



# Spinsterhaven

Volume VII, No. 2

Northwest Arkansas's haven for over 55 and disabled women.

Fall, 1996

## CALENDAR

**Friday, November 15 Video Night**  
 7:00 *Coming Out is a Many Splendored Thing*  
 and *Susan Westenhofer Comedy Special*

**Saturday, December 7 Annual Dance**  
 See flyer inside.

**Friday, January 24 Video Night**  
 7:00 *I've Heard The Mermaids Singing*  
 9:00 *When Night is Falling*

**Board Meetings** are held once a month. All members are welcome to attend. For time and location call 443-3184.

We are not scheduling a Work Day this time. If you have the time to donate, call Sustana, 677-2911 to see what needs to be done. Spinsterhaven does not own any carpentry tools or equipment, so if you do own tools it would be appreciated if you volunteer for some minor carpentry-type job around the place. You could even get a couple of friends to help you. We do have hand gardening tools and a small electric chainsaw.

## OUR APOLOGIES

Our apologies to Lesbian Natural Resources for our mistake in printing their name last issue. It was Lesbian Natural Resources who granted us \$5,000 to build a road to the first dwelling site on the land. As it turns out, we have changed the layout so that the same amount of road will reach the first two dwellings.

Lesbian Natural Resources is an international organization that helps lesbians all over the world.

## FROM THE LAND

By Sustana



I can't believe I've been living here a year now. The time has just slipped by. All the seasons are so beautiful that I wonder where they went when the next one starts. The road is to be started next Monday. By the time you read this it should be completed. We changed the layout so that the same amount of road reaches the first two dwelling sites instead of just one. I will be moving my trailer onto Site #1 as soon as they finish the road. Needless to say, I am very excited about that, and about finally being able to have a neighbor. She will live in the Gatehouse where I have been this past year.

I have seen two new wild animals since I wrote last. A fox walked around the house while I was sitting on my front steps. We made eye contact and then she turned around and tiptoed through the wet grass (like a cat in water) and went back the way she had come. Then one day when I went to the mail box, which is half a mile down the road, I saw a cougar. She saw me and ran into an old barn close by. I don't think we would have so many deer though, if a cougar spent much time on the land.

I made a very small garden totally by hand and it turned out better than I had expected since I'm new in the area and just learning the climates, soil, weather, etc. I have canned 25 pts. of cucumber pickles and 55 pts. of tomatoes. There wasn't enough of anything else to can, but I enjoyed some wonderful summer meals of peas, green beans, squash, peppers, okra and new potatoes.

Linda Matthews, our board treasurer, bush-hogged the whole camping area with her new tractor. Karin Wiggins, the board president, brought a friend, Kristy, out and they built two

very big fire circles for campers. They moved lots of large rocks. (We do have lots of rocks.) Cheryl and Lisa-Ann brought new compost barrels for the camping "Potty Teepee". Also, we now have wind-chimes in the trees at the camp ground. Barbara brought her pickup truck and we gathered up all the leftover building junk plus a huge refrigerator that doesn't work, and she hauled it 35 miles to the recycling center. Carol and Isis have helped with the garden this summer and also with measuring out the land where the road goes and where my trailer goes.

When you write it all down, a lot of work has been done. And we have also completed what was probably the hardest job of all: we have finally written a lease agreement that pleases everyone. Very special thanks to the four women on that committee who put in so many extra hours: Marilyn Yoder, Guthrie, Cheryl and Lisa-Ann.



### SPINSTERHAVEN AND THE WOMEN'S MEMORIAL GROUP

A meadow fragrant with honeysuckle, jasmine and bumblebees, a carpet of wildflowers covers much of the ground. Birds sing a summer song, deer and small wild life munch on bushes and grasses, tiny flat metal circles mark certain areas. The scene changes as seasons progress, but there always seems to be a sense of spiritual peace as you pause here. Where is this place?

As I did research for my forthcoming book called *The Compassionate Way of Experiencing Death*, I began to think a lot about death. This article is my vision of a good happening. I am using what I decided were my wishes as an example to show one possible way.

Whether I die at home or in the hospital, I would like to be prepared for burial by a group of women friends. This entails washing, and dressing or wrapping in a winding sheet. I would like a viewing at my home. Then I would like to be transported by van, station wagon or pickup truck to a women's cemetery. Hopefully a cemetery like back in the first paragraph.

What would it take for this to happen?

**I. Education:** a) Women must educate themselves about their own wishes surrounding death. b) We must learn what is possible in our present society. Don't assume that if it is not being done there is a law against it. c) We must know how to deal with the authorities. d) We must know how to perform the necessary duties.

**II. Preparation:** a) There has to be a group of women willing to act as a burial society. We have to face our fears and return to older ways of caring for the dead. Several women have expressed an interest in this. b) There must be an established system already in place at the time of death: a phone number to call when one dies. This person will take responsibility for accepting the body (if in a hospital) or calling the person designated. The contact person calls all members of the burial society and together they make all preparations. c) Each woman must make out a living will. This is a document that states her wishes. In the Living Will, you state whether you want to stay plugged in to machines or not, and who you want to take charge before and after death. Be sure to make several copies, one for your hospital, your attorney, your significant other, your family home, etc. d) There has to be a cemetery in place to be taken to. This is relatively easy as Spinsterhaven has agreed to set aside acreage for this purpose. The details are still being worked out. Hopefully it will be open to all women who express a desire to be buried there. e) There will be a fee to cover the expenses such as mowing, digging graves, etc. A book of remembrance will show where each woman is buried. It will also have a short life-story for each woman.

**III. Affirmations:** a) We will get out of the denial mode that the present system has put us in. b) We affirm that since we are all going to die, let's do it our way. c) We will start to act now, since none of us knows when time stops for us. For info call (501) 582-1881 or write to:

Silver Crone  
314 South Block  
Fayetteville, AR 72701

**NOW IS THE TIME !!**

With the building of the road, we are now able to open up new building sites for future residents. NOW IS THE TIME to let us know if you are interested in living here within the next year. Write to:

Spinsterhaven  
P.O. Box 718  
Fayetteville, AR 72702

**DISABILITY AWARENESS  
UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL**

On Nov. 17, 1995, I was in an auto accident that left me with a serious head injury and major trauma to my legs and hips. The previous month I had been hospitalized for two weeks with asthma. Asthma has been a presence in my life for 23 years and I'd been through major attacks and hospitalizations in the past. I had some awareness of "hidden disability," one that isn't obvious to others, but slows you down, or prevents you from doing an activity.

Suddenly, I was becoming intimately acquainted with another type of disability, one that was only too obvious. I limped while walking, had difficulty getting up from a sitting position, and stairs were an adventure in themselves. I have tried to be a woman who is considerate, conscious and concerned about accessibility for all people. But it took my "fall of '95" for disability awareness to become up close and personal.

Life is quite different for me now. The accident and illness forced me to be still, quiet, and introspective. This was in contrast to my former lifestyle of going 90 miles an hour, in four directions, all at once. I like the new me, she laughs more, and has simplified her life. She rejoices in small accomplishments, like being able to walk well enough to go empty the trash. I boasted of that feat for days and my partner, family and friends patiently told me how great I was.

Gardening this spring and summer has required creativity, innovation and remembering some of the old skills I developed twenty-odd years ago

when I was a back-to-the-lander. Intensive, raised bed gardens are my choice since bending, stooping and kneeling are not activities I can participate in. With the help of my partner and my daughter and her partner, we began transforming our regular garden into a raised bed garden that is accessible. Over the winter months, Jason, my son outlaw, dug the entire plot up by hand, with a pick. Jessie, my daughter, sat on an upside down milk crate and sorted rocks for weeks. For those of you not familiar with Ozark soil, rocks are one of our greatest natural resources.

We then built our first raised bed with concrete blocks and dumped the two-year-old compost barrel into it. The soil was mixed with the compost and we then added the decomposed section of our compost pile and mixed that in. I planted zinnias since I didn't want to grow vegetables in composted human waste the first year. Over the summer months the flowers provided color and beauty to our lives and the compost and soil was cooking.

It's now the end of August and I'm getting ready to plant broccoli in the raised bed. Jessie is expecting her first baby any day now, so she isn't gardening much these days. Jason is working 60 hours a week for a contractor and he hasn't much time for gardening these days either. But as my health has improved I've been able to undertake more in the garden.

I'm really excited about building a garden that is accessible to me and others. I'm also beginning to rejoice in the different direction my life has taken. Disability awareness, up close and personal, is turning out to be a wonderful opportunity for growth and creativity, both for me and others.

*Northwind*

**CROSSES  
FLEA MARKET**

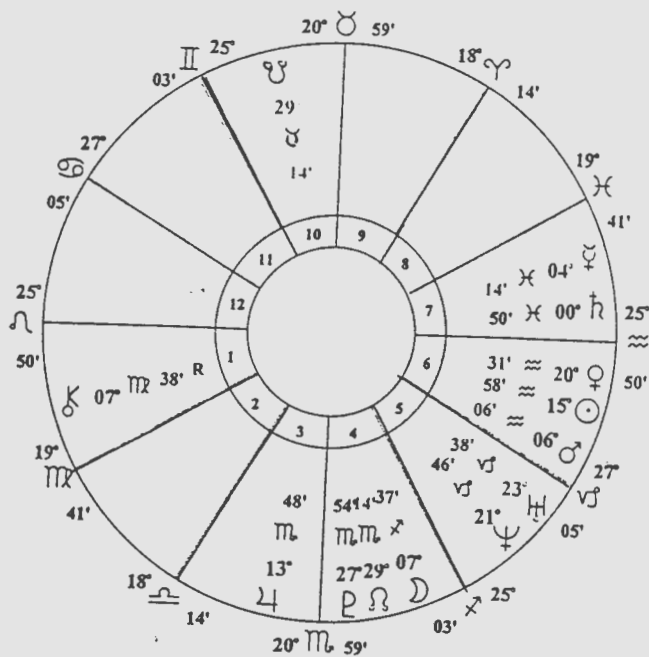
Hwy. 16 East at Crosses, Arkansas

Open Fri, Sat, Sun, Noon to 6:00

Antiques, Art, Quilts, Tools, Toys, Books, Camping, etc

*The Best Junk in Arkansas*





## HOW THEY DID IT

I recently had the chance to read the minutes from all of SpH's board meetings which started in 1988. It may seem like eight years is a long time to put something like this together, but in truth there are lots of things that must be done which are invisible to anyone who is not working on the board.

There have only been four presidents, the first resigned after one year and the last one was elected only a few months ago. The president invariably does more work than anyone else. This means that Nancy Vaughn and Guthrie have done the major part of the work it took to get SpH to where it is today. There has been an incredible amount of work done in each term by an incredibly small number of women. Almost all of these women work for a living and their time with SpH is volunteer.

In the term of the first president, Mary Grace, they found the name, Spinsterhaven, determined what exactly it was to be, wrote the mission statement, the by-laws, the articles of incorporation, went through the legal process of becoming incorporated, and worked on membership and fundraising. This was probably some of the hardest work that has been done.

In the term of the second president, Nancy Vaughn, they began networking with other organizations, set up training sessions for board members, found a Logo, started a newsletter, put out the first brochure, started looking for land, found the money to pay for the land, worked out our standing with IRS and got our 501(c)3 rating, created a mailing list, and worked on membership and fundraising.

In the term of our third president, Guthrie, we found the land, bought the land, cleared the title, bought a trailer and put it on the land, remodeled it to make it into an office plus a living space, put in electricity, got set up with the county for water when that utility becomes available (1997), cleaned out the well, put in a pump and running water in the trailer which is now called the Gate-house, rented to the first resident and worked on membership and fundraising.

In the term of our fourth president, Karin Wiggins, we have found the money for building

For those who didn't approve of us having a chart done for Spinsterhaven, I want to say that most of us acknowledge that today's astrology is as warped as everything else the patriarchy has gotten its hands on. However, the fact that "it is such an ancient science/art and that it is based on principles of interconnectedness and interrelatedness are clues that it is one of the remnants of pre-patriarchal culture. Chief among the lost concepts is that all things in the universe influence one another"\* In other words, it's a two-way exchange.

This chart was done, free of charge, by Starscape Astrology Services, Denver, Colorado. A very general interpretation of this chart is that SpH has an introspective personality. It is a very private, personal and spiritual place. The only time it reaches out beyond its own boundaries is to offer "home" and "personal relationships." It will be gently and methodically active and productive. It has a strong artistic bent and is not afraid of hard work. It has an extremely strong accent on home for now and for the future. Self and mind are important. It looks like SpH will be a group of individuals as opposed to a single-minded group. There will be many projects which are spiritual and nurturing for women.

Any SpH member who knows more about reading astrological charts is welcome to send her interpretation to us and we will print it in the next newsletter.

\*Wording by Sonya Johnson in *Wildfire*.

Business Consulting  
Tax Planning and Preparation

Joanne Olszewski MBA, MSA, CPA

501- 643-3699

Peggy Konert, LCSW

Individual, Group  
and Family Therapy

501-582-2413

a road through the land so women can build their own dwellings (the road should be in by the time you read this), cleared the first site and helped Sustana get moved in, created a residency agreement and the policy and procedure that is involved in leasing the land out to women, and worked on membership and fundraising.

I'm sure each board member will tell me things I didn't even mention such as work with neighbors and lawyers, and some of the things I did mention took months and even years. For instance, when we found the land and tried to buy it, we discovered that the title hadn't been cleared. The seller had an ex-wife who had to be found so we could get her signature of release. We had to have a clear title or we couldn't get the money to pay for it.

In talking with the women who have served on the board, I discovered that most of them had thought SpH would be a "done deal" by now. But the biggest assumption was that hundreds of women would become enthusiastically involved and they would provide the energy and money needed to bring it all about. When you read the

board minutes you can feel the tension and stress. You can feel the energy being spent on trying to make that assumption a reality.

Because they expected this to happen, they assumed it was their fault (or someone's fault) when it didn't. One by one they experienced disappointment and burnout. Burnout is caused by unfulfilled expectations. It doesn't have anything to do with the actual amount of work done.

I sincerely hope that all the women who have worked on SpH understand that they have succeeded. It doesn't take hundreds of women to get a job done. They are proof of that. If all the energy and frustration spent on trying to get other women interested, had been put into the project itself, SpH would probably have a dozen communities going by now. But I think we are all satisfied with the one we have. By taking in one resident at a time and dealing with her needs, the board will methodically get SpH to that "point of completion" envisioned by everyone for the past eight years. A job very well done. *Sustana*

.....

**S P I N S T E R H A V E N   N E E D S   Y O U !**

Join Now!

Please consider making a monthly pledge.

Join Now!

Membership Fees: \$5.00 = low-income    \$10.00 = basic    \$25.00 = Contributor    \$50.00 = Sponsor

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to Spinsterhaven, Inc. P.O. Box 718, Fayetteville, AR 72702

P.O. Box 718  
Fayetteville, AR 72702



*Herland Sister Resources, Inc -  
2312 N.W. 39th  
Oklahoma City, OK 73112*

73112/87

