave behind the wasteland of patriarchal institutions--including the dollar--in favor of developing new forms of exchange in the communities we create, it seems we will need the boost of the buck to get from here to there. It's time to get creative about fundraising.

The lament "if only we could print our own money" began to really appeal to me after reading about *local currencies* being used in a small Berkshire, Massachusetts town. The story goes like this: The owner of a popular deli loses his lease, and no bank in town will lend him the dough to move his business, so he prints up his own "Deli Dollars". He sells notes at \$9 a piece, and customers could redeem them for \$10 worth of food after a 6 month waiting period. A novelty at first, the Deli Dollars quickly became a community movement, turning up everywhere from the local bookstore to the collection plate at church.

The same town also birthed the Berkshire Farm Preserve Notes, which could be purchased during winter months and then cashed in for produce at harvest time. These notes read aptly "In Farms We Trust" and portray the head of a cabbage. Local farm owners are keeping their farms afloat with the more than \$8000 in Farm Notes issued last year.

As long as a currency can be exchanged for U.S. dollars and transactions can be taxed, the federal government has no restrictions on these notes. Home-made money--like the Deli Dollars and Farm Notes-- is in effect a short-term loan to the seller provided by the faith and support of the community.

It's high time to print some Dyke Dollars! Printing Lesbian money is an easy, low-cost approach to financing Lesbian land (and other Dyke dreams, too). Sold in advance to raise funds for purchasing land, the notes would be redeemable later for goods or services produced on the land. The possible wares are limitless: organic produce, herbs, salves and tinctures, heritage seeds, massage or other body work, camping/retreat space, home-cooked meals, weaving, pottery, and Dyke-made crafts of all sorts. The pre-sales would get a land-based economy off to a good start.

With Dyke Dollars, our communities will have the opportunity to invest in Lesbian desires. With Dyke Dollars, we'll concentrate our resources within our community. And these resources will multiply. Finally, Dyke currency is a leap toward creating our own exchange/gift economies, a leap away from ideas of "scarcity" and toward the abundance we're ready to embrace.

Jeanne: I'm a creative thinking idealist living happily on Lesbian Land in New Mexico. I look forward to the days of DYKE "TENDER", and am working on a design for round wallets.

Getting to the Land

By Ayla Heartsong
Soldier's Grove, Wisconsin

I wish to respond to ideas presented by Sister Homelands on Earth (SHE). As I understand them, SHE wants to establish land groups/areas for women and serve as a coordinating network organization. All of this is well and good with me, but what I would like to present is a different way of reaching the same end: wimin living on land, supporting themselves and daring to be as radical and wild as they can imagine.

SHE clings to the same formula wimin have been struggling with for years: get a group of wimin together, pool all of their limited resources to buy land, then struggle to create self-sufficient work and make the land payments and make the existing buildings fit your changing needs/relationships, etc., etc.

I live at Luna Circle, a wimin's land community in SW Wisconsin. Five wimin are sharing a large farmhouse, living together communally, collectively, as individuals and as a group. Three of us work part-time off land, and two of us are running a successful business on our farm. What are the key differences? First, we rent. By renting various places, we have been able to observe what qualities will be a benefit to us and what qualities to avoid, *without being stuck with them*. Also renting is cheaper and potentially more accessible to wimin with limited money (one of SHE's goals is to get wimin with limited money onto land). We rent a huge, four bedroom farmhouse with two barns and three other outbuildings for \$150 per month! True, we don't own the land, so it isn't technically a lesbian "homeland". However, anyone walking in the door knows this is amazon space. Yes, we are at the whim of the landowner and the insecurity of that is unsettling at times. Eventually we will buy land, but we will

know exactly what we need for our community and our business.

Second, we are establishing a farm-based business now that we can easily transfer wherever we move. We are stacking up experience and resources and knowledge that will be well in place when we buy land. We grow three acres of organic vegetables, sold at farmer's markets and food co-ops and neighbors. So far, this business has paid all our day-to-day bills and farm equipment loans. We are passing on what we know to two half-season apprentices. We trade local wimin vegetables in exchange for their help in our fields. We're not really making a "profit", but we are definitely getting the most pressing needs met.

I want to challenge the assumption that wimin must buy land first, then try to live comfortably there. We are renting land and learning to live comfortably here now, as well as learning what we want to buy sometime down the road. I truly feel like this *is* a lesbian "homeland", a place where lesbians can be themselves, creating new economies, dynamics and possibilities. We all have seen far too many land groups struggle with exorbitant land payments and other issues around money and power. Certainly some of those things happen here too, but I am suggesting that building the community first, then buying land may be more enduring in the long run.

I welcome dialog around this concept. For more personal correspondence, my address is: Ayla Heartsong, Luna Circle Farm, Rt. 1 Box 1200, Soldier's Grove, WI 54631

Ayla Heartsong is a young, idealistic Dianic dyke currently pulling a lot of foxtail and velvetleaf out of the fields of southwest Wisconsin. She wrote this commentary on a contemplative, rainy Sunday morning in late July.

Womon-Grower

By Mitru Ciarlante
The Poconos

Nurturer of life, witness to death
Feeding your sisters as you give back to the Earth.
Working with Wind, Sun, Water, Soil as they
Make known to you Her ancient ways.
Tilling and planting the fields our mothers walked
before you.

Bring bucket, bring broom, bring sponges:
Sisters build a home for Womyn.
Clean house and minds free from dust and cobwebs.
Creating new spaces within the old.
Clearing the windows that we may be farseeing Womyn.

Bring boots, bring tiller, bring measure stick:
Sisters build a field for crops.
Walk fields and test soil seeking fertile ground to
Transplant Womyn's roots.
Connection with Earth and each other gives us courage to
reach towards Sky.

Bring hammer, bring stapler, bring plastic:
Sisters build a haven for seedlings.
Build the green house that seeds may grow as strong as
Womyn's goals grow strong--with lots of wommonwarmth,
nurturance and support.

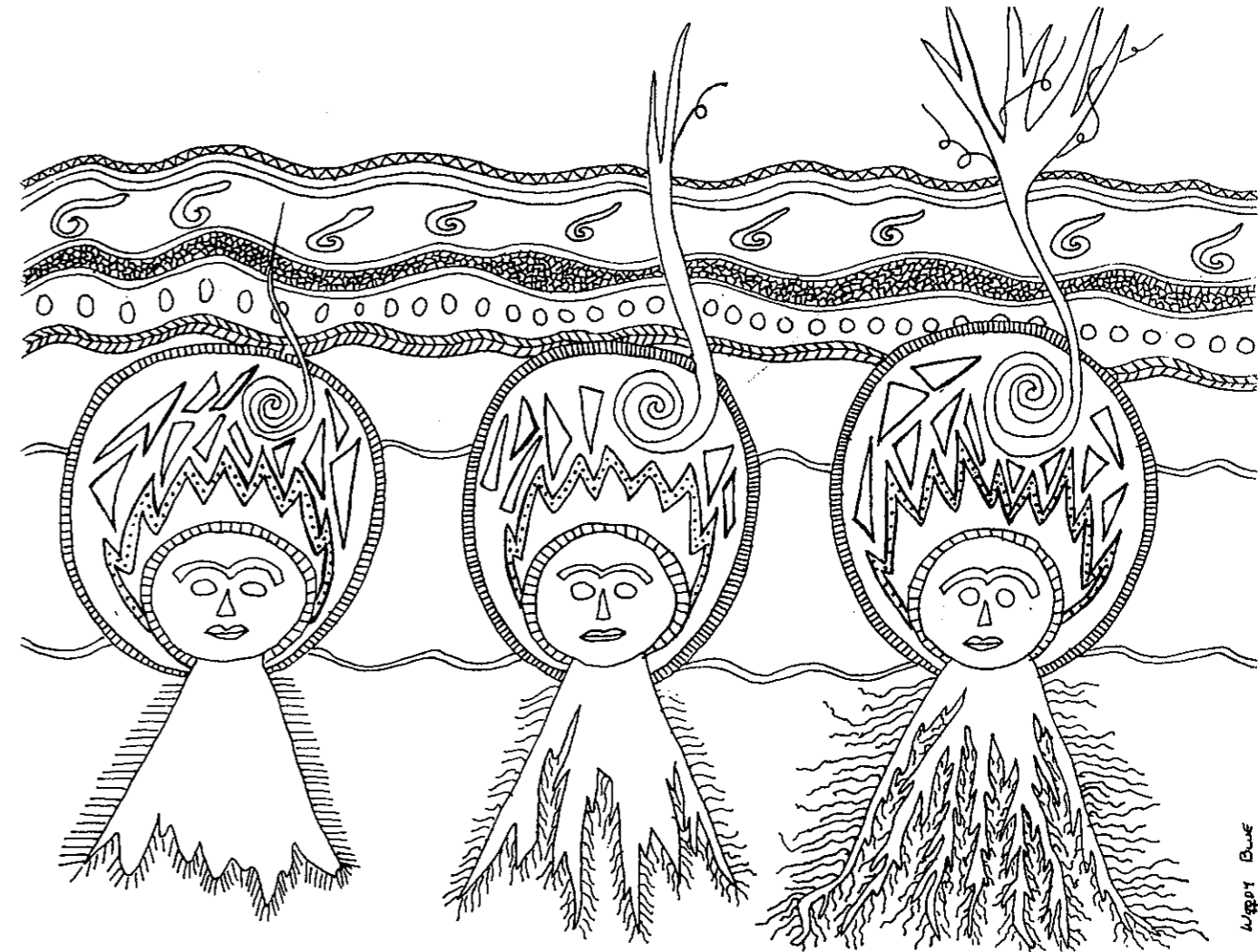
Bring sand, bring soil, bring water:
Sisters build trays for seeds.
Mix soil as womyn mix ideas and words.
Seeking the balance that nourishes growth.

Growing Womon stretching beyond your Self.
Limitless as all that grows. The paradox: Reaching
ever further until you Circle back to self-truth.
Growing in Her cycles.

Bring vision! Bring humor! Bring spirit!
Bring compassion! Bring love! Bring power!

SISTERS BUILD A NEW WORLD FOR WOMYN.

*Mitru Ciarlante is a sweet Aquarian dyke
who passed thru Luna Circle last spring
and planted this poem in among the other
dreams in the living room. She's
currently living peacefully in the Poconos.*



Woody Blue

Earth Bowl

By Woody Blue
Soldier's Grove, Wisconsin

Earth bowl, finger-bone
Dig a hole.
Dig a hole.

Water spoon, silver moon
Watch it bloom.
Watch it bloom.

Thunder wind, global spin
Flow within.
Flow within.

Grounding heat, witches feet
Harvest we.
Harvest we.

*Woody Blue has recently moved from the
miasma of Cleveland, Ohio to the sweet
country hills of southwestern Wisconsin.
She lives at Luna Circle Farm, in
company with powerful Amazon lesbians.*

On the Land

SOMETHING SPECIAL MIAMI, FLORIDA

back in the 70's a lesbian who had traveled extensively in and out of lesbian communities told me she felt that what divided lesbians, whether living on the land or in cities, was the 3 M's--men, meat and money.

having experienced the building and then eventual dissolving of lesbian groups, i quickly made connections. she was right! so when louise and i, having pulled in for several years, and realizing our need to continue creating lesbian culture, decided to do something again, we knew we'd have to deal with the 3 M's. louise, being a vegetarian chef extraordinaire, and needing an income after shedding her msw-university chains, knew that food was potent, political and dealt with one of the 3 M's! something special was born. a lesbian venture, serving vegetarian meals daily out of our converted porch and living room. an underground lesbian business.

ah yes, no meat, that's obvious. we're vegetarian. men? our house and property have been wimmin only space since we moved in ten years ago. our fathers don't come through our gates. now, for money. how do we get paid for our services. we decided that instead of putting a price on our food and drink, we'd put a sign on the tables that says "the cost of your food and drink is left to your discretion." everyone immediately told us we were fools. it wouldn't work. wimmin would take advantage of us etc.etc. well, wimmin, it's been five years, we have to work other jobs on occasion to make ends meet, and something special is still open seven days a week serving vegetarian meals daily in a wimmin only atmosphere, and yes, wimmin decide the price.

blessed be!
maryanne & louise

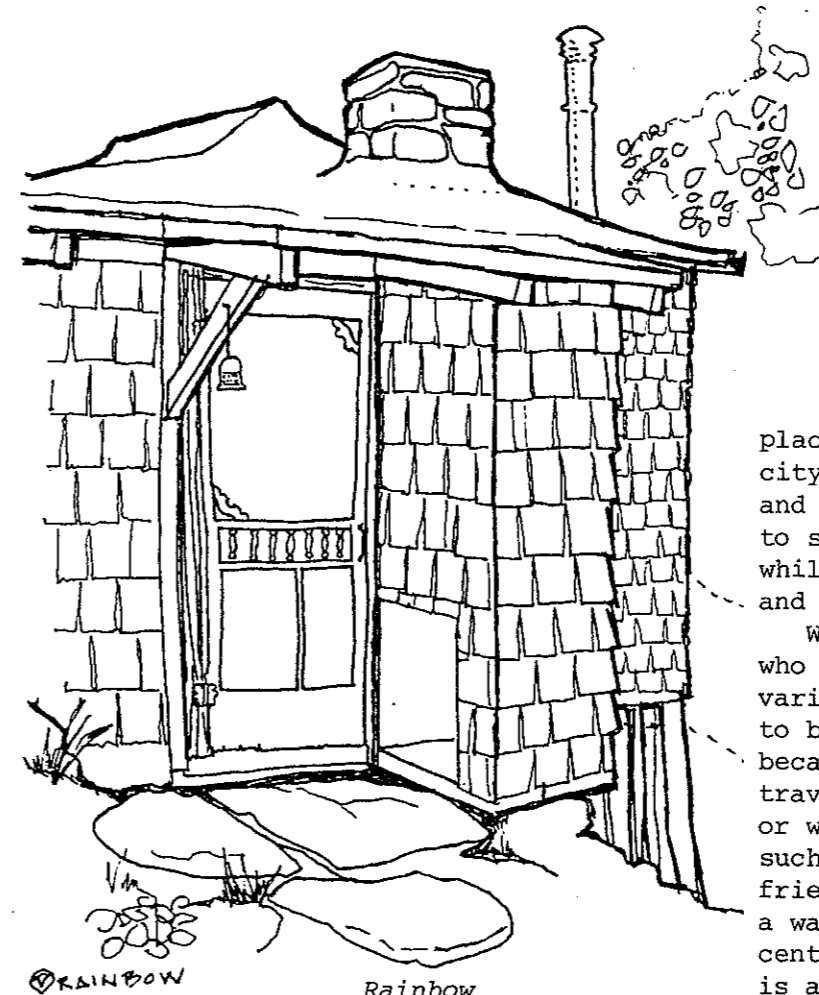
MOON AND STARS FARM GALLATIN, MISSOURI

August 26, 1991

What a summer this has been! After writing to Maize early last spring expressing, not too well, our desire to create a new wimmin's land on our farm, we were led to a wonderful group of wimmin in central Missouri, some of them city and some country like us. In meeting them we realized more fully just how much wimmin's land is needed. And that it can't happen overnight no matter how much we want it and need it.

There are so many country dykes in northwest Missouri but for the most part we are so wary of the homophobics that we hide--from each other too, unfortunately! The wimmin we met, crafters, artists, healers, teachers, seekers, opened our eyes and helped us see for ourselves what we, all of us, can have and can be. And strengthened our determination to create a safe place for us to come together--in an area where such space is sorely needed. A retreat from patriarchy right here in the midst of some of the worst of it. We have been soothed and healed and enlightened and encouraged and empowered on this land and want to make it available to other wimmin who need such a place--for an hour, a day or a lifetime.

Naturally, our letter in the summer issue of Maize received no response. We wanted to say "Looking for wimmin disengaging from patriarchy to establish rural wimmin's community in northwest Missouri. And we think we can finance it with an antique/craft mall in the barn." But instead we came across sounding like a late-night TV ad for used cars! We can well imagine the raised eyebrows and indulgent smiles. From a financial standpoint the antique/craft mall was a good idea, albeit born out of desperation and impatience to get this thing going. But, at the same time, we really didn't want the "public" on this land. It would be completely counter to our purpose, which is having a place to be safe and free to be who we are! And that's probably why it didn't happen. We are trying to learn patience and to wait for guidance and just let it happen. And it is happening.



Rainbow
St. Augustine, Florida

What we do have to begin with is 160 beautiful acres, 90 of which is mostly woods; 2 ponds; a creek; a 100 year old Victorian farmhouse; a wonderful 100 year old barn, full of possibilities; and 3 buildings which can easily be converted into living spaces. We also have 2 goats, 13 rabbits, 3 dogs, 9 cats and 2 kids. We've been together for 7 years.

Two years ago the Goddess led us to this land and helped us defeat one of patriarchy's finest to acquire it. And over the past few months She had led us to some wonderful wimmin who are helping us learn how to develop our plans (and ourselves). We are very grateful for their wisdom and caring. They've helped us remember that nobody starts at the end, we must start at the beginning.

So, this is our first step. We plan to open up our front parlor as a wimmin only shop, with crafts, jewelry, herbs, candles, oils, art, books, music, etc. and which we also offer as a gathering

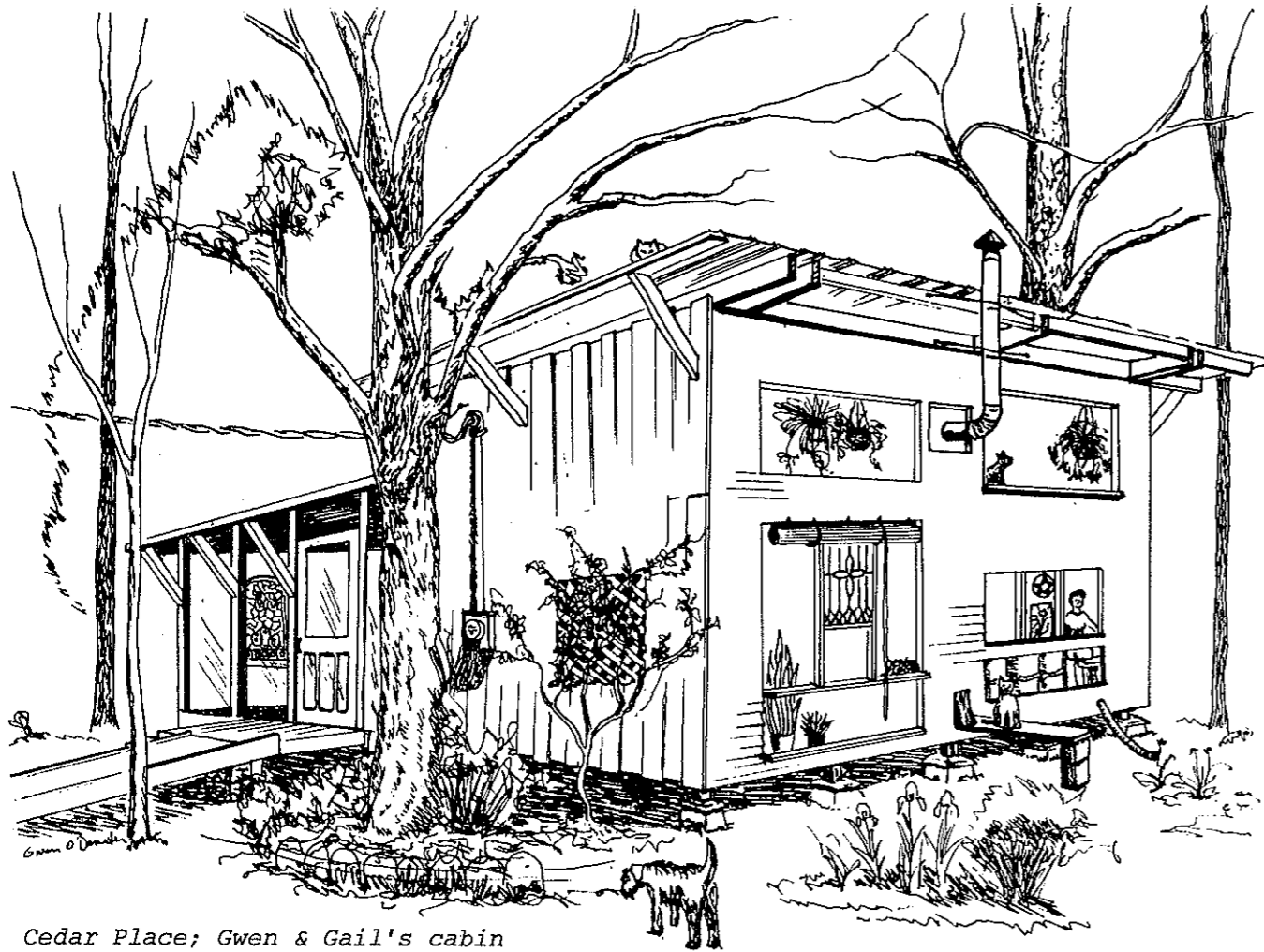
place/resource center for country dykes, city dykes who need the country sometimes and anyone passing through who would like to stop and visit and rest here for a while. We need your experience, ideas and suggestions.

We have talked to many country dykes who are missing out on the richness and variety of wimmin's culture (which seems to be mainly concentrated in the cities) because of their isolation, inability to travel to the city because of the distance or workload or their reluctance to enter such an "alien environment" without friends to help them "break the ice". In a way, our shop would be an "outreach center" for country dykes. A woman who is afraid to subscribe to a lesbian publication because her nosy neighbor works at the post office, could stop by the farm on her way to the feed store and pick up a copy of Maize or the Spiral Dance or a special gift or card for her lover.

We can make this a thriving, loving wimmin's community where we can make a living and a life, unlike patriarchy where you get one or the other!

These are the things we've wished for and we know others do, too. So here we are. We have the place to do it, so come and let's get started. There's always a pot of coffee on and the front porch is a great place for brainstorming! We've set our Second Annual Get-Together/Brainstorming Weekend for November 16&17, 1991 and invite anyone interested in a new wimmin's community. Space is limited at this time unless you're a hardy camper, so give us a call soon. All we ask is a little help with the food. Hope to see you all soon!

Debbie & Lin
Moon & Stars Farm
POBox 412
Gallatin, MO 64640
816-367-4486



Cedar Place; Gwen & Gail's cabin
Silver Circle Sanctuary
Holly Springs, Mississippi

Gwen O Demeter

SILVER CIRCLE SANCTUARY
HOLLY SPRINGS, MISSISSIPPI

The summer was marked by moderate temperatures and only about a month of drought. The devas blessed us with a wonderful garden of snowpeas, greens, lettuce, chinese cabbage and later tomatoes, green beans, bell peppers that are still producing, sweet corn just now coming in, winter squash; the list gets boring unless you live in the country and know how important gardens are. We are happy that it looks as though we will have an abundant late garden of cool weather crops also.

Gwen and I enjoyed our trip to womanwrites and to the unfinished revolution party at M.bj's wit's end farm. We seemed to have been centered at home on the farm this year, however. The composting toilet is working and we have done extensive work on the drive-

way, a never ending task. Our most traumatic event this year has been the logging of the 80 acres next to us. The devastation is almost unbelievable. As a result we have had an influx of wild animals of all sorts.

We are looking forward to Ayla and Trish's visit this winter as well as other friends. We are planning to continue working on our cabin addition this winter.

We hope to make the trip to Spiritfest in Nov. and later join our friend Merrill Mushroom for a Thanksgiving celebration. Her new house is just magnificent. We are continuing our work of networking and hope any of you traveling this way will stop by for a "set on the screen porch and a little supper". If you get through Memphis, TN, be sure to stop in at Meristem, our new bookstore. They can give you all the scoop on the city doings.

Gail

OWL FARM
DAY'S CREEK, OREGON

Hey, have you heard? The Oregon Woman's Land Trust will celebrate its fifteenth year of existence in 1991. What a lot has been accomplished in those years! OWL Farm, 150 acres of land, open to all wimmin, is owned and paid for. Through this land, the Trust is providing wimmin access to living on land; providing the opportunity for wimmin to learn new ways of relating to each other by creating new forms of family and community. At the same time, the Trust continues to preserve this beautiful part of Mother Earth while protecting her from misuse. These are all goals that were aspired to by the original creatices of OWLT. It is so important to recognize that they are being accomplished.

So, what about the future? Where do we go from here? The work of the Trust in the next few years should be to broaden its focus so as to become an umbrella organization for other lands. At this time, the majority of active members of OWLT are those wimmin who live at OWL Farm. Much of our energy is focused on making OWL Farm work. At the same time, these wimmin, with some exceptions, are new to the idea and reality of wimmin's land.

For OWLT to fully achieve its purpose as an organization that can coordinate the needs of several lands and/or assets, we need a diverse group of wimmin with varying levels of skills, experience and commitment. In short, for OWLT to be more than just the caretaking body for OWL Farm, we need more hands and more hearts. For those of you who have been involved with the Trust in the past, we call to you to join us, for your voice of experience is needed. For those of you who wish to be part of the future of OWLT, we invite you. Your vision is needed.

For OWLT, NiAodagain

The Outreach committe has been doing a lot of work and has accomplished much. We asked womyn's lands in Oregon to give us a 25-30 word description of their land so we could make an Oregon woman's land flyer. It's beautiful and includes lands from outside Portland to outside Grant's Pass. Write to the Trust or the Farm if you would like this networking flyer.

In sisterspirit, kaseja O

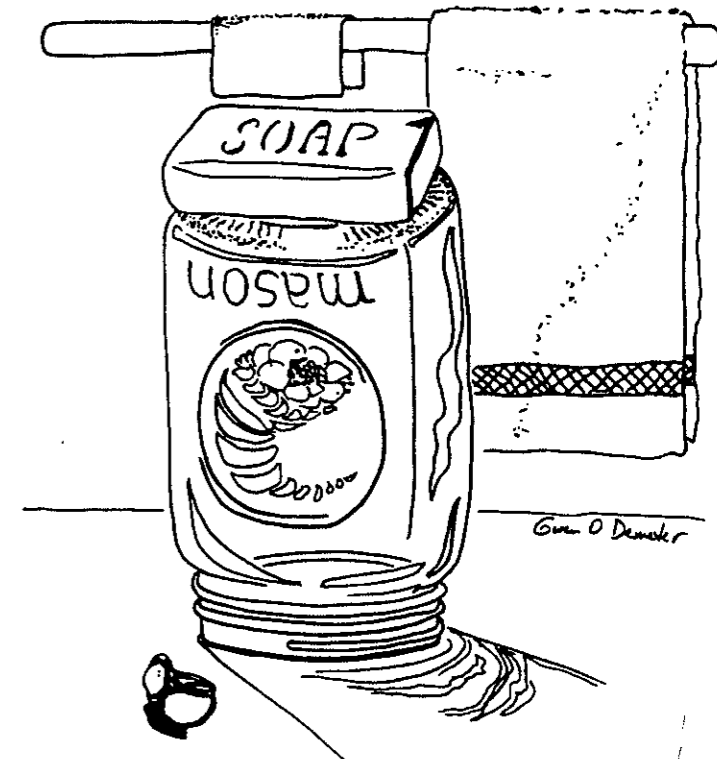
The Marsha Garden, our experiment in irrigation gardening, has proved very successful. Thus, we have expanded to the eastern slopes of the Marsha. With lots of fun in the ooey-gooey mud, wimmin have created 12 more beds, each 13 ft long by 3 ft wide. Our food-growing capabiliti are increasing rapidly!

Boa

The front room of the main house is now freshly painted and very inviting. The library keeps expanding and visions of ways to use the room are ever spiraling. Two items we see coming to the farm before winter are a stove to insert into the fireplace and a piano for Beulah's parlor, the room adjacent to the kitchen. Since April, we've raised \$92.50 for the collective piano/stove fund, through a bake sale and talent show. We will give 10% of the final total to our sisters at ARF who are buying their land. If you would like to donate to the fund, or have a lead on either item, please write to us.

Corva

from the OWLT newsletter
PO Box 1692, Roseburg OR 97470



mouee-proof soap dish

Gwen O Demeter

NEW MEXICO WOMEN'S LAND TRUST TESUQUE, NEW MEXICO

We are very pleased to announce that on August 2, 1991, we achieved a signed agreement to purchase Arf Women's Land. The price is \$77,000 plus the amount still to be paid on the original real estate contract which is approximately \$23,000, for a total of approximately \$100,000. We have made the first payment of \$15,000, with a second payment of \$15,000 due on February 2, 1992, and the balance of \$70,000 due on August 2, 1992. We still have about \$13,000 in the bank to go towards future payments. Now, *more than ever*, we need your help securing this land for women. We need donations, loans, fundraising events, memberships, and contacts with women you know who might be able to help us. Many, many thanks to each of you who has helped us get this far!!

We are also pleased to announce that in February 1991, the New Mexico Women's Land Trust was accepted as a sponsored project of the New Mexico Research, Education and Enrichment Foundation (NMREEF), a 501-c-3 tax exempt organization. This means that donations may be made to the Land Trust through NMREEF for an income tax deduction. Contact us for more details if you would like to make a tax-deductible donation to the Land Trust.

After much research and many drafts, our application to the IRS for our own tax-exempt status was submitted in June. We wish to thank the many groups who sent us copies of their Articles of Incorporation, ByLaws and tax-exemption applications, which helped us figure out how to write ours. Thanks especially to the Oregon Women's Land Trust, HOWL Vermont Women's Land Trust, HawkHill Community Land Trust of Missouri, and the Institute for Community Economics.

For those who are interested in loaning us money, we will be forming a Loan Pool so that every lender will have an undivided interest and a first mortgage position. We are being assisted in setting up the Loan Pool by Christine Champion of The Champion Group. There are a number of possible options for terms that we can tailor to our lenders. Presently we are looking at 10-year loans, with interest at market rates. Let us know if you are interested in making an investment in the

women's community, and what would work for you.

Diane and Pelican

Plans are beginning for another NMWLT land in New Mexico. Since August 1990 lesbians have been meeting to exchange ideas about how we might want to do wimmin's land if we had the opportunity to do it the way we want to. Many in the group have been involved in past wimmin's lands, and from our experiences and failures want a chance to do things differently. The group is also motivated by the fact that Arf meets the needs of a limited number of wimmin due to its small size (25 acres), and difficulty of physical access. From the beginning we were surprised to find that we had many points of agreement. We hope to encompass and support diversity by addressing racism, anti-semitism, classism, ableism, cultural elitism, and other oppressions which create divisions among lesbians. We are committed to accessibility for disabled wimmin, old wimmin, poor wimmin, and wimmin of color.

We would like to have enough land so that we can live in affinity groups with other lesbians with similar wants and needs. This would allow for diversity on the land while each womyn could live in a way comfortable for her. We want to find ways to live that honor the richness of our differences as well as our similarities. Instead of it being "open land" it would be land open to those who share the values of and are committed to doing anti-oppression work, ecological responsibility, building a community, and a conflict-resolution process.

Some of us spent last winter writing a paper stating our points of agreement so far. We want other lesbians to join us and to see if this project will gather energy. We want to increase our diversity and welcome input and new ideas as we move forward. Meanwhile the ideas are available for other groups to use in any way they can benefit from them. For a copy of our paper, "Ideas for a Diverse Lesbian Land Community", send \$2 to the Land Trust address. This is a slow moving project, as Arf Women's Land needs to be secured for wimmin first, and we want more lesbians of color, disabled lesbians, and old lesbians involved in the planning process from the beginning. from the newsletter Raven and Pelican NMWLT, POBox 707, Tesuque, NM 87574

COMMUNITY HERSTORY

As hard as making community together can sometimes be, it's encouraging to recognize and celebrate the ways it has been and is being done. We're not the first. Lesbian Separatists apparently settled in Oklahoma:

"A wheat field covers all traces of Fashibo, founded by and for women in the Cherokee Outlet in 1893. As many as 33 women, and no men, lived there once. They even killed all the roosters! They threatened to kill a nearby rancher's bull and at the height of bickering with neighbors and among themselves, 10 women deserted in one week. The town soon died, the pioneer feminist experiment a failure." (entry in an article about Oklahoma ghost towns, The Tulsa Tribune, Dec. 31, 1975, reported in UP & COMING, Fayetteville's Own Feminist Newspaper, Dec. 1990)

And in Texas, The Women's Commonwealth, a community and way of life created by, for and about women thrived for 40 years (1866-1904). About 32 adult women (50 in 1880) lived, worked, dreamed and built together.

These women consciously created their way of life, always encouraging both a solid individual identity and a cohesive group identity. They left husbands (facing both physical attack and ostracism) to live together, share their spirituality and develop a communal economy/work. They renounced their earlier lives, practiced celibacy, gathered together in prayer meetings and never proselytized.

Within 17 years they established financial independence, were building houses on their own land, and won court decisions to keep their children and their own money.

For years they operated a successful hotel in Belton, Texas--of course they also designed and built it. Altogether they erected 15 buildings in Belton.

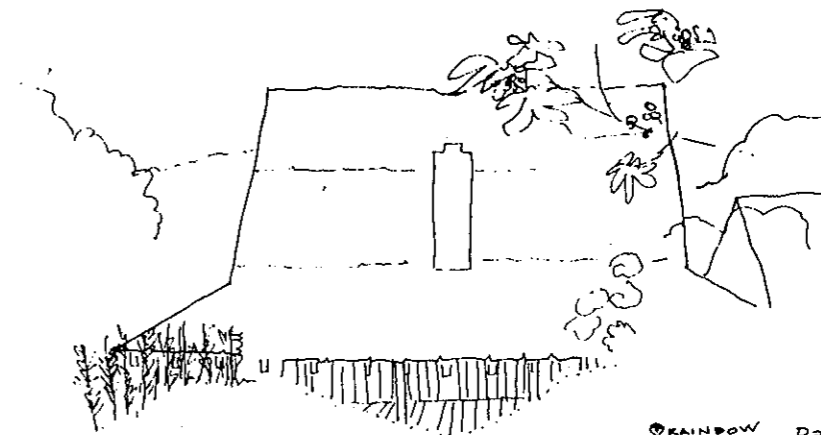
Responding to current needs, their buildings and lives continually evolved. Peace and simplicity were the tone. Equality was a core and they were economically interdependent/sharing. They rotated tasks weekly to share skills and experiences. Tasks were done efficiently and joyfully. Space was designed to be open and flowing, no walls or other artificial boundaries to working or living or relating. Large group areas encouraged sharing and interaction. Spaces were used for many varied activities.

Equally important was self-identity and each woman had her own small room. Officially, each woman worked on community tasks four hours per day with the rest of the day her own. The community design included many walks, gardens and other nooks encouraging alone time.

Martha McWhirter, the founder, apparently remained a respected "leader" until her death in 1904 when the group began to dissolve. Decisions and policies in the community were discussed in informal meetings, often coming from interpretations of women's dreams. It's said they lay, heads together, to dream.

In 1899, the entire group decided to retire. After dreaming, visiting, researching and discussing they moved to a large house outside Washington DC. (Condensed from an article by Gwendolyn Wright, "The Woman's Commonwealth, a Nineteenth Century Experiment", in Heresies #11, 1981.)

Jae Haggard
Serafina, New Mexico



RAINBOW Rainbow
St. Augustine, Florida

Greenham Common Wimmin's Peace Camp

By Cas Heron
Bloo Gate
Greenham Common Wimmins Peace Camp
USAF Newbury
Berkshire, England

I suppose the birth day celebration of ten years of wimmin living on land is quite a celebration, eh? I live at Greenham Common Wimmins Peace Camp; we are on an ancient 'common' in the midst of rural England.

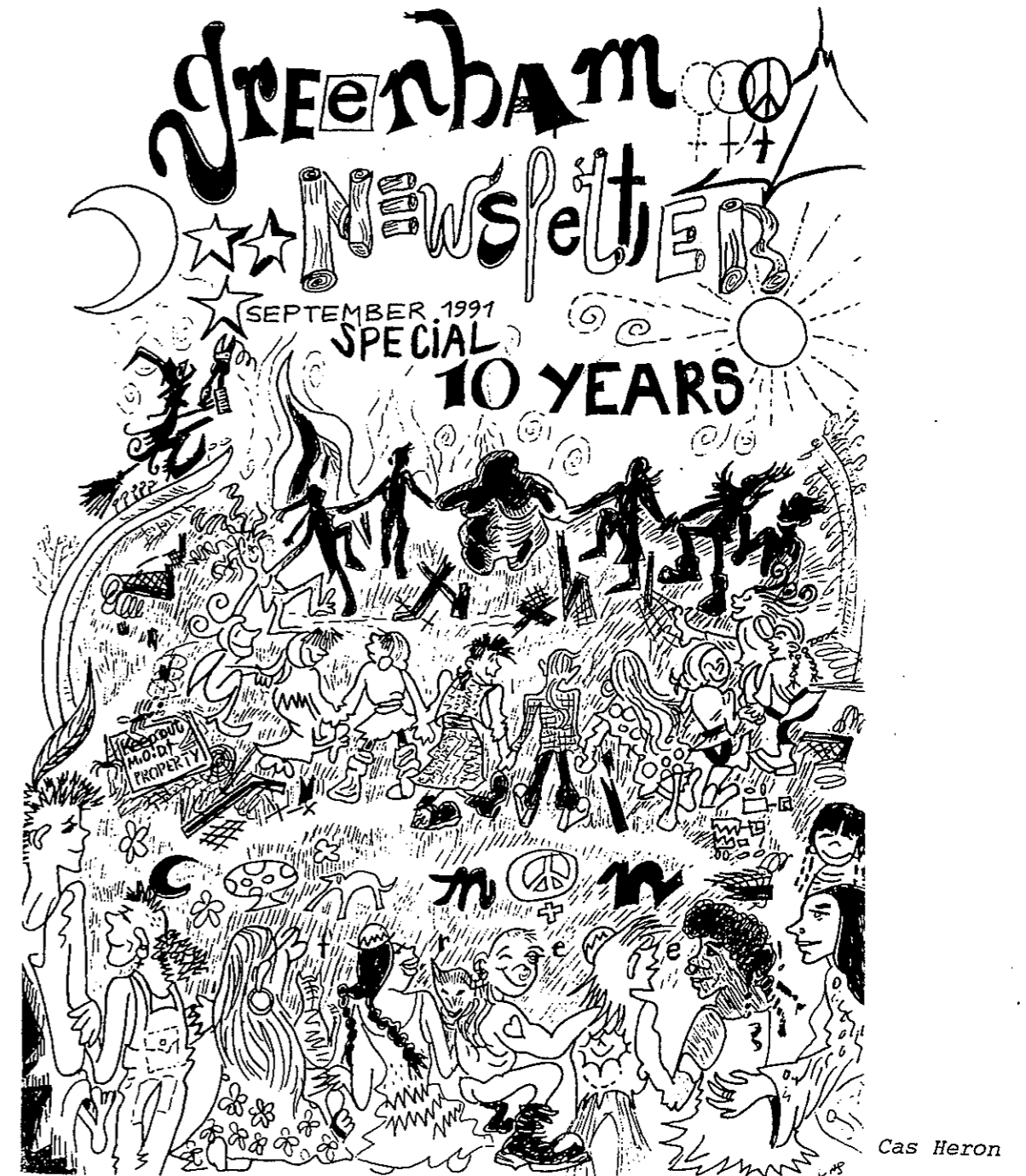
This land of ours is not owned by us, or given in Trust, it has been fought for and held by us, although at times precariously, for all wimmin.

In the winter our life centers around an area of say 5m x 5m. Huddled around fire pit and shelter this is our communal space. Wood, kettle, vegan delights--all kept within reach. Toes and face warmed, backs damp and cold, will the wind ever blow another way? It bites the ears that have no cover until they feel no more! Will Jane's fingers stay warm enough to play the guitar, who will tell us a story? Doing the water-run and wooding is a chore and your fingers ache with the cold. You dream of dry wood and wonder what the food-run wimmin will bring for tea. The nights begin early and are long, in the dark we scuttle to our tents or benders in the woods.



In the summer we unfold--peeling away layer upon layer. Our life spreads to 100m x 40m, any further and we would be on the main road. Still our fire pit, shelter always at the ready (our unpredictable weather). Out comes the wash line, the earth fridge is dug, spring clean!! She brings with her wasps (ouch!), earwigs, ants, the harvest mites that nestle in the warm folds of your body--Ahh the Sun! Shitpits are dug in beautiful spots, our laughter and singing becomes lighter. Slowly swimming in the gravel pit, watching the dragonflies dashing, the waterlilies showing us their wonderful costumes. Homes in the woods aired, bedding spread out on the wire and the sun She stays with us until 8 or 9 in the evening until Her Syster takes over our care. Evictions still happen, we laboriously move 'everything' 40m, put it down, they leave and we move it all back--too late bailiffs, we've seen your worst and we're still here!

Of course our 'land' life covers a huge area of magnificent heathland: the Common. It is summer now and it vibrates with the bees feeding from the bright purple heather, bracken growing tall, gorse, scruboaks and silver birch, an occasional pine. We have bluebells and forget-me-nots, wild honeysuckle, blackberries and raspberries. Daily visits of robins, blackbirds, wood pigeon, magpie, jaybirds, wren, woodpecker and the spring brings the sound of the cuckoo. Deer use their ancient tracks, rabbits and squirrels scamper and at night we are visited by bats--the Mother at Her most abundant. The Common is our place of play, our place of meditation. It holds our tears, our fears and terrors. It holds our bodies as we lay in the long grasses with friends or lovers, it hides us on our actions against the military. This Common holds ten years of wimmin's memories, many thousands of wimmin and at moments you can feel what was there before--in the 'lost' times.



I, as a radical lesbian separatist live in community with wimmin, faces seen through the smoke and flames of our fire that stay with me. Those faces...some never seen again others that reappear over and over throughout the year/years. And wimmin's eyes, holding all there is to hold in this world, stepping into this space from 'outside'. Some bringing it with them, some desperately trying to lose it, some who have slipped the 'outside' layers from them as they arrive. Rising from the flames of the fire they become phoenix, their wings carrying them across

the heather, through the wire--dancing calling, screaming, angry wimmin--so wild, so wild! And there also see the woman as child, needing to be held (cuddled) and nurtured, her tears honoured and gently wiped away.

This Common has let us be here with Her for these ten years. We honour and love Her by our determination and commitment at non-violent living and at non-violent direct action against patriarchy in all its forms.

Blessed Be.
27-8-91

Wall Raising

By Kathe Kirkbride
Ribera, New Mexico

Crowded freeways, air thick with pollution, people everywhere, no privacy, rat race. This was what Bev and I left behind in Southern California to relocate to Northern New Mexico. Were we going to miss any of it? Not a chance.

We settled in on 130 acres 35 miles out of Santa Fe. We had been prepared to purchase raw land and build a home while living in a trailer, but were pleased to find a piece of land with a comfortable passive solar adobe house already on it. The only thing lacking was a workshop so we could earn a living doing some type of woodworking.

I had some experience as an owner/builder and felt that we could handle the type of construction that we had in mind. We purchased several books on construction and proceeded to design the shop. It needed to be large enough to have friends come dance and simple enough to build that the two of us could do it alone. We settled on a simple rectangle 24' x 52'. The shop portion was 24' x 30' and a double garage which could be a shop expansion if needed in the future was to be 24' x 22'. A shed roof with a 2 in 12 pitch seemed to be the simplest and gave us a ceiling height of 12' at the front and 8' at the back.

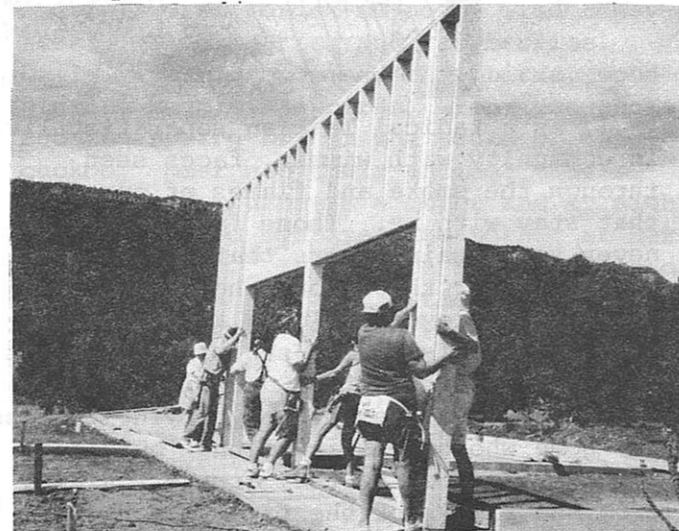
Bev and I decided early on that we did not have the tools nor expertise necessary to pour the concrete slab foundation and so we found a contractor to provide it for us. An architect friend in Santa Fe suggested the use of fabricated wood I Beams to span the 24' as they only weigh 75 or 80 pounds apiece and could be handled by the two of us. It seemed that we were all set to get started.

About this time a woman came to visit who told us of some friends of hers who were going to have a wall raising for a weaving shop the following weekend. Since the framing was the first thing that we

were going to have to do on our shop, we thought we would call and offer our services and see if we could pick up some tips. Our offer was accepted with enthusiasm and we showed up at the building site at 9:00am. In all there were 9 women and a man (who worked during the week as a carpenter) who showed up for the work party. Of the nine women, only a few of us appeared to have more than a passing acquaintance with a hammer.

The floor was already built and the materials were on site. Without much direction, it became obvious to each one of us what needed to be done. As the sill plates were laid out and the studs, trimmers, and cripples cut, the walls took shape on the floor. As each wall was framed, we tipped it into place. By 6:00 the building was built. The frame walls, the siding, the windows, and the roof were all up. In about 8 hours we had built a 14' x 20' weaving studio.

Bev and I were amazed. A thought born of the day began to form in our minds; maybe we could prevail on our friends to come to a wall raising. That day we invited the women who were there to come to our place two weeks hence and then went home and called other women we knew to bring their hammers and lunches. We had a lot to do to get ready so that the day would be as productive as possible.



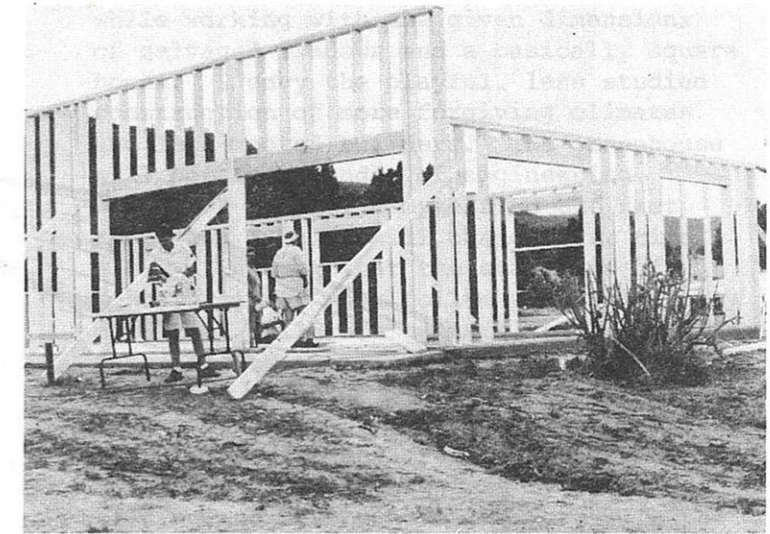
Jae Haggard

We ordered the materials, built all the headers (the thick framing members that go over the tops of windows and doors), built sawhorses, laid out and drilled all the sills that were to be set on the anchor bolts in the slab, and marked the sills as to where the studs, trimmers, and cripples were to go so that the rough openings were already decided. We also laid in a supply of soda and ice for the day.

We had not asked for a commitment from any of our friends and really did not know how many nor who would show up that day. We hired the same carpenter who had been at the previous wall raising to quietly choreograph the construction. Bev and I did not feel that we could handle all design problems that might arise and so hired him; if we had known a woman carpenter we would definitely have made it an all-woman crew.

At 9:00 on the appointed day our friends began to show up. Some of them brought power saws in addition to bringing their own hammers. Each of the 12 women who came to help brought a can-do attitude and a willingness to do what they were able. Each woman had a different approach to the work. I heard comments like, "I am not any good with a hammer, but I brought friends who are." "I have no idea how to do any of this." "Where do we start?"

As each wall was framed and then tilted up you could see the attitudes start to change. It became obvious to even the greenest rookie that we were really capable of building this shop and that it wasn't the impossible task it had seemed to them at the onset. I began to hear a lot of "Wow" and "So that's how you do that". At the end of the day all 4 walls were up and tied together. There were a lot of weary women and Bev and I were grateful for the many hours that our friends had put in and how many days of work we were saved.

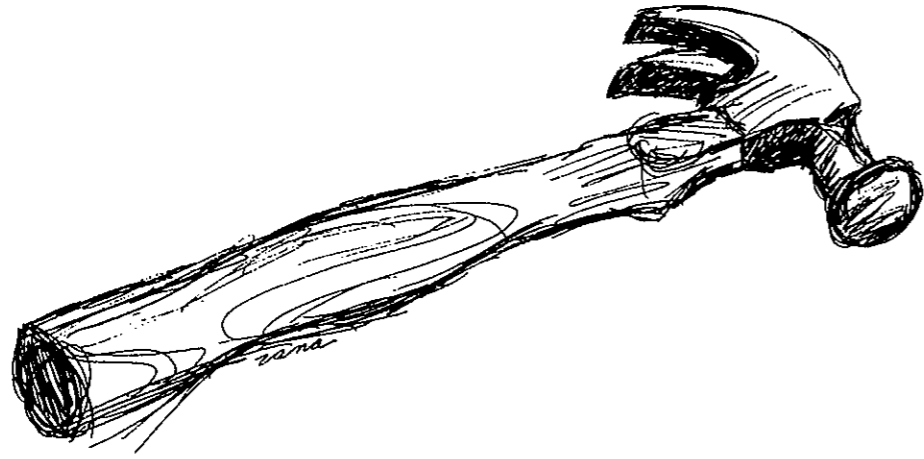


Kathe Kirkbride

If you are interested in doing something similar, here are a few tips to make it successful.

1. Have all the materials on hand for what is to be done that day. You will lose your workers and many hours labor if work has to be stopped to wait for an essential item.
2. Have the proper tools available and have your friends bring theirs if they are willing.
3. Do as much preparatory work as possible so that work does not have to stop while planning is done. Lay out the process so that it flows smoothly.
4. Have at least one person there who is familiar with the process in case of questions. Don't have an obvious boss who has to tell each woman what her individual task is; even novices can figure out what they can do by watching the others.
5. If you are a perfectionist, you will have to be prepared for things to be done with a little less precision. Finish work or work which requires considerable previous experience is probably not a good choice for a group activity.
6. Make sure your friends know that you can be counted on for a work day in exchange.

Kathe is an enthusiastic, inquisitive, technophile who, at mid-life, traded the computer for a combination square and resides with her partner in northern New Mexico.



Can We Structure for Permanence?

By Nett Hart
Foreston, Minnesota

I'm building a solar greenhouse this summer and it seems all the details of choosing lumber, choosing design, choosing finishes came back to the question--and my assumed measure of quality work--"Will it last?" "Is this the best kind of wood for this purpose?" means "Is it strong enough to hold up over time?" How close together should the joists be? is about maintaining the structure as I now envision it into another era. The search for a non-toxic wood preservative and then the longer search for untreated construction wood was an exercise in determining what combination of wood variety and wood treatment would give the greenhouse the longest duration, without repeated treatment. It seems the value that outranks aesthetics, function, and budget is PERMANENCE.

Some of the structural questions and treatment questions--to be fair--also involve safety and long-term budget concerns. But the structure is safe and economical because it is built to last.

Is this a reaction to the "throw away" society of america? Is it a statement of respect for the materials that they be cared for and of use for a long time? Is it good ecology, living more gently on an overtaxed earth? Certainly these values are prominent to me in this project. But I am still haunted by this quest for permanence.

How much of this quest for a "permanent structure" is a need for mastery or control of my environment? I live where weather's versatility is showcased: deep freezes send the embedded footings heaving to the surface unless they're well anchored; rain, snow and sleet can keep wooden members soaked for long periods of time. There's the scald of low winter sun and the heat of summer. Who am I to try to outwit the rhythm of decay and regeneration that happens in the woods all around me? It feels different to me to build for permanence in an impermanent environment from the other intrusions in natural rhythm I make when I water a garden plot or prune the apple tree. This desire to build a structure that can be used over time has me considering

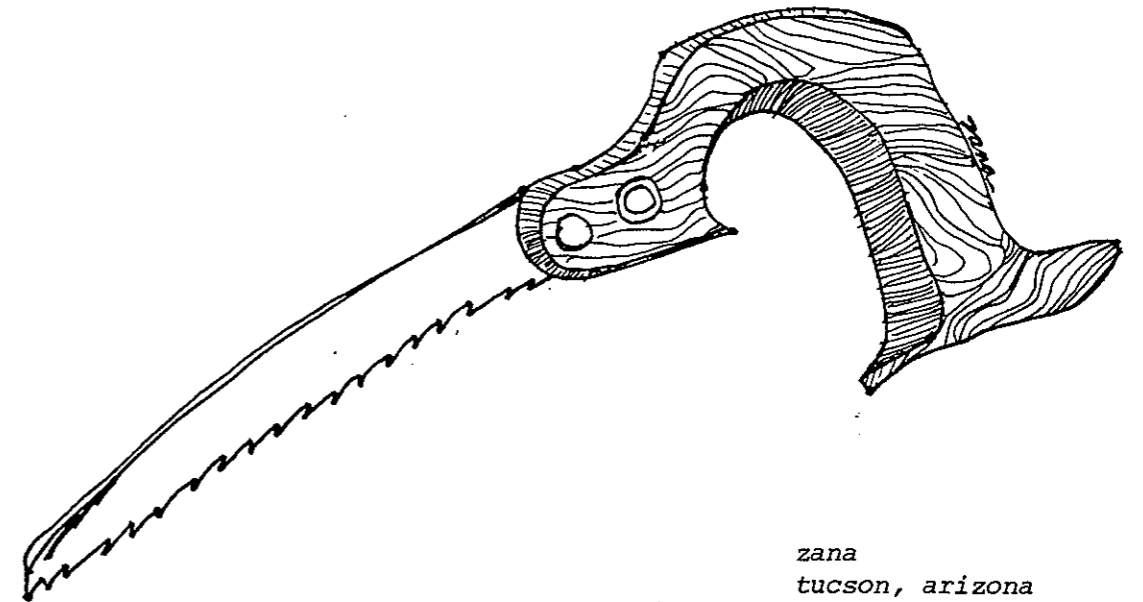
the elements as oppositional, not my usual attitude. I have no illusions about testing myself or my skills in this arena, yet the project itself is about altering nature: a greenhouse because the growing season is not long enough here for some of the garden varieties to which I am attached. (I just had to stop writing this to follow the loud crash of a tree falling over on the edge of the garden. Point made, I guess!)

The fact that I can imagine the silhouette of the house standing over time with this magnificent greenhouse indicates to me that in some ways it represents a monument to my carpentry skills, a tangible sort of pride. I've never built anything this big or complex before. I've never built anything that I couldn't pretend was just another fanciful shed, something that required me researching actual construction codes and options.

With this admitted sense of personal skill on the line and all the efforts to find the best materials and techniques, I've poured my summer into building a greenhouse that I can use for several seasons. Sometimes the whole process seems artificial. Wood as I know it is not lumber, that straight, geometric, dead form that has to be preserved against the elements, kept from twisting to its natural inclinations. I do what I can to create assymetry, angles and surprises in the relentless regularity of 2x4, 4x4, 2x8,

while working with the given dimensions of salvaged windows and a basically square house. I envy the playful, less studied construction of more forgiving climates and less rooted builders. The greenhouse will not be a wonder of engineering. Slowly I reconcile myself to the fact that what I build will change over time. Slowly I accept that the standards of construction I must follow are really only my own--I build a structure that serves my purposes for as long as I want that to be true. Slowly I reconcile myself to the impermanence of all things around us, even those we design and create. To structure for permanence goes against my process of wilding, of moving more and more with the rhythms of the natural world. I do not need a structure that stands outside its context, that has less flexibility than the forms around it. I need a nest that maintains me *within* the elements, not a sanctuary *from* them. I don't need or want the security that comes from outwitting the world of which I am most a part.

I look at the cement I poured to hold the posts at a depth of four feet. At least they are full of Lesbian symbols, but I can't imagine I will keep using cement in my construction. Its ugliness is proof enough. I smile gently on this building. It is not so much a compromise as a transition. We will weather some winters together. That's all I can hope. She may well outlast my desire to live indoors.



zana
tucson, arizona

Full Moon in June

By Lilith Lynn Rogers
Serafina, New Mexico
June 27, 1991

Soon I will be leaving here. I call it "my little cabin in the woods" but I actually have only used the cabin as a large storage closet. I only slept inside those three nights it rained in the first part of May. And I did enjoy staring into the fires I built in the woodstove a few chilly evenings.

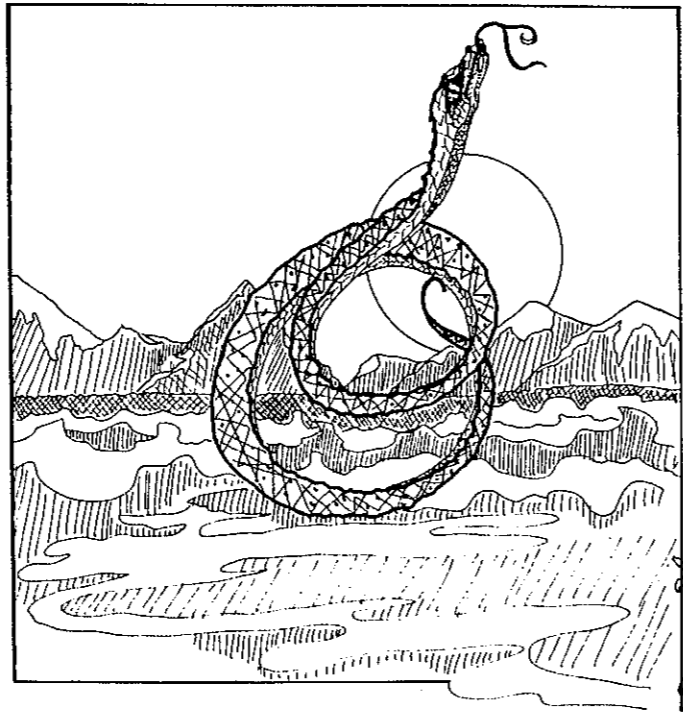
No--the cabin wasn't home for me here. It was these woods--the white oaks, bay laurels, firs and madrones--all fairly young since this forest was brutally logged not so long ago.

It's been the woods and the big, mossy rocks and the small shiny ones--green they are and crystal-like--and the little rocky creek that, until two weeks ago, brought cool, clear water right into the cabin with just a simple siphon set-up that I could fix myself. I used to bathe in the largest hole just down the path from where I'd made my bed under the largest of the white oaks. Now there's only enough water there to splash my face and breasts and I must bring in water from town to do the rest.

Time to go--to move on. One spring here was all I got. Longer than my last love affair by a couple of weeks at least but still--.

The other morning I woke to crashing about sounds and there was a doe grazing only a few feet from my face! She was so skittish--poised to flee the whole time she nibbled away at the tender bay shoots sprouting from the big old stump I used for my nightstand. I watched and watched her, I was fascinated by her fearful browsing. I didn't move a muscle for ten minutes and then--thinking that she was my friend--I reached slowly up to scratch my chin and she was gone in two quick leaps.

Thinking back on it, I wish now that I hadn't killed the rattlesnake in the woodpile in April. I feel now that we could have shared the place but I was new here then and still had more of that man-given fear of snakes. At least I gave her a respectful death and--since



Mau Blossom
Doniphan, Missouri

I ate her--I feel she is with me still and always--especially in my/our heart. Never will I forget that small, brave, still-beating heart I swallowed whole.

The birds, of course, don't care whether I come or go. They'll play on and sing their noisy songs at each other and at the foolish squirrels that dare to climb too close to their nests in the treetops over my bed. Still, that little ruby-throated hummer that almost flew into my red shirt I had hung on a branch yesterday will probably miss the bright colors I've brought.

And then there's the lizards--who'll be here to grab them up, pull the ticks out of their necks and ear holes, and set them down again? The lizards, the bugs and bees--but why speak of these? They belong in any woods and only to themselves and not to me.

I know I'm stalling--putting off closing this journal and getting to my last packing--just as I'm putting off leaving this sweet place, this place that has given me the chance to be alone outside for many days, to sleep alone with no walls around me, to gather wood for a small campfire, to gather peace for a restless soul in a restless world.

Aw well--time to go. Thank you, mother.

Full Moon in Mid-Summer

By Lilith Lynn Rogers
Serafina, New Mexico
July 26, 1991

I am a Jew.
I am a wandering Jew.
I am in the desert
searching for my Tribe.

I am a Lesbian.
I am a wandering Lesbian.
I am in the desert
searching for my Tribe.

I am Lilith.
I have flown to the desert
on my demon wings.
I have left Adam
and his puny god behind.
I am searching for my Tribe.

At night I lie out here
alone in my small red tent
in the wild desert storm.
Inside here
the little flame on my gold candle
flickers
as outside here
a fierce wind blows.
Lightning flashes around me
and thunder booms.
Rain falls thick and fast
on the round roof
a few feet over my head
then runs down the sides of my tent
in streams.
The usual silence
of the desert night is broken open
by the roar of wind and rain
the awesome crashing of the lightening.

I am alone out here in my tent
in the desert--
a thin red skin of cloth
my only protection
from the wild storm raging
all around me.

It is enough.
I am safe and warm.

I am Lilith
the wandering Jew
the wandering Lesbian
Lilith in the desert
searching for her Tribe
I am not afraid.

In the early morning
the lightning and thunder
the rain
have all stopped.
The wind still blows
but more gently.
The mourning dove calls and calls
and the coyotes are howling
up on the mesa.

Where are the others--
the others of my Tribe?
Are they waking now, too?

The others here
do not sleep alone.
They have each other.
In the night, in the storm
they roll into their partner's arms
and hold one another tight
as the lightning
flashes through the darkness
outside their strong windows
their strong earth walls.

But they, too, are travelers.
They, too, have wandered
to this wild desert
in search of Tribe.
They, too, have left Adam
his god, and all--
so much--
behind.

They are not Jews.
They are not Lilith.
They are Lesbians.

Are all Lesbians
Jews
I wonder?
Will we all, now
wander out to deserts
spend nights in wild desert storms
searching for our Tribe
searching for Ourselves?

Gardening with Arthritis

By Kenna Hicks
San Francisco, California
Renaissance Gardeners
Organic Garden & Landscape Service

In response to "You Don't Need a Strong Back to Carry Your Own Weight" by Jenna Weston, Ava, Missouri.

My dream had always been to find a womyn's country community where my lover, Margriet, and I could truck farm veggies and homesteading products. Our search began in the early seventies when we were young, vital and it simply never occurred to us that one day we would be forty-five and still seraching for a womyn's community physically worn out.

Jenna Weston's portrait of living in the country despite disabling scoliosis was inspiring and gave me renewed hope that despite physical limitiations, a future country lifestyle is possible with as full a participation in physical activities as any other able-bodied womyn.

Besides Jenna's helpful tip on the use of a "Bio-Fork" as an alternative to shoveling, I would like to pass along a few other ideas which may prove useful to those who have difficulty with onorous physical tasks, especially of the garden variety.

Weeds can be clipped at the point where stem and soil meet. The unseeded debris can be recycled in the compost. Their roots will decay below the soil adding fertility and allowing the gardener to avoid socket wrenching maneuvers to yank unwanted vegetation from the ground. Heavy mulching also keeps weed growth to a minimum.

The use of raised beds, as Jenna mentioned, is essential to avoid excessive stooping. The twisting wrist and elbow motion necessary for hand trowels and the upper body tension of regular hoe usage can be eliminated with the selection of potato fork cultivators.

Sawing small limbs off fruit trees is still a push pull operation. But extensive tree work can be done with tree trimming blade attachments for standard weed whip equipment. It needs to be lightweight enough to hold aloft for sustained periods of time. Safety equipment is essential so be sure to rent it along with the trimmer.

If repetitive hand trimming of foliage is necessary, then padding the handles of the loppers and long handled pruning shears with foam will help absorb the percussion and perhaps lessen trauma to the shoulders.

The original layout of garden paths can be solid and stable enough to make it possible to use two wheeled cart or a dolly in the garden. Wheelbarrows are unwieldy with heavy loads.

A drip irrigation system is a good investment as dragging heavy hoses is stressful. If hoses are used, have them placed at short intervals. Connect distant faucet and hose bibs with couplings and extension hose to increase the parameter of your water sources.

If hand shears are a problem then substitute a knife or sharp cutting blade that can trim or shear off clippings. Eliminating strain to the hand's tendons, as with the gripping and pressing action of pruning shears, is the sure way to prolong your stamina in the garden. Be sure to keep a scabbard on your belt.

Naturally, knee pads will be necessary when getting down on the ground. Avoid stoop work whenever possible. The worst movement is the stoop then the twisting sideways that traumatizes the lumbar.

Non-cultivation can be a style of gardening which makes its comeback as more differently-abled practice effort-less gardening. A sampling of writing about the subject follows:

Year round mulching: *How to Have a Green Thumb without an Aching Back*, by Ruth Stout (1955)

The no digging method school of gardening: *Is Digging Necessary?* By F.C.King (1946) *Gardening Without Digging*, By A.Guest (Above reference: *Encyclopedia of Organic Gardening*, Rodale Press, Emmaus, Penn.)

According to the research on the no-dig method, cultivation is still essential at least every three years. Tilling,

then, on fields and non-raised bed gardens is a hurdle. Sears, for the prosperous, offers a seated mower which has a roto-tiller attachment allowing the operator to remain seated while deep cultivating. Work exchange seems so much more of the communitarian spirit by bringing womyn together through inexpensive networking methods much as early farmers came together to raise barns.

Thanks Jenna for your timely and thoughtful article in the Summer '91 MAIZE issue. Many other womyn will profit from your suggestions. New tools are currently merchandised with the differently-abled in mind through mail order catalogs. Information is now becoming more common on wheelchair accessible gardening through SLUG (San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners) which we in turn can apply to our own particular special challenges.

Happy, pain free gardening...

AN AFTERNOON AT
THE LESBIAN FARM



Woody Blue
Soldier's Grove, Wisconsin

Sound

By Sky
Murphy, Oregon

The moon hangs empty tonight.
A sad, vacant eye.
Shadows veil the ground.
Mountains lie dark against the maw of the open night.
No sounds, no sound.
No dogs barking, no cattle baying, no night hawks screeching.
The moon is full, the moon is fallow.
Quiet hangs heavy around me.
Why no sounds, why no sound?
Full moon time is hunting time.
Important time for creatures of the meadow and woods.
My dogs wait in anticipation, eager to join the rowdy ritual.
Still no sounds.

The men have killed the coyotes.
They did it during the day.
Rounded them up, shot them all, sixteen by my count.
Mother coyote screamed as her pups are shot one by one.
There were many sounds then of shrieking and pain.
Until finally no sounds came.

My heart hangs empty tonight.
The moon and I with watery eye wait for dead throats to open and
once again sing, laugh and howl to the planets.
But no sounds come tonight.
A piece of the world is missing.
Slowly the lid of the moon eye closes.
The creatures in the fields and trees stay silent, waiting.

Three nights pass, I cannot sleep.
I keep grief vigil with the moon, my dogs and the night animals.
Then comes the rebirth as shocking as the death.
One has escaped the hatred of the men.
Her wail shakes the soul of the night, makes my heart start.
Sharp and clear comes her song.
Her sound folds out upon itself, filling the valley.
She howls, she bays,
She dances her sounds from wooded wall to wooded wall.
Like a dusky flower of an ancient garden,
her scented sound pushes high into the velvet black sky.
Defiantly she screams her aliveness.
I am here, I will live.
Her soundings tune the moon back to fullness.
The meadows and mountains rustle, chirp, bark and yowl.
Coyote sets about her task to call back into being her pack.
She aims her throat toward the deepest crevice of the hills.
Her diamond voice breaks into a million faceted cry;
I am here, come continue life with me.

Creativity in Southern Oregon Women's Communities

By Tee A. Corinne
Southern Oregon
© 1991

Slightly different versions of this talk were given (with slides) at the 18th Annual Womansource Gathering in Southern Oregon, July 12, 1991 and as part of a panel called "Making Art on a Shoestring" at the Northwest Women's Studies Association Conference, W.S.U., Pullman, Washington, April, 1991.

Southern Oregon was one of the centers of the "Back to the Land" movement in the 1960's and '70's. Land was reasonably cheap and numerous women, most but not all white, settled in the area, individually, in small groups, and in collective living situations. WomanShare, a collective, recently celebrated their 18th birthday. In their third year they self-published a book, *Country Lesbians*, about how they came to settle there and how they worked things out. Two of the original women were artists and the book included information about using a camera in the midst of an argument so each participant could see what the other person was seeing. I was impressed.

In the Spring of 1974 *WomanSpirit* magazine was begun by Jean and Ruth Mountaingrove who lived on Southern Oregon land owned by gay men. Some of the WomanShare women worked on the initial and subsequent issues. *WomanSpirit's* foundation was the belief that our spirituality is directly accessible to each of us, and that its rituals come from our lives, from our relationship with the land and with other growing things. It was published quarterly, on Equinox and Solstice, for ten consecutive years.

Ruth and Jean also joined with other women to create land trusts and open women's land--places which were to be

accessible to women, no matter what their income. OWL Farm was one such refuge.

I was living in San Francisco in the 1970's, working in sex education and making drawings and photos of women's genitals and lovemaking. *WomanSpirit* was the first, and one of the rare, magazines to publish my labia drawings beginning with issue #2, 1974. In 1975 I self-published a collection of labia as *The Cunt Coloring Book* and met Jean and Ruth a few months later when they came to the publication party.

In August 1976, returning from the First National Women in Print Conference in Omaha, Nebraska, Honey Lee Cottrell and I visited the Mountaingroves in their one-room cabin reached via a steep eighth of a mile climb. I thought the region was beautiful and decided to live there someday. That someday came five years later. I was drawn by the creative solutions I saw women working and living with, the thinking which moved outside society's margins to form alternative social and cultural institutions.

I visited many times in the next few years and, in 1979 helped found the Feminist Photography Ovulars.

The Feminist Photography Ovulars grew out of Ruth Mountaingrove's need for stimulation and support as a photographer working alone in a rural area. Ruth chose the term "ovular" to underline the difference between these workshops and "seminars", the definition of which literally means "spreading the seed or semen". They took place at Jean and Ruth's land, Rootworks, six acres on a heavily wooded hillside. There were three cabins, one spacious barn-like structure, outhouses, spring-fed water and a grassy field for camping. A stream ran nearby.

In her mid-fifties when the Ovulars began, Ruth Mountaingrove brought a

facility with large format cameras, publishing expertise, and a speculative mind to the workshops and later to *The Blatent Image*.

Jean Mountaingrove, in her early fifties, brought organizing abilities and a firmly grounded feminist theory, theory brought home and made real in her life.

I had been exhibiting in San Francisco and elsewhere for several years, and my images had been published extensively in the lesbian and feminist press.

The fourth member of the first Ovular facilitator team was Carol Newhouse, an original WomanShare collective member and a photographer with a strong interest in meditation. Carol and I were both in our mid thirties.

The Ovulars were the kind of place where women could come together and experience community, where questions could be freely asked, information shared and ideas generated. The Ovulars were structured for support and against competition and the extremely low tech facilities helped women believe that if photos could be made there, they could be made anywhere. Darkroom electricity was supplied by marine batteries which were recharged at the service station in town. Slide shows were powered by a gas fueled generator. Participants camped, bathed using stream water heated by the sun in gallon plastic jugs, and shared responsibility for cooking.

Living and working together on isolated women's land helped cut down on costs, and the processes of bathing, cooking, etc, offered unique subject matter for our photos.

Early in 1981 several Southern Oregon women including Tangren Alexander (a.k.a. Pearl Times's Child), Hannah Blue Heron, Ruth Mountaingrove, Caroline Overman and Zerod started a writer's group which came to have the name The Southern Oregon Women Writer's Group, Gourmet Eating Society and Chorus. I joined in September of that first year.

The group was and is an open group--any woman can come--and meets every third Sunday, all day, with a vegie potluck for lunch. Women drive for as much as two and a half hours each way to attend. It is held in individual homes spread out over a 150 mile radius. Any and all kind of creative work--writing, art, music, sewing, weaving--is brought and

shared. Emphasis is on each woman finding the next step she needs to take in order for her work to grow. We encourage each other to send work out for publication, join in public readings, and self-publish whenever possible.

The idea of doing a photo magazine was discussed in 1979 at the first Ovular. It got off the ground at the second, in 1980, when the title *The Blatent Image, A Magazine of Feminist Photography*, was chosen and the 24 Ovular participants and facilitators committed themselves to gathering material and selling subscriptions.

Production took place in the Spring of '81. Living at Rootworks for six weeks, we worked by daylight, heated with wood, powered the IBM Selectric by marine battery and made headlines one letter at a time using press-type. There was no telephone.

What we wanted for the magazine

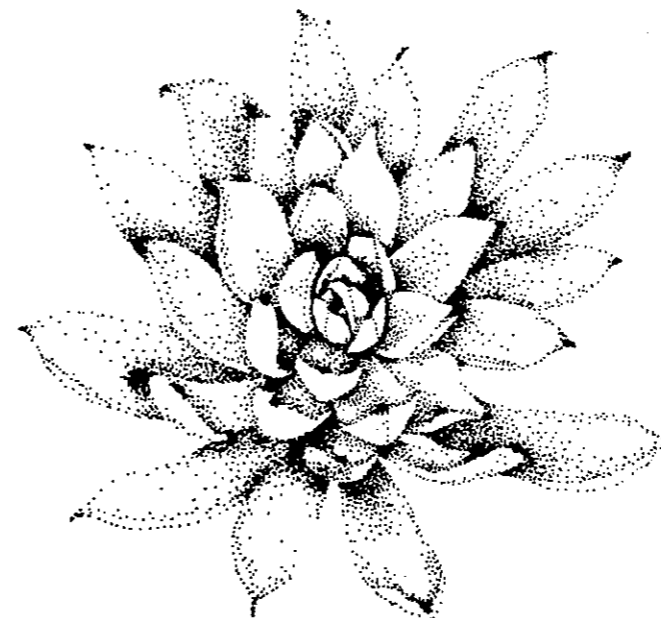
We asked "How has the women's movement changed the way we see? What kinds of photos are being produced and published now that haven't been seen before? What are the realities of our shapes and our lives? What are the differences between the ways men have pictured women and the ways we see ourselves?"

We wanted it to be accessible to all women, strongly feminist in structure, radical both in the sense of confronting the viewer with seldom seen or hard to look at images and in going for the roots of women's vision. We wanted it to include both the work of women of earlier times and of our own, to include ideas as well as pictures.

The first issue of *The Blatent Image* was produced for \$6000, raised before we went to press by prepaid subscriptions. All the labor was volunteer.

Two more annual issues were produced. After the third issue *The Blatent Image* ceased publishing indefinitely.

Many arts have flourished here. The area has been rich with performances including the theater works of Hannah Blue Heron, Jan McLaughlin, Carolyn Gage and her No To Men Production Company, and Hawk Madrone and Bethroot Gwynn performing and teaching Personal Theater Workshops. We have music and drumming groups, songbooks, and several self-produced tapes.



Shoney Sien
Santa Cruz, California

Self-publishing has also blossomed with xerox technology allowing for small print runs and low cost local distribution.

Times change. Women leave and others come or return to the area. Ruth Mountaingrove moved to California, went back to school and earned a second Bachelor's degree and then a Master's degree in Photography.

Ten years ago I bought a house five miles away from Rootworks. Since then I have created an art show about growing up in an alcoholic family and learned to write and edit books.

New groups form. In 1989 I felt the need for support as a lesbian artist. Wendy Cadden, a San Francisco Bay Area artist was coming to talk for a Women's History Month show and a group of us gathered the next evening to show slides of our images. Jemma Crae, Jan McLaughlin, Annie Ocean, Germaine St. George, (Jean Mountaingrove?), Jude Spacks, Emerald Goldman from Portland, and LaVerne McLaughlin attended. We agreed to meet again and now gather every six weeks to share work, slides and ideas. For the past two summers three members of the Artist's Support Group, Sierra Lonepine Briano, Jemma Crae and Jean Mountaingrove, have organized Dyke Art Camp, a week-long, residential artmaking experience.

In 1990 a group of rowdy photographers held a full day and a weekend retreat and now meets every couple of months. We're documenting ourselves and broadening out into documenting our community.

I'm leaving out so much: the eighteen year history of Womansource which sponsors dances and an annual, rustic, networking retreat, entrepreneurs, crafts groups, The Southern Oregon Country Lesbians Archival Project otherwise known as SO-CLAP, and more.

As we move into the 1990's some of the Women's Lands like OWL and Cabbage Lane which were sometimes underpopulated in the economic crunch of the 1980's are seeing a resurgence of visitors and permanent residents.

Most of the existing communities have formed along the I-5 corridor (also known as the Amazon Trail) and highways 199 and 42 which lead to the coast. New immigrants, some with lots of money, are moving up from California as part of a general population shift.

Women are also settling on the other side of the Cascade Mountains, near Klamath Falls and north, where land is still relatively cheap. Community building is in the early stages there, but they're only an hour or two from the Amazon Trail communities which have a strong communication network already established.

What makes this such a creative environment? For me it's the support that we give each other, the caring and sharing. Many in our community are doing recovery work and for us this has offered additional problem-solving skills. We've also stayed together, just plain hung in there, for the most part, working with our differences, learning to see them through.

Tee Corinne lives on 6 1/2 acres along the western side of the Cascade Mountains in Southern Oregon. Her books include Lovers, Dreams of the Woman Who Loved Sex and The Sparkling Lavender Dust of Lust. Her first book, the Cunt Coloring Book, with a new introduction in French, Spanish, German and English, is available for \$6.95 + \$2 mailing (Calif. add 6 1/2%) from Last Gasp, 2180 Bryant St., San Francisco CA 94110.

Resolution Process

By the Wimin of Sister Homelands on Earth
Tucson, Arizona

We wrote this resolution process to help us through places where we might otherwise get stuck. We perceive learning to live together and unlearn the ways we oppress each other as our biggest challenges--but ones we are capable of!

This may spark thinking in other wimin/groups. If you have any ideas that spin off this or experiences to share, please contact us.

The following is a suggested process to use while working together when we are not all compatible. We suggest that all sisterlands affiliated with SHE use some sort of consensus decision making and have conflict resolution procedures. We want all to be accountable to the community to prevent getting blocked.

If a woman has an issue, the first thing she does is clarify the issue for herself.

If it is with one other woman first she tries to resolve it one on one. If that doesn't turn out satisfactorily, we encourage them to go through mediation. If that still isn't satisfactory, then they bring it before the group.

If the issue is with an action or decision of the group, she presents it to the group either at the next scheduled meeting or an emergency meeting. She may have a support woman not in the larger group who is there to be her ally, but not be part of the decision-making.

We recognize that wimin tend to get defensive/react/need to discharge emotions. This can often block resolution. We want to include space to do this, and then be in a better position to respond. To let this happen, the woman presenting the issue may opt to leave and let the group deal with the feelings that her presentation brought up. They could set a time for her to come back or schedule a meeting on another day to meet together.

In the time apart, the group members may talk together or break down into smaller groups or pairs to co-counsel.

During this time the presenting woman may wish to counsel with a support woman.

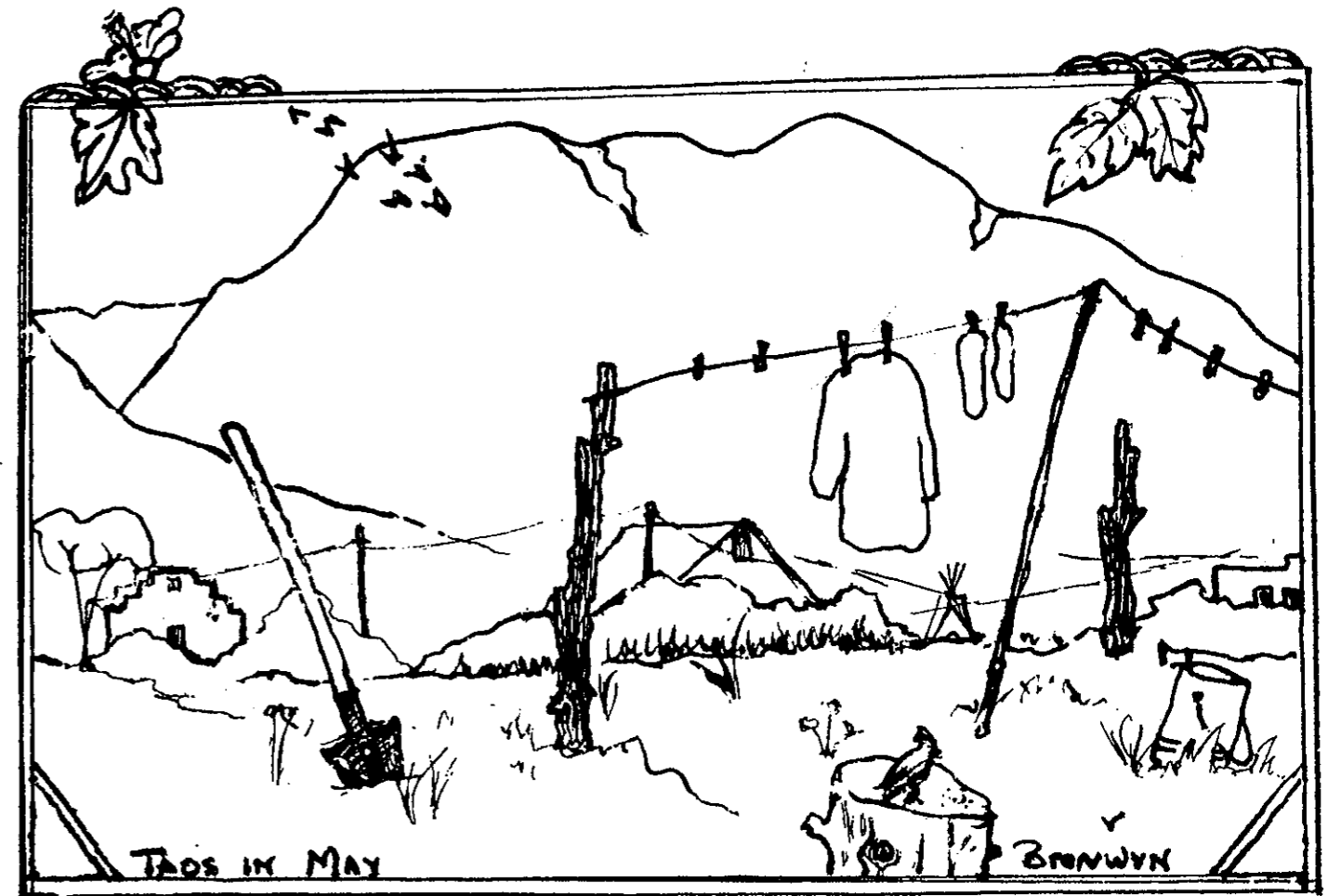
We recognize the need for parity. Without parity, it is more difficult for the woman in the oppressed or dissenting group to maintain her reality and respond to the thinking of many other wimin. At this point or later the woman may bring in outside allies who are there for validation and viewpoints (but would not make actual decisions if they are not part of the participating membership.) Outside wimin may not know all the history of the group. Someone in the larger group will take responsibility to get background information to the parity group, including how our decision making process works.

In the interest of learning more about each other and our perspectives, we can provide informational materials pertinent to the conflict. We encourage wimin to make use of these and other learning opportunities and for each woman to take responsibility for unlearning ways she may oppress others.

Discussion in the entire group can take many formats. Those we are most comfortable with depends on our own backgrounds and experiences. There is not one right way to hold discussions. We encourage groups to find ways that work best for them and to seek out new formats. We encourage each woman to also think about oppressed/oppressor divisions and consider how much space she takes up in discussions.

- take turns, no one interrupts
- free form discussion
- fishbowls
- speak and other(s) repeats to be sure information is taken in

Discussion continues until decision can be reached. This may entail using different formats over multiple sessions. We endorse the consensus model of decision making.



Brenwyn
On the Road

If the group cannot reach a decision, we suggest the wimin go through a time of gathering more information and personal reflection. If the group still cannot reach a decision, a council of wimin (with most inclusive representation we can get) can meet and make the decision for the group. The idea is that these outside wimin would be able to more clearly deal with the issues since they are not so personally entangled.

Throughout the process, we encourage wimin to strive to not make others into enemies. And to strive to remember the complexity of each woman, not just perceive her in the issue she is raising.

SHE: We are a new land trust. Our intent is to be a mother organization for a variety of sisterlands. This way lands can become land trust without having to go through costly and lengthy paperwork. Members of the group are raising money for the operation of SHE and for the downpayment for a sisterland dedicated to providing homes for those with little access to land--wimin with disabilities, wimin of color, and wimin with low-income. We are members of these groups. We hope to raise money soon since several of our members are being threatened with homelessness.

SHE
POBox 5285
Tucson, Arizona 85703

EI Access

By Shemaya Laurel
Shutesbury, Massachusetts

EI is short for environmental illness. It's a disability that means being sensitive to many or most materials in our environment, especially chemicals and scents. EI reactions come in many forms. Some of them are: breathing problems, migraine headaches, muscle and joint pain, fevers, rashes, intense gastro-intestinal trouble, exhaustion, and 'brain reactions' like memory loss, confusion, and emotional freakout. Breathing in chemical fumes or even strong natural scents can be life-threatening for some lesbians with EI, and can make others sick for weeks or months... that's why we ask you to please not wear perfume or other scented stuff (like hair goop and skin lotion) when coming to events. EI is extremely isolating; making dyke events as accessible as possible means we all have a better chance of sticking together through this toxic time on our planet.

Some things you can do to be 'EI safe' at events are: check out the stuff you use on your body and clothes. If it has a scent (even if the label says 'unscented') think about if you could go without, or use something else as an alternative. For example vegetable oil works well instead of skin lotion, and baking soda works for many womyn as a deodorant. In a spiritual practice, a small bundle of herbs in a pouch will not fill the room with scent nearly so much as scented oils, or clothing that is saturated with sage smoke. If you generally use heavily scented hair stuff, it will stay strong even after washing; if you ever like wearing a head scarf, this would be a great time to do it. Cigarette smoke in clothes--like after a night in a smoky bar--is also very intense.

Some things one would never expect are highly scented, and can make womyn with EI quite sick. Chapstick is one (comfrey salve or vaseline can be ok alternatives) and chewing gum is another, along with cough drops...chemical bug repellent, whether or not it's scented, is EXTREMELY

toxic, and fabric softener in clothes can fill a room. Coffee is another one. It helps to keep alid on the cup and sip through a small cutout; but a number of women with EI have intense reactions if coffee is anywhere in the room.

Fibers and animal dander in the air are a problem for many dykes, including some who have EI and lesbians who have 'traditional allergies'. If animal friends leave fur on your clothes, it's a good idea to wear a set that's been washed since the last cuddle. And if you have a choice between either cotton or fuzzy, wooly clothes, you could go for the cotton. Besides improving the air quality, all of this ups the chances that you and both new-found and old friends with EI will be able to HUG without anybody getting sick!

So we know this list is rather intense--it's one of the reasons lesbians with EI tend to just drop out and disappear from the community, instead of bringing up the subject of how to do access. However, it IS possible to make a big difference in the air quality of the places where we gather. The above list includes both major items and some of the finer points of being EI safe; just leaving off perfume helps a lot toward creating space that is open to lesbians with EI.

Smoking! Cigarette (or other) smoking is a major obstacle in EI survival. If anyone smokes anywhere near a doorway (even if they're on the outside of it) or in a bathroom, EI dykes can't go there... no way in or out, no place to pee...please don't smoke near entrances, or in EI safe bathrooms!

About masks. Lesbians with EI often wear one or another kind of face mask to filter the air before breathing it in. Masks are not perfect, but combined with efforts to create non-toxic space, for some womyn they can make it possible to stay. Dykes with masks may or may not be interested in explaining/discussing them for the millionth time!

This list has been about things individuals can do to help make events EI accessible. For information about how to plan for EI access when organizing an event, or if you want to know more about environmental illness, or would like to connect with other dykes with EI, contact Shemaya Laurel, PO Box 191, Shutesbury MA 01072. (413)367-9213

Announcements

NON-TOXIC & LESS-TOXIC BUILDING CONSULTANT
For persons with environmental illness/chemical sensitivity and those who "just want a healthy house". Specializing in coping strategies for those of us with severe EI. New construction, renovation. Design and materials info: what to use, where to find it, how to put it together. Existing housing and what you use in it: how to improve indoor air quality. Want to read up on it yourself? Resources gladly shared. Fees negotiable. Simple questions answered free of charge!
Shemaya Laurel, POBox 191, Shutesbury MA 01072. (413) 367-9213

THE LAVENDER MASK: Newsletter for lesbians with EI/chemical and scent sensitivities. For free sample send SASE. TLM: POBox 191, Shutesbury, MA 01072. Print or cassette.

LAND FOR SALE: 80 acres of pinon and juniper covered northern New Mexico land. Will sell all or part (20 acres or more). Low down payment, will carry contract. Located near Santa Fe and lots of dykes. For more information contact Kathe & Bev at Maricasa, Box 426, Ribera, NM 87560 505-421-2710

MONOGAMOUS, SELF-MOTIVATED, CLEAN AND SOBER lesbian couple seek the sun! Want to live near ocean in Florida, Hawaii, south Texas or tropical U.S. territory. Interested in living near/with lesbians. Possibilities include buying land for our mobile home, buying house adjacent to others and/or being in a lesbian retirement community. Must have ready access to electricity, running water and phone. Write E.L. POBox 4367, Boulder CO 80306

POETRY, FICTION, ESSAYS wanted for *Sister/Stranger*, an anthology on lesbians loving across differences of age, race, class, size, dis/ability, ethnic/religious background. Lesbians who are of color, old, disabled, Jewish, poor or working class especially encouraged to respond. Please send SASE for information to Sidewalk Revolution Press, POB 9062, Pittsburgh, PA 15224. Deadline 11/30/91

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS: Venus Press is seeking single panel cartoons, strips and cartoon stories for *New Dyke*, a book anthology of cartoons by, for and about lesbians. By 12/1/91. Send submissions and SASE to Venus Press, 7100 Blvd East, Guttenberg NJ 07093

CACHET, a new publication for lesbians/women, is seeking writers. The emphasis of this publication is entertainment. We are looking for writers of short fiction, poetry, reflective or personal essays, in depth feature articles. SASE to CACHET, 610 McCourtie #1, Kalamazoo MI 49008

CALL FOR WORK: Survivors of Trauma Share Their Success Stories. I'm looking for recovery stories and ways of dealing with after effects of trauma. The emphasis of the collection will be on thriving; not merely surviving. Please send SASE if you'd like a copy of the guidelines: L.A. Ross, Box 51, 2 S. 727 Rt. 59, Warrenville, IL 60555. If you would like information about the book when it is published, please send me your name and address.

BOOKS RECEIVED

The Ship That Sailed Into The Living Room: Sex and Intimacy Reconsidered.
By Sonia Johnson, 1991
Wildfire Books, Star Route 1, Box 55
Estancia, New Mexico 87016
\$12.95

Is it time to look at your relationships, where you've been, where you're going? Here's a thought provoking look at one woman's changes as she explores what lesbian relationships can be.

Bubbe Meisehs by Shayneh Maidelehs
an anthology of poetry by Jewish Granddaughters about our Grandmothers
Edited by Leslea Newman, 1989
HerBooks POBox 7467, Santa Cruz CA 95061
\$8.00 + 1.25 p&h

Warm words reflecting the special relationship between grandmothers and granddaughters.

\$3.50

NUMBER 30