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*Good News
Positive Reminders
Inspirational Messages*

Makaw Press
May 2002

LesbianPride

Newsletter

Good news, positive reminders
and inspirational messages

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Third Annual COURAGE AWARDS

Honor Everyday Heroes

2002 Colin Higgins Award Winners

*Braved Harassment, Hostility in the Trenches
to Promote Tolerance, Queer Rights*

— US Newswire

A 15-year-old boy who stood up to the local school board in his rural Missouri town and a Miami grandmother who overcame religious and community backlash to support her gay son, are among this year's Colin Higgins Courage Award winners. The awards are given each year to honor everyday heroes who demonstrate courage in the face of discrimination, intolerance and bigotry based on sexual orientation.

"We may be tempted to believe that just because *Will & Grace* is a hit TV show and Rosie O'Donnell comes out of the closet, equality and acceptance for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people is a fait accompli," said Charles Fernandez, spokesperson for the Colin Higgins Foundation and a program officer of the Tides Foundation, "but the experiences of the 2002 Courage Award winners prove that there are still blood and tears in the trenches where ordinary individuals battle bigotry in their daily lives."

Fernandez added, "But most importantly, these heroes teach us that personal bravery shines a light on the struggle for LGBT rights, and that each of these lights is an important victory."

The winners of the third annual Colin Higgins Courage Awards are:

D. Patrick Bynum — at the age of 12, this 15-year-old from Ozark, Mo., went twice before his local school board to ask for protection from beatings and harassment by his classmates. When the school board failed to act, he bravely took his battle to the next level by filing a complaint with the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.

Eva Leivas-Andino — the mother of four children, including a gay son, and grandmother of two, Eva overcame her own fears and prejudices and those of her religious and ethnic community in Miami to become a full-time advocate of LBGT youth.

Vanessa Duran — As a 17-year-old queer African-American-Latina activist, Vanessa has lived a lifetime of being labeled and attacked for who she is. But this El Cerrito, Calif., youth has transformed her experience into art and activism, using film, video and photography as lenses through which to explore racism and homophobia.

Calvin Warren — taught by his church that his sexual orientation made him the "antithesis of black manhood," 21-year-old Calvin endured threats and regular harassment in his hometown of Newburgh, N.Y. to become an outspoken and dedicated gay rights activist who will graduate this May from Cornell University.

The Colin Higgins Courage Awards recognize ordinary but remarkable individuals who have endured overwhelming hostility and hate, yet have handled themselves with the utmost grace as they educate and enlighten others about the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender experience. Each winner receives \$10,000 as part of the prize.

Colin Higgins, acclaimed screenwriter, director and producer of films such as *Harold and Maude* and *Nine to Five*, established The Colin Higgins Foundation in 1986. In addition to the Courage Awards, the Foundation also funds film scholarships and has supported over 390 LGBTQ organizations, ranging from the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender outreach and AIDS prevention programs in such locations as Fayetteville, AK and Biloxi, MS.

The Colin Higgins Foundation is administered by the Tides Foundation, a larger parent foundation which partners with donors to increase and organize resources for progressive social change. In the past decade, the Tides Foundation has awarded more than \$100 million in grants to community-based organizations and progressive nonprofits. Δ

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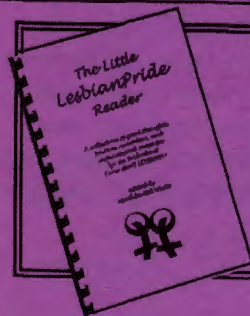


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I am committed to healthiness

The statistics on chemical dependency among lesbians and gay men are telling. As a member of an oppressed minority, I struggle to be emotionally healthy in spite of discrimination. Turning to chemicals for comfort is a constant temptation, since I find easy access to prescription and non-prescription drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, or simply coffee.

I have many challenges in my life, but I can deal with them in healthful ways. I don't have to become a statistic, and I can react to stress by becoming strong, not weak. The good feelings I find in chemical use are transient and may in time become debilitating. The sense of well-being I seek is based on healthful, authentic living. If keeping myself away from such chemicals for all of today seems too hard, I commit to the next minute. I take small steps, one at a time, one after another. When I need help, I ask for it — from friends and family, through professional treatment, in support groups.



Today I look at constructive ways of dealing with the difficult parts of my life. I remind myself of all the struggles I have successfully weathered. Having made it this far with grace, I am going much further. I center myself and summon the strength within me. By choosing to be more chemical-free, I am taking care of myself. I deserve the best, and that is what I'm giving myself.

— Eleanor Ruth Wagner
Lavender Reflections

Reminder:

Angry, nasty,
 mean-spirited feelings
 come when something
 "Not Good For You"
 is going on...
 Listen inward
 for what that something is!

— Robyn Posin
 Rememberings and Celebrations
 www.forthelittleonesinside.com

Savvy Sappho's Solutions for Successful Living

Dear Savvy Sappho – I want to increase my physical activity. My partner is a couch potato. How can I motivate her to come with me? – Signed, Road Runner

Dear RR – You can ask nicely, or beg, plead and even nag, but the only person you really need to motivate is yourself. – SS

Dear Savvy Sappho – My mate is a zealot about gay rights. She's an activist all the way. I'm much more quiet and subdued. How are we ever going to work this out?
Signed, Meek

Dear Meek – With discussions between the two of you, and plenty of give and take on both sides, I'm sure that anything can be worked out with negotiation and love. – SS

This month's Savvy Sapphic Suggestions for Successful Lesbian Living by Stacy Chandler. If you have a question, send it to SS % Makaw, PO Box 130, Tehachapi, CA 93561



A happy woman is one who has no cares at all; a cheerful woman is one who has cares but doesn't let them get her down.
– Beverly Sills

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Astrology



by Stacy Chandler

TAURUS

April 19 – May 20

*Plod on mighty bovine,
you'll make headway;
don't be afraid to gore
a few problems in your way.*

*The only difference
between a nudge and a butt:
force Xs intent =s play
(FORCE TIMES INTENT EQUALS PLAY).**

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

On the Amazon Trail

by Lee Lynch

Born Defiant

I've always considered myself to be mild-mannered, easy-going, a bit on the meek and wimpish side. Imagine my surprise to learn I've had my self-view-mirror adjusted cock-eyed, maybe even upside down. One day I woke up to find that I actually am the ferocious lion I thought had been lurking inside me all these years.

The cowardly lion has always been the literary character with whom I most closely identify and my life has been like his, one long quest for courage. But I may (or may not) be different from the cowardly lion: I was born gay.

I have an image of all these tiny newborn butches springing into the world upright, in a wide-legged triumphant stance, labryrises pointed at male physicians and shields held up to hide our nakedness. "Get me some goddamn swaddling clothes!" we bellow in what's taken for crying. Imagine what that first slap by a male hand does to us.

Early baby pictures of me reveal a deeply unhappy-looking infant. "Why," I hear myself wondering, "is my big brother out there where I want to be, free and independent, in long pants and a tie, while I'm stuck in this stupid carriage wearing a sissy pinafore?" By the time we come out we're raging mad. We become defiant baby dykes in denim and boots, with strides more butch than our brothers' ever were, our chins raised to challenge the world, our cologne the scent of young femmes and curious straight girls on our hands.

What I have said, but never recognized in myself before, is that coming out and staying out are not only a great joy, but also great acts of courage. Some gay people cannot find that courage at all and settle into uncomfortable places in the het world. You've seen the butchy-looking woman in Safeway with her three kids and taciturn hubby in tow. And the bold-eyed pretty woman who'll meet another woman's frankly appraising gaze in the Wal-Mart cosmetics department (where the nail-clippers are hidden).

Other lesbians have just enough courage to live life in a closet. They play bingo down at the church hall and get invited to their neighbors' barbeques, convinced their co-workers buy the

spinster second cousin story. Well into her sixties my late friend Norma, queer as the three dollar bill she bequeathed to me, at last let her hair grow out straight. She looked fantastic, but was afraid that without permed hair someone would guess she was gay.

When I hear the term lipstick lesbian I always think of closeted butches in scratchy wool skirt suits and lipstick working in the financial district, not femmes who paint their lips — why do they do that? — to make a woman like me weak in the knees.

Joan Nestle has written about the defiance implicit in making love with a woman, and somewhere inside I've felt that to be true, but I've never heard it explained in a way I truly could understand until I read Joy Parks' words: "Butches turn their backs on what they are expected to be. Femmes turn their backs on the world by loving and desiring that which is deviant..."

Tell me our defiance doesn't take courage, whether sealed in a safe house or out in the streets. Parks writes elsewhere, "And we can't ever forget what any of us mean to each other, that we are each other's safety and each other's soldiers..."

Soldiers survive by courage. I never gave myself credit for courage, because I've always just done what comes so naturally. Then I listened to Melissa Etheridge's song "My Beloved," which feels like our own 1812 overture. She makes "my" and "beloved" simultaneously words of love and words of defiance. When I hear her sing about bigots shouting "you're all going to hell," my fists clench and raise of their own accord.

This is also the album where she sings "Scarecrow," the song she wrote for gay martyr Mathew Shepherd. Listening to this and then to "My Beloved," I was blown away by Etheridge's courage — and recognized my own: "Someone's getting louder and that someone could be me."

There have been times when I wished I could live in a closet with a devoted woman who thought marches were for patriots and Melissa Etheridge just a pop singer. There have been times when I did hide in a job or chemical highs or illness. Times I didn't know I was hiding. Times when I roared out a book or column only to scare myself back into my lair.

But I never took off my dyke clothes, never stopped writing, never stopped holding a lover's hand in public. It takes its toll, but in the end I'm stronger for the acts of defiance I can muster. Strong enough to admit that I have courage. And that's the hardest part — now I have to live up to myself. ♀

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On sacred ground



by Joy Parks

Just Because

Last fall's books have long been reviewed, but most of the spring books previewed on the publishers' list haven't yet been released. It's the off season for lesbian publishing, which makes it a good time to catch up on random, sometimes misfit books that don't seem to fit into any particular category.

Gaslight by Caroline Guess can be best described as an artistic memoir. Guess writes honestly, and at times very painfully about the process of creation: how one's life feeds one's art and how one's most intimate experiences become milestones of creative development. *Gaslight* allows readers to follow Guess' growth as both a woman and a writer and to witness her encounters with many difficult issues — internal demons such as body image and anorexia, confusion over sexual yearnings towards women, artistic ambitions — as well as external conflicts like sexual exploitation, the nagging of compulsory heterosexuality and the trivialization of woman's experience.

At times, there is something adolescent about this book, readers may at times have the feeling that they are sneaking a peak at the diary of a young and sensitive woman just on the verge of discovering her sexuality and being fortified by her anger. But while occasionally self-indulgent, *Gaslight* is eloquently written, Guess' language is both poetic and potent, the magic and music of her words alone makes the book worthy of serious attention. It's one of those rare, at times disturbing books that can impart deep emotions within a serious political framework and still woo the reader with its rich and sensuous language. (*Gaslight*, Carol Guess, Odd Girl Press, \$15.95)

By the Sea Shore: A Jess Shore Mystery by Sandra A. Morris, is set in Provincetown, MA. Most true fans of the little gay town on the cape would agree that this is enough to make it a worthwhile read. The story begins with the protagonist flying into the Provincetown municipal airport, a real treat for readers who have braved Cape Air's 9-seater Cessnas from Boston and experienced the dunes from the air.

The story itself is far less impressive. The plot is the typical mystery fare: a dead restaurateur, riches and intrigue and a motley collection of detective Jess' ex-lovers who seem keep showing up all over the place, some with the thinnest of motives. The dialogue is at times stilted and too often tries to be philosophical. Still, I have to congratulate the author for making the lively gay mecca of Provincetown one of the characters in the book. (*By The Sea Shore: A Jess Shore Mystery*, Sandra A. Morris, Rising Tide Press, \$12.00)

While lesbian mysteries are about as rare as flies in summer, *Holy Hell* by Elizabeth Sim offers readers a rare combination of a good mystery plot with solid writing, whole characters and dialogue that doesn't sound like it's been wrenched out of a bad made-for-TV-movie. There's a wonderful irreverence to Sim's Lillian Byrd and a bizarre realism to the individuals she encounters. I like to think of *Holy Hell* as a non-mystery reader's mystery; it is a real novel in which someone happens to die in a mysterious way and the plot evolves around discovering who is at fault. But I'm sure actual mystery readers will also enjoy it as well. (*Holy Hell*, Elizabeth Sims, Alyson Publications, \$13.95)

Sacred Classic: *The Femme Mystique*, edited by Lesléa Newman

Trying to place *The Femme Mystique* into a particular genre is just as difficult as trying to nail down a definition of what femme means. And like femme power, the potency of this collection lies in its diversity. *The Femme Mystique* brings together essays, short fiction, think pieces, poetry and photographs that speak from that often undervalued or misunderstood perspective — that of the femme lesbian. Written by both femmes and the butches who love and appreciate them, the writings in *The Femme Mystique* are highly representative of femme experience. In mood and style, the pieces range from shy to outrageous, the femme writing collected here is colorful, it is opinionated, it is honest, flirty, smart and sometimes angry. It's the kind of writing that makes me proud to be femme. *The Femme Mystique* was an important collection when was first published in 1995 and remains one of the best and most complete collections of writings on the femme dynamic. (*The Femme Mystique*, edited by Lesléa Newman, Alyson Publications, \$11.95 original price)

Ask for these books at your
local feminist bookstore.



On the Back Porch

by Leslie McGirl

Elder Care on the Prairie

I'm sitting here at the kitchen table in a farm house on the edge of a corn field. It's the middle of the United States. The kitchen table is yellow Formica, circa 1963, with 4 matching chairs of worn vinyl and chrome. Not a one of them rests easy on all fours. Jesus Christ gazes heavenward from an old fashioned picture near the hallway, hands clasped and resting on a rock — he begs for mercy from the dusty garden in Gethsemane. Little china plates adorn the wall with violets, blue birds, and the bible verses — "thy rod and thy staff shall comfort me..." "a little child shall lead them..." "blessed are the poor..."

A standard issue florist shop vase on a night stand provides a vessel for a blueberry popsicle-colored floral arrangement of plastic tulips. A tatty pink cross of crocheted handy work dangles from a nail on the back of the bathroom door. Once inside the bathroom there is reading material — *Our Daily Bread* and *Reader's Digest*. A set of praying hands holds a bar of Ivory soap while three ceramic ducks fly in formation over the toilet towards the tub.

Now I'm making breakfast and Metamucil. The Metamucil is orange flavored with a bendy straw placed appropriately so that the pursed lips of my little old lady can slurp it. She suffers from Parkinson's disease, old age, fear, and a few secrets. I can see the back of her little delicate head as she sits in the grip of some horror story of abuse or sexual promiscuity coming from the morning talk show on Fox TV.

Over breakfast she natters on over the same topics: interracial marriages, teenage pregnancy, blacks, liberals, Jews, immigrants. She shakes her head and repeats the familiar phrases of her generation: "Didn't used to be this way when I was growing. Things has gotten mighty bad. Yes sir, it's a bad old world now."

It's been a particularly gruesome morning on the tube, and we're both feeling a bit rattled. A pot of coffee poured over empty stomachs earlier doesn't help. She continues on, negatively, and I join her. My negativity grows and I begin to recite my statistics on crime child abuse, and disgust at men in general.

She usually bristles when I hammer men, but this day she doesn't, and before I know it she has laid out the story of her rape at the hands of the neighbor boy when she was about nine years old. I get the impression that this is the first time she's told anyone. Between the coffee, Montel, and the opinionated female making breakfast (me?) it just kind of slipped out there.

And this happens to me from time to time, that some old dear with whiskers and blue hair sits there damning the current state of affairs, what a mess we're in, and then in the next breath reveals a veritable powder keg of personal horror stories from when they were young.

With my dad it was a story about a lynching (circa 1918). With my mom it was how she and the woman in her family used to have a joke about what they would like to do to a pedophile who lived up the street (circa 1922). They'd yell, "Abbie, you hold him while I sharpen the knife!" This was a joke between the lot of them.

It was supposed to be shocking, and it was. They were a crew of powdered, dainty, fresh smelling old sweetie pies in cotton dresses, flour sack aprons, sitting around snapping beans and making doilies. The image of any of them choke holding and castrating an old man was stupendous. It was disturbing, a little Jerry Springer, a little over the edge. I got the impression they were mad, and I got the impression that the old pedophile remained free to roam the back alleys of our small town.

For me it was the junior high basketball coach/math teacher, all-around "upstanding" citizen of our town, and pedophile who repeatedly molested my buddies, Mikey and Franky, and probably every guy on the basketball team (circa 1972).

I remember our sheer frustration with the adults around us. For some reason there was absolutely no way we could have busted this powerful adult and not suffered serious consequences. The impression was the adults would do nothing and then turn on us for exposing the embarrassing truth. So we lived with this man every day of our lives. I know an entire class of guys who knew what was going on. I watched this guy run the park board, sit on committees. I left town when I was 24 years old. He was still here. But when I got back about 12 years later, he was gone. 1991. Something had happened. I guess a few powder kegs had blown.

And I'm so glad. I'm so glad that there seems to be an end to the era of destructive silence ordained and sanctioned by the "It weren't that way when I was a kid" crowd, those promoters of a return to the values of our parents and grandparents. I'd have to stand up and ask them "what values?" You mean the values that promote the cover up and silence on issues as devastating as rape and child abuse? The values that support silence on issues as destructive as racism, sexism, and domestic violence? The values that teach shame, guilt, and self loathing in regards to our bodies, our sexuality? Oh, oh those values? Those old John Ashcroft *cover-up-the-artwork-and-don't-let-them-catch-you-peeking* family values? The moral majority values?

Yes indeed. Been there. Done that. Not going back. ♀

© Lester McGirl



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Gay Alliances Help Teens

According to a new study released recently by the Institute for Gay and Lesbian Strategic Studies (IGLSS), lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth are benefiting from the existence of Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs).

The IGLSS release, *Going Beyond Gay-Straight Alliances to Make Schools Safe for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Students*, is based on a study by principal investigators Drs. Pat Griffin and Mathew Ouellett. The pilot study is part of a larger research project looking at schools participating in the Massachusetts Safe Schools Program (MSSP).

The MSSP is now in its tenth year. The researchers expect the study to be used nationally by advocates, school personnel and others who seek to have formal safe schools programs implemented in states outside Massachusetts.

Although several states have voluntary school and community-based GSAs, Massachusetts was the first to create a Safe Schools Program and is the only state to include funding. Δ

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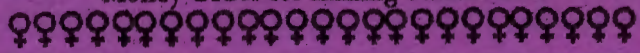
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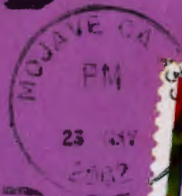




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