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# LPN

*Good News  
Positive Reminders  
Inspirational Messages*

*Makaw Press  
August 2002*

# LesbianPride

## Newsletter

*Good news, positive reminders  
and inspirational messages*

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### *Victory for local advocates in Massachusetts*

— *US Newswire*

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force joined with local Massachusetts activists last month to celebrate their joint success in defeating a right wing effort to pass an anti-gay constitutional amendment prohibiting same-sex marriage in the state.

"The defeat of this anti-gay, anti-family amendment shows how national organizations can effectively partner with local activists to stand up for full equality for all gay, lesbian bisexual and transgender people," said Lorri L. Jean, the Task Force executive director. "No one, whether an agent of the government or of the radical religious right, should be in the business of punishing millions of same-sex partners for how they choose to organize their own families. A government 'for the people, by the people, and of the people' ought to serve everyone, and that means respecting and valuing our families equally.

In July, a Constitutional Convention was held where a joint session of the Massachusetts House and Senate voted 137-53 to adjourn immediately without taking a vote on the controversial issue. The Constitutional Convention was called after right wing groups collected the 130,000 signatures needed to initiate the process of passing a constitutional amendment. To appear on the ballot in November 2004, the ballot question needed to be approved by 50 of the 200 elected representatives

and senators in the Massachusetts legislature before the two-year legislative session ended July 31, and again during the 2003-2004 session. If passed, the amendment would have made same-sex marriages unconstitutional in Massachusetts and accord marriage benefits only to unions between one man and one woman.

As an active member of MassEquality.org, a coalition of local, statewide and some national organizations formed to defeat the amendment, The Task Force was significantly involved from the outset of the campaign to defeat the question. In addition to providing ongoing support and technical assistance, the Task Force:

- Trained 30 state activists in critical campaign strategy and management. Many of these 30 later took on leadership roles in the campaign;
- By mobilizing its membership base in Massachusetts, generated thousands of letters to Massachusetts state legislators, urging them to vote against bringing the question to the voters;
- Provided MassEquality.org with a cash contribution of \$18,000, making it one of the largest single donations to the campaign.

"From Day one The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force has supported our effort to defeat this homophobic and misguided amendment," said Joshua Friedes, a board member of MassEquality.org and political director of EqualMarriage.org, one of the coalition's member organizations. "They gave us the skills to set up and run an effective campaign, they gave us funding to help the campaign get off the ground, and they provided us with ongoing support and advice throughout the campaign." Δ

*Founded in 1973, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force works to eliminate prejudice, violence and injustice against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people at the local, state and national level. As part of a broader social justice movement for freedom, justice and equality, NGLTF is creating a world that respects and celebrates the diversity of human expression and identity where all people may fully participate in society.*

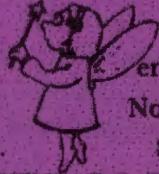


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is a worldwide network designed to end loneliness and isolation among midlife and older Lesbians.

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### **My dreams release new energy into the world**

*I have the right to dream. I won't let the difficulty of the struggle for my civil rights and acceptance of my sexual orientation make me settle for less than I deserve. When I feel hopeless, I remind myself that no one can take away my dreams. I nurture my capacity to envision the world I want for myself and others.*


*Today I imagine the person I long to be — perhaps in a different career, behaving differently in my relationships, doing what is really important to me. I see the "me" in my vision as no better than who I am right now, but as long as I am alive, I am changing and I stretch myself by reaching toward the person in my mind.*

*I fantasize about the world in which I want to live — where I can walk safely after dark, where people smile at me when I kiss my lover in public, where my job is secure and being out of work is accepted. Beautiful pictures fill my mind and heart. As I and those who dream with me blend out positive energy, a new reality is emerging. I am dreaming a new world into being.*



— Eleanor Ruth Wagner  
in *Lavender Reflections*

### **Reminders:**

Remember to speak softly,  
kindly and lovingly  to your self

Go only as fast  
as the slowest part of you  
feels safe to go!

— Robyn Posin  
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# Astrology



by and © Stacy Chandler

**LEO, July 23 — August 22**

***Come on out little cubby...  
Frollic and play all about;  
Hiding in your den  
won't help your psyche out.  
Warm yourself in the lime light —  
Time to strut your clout!\****

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

# Savvy Sappho's Solutions for Successful Living

Dear Savvy Sappho — While visiting my local zoo, I noticed a woman carefully harvesting the seeds from the exotic plants. She was not an employee, and she did not harm the plants. Is this stealing?

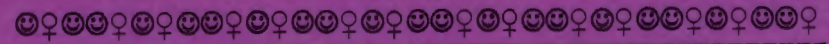
— Quizzical

Dear Quizzical — Yes, unfortunately this is stealing. Pilfering seeds from any public or private garden is theft. These actions are no different than snacking on unpurchased grapes at the super market. — SS

Dear Savvy Sappho — My girlfriend is always late for everything! How can I get her to be more punctual? — Stewing In My Juices

Dear Stewing — Maybe you're early! Slow yourself down by mentally placing any appointment with a late person a half an hour later. Or maybe an hour later, just to see how they like to be kept waiting... — SS

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



*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](http://www.forthelittleonesinside.com)  
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# On the Amazon Trail

by Lee Lynch

## The Reluctant Gardener

I thought I bought a house, but what I really got was a place to collapse after tending the two gardens that came with it. I wanted a no-muss, no-fuss, no-maintenance home where every week I could concentrate on getting my job out of the way and get back to writing. There would be no lawn to mow, no trees to gum up rain gutters with discarded leaves, no hordes of flowers to deadhead. When I bought in mid-winter, knowing nothing about gardens, I thought I was getting what I wanted. Guess again.

How could I know that the previous owner was an urban gardener *extraordinaire*? A woman who planted flowers that would bloom for most of the year, who knew how to get maximum growth out of soil laid atop plastic sheeting on a small plot of land. "Oh!" the realtor and my friends exclaimed, "an easy care garden!" Given that all I saw was a mess of dead stuff, I believed them.

Naturally, this is the driest summer we're had here on the coast in years. I search weather reports for a sign that rain is on the horizon, but usually it's only me on the horizon, hose in hand. I can't let the poor little roses die, can I? Or the galloping fuchsia, or the out-of-control patches of lavender and sage.

I bought a hose. I went back to the store and bought a sprinkler to attach to my hose. Then I went back to the store and got washers to fix the leaky connections. Every other night when I go out to water (I refuse to give in to the African daisies' demand for nightly watering) I'm ambushed. Either I don't accurately anticipate the arcs of water it throws, or this yellow grinning sprinkler-demon changes direction at sight of me. I'm going to start keeping towels out there so the neighbors will think this is how I prefer to shower — fully clothed, glasses dripping, Birks sloshing.

One of the attractions of the coast for me has always been the profusion of vegetation. I'd never seen anything so gloriously lush. Leaves the size of kayaks, bushes and vines that with no suppression would crowd out western civilization in

weeks. Now that I have to hack through them to take out the trash, I'm not quite as charmed.

A gardener must be ruthless here, stripping the fence of ivy before the ivy rots the fence and yanking out new fernlets that will steal sunlight from delicate columbine. I'm told I'll have to — quote — cut the shit out of — unquote — the boisterous rock rose that threatens to take over the garage door. Because the Martha Stewart of gardeners somehow got me to pay her for the privilege of taking on her work also trained the rhododendron into a sturdy tree, I'll have to saw off its extraneous limbs come fall. (It's probably growing Godzilla-sized roots under my foundation as I write this).

I'm one of those suckers who escorts spiders outside rather than kill them. If the violets get rowdy enough to impinge on the primroses I'll have to find it in my heart to weed some out or give them away or move them.

Weed? Do I dare to write the word? Weeds spring up literally overnight and grow an inch a day. It's a full-time job distinguishing them from planned plants, then rooting them out. When I can find their roots. I am not my grandmother, who devoted a good part of her retirement ridding her lawn of crab grass; even she could not have subdued this local bindweed. It's puny and spineless, coiling itself around anything it can find — other plants, stalks of grass, even itself — and races to the top, sending off trailers to smother innocent asters and sharp holly leaves, proclaiming itself victorious with its morning glory-like white bloom at the top of the flowering quince.

And that's just the front garden. In back are a butterfly bush that chokes me with a powdery substance, garlic plants lined up like a troop of aliens staring in my windows, strawberries so appealing to hungry bugs that I'm forced to share, poppies that won't bloom, and more weeds that do nothing but.

Caring friends have cleaned up, pruned, weeded, uncovered. Grateful as I am, I heard them teaching me as they did so because in the end, this is not a community garden, but darn it, *my* garden, and I'll have to fend for myself...and for all my new dependents: the hosta, the calla lilies, the tarragon, the violas, impatiens, snapdragons, geraniums, iris, tulips, daffodils, beach rose, pinks, verbena, rosemary and the unidentified surprises yet to arrive, all determined to get my hands into their soil and to root me right alongside them.

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## On sacred ground



by Joy Parks

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### *Dearly Defiant*

Standing up, speaking out, never giving in — defiance in fiction, as in real life, is a beautiful thing. But it seems to be a rare quality in lesbian literature these days. That's unfortunate for readers who appreciate strong characters who have the courage to resist the status quo and stand up for their beliefs. Thankfully, there's a healthy dose of defiance in the month's selection of books.

There's nothing like a lesbian mother with a prison record and a past to get a small town talking. And if she happens to fall in love with the shy widow/mother who gives her a break and a job, things can really get ugly. While *The Wild One* focuses mostly on the romantic relationship between the two women, there's a subtle sense of defiance that comes through in the characters, particularly in Quinn. Returning home to the small town where she grew up after spending time in prison for a crime she didn't commit has made her even more of a pariah than she was as a wild and rebellious teen. And her new love Rachel has to decide which is more important — her small town respectability or her love for Quinn and the acceptance of feelings she has had all her life. While it will be a treat for romance fans, particularly with its many passionate passages, there's something just a little too expected and tame about *The Wild One*. (*The Wild One*, by Lyn Denison, Bella Books, \$11.95)

Small town gossips also play an important role in *Bethlehem Road* when San Francisco lesbian Ruth accompanies her ex's mother Naomi back to her hometown of New Bethlehem, Indiana. There, she falls in love with very attractive and very closeted Dr. Belinda Boaz, a dangerous thing to do in the fundamentalist bible belt. In addition to the love story, Crowe does an excellent job of depicting the tension of a conservative small town where fear and ignorance still make it necessary to lesbians to hide from both the prying eyes outside and their own feelings. *Bethlehem Road* is an important book, one that will be welcomed by readers who live outside more urban and tolerant communities as well as readers who understand the connection between love, dignity and defiance. (*Bethlehem Road*, by Nancy Crowe, Odd Girls Press, \$12.95)

Without question, *Night Diving* by Michelene Esposito is one of the best, most quietly defiant novels to come out of the women's/lesbian alternative press in a long time. It's both a love story and the tale of a journey; Rose Salino leaves her lesbian lifestyle in San Francisco to return home to Long Island for her grandmother's funeral. There, Rose learns more about her mother's manic depressiveness and re-kindles a romance with her first love, Jessie, a woman whose life has been tattered by her father's sexual abuse. Issues involving Rose's own uncontrollable fears and anxieties also arise. *Night Diving* is an extremely introspective book, but the beauty of it lies in the exploration of these flawed women and the lives they achieve despite their problems. It's very freeing in the sense that no one gets "fixed," it's just a wonderfully human (and wonderfully female) story about dealing with whatever life hands you and in the words of the narrator, creating the life you want instead of the one you were "supposed to have." *Night Diving* is original, at times oddly humorous, honest and believable. And it's a welcome departure from the formula novels that we've come to accept as lesbian literature. (*Night Diving* by Michelene Esposito, Spinsters Ink Books, \$14.00)

### **Sacred Classic: *Torchlight to Valhalla* by Gale Wilhelm**

What a difference a decades makes. Gale Wilhelm's hopeful and moving *Torchlight to Valhalla* was originally published in 1938 (and re-released by Naiad Press in 1985), just ten years after Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*. Wilhelm has created a work of self-exploration that bears little resemblance to the tormented world of Hall's Stephen Gordon. Intent on developing herself as a writer, Morgen is caring for her ill father and docilely being courted by the affable Royal. But she knows that there is something not quite right. She immediately discovers the missing piece of the puzzle when she meets her neighbor's niece Toni and they quickly fall in love. As Morgen tells Toni, "I was waiting, I didn't know what I was waiting for. I didn't even know I was waiting, but when I saw you, I knew." What follows are some of the most beautiful and moving passages describing the intensity of lesbian emotion ever written. One can only guess the impact Wilhelm's defiant, courageous ending and her fine, luminous prose about a passionate life-changing love had on lesbians more than six decades ago. But what makes *Torchlight to Valhalla* a real classic is that this wonderfully written, timeless story still has a powerful effect on readers. (*Torchlight to Valhalla*, by Gale Wilhelm, Naiad Press, \$7.95, available at [naiadpress.com](http://naiadpress.com))

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# On the Back Porch

by Leslie McGill

## Beautiful Battlefields

Sunset rolls across the stage of the backyard and sprays a flaxen wash of light across the bean field and the soft face of a young woman sitting on the top step of the old veranda. She is silent and sad and we are just sitting. There is nothing to do but rock. There is nothing for this pain she is experiencing but time. She cannot drink, she cannot find a pill, she cannot find a way out of what's before her except for the letting of a few tears when it becomes overwhelming. Other than that there is nothing for her but to go right down the middle of this thing and see if, with the help of some old friends, she can get by. Rooster crows and Mr. Duck nibbles at her sandal buckle. A kitten crawls in her lap. She weeps.

She's young and she's inexperienced in the ways of the romantic world and the tribulations that lie inside it. She no more saw this coming than a baby bird saw the cat, or the cat saw the car or the car saw the train. She just got smashed into one day. She didn't recognize the signs. That takes time and experience. She's having her very first heart break and the back porch is the trauma unit.

A million metaphors come to mind to describe her devastation: train wrecks, falls, drownings, burns, illness, cancer, heart break, fever. There isn't a human ailment that doesn't apply here and we laugh a little as I point that out to her and then try and give her a few clues about what to expect. I'm not a doctor, but I know this place and I've been through the middle and out the backside many times. I'm not a victim or a fool or a bad person. Neither is my young friend. Dysfunctional, unhealthy, codependent? Oh, I don't know. Maybe, but I like to refer to ourselves as warriors. It's more positive, more hopeful. Warriors occasionally beat the odds and triumph.

It's been a long time since I had to see the face of devastation, look into the sad eyes of romantic despair. She's so young sitting there with her back against a post resting on the top step looking at her hands, sniffing back the congestion from her distressed sinuses. I feel a strong desire to help this pup of a kid, but what can I do?

Reaching back in my memory I try to recall what I used to do when I was in a break up. Actually I remember developing a list of do's and don'ts. I could give her those though she's not really in a thoughtful mood. Maybe I could make a list and she could read it later. First off I'd put at the top of the list *You Must Not See Her Any more*. That's essential, basic stuff, and one of the major stumbling

blocks in the beginning. It's also one of the reasons this little dummy is having such a tough old time tonight. She keeps going back in, calling, trying to see if they can work things out. And it's so over; the object of her affection has made this clear. I think to myself, "It took you days to get where you were and you blew it in one phone call." I guess she'll repeat that pattern several more times until the part of her more interested in living overrides the part of her more interested in loving. Once she gets in touch with that part, real healing can begin.

Second thing I'd tell her is to make sure to get plenty of rest to help avoid those wrenching crashes. She needs to build upon the centered, even-keel moments she has. There's a chemistry in the body for every mood and she should build upon the moments she's feeling okay. Every time this kid gets to feeling okay she reaches for the phone or drives by the ex's house. That's so self destructive, but that's what you do when you're young and don't know better.

And she doesn't need to cry every day. Yesterday it made her feel better so she thought she'd try and cry it all out today, but it backfired and just left her exhausted and raw. Sometimes crying can be a tricky business. You cry at first, you're amazed at the relief. Next time you cry, you're amazed at the pain.

The right music can help, too. She needs to find herself a good song to play over and over in her head as her own personal recovery anthem. I used to use Steve Earle's *Fearless Heart*. It goes: *I got me a fearless heart/Strong enough to get you through the scary parts/It's been broken many times before/A fearless heart just comes back for more...* Or Gloria Gaynor's *I Will Survive: I will survive/As long as I know how to love I'll stay alive...*

These are the kind of songs she ought to be playing in her head, *NOT* Roy Orbison and K.D. Lang singing *Crying*. Not Paul McCartney singing *Yesterday*. She shouldn't go anywhere near *Unchained Melody* or Samuel Barber's *Adagio For Strings*, Sinead O'Connor's *Nothing Compares To You*. She needs music to heal by. Music that bolsters her heart instead of pummels it. Warrior songs.

And then somehow, some way, she needs to find a way to laugh. She won't believe me when I tell her this. She'll want to wretch, but honestly, if she could actively seek out a funny video, or visit a comedy club, get herself around a little kitten that chases its tail, or a little puppy that falls over its paws, she could hasten her recovery tenfold. Laughter is the yoga of good mental health. It massages the psyche, clears out stuffy motor neuron pathways, makes the synapses fire white-hot. It's amazing the physical effect that laughter can have on a body.

The worst advice I'll give her is to get another girlfriend as soon as humanly possible. You know that stuff they tell you about ☞

how love on the rebound is bad and how you ought to wait until you're healed or figured out what went wrong? Well don't. Don't wait. My goodness if I had waited until I had healed from all my relationships I got myself in as a kid, I'd still be waiting. Sure, a little time alone, a period of self reflection is good, but years off? It was when I was engaged with others, trying to live with them in the form of romantic relationships that I learned some of the most valuable lessons about myself. Living with people makes for great challenges. Romance can be an opportunity to develop healthier behaviors. I got to know a lot of things about myself and other people. And boy oh boy did I learn how to break up and make a list of do's and don'ts for recovering from a broken heart.


But unfortunately with all my experience in the area of heart-break, I have to admit that every single time it happened it was still miserable. There is no magic pill, silver bullet, or correct way to hold the mouth. You still have to wait for the requisite passage of time before you feel good again — no matter what you do. The other stuff just helps a little.

And now she rises to leave and I take her in my arms in a big hug, and then hold her out at arms length and chide her, "So you got your heart broken. My goodness me, aren't you something? And think about it! You were very brave. No sitting on the sidelines for you. No! You were out there on the battlefield of love, engaged in this life, gettin' after it. You took the risks, had trials by fire, ascended great mountains, crossed the desserts, lost your way — for a little while, maybe. But that's okay. You'll make it. You will feel better again — one day. And one day, I hate to tell you this — you will love again."

At this she winces and we laugh there together as the sun shines down and tinges everything with gold upon our beautiful battlefield. ♀♀

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