

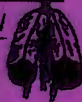


# LesbianPride Monthly

*Good news, positive reminders  
and inspirational messages*

VOLUMN VIII, ISSUE 9, September 2003

© 2003 MAKAW



## ***Equality for Transgendered Citizens!***

California Governor Gray Davis may be under fire for many things lately, but last month he presented the gift of freedom to thousands of his fellow Californians. In signing AB196, which clarifies the state's Fair Employment and Housing Act by including gender-identity and expression, Governor Davis brings California into a leadership position of a growing human rights struggle. California now becomes the most populous jurisdiction to enact equal rights for transgendered citizens.

The National Transgender Advocacy Coalition (NTAC), who endorsed the bill in this session and in its previous attempts, was "overjoyed" with Gov. Davis' signature. The bill was introduced by Assemblymember Mark Leno (D-San Francisco), sponsored by Equality California (EqCA), and formally supported by more than 50 other local, state and national groups.

Many in the transgender community were pleasantly surprised with news of the Gov. Davis' signature. This was the third attempt for this legislation, and the embattled governor has recently had plenty of partisan salvos to fend off. While the prospects for enactment seemed less optimistic given the political environment, the results were positive.

"I can't even begin to explain the joy and surprise I feel," said an ebullient Gwen Smith, founder of Remembering Our Dead, a website devoted to transgendered victims of murder. "I'm amazed — and pleased — that Gov. Davis chose to sign this bill, even in the midst of mounting attacks from the religious right and from the conservatives behind the recall attempt."

"Transgender people seek nothing more than the opportunity to support ourselves and our families and to be treated with dignity and respect," said Shannon Minter, Legal Director for the California-

*continued on page 15*

## ***Marriage is a Civil Right***

In light of recent statements by elected officials and religious leaders, Soulforce Inc. issues the following policy statement on civil marriage:

Since the day the Supreme Court released its decision on the Lawrence v. Texas sodomy case that decriminalized private sexual activity between consenting adults, the debate has turned to civil marriage.

Soulforce, Inc. strongly supports the civil rights of all people, including but not limited to the right to choose whether or not to voluntarily enter into civil contracts with one another.

Civil marriage is a civil contract between two people, who promise to honor, respect, and care for one another until death. This contract affords over 1000 government benefits to those who enter into it. Some people have the ability to choose this form of contract, others do not, because the United States government sanctions discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people when issuing civil contracts that we call "marriage."

Additionally, when this commitment between two people takes on religious connotations, we also call it "marriage," however it then becomes a religious ritual. Soulforce also supports religious liberty, which guarantees people the right to choose their religion, and to choose a religion that honors their choices and decisions. We do, however, look forward to the day when no one will choose a religion that discriminates against people based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Soulforce also supports the separation of church and state, a Constitutional principle based on the balance between the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause. Statements by religious leaders or politicians that are intended to entangle church and state, to blur the distinction between civil and religious marriage, and to deny equal rights to anyone people based on the gender, sex, sexual orientation or gender identity are an insult and an injustice to America.

We strongly urge all elected officials and religious leaders to uphold the Constitution, honor the Supreme Court, support Freedom of Religion, by granting civil marriage to consenting adults regardless of sex, gender, gender identity or sexual orientation, and to work to guarantee the ideals of Equality, Justice and Freedom for All.

*Soulforce a national interfaith movement committed to ending spiritual violence perpetuated by religious policies and teachings against gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender people. We teach and apply the nonviolent principles of M.K. Gandhi and Martin Luther King to the liberation of gender and sexual minorities.*



## *When it's okay to let someone go*

*Marilda Mel White/Susan A. Jackson*

There is a scene in the movie *Longtime Companion* which left such an impression on me when I saw it some 20 years ago, that I still cry when I picture it in my mind. One man is dying of AIDS, and after a long and valiant struggle, his partner (his longtime companion) tells him that it is all right for him to go.

Such love I could hardly imagine then – loving someone enough to let them go in such a final way. At the time, all I could think of was wanting to live, wanting to fight, *not* wanting to go...and not wanting anyone else to go either.

I'm older now, and hopefully a little wiser. Or at least I've had more experience with the twists and turns life can offer, and I have a greater understanding that nothing is really as cut and dried as I once believed.

And I've learned that sometimes letting go is the exact right thing to do, and even more, letting someone else know that it's okay if they go is the greatest gift, even if it is the most difficult.

At the memorial service for my mother, who passed away in June, I had a friend read a poem that meant a lot to Mom and me, that speaks to this issue. The poem "May I Go?" was written by a woman named Susan A. Jackson; Pastor Jim Williams, the hospice chaplain who visited my mother regularly, uses it often in his work.

Pastor Jim gave a copy of the poem to Mom a couple of weeks before she died. Mom and I cried when we read it, but it was not just because of the sadness of knowing time was short. The poem also brought us a kind of peace.

I'd known Mom was ready to go – she'd told me so – and I was trying to be ready to let her go. The poem helped both of us by beautifully and succinctly summing up what we were thinking and feeling, but were unable to express.

It helped to reassure us that, as Mom's favorite Bible verse says, "for everything there is a season, a time for every purpose, under Heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). It reminded us that while it is good to want to live, it is also all right to be ready to go...and it is all right to let someone go.

Sometimes a stranger's words, like those in this poem – written from going through the same kind of experience we

were going through – can bring a kind of comfort that nothing else can. I don't know if the poem was written by or for a person with AIDS, or for a husband or wife, or by a mother to her child, or by any other human relation combination.

What I do know is that it was surely written by someone who loved someone else; the feelings it evokes are universal, as is love.

I want to share the poem with you now because even if it doesn't mean much to you today, perhaps it will some time in the future.

And when the situation comes up in your life, perhaps you too will find comfort in this poem, and you will know you are not alone.

### May I Go?

May I go now? Do you think the time is right?

May I say good-bye to pain filled days  
and endless lonely nights?

I've lived my life and done my best, an example tried to be.  
So can I take that step beyond and set my spirit free?

I didn't want to go at first, I fought with all my might,  
but something seems to draw me now  
to a warm and loving light.

I want to go, I really do – it's difficult to stay  
but I will try as best I can to live just one more day.

To give you time to care for me and share your loves and fears.  
I know you're sad...and afraid, because I see your tears.  
I'll not be far, I promise that, and hope you'll always know  
that my spirit will be close to you, wherever you may go.

Thank you so for loving me, you know I love you too.  
That's why it's hard to say good-bye and end this life with you.  
So hold me now, just one more time, and let me hear you say,  
because you care so much for me, you'll let me go today.

*Thank you, Susan A. Jackson,  
from my mother and me. – Mel*

# On the Amazon Trail

by and © Lee Lynch

## *Scruffy Little Dykes*

When my friend the Innkeeper told me she was going to an art gallery opening a few weeks ago, I asked if I could tag along. She paused for a long moment and a thousand reasons for her hesitation raced through my head. "If," I offered, in a very small voice, "you don't mind going with a scruffy little dyke."

Immediately, she said, "I've been living with a scruffy little dyke for 34 years."

We went on to plan the excursion. A few minutes later it hit me. I told her, "I just realized what you really said," and got off the phone quickly because I thought I was going to cry. I was feeling a huge wave of appreciation for the good femmes who stay 34 years with their scruffy little dykes (SLD).

And what is an SLD? It's a woman who is not tall, but not necessarily short, who's inclined to live in blue jeans, but has a good pair for dress up, or at least a clean pair. Some people might look a little puzzled about why my good pair deserves that description. She's likely to dress very simply, in t-shirts with short sleeves and maybe long sleeves if it's chilly. In my case I like to have a few denim or canvas shirts or work shirts, to protect me from the sun and because I think a collar looks spiffier on those occasions when I need a little spiffing up. Like art shows.

I know many lesbians no longer believe in femme and butch because they think this is role playing, but I have never played a role in my life; I simply know where I fall. Was it something in my baby formula? Was it because I adored my big brother? Is it in my genes? Or maybe it was because my mother taught me that comfort is one of the greater virtues. She, of course, talked the talk and did not walk the walk, but her daughter took her at her word and is a bra-phobic woman who dresses like a skateboarding teenage boy. AKA an SLD. And proud of it.

Yet I have to wonder why femmes put up with us. The Innkeeper with the SLD partner could hardly complain if she wanted

to. She tells the story of the guest who asked if she always wore t-shirts. The innkeeper said, "No, in the winter I wear sweatshirts." The difference is that she wears pretty yet interesting sweatshirts decorated with abstract designs or other arresting graphics and her partner generally goes for solids and handsome illustrations embellished with house paint or sawdust from her many handy-dyke projects. Sometimes they share. They both wear jeans most of the time. The Innkeeper disdains the time it takes to "do all that shit," like makeup and fancy girl clothes. But does any femme ever look like an SLD? No way! She looks well-put together. How do femmes do that?

Having recently been thrown over for the dominant society, I am painfully aware that some women do not put up with us. They want to change us or they give us a wide berth. Some lesbians are otherwise fine partners who were perhaps brought up in a way that makes living with an SLD a trial. Some women are bi and straddle both worlds with amazing dexterity including the one that comes equipped with SLDs. The women I most admire are the ones I call the good femmes, the women who love us partly because we are scruffy little dykes. They will straighten a collar with tenderness in their eyes, walk down the street alongside us with an unconscious protective defiance, and gladly avoid places where we might be made uncomfortable.

They seem to think, the good femmes, that we are beautiful despite a society that finds us repellent. Some of them enjoy nothing better than spending time with a gaggle of admiring SLDs. They are a special breed, these femmes, created to love and be loved by the special breed called scruffy little dykes.

The concept of the SLD has become a family joke now, but we've talked seriously about it too. The Innkeeper is careful to use the words self-proclaimed before she uses the SLD term. The best news is that this good femme doesn't see us as SLDs at all. Rather than describing us as little, or scruffy, she sees us as women who dress for comfort, practicality and for our situations, whether we are painting houses, dancing till dawn or cooking breakfast.

What she hasn't acknowledged knowing is, of course, that we dress for her. ☺

## ***Family Pride Coalition Commends ABA for Support of Gay Adoption Issues***

The Family Pride Coalition commends the American Bar Association (ABA) for its passage of a resolution in support of joint and second-parent adoptions. The voice vote took place last month during the annual convention in San Francisco.

The ABA was previously on the record in support of the rights of single gay men and lesbians to adopt children. The resolution passed this week indicates the ABA's support of "the establishment of legal parent-child relationships through joint adoptions, and second-parent adoptions by unmarried persons who are functioning as a child's parents, when such adoptions are in the best interests of the child."

The 410,000-member association is the nation's largest legal group. Approval of this resolution means that the organization can now lobby state legislatures to ensure that adoption laws permit both members of a same-sex couple to establish a legal relationship to their children. The resolution also applies to unmarried heterosexual couples.

"The American Bar Association has again taken an important step toward justice for all American families," said Aimee Gelnow, executive director of the Family Pride Coalition. "Too many children have been left vulnerable because their parents were denied the legal protections and responsibilities that come with adoption. The ABA, along with other professional organizations, has supported the idea that the best interests of children are served when they have a legally protected relationship with both of their parents."

The ABA resolution follows similar resolutions from three other respected professional organizations just last year, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Family Physicians and the American Psychoanalytic Association.

*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.*

## ***BEWARE! Read the Small Print***

*received by e-mail*

This is to all of you that signed up for the "do not call" law. This week I received a card in the mail that looked all right. It said "vote for your favorite cola — Pepsi or Coke — and receive a complementary 12 pack" It didn't look suspicious, but for some reason I kept looking at it.

THEN I FOUND IT!! At the bottom of the card here is a VERY small statement. It is SO small it is hard to read — but here is what it says: *By completing this form, you agree that sponsors and co-sponsors of this offer may telephone you, even if your number is found on a do not call registry or list*

This REALLY upset me and I just wanted all my friends to be aware of this way to get around the "do not call" law!! Just think how many people will send this in and their do not call registry will be NO GOOD !!

The company's name is MARKET SOLUTION. Please send this to all your friends that signed up for "do not call." I think this is just one of what we will get in the future — so READ EVERYTHING before you SIGN and TELL YOUR FRIENDS ABOUT IT!!!! ●



## On sacred ground

by and (c) Joy Parks



### It's purely academic

One common trait I've noticed in people like me who have spent considerably more years than was necessary in the halls and lecture rooms of academia is the sense that September, and not January, is really the beginning of the new year. It's been nearly two decades since I submitted my last major class paper and yet every August, I get charmed into buying something in an earth-toned tweed or succumb to the urge to stock up on pens and markers and pristine lined spiral-bound notebooks. So this year, to subvert my desire for a year's supple of mechanical pens or even worse, a Charlie's Angels lunch kit, let's look at lesbian books from some of the university presses.

There's nothing new about academic presses taking an interest in lesbianism. It's just that much of what they historically have published amounts to piles of "objective" studies that would keep the average healthy, happy dyke up nights. I suppose we should be grateful that some of the most respected university presses now ignore the fact that what many of their queer authors write is a far cry from what once passed for academically-sanctioned literature. Still, my distrust of authority makes me worry that once our writing become sanctioned by the mainstream (in as much as academia is mainstream), it won't belong to us anymore. But thankfully, most of the books covered in this column have the kind of integrity that puts those fears to rest.

You should be forewarned that Minnie Bruce Pratt is one of a handful of my very favorite poets. She has been since I first read her tiny *The Sound of One Fork* in 1981 and her latest collection, *The Dirt She Ate*, is a reminder as to why this continues to be so. *The Dirt She Ate* includes poems from her four previous volumes, along with several new, wonderfully open-structured pieces that aptly demonstrate how her work continues to grow finer, braver and more illuminating with every line she writes. Granted, I finally accept that poetry is an acquired taste and no longer the drum beat of radical lesbianism in the way it once was. But sometimes you need to read great poetry just to feel its beauty. This is the case with Pratt's writings. Her poems are highly biographical and intimate; they are as complex and demanding as the life she speaks from. Her conversational story-like style, her selection of simple, daily events as subject matter and her

intense, musical rhythms surprise and seduce, they build from simple description of fact into waves of powerful and unexpected emotional revelations that will strain your heart and stretch your mind. If you read only one book of poetry this year, *The Dirt She Ate* should be it.

The press release that accompanied *Love in Good Time*, a memoir by Claire Robson, stresses the uniqueness of this novel-like real-life coming story. But the truth is, there are elements to it that are so familiar and have been experienced by many woman of her generation as they moved from traditional daughter- and wifehood towards the lesbian community. And then somehow found the courage and freedom to really live their lives as they chose. And that's the beauty of this book. We know what she says is real and true. We read her and we believe her. Set in England, there are terms that may momentarily confuse American readers, but for the most part, there's a wonderful familiarity to the story, as well as laugh-out-loud humor and the warmth and pain and frustration that comes with really having choices. Readers will leave the book wishing they had a friend like Claire Robson. Then realize that they probably already do.

Also out from the university presses, *The Literature of Lesbianism*, edited by Terry Castle and published by the prestigious Columbia Press, unfortunately has more to do with the literature of how others have perceived lesbians than how they see themselves. To find out how this much anticipated (and huge!) work of lesbian scholarship stacks up against previously published less "official" studies of lesbian writing, see the October 2003 Sacred Ground next month.

*The Literature of Lesbianism, A Historical Anthology from Ariosto to Stonewall*, edited by Terry Castle, Columbia University Press, 704 pages, hardcover, \$45.00  
*The Dirt She Ate* by Minnie Bruce Pratt, University of Pittsburgh Press, \$12.95  
*Love in Good Time* by Claire Robson, Michigan State University Press, \$24.95

Sacred Classic: *The Group* by Mary McCarthy

*The Group* wasn't published by an academic press, but since this novel tells the story of eight Vassar graduates, it seemed like the perfect choice for this month's Sacred Classic. Thought to be semi-autobiographical (author Mary McCarthy was the wife of famed American literary critic Edmund Wilson), much of the book deals with men and marriage and childbearing, which may not interest readers accustomed to more consciously lesbian books. Still, *The Group* introduces one of the most intriguing (and desirable) lesbian characters to exist before Stonewall and deals with women's education, women's friendships and the damaging attitudes towards smart, independent women in America just before WWII in a way that rocked the academic world. The book was made into a movie with Candice Bergen as the female lead and while it probably won't seem so to lesbian readers now, McCarthy's ideas and attitudes towards mainstream heterosexuality were radical and shocking when *The Group* was first published in 1954. That alone makes it a milestone of American literature that one shouldn't miss. (*The Group* by Mary McCarthy — several New American Library paperback editions, price varies)

# Savvy Sappho's Solutions for Successful Living

by and © Stacy Chandler

Dear Savvy Sappho, I get very annoyed when told to wait on the phone. How can I get more patience? — Twitchy

*Dear Twitchy, Get a speaker phone, and have small projects stacked next to where you use it. A lot can be done while you're on hold — a friend of mine wrote a book while on hold. — SS*

Dear Savvy Sappho, My lover of six years has just told me she'd like to have a child. I love her but want to remain childless. What can we do? — Worried

*Dear Worried, Both of you should see a counselor and discuss this at great length. Children are not spur-of-the-moment projects — they last a lifetime! — SS*



**Astrology**

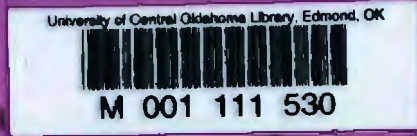
by and © Stacy Chandler

**VIRGO**

**August 23 — September 22**

*Chaste and pure are rare for sure  
Not only beauty has allure  
You're never quiet nor demure  
Don't see amour when Insecure —  
Caring friends shall reassure.\**

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



based National <sup>Of ty</sup> "By enacting AB 196 into law, Californians are sending a powerful message that no person can be denied employment or housing based on gender-related characteristics."

The amended California law describes discrimination based on 'sex' as including discrimination based on 'gender,' which includes a person's "identity, appearance or behavior whether or not that identity, appearance or behavior is different from that traditionally associated with the person's sex at birth." Thus, the law protects effeminate men and masculine-appearing women as well as the transgendered.

"The governor exhibited clarity under pressure," said Vanessa Edwards Foster, chair of NTAC. "We only wish more of our political leaders could show as much leadership. Gov. Davis demonstrated his concern for all of California's citizens — not simply those who think, look like, or contribute to the same causes as he does," Foster commented. "It's far too rare a trait in these politically polarized times."

NTAC applauds the fair-minded California legislators for joining Minnesota, Rhode Island and New Mexico in protecting transgender citizens from discrimination. NTAC believes that all nondiscrimination laws and bias crimes laws should include gender-identity and expression. Discrimination has no place in our nation.

Gwen Smith summed it up simply. "It is a big win for California's transgender community." ✓

*Founded in 1999, NTAC — the National Transgender Advocacy Coalition — is a 501(c)(4) civil rights organization working to establish and maintain the right of all transgendered, intersexed, and gender-variant people to live and work without fear of violence or discrimination.*

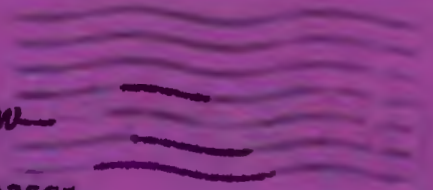
*Everyone has inside himself a piece of good news! The good news is that you really don't know how great you can be, how much you can love, what you can accomplish, and what your potential is!*  
—Anne Frank

**LesbianPride Monthly**  
Mel White/MAKAW Press, owner/publisher

© 2003 All Rights Reserved  
For permission to reprint  
or use any of the content, contact:  
Mel White, PO Box 130,  
Tehachapi, California 93561  
morningland@msn.com      www.morningland.net



Mal Whitfield/MARAW  
PO Box 130  
Tehachapi, CA 93561



*Address correction requested*

HERLAND (PE02-12)  
HERLAND  
2312 NW 39TH  
OKLAHOMA CITY OK 73112

73112+8701

