

[October 30, 1980]

Portland Women's Community Newsletter

COME AND HAVE **FUN** ON **OCT. 5TH**

YEH * YEH YUM!

The next general meeting of the Portland Women's Community will be held on October 5 at Williston West Church, 32 Thomas St., Portland (West End). This facility is wheelchair accessible.

The day will begin at 2 P.M. with the first half hour for hugs, kisses, and hellos. Workshop, general meeting, and committee reports will be held from 2:30 to 6, followed by a Pot Luck supper.

The internal process committee is putting together a workshop to allow us all the space to share our past and present experiences in women's groups, so that we may save and celebrate the positives and dispel the negatives.

Give this some thought in advance in order to make this a productive workshop.

In an effort to save money and waste, please bring your own complete place setting for dinner, and an extra for someone who may be new or forgetful.

You are invited and encouraged to bring musical instruments. If anyone has a stereo we could use for the day, I'm sure we'd all love music to dine by.

The cost of the day will be \$2.00 (more if you can, less if you can't). If you have ANY suggestions, comments, agenda items, a stereo - any or all to make this day a bit more wonderful, contact Ann Houser at 774-7166.

THE NIGHT WON'T BE TOOK WITHOUT TAKERS

Chickie/Diane

For the past two months, women in the Portland area have been organizing a "Take Back the Night March." Recently, the date was changed from September 27 to November 1, due to the immensity of the undertaking and the many tasks yet to be completed.

The focus of the workshops, rally, the evening March through Portland is to unite women in addressing the issues surrounding violence in our lives and to promote positive changes and collective support.

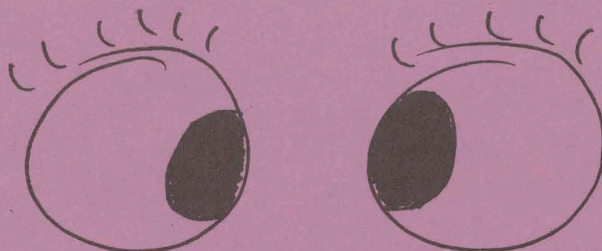
For this event to take place, many women are desperately needed to participate in the following task groups:

1. Outreach, Education, Public Relations - One of the major purposes of the March is to educate the community on the trauma and impact that violence has on our lives. We need help in mailing, leafletting, contacting and/or speaking to community groups, and media outreach.

continue pg. 9

TWO VIEWS OF HESPERIA,

MICHIGAN



1 Barbara Cleveland

At 5:30 P.M., on Tuesday, August 12, 1980, seventeen Maine women loaded down with orange tents, sleeping bags, apples, cheese, goat's milk, flutes, paperback books, toilet paper, salad bowls and knitting needles, began to gather at the parking lot of the Wedgewood Apartments in Portland. There was an air of raucous excitement as we packed two vans tight with gear. A large green lump of supplies sat on the green van's roof. Fortunately, this lime bulge could be sighted a mile ahead on the New York Thruway, a relief when we lost each other by making wrong turns. Eleven women climbed into the green van and six into the white one. These vehicles were soon to be re-named the Green Sardine and The White Cloud. We were on our way to Hesperia, Michigan.

Driving throughout the night, stopping for coffee and bathrooms at truckstops, we arrived early the next morning to be tourists at Niagara Falls. Women unfolded their crunched up sweaty bodies and we ran down the park path to catch a glimpse of the Falls before the crowds appeared. Some bought tacky postcards to send friends back home. No honeymoons were celebrated.

More driving. Singing and chanting started to pass the hours on the blacktop. Signs like "I Only Have Eyes For You" and "We Need the Rock and Roll Tapes" were displayed from one van to the other as we sped down the highway. All day we drove and into the evening. People curled up like snails in a shell, slept. Two courageous women piloted us into the night. At 1 A.M., we sat up as the road became bumpier and the trees swept past the vans. Cheers went out, "We're here." Women with orange security patrol vests greeted us with "Hello. You're all the way from Maine?" "Good to see you."

We paid and registered at a tent; found a place to park the van in a field. Some slept on the ground under the stars to stretch their legs and arms out straight for the first time in twenty-nine hours.

The next morning, we shuttled our gear up the mountain to the Festival grounds. It looked crowded. Brightly colored tents spread out over the hilly fields. We scouted out a spot in the low noise area and set up camp. Most of us immediately took off with a bowl and silverware to stand in line for breakfast Granola, yogurt, fruit, brewer's yeast and bread with peanut butter or tahini. Lines for food were long at times, but moved quickly as women talked or banged their dishes to the music at the day stage. Then showers to clean up after the hours in the stuffy vans. The water from the showers must have been the run-off from an ice age glacier for even at high noon, it was impossible to stand under them for more than two seconds without letting out a bellow of terror. Near the showers, women played bongo drums and danced to the screams from the cold water.

Some of us wandered off to workshops, others walked around dazed at the sight of so many women in one place. It was only Thursday and the crowd was small compared to what was to occur.

If a woman suffered from sunburn, backache, bee sting, cold or whatever, "The Womb" was open for 24-hour care. When one walked up to the Womb tent, you were immediately greeted by a friendly woman who asked your problem and then escorted you into The Womb. Sunburns were treated with aloe by an herbalist; backaches relieved by a massage and heartaches by emotional counselors.

Clothes were stripped off. Naked bodies became redder and redder under the continual sun. Women adorned their bodies with dangling necklaces from beads and bones, intricate painted designs and flowers picked from the woods. Women cut their long hair short or shaved their short hair off, leaving only a women's sign atop of their head.

In the evening at the main stage, the music started. In the afternoon women saved spaces on the hill near the stage with spread out blankets and sleeping bags. A special section up front was reserved for physically challenged women. A chemical and non-chemical area was roped off. With darkness and starlight came the music. Thursday night's concert was calm, folk music. As the days progressed, the music appeared to inspire more and more native excitement. By Saturday, women stripped off their shirts in the light rain and danced on the hill to the music of the Harp Band and a Latin group. The dancing women pulsed like roaring flames. Cheers and hollers encouraged the performers. Lights from flashlights as if they were candles, covered the hill.

Around midnight, women wandered through the darkness to their tents. Some sat around the community fire pit and talked to neighbors about "where they were from." If you managed to find a flat piece of ground to pitch your tent, you crawled in your sleeping bag and comfortably slept the night surrounded by 7,499 other women.

During the day, most of us went to workshops. These consisted of everything from aura reading to solar retrofitting, publishing your own poetry, yoga, women with red hair, women with facial hair, women over 40, massage and guitar.

One of the best attended workshops was that held by Z Budapest, a witch. Unfortunately, I missed the first one where 250 women kissed each other during a ritual. I ran to the next one as word spread quickly among the women. Women who had known each other for one year and a month - 13 months, could take a vow of commitment to one another. Z picked the youngest woman (nymph) and the oldest (crone) from the crowd to help with the ceremony. The women being married pledged to be loyal friends even though they may love other women. They drank a sip of wine, ate some berries and jumped over a broom towards the East. The women watching chanted while looking into each others eyes. "Listen, Listen to my heart song. I will not forget you. I will not forsake you."

Z also spoke about the 80's being the decade of the Goddess. Women's spirituality will turn to recognizing the Goddess in each one of us - that is recognizing our own strengths within and approaching the world and each other through our hearts, rather than our intellect. We chanted "We all come from the Goddess and to her we shall return like a drop of rain, falling to the ocean."

The seventeen women who journeyed to Michigan are still chanting.





MICHIGAN



2 Balenda Ganem

Last month, I travelled to the Women's Music Festival in Hesperia, Michigan with 17 zany women from Portland, Augusta and points Northeast. It was.... everything - fun, crazy, shocking, calming, hard to leave.

An estimated 7500+ women and daughters were there with us sharing our immense enjoyment of four days tenting on woman-blessed land. And it was beautiful land indeed - boarded on one side by a stream which we bathed in daily (fewer women were using this natural facility than we expected) and on the other sides by lush green woods. I found myself often walking through great patches of ground fern that grew to my hips. Just beautiful.

Music filled this special place from early on in the day until early morning of the next. It was enlightening to become more familiar with the vast store of woman musical and production-technical talent we have in our lives. It is sad to know that such great talents are still quite unknown to so many women across the nation. Let's begin a women's music movement now!!

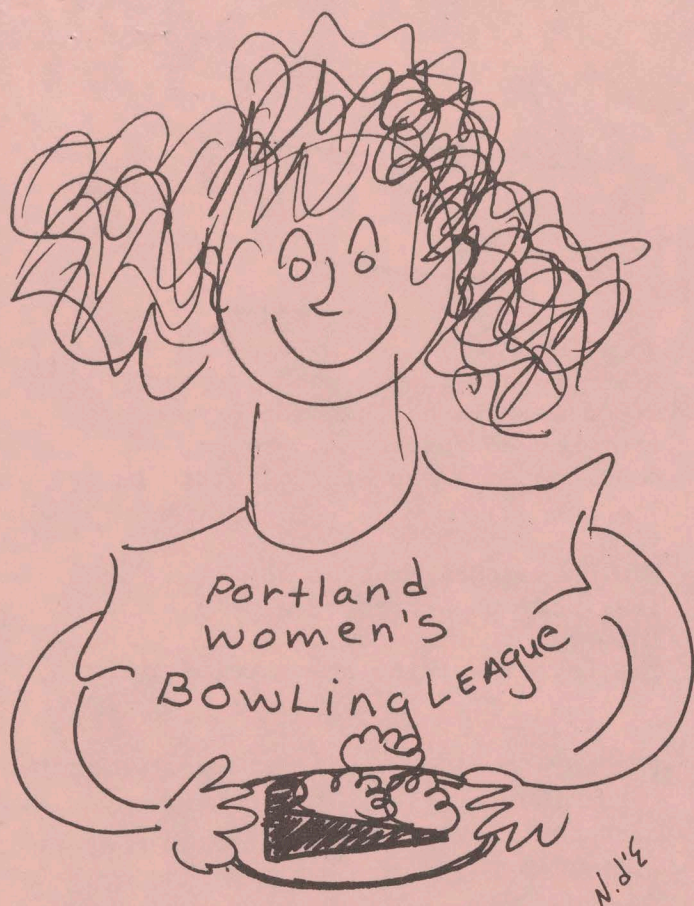
The most heartfelt experience for me through the four days was that not one word was said or one word sung on stage without a "signer". It appeared that the signing organization in Boston, "Face the Music," provided most of these dynamic and talented women. It was so relieving to know that everyone of us, regardless of physical obstacle, was able to enjoy, as equally as womanly-possible, this wonderful festival.

We were fed so well and bountifully that all those "little cans of things" I packed, making my load ridiculously heavy, were left untouched for the duration. We were told we would be provided with two vegetarian meals a day, but as it turned out, at noon we had snacks which compared closely to having both breakfast and supper in one bowl.

We all were asked to sign up for a work shift and, being true enjoyers and authorities of life's little ordinary gifts, we all (Maine) signed up to work breakfast Sunday morning. It was pretty funny. Imagine, if you will, all those crazy Maine women on the breakfast line using bananas and peaches as telephones. There were lots of laughing women going through the line that morning.

Workshops were conducted throughout the four days on every woman's issue imaginable. Also conducting workshops were Z Budapest, feminist witch, and her sisters of the WICCA Susan B. Anthony Coven #1 in San Francisco. She was marvelously exciting conducting a spiritual ritual in which all, to the encouragement of her "Perseverance girls; it takes perseverance," kissed 200 women! I thought I would hate it. It turned out to be one of the more rewarding things I've ever experienced.

turn to page 10.



THE SEARCH FOR THE

PERFECT PIE

OR

HOW TO GAIN 'EM

WITH GANEM

After our intense and exciting day at Birdsong Farm, our blood sugar levels had dropped to the "red zone" and we knew if we didn't do something fast, we would surely perish. So - after a quick consensus of three cars of "wild and crazy feminists," it was agreed that only pie - homemade pie, that is, could cure this acute attack which we all were equally experiencing.

Barbara said there was a dandy little place about a mile down the road. So we piled into our cars and peeled for the pie. The joint was closed! We started to panic, but a "together" member of the caravan assured us we'd find plenty of those "beloved family-style diners" along the way. She lied! Not a one was appropriate to satisfy our discriminating image of the "right" little diner for our dynamic presences to grace. Things were looking bad.

Right out of nowhere Mary remembered a fine little place where they make nice fresh pies daily. Well, it took a while, but we got there - only no more pie - just pizza and subs. Can you imagine that!

We were becoming depressed, irritable. Ann, being a quick thinker, saved us from the sugar D.T.'s - and, possibly herself from us - by heading us up Route 77 to the quaint little "Spurwink Country Kitchen." It was everything we hoped for - cute, quaint, small, set on lovely grounds. We parked, went in and took our place on the bench in line. It's a very popular place on Sunday. Everyone was wonderful. They quickly set up two long tables. We took our seats, ordered (the waitress

listed about ten pies in ten seconds), and were soon chowing down on such pleasures as fresh peach, lemon merangue, custard, coconut and chocolate cream, blueberry, apple, Boston cream and, the favorite of the group, date cream. In fact, an entire date cream pie was put together fresh for us.

We had a fine time eating and carrying on. We were marvelously entertaining. Everyone laughed a lot. Our waitress loved us and the management thought we were a bowling league. *continue pg. 9*

Breaking Silence

A Woman Stands
(for Audre Lorde)

a woman stands
at the far side of this room.
we are not dreaming.
she breaks silence-
it is what we are dying of.

words travel down her arms,
reach toward us
to rock our caution
free of itself.

there is a woman standing-
a mother of sound,
a lover of women.
we are not dreaming.
she knows that swallowing what we cannot hear
will only make us hungry.

Barbara Maria
Hope, Maine

Erstwhile Lovers

Our eyes meet, but only for a moment.
Water wells in the corners of our hearts -
Your breath traces the contours of my shoulder,
And I, dense with nostalgia, freeze.
My trembling body embroidered in the bedspread,
you gently guide my hand to years past.
We sit with empty eyes,
Choking little sounds -
Allowing no word to escape.
We are no longer one.
We are no longer....
I look up at the ceiling -
My soul leaves my body.
Our eyes meet, but only for a moment.
You pull your numbness around you with aplomb.
I hear no sound as you descend the stairs.
In the morning I am insensible.
I remember nothing....
Nothing at all.

Michèle R. Dion

Fidelity

Like the old farmer who for years
stood warming his hands over
the wood cookstove and now
does the same over the electric range, or

the horse that must be shot,
it's body then dragged slowly
into the frozen woods.
The farmer walking home, reins in hand, or

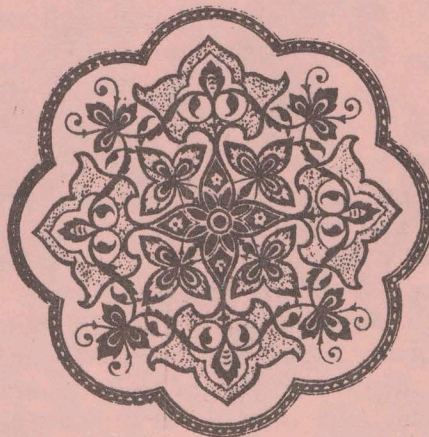
the barn swallows on April twenty-first
returning to nest in the same
barn eaves, year after year.

In our life, no
such histories.

Nothing is whole.

Only the moment we choose
to hold between us,
trembling like some stunned bird,
it's heart beating furiously
against both skins.

Nicole d'Entremont



COMMENTARY

TOWARD A CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

Debra Kaufman

Since we're in the process of considering what our community should include, I hope we'll soon begin discussing our class attitudes. The women's movement in general has been largely unsuccessful in reaching working class, rural, minority and poor women, and it remains primarily a middle class movement. That doesn't have to happen in our community if we make a conscious effort to include all kinds of women.

We need to be conscious of the economic and social conditions that affect all women's everyday lives, speak to "ordinary" women's concerns in a style they can relate to, develop strategies that allow the average working mother to participate, and encourage working class and poor women to develop leadership skills.

For example, we should consider the average working mother's schedule when determining the location, time and style of our meetings. The meeting at Birdsong Farm was far enough away from Portland that it was impractical to attend just one workshop and then leave. Not everyone can spend a whole day at a gathering. Also, women who might feel uncomfortable with "new games" may thrive on task-oriented projects if they feel they have the skills; we should encourage that.

How about beginning by discussing class at our next general meeting? Class issues are multifaceted and continual, but we could at least determine our priorities about what kind of community we want. I'd like to see included in our community a practical, politically active organization with ties to existing grassroots, women-affiliated groups; I think other women share that desire.

continued pg. 7.

*An Open Letter to The Community
from a Married Member
by Andrea Kelly*

Dear Women,

The Newsletter Committee asked me to write an article for this newsletter out of their concern that it was going to be too heavily "lesbian-identified." It has been extremely difficult for me to write on the subject of being a heterosexual woman, living with a man, and a member of women's community. I have revised this article many times. I have learned from writing it that the most frustrating thing about "sexual preference" and women's community is that we haven't been talking enough about it. In some ways I am responding to my fantasies of what lesbian women think of me. This makes me think that lesbian women have fantasies about what we think and feel too. So, we need to share and talk honestly. May this article be just the beginning.

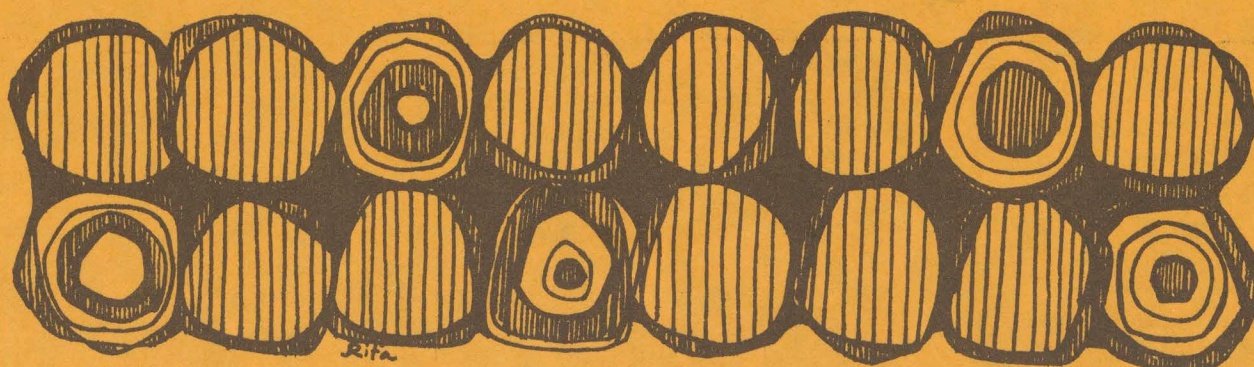
Letter Continued

What I really feel about Womyn's Community: I am longing for it. I feel, have always felt a oneness with womyn friends that I know I will never have with a man, no matter how much I love him. I identify heavily with lesbians--their love for womyn and thereby for themselves, their/your freedom from the oppressive institution of heterosexuality.

I feel acutely the contradictions inherent in being a married feminist with a growing woman/lesbian identification. I love Rob and have a nurturing life with him. I feel the task before me is to take down the pyramid that surrounds us--the ragged structure that is the institution of heterosexual marriage, constructed of women's body parts and oily rags. I used to delude myself that this was easy, that we had done it, that we were different. The coming of a baby raised my consciousness enough to realize that we hadn't done it at all. That we would be doing it all our lives. I want to begin to define my relationship with Rob from the point of view of my needs as an independent, confident, self-loving woman.

I know that heterosexual women friends of mine have this same longing. I know also this: the "lesbian issue" intimidates us. This is why so many heterosexual women have faded out since the first potluck. Here are the things we are feeling when we withdraw from this heavily lesbian-identified women's community: (Let me say again that I think it is good to be heavily lesbian-identified.): That our mothers, that we, will not be admitted to the Old Age Home for Lesbians (later changed, tactfully, to Feminists). That you do not trust us not to abandon you for men. That you will insult us for being politically incorrect. Heterosexual feminist women, leading lives of struggle, need women's community as much as anyone. We also need a direct invitation. We're not quite sure that some of you, most of you, have any use for us at all. I think lesbian women need to discuss among themselves how they really feel about women who live with men joining the community, and then, if appropriate, make a clear statement of welcome. Then, we as a whole community need to think about what our bottom line is: if not "sexual preference" for women, what kind of commitment to women? A credo, carefully written and revised, collectively hashed over, would let every woman know what she can expect of herself and her sisters.

Continuing avoidance of the issue will be deadly. I'm excited by the possibilities of this community, and feel, as I write, that we are equal to crossing "sexual preference" (there's a term that needs replacing!) lines.



MARCH Continued

2. Workshops, Presentations, Information Tables - We want to offer workshops that address the political, social, psychological, economic and legal aspects of violence against us, in its many forms, and strategies to combat such acts of aggression. We welcome individuals and organizations to facilitate workshops, set up information tables, and/or conduct presentations (e.g. self-defense, martial arts, theatre). For this task group, contact: Ann Houser, 224 Ocean Ave., Portland, 04103, 774-7166.

3. Keynote Speaker, Rally, Post-March Celebration - These activities will be a statement of our strength and a celebration of our spirit and unity. Much womanenergy is needed to organize these events.

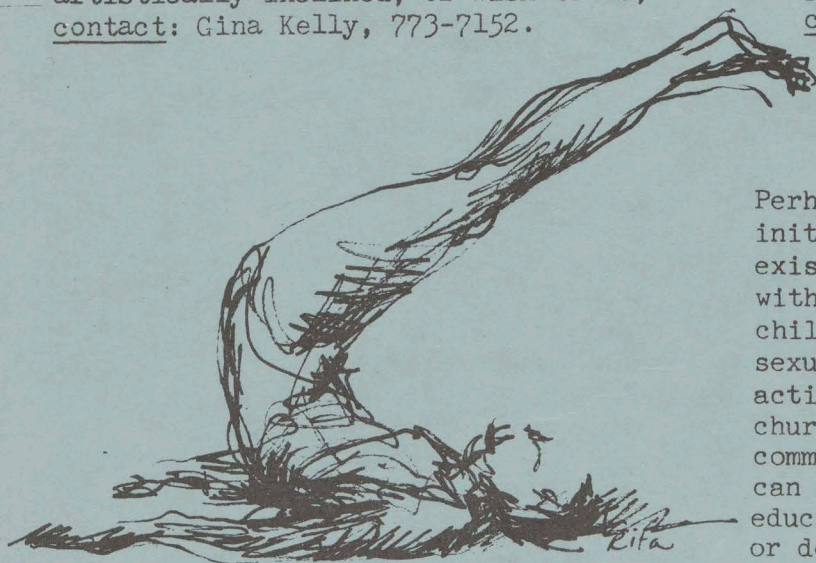
4. Arts, Rituals, Songs, Chants - Women have been working to create expressions of our rage, unity and power through a variety of artistic mediums. If you are musically or artistically inclined, or wish to be, contact: Gina Kelly, 773-7152.

5. Follow-Up, Future Action - Hopefully, organizing efforts, continuing education and political change will emerge from the events of November 1. Calling all activists and potential burn-outs!!!

6. Child Care - We are welcoming men to help us by providing child care throughout the day and evening. We feel such support will increase the direct participation of women in all "Take Back the Night" events.

7. Fundraising - We are hoping to have Andrea Dworkin as a keynote speaker at the rally. Money is needed for speakers' fees, printing and postage. Need we say more??!!

In the past few years, women have been marching to "Take Back the Night" throughout the United States and Europe. It's time for women in Maine to make a statement. Collectively, we have the power and the potential to "Take Back the Night" and to affirm our right to be free from violence and harassment. If you are interested in participating on any level, please contact Betsy Whitman, 775-0232.



Class Consciousness

Perhaps we could establish a committee to initiate (or, where appropriate, link with existing groups on) such projects as: working with union members to raise issues such as child care, health and safety standards, sexual harassment, decent wages, affirmative action; or speaking to local women's clubs, church groups, high school students, school committees and town councils about ways they can establish child care, improve (sexist) education, prevent rape in their neighborhoods, or deal with family violence.

A women's community becomes truly effective when it is not elitest, and when women from various backgrounds feel comfortable being part of it.

pie continued

We left promising to come back - which we did the following Sunday. And we have continued to frequent the Spurwink pie extraordinaire fairly regularly. There are Sunday afternoons on Rte. 77 when one would swear they were dining at the Spurwink Feminist Restaurant!

NEWSLETTER STAFF

Nicole, Diane, Barbara, Lee,
Chickie, Leslie. YAHOO!!!!!!!!

and Deborah, too, for help and encouragement.

Announcements

SHARING OUR STRENGTH: A WOMEN'S SUPPORT GROUP...We are interested in forming a weekly group to create a supportive atmosphere for -- sharing resources, struggles, joys, identifying changes, making choices, sharing our creativity, exploring feelings. We would like to use discussion and a variety of creative experiences, and to combine work and play. Not a therapy group. Call: Rita (775-3082) or Diane (774-3329).

I AM AN INTOWN car-less resident who would like to arrange rides, on a regular basis, with an intown (Spring Street area) woman to Shaw's grocery store. Will help with gas costs or exchange services. Call Rita, 775-3082.

I WILL DO GRAPHICS for women: Business Cards, Posters, Stationery, Illustration, etc. etc. Rita - 775-3082.



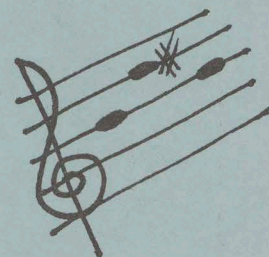
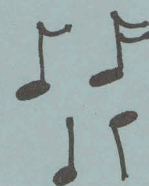
Michigan Continued

We had sunny, hot, chest-baring weather the first three days, and on Sunday, a bit of a teasing rain, but not enough to change any plans. That evening's concert went on. It was great, and at its end an announcement was made of a huge Goddess arch carved by two women and placed at a point where we could pass through it as we left. It was like a dream. The Goddess arch was about nine feet high. The sky was the deepest black. A light, wet mist of rain was shone by stage lights all around the figure. As we passed through the opening one by one, two by two, or as a group, arms linked together, the women chanted softly. There were tears of sadness for the ending and joy for the beauty of it all.

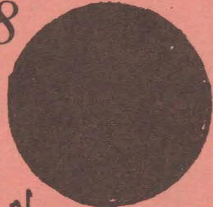

Now it was on to the vans and the long 30-hour trip home. We kept our energies up as much as possible on the trip out and back, with singing, reading, food and coloring books; spent lots of time pretending to sleep! One great joy of the road was that both ways we shared the highway with many women who were on their way to or coming from the festival. We would all make some kind of touch as we (or they) sped by, enjoyed the excitement of it for a few miles, and then settled back into our own little ways of coping with cramped quarters on a long journey to paradise.

WANTED: FEMINIST CAESAREAN MOTHERS to form writing/study group on the subject of Caesarean section. We will share and analyze feelings, read critically, and support each other in writing of all sorts. Call Andrea, 772-5527, before October 1.

FILM: THE WHITE HERON by Jane Morrison, Wednesday, September 24 at 7 P.M. Luther Bonney Auditorium. 25¢ per person. Proceeds to go to the Portland Women's Community Newsletter.



OCTOBER 1980

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3	4
5 Women's Community Meeting. Williston West Church - 2-6 → potluck dinner following - \$2 donation.	6 Feminist Spiritual Community State St. Church 7 p.m. Newsletter Meeting 5:30 Deli I	7 Women in Management - What Makes It Happen. Seminar put on by the New Enterprise Institute. 9-4 Holiday Inn, Portland. \$25.	8  New Moon	9	10	11
12	13 Feminist Spiritual Community State St. Church 7 p.m.	14 Portland Women's Community Newsletter DEADline d'Entremont / 71 Walnut	15 Bring Your Favorite Children's Story - Fun and Bonding Task Force. Erna Koch 81A Vesper St., Portland. 7:30	16	17	18
19 Monthly Spurrink Pie-Eating Pig-out 6 p.m.	20 Feminist Spiritual Community State St. Church 7 p.m.	21	22	23  Full Moon	24	25
26	27 Feminist Spiritual Community State St. Church 7 p.m.	28	29	30	31 Hallowmas: Woman's New Year (create your own ritual) See The Holy Book of Women's Mysteries by Z. Budapest pg. 47	Nov. 1 st Take Back the Night MARCH

call Betsy Whitman

Have you enjoyed this first issue of the Women's Community Newsletter???
If so, here's your chance to subscribe. Subscriptions are \$5.00 (more if
you can, less if you can't) for 12 monthly issues. Please return the
form below with your payment to: Diane Elze, 15 Deering Avenue, Portland,
04101.

We need more women on the Newsletter Task Force. The organizational
meeting for the next issue will be held October 6, 5:30 P.M. at the
Deli on Exchange Street. We are hoping to get the newsletter out
monthly. To do this, we need more interested women.

The deadline for the next issue is October 14. We encourage all of
you to send us articles, poetry, graphics, announcements, cartoons,
news items, columns, etc. etc. Send to: Nicole d'Entrement, 71 Walnut
Street, Portland, 04101.

Name _____

Address _____

Amount Enclosed _____

Diane Elze