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*Good News
Positive Reminders
Inspirational Messages*

*Makaw Press
January 2002*

LesbianPride Newsletter

Good news, positive reminders
and inspirational messages

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New Traditions

by Marilda Mel White

We human beings tend to rely on tried and true methods of doing things – it's called *TRADITION!* (I sometimes think of the word in capitol letters, with an exclamation point, because of the opening number in "Fiddler on the Roof").

We all have holiday *TRADITIONS!* that are important to us. For me, in recent years it has become tradition to load my dogs into the Jeep Thanksgiving morning and drive north of my Denver area home to Ft. Collins to spend the afternoon with friends. And I really enjoy the traditions we've created there, like the delicious turkey dinner Terry and Toni prepare, holiday treats for the dogs, and walking across the prairie, no matter what the weather.

Christmas traditions with my family in recent years have included driving around to see the lights and eating a big turkey dinner on Christmas Eve; on Christmas morning we liked to check the stockings, eat some Sara Lee pecan coffee cake, and then get down to the business of opening packages.

I like those traditions because they are, like all good *TRADITIONS!*, comforting – it's nice to know what to expect, and it's nice to know how to prepare and plan. But you know, all of the traditions I'm used to in my life – and the ones you're used to in yours – had to start somewhere, some time, and there's nothing wrong with you or me starting new traditions any old time.

One of my friends wanted to change her family tradition this last Thanksgiving. She and her husband both enjoy the football games, so she came up with the idea that they could have the big meal on Friday. That way no one would be busy in the kitchen when somebody might be running the ball back 97 yards. Made sense to me, but

TRADITION! dies hard for some folks. Her grown children couldn't quite grasp the concept of that big of a change.

Maybe the idea of making big changes like that takes time to get used to, but I like the idea of creating new traditions that make things easier for people. And recently, in the midst of a major overhaul of my own holiday traditions, I've also discovered that changes aren't really that hard to get used to when the conditions are right.

Since my father died and my sister is not well enough to join us, it's just Mom and me now as far as family is concerned, and we decided to change things in a big way this last year (knowing full well we might have an easier time of creating new holiday traditions than some because for one thing, there are only two of us to please, and for another, we both have always liked doing things in new and different ways).

Mom and I both believe wholeheartedly that home is where the heart is, and as long as our hearts are together, wherever we are is "home" for the day – so we decided to travel. We spent Thanksgiving in Monterey, California, and Christmas in Santa Barbara (also California). Mom's Thanksgiving meal consisted of an untraditional marinated artichoke and mine was a yummy hamburger (okay, that's traditionally my favorite meal any day of the year). We also avoided all the "normal" holiday eats on Christmas Day when Mom ate fish and chips and I chowed down on fried chicken.

It was a little odd at first, celebrating both holidays in motel rooms in new towns and warmer climates, away from everything familiar, but it was also, quite frankly, great fun and adventuresome. And it sure did take the pressure off of trying to compete with old memories, or trying to make things the way we always thought they "should" be when in reality things have changed. Now I can't wait to see what other new traditions we come up with.

It can be fun creating new traditions – doing or even just thinking about things in new and different ways. And creating new patterns or routines (or *TRADITIONS!*) doesn't have to be limited to holiday times either. It's just turned into a brand new year, and maybe now is a good time to think about adopting some brand new traditions...

Like donating to charities every month (instead of just at the end of the year);

Or volunteering for an agency or community service (without being ordered to by a judge);

Or setting a new standard of self-acceptance for yourself, by being true to who you are and loving yourself;

Or treating people – even family members, and even family members who don't accept you – with more respect.

When you think about it, there is no end to the new traditions we can come up with in this new year. ☺

My dad is a retired minister. Well, he's supposed to be retired. The bishop keeps asking him to come back and preach at one small country church or another, "just for a few months to straighten things out" or "until we can get another pastor." Dad says he enjoys it and thinks it keeps his mind sharp. He's right. He may be 80 with a slight hearing loss but he can still preach a sermon.

Now, Dad isn't a "hell-fire-pound-the-pulpit, threaten-everyone-with-hell kind of preacher. No, he uses the gentle approach. He speaks quietly but effectively, almost like a storyteller with an occasional joke so you have to pay attention.

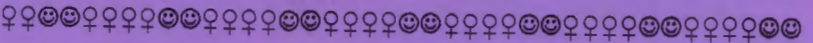
In my dad's 60 years in the pulpit and my 40 some years of hearing him preach, I've heard most of his sermons, some of them twice, and many a Bible story. I especially remember the story of Jesus having supper with the tax collector, allowing the prostitute to wash his feet and forgiving those that hung him on a cross to die. Not once do I remember a story of Jesus condemning others; rather, He spoke of God's love, understanding and acceptance. He didn't judge but assured us God loves us all as His children.

In this time of chaos, in this time of some proclaiming their way is the only way and all others are destined for hell, I stop and think back to my dad's sermons. I like his way best.

My dad taught me to accept all others and love them for who they are. He taught me that God loves me just the way I am. He taught me that it wasn't my job to judge others; God would take care of that. He taught me the Bible was a guide for living, not a book of rules for condemning.

As the new year begins, my dad once again is preaching at a small country church ("only until June when we can get a new minister assigned"). And as the new year begins, I'll try to remember the stories and sermons I've heard over the years.

As I make my New Year's resolutions, I think I'll make just one: for the next year, and hopefully the rest of my life, I'll try to be more like my dad. Δ



Everybody knows if you are too careful you are so occupied in being careful that you are sure to stumble over something. — Gertrude Stein

If you don't live the life you have, you won't love some other life, you won't live any life at all. — James Baldwin

I think back to my first awareness of my same-sex orientation. Coming out to myself, admitting my true sexual orientation, was the beginning of a lifelong process. I remember signs along the way, times when I may have tried to hide from myself. I also remember finally being willing to accept the truth of who I am.

So many emotions vying with each other — pain at being different, peace in finding an answer in my life, fear of the inevitable oppression, excitement in anticipating my natural loving, anger at the difficulty of the road before me, satisfaction in the sense of congruency within myself.

I knew my life wouldn't get any easier, but it wasn't easy up to that point either. I have survived many difficult moments since that first one, and there will be difficult moments ahead of me, but my path is clear.



I rejoice in accepting who I am. Some people never find themselves. I have accomplished much in my life. I am honest with myself. I pronounce myself good!

— Eleanor Ruth Wagner
Lavender Reflections

Reminder:

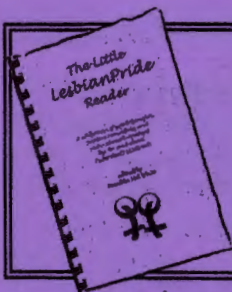
When others are interpreting, analyzing, advising or directing you — they are really only communicating what they believe would be appropriate for themselves were they in your situation.

Remember this if you choose to hear their voices...

Remember too that in the deep knowing places inside of you, you are the worlds' best and only authority on you!

Practice listening inwardly instead of outwardly.

— Robyn Posin
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Astrology



by **Stacy Chandler**

CAPRICORN **December 22-January 19**

AWESOME is the only way to try to describe you. Astounding wouldn't be too far off either. Actually, you're always able to avert disaster. You are the apple of your parent's eyes. Anywhere, anytime, you can have almost anything you desire.*

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Savvy Sappho's Solutions for Successful Living

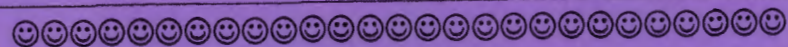
Dear Savvy Sappho — On a good day, we all want to save the world. In reality, what can one person do? — Signed, Forlorn

Dear Forlorn — *It's much easier than you think! Start by holding a door open for the person behind you. Smile more at everyone you see. Say Thank You and mean it. Give someone you know a hug, just for the hell of it. Give a cough drop or a tissue to someone who is suffering near you. If everyone was extra nice for just one day, we might actually experience heaven on earth.* — SS

Dear Savvy Sappho — Please help me! I'm macramé'ing an emergency ladder outta new tampons as we speak. I got started before Christmas and now I can't stop — can you break me from this crafting addiction? — Signed, Stella Stencil

Dear Stella — *Take a deep breath and put your arms down. Slowly back away from the glue gun. Shut off the telly and take a walk outside. Refuse to mentally replant every garden that you come across. It takes time, but you will heal. Stay out of all craft stores. Love things for what they are, not what they could be.* — SS
 (PS — you'll be happy to know that if your emergency escape ladder ever gets wet, you'll have a wonderful floatation device!)

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



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On the Amazon Trail

by Lee Lynch

Lez Lit

There were no truly out lesbian writers published during the mid-twentieth century. Then a slew of writers came along for an audience radicalized by the civil rights and feminist movements. To accommodate this outpouring of gay words, the lesbian presses were born.

Those were exciting times through the 1980s and early 1990s. I have shelves of books published in those years from Diana, Firebrand, Naiad, Daughters, New Victoria and so many others. The quality of the books was, as with any literary movement, uneven, and some of those hailed as classics were released by straight presses, not our own, but whether that reflected better publicity machines or reality only time will tell.

Today I received the last issue of *The Lesbian Review of Books*, the distinguished brainchild of teacher and reviewer Loralee MacPike. This is one more sign that the era of the first great lesbian literary flowering is endangered. So few of the old publishers are represented in this issue, yet lesbians haven't been silenced! Many of the books are from university presses — an increasing indication that we and our work are being taken seriously. Others are being published by gay male-founded presses like Alyson Publications which has always promoted lesbian authors.

Our presses old and new struggle to publish books and magazines that lesbians need to read. The owners devote their time, personal incomes and energy to giving us voice. Too many have fallen by the wayside, victims of a need to survive emotionally, physically or economically. Every time a women's bookstore closes we all suffer. Losing plucky *Feminist Bookstore News* was a terrible blow. Goodness knows how an important publication like *Lambda Book Report* manages to stay afloat, but I'm glad it does.

It's a struggle for anyone in the word professions to survive economically, but especially for gay people who have a smaller readership than heterosexuals simply because there are fewer of us. I think a lot about Isabel Miller who sold *Patience and Sarah* (at that time called *A Place For Us*) out of a shopping bag in the bars. That kind of chutzpah in the face of the locked doors of the publishing world helped create our alternative literary establishment. E-publishing on a personal web site may be the equivalent thirty years later. Where

there's a queer will, there's a queer way.

Yet I worry about where the economics of the publishing "industry" are taking us. So many of the books on our best seller lists are about sex, violence or both. Maybe it's a sign of the times, but I wonder if we'll read any lesbian-related erotica or sensationalistic genre fiction we can find or if we're writing for straight men. Current books take me back to the early 60s, when seductive covers on newspaper shop racks were all I could find about myself. The publishers were very up front then — low wage lesbians were not their target audience. The covers have been updated, the content has escalated in graphic detailing, but there they are, defining us by our sexuality again.

Call me an old-fashioned prude, but when I see anthology after anthology of so-called erotica, I fear receipts have become more important than creating a body of work that can sustain a marginal people. Do we really think we're out of danger and can afford, like the grasshopper in the fable, to spend our days fiddling? Once it took courage and imagination to write an erotic scene. I hate to see some of our most intimate moments transformed into loveless demonstrations that seem to serve little purpose beyond answering the age-old question, "But what do they do?" Economic realities do not favor minority publishing and perhaps income from such magazines and books will keep our presses alive so that they can publish work that will positively impact lesbian lives and leave a literary legacy to nurture future generations.

If that's the motive behind this avalanche of questionable fiction, perhaps it's a legitimate purpose. Perhaps this is another stage in becoming all we can be as a culture. There is certainly a place in every literature for sheer escapist fiction. That some of this is awkward and lacking craft is understandable; that some is hurried and barely edited is a terrible mistake. The problem comes when limited resources elbow more serious work off the few printed pages available. This discourages writers from growing and denies readers what we deserve. Is this phenomenon another manifestation of internalized homophobia? I fear that we are allowing heterosexist society to steal our feisty lavender souls again, this time through the marketplace.

Loralee MacPike will continue her work in some other form, I am sure. Newer Presses like Odd Girls and Haworth are keeping lesbian literature visible. As are web-savvy lesbians who create sites such as www.queerreads.com. When I turn the virtual pages of this monument to our literature I am filled with pride at all we've accomplished and humbled to be among our ranks. Despite the right wing, the fundamentalist terrorists and our slow-to-heal tendencies to self-destruct — with a book list like the one at [queerreads](http://queerreads.com), I know nothing can stop us now. ♀

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On sacred ground



by Joy Parks

The WOW Factor

In a recent interview to promote her forthcoming collection of short stories, *She Loves Me, She Loves Me Not* (Alyson Publications, Available April 2002), Lesléá Newman declared the heyday of women's publishing to be over. Reluctantly, I have to agree with her. Still, every now and then a book crosses my desk that makes me sit up and pay attention. Whether it's the characters, the plot or just the strength of the writer's/editor's convictions, these books have what I call the *WOW Factor*. And since there aren't that many of them, it's important that they get the attention they deserve.

Despite the fact that I tend to be critical of most collections of so called "lesbian erotica", I am a big fan of Karen X. Tulchinsky's best-selling *Hot and Bothered* series. The reason for the popularity of this series is obvious. In the introduction to *Hot and Bothered 3*, Tulchinsky shares with readers her tale of wanting to grow up and marry the princesses of the fairy tales she was told as a child and her surprise at finding out that she was supposed to be the princess. This charmingly innocent story sets the tone for her explanation as to why *Hot and Bothered* is not an erotica anthology, but a collection of fiction on lesbian desire. She explains that this desire is broad and encompasses intimacy between women in all its forms. It is Tulchinsky's understanding of this very important difference in how lesbians perceive and experience their sexuality that separates *Hot and Bothered 3* (and the two collections that preceded it) from the majority of the erotica being published. One gets the senses that it truly is written by lesbians, about lesbians, for lesbians. In *Hot and Bothered 3*, 72 writers offer short-short fictions (1,000 words or less) that explore, analyze and reveal many of the complications, fantasies, and pleasures of lesbian desire. The collection includes both works by well-known lesbian writers such as Sarah Schulman, Joan Nestle and Elana Dykewomon as well as many other lesser-known, but talented and highly original writers. My personal favorites include "This is a Promise" by Cathy McKim, "Holding Hands" by Jean Taylor and "The Tenth Commandment" by Terrie Akemi Hamazaki, but the entire collection is strong and even. *Hot and Bothered 3* offers up a treasure of writing on lesbian desire; it captures our loves, our lusts and our losses; it is

sensual, romantic in the best sense, and filled with believable characters and strong emotions. And I hope its popularity is a sign of the level of quality lesbian readers want. (*Hot and Bothered 3: Short Short Fiction on Lesbian Desire*, Edited by Karen X. Tulchinsky, Arsenal Pulp Press, \$15.95 US/\$18.95 in Canada)

I love a book that makes me laugh and Paula Martinac's *Chicken* is probably one of the funniest lesbian novels I've ever read. When ghostwriter Lynn Woods get dumped by her lover of 13 years, she finds herself dating not one, but two, much younger women. They eventually find out about each other and things get very uncomfortable for a while. But in the end, we leave the characters confident that things usually work out for the best...just not the way one might expect. What is so amusing about this book is its wonderful portrayal of (lesbian) reality and the nutty things we do to deal with loss. First published by Alyson in 1997, *Chicken* is a witty look at some of the common complications of lesbian lives. (*Chicken*, Paula Martinac, Bella Books, \$11.95)

Sacred Classic: *Stone Butch Blues*

Stone Butch Blues is a WOW! book in the strictest sense; it's the kind of book that changes lives and changes minds. In this thinly veiled autobiographical novel, Jess Goldberg grows up differently gendered in a harsh working class town, comes out as a butch lesbian in Buffalo, New York in the early, pre-feminist 60s and finds herself an outsider in the lesbian community in the 70s. *Stone Butch Blues* isn't an easy book, it's gritty and disturbing at times, Feinberg has spared no details in describing the harassment and humiliations endured by butch lesbians only decades ago. Equally moving is her candor on the netherworld existence of being transgendered in the lesbian community. Originally published by the now defunct Firebrand Books, I hope some visionary publisher realizes that *Stone Butch Blues* is a necessary book that must not disappear. (*Stone Butch Blues*, Leslie Feinberg, Firebrand Books, original price, \$13.95.)

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On the Back Porch

by Leslie McGirl

The February Ornament

There they are now, the little bedraggled lot of Christmas tree ornaments I cannot make myself pack away. I have them arranged in a tumultuous heap on the mantel. Some of them it's time to toss out. One is particularly bleak – the snowman – but there is something about a worn out Christmas tree ornament that gets to me. Opens me to a tender, melancholy, sweet, holiday emotion.

There are other emotions – like the cheery, childish buzz received from gazing at strands of colored lights, and dazzling, twinkling Christmas trees. There's the more spiritual, holy feeling inspired by lighted candles, majestic foil cards. But right now I'm just thinking about the tenderness I feel towards this one little disaster of a snowman fastened to a cloudy green glass ball, and encrusted with glue and faded glitter. Poor old ornament depicting a tired winter scene.

This decoration doesn't tell a story of Christmas and the first snows of winter, the glory of the seasons. No, this is the February ornament, the "when will it all be over?" scene – a worn out, melting little snowman whose red yarn scarf bled into the white of his cotton body from the application of an over abundance of Elmer's glue. Was the scarf attached with great, childish enthusiasm or just sloppy disregard? No matter. She's mine now. She's home. I picked her up last summer at a garage sale in July. I could not leave her there with her "10¢" label, runny magic marker eyes and oozy pink scarf standing next to a "Charlie Brown" Christmas tree.

She sits on the mantel now in the display of refugees – she and her buddies. That lot would be lost on the magnificent, brilliant tree. She sits there, her and her label – "10¢". Today I think we shall hold an award ceremony and present her with the Lifetime Achievement Award, maybe a dozen roses. See if we can't turn that dour expression into a cheery holiday smile.

I wish you could see her. She'd break your heart. Δ

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*I can think of no better place to have suspense
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— Mary Wings



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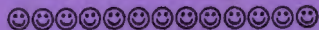
In the easy chair


Your "easy chair" may be a cushion on the back porch or a recliner in the living room, or it might be a blanket on the beach or a rocking chair by the fireplace. Whatever or wherever it is, it is the place you love to go to enjoy a good book! Below is this month's TOP 10 of GLBT books, thanks to our friends at www.InsightOutBooks.com:

1. *RAINBOW BOYS* by Alex Sanchez
2. *DAYS OF AWE* by Achy Obejas
3. *IN THE CITY OF SHY HUNTERS* by Tom Spanbauer
4. *BEHIND THE SCREEN: How Gays and Lesbians Shaped Hollywood* by William J. Mann
5. *PUCKER UP: A Hands-On Guide to Ecstatic Sex*
by Tristan Taormino
6. *METES AND BOUNDS* by Jay Quinn
7. *KISS THE GIRLS AND MAKE THEM SPY* by Mabel Maney
8. *BOY TOY* by Michael Craft
9. *THE TRUTH IS...My Life in Love and Music*
by Melissa Etheridge
10. *Triangle Classic Edition of THE CITY AND THE PILLAR*
by Gore Vidal

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Stacy Chandler

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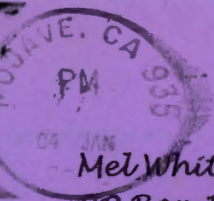
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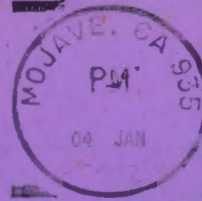
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