

WOMONSPACE NEWS

our voice in the lesbian community



Gay Shame:

Internalized homophobia

August 1995

Let's Stop Beating Ourselves Up

Laurie

Internalized homophobia ... it's a popular catch-phrase these days, but how many of us in the lesbian community have devoted any serious thought to what it really entails, or how all-encompassing it is?

Internalized homophobia tends to be one of those things, like ill-mannered children and bad pets, that we try to pass off as **SOMEONE ELSE'S PROBLEM**. We're really good at recognizing it in our closeted colleagues, but deny that it exists in ourselves.

It's kind of like beating yourself up mentally or emotionally for being gay—even though you may be feeling safe, secure and confident about your sexuality 99 per cent of the time. Even though you may generally accept your sexual orientation and have come to terms with all its implications—social, political, emotional—there may still be a part of you that, deep down, is afraid or ashamed of coming out completely.

You may attempt to hide that by living two lives: the mild-mannered,

straight-laced, conservative salesclerk by day; the bar-hopping, disco-crazed, nipple-pierced leather butch by night. (This may seem like an exaggeration, but let me tell you, there are more than a few of us with split personalities out there.)

Still unsure of the concept? Here's a few more examples. See if you recognize yourself—or your fellow choir members:

You're guilty of internalized homophobia if, like me, you march anonymously in the Edmonton Pride Parade, hoping like hell your face doesn't show up in the ITV footage on the 6 o'clock news. (How's that for the ultimate hypocrisy—negating the very purpose of a PRIDE parade by refusing to acknowledge your participation in it! Maybe we need a new slogan, like: "We're here, we're queer, and we're quite embarrassed about it...")

You're guilty of internalized homophobia if you deliberately conceal the name of your softball/hockey/soccer/rugby team from straight friends because of the squad's reputation as a bunch of "lezzies."

Womonspace News is a publication of Womonspace Social and Recreational Society of Edmonton. We are a nonprofit organization. The newsletter is produced by, for, and about lesbians in Edmonton and the surrounding areas. Our purpose is to inform and entertain our members and any other interested lesbians. The opinions expressed in any issue of *Womonspace News* do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Directors or the Newsletter Committee. The events, organizations and establishments publicized are not necessarily supported by Womonspace. *Womonspace News* is produced on a volunteer basis by the Newsletter Committee. We welcome submissions. Material submitted becomes the property of Womonspace. We reserve the right to edit for length and content, and to refuse publication. Articles or letters to the editor may be sent to: Womonspace, #30-9930-106 Street, Edmonton, AB T5K 1C7. *Womonspace News* seeks advertising that is lesbian-positive to help defer publications costs. Womonspace does not necessarily endorse products or services offered. We reserve the right to refuse ads. For rate information, and to place an ad, please leave a message on the Lesbian Life Line: 425-0511. The editor is Lindy Pratch.

You're guilty of internalized homophobia if you think the gay community can only get ahead by obliterating the drag queens and bulldykes. We certainly don't have to pass as straight to be accepted by straights ... and we shouldn't ask the most flamboyant and visible members of the community to censor themselves. After all, isn't that what this whole gay and lesbian movement is about—freedom to be ourselves? To love who we please, and wear what we want, and fashion and conformity be fucked?

You're guilty of internalized homophobia if, like me, you have a same-sex benefits package at work that you're afraid to use ... because reaping those benefits would mean coming out to the payroll office.

You're guilty of internalized homophobia if, when co-workers ask what you did on the weekend, you tell them you spent Saturday night "watching videos at Bob's" instead of the full truth—that you and your lover had dinner with Bob and Dave, and then watched "Torch Song Trilogy" for the 19th time.

You're guilty of internalized homophobia if you've ever just sat there, red-faced and dying a thousand deaths, while those same co-workers gay-bashed or told tasteless fag jokes at the office. Speaking out may seem like a case of easier said than done, but like



Jezanna (the owner of Madwimmin Books in Alison Bechdel's *Dykes To Watch Out For* comics) proclaims, "Every time you DON'T come out, you let someone go on thinking they don't know any gay people. It makes us invisible." And as long as we're invisible, people think it's okay to slander us, to tell gay jokes, to speak unjustly about our community as a whole. Who needs bigots and hate-mongers when we've gotten so good at invalidating ourselves?

And while it's true that life is hard enough without having to tell the plumber you're a lesbian, and it's nobody's business who you sleep with, the fact remains that the more of us that speak out, the more people will realize we are not a tiny, perverse group of sexual predators, preying on their children. We are the teachers in their schools, the tellers at their banks, the cashiers in their stores, the doctors in their hospitals. We deliver their mail, design their buildings, fight their fires, police their streets, make their laws, write their screenplays, edit their newspapers and dig their ditches. Some of us even win at Wimbledon.

Contributors this issue:

Laurie, Lindy Pratch, Sheelagh,
Heather, Rosa, and Coco

Between the Covers

At Edmonton Public Library

Lindy Pratch

Womonspace has donated rainbow flag stickers to the public library in order to identify lesbian and gay fiction. The pilot project is at the Southgate branch, where about 75 books have had these colourful spine labels applied. If you would like to see this happen at your local branch, then let the manager there know!

I am currently compiling a book list of lesbian fiction in the Edmonton Public Library system. Meanwhile, here are a few titles which may be of interest:

Ghost Motel (1994) by Jackie Manthorne, introduces Montreal sleuth Harriet Hubble. While on vacation, Harriet discovers she was the last person to see motel owner Gertrude Cashin alive. The mystery is an intriguing vehicle for the author's views on monogamy vs nonmonogamy.

Polly is an art historian determined to write *The Truth About Lorin Jones* (1988), a painter who died in the 60's. Polly is sure that the men in Lorin's life ruined her. Polly is also determined to have nothing further to do with men herself, and that her next relationship will be with a woman. This is an entertaining account of self-discovery, written by Alison Lurie.

"In the Life" is an excellent short story by Becky Birtha in the anthology *Garden Variety Dykes: Lesbian Traditions in Gardening* (1994). I also

enjoyed the article about Pennie Rose, the first female arborist in California. Editors Irene Reti and Valerie Jean Chase have collected a wide assortment of writings, including poems, a song, and lots of photos of women in their gardens.

Amazon Story Bones (1994) is Ellen Frye's tale of the Amazons. Greek myths are retold with a new perspective, using many viewpoints, different places and different time periods. Rich details and fluid writing paint a vivid picture of life in ancient times.

It's a dying shame, and about time too

Sheeclagh

"Gay pride. I don't like it. It's offensive ... unnecessary."

"Why do you have to be out there flaunting it? That's what puts people off. If you kept to yourselves and left people alone..."

"Pride Week? No. No city council should proclaim a Gay Pride Week. There are already too many groups with special rights. Why should gays and lesbians be given special treatment?"

Special treatment? That's a new one. I thought it was equality we sought, along with the protection that would make that equality a reality. And so, if we ever for one moment stop fighting and accept the imposition of these horrid, narrow-minded and

discriminatory views, we risk being forced to hide. We would become invisible ... but we wouldn't quite disappear. What would emerge would be pain and more pain, caused by a pervasive and ongoing sense of unworthiness, guilt, disgrace and dishonour: in effect, gay and lesbian shame.

"When we talk about gay and lesbian shame, we're talking about a very real and powerful force," says Dr. Paul Sussman, an Edmonton therapist who in his practice counsels gays and lesbians. "It can force gays and lesbians to make only tentative contact with the gay organizations and support structures that serve them. Or it can be felt as something so powerful that it prevents some gays and lesbians from even accepting their sexual orientation. These people can become completely fearful and repressed and at times even very hostile towards the gay and lesbian community."

The gays and lesbians who feel shame are reacting to an oppressive world. They are reacting to those who, for whatever reason, are unable to accept that there is something other than a "normal" sexual orientation. Many humans seek conformity because it's non-threatening, safe and secure. If someone doesn't conform to a pre-determined norm, there's an element of unpredictability; maybe that person can't be categorized and, to some, that can be threatening. "Most of these people are fairly egocentric in their

point of view and therefore continue to have narrow views and negative attitudes towards gays and lesbians," says Dr. Sussman.

"For example," he continues, "I used to lecture in psychology and point out that homosexuality was a normal sexual variant. Some students would reply with: 'When I imagine that, it grosses me out.' But these people would be equally grossed out by imagining their grandparents having sex. And whether or not someone is grossed out by something should not be the criteria we use to judge or assess other people. But it's amazing how many people can't grasp that ... they are just too egocentric."

This kind of egocentrism and need to conform usually has its roots in childhood and teenage years, or in strong religious beliefs. "People want a sense of sameness, so if someone is different we ask 'Will I be liked?' or 'Can they be liked?' We see this behaviour in the form of racism also; for example, the way some people behave towards Natives, towards Blacks," comments Dr. Sussman. "Parents, if they have the skills and the maturity, can challenge and change this way of thinking, but this doesn't happen often enough."

In fact, parents and older people often reinforce a fear of difference and change. "There's a mentality," says Dr. Sussman, "that says that if the picture of the school yard when my father was a kid is changing, then something is

happening to our country and that's bad."

People who, for whatever reason, believe that homosexuality is wrong have a right to that opinion but no right to impose it on others. To believe that gay and lesbian relationships are wrong means only that someone holding such a belief should not involve themselves in a homosexual relationship. Unfortunately, says Dr. Sussman, most people don't understand this because they don't mature intellectually. "They can't function on an abstract level or reason logically. They just don't get the fact that as long as it's not being imposed on you, you should reciprocate and not impose things on others. These are the attitudes and ways of thinking that keep many gays and lesbians in the closet."

The impact on gays and lesbians can vary, depending on many things such as the person's background, way of thinking, need for acceptance, and level of sensitivity. Some gays and lesbians cannot tolerate the thought of not being accepted. "These people are basically conformist, and if their homosexuality makes them non-conformist, they may repress it," explains Dr. Sussman. "For others, North America's intolerance and the resulting sense of shame can cause anything from stress, depression, and anxiety, through to drug abuse and full-blown psychosis."

In addition, a lot of gays and

lesbians suffer because they are denied the benefits of stable couple family relationships. They are oppressed, and without things that heterosexuals have a right to, such as legally recognized family, bereavement leave, same-sex benefits, and general acceptance. "The traditionalists would go nuts if everyone was denied these things; they'd say it would lead to mass instability. Yet this is what gays have to deal with. And it can cause anger, shame and depression," says Dr. Sussman.

The State reinforces any sense of shame a gay or lesbian might feel because it does not work to bring about equality. In Canada, we have yet to see the status of family applied to gay couples. When the issue is raised, most homophobes jump up and talk about tradition. This argument doesn't make sense, given that today we have all kinds of variations on what was until recently considered a "normal" family.

Dr. Sussman says that Canadians seem unable to decide what kind of Canada they want. "Do we want gay and lesbian couples to live in peace, in stable relationships, enjoying things others enjoy and benefit from? And in this case it's not a matter of majority rule. It's a question of what is right and what kind of country we want. And so we shouldn't be making unnecessary restrictions on people who are enjoying their right to the pursuit of happiness peacefully."

The psychologist says that in spite of living in a democracy, there are certain rights the majority simply does not have. The majority does not, for example, have the right to oppress minorities. In fact, how well minorities are treated is a test most countries face ... a test of tolerance, compassion and a higher form of reasoning. 'But how we implement changes in a practical sense in this political system is another issue. Politicians focus for the most part on being re-elected and are therefore not brave. Perhaps if we passed a law that said that people could only be elected twice, they'd be a lot braver and show real leadership on a whole array of issues.'

Dr. Sussman is not too optimistic when it comes to change in the future. "Few want to pass laws for gay and lesbian equality and stand for re-election. And I'm not seeing a lot of change. It's a move to the right with the same tired interpretations of scriptures and narrow views."

Is Dr. Sussman right? I hope not. I focus on gay and lesbian pride, not just during that one week in June, but every day of the year. For me, it's a strong reminder that the powerlessness that so many gays and lesbians have felt and are feeling is slowly ending. I look forward, perhaps somewhat idealistically, to a time when gay and lesbian shame will be a thing of the past; it will be a thing of the past because, by continuing to fight, intolerance of gays will one day be looked upon with shame.

President's Message

Heather

The last year has been both busy and rewarding for me. I've enjoyed working with the women that volunteer for Womonspace, as well as meeting the many fascinating people from across Alberta that are involved in gay and lesbian organizations.

Throughout this past year, I've tried to make my mark at Womonspace. I hoped to make Womonspace more appealing by setting membership fees for couples, revising the constitution, coordinating dances, recruiting new volunteers and increasing the number of events that Womonspace offers. The hard work and creative planning of the Board appears to have paid off, as membership numbers are at an all time high and more women are joining every day.

Membership does have its privileges; a newsletter and reduced admission rate at our dances as well as at golf and pool tournaments.

This is my last message to you as the president of Womonspace because I am bound for Australia. Roz will be the acting president until the next annual general meeting.

I hope that everyone will continue to support Womonspace through volunteering, membership and attending its events. I will miss you all.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Groups and Weekly Events:

GLCCE (Gay and Lesbian Community Centre of Edmonton), 104-11745 Jasper Avenue is open Monday to Friday from 7-10 pm and Mondays and Wednesday from 1-4 pm. Peer support counselling, drop-in, lesbian coming out group and library. Phone 488-3234.

Gaywire A lesbian and gay radio show on FM 88.5. Thursdays from 6-7 pm.

Lesbian and Gay Badminton Thursdays, 7-9 pm at Oliver School, 10210-117 St.; \$1.

Edmonton Frontrunners Meet at S.E. steps of the Butterdome (changed and ready to go) every Sunday at 9 am sharp, and run through the river valley trails. Jeff: 439-9803.

Lambda Christian Community
Welcomes members of the lesbigay community; worship 7 pm Sundays, 10876-97 Street. Phone 988-3913.

Metropolitan Community Church
Weekly worship, 10086 MacDonald Drive, Sundays at 7:15 pm.

Liatris Society Queer-positive outdoor and gardening group organizes fun events every month which are open to everyone. \$5/year gets you on the mailing list to stay informed about the many activities. Brent: 497-7059.

OUT & Out (O²) An outdoor and recreation group for Edmonton's gays, lesbians & bisexuals and their friends. All activities are self-funded and many are free. \$5 membership covers newsletter cost. Darren: 489-1339.

Gay & Lesbian Infoline: 988-4018.

Lesbian Life Line: 425-0511.

August Events:

Wednesday, August 2

Womonspace General Meeting

7:30 pm at #30-9930-106 Street. If you are interested in becoming involved with our organization, come on down!

Thursday, August 10 - Sunday August 13

Edmonton Folk Music Festival

Listen to Tracy Riley, Loreena McKennitt, and difranco, the Flirtations, and Ricki Lee Jones, among others, at Gallagher Park. 429-1999.

Friday, August 11

Womonspace News Deadline

There will be no newsletter meeting this month. You may drop off submissions for the September issue on the topic "Take Back the Night" at Jazzberrys, 9965 82 Ave.

August 18 - August 27

The Fringe Festival

There's always something of interest to lesbians at the Fringe. This year, look for the return of Foresight Theatre, with Boadicea: the Red-Bellied Queen. Constance Cook (Are You a Friend of Dorothy's) is also back with another dance work. Whoopah is a feminist circus of mythic proportions and Pandora's Squeezebox is a one woman show. Highest ticket price is \$8. Get a program at any 7-11 store.

Saturday, August 19

Womonspace Picnic

Emily Murphy Park, near the playground, at 1 pm. Bring yourselves, bring kids, bring food and meet some new friends.

Sunday, August 20

Beach Volleyball Party

Ron and Don of O² have organized this fun, sun, and sand event. It's very casual, and costs \$3 per person. No preregistration. Sand courts at 10943 - 84 Ave. from 1:45 - 5 pm. (Phone Ron at 488-8644 for location of indoor event in case of rain.)

Saturday, August 26 - Sunday, August 27

O² Spelunking/Camping Weekend

Saturday will be spent in the Cadomin Caves near Hinton, followed by camping the rest of the weekend. Registration deadline August 20; Jeff at 439-9803.

Monday, August 28 - Tuesday, August 29

"When Night is Falling"

If you missed it when it was in Edmonton before, here's your chance to see a wonderful lesbian film at the Princess. 7 pm on Monday, 9:15 pm on Tuesday. \$5/adults; \$3/members.

Wednesday, August 30

Sacred Circle Dancing

Open to any woman who wants to dance. Riverdale Hall, 9231-100 Ave., 7 (sharp)-9 pm. Donations toward hall rental welcomed.

O² (OUT & Out) Fall Meeting

South Annex Meeting Room, City Hall, 7:30 pm - 8:30 pm.

Friday, September 1

Womonspace News Meeting

Jazzberrys, 9965 82 Ave., at 7:30 pm. Deadline for submissions for October issue on the topic "The Work Closet."

Saturday, September 2

A Dance for Ladies Only

Shakespear's Darts & Rumpus Room, 2nd Floor-10306 112 Street. Call 429-7234 for details.

Wednesday, September 6

Womonspace General Meeting

#30-9930-106 Street, 7:30 pm. Womonspace members are encouraged to attend, in order to have a say in how our society operates.

Elizabeth Massiah, M.S.W., R.S.W.

Social Worker, Therapist

▼ Individuals

▼ Couples

▼ Families



Riverwalk Counselling Services

10230 - 142 Street, Edmonton T5N 3Y6

Phone and Fax (403) 489-7998

Pinoccioella

Rosa

Once upon a time there lived a kind woodcarver named Gepetto. One day Gepetto took out a piece of pine and carved a wooden puppet on strings. Gepetto had always wanted a daughter so he decided to name the puppet Pinoccioella.

Gepetto spent hours walking her about the house on her strings. Before going to bed one night Gepetto wiped a stray tear from his eye as he hugged Pinoccioella. "Oh, to have a real daughter ..." He gently put Pinoccioella down on his hard wooden chair and sadly shuffled off to bed.

Now a magic fairy just happened to be in the vicinity and he heard Gepetto's wish. He flitted into Gepetto's modest workshop and with a wave of his magic wand, the puppet came to life. Pinoccioella rubbed her eyes with her little fists and it was then that she saw the magic fairy in front of her. "I - I can - move, but who are you? You're not Gepetto!"

The fairy explained everything. "Pinoccioella, as long as you are always honest, you will retain your humanity. However, if you lie, not only will your nose grow, but with each lie you will become more wooden and lifeless." And with that, the magic fairy flew out and Pinoccioella fell asleep.

There was much rejoicing the next morning when Gepetto found that Pinoccioella was no longer a puppet,

but a real human being.

The two of them lived happily for a very long time and Gepetto even managed to scrape together enough money to send Pinoccioella to a good university. Unfortunately, the university was very far from home and Gepetto missed Pinoccioella.

During Pinoccioella's first year in university, she fell in love! Now his happens all the time in fairy tales, however Pinoccioella fell in love with another woman. Intriguingly enough, Pinoccioella discovered that her lover had originally been carved from a piece of pine as well, and was brought to life by a kind fairy. They had so much in common that within a week they were living together and spent the next four years in total bliss. During Reading Week, Pinoccioella would visit her father and her lover went home to visit her elderly parents.

After Pinoccioella and her lover graduated, they were both lucky enough to get jobs in a city two hours away from Pinoccioella's home town. Gepetto was happy, for now he could easily take the train to visit Pinoccioella. In fact Gepetto is on his way there now.

Meanwhile Pinoccioella and her lover are getting ready for Gepetto's first visit. Somehow, Pinoccioella didn't think that Gepetto would approve of her same wood lover. "Sweetheart, did you take the *Out* magazines out of the bathroom and ... oh, do you think my dad would get suspicious if I left this

dyke calendar on the wall?" ... and so the afternoon went.

It was merely accidental that Pinoccioella passed by a mirror. She stopped and studied her face. Her nose looked a bit longer than usual. "Hey honey, do you think I should get rhinoplastic surgery?"

"Pinoccioella, your nose looks fine. It's probably that zit on it that's making it look longish today."

The doorbell rang.

A tired Gepetto stood at the doorstep. "Daddy it's so good to see you!" Pinoccioella kissed Gepetto's cheek. "Daddy, this is my umm, roommate, Woody!" ("Darn zit!" thought Pinoccioella, "It feels like it's sticking out a mile.")

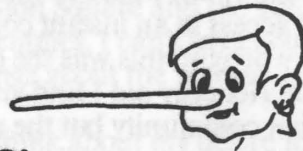
They took Gepetto for a quick tour of the apartment. "This is my bedroom and this is Woody's bedroom." Pinoccioella scratched her nose. That zit on her nose was becoming annoying. Woody was now looking at Pinoccioella with deep concern in her eyes. All evening long Pinoccioella peppered her father's visit with one lie after another. With each lie her nose grew, and she started to become more wooden. She just couldn't tell Gepetto that she was a lesbian. He would have a heart attack. She knew how much he wanted her to get married and to have kids. Pinoccioella could barely move now. Woody was frantic. Thankfully Gepetto had fallen asleep, empty teacup in hand.

Old memories stirred in Woody's

subconscious mind and a faint image of a fairy came to her. She knew now what had to be done. She touched her lover's woody arm. "Sweetheart, tell the truth. If you lie, you'll die. Remember what the fairy said!"

Gepetto woke up. Pinoccioella found she was barely able to talk, but she wanted desperately to live and the lies were slowly killing her. "Dad - dy. I - I - am - a - a - lesbian!" The truth immediately transformed Pinoccioella. She was alive again!

Gepetto looked at Pinoccioella. "Pinoccioella, I'll always love you no matter what." He wiped a stray tear from his eye. "I had always wanted a daughter. Now I have two to love!" he said, hugging both Pinoccioella and Woody.



QUOTES:

There have always been some who have been gay and proud; but for every Natalie Barney, there have been many more Radclyffe Halls, accepting the degrading descriptions of psychologists, inevitable suffering, and a need for pity.

Jane, Rule, "Closet-Burning," *Outlander*, 1981

Our sexuality is such a deep spontaneous, and powerful part of our core identity that the conscious need to falsify it is a little death.

Gloria Steinem, *Revolution from Within*, 1992

Reflections on Two Communities

Coco



I think that everyone needs to spend some time abroad. Living in a foreign country helps to provide an alternative perspective about one's home environment. I spent the past year travelling in Thailand and Japan. I also spent some time working in both of these countries. I loved the experience of living in cultures that were radically different from my own. I also loved having the opportunity to view my own culture from a distance.

I have always claimed that a great benefit to being part of the gay and lesbian community is the ability to go practically anywhere in the world and have access to an instant community. To my delight, this was the case in Japan. Not only did I find an instant lesbian community but the members I contacted were very friendly and welcoming. While residing in Tarui-Cho, I thought about the nature of the lesbian community in Edmonton. Naturally I drew comparisons between Edmonton's community and the community I found in Japan.

My introduction to the lesbian community in Edmonton was neither friendly nor welcoming. Unfortunately, my case was not unique. I have spoken with many women who have said that they felt the lesbian community in Edmonton is incredibly unfriendly. If I had a twenty

dollar bill for every time I've heard how aloof and unfriendly the women in this community are, I would own a customized purple Porsche.

I arrived in Edmonton about seven years ago. I attended about five Womonspace dances before anyone said hello. I will often see women on the street who I recognize from the dances. Often I will say hello and be met with arrogant silence or a cold stare. It is quite disconcerting. I long for the community to be different and I wonder what causes such rude behaviour. I find it hard to believe that these people were not taught basic manners.

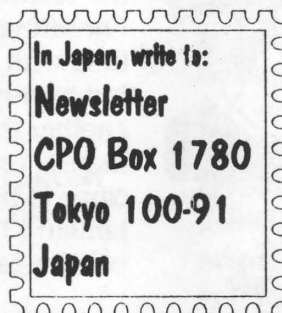
I have developed two theories as to why such behaviour exists. The first is that, in general, Edmonton tends to be a less than hospitable place and the lesbians here have definitely been influenced by their environment. Another theory is that like most of the lesbians in the western world, lesbians here are controlled by a tyranny of coolness. It is twisted, but try to comprehend the following logic. The premise is that as a dyke, one must appear to be cool at all costs. In order to be cool, one cannot risk being humiliated or making a mistake. To be fully expressive, and extend a greeting to someone who is not a close intimate friend, involves the possibility of the above occurring. If one does not extend a greeting, it decreases the possibility of mistakes and humiliation occurring. As a result the semblance of

coolness remains intact. (I did warn you that it was twisted.)

The fact remains that the lesbian community here tends to be clique-driven and cold. This is a problem. When I think about the warmth and friendliness of the lesbian community in Japan, I realize that there are more positive and constructive ways of operating as a community.

Before I left Vancouver to head to Nagoya, I quickly scribbled down the address of a lesbian organization in Japan. After a week of bewilderment and culture shock, I wrote a letter to the organization. Within two weeks, I received a beautiful handmade card welcoming me to Japan. They also sent me an informative newsletter and encouraged me to contact some of the members listed in the newsletter. The newsletter was pretty unique. It listed the names, addresses, and phone numbers of lesbians throughout Japan who were willing to act as hosts, guides and resource people. The women were listed according to region. The women closest to Tarui, my town, resided in Nagoya and Kyoto.

I was anxious to meet with lesbians so I phoned Nora, one of the women in Nagoya, right away. Nora is an expatriate American from Colorado. She had been living in Japan for three years. She was so friendly and helpful.



She gave me the rundown on gay life in Japan and gave me valuable information about coping with daily living in Japan. She, like many of the women there, offered to let me stay at her home if I wanted to visit Nagoya. (Please see article on a weekend in

Nagoya.) Of course I took her up on this and I had a wonderful time. The hospitality shown was incredible. I also stayed with a Japanese woman, Kazuko, in Kyoto. I was showered with hospitality and thoroughly spoilt. Kazuko made all sorts of Japanese food for me and showed me many of the fascinating landmarks of Kyoto, including Gion Square and the gold and silver temples. I can't say enough positive things about the women I met there.

When I think about my desire for this community to change, I liken the process to the formidable task ahead of the French government. They are trying to persuade their citizens to be more cordial to tourists. This seems like an impossible mission. However, I believe the French and the lesbian community in Edmonton could change their behaviour for the better. It will take the conscientious effort and will of each individual within the lesbian community to be more open and approachable. Friendliness can help make our community a warmer and healthier place to be.

A Weekend in Nagoya

an excerpt by Coco

It is the morning after the night before, which centered on attending Club Magos in downtown Nagoya. Club Magos is a little, and I mean *little* gay club. It was started by some adventurous former Texans. The clientele is 70% Japanese and 30% other (gai-jin). It is around 1 pm and not exactly morning. Four of us are sitting around a table at this cool cafe called Five Feet. There is a beautiful story about how this came to be named, but I don't remember all the details. It has something to do with an incredibly depressed person roaming the streets of Nagoya looking for some solace. Finding none, and about to jump off of an Aichi bridge, she sees an angel hovering five feet above her. Someday I'll get the rest of the story. In the meantime back to the cafe. Sitting around the table is me, Coco (former Albertan now in exile in Japan), Nora, a really sweet woman from the United States (bit of an oxymoron, isn't it?), and Vicki and Corinne, a hilarious fun-loving Aussie couple. We are in the middle discussing—or rather, gossiping about—some of the women we met at Club Magos when in walks Nicola. Nicola is this stunningly attractive Patsy Kensit look-alike* who is a flight



attendant for Qantas, the only airline never to have a crash, she later informs us. She saunters in and shouts across the room in that big, broad Australian accent, "Hello girls!" There's a twinkle in her eyes and I sense that this is going to be an interesting brunch. And hell, the Texans haven't even shown up yet. I'm sitting in this cafe having a great time with three people I've met in the last twenty-four hours and with another that I've only known for a month. I start to think about how this came to be. When I came to Japan in January, I had no expectations of there being a gay community ...

*Patsy Kensit is a British actress who is featured in the movie "Twenty One." Although it is pretty heterosexual, it is still worth viewing. It is available at Sneak Preview.

QUOTES:

Of course it is extremely difficult to like oneself in a culture which thinks you are a disease.

Chrystos, *This Bridge Called My Back*, 1983

Fear of the label "lesbian" has driven many into matrimony, mental hospitals, and—worst of all—numbing, dumbing normality. It has driven others into heterosexist "gay pride" protests promoted by and for men, into butch-femme matings modeled on matrimony, into aping the genital fixations of porn peddlers, pimps, priests.

Mary Daly, *Cyn/Ecology*, 1978

Splinters from the Womonspace Board

The date for our **Annual General Meeting** has been set: October 8.

Donations to Michael **Phair's** and Sherry **McKibben's** campaigns have been approved.

Auditors were appointed.

We've agreed to mount a **concert** in the coming year, and are looking into venues and artists.

A Womonspace **film festival** is a go in November; watch for details.

About twenty-five people attended the **Womonspace picnic** in July. Women took advantage of the opportunity to socialize and meet new people. Next picnic is August 19 at Emily Murphy Park.

Womonspace Golf Tournament

Our first golf tournament was held July 8 at Terrae Pines and exceeded all expectations!

Thirty-four golfers showed up to whack, hack, swish and putt their faces off for nine hole. Another three non-golfers, including Ward 3 councillor Sherry McKibben, joined us for dinner afterwards at Jazzberrys. There, hosts Dallas and

Kevin put on a fine selection of burgers and salads.

The biggest concern going into the tournament was the weather, especially after tourney director Laurie had her basement flooded in the July 4 hailstorm. But, the weather goddess came through and sunny skies prevailed.

Two of the event holes were won by Alison—the longest drive and closest to the pin. Glory took home the award for longest putt. Door prizes, including CDs, books and gift certificates, were also distributed at the post-tournament reception.

Many thanks to Diane for her tournament guidance, and for personally donating a private golf lesson to our cache of prizes. Thanks also to **Body Balance Therapeutic Massage, Orlando Books, Hole's Greenhouses, Glenora Gallery, and Jazzberrys**, whose donations helped make our inaugural fun tournament an overwhelming success.

A very special thank you also goes to Laurie for doing such a great job of organizing this event!

We've been asked not only to do it again, but to think about expanding to 18 holes ... so if the response is there, we'll definitely be back next year!

Back to school

Womonspace Picnic

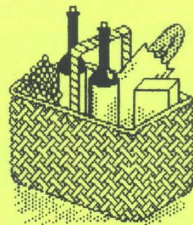
August 19

Emily Murphy Park at 1 PM

(Near the Playground)

Bring yourselves, bring kids, bring food
and meet some new friends.

NOTE: There will be no dances in July and August.



WOMONSPACE 1995 MEMBERSHIP FORM

#30- 9930 106 Street Edmonton AB T5K 1C7 Phone: 425-0511

Confidentiality Assured

NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____

POSTAL CODE _____ PHONE _____

Membership Fee: \$15/single; \$25/couple (with one newsletter)

Cheque or Money Order payable to Womonspace (low income available)

New Member ☐ Renewal ☐ I would like to be a volunteer Yes ☐ No ☐

Please mail my newsletter to my home ☐

I will pick up the newsletter at dances/events ☐ Total enclosed \$ _____

