

DON'T EVER LET GO

Many thanks for your September issue. I read every copy of LC from cover to cover and I always intend to write and tell you how much I appreciate all your hard work in putting it out. Your magazine is stimulating to me and fulfills a real need; I don't want it to ever cease operations. I am amazed and thrilled to hear that your magazine reaches 6,000 people and that you anticipate increasing your following to 10,000. More power to you, and be assured of whatever dollar support I can give. I would also like to offer my moral support, but as I am still a closet lesbian, I can't offer you something I can't give; and I can't give anyone moral support because I ain't got any moral courage--and I can't give what I ain't got, can I? However, I keep telling myself that this in the year I'm "gonna get it all together," but I think I'm gonna have to take it all apart first. Meaning? I'm not sure. I'm confused. But I know that somehow, sometime, somewhere, I'm going to have to say who I am. I can feel it coming. It scares me shitless.

I'm reading books like crazy. I've gotten to the point where I can't (literally, can't!) read a book unless it is woman-oriented. I'm saturating myself with lesbian literature--I can't get enough of it. I thirst for it. I'm a 52-year-old desert that needs to be flooded, soaked, inundated, deluged with it. And like the burning bush that is "nevertheless not consumed" I will never be completely quenched.

I agree with Cheyenne, WY, in her comments about Ms. Magazine (Issue 5). Her description of the magazine's clientele as "Barbie-doll feminists" is apt, I'm sure, and yet we don't want to put down the Barbie-doll feminist, do we? The truth is that we can't all reach the same platform of awareness at the same time. And who can say that this year's Barbie-doll feminist won't be next year's red hot Dyke? My own experience with Women's Lib came by way of Ms. Magazine. I'll share it with you in the hopes that it may have some value in our great cause.

Four years ago, a young women's libber joined our staff at the office. She breezed in with her youth, her assertiveness, her way-out attire, her intelligence, her sensitivity, her courage, and her copy of the latest Ms. Magazine, and announced that "Women's Liberation was the great revolution of our time." I was amused, impressed, but not buying anything. (Looking back at the "me" of four years ago--is that all the time that has gone by?--I was also: a goody-goody, a self-sacrificing prude, a "little miss sunshine," a pain in the ass, a phoney; actually, I haven't changed all that much but now I recognize what I am. I guess that's what I mean about, "having to take it all apart"). Anyway, as I was saying, our office was suddenly inundated with women's liberation literature, talk, energy. No one could work closely with a human dynamo like Audry without being lit by the sparks she threw off. I have always been "one of the boys" disguised as one of the girls; I was a mini-macho in my thoughts though not in my actions, and not averse to knocking my own sex at every opportunity in my speech. I put down the whole women's movement with a curl of my lip and some comment about "dumb dames!" But Audry didn't let up, and I suddenly began to feel myself getting quite agitated by "the Good News for Modern Woman" that was coming my way via Ms. Magazine and the books Audry brought into the office for discussion.

How many would laugh to know that I was terrified to buy my first copy of Ms. Magazine? Imagine! The magazine that now caters to the "Barbie-doll feminist," and that to radical feminists (which I now like to think I am) is about as revolutionary as the local Sunday School paper! I was, literally, scared to go up to the newsstand and pick up a copy of Ms. Magazine and hand over my dollar. But I did it! Such bravery above and beyond the call of duty surely deserves a cheer. Bronx, of course! Yet, for me, it was a step--a hesitant, wavering, uncertain, scared step, but nevertheless, a step, and there could be no going back to what I had been. And I cannot now turn up my nose at Ms. Magazine, because I, too, was able to reach the lesbian world thru Ms. Magazine. And it was thru Ms. Magazine that I got my first refreshing drink of the water of life from the fountain of the women's movement that erupted out of its pages and into my parching, thirsting, dying soul. (How's that for rethoric?) You, LC, hope to reach out to 10,000 lesbians, and I'm sure you'll do it--yeah, to 1,000,000, to 100,000,000, but Ms. is reaching out, too, and helping in spite of its "Barbie-doll" outlook. And I still continue to buy it, and I probably always will--because I'm that kind of sentimental fool, at times.

Cheyenne, WY, please do not let go--I, too, am a cat lover. At present, am boarding five with my former landlady who is taking better care of them than I would, and I'm thinking of suing her for alienation of affections. When I read your letter in LC, I was particularly struck by your sentences: "Where do I find the strength? It's not in a bottle, and it's not in patriarchal religion. It's from you, all my lesbian sisters." I could really relate to that. I just recently wrote in somewhat the same vein to Albatross, and I said, ". . . where do I find the courage that I need?" I'm sure you are right. That courage can only come from contact with our sisters. I wonder if you have as big a problem reaching out as I do?

In the Albatross, my article was entitled "Reach Out and Touch," but I am wholly incapable of doing that. I'm encased in cement. I even find now that I'm clenching my teeth so hard my jaws are sore. The physical symptoms of my inability to reach out are nothing compared to my screwed-up psyche. I can't even relate to women. I don't feel as if I am a woman. And I can't love men--I can like

individual men, as kind of brothers, but I can't love them. I love women, but I can't relate to them. I'm always giving. I squeeze the giving out of me; I put myself in debt to give. I drain myself with giving--my time, my money, my belongings. I pick up stray cats--five, in all. And stray dogs--have had two. I never push or shove. I always say, "After you, my dear Alphonse!" I am gentle to the point where I once stopped my car to let a caterpillar cross the road.

I am so screwed-up and neurotic that everybody thinks I'm the most well-adjusted person in the world. Today, at work, a colleague (female) paid me the compliment of saying that when she read the first few pages of the book Don't Push the River, she thought it might have been written by me. "One lives in terror of being discovered to be not what others think one is," I replied, and quickly changed the subject when her eyebrows lifted quizzically. I'm trying to saturate myself with Karen Horney's books at the moment. The Neurotic Personality of Our Time, Our Inner Conflicts--two books I'm hoping may help me to chip off a little of the cement I'm trapped in. Sometimes I hate Society so much that I wish I were the carrier of some horrible disease that would destroy everyone I pass. (Hate fantasies, what do they mean?) Sometimes, I see myself sitting on top of a building with a machine gun and mowing down everybody on the street. (Violence fantasies, what do they mean?) But the best one of all is the one where I push the button that obliterates the whole shitty world. WOW! Have I got a problem! So, don't you ever let go--'cause I ain't gonna. UP Dykes! --Toronto, Canada

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EMMA, the Buffalo women's bookstore, was attacked late in August. The front plate glass window was smashed with bricks, and the inside of the store vandalized with yellow paint which was thrown in through the broken window. The EMMA collective believes the attack to be the work of people who are threatened by the women's movement and by people's liberation struggles generally. The women are asking their supporters to help defend the bookstore against further attacks. EMMA is located at 2223 Fillmore Avenue in Buffalo (call 716-836-8970). --Big Mama Rag

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A joint study by the National Cancer Institute, the Harvard School of Public Medicine, and the University of Louisville (KY) School of Medicine shows a "definite possibility" that estrogen pills may cause breast cancer. Estrogen is taken by five to six-million middle-aged women to ease the pain of menopause and about 10 million younger women in contraceptive pills. Supposedly by 1977 a new brochure will be included with the estrogens that menopausal women take. It will warn women that breast and lining of the uterus cancers are more common in users compared to nonusers. --Info from Big Mama Rag & Amazon

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According to the annual FBI Uniform Crime Reports for 1975, forcible rape increased 1% over the year. One forcible rape was committed every nine minutes throughout 1975. --Big Mama Rag

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Brazilian Judge Alfonso Soares has vowed he will never accept a woman juror for three reasons: women shouldn't work outside the home; women are "emotionally fragile"; and the courtroom's toilet is dirty. --Big Mama Rag

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A National Gay Task Force campaign to convince the television networks and other national news media to give adequate coverage to gay-related news has brought encouraging results. NGTF prepared a Summary of National Gay News (see LC issue 6 Ads), covering the period from January 1975 through June 1976, and sent copies to all executives, producers and assignment editors in network news departments plus key people at the wire services and news weeklies.

First to respond to the mailing was NBC's Today Show, which invited two people from NGTF onto the August 5 show. United Press International also was quick to respond with a positive article on the gay movement sent to 2,000 newspapers across the country on August 22, and the Associated Press is currently doing a wrap-up on the status of the sodomy laws in the 50 states.

Offers have also come in from Newsweek and US News and World Report to meet with NGTF representatives. Articles from the Summary have appeared in Broadcasting, Variety, the Chicago Daily News, and Access Magazine, a publication of the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting.

The Summary is available for \$1 from National Gay Task Force, Rm 506, 80 Fifth Ave., NY, NY, 10011. --NGTF

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