

[Sep 1982]

# PORTLAND WOMEN'S COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

75¢

Issue 22

## UTOPIA A CHILD VIEW



The following interview was compiled in separate talks with Alliea and Nathan Group and with Becky Tarling. I wanted to get a sense of the kind of best possible world kids would come up with.

N.d'E.

Nathan: My world would be Fun Town, U.S.A.. There'd be like a swimming pool, hockey, baseball, another squirt gun game. Haunted houses all over the place - rocks that opened up, and, when you tried to get'em, there'd be monsters and creepy things.

Alliea: A world of just summer. On the hot days I'd go swimming. No winter. No fall.

Becky: Rainbows every day and sun every day and sometimes rain. Flowers, grass, nice tall grass and a big place in our yard for us to play in and a garden with sun flowers. Everyone in my world would live like this.

Question: How about school?

Nathan: We'd have school once in awhile. One day school and one week vacation. One day school and one week free-time and on and on.....

Alliea: One day in the whole year.

Becky: Four days out of the week so I wouldn't have to do five. Nice teachers who let you play outdoors and show you how to do stuff.....

Question: Would there be any wars?

Nathan: No wars because it's a magic world.

Alliea: No fighting.

Question: Ever?

Alliea: No fighting.

Nathan: Only once in a while. If Alliea took one of my toys. If Alliea took a squirt gun. I can't live in the same world with Alliea. If my sister is with me, I'd get in trouble.

Question: Well, what kind of fighting would you do?

Nathan: Squirt gun fighting.

con't. on pg. 2



Alliea: I could allow squirt gun fighting in my world.  
Becky: No wars because I don't like 'em.

Question: How about work in your world?

Alliea: Share work and whenever you wanted to take a rest, you could.  
Nathan: If somebody asked you to help, you would, even if it wasn't your turn.

Question: Would you help if you weren't asked?

Nathan: If somebody younger than you is baking and grease spattering, you would help.

Becky: People would work parttime. Kids would go to school 4 days and they would clean the house when they had company. The grown-ups work parttime.

Question: What kind of homes would people live in?

Becky: Split homes - a family would live in the homes. The houses would look all alike but most of them would be different colors.

In my world there would be animals: deer, bunny rabbits, grass snakes, lions, tigers, bears, squirrels, and chipmunks and some gorillas, nice gorillas.

Alliea: Little cottages, in the country.

Nathan: Live in Fun Town and you go down a slide to wake you up.

#### Newsletter Task Force

Diane Elze  
Nicole d'Entrement  
Bunny Mills  
Jennifer Tarling  
Elaine Shuman  
Susan Turley-Moore  
Avis Loring  
Martha Lunney  
Sparky

# encore...

## NEW ENGLAND WOMEN'S MUSICAL RETREAT



Labor Day Weekend,  
Sept. 3-6, 1982  
North Stonington, Connecticut  
For women of all ages

### Performers:

Margie Adam, Alix Dobkin,  
Linda Tillery & Mary Watkins,  
Kay Gardner, Ibis, Ginni Clemmens,  
Retumba con pie, Bachelorettes,  
Anna Crusis Choir  
MC'S - Judy Sloan and  
Kate Clinton

and showcasing the finest  
performers of women's music in  
the northeast

Three days and three nights of music, camping, food, workshops, artisans and craftswomen, childcare (all girls and boys under 10), accessible for women with disabilities, interpreted for hearing impaired, braille programs, swimming, hot showers.

Three day tickets - advance sale only - limited to 2500  
(includes camping, food and access to all concerts) -

Student/unemployed \$45 - regular \$50 - contributor \$58

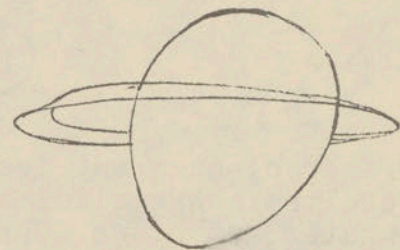
Day tickets: advance \$10/12/15 at door \$12/15/18 (food and camping not included)

For tickets and information, please send a large, self addressed, stamped envelope to:  
NEWMR Box 14269, Hartford, Conn. 06114. (203-247-4061)

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# As The Ovum Turns



Parthenogenesis is the sequence of events that occurs when an egg begins to develop without contribution from a sperm. This procedure does not necessarily produce a living offspring, or even a recognizable embryo. It may just produce a few cells or some disorganized tissue.

Normally reproduction in vertebrates occurs when eggs and sperm come together to form a fertilized egg, or a zygote. The eggs and sperm contain only half as many chromosomes as other body cells; a zygote has a full set. The zygote divides into numerous cells which finally form the embryo.

However, the sperm is not essential to the beginning of this process. The egg cell contains everything necessary to start cell division, and any number of things can set it off. Mammalian eggs have been stimulated to divide by exposure to various stimuli, such as cold, heat, electric currents, or certain chemicals. None of these procedures have produced a viable embryo except in rabbits.

The parthenogenetically activated egg may divide while still in the ovary, in which case it causes an ovarian pregnancy or a tumor called an ovarian teratoma, consisting of various kinds of disorganized embryonic tissue. Or it may continue down the oviduct and implant in the uterus to form an embryo. Very few of these embryos survive to full development.

One frequent cause of death in parthenogenotes is the activity of lethal recessive genes. The other main cause of death is loss of synchronization between the changes in the developing embryo and the progressive changes which occur in the uterus during pregnancy. Development of parthenogenetic embryos is usually slower than normal ones.

One of the assumptions about parthenogenetic progeny has been that they would have no genes that their mother didn't also have. They might not have all of her genes, but they wouldn't have anything different. Parthenogenesis would be an evolutionary "dead end" and nothing would ever change. This assumption is also the basis of the immunological tests used to detect instances of parthenogenesis. It is, however, false.

There are two ways genetic variability might arise during parthenogenesis: mutations and chromosomal rearrangement such as recombination. Both of these happen spontaneously. In theory, since a parthenogenetic progeny would not have any genes its mother didn't have, a skin graft from offspring to mother should be successful. (A graft from mother to offspring would not necessarily work, since the mother could have genes not passed on to the progeny.) In fact, this is not true.

What about humans? The earliest published account I found dates from 1922 and describes an egg which divided several times but not produce an embryo. In 1939 a case was published concerning a parthenogenetic egg in the ovary of a 7-year old child. In October, 1955, Dr. Helen Spurway gave a lecture on "Virgin Births", based on her work with guppies. She suggested that parthenogenetic births might also occur among humans. The London Sunday Pictorial picked up this story and ran a notice seeking mother/daughter pairs who were the result of parthenogenesis. Nineteen prospective pairs turned up. Eleven pairs were eliminated at the initial interview because they thought that an intact hymen was evidence of a "virgin birth". Four more were eliminated through blood-group analysis.



(( ( ( o ) ))

Further blood-group tests eliminated two more, and one which passed blood tests was eliminated because the mother had blue eyes and the daughter had brown. The final pair passed tests on phenylthiocarbamide tasting ability, saliva A-substance secretion, and serum protein electrophoresis. The probability of so good an agreement was estimated at less than 1 in 100.

One final test was performed: skin grafting. It was unsuccessful. Although a successful graft would have added weight to the evidence in favor of parthenogenesis, failure does not necessarily disprove it. This incompatibility, assuming the technical aspects were not at fault, could have been the result of mutation or chromosome rearrangement. Therefore the mother's claim had to be taken seriously, as it could not be disproven.

There has been only one mass screening of human ova. It occurred at about the same time, by Lundrum Shettles. He observed 400 eggs. He found 3 which began to divide without fertilization: one into 2 cells, one into 4 cells, the third into 50 cells. A 50-cell blob is along way from a living baby. Never the less, the claim cited by Andrea Dworkin in Woman Hating that parthenogenic human births occur with a frequency of 1 per 10,000 is based on a misinterpretation of Shettle's data.

So where does this leave us? We know that parthenogenesis occurs in birds, fish, lizards, insects and perhaps rabbits. We have a probable instance of parthenogenetic birth in a human and many instances of egg development. The thought occurs that human parthenogenesis has probably happened more than once. Why hasn't it been reported?

One such event would be rare, and as Lancet editorialized in 1955, "A rare event which is hard to prove is likely never to be reported at all, if it is also an event which according to common experience is "known" to be impossible." Two, a parthenogenetic birth occurring to a woman who was involved in heterosexual activity would not be suspected of being anything unusual. Parthenogenetic births may not have been found because they have not been looked for.

Where to look? Obviously, any woman who becomes pregnant without any contact with a male or with sperm; mothers/daughters with striking physical similarity might be tested. Judging from animal studies, parthenogenesis may be more common in ethnic groups with alot of inter-marriage, such as French-Canadians, Jewish, American Indian, and the Amish. In these groups more lethal recessive genes would have been bred out, leaving the parthenogenetic embryo a greater chance of full development.

How common are human parthenogenetic births? At this point no one can make a reasonable guess. In the absence of data from mass screening of births, we simply don't know. It is highly unlikely, in my opinion, that parthenogenesis has ever been the sole form of reproduction in mammals, and it is even more unlikely that it will ever be more than an occasional accident in humans. It will never be a viable means of reproducing the human population. For me to believe, or hope, for a utopia based on parthenogenesis, is purely an escapist tactic. Sometimes I would rather be an escapist.

The biologist in me says my utopia does not exist. The dreamer in me says, "Why not?"

Bunny Mills



# WHO SAID UTOPIA WAS AN EASY PLACE?

*Editor's Note:*

*From July 24 to August 8, I participated in the Women's Writing Workshop at Ithaca College. I was one of 18 women in Judy Grahn's fiction section. We met daily for three hours to present and critique each others' work. The purpose of the Workshop was to give women the opportunity to write and share work in a supportive community of women writers. Each day two women would present work-in-progress. I kept a log of my feelings, reflections on the process, both of literary criticism and community building. I would like to share portions of those reflections with the Newsletter readers.*

*N.d'E.*

July 26, 1982.....Well, I am probably as close to a writer's utopia as one can find. With that in mind, I thought I would write this running log c/o you, Diane, for edited inclusion in the Newsletter. I've just returned from the first critique session of the two weeks here and, again, I am confirmed in my belief that women as a tribe, species, try hard to be clear, non-repetitive and honest. We talked of the life of the woman's story we read, where it moved us, where it missed the mark. There were technical observations, artistic observations, personal life sharing observations. Little mention of the kind of round-a-bout symbolic this'n that considerations that waste so much of the energies of people in "literary circles." I'm just always struck by that and love it.....Judy Grahn is an impressive woman. Born in 1940, New Mexico. Her father emigrated from Sweden and never was quite assimilated, gave her a different sense of syntax, puns. Her mother was timid, shy--went to see Judy in school plays and Judy would always belt out her lines because her mother would sit in the back row. Her mother always felt Judy did the best job but she was probably the only kid her mother could hear. Judy started working her way through college--poor--drinking the cream that was returned when tables were cleared(all this told matter of factly without overlays of political virtue)--decided to join the Army, at least they feed you. Army run by gay people yet you must be closeted. Kicked out, learned a med-tech trade (all the while knowing that what was core and necessary was writing) got seriously ill, in a coma, when she regained consciousness she could not speak words, could sing but not speak. When people told her sad things, she'd laugh; when told funny things, cry. She recovered but came to some conclusions. Been real poor, I can survive. Been kicked out of jobs and down, I can survive. Been as sick as I can be, I can survive. So why not write and so she has. It was good to hear her words. I feel a lot of integrity in her.

I sit here. My room 7'by8', a desk, bed, lamp, books, Virginia Woolf photo, the little gray-blue vase with chickory flowers, 2 smooth stones, a pine cone, velvet pouch and the Mexican ceramic candle holder from Santa Fe, memory of my childhood---women's laughter down the hall, a typewriter clicking away down the hall.

July 27.....I hear the rain start now, each drop distinct, hitting separate leaves, now, more, sounding like crinkling cellophane. If I stayed just in the writing world, indulging this kind of receptivity, it would not be healthy.

July 28.....Had my individual critique with Judy this afternoon. I had to laugh. She pointed out that what I said the story was about in the synopsis, didn't seem to be the story I told. I had to agree. The story is about Rachel and her little brother Will, not about Rachel and Monica. I didn't even mention Will in the synopsis. She was encouraging, felt the children were real, that it was a warm story, not boring(probably my biggest fear) In any event, I left wanting to continue writing this story with these two children. con't. on pgs



July 28.....857 different emotions later. Issues of rape, battering, racism, classism, a woman presenting a story that twisted everyone around because she worked with stereotypical characters in a cardboard way. The way she treated the rape was neither good fiction nor good, factual journalism. Lots of processing on the responsibilities of artists in treating these subjects. Lots of emotion running around here, women coming out as incest victims, as rape victims, victims of class war, race war---I feel, on some level, too, a degree of, "well, I've suffered more than you 'n survived so listen to me, sister, etc.....kind of strange, that part. Some women wanting to write, some wanting community, companionship, talk, dealing. Judy Grahn doing a good job of trying to keep it all together.

July 30.....Story is done, gone to be xeroxed, feel nervous about it because it's so rough in places but I'm eager to get everyone's opinion since this is the story I want to tell. The stories that are my core stories are the little events of life and a few big ones but basically the small dramas, the little victories, words caught overheard, a gesture that brings you in or pushes you away and strangely enough, even though there are no children, really, in my life, it's a child's voice and eyes I want to write through.....

August 1.....Another incest story and a story dealing with violence between two lesbian lovers. I am feeling overwhelmed with the incredible amount of emotional dealing that goes on along with the literary criticism. We are hungry for the affirmation of our pain and survival.....The incest pieces have shaken me. They are ominous, sinister, how sex gets distorted, how unspoken needs, force, violence, how everything can get twisted. I'm sitting here by a pond...just fed the ducks, aggressive bunch. There is a Disney like quality to this scene: the pond, the ducks waddling and quacking, butterflies, dragonflies, an occasional frog adding counterpoint....meanwhile, these victim themes rattle around, so I feel rather split. Utopia has its thorny side.

August 2.....Have just finished reading a beautiful mother-daughter piece.... such a theme, all of us needing mothering. I think of taking those manuscripts, of sharing them ....I am reading such strong stuff. Sherry wrote an exceptional story, Judith, about a Maine woman and I can't wait to read it to all of us.

August 3.....Visited Seneca Falls. The Women's Rights National Historical Park just opened up two weeks ago, very "nice" and proper. What got my blood boiling right away was a simple marker proclaiming, "First Congress for Women's Rights was held here on this corner...1848." The marker stands on the corner in front of the Seneca Falls Laundromat and Dry Cleaning and opposite Venice Pizza. It reminded me of Room of One's Own where Virginia Woolf speculates that Shakespeare's sister is buried between the Elephant and Castle near where the omnibuses stop. We could stage some events in Seneca Falls next summer.

August 3 (around 5 p.m.) Glass critique is over. I feel mute. Women dug into it, said good stuff. I am left with the feeling that I either really enter the material or get out. I need to make the connections clearer...the strange connections that are the unturned rocks in all our family's systems... many comments re. the kids playing cowboys and indians...racist, have kids playing some other game but I won't do that because it's true. It's necessary to set the scene as 1949. Judy said compelling stuff...the symbols are all there but I have not gone to the heart of them. Why did we play those games? What is the protective circle the children make. What about Mr. Ernst being killed by a bullet...bullets are magic. Immigrants trying to make a place in a land stolen from Indian people who we then kill, drawing our magic circle around us. The grape juice blood red all over the tablecloth, The Great American Gun Fest. Our myths. I sense that I could say something if I worked long enough, went deep enough. I think I created believable characters, women felt the children were real. As children the adult world is shadowy but I must explain the shadows....I need to remember more impressions.

6 This whole thing has been hard work. I'm going to walk down to the mail box and post this....maybe visit the ducks.



## A CHILD'S HOPES AND FEARS

My four year old son, Keith, is very concerned about war. He says to me, "Mommie, war is stupid. Why don't they, these men who want to fight, just get together and talk about the land that they want... just share?"

One day a jet bomber flies overhead. Keith sees it and starts trembling. "Why is that here, Mom? Are they going to shoot?" His face is contorted with fear and anxiety. I hold him and reassure him that wars are not here...they're going on elsewhere in the world. What else can I say? I tremble too.

Keith says to me, when asked how he would like to see the world be, "everyone should have their own home, enough clothes, and extra food so we could all share and feed each other

Susan Turley-Moore

## OCT. ISSUE INFO

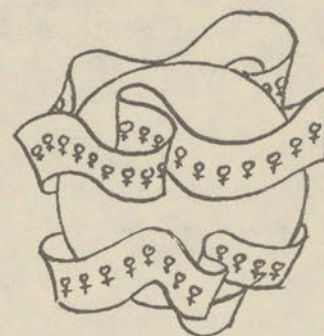
The theme for the next issue is Wise Women, Witches, and Healers. We welcome articles, interviews, essays, book reviews, etc. regarding this theme. Interview a healer that you know? Any witches out there? Who do you admire as a Wise Woman? Remember: deadline for October issue is Sept. 15th.

## *where do we go from here?*

A group of women will be gathering on September 15 at 7pm, in the People's Building, to brainstorm, create and plan future political actions - both civil disobedient and other actions. Much interest was generated from the July 1st "Feminist Independence Day Celebration" held in Monument Square, which culminated in an action of civil disobedience. This meeting will begin the processing of "where do we go from here?" All women welcome. (The People's Building is on Brackett St. in Portland, right across from Reiche School.)

Jane Weinstein announces the opening of a private counseling practice for women, children and families. Sliding Scale Evening hours by appointment.

774-0510





Your labia,  
 folded in upon itself  
 delicate, dusky pink  
 unprotected.  
 Not shielded,  
 like your eyes.  
 Not shielded,  
 like your spine.  
 Not shielded,  
 like your brisk words, flung  
 into the air  
 but folded, moist wings  
 glistening dew  
 trusting, over and over again  
 to be treated  
 gently.

Nicole d'Entremont

### Living Outside Under An Umbrella

Eyes accustomed to clouds  
 Cannot endure the sunshine.

I have always lived in London  
 And I have always gone outside  
 /With my umbrella.

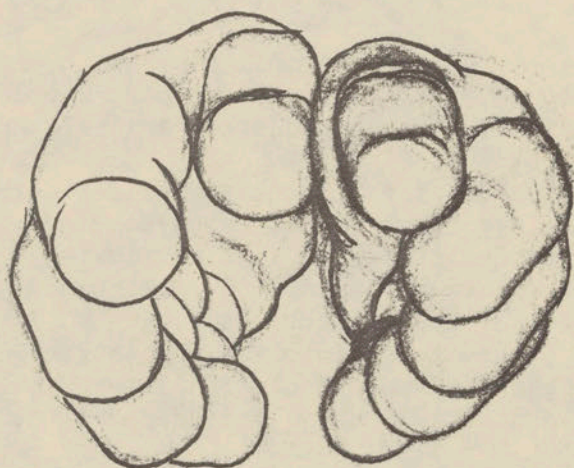
At night I never saw past the fog  
 To others who would not stay inside.

In school teachers told me,  
 "In America there is little fog,  
 And in California the sun always shines,"  
 But I've experienced rain there.

Current philosophers say,  
 "Utopias do not exist,  
 And everyone must stay inside  
 /to survive."

I'd rather go outside,  
 Even if I must carry my umbrella.

Francine Komar



pearls  
 spill  
 down  
 mama's hands  
 reach out  
 kindness  
 overflowing  
 her heart  
 pearls  
 clasp my shoulders  
 one another several  
 her touch  
 running gently down my side  
 mama mama  
 her touch  
 big as a cloud  
 rolling  
 as pearls  
 mama's hands

Martha Lunney  
 8/82



# JUDY SLOAN & COMPANY

*feminist actress clown juggler  
comedienne*

with ALISON FARRELL on electric guitar



'SOPHIE'

explains the  
nature of reality



## STATE STREET CHURCH

### Friday, October 1

### 7:30 p.m.

'GARBONZA'

doesn't care

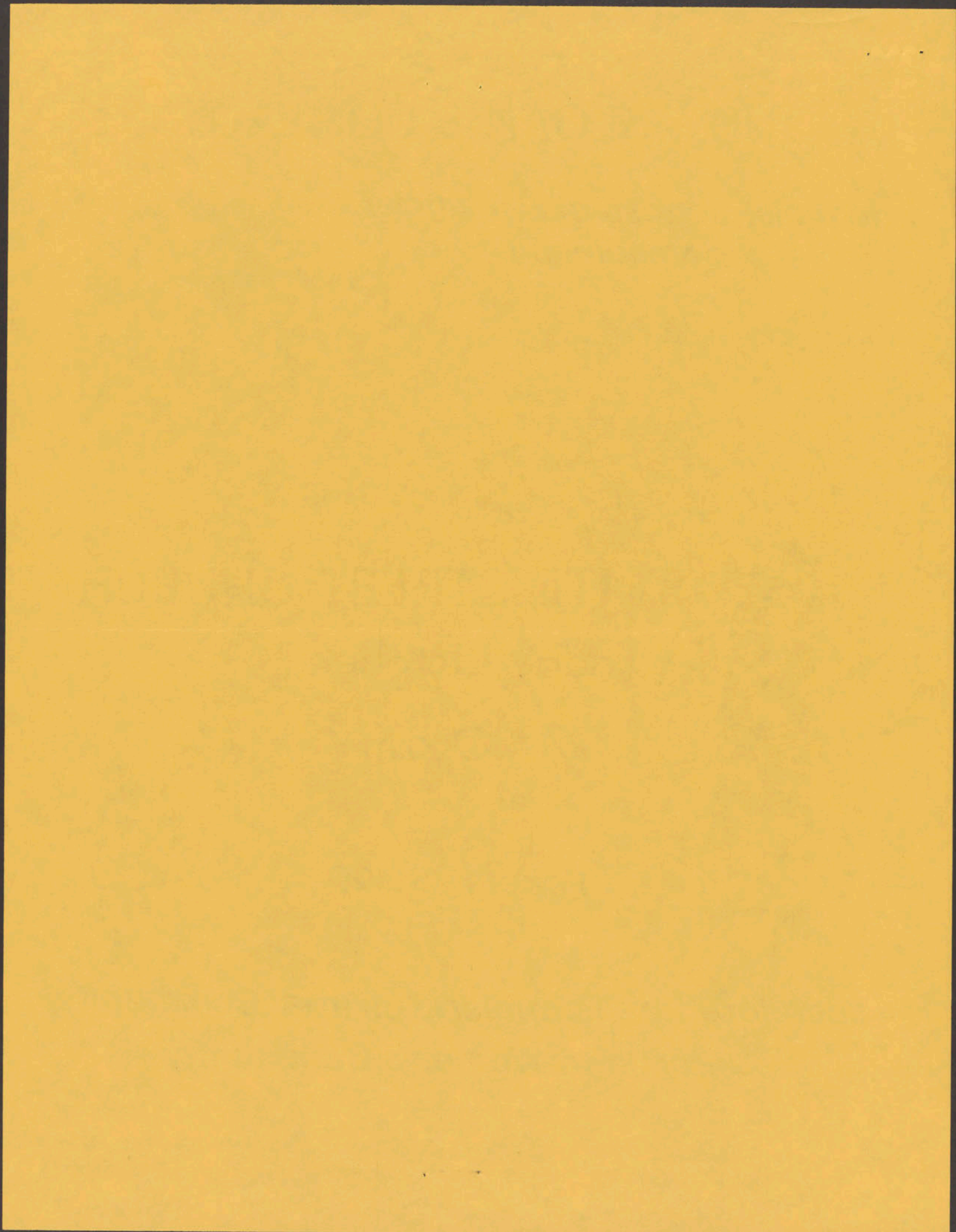
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# SEPTEMBER '82

			1	2	3	4
					New England ♀'s Music Retreat ←	
5	6 Labor Day	7	8	9	10	11 YNCA Fall Open House 10-2.  Contra Dance YWCA 7:30 \$2.50 admission
NE♀'s MR →						
12 PQC Board mtg. 6:30pm 773-1394.	13 Fem. Spiritual Comm. 7pm State St. Church	14	15 Newsletter Deadline Editorial mtg. 7pm. 772-3457.	16	17	18
19 PQC Gathering Fort Williams 3:00pm.	20 Fem. Spiritual Comm. 7pm State St. Church	21	22	23	24	25
26	27 Fem. Spiritual Comm. 7pm. State St. Comm.	28 Gtr. Pld Now 7pm. People's Bldg.	29	30	October 1 <sup>st</sup> Judy Sloan 7:30 pm	



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THERE WILL BE A  
**BENEFIT DANCE**  
**MONDAY, SEPT 13th**

Sorry  
about the  
mix-up on  
the last  
dance.

This one  
is for  
real.

See you  
there.

DANCE THE  
NIGHT AWAY!



BOOGIE  
DOWN!

at THE UNDERGROUND  
spring street, portland

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Community Newsletter and Maine  
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DONATION: \$1

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**NEW VENTURE**

**105 CONGRESS ST. - ON THE HILL**

**THE REMARKABLE FURNITURE SHOP**

**AFFORDABLE COLLECTABLES**

**WED. - SAT. 10:30 - 5:30**

Erna J. Koch, feminist attorney, is pleased to announce the opening of her law office at 22 Deering St., Ptld. 774-8273. No case is too large or too small.



JUDY SLOAN AND COMPANY

We are bringing this wonderful feminist comedian, actress, juggler to Portland on Oct. 1st. State Street Church at 7:30pm. Tickets are \$3.00 and are available in advance

TAKE BACK THE NIGHT 1982

An organizing meeting was held on August 25th at the YWCA. We are in the process of getting together for this year's events. Call Betsy 772-1515 or Nellie 775-7510 for information.

Community Board Meeting

At the August meeting, there was considerable discussion regarding the pros and cons of becoming a women's collective. We are still deep in the throes of this process. The next meeting is scheduled for Sept. 12th at Asherah's house. 773-1394. Time 6:30pm.

Portland Women's Community Gathering Sept. 19th

Come to Fort Williams at 3:00pm for fun, relaxation, interaction, and food. Pot Luck. Hot charcoal for cooking. We're both changing and the same. Everyone welcome.



Lesbian-feminist, 25, looking for same to share household. Near bus-line. Non-smoker preferred. Call 773-1505 after 5:30pm.

GREATER PORTLAND NOW meets the 4th Tuesday of every month at the Public Safety Bldg., 109 Middle St., Portland on the 2nd floor. All are welcome to attend our chapter meetings. Contact Marilyn for more info, 846-4644.

FOR LESBIANS - Opening The Heart a Spring Hill weekend workshop. Sept. 24 - 26, 1982. This is an intensive experiential journey in self-discovery. Using tools from the expressive therapies, music and meditation, a safe and caring environment will be created. We are invited to drop our everyday masks and confront the fears, the hurts and the angers that we carry inside, blocking our experience of joy and love. Sliding fee scale. Place: Spring Hill, Ashby, Mass. For info call: Brook Stone (413) 586-1979 or Lesley Goodwoman (617) 386-2491.

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then this is your last issue. So, resubscribe now! Subscriptions  
are \$8.00 (more if you can; less if you can't).

The deadline for the October issue is Sept. 15th. Theme: Wise  
Women, Witches, and Healers.

KEEP UP UP-TO-DATE ON YOUR ADDRESS, Newsletters will not be forwarded.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_ Checks may be made out to:  
"The Community"

