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NETWORK

MAINE WOMEN'S NEWSPAPER

July 1993

P.O. BOX 74, BLUE HILL, ME 04614

\$1.00

THE PEACE THAT CALLS TO US by Barbara Hope

For those of us who looked to Clinton's presidency as a vehicle of potential change in American politics, the recent missile attack on Iraq came as a cruel reminder that terrorism remains a principal national export. Basing his action on the necessity of sending a warning to Iraq that their terrorism would not be tolerated (referring to the foiled assassination attempt on George Bush), and defending his decision by citing Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, Clinton ordered 23 Tomahawk missiles to target Iraq's intelligence headquarters. Reports indicate that 16 missiles hit the complex, while three hit adjacent homes and four landed nearby. At least eight civilians were killed; the number of injured persons remains unknown. While regretting the loss of life, Clinton stated that "...Americans should feel good about this [the attack]".

I am one of those who do not feel good about it; rather, I feel an overwhelming grief and rage that violence is once again an instrument of foreign policy. I wonder what political leaders have learned from the past when I read that Clinton's willingness to use force makes him decisive, strong, skillful, and tough. I shudder when the media reports that the president's popularity has increased and that his standing with the military

has improved because of this attack. I feel horror when the weapons of destruction are called clean, smart, precise—sanitized words that ob-

scure their real purpose. I mourn the loss of Iraqi lives and the pain of those who are bereaved. It is hard to be hopeful in this context.

What women know is that violence is an interconnected web, that the use of force breeds more force, that reliance on force in the international arena provides

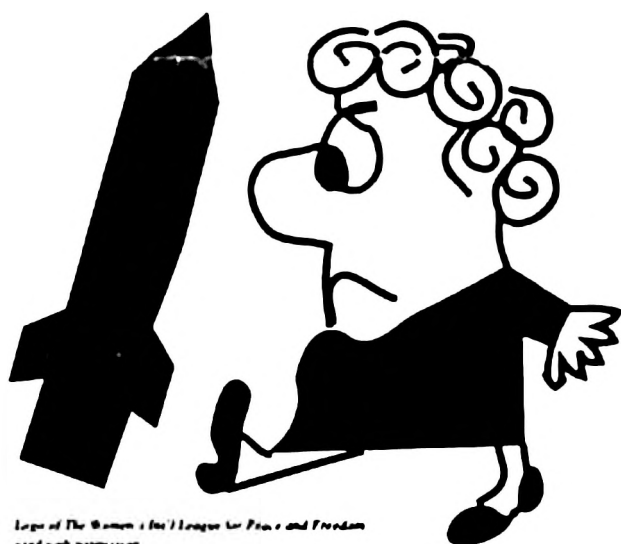
support for force in the national and domestic spheres. Clinton's action is a vote to sustain macho politics as usual, a vote to equate leadership with military action. By implication, this use of force sends an ominous political message: that the powerful have the right to use their resources to assault, dominate, and exploit those whom they

hate and fear. This dangerous code justifies the dynamics of oppression, resulting in catastrophic human suffering.

When we marched in Washington to protest the Gulf War, these links were acknowledged. Women called for peace at home and peace in international relations. We recognized the inevitable tie joining violence against women and children with state-sponsored violence. Many of us have survived the domestic war zone, our own bodies having been battered, raped, abused in multiple ways; in our own flesh we feel the connection between the public and private abuse of power.

The attack on Iraq reminds us that phallocratic politics prevail, and that our efforts towards feminist peace and justice must expand, transforming both individual and social life. The legacy of our peacemaking forefathers can inspire our work; our collective vision will determine our path. Despite the horror of the violence around us, we can work together to make peace our home.

(To become involved in peace and justice efforts, contact the Peace and Justice Center, 359 Main Street Bangor, 942-9343.)



Logo of The Women's for League for Peace and Freedom used with permission

You will find articles on Birth Mothers, Women's Health, RVing Women, an interview with comedienne Lorraine Brown, Poetry, a Book Review, our Network listing of Organizations working for the Common Good, and an invitation to get together around the Network Table at the WERU Full Circle Summer Fair in Blue Hill on July 11th.

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Network Maine Women's Newspaper
Post Office Box 74
Blue Hill, Maine 04614
207-348-2283

July 1993

The purpose of this newspaper is to embrace, inform, educate, and activate women in Maine and, through women, promote political, economic, and social change in the lives of women, children, and families.

Network is a not-for-profit newspaper for the specific benefit of women in Maine, and its publication is made possible by women of vision and intent through annual subscriptions, contributions, and purchased advertising.

Deadline for inclusion of letters, articles, features, reviews, etc., in the August issue is July 15th, and for calendar listings and advertising, July 20th.

Editorial

You are reading the second issue of *Network*, which has been mailed to over 1,500 women throughout Maine. The next issue will be mailed only to women who have become subscribers to the newspaper, and to advertisers for the duration of their advertising commitment. We would like to make *Network* available over as wide an area as possible and ask that if you have access to an appropriate place of business which could carry the newspaper for sale on a monthly basis, you call us at 348-2283 and we will make arrangements for delivery.

Subscriptions, advertising, and sale of the paper are our sole source of financial support and pay for the printing and mailing of the paper.

We should all be aware of how fragile this young venture is. Please get involved in your geographical area and field of interest to help generate support for a women's community newspaper in whatever way you can. I urge you to share your experiences, your feelings, thoughts, artwork and photography, and to encourage other women to do the same.

This newspaper is not an end in itself, it is a means to an end. The primary object of *Network* is to get us talking and communicating with each other, not to provide just another media publication with a feminist slant.

It is a tool with which to construct a real network of

Women involved in the publication of this issue:

Michaela Baldwin
Pauline Boyce
Jane Crosen
Kate FairChild
Olga Lange
Judy Robbins
Jane Sanford
Mary Ann Solet
Sherry Streeter



support and connection among different groups, organizations, and individual women state-wide. To build a strong community of women we must get to know each other and help one another identify and fulfill our needs.

I am a weaver and spinner of wool, and I think of life in terms of warps, wefts and plies. The weaving of different types and sizes of yarn over and under, back and forth, all touching each other creates connections that come together as a whole to create a fabric for which there are many uses. It can cover, carry, protect, wrap, and comfort. I envisage the newspaper making possible similar connections among women and as we encounter one another and recognize ourselves in each other we come closer to forming a common bond which will be a source of strength both on a personal and a collective level.

So, please don't linger with your support; become a subscriber to *Network* now (\$10 for 12 issues—the signup form is on the back page). Advertise if you are in a position to do so. Also, we need women to sell advertising all over the state (for more information on advertising, please call 348-2283). I ask that you recognize the potential of a Women's Newspaper in Maine and look forward to your active response to, and involvement with, *Network*.

Pauline Boyce

Letters to the editor are welcome. Please use this opportunity to speak about whatever is on your mind. Let's start talking to each other.

Send to: Network Maine Women's Newspaper
Post Office Box 74
Blue Hill, Maine 04614

Secrets Is about the Price and Effect of Keeping Secrets in Your Life

by Sherry Streeter

Lorraine Brown is a performance artist living in Belfast. Her medium is words, her message is universal. She performs mostly her own creations and mostly solo. When you meet her, one of the first things that will strike you is her infectious laugh and contagious smile. She has an act you want to catch.

During a performance by Lorraine, you don't actually hear her laugh or even see her smile much. She plays her roles straight and with great intensity. The laughs and smiles are transferred to the faces of her audience, instead, almost without stop. Lorraine takes serious and sometimes painful issues and through her deep excavations of them unearths great humor and irony. She has a powerful and riveting presence that expresses both strength and vulnerability, but also a companionable aspect that puts the audience immediately at ease. Her topics are for the most part based on experiences from her own life, looked at from a fresh and original point of view. Most of all, she is funny.

Recently, Lorraine performed to a very enthusiastic audience at the Abbott Room in Belfast. This month an award-winning play she wrote, *Secrets*, was produced in Providence, Rhode Island, and the run was extended by popular demand. She will be performing at the Left Bank Cafe in Blue Hill on Sept. 19. Catch her while you can!

How would you describe yourself as an artist?

Well, I write. That's the major thing that I do. I write pieces. Sometimes the page isn't the best place to put the feeling across. Then I also perform the pieces that I write. One way to describe it is performance artist, but I'm really a writer/entertainer.

Do you ever perform other people's work or do other people perform your work?

I do perform other people's work if I really like it. At this point I'm only interested in original work by women, and I do that sometimes. My pieces are occasionally performed by others. I have a piece, *Secrets*, a one-woman play that was just produced in Providence. That piece won a contest for original one-act plays, and was shown as part of a women's playwriting festival.

Great! What is the subject of Secrets?

It's about the price and effect of keeping secrets in your life. All different kinds of secrets are dealt with in the play—cultural secrets, personal secrets, secrets you have that you don't even know you have. There are three different characters in the play. It was produced and directed with three actresses, but the way I wrote it one person plays all of the characters.

Sort of a Lily Tomlin approach....

Yes, she's fabulous.

What women performer/writers have influenced you?

I think Lily Tomlin is completely brilliant—anyone who has ever seen her perform live, I think would agree—the physical stamina that she brings to her parts as well as the intelligence. But she is too far in some other sphere to actually influence me. She inspires me deeply. The person I could actually reach out to, almost, is Whoopi Goldberg. I don't know if you've ever seen the video where she does six or seven different characters. I was fascinated by the way she changes character and speaks from different points of view and can change sex and age.

When you do performances, are you more interested in

portraying yourself commenting and philosophizing or are you interested in creating other characters?

Well, I'm interested in doing both. I've been most successful in commenting on my own life at this point, but I have characters in me that are itching to get out. I have a young child character that I'm working on, and I might do that at the Left Bank Cafe performance.



Lorraine Brown: I'm involved on a cellular level with women....

When you write pieces, what issues are of the greatest concern to you?

I'm involved on a cellular level with women—women's lives, women's ways of looking at things, women's humor. I think women have a fabulous sense of humor, and that's how we've survived. It's a bonding between all women.

And class oppression. It's hard for me to really understand class here in America, because I'm English and class is very clearly delineated and defined in Britain. I'm working class, I know the values and culture that go along with that. In this country, class is a harder thing to get a hold of.

Also, in some of your work it seems you're dealing with very private, personal issues. For instance, the piece I saw at the Abbot Room about breaking up....

I like to believe that those issues are universal. Like the stages of breaking up that we go through...most people have been through it. And they can always use some humor in that situation.

What led you to doing the work you're doing now?

I have a background in frustration. I had to do something, otherwise I would have offed myself [laughs heartily]. Because my parents are working class and have working-class accents, they were determined I wouldn't have that accent, so I was taught to speak with an upper-class accent. The only way

you can be taught is through learning poetry and plays, and so by the way I got an appreciation for the language, for poetry and plays. I wasn't supposed to be getting that, I was supposed to be getting the way to speak Queen's English the correct way, but it just happened I grew to love the language. That's what helped me with the whole class thing, because I spoke like an upper-class person but I was going home to a very working-class house, so I was in a sense outside both classes. It enabled me to see more clearly.

Then did you go to school to study drama?

No, I joined a theatre company in London and was in that for awhile when I was very young. Then I got married and that ended everything, as it does for a lot of people, and I wrote for self-expression. Then I got divorced and got interested in theatre again. I was working in a very "high-powered" job running sales forces in Boston, and I knew I needed to do something that was more creative and playful, so I started to go to a place called The Actors Institute. I put together a show called *The Provincetown Stories* and performed it in Boston. It got a very good response, and I continued to write and perform my own work.

Then I came to Maine, and two women, Karin Spitfire and Barbara Maria, who were in DoveTail Performing Artworks, invited me to be in a piece with them, and that mutual encouragement and admiration led me to doing my own work around Maine and New England. DoveTail no longer exists; we've each gone our separate ways, although we still collaborate sometimes.

What were the themes DoveTail dealt with?

Recovery was a big part of it. Recovery from chemical abuse and addiction and childhood abuse. One of the things I liked about DoveTail was that there was a lot of humor. These subjects were difficult ones, but they were dealt with humorously as well as seriously. Actually, I think humor is serious. I think it is a serious way to deal with things. Humor is a saving grace. If you can find the humor in a situation, then usually it means you're going to survive it. If you can see the silliness, the absurdity in situations, it gives you the way through. I've sometimes had great difficulty in finding the humor, but once I do I know I'm home-free. Once I can laugh at something, I know I've broken through.

Continued on page 11

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Adoption: The Feminist Challenge by Pamela Feeny

Have you seen the new advertisement for the latest adoption movie? A woman stands with her arms outstretched to the heavens. Her face is full of anxious uncertainty. Suddenly her expression changes to one of radiant joy. Floating down from the heavens comes a beautiful, chubby, perfect, white baby. Slowly it drifts into the waiting woman's arms.

Recently the De Boers appeared on *20/20*. This sanctimonious couple are outraged because the court has ordered them to return the child in their care to her natural parents. Barbara Walters wants us to be outraged with them. My friend informed me that she and the women in her church group are disgusted with the Iowa couple seeking custody of their daughter. The natural parents are "horrible low-class people," I was told. "He is a beer-swilling slob." "She signed the papers. She has no right to change her mind." "They can have as many children as they want." "Who do these people think they are, to take a child away from the only parents she's ever known?"

Why are the Clausens, a sober, grieving couple, considered criminals for wanting to raise their own daughter? When is it not considered criminal to take a child, at birth, from the only mother she has ever known? If a mother and daughter sharing a blood supply for nine months is not honored as a relationship, can we claim to value relationship at all? We all know, when we stop to think about it, that babies don't come floating down from heaven. There is no such thing as a motherless child. Women give birth to babies in a process once known and honored as motherhood. Manipulating the mother/child bond is the prime source of patriarchal power. There is nothing benign or joyous about adoption when it is viewed in context.

In Western culture, adoption is a social institution based on sexism, classism, racism, homophobia, and ableism. We consider it appropriate to "save" children in third world countries from their native cultures through adoption. White

children are always preferred to children of color. Because of their difference, Lesbian women lose custody of their children, as do women with disabilities. Finally, women lose children to adoption simply because they are women. The majority of mothers who surrender are single women deprived of economic resources by systematic gender oppression in a sexist society. Adoption rhetoric, policy, and practice are embedded in an intricate network of lies, fueled by and reflecting the violent, misogynist dictates of patriarchal culture.

My friend, like most feminists, is ignorant about adoption. The facts of the Baby Girl Clausen case do not interest her. That the natural mother's relinquishment was obtained illegally, that the Clausens filed for and won custody of their daughter when she was an infant, that the De Boers do not have legal custody of the child in their care and have refused all court mandates to return her to her natural parents, that the De Boers are not and can never be the adoptive parents of the child because the natural father has not and will not sign relinquishment papers—none of these facts interest my friend. She said, straight out, "I don't believe you." When are women going to wake up and address adoption as a feminist issue? The media does not exist to educate women on self-empowerment. Do you have the courage to look beyond the slick, surface "reality" of the evening news? If you would like to raise feminist consciousness, if you have compassion and faith, if you truly want to empower yourself and other women, take responsibility for educating yourself about the realities of adoption. Addressing the denial of motherhood through the institution of adoption is feminism's greatest challenge.

If you need information on search or support for families separated by adoption, please call 546-7472. If you would like to learn more about the sociological, psychological, and economic aspects of adoption, please send \$5 to: The Society for Honoring Motherhood, Rte. 1, Box 76, Steuben, ME 04680.

My Story by Mary Offutt

When I was a child, women discussed their childbearing experiences as if they were competing for "The Stephen King Award." My mother had the classic experience of the 1950s—laboring in fear, birthing asleep, and having her depressed babies dragged out by forceps (her version was much more colorful!). My father talked angrily about those events. Like most fathers, he was excluded from participating in his children's arrival into the world.

I first got pregnant in 1984. At eight weeks, I started bleeding and cramping. Some three weeks later, a fetus came out—only 1 inch long, but with all its fingers and toes and eyes. My medical care was appropriate, but I was left with an incredible empty feeling.

I connected with Henrietta Clews, CNM, about a month later. For the first time, someone understood, someone listened. When I got pregnant again, I chose Henrietta to attend my birth, not so much because I wanted a home birth, but because I wanted to be treated with compassion during my pregnancy. I didn't really want to have a natural birth in the first place. But since all my friends were having natural births, I didn't want the embarrassment of wimping out and taking "the drugs" (anesthesia).

My first birth experience was the most challenging event I have ever encountered. I had a number of "glitches" that might well have earned me a C-section had I chosen an aggressive practitioner. A team of supporters got me through it—Henrietta's faith, Karen's compassionate eyes, my husband's and Diane's back rubs, and Dr. Walker's patience. The one thing that can be said for a difficult birth is that getting through it without intervention left me feeling exhilarated. I wanted to have a parade!

A couple of years later I gave birth to a second son, again

at home. It was the kind of experience one only achieves through practice! After that, I became a childbirth educator so that I could help other women discover within themselves their immense capabilities, a process that too many women are deprived of.

Mary Offutt is a Childbirth Educator/Birth Assistant living on Little Deer Isle.

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See Page 12 for all the details.*

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Poetry

how you
were all
my candles
into the night

I can't hold you
anymore
than my eyes
can hold these tears
arms can hold you
in your room
across town.

There is no night.
Desire is awake.

the tide is out
the tide comes back
Oceans do die
but not today

breasts
Let loose
to wander
under a loose shirt
the seat is wet
bus lurches
down a road
through summer

the 1000 butterflies
of bright thought
you've cocooned and
burst into me
every hour

I come into your
camp
You are in the leaves
you watch
I make the fire breathe
I put water
into my mouth

You walk into the circle
the sky spins
Stars gather across your
back
The moon
is in your eyes

Poem by S. E. Eldridge, copyright 1992
S.E. Eldridge lives in Deer Isle

Business Trip Home

by Lynn Boulger

Imagine you have flown
all night from the West Coast
to the East Coast and on
to Port-Au-Prince where your family
moves to and from and back, all
in accordance with the mechanics
of upheaval. Imagine the scent
of the island, the country
after so long. Hot, heavy.
You can almost smell the guns
that have not yet gone off.
The sulfur almost in the air.
Imagine your surprise when
on the way to your meeting you find
yourself lost. Dirt roads, cane high,
buildings shorten and fall
in on themselves. Imagine
your dark suit in the heat, even
at dusk. All around you now
the color of a spring gone
mad. Then your blue American
car comes to a field where workers
are leaving for the day. Sweaty straw hats
and bare chests. The women's white
blouses darkened with sweat. Colored
scarves in their dark hair. Right before you
the sound of their singing.
Right before you the rhythm of their work.
Each in passing you, lifts a machete
to a pair of eyes
"Bon soir, Monsieur"
"Bon soir, Monsieur"
Metal glaring in what's left
of the sun while the singing goes
on and on
acappella

Equivocation

by Lynn Boulger

Her memories of Africa are turning
into something Africa was not.
The photographs replacing the heat
and scent of Kenya, Mombasa.
She looks at certain shots of the grasses
and cannot see the animals any longer.
The lions she knew were in the field.
but she cannot remember if it was
the left hand corner or the right.
Was the mosquito net over the bed
in his uncle's house in Nairobi
or the room they rented
that night in Moyale?

Lynn Boulger lives in Orland.



Greer's Latest Addresses Myths and Realities of Menopause

Review by Sabrina De Turk

The Change: Women, Aging and the Menopause, by Germaine Greer

In *The Change*, Germaine Greer presents an exhaustive study of the menopause and its perceived and actual effects on the aging woman. Greer utilizes historical anecdotes, medical studies, and testimony from numerous women to analyze the physical, emotional, and psychological states encountered during the climacteric. Greer breaks through stereotypes and images of the menopausal woman which she sees perpetuated by a male-dominated society and medical profession. She calls into question everything from the psychological imbalances often attributed to menopause to the sensibility of estrogen replacement therapy for menopausal women.

There is no question that Greer is angered by the lack of response on the part of the medical establishment to the concerns of menopausal women. It might be tempting for the reader to dismiss her book as the rantings of a strongly biased feminist, whose outspoken opinions need not command serious attention. To do so would be to grievously shortchange the amount of research and thought Greer has invested in her topic. Her outspoken views may at times be uncomfortable, but they are founded in considerable truth. The stereotypes she confronts and refutes may be unpleasant, but they are those of our time, culture, and history. Greer has taken a serious look at the ways in which aging women are regarded in contemporary society and finds legitimate

cause for complaint in their treatment.

Greer devotes a significant portion of her book to a discussion of the history of treatment for symptoms of the climacteric, including the use of estrogen replacement therapy (ERT). She has obviously done her homework and presents some fascinating examples and views. However, for the purposes of this review, my interest lies not so much in her treatment of this topic, but in her discussion of the marginalization and discrediting of the aging woman in our society.

"If turning fifty gave us the keys to the city, if turning fifty entitled us to the first place in the queue, if turning fifty gave us the right to sit down, the physical discomforts of the climacteric would be a small price to pay." (p. 56)

Unfortunately, Greer argues, turning fifty does none of these things for women. In a society in which sexuality, youth, and beauty are revered above all else, the disappearance of even one of the three marks a crisis indeed. Devoid of all the above, the menopausal woman becomes invisible within her own society. When this sudden dismissal from view is accompanied by the physical discomforts of the climacteric, is it any wonder that many women wonder what hit them?

Greer makes a strong case for allowing women the privilege of mourning the losses incumbent in the period of

the climacteric, in particular the loss of reproductive function. Women are socialized to see themselves as childbearers and rearers (even if this is done in company with "outside" responsibilities), and the end of the childbearing years signifies a deep change in the way a woman views herself and the way in which she is perceived by others. Greer strongly advocates using the climacteric as a period for reflection and inner growth and urges health professionals to treat women in this stage as experiencing senses of loss and mourning, which need to be acknowledged and accepted.

In what may be a startling suggestion for women accustomed to putting others' needs ahead of their own, Greer emphasizes the possibilities for introspection and reflection inherent in the climacteric. She urges women to seek a new pattern of existence for themselves in the post-menopausal years, one in which they are freed from societal norms and expectations and can take time to fully experience their own spirituality. While her thoughts on treatments and coping strategies aimed at the symptoms of the climacteric may be useful, it strikes me that Greer's insights on making the years of the climacteric a positive experience reveal the essence of *The Change*.



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Suggested Readings

Feminism for the Health of It

by Wilma Scott Heide

Essays by a renowned activist for racial justice, nurse, and third president of NOW. With humor, anger, and compassion, she prescribes a feminist ethic for social and personal health. "Let's make today's radicalism become tonight's common sense. Tomorrow may be too late."

from *Astarte Shell Press, Portland, Maine, 208 pages, \$8.95*

The Moon in Hand: Journeys into Feminist Mysticism

by Eclipse

Through meditation, stories, prayers, and rituals on each of the four directions, *The Moon in Hand* invites us on a powerful, ecstatic, and wrenching journey into the heart of the ancients, the Earth, and ourselves. Accompanying each direction is a stunning color plate created by the author and several black and white line drawings. The book is designed for group use, but it also includes many individual activities.

"*The Moon in Hand* is an invitation into the Mysteries and into ourselves. The journey is many journeys at once. It is a mystical journey into communion and oneness with all that is. It is also a personal quest of challenge, transformation and power. And it is a call from the Ancient Ones to honor the earth and all its inhabitants." (from the introduction)

"The work is gentle enough to be used with children, but powerful enough to reshape your world. Use it and enjoy it."—Luisah Teish

Eclipse is an Earth-Witch activist and mother. She is a co-founder of Earth Calls Network, an ecofeminist organization dedicated to challenging oppression and preserving the living body and spirit of the Earth.

from *Astarte Shell Press, Portland, Maine, 154 pages, \$12.95*

Vision and Struggle: Meditations on Feminist Spirituality and Politics

by Eleanor H. Haney

Rooted in a commitment to social, economic, and ecological justice, the author develops a normative framework for feminist theology and ethics. Topics explored include white privilege, sexuality, alliance building, goddess language and cosmic principles of feminist ethics and moral excellence, and a political analysis of alcoholism. This is a basic book for classes in Women's Studies and Religion.

"Human beings alone may be in touch with the demands and possibilities of justice. It may be our vocation alone to dream of and work for justice not only for ourselves, but also for all. If so, that puts us neither above nor below other creatures but simply entrusts us with a specific responsibility—to be just and to create a just world." (from *Vision and Struggle*)

Eleanor Haney is a feminist scholar/activist. She is a co-founder of the Center for Vision and Policy, an organization dedicated to building a new society based on feminist principles and working in alliance with other groups and organizations across the barriers that have divided people committed to justice. She teaches ethics at the Portland School of Art in Maine.

from *Astarte Shell Press, Portland, Maine, 150 pages, \$10.85*

The Crone: Woman of Age, Wisdom, and Power

by Barbara G. Walker

Few men have tried to understand the real causes of man's inhumanity to woman. Among these causes is man's own sense of inferiority in relation to the female archetype of power, which he draws from his infantile experience of total dependence on his mother. Adult men, who might know better if they were thinking rationally, often try to blame women for anything or everything that goes wrong in their lives, as a child might blame his mother for her failure to anticipate every need. Many wives, raised in a patriarchal society that perpetuates the myth of male strength and stoicism, have been disappointed by the fundamental childishness of husbands who expect the wife/mother to somehow "make it all right" and blame her when she can't. And few female actions arouse so much male bitterness as what the child typically fears his mother might do: simply walk out, and refuse to return to him. This fear is the root of innumerable patriarchal laws and customs designed to restrict women's freedom.

from *Harper & Row, 1985; 191 pages, \$14.95*

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Over the Waterfall by Jane Crosen Washburn

And then there are those of us who didn't...become mothers.

I'll make this short and sweet. Four years ago you would have gotten the full story, passionate and long, but I've gone over the waterfall...and find myself dabbling in gentler waters. The pain is nearly gone.

But what a shock it was, at 35, to find out my reproducing days were about over! Sort of like a hothouse pepper having struggled to arrive at the end of a short Maine growing season in full bloom—only to get hit by an early frost, no fruit set. A sad eventuality, premature menopause, and how do you take it but personally?

It wasn't that I really had my heart set on having a family...but I've always valued my family heritage, and had taken it as a given that someday I'd be part of its flesh-and-blood continuation (an old-fashioned mind-set, I suppose, with the world population growing as it is!). I'd been concentrating on first things first (my career, and finding the right man), time had run out, and here I was with a lifetime prescription for estrogen and progesterone—and a whole

roomful of big issues to face: (1) I'm getting old! (2) I'm getting old, and I'm going to die someday, like everybody else. (3) When that happens, I won't have a son or daughter to keep my little branch of the family tree alive. (4) I'll be a lonely old lady without any kids to care about me, or grandchildren to cuddle and coddle. And, finally, a gracious revelation: I have the rest of my life ahead of me, and I can do whatever I want!

"Oh, poor me"—there was a lot of that at first. Grief and loss, and a big lump in my throat. I could hardly stand to be around women who were pregnant, young mothers. I tried talking with a counselor, who, God bless her, made a neat job of helping me realize the last thing I really wanted and needed was to take care of a baby, even for one day! But what I did need was an understanding friend, a woman friend who had been there too. She was hard to find. There were plenty of kind people around me, but the pain was just too deep then for me to open up the subject, in casual company, with women I thought might understand, and my closest friends were...mothers, and fathers. It ain't quite the same. I needed to know I wasn't alone, but...I sure felt alone.

As with any personal struggle, each of us needs to find our own way through to a solution, acceptance, peace. Me, I reach out best with pen and paper, and I mentioned my plight, among other things, in an open letter to a group of old friends (the Findhorn community, my "other" family). I'd been muddling along pretty well big-sistering myself, but it was such a joy to reconnect with several dear women friends who responded to that part of my letter. For two years or so, between Maine and New Mexico and the Pacific Northwest, we've carried on a long, deeply satisfying conversation, mostly by mail—and this, more than anything, helped me land in a place where I feel connected again. Connected to the women around me, childless and with child, and able to enjoy the pleasures of their company—the latter with the lightness of heart that comes with knowing the child's company's a gift, not a day-to-day responsibility. (See? I'm better off as I am!)

I salute the folks who are creating good families, growing beautiful kids and raising them into wonderful people, and

drawing together in a community of school, scouting, etc., a neighborhood of parenthood. Thanks so much, you guys, for including me now and then in that community, in your big family hug! It's a delight to share in your fun and vitality. And yet, I don't want your pity—just your understanding. It's not a bad life, not having kids' I treasure my close relationship with my husband. And there is a sense of great personal freedom, a welling-up of boundless creativity, the joy of finding other ways to nurture and be nurtured—the same things many parents rediscover when their fledglings have flown.

But getting there.... I'm writing this because I feel that we who do not have children, who will not be having children, need each other too—perhaps not in the same positive, dynamic, ongoing way as families do, but just the assurance of knowing we are not alone can make the difference between pain and comfort, between self-pity and strength, and having something to offer. I am heartened to see Maine's community of women coming together, in general and through *Network*, and I hope it will be easier for someone going through a premature menopause, coping with infertility, coming to the realization that for whatever reason, having a child is not in the cards...to find an understanding friend.

There's such a sustaining support system in our culture for mothers and parents (I have an idea they need it!)—yet none, it seems, for childlessness, for people who, by choice or not, do not have children. From Day One, little girls look forward to having babies of their own. But the fairy tale doesn't end this way for us all, and if it happens not by choice, it can be a hard fact to swallow.

If you're crossing this ocean alone, brave soul, my heart goes out to you. But you don't have to "tuff it out" singlehanded. When you're ready, reach out to find comfort. Maybe the readership of *Network* is a place to start.

Jane Crosen Washburn lives in Penobscot, Maine.

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Brenda T. Cartwright

Women's Health: Keeping Pace in the '90s

by Sabrina De Turk

Dubbed "The Year of the Woman" by politicians and the media, 1992 was a year marked not only by the individual achievements of some remarkable women, but also by an increased awareness of the issues affecting all women. On topics from sexual harassment to child care, women gave voice to their opinions.

The medical profession can scarcely escape this demand for recognition and consideration by American women. On the contrary, the area of health is one of the hottest topics for women in the '90s.

As issues related to women's health surfaced again and again in the national media over the past year, I wondered about the ways in which Maine physicians were responding to this topic. My curiosity thus piqued, I distributed a survey to women D.O.'s (Doctor of Osteopathy) which asked for their thoughts on women's health issues. Roughly one-third of those surveyed responded to my questions about which topics they considered most in need of attention, appropriate educational programming, and obstacles to an increased focus on health issues pertinent to women.

Areas of Concern Noted

When asked to list the areas of women's health they regarded as most important to focus on, fully half of the respondents cited either or both menopause and abuse (physical, sexual, emotional). I was not surprised to find that menopause figured prominently as an area worthy of increased attention. As the women of the baby boom generation approach the menopausal years, they are seeking further information about treatment for the physical changes they are undergoing.

I was disturbed to note that the issue of abuse was also presented as severely lacking in appropriate attention by the medical community and by society as a whole. Clearly this is an issue which our society would like to see as nonexistent, or at least rare. Sadly, the facts about abuse and violence toward women show us otherwise. *The New Our Bodies, Ourselves* cites some sobering statistics on violence against women, including the prevalence of child sexual abuse and domestic violence.

"Every form of violence threatens women with physical or psychological violation and limits our ability to make choices about our lives." (p. 132)

Before women can be free to investigate those areas of health care which hold particular interest for them, they must be free from the threat of violence in their lives. A constant fear of violence forces women to use their energy simply for self-preservation, rather than for building and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Closely linked to the issues of violence and abuse is the topic of women's mental health. Marie Guay, D.O., a psychiatrist from York, suggests "a focus on mental health work, as women make up the majority of patients seen in psychiatric practices." Perhaps it would be advisable to address women's mental and emotional health as a precursor to focusing on the many physical issues of importance to women.

Need for Education Underscored

"Good health depends primarily upon how a person cares for herself. People, in general, have a poor understanding of what it takes to achieve and maintain good health. Definitely, more should be taught in the schools regarding this."—Donna L. Warner, D.O., Scarborough.

The need for comprehensive health education programs in schools was emphasized by many of the respondents. Issues surrounding sexuality and reproduction, including HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, were cited as being in need of attention and were frequently mentioned as possible topics for school-based education programs. Jacqueline Sicari, D.O., of Detroit made the unique suggestion of establishing programs addressing issues of sexuality which teenaged girls

and their mothers would both participate in.

Community-based programs are also regarded as a key method for providing health information for women. Brighton Medical Center has demonstrated the effectiveness of such programs with a series titled "A Time for You," seminars for women which address such health care topics as menopause and breast cancer. The first seminar, conducted in January by Emil C. Gotschlich, M.D., focused on menopause and attracted over 70 women.

The Road Ahead

With the change in Administration and increased focus on improving the health care system, it is to be hoped that the issue of women's health will continue to command attention in the years ahead. However, there remain many obstacles to fully addressing the medical concerns of women.

Breast cancer and heart disease in women are two topics felt to be of prime importance for those concerned with women's health, yet the amount of research being done on either of these conditions remains small, due to a lack of finances and the marginalization of women in a medical profession dominated by men. Women need to use some of their increasing political clout to ascertain that funding for research on diseases affecting women is available and that research efforts on conditions such as heart disease include studies of women as well as men.

At a time when increasing medical costs are making it difficult for many people to obtain quality health care, the lack of adequate insurance reimbursements for screening procedures such as Pap smears and mammograms creates an added hardship for women.

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MEDITATION by Shelia M. Coyle

There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the heavens.

We rush through life forgetting there is a divine plan, a time for everything under the heavens. It gives purpose and peace to life knowing my life is made up of different stages—every step leading me closer to my final entrance into eternity. But for now, my business is on this earth plane. I may marry, have children, remain single, start a business, or work to save endangered species of the earth. Whatever I do in life adds its own riches to my soul. My joys, my sufferings, my desires all happen exactly when they're supposed to happen and why they're supposed to happen. The human experience is made up of many things, all bearing their own message—a message that purifies and brings me closer to my final heart's rest and onward into eternity.

I will have time to do all I need to do.



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RVing WOMEN

A Support Network For Women RVers

by Diane Whitaker

After several full-time through years of RVing the United States, Canada, and Mexico, Zoe Swanagon and Lovern King found that they missed networking with other women. They were beginning to wonder if they were the only women traveling either together or alone out there. The logical solution was to start a newsletter in an effort to reach others who were interested in RVing and making connections with other like-minded travelers.

In January of 1991 they published their first newsletter on a little laptop computer with an out-of-date word processor. The first few newsletters were cut-and-pasted together. Today they use a desktop-publishing program, and the 8

pages has grown to 20 and sometimes 28 pages.

RVW's first small rally in 1991 became 20 in 1992 and over 40 rallies and caravans in 1993. Today the membership numbers over 3,000 and grows by about 100 new additions each month. RVW boasts members in every state in the union, including Alaska and Hawaii. There are also members in Mexico, Canada, Japan, Germany, and Italy. Members are a wonderfully diverse and talented group. As one member described them, they are all "interesting and interested."

RVing Women is for and by women RVers. Our members are a unique lot with a multiplicity of talents and skills. The level of sharing of their time, knowledge, and assistance

Dreams Can Come True by Diane Whitaker

Rita Anctil had a dream for five years to own a campground. After looking at 20 possibilities, when she drove into Bear Mountain Village in Harrison, Maine she said, "A feeling came over me that is indescribable. In short, I knew within the first 20 feet of the entrance that this is the one that I dreamed about. I was Home."

Bear Mountain Village Campground contains 1800 feet of lake frontage with a lovely sandy beach. The campground is covered with beautiful evergreens. Sixty-five campsites are available, as well as 20 cabins. There are boat rentals, volleyball, horseshoes, a baseball field, and a recreation hall. Clean restrooms and free hot showers welcome campers. You can even happily bring your pets, as Rita loves animals.

Rita is well-trained to run her campground. She was born and raised in Maine. She graduated from high school

with a business diploma, then attended the University of Maine where she received an A.A. and a B.S. in Recreation Administration. She then served as the Recreation Director for the town of Wayne, Maine, for three years. She is currently a full-time agent for Modern Woodmen, which is a fraternal insurance company specializing in retirement planning using annuities that are guaranteed.

Her present dream is to make this an all-woman campground. If not, at least it will be a woman-owned park that will always be safe and inviting for women to come and enjoy.

For further information, contact: Rita Anctil, RR 2 Box 745, Harrison, ME 04040, or call 207-583-2541.

Diane Whitaker lives in Deer Isle.

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is outstanding. RVing WOMEN is dedicated to sharing knowledge and support with other women. The success of the organization is reflected by the attitude of its members who constantly refer to the organization in terms of "we," "us," and "our."

The schedule of rallies and events for July on the east coast include: August 6-8, Bar Harbor/Acadia National Park Rally; September 6-8, Harrison Maine Rally; October 2-3 Sylvan Lake, NY; November 12-14 James Island, South Carolina; December 3-5, Florida.

The Maine and New York rallies will be run by two Maine women, Weezie Ewing and Diane Whitaker. For further information, call them at 207-348-6897, or drop a card to RR1 Box 392, Deer Isle, ME 04627. For information about national rallies and caravans, call 1-800-333-9992.



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Calendar

WERU Community Radio is holding its fourth annual Full Circle Summer Fair on July 11th at the Fairgrounds in Blue Hill, and *NETWORK* will be there in the Lifestyle area. Please visit our information table and share your opinions and views, etc. The Fair offers a full day of events for the whole family, with great live music, a wonderful children's area, and a wide variety of good food. It is an excellent place to shop for quality crafts, support local businesses and gather more information about several groups working for social improvement.

Among the 200 exhibitors are: Greater Bangor Area NOW, The Down East Aids Network, Amnesty International, Displaced Homemakers Program, Maine Coalition in Central America, Literacy Volunteers of America/Hancock County, Maine Peoples Alliance, Peace Action Maine, Peace & Justice Center of Eastern Maine, Maine NARAL.

Following the Fair, at the Blue Hill Fair Grounds there will be a benefit concert by Peter, Paul and Mary. Please call WERU at 374-2313 for ticket information.



Belfast Dance Studio. 55 High Street. July 5 and 7 classes with Dylan Newcomb. For more information call 338-5380.

Fundraising events for the Womens' Center in Belfast. Judith Sloan, July 10th at 8:00 pm in the Abbott Room of the Belfast Free Library. Julie Goell, July 31st at 8:00, also in the Abbott Room. Tickets available in advance at JKS Copyprinters and the Fertile Mind Bookstore. FMI: 338-2498.

Down East AIDS Network Benefit Auction. Ellsworth City Hall, July 15. For more information or to donate items call 667-3506.

Maine Tradeswomen Network is having an Organizational Meeting on Sunday, July 25 from 3-5 pm and Tuesday, August 24, 6-8 pm. FMI, call 797-4801.

Women's Downeast Network meets on the 2nd Wednesday of every month at the Sorrento-Sullivan Recreation Center, Route 1, 6:30 pm. Contact Dorothy Torrey, 667-3897 or 963-7888, or Ann Sargent, 422-3889.

If you, your group, or organization wish to inform the Women's Community in Maine about upcoming events/happenings, etc., please mail the information to NETWORK, PO Box 74, Blue Hill, ME 04614, by the 15th of the month prior to publication. We cannot take calendar listings over the phone.

LARRAINE BROWN

continued from page 3

And that's really the basis of all your pieces, isn't it.

Yes, humor in pain. I really believe that humor is transformative energy.

Are you working on any pieces right now?

Yes, I'm working on a great new piece. It's called *Woman without a Body*. It's all about how we women relate to our bodies. I'm dealing with it as a comedy, but it's also a tragedy. What woman is that not a hot button for? What woman do you know who doesn't have trauma about her body? Who can't point to one part of her body and feel it's completely unacceptable, if not her whole body? So, the piece will address this issue.

Will this piece also be part of your Left Bank performance?

Yes.

Well, I hope to be in the front row! Thanks, Larraine.



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