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*Good News
Positive Reminders
Inspirational Messages*

*Makaw Press
July 2003*

Lesbian Pride

Monthly

*Good news, positive reminders
and inspirational messages*

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Why are we so afraid of freedom?

by Marilda Mel White

This is the month we celebrate the anniversary of the birth of our nation, which in turn began a long tradition of freedom for the people of the United States. Of course, it took awhile before all her people were free — including the original residents of the land — but through the years, the Emancipation Act and a few Amendments have tried to make things more equitable.

We still struggle with the idea of freedom today, however, and there are people who would argue that we're still not free. I sometimes wonder if people can ever really, truly be absolutely free; other times I wonder if we've already hit the pinnacle of possible human freedom and we've started back down the slippery slope toward being a totally restricted society.

I also think sometimes that Americans — all Americans, including my gay and lesbian brothers and sisters — are just plain scared of being free.

Oh sure, we all talk a good line — we fight wars for freedom, we love to quote the freedom of speech amendment; we rally and sing about living in the land of the free. We love to say we want freedom for all the people in the world.

Which I think is pretty ludicrous since most of us don't even want our neighbors to be free to paint their house the color they want, or fix their own car in their own driveway, or park their motor home where it can be seen. We don't want our neighbors to be able to make their own choices about seatbelts or helmets, or abortion or firearms, or even what to wear to school.

And we certainly don't want our neighbors to feel free to go to a bar and dance by a pole, or to marry someone of the same sex,

or to take a little marijuana to ease their suffering. We don't want our neighbors to be free to say a prayer in school or pledge allegiance to "one nation under God."

Closer to home, in a lifestyle sort of way, there are some of us lesbians who don't want our sisters to be free to eat meat, or to identify as butch or fem...or to be *too* androgynous. Some of us sing songs about freedom and then turn right around and abuse our sisters who think differently than we do.

We as a people, no matter on which side of the sexual orientation fence we stand, we seem to love the idea of being a freedom-loving nation, as long as our friends and neighbors freely and lovingly conform to what we think is right. If, by chance, someone might try to exercise his or her right to free expression, and it differs from what we think they should do or think, you can be sure that any number of freedom-loving Americans will jump on the bandwagon to create — or at least attempt to create — a law to restrict those other people from being free.

Laws (and rules) are meant to restrict, and restriction is the antithesis of freedom. How can we spout off about freedom and then want to restrict not only our neighbors but ourselves as well with more laws and rules? Why, I wonder, are we so afraid of freedom?

It could be as simple as the fact that we don't want to think our neighbors are freer than we are and are therefore having more fun, or it could be as complex as the idea that we think we're smarter than God (or any higher power, for that matter) and we alone know what's best for the other gal and how to rein her in.

The trouble is, no matter who is in charge, or who gets to hold the reins, the more restrictions there are, the less freedom there is for everyone. You may be happy about a new law or covenant that means your neighbor can't always do what she wants, especially when it means your straight neighbor has been put in her place, but every time you limit someone else's thoughts or actions, that slope gets slipperier and you can bet your bottom dollar those restrictions will ultimately be used to curb your own freedoms as well.

There is an old saying that goes "none of us is free until all of us are free." I don't know who said it, but it was surly someone wise, and it surly applies to all of us. As we celebrate the founding of our nation this month, we'd do well to remember that and not be so afraid of letting our friends and neighbors enjoy their freedoms as we like to enjoy our own.



GOLDEN THREADS

is a worldwide network designed to end loneliness and isolation among midlife and older Lesbians.

GOLDEN THREADS

is a discreet contact publication for Lesbian women over 50, and their younger friends. No one is excluded because of her age.



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HAPPILY EVER AFTER

a book by Stacy Chandler FREE to good lesbian homes! \$2 for postage to Speculators, Inc. PO Box 99038, Troy, MI 48099

GAYYELLOW PAGES informing the lesbian, gay, bisexual & transgender community since 1973, Includes Women's Section and Ethnic/Multicultural section "You won't find a more complete guide covering literally all aspects of Gay and Lesbian life" Our World http://gayyellowpages.com Renaissance House, PO Box 533 Village Station, New York, NY 10014 (or ask at your local feminist bookstore)

LAVENDER REFLECTIONS by Eleanor Ruth Wagner, A book of affirmations for lesbians and gay men; Meditations & quotations; photos & holiday entries \$10.95 (post paid) from author. 5529 Vernon Ave S, Minneapolis, MN 55436

Rememberings and Celebrations, a 64-card deck of Loving Reminders of the Great Mother's Voice available through Robyn Posin, Box 725, Ojai, CA 93024 805-646-4518 www.forthelittleonesinside.com Ask for A Catalog of Treasures

I celebrate the rainbow in myself and the world

The full spectrum of life calls to me. No longer do I see myself in "either-or" terms. I love and hate; I teach and learn; I am a healer and one who is being healed; I am part of humanity yet ever alone; I change while staying the same; I am living and dying all at once.



My recognition of the range within myself helps me also to see others as parts of the continuum. I don't need others to be at the same place I am — my own position shifts, as everyone's does. In this fluid diversity is the beauty of the rainbow. It colors the world and challenges my efforts to harmonize.

Respecting who I am, I look forward today to where I will be tomorrow and honor where I have been in the past. In my same-sex orientation, I expand the possibilities for love. My being weaves sparkling threads into the wonderment of the universe.

— Eleanor Ruth Wagner in Lavender Reflections

Reminder: Giving that depletes you can never truly be nourishing to another... when you give more than you can, you come to need more than you can find anywhere outside of your now depleted self... practice taking better care of you!

— Robyn Posin Rememberings and Celebrations www.forthelittleonesinside.com

Dreams are necessary to live. — Anais Ninn

Love is the greatest refreshment in life. — Pablo Picasso

Family Pride Coalition Commends Supreme Court Decision

The Family Pride Coalition commends the United States Supreme Court ruling which struck down the Texas sodomy law by a vote of 6-3, saying the law was an unconstitutional violation of privacy and also violated due process guarantees.

The U.S. Supreme Court considered the constitutionality of the Texas "Homosexual Conduct" law, which criminalized oral and anal sex between consenting gay couples. The June 26th ruling also overthrows sodomy laws in all 13 states where they had existed, and not just the four states — Texas, Kansas, Oklahoma and Missouri — that had discriminatory sodomy laws that only outlawed same-sex "sodomy."

Lambda Legal argued the case — *Lawrence and Garner v. Texas* — before the United States Supreme Court. Justices Anthony Kennedy, John Paul Stevens, David Souter, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen Breyer and Sandra Day O'Connor voted in the majority. Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist and Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas dissented.

"Today, the Supreme Court ruled for fairness for all Americans," said Aimee Gelnaw, executive director of the Family Pride Coalition. "After years of this antiquated law being applied with prejudice to gay and lesbian Americans, it can no longer serve as an unjust barrier to lesbians and gay men maintaining custody of their own children or becoming foster or adoptive parents."

This year, the Family Pride Coalition was deeply involved in efforts to defeat three anti-gay foster care and adoption bills in Texas. The sodomy law was used as a reference point in arguments against allowing lesbian and gay Texans the opportunity to serve as foster and adoptive parents. Despite this opposition, all three measures were defeated. The Family Pride Coalition is the only national non-profit organization dedicated to advancing the well being of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender parents and their families through mutual support, community collaboration and public understanding.

Cathedral of Hope Commends Supreme Court

The Cathedral of Hope, the world's largest liberal Christian church with a primary outreach to lesbians, gays and transgender people, applauds the U.S. Supreme Court for its courageous ruling today in the *Lawrence and Garner v. Texas* case that strikes down the Texas sodomy law.

"Today the Supreme Court made it clear that state governments have no right to enshrine their prejudices in law," said Rev. Michael

S. Piazza, Dean of the Cathedral of Hope. "It is difficult to see how any rational person can justify the government regulating private behavior between consenting adults. How could that behavior be legal for some consenting adults (heterosexuals) and illegal for others (homosexuals)? Obviously the majority of the Supreme Court recognized that all taxpayers deserve equal protection. We are grateful that the law is at last catching up with the common sense of the American people."

Soulforce Expresses Jubilation and Hope for the Future

Leaders of Soulforce today express jubilation at the decision by the United States Supreme Court in *Lawrence v. Texas* overturning Texas's sodomy law. Until the decision, it had been illegal in 13 states for same-sex couples to engage in certain types of sexual behavior in their own homes.

The Texas case began when police responded to a false report of a weapons disturbance and busted into John Lawrence's home. Although the police found no weapons, they did find Mr. Lawrence with Tyrone Garner engaged in sex and arrested them both. Texas courts found both men guilty and the June 26th decision overturns those convictions.

"[It is] fantastic for all people because the Supreme Court has recognized that our government has no place in our bedrooms, nor a right to selectively single out people of minority sexual orientation for criminal punishment," said Rev. Mel White, founder and director of Soulforce, Inc (and no relation to this newsletter's editor). "Maybe some churches that alienate and degrade us will see the light after today as well."

The decision overturned both the Texas court decision in *Lawrence v. Texas* and the 1986 Supreme Court decision in the *Bowers v. Hardwick* case that upheld Georgia sodomy laws. According to CNN, the late Justice Lewis Powell, the deciding vote in the *Bowers* decision, later said he probably made a mistake with his decision on that case. This decision corrected that mistake.

"I'm free, I'm free, I am no longer a criminal for who I love, I am free to be who God created me to be," said Karen Weldin, Soulforce Director of Operations. "I hope this gives people hiding in the closet the sense of freedom and courage to come out and be proud of who they are and who they love."

Soulforce, a national interfaith movement committed to ending spiritual violence perpetuated by religious policies and teachings against gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT). We teach and employ the principles of nonviolence as taught by Gandhi and King to the liberation of sexual minorities. www.soulforce.org

On the Amazon Trail

by and © Lee Lynch

An Epidemic of Love

I just received an e-mail telling me that yet another woman I know has cancer. In the past several months the toll from cancer in my social circle has risen beyond already unacceptable levels — breast, colon, uterine, lung, cervical. I suspect this is not a phenomenon I am experiencing alone. Surely it is an epidemic that deserves as much attention as any ten hot warring countries.

Helpless is a weak description for what I feel, yet I have learned that I can do something, I can be a friend. We're all so essentially alone when dealing with diseases of body and mind, but I see this scourge uniting us in ways little else could. When I heard that my ex's partner was ill, I spontaneously ended a year's-long silence with a note of support. Cancer is the great equalizer. Differences and past angers pale next to the instinct for clan-wide survival.

So we send energy and green healing light, visualize a healthy, thriving friend, embark on a course of meditations or prayer and donate whatever we can in the way of money or time — weaving all of this into a fabric we use to wrap our friends in love. Around here, we're getting good at this.

Over time a sort of crone's resource kit with healing rituals for radiation and chemotherapy and special diets rich with strengthening nutrients will evolve. Even now organizations are coordinating services like hospital visits, rides to appointments, home visits, housekeeping, gardening, pet care, laundry, meal preparation and help with confusing medical bills or insurance problems.*

Is the raging current of cancer a product of aging? All of the diagnoses I'm hearing about have come to women in their 50s and older. Maybe this is normal and only new to me because these are my contemporaries. Is it a sign that we are taking better care of ourselves and going to the doctor so the cancers are being caught earlier? This would be good news in terms of survival. Is it a sign that the medical establishment has responded to feminist pressure and is paying attention to something besides prostrates and male hearts? Have the medical schools accepted and trained more women physicians than they used to and are these women now listening to women patients as we have never been listened to before?

Probably these are all factors in what feels like an awfully high incidence of cancer around me. But what I fear is that this is no statistical fluke reflecting better, earlier reporting. I fear that as our planet gets more polluted, as our foods become more processed, as corporations change the very chemistry of what we ingest and breathe, that we are the guinea pigs of a radical future designed for profit, not people. I fear our bodies are failing to adapt to an atmosphere in which space explorers would refuse to land without heavy-duty protective gear. I hope I'm wrong.

Whether there is an increase in cancer (and I no longer trust our government to report this) or I have simply reached an age when illness becomes more common, I have a challenge before me. The lives of my friends are seriously disrupted and they need help. What I see evolving is lesbian family like I have never seen before. And not just lesbian — neighbors, people at work, estranged in-laws, childhood buddies from across the country — everyone wants to help. It's like a blizzard, when the whole block comes out with shovels and hot chocolate and good cheer. I hear a collective belief that positive thought and huge amounts of love can heal, or at least prolong life. Even when it's time for someone to go, the caring remains to carry the survivors through grief.

More than one friend has told me that although it's no fun, having cancer taught her a lot. It's teaching me too. Of course its prevalence in my life leads me to worry *What will I do if ... ?*

I start thinking about how home is where, if you have to go there, they have to take you in, and get depressed about going backwards toward my relatives who have enough on their hands without the return of the never popular family queer. But I don't see that happening. I see families I never knew were there being created and expanded. I see all kinds of help, from the national Mautner Project for lesbians to local groups to pharmaceutical giants that make drugs available at little or no cost..

I sure hope no one else in my life ever gets cancer, but now I know that when the cure is found, it won't be the only miracle inspired by this disease.

© Lee Lynch 2003

**Founded in 1990, the Mautner Project is the only national organization dedicated to lesbians with cancer, their partners and caregivers.*

The Mautner Project

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In memory of a very special woman: my mother
by Marilda K. (Mel) White

It was Sunday morning, early. 6:00. I woke up and checked on Mom. She was sleeping, but she did not respond to me.

I sat with her awhile, and I told her it was all right for her to go. She left this world almost immediately. It was something we had discussed before, but saying it out loud at that moment was one of the hardest things I've ever had to do.

Her passing was the inevitable end to her battle with pancreatic cancer, but knowing it was coming did not make it any easier. I have lost my mother and my best friend, and this world has lost one of its brightest lights.

I don't know that my mother ever really knew how incredibly special she was, but maybe that was to be expected — she was always the type of woman who steered attention away from herself and onto others. Perhaps that was what endeared her to so many people...or maybe they were just drawn to her sunny smile, or her optimistic attitude, or her cheerful spirit. At any rate, my mother has always been the kind of person other people like to be around.

She did not necessarily have an easy life, but she made it a good one. She knew her share of heartache and pain, and yet she was the one who first and always taught me to look on the bright side. I'm told that times were lean when I was small, but I never knew it at the time. I just remember the good times we had — all of my fondest childhood memories are centered around my mother.

Life got harder for Mom as we all grew older. She accepted me and my lesbianism, even though she never really understood it and even though it ultimately meant no grandchildren for her. She dealt with the illness and eventual total disability of her younger daughter, and she cared for her own elderly mother when my grandfather died. She nursed my father through several heart attacks, back surgeries and his final days with congestive heart failure. She suffered her own heart attack and angioplasty, and a thyroid surgery that robbed her of a beautiful singing voice. And she battled — and beat — breast cancer twice.

The pancreatic cancer may have won out in the end, but Mom staved it off for a good long while. A week after my father died she learned of the cancer, and the doctors told her she probably had about six months left. That was almost three years ago.

She met this latest challenge with the same dignity and optimism with which she has met any other challenge. The diagnosis was devastating when we heard it, but Mom kept her sense of humor and her spirit of adventure, and we got on with the business of living in the

here and now — not dreading the future — and making the most of whatever time she had left. Even on the day before she died, though she was so weak she could hardly speak, she managed a joke and a smile.

Through good times and bad in her life, right up to the end, Mom always maintained her sense of wonder and enjoyment of life. And by her example, she taught me to dream and to learn, to enjoy and appreciate, and to not be afraid to try new things. I will always be grateful to her for that.

And I will always be grateful that Mom and I got some extra time together over the past couple of years, during which time we laughed a lot and cried a lot and got to know each other even better. My mother was such an important and integral part of my life, and through this last extended experience with her — on her own turf, in her home in Tehachapi, California — I've received the additional blessing of seeing for myself how she touched the lives of so many other people as well.

My mother was a genuinely good person, an incredibly special woman, whether she ever knew it or not. Right now I am happy for the long and full life she made for herself, and I am filled with sadness at losing her — I only hope I can honor her life by living up to her legacy. ☺

*For everything there is a season,
and a time for every manner under heaven:
a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
a time to cast away stones,
and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
a time to rend, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.*

Ecclesiastes 3: 1-9, Revised Standard Version

On sacred ground

by and (c) Joy Parks



Reading Beaver

Ok, I apologize for the title. But I simply couldn't resist. The beaver (as in *Castor canadensis*) is a national symbol of Canada, right up there in prominence with the Maple Leaf and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (better known as the Mounties). July 1st will mark my 40th Canada Day (sort of like Independence Day, but much quieter). And as an American who has lived in Canada most of her life, sometimes I forget that it really is different here. Quieter. Gentler. More tolerant of diversity. The national health program means we can afford to get sick. There's real gun control, firmly entrenched government policies that protect gay rights and socially responsible democratic rule thanks to the prevailing Liberal Party, which drew a line in the sand over the Iraq war and has openly demonstrated disdain for the current American administration. That certainly makes up for the cold winters, undervalued dollar and being able to get only a few flavors of Ben & Jerry's. Frankly, Canada isn't such a bad place to be if you're gay or lesbian and it's home to some wonderfully lesbian writers, like Karen X. Tulchinsky, Ivan Coyote, Helen Humphries and Jane Rule. Which is a good reason to take a look at some new books by lesbian writers that are worthy of attention on both sides of the 49th parallel.

Nicole Brossard is one of the most influential French-Canadian writers in Canada. And one of the few who is also known to many English-speaking readers. Her writing is highly experimental, linguistically subversive, inherently sexual and openly lesbian — even when she's not writing about lesbian subjects. She is the author of more than 20 books of poetry, fiction and essays and is considered a visionary in feminism and post-modernism. The recent publication of *The Blue Books* (so named because the books were originally issued in plain blue covers) is a collection of her three best known works, *A Book*, *Turn of a Pang* and *French Kiss*. And it's a perfect introduction to her writings.

Describing Brossard's work, at least the meticulous English translations of her original writings in French, isn't easy. Reminiscent of the wonderfully chaotic non-linear prose of feminist theorist Mary

Daly and the exploratory post-coming out poems of Adrienne Rich, Brossard writes a great deal about the relationship between women, sexuality and language, and the need to break open old forms to describe those things which are not permitted description. There's an eroticism to even her most intellectual pieces, a sexual energy that permeates every line. Nicole Brossard is not for everyone and her work isn't a particularly easy read. But there is something so powerful in her creativity with language, her openness and her underlying ideas on the politics of language that make *The Blue Books* worth the effort. (*The Blue Books*, by Nicole Brossard, Coach House Press, \$19.95/\$24.95 Canadian)

Ironically, the most visible and revolutionary publisher of lesbian books in Canada is not a specifically lesbian or gay publishing house. As part of their extremely varied list of titles, Arsenal Pulp Press in Vancouver is making great strides in ensuring that the work of Canadian lesbian writers gets to the right readers. Arsenal is probably best known for its best-selling *Hot and Bothered* series, edited by Karen X. Tulchinsky and its Lambda-nominated anthology, *Brazen Femme*. The press continues to bravely stake new ground in the genre of lesbian erotica with its recent *Quixotic Erotic* by Tamai Kobayashi.

Again, no standard linear prose here, Kobayashi skillfully writes in a melodic, poetic style that is extremely powerful and manages to convey the essences of a variety of sexual encounters, rather than just describe the act. There's a great deal of emphasis placed on plot and setting and characterization, which infuses the writing with much intimacy. *Quixotic Erotic* depicts sexuality in a unique voice and is a valuable contribution of lesbian erotic writing. (*Quixotic Erotic*, by Tamai Kobayashi, Arsenal Pulp Press \$15.95/\$19.95 Canadian)

Sacred Classic: *Desert of the Heart* by Jane Rule

Jane Rule didn't start out as a Canadian, but the New Jersey native has made her home on Canada's west coast for nearly half a century. And *Desert of the Heart* (which Donna Deitch lovingly crafted into feature film *Desert Hearts*) is one of the most poignant lesbian love stories ever written. Set against the arid landscape of the Nevada desert and the garish lights of Reno, Evelyn falls in love with the beautiful, complicated and much younger Ann while waiting out her divorce. Rule knows that the most vividly erotic scenes are the ones in the reader's mind, and her understated, finely crafted prose and sensitivity to the awakening experiences of a woman coming out in mid life is impossible to resist. Also fascinating is how Rule bravely raises the issue of maternal feelings within an intergenerational lesbian re-

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Savvy Sappho's Solutions for Successful Living

by and © Stacy Chandler

Dear Savvy Sappho, I've been single all my life, but now I'm taking the plunge into coupledness. Any advice? — Soon to be "Ours"

Dear Soon, Develop three devine qualities: 1. Share every-thing; 2. Think about what your other would do first; and 3. Love unconditionally. — SS

Dear Savvy Sappho, My lover just added a piranha to my Angel fish aquarium. Should I worry? — Jumpy

Dear Jumpy, Remove the new fish and put it into a separate tank. Your lover may have just made an uninformed (and bad) purchase. To be sure, you'd better ask her point blank what her intentions were. — SS



Astrology

by and © Stacy Chandler

CANCER
June 22 — July 22

*Moody moon child of the night,
Life phases change as well as plights.
Bid Fare-Thee-Well and a firm Good Night
To imagined fears and unknown blights.**

*BE WARNED — THE VIEWS EXPRESSED ABOVE DO NOT
NECESSARILY REFLECT THE AURA OF THE COSMOS!

Call for works
Writers, photographers, poets, artists, cartoonists — all works are welcome as submissions for the upcoming *LesbianPride Readers*. The only criteria is that the works be positive, upbeat, or inspirational, focusing on the brighter side of being a lesbian.

You must submit original works, but previously published works are acceptable. Fiction should be 5,000 words or less; essays 1000 words or less (shorter is always better!). Poems should be limited to 40 lines or less. Drawings, photos and cartoons should reproduce well in black and white (color is not in the plans at this time).

Also welcome are quotes, thoughts, paragraphs — any form of writing as long as you are the creator and own the rights to your work.

One-time rights are requested by Makaw Press (the publisher of this newsletter and the upcoming *Readers*); all rights revert back to you upon publication. Compensation will be in the form of complimentary copies of the *Reader* in which your work appears.

Don't send originals — send a copy; **your work will not be returned to you unless you have included a self-addressed stamped envelope**. Work may be submitted by mail or email: Makaw, PO Box 130, Tehachapi, CA 93561 or Morningland@msn.com.

On Sacred Ground — continued from page 13

tionship, a subject few writers even now would have the courage to tackle. *Desert of the Heart* was an open declaration of lesbian experience when it was first published in 1964, and is now on the required reading list of many women's writing courses at Canadian universities. The story is unforgettable and the writing is breathtakingly beautiful, making *Desert of the Heart* most certainly a sacred classic.

LesbianPride Monthly
Mel White/MAKAW Press, owner/publisher

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