

the Common SCold

75¢

a women's newsletter, Portland, Maine

November, 1983 [No. 35]

A Community of Living, of Art

We came together for 5 days, to live and create, as a community of artists and to then present a public performance. The performance grew over that time into a sacred ritual about the harvest, with music, singing, dance, theatre, poetry, sculpture, a wondrous celebration surpassing all my fantasies. As I gather my memories, it is the living-together-in-community that seems the more significant art work and I would like to give a taste of that and to understand how we created it.

We came in strength recognizing

Ourselves as artists

We had a five day time limit

We were to produce a celebration.

Each of us had various levels of experience in one or more media, as we all do. We introduced ourselves naming those strengths. We started from our place of power, defined what we could share, and what new risks we wanted to take. We had no time for modesty or for barriers or threatened feelings. We each wanted to learn new skills from the group and to trust in each other's talent for the performance. We immediately set up a dynamic of trust respect and openness. We affirmed ourselves and recognized each other as powerful.

As we progressed through the 5 days we concentrated on the image of harvest as abundance. We lived with an abundance of time and energy. We took time to listen to each other, to play together and to heal each other. We needed to heal the sadness, the pain in heart, mind, and womb in order to work. We shared our wise-woman skills of pendulum, massage, laying on of hands, and even lullabies with much laughter. We created concerts as we did chores, read stories to each other. We created structure and changed it as the days passed. The concept of abundance of time allowed us each to be our most loving and giving selves. There was time for individual work, collective work and attention to each other as complex people. It was graceful, loving daily life.

On the last day we planned a public performance. It kept us focused as artists. How do we grow, how do we begin new areas, how is women's art different? As we began working we shared our stories, what had empowered us, what had blocked us. Then we began training each other, creating new models for growth. We found we needed loving support. We accepted the sources and working methods of each other, we cheered each growing idea, we challenged each other to become her dream or fantasy, and it was empowering; we were all able to take giant steps into new areas. We continued to need a great deal of healing and cheering- with both, each of us was powerfully creative.

Gina Kelley

LETTER

Dear Women of the Common Scold,

I have just received my third complimentary copy of your newsletter, and am enthusiastic enough about the continual upgrading of its content, that I am sending along my check to cover what I can afford towards a yearly subscription. Please know that I will send more when I can.

Having formerly lived in the Portland area for almost 6 years, I have just moved with my family to Cambridge, Mass. in order to attend Episcopal Divinity School. I hope to earn a Master of Divinity and become an Episcopal Priest. For any of you who might know anything about the institutional church, especially this denomination, you know that this is a goal not easily accomplished. In fact, one of the reasons I chose to attend school here is because of the presence of Carter Heyward and Susan Hiatt, two of the original "Philadelphia Eleven", womyn whose radical feminist visions and liberation theology forced the rust off the hinges of the church, and opened wide the door of hope, for other womyn as well as the worshipping community which calls itself church. The "irregular ordination" of these eleven womyn by several retired Bishops in 1976 shook the church by its very roots; its impact continues to be felt. I was informed yesterday in fact, that there are 40 people in my class: only 5 of them men!

I am writing this to you with the knowledge that you plan to develop next month's newsletter with the theme of "Women and Spirituality". I've been struggling with the desire to contribute something, but not knowing what to write, or more specifically, what I could write succinctly enough to be included

in a newsletter, and coherently enough, given the constraints of the deadline. It came to me in a meditation that perhaps what I could give was not necessarily something I had written, but some ground I had already covered; ground that roots me and nourishes me in my spiritual journey. So, I've enclosed two zeroxed copies of works by other feminists involved in spirituality of womyn. One is "The Coming of Lilith", by Judith Plaskow Goldenberg, and the other is an adaptation of a litany by Carter Heyward. I hope that you can use one or both of these next month. There are many, many more books that are available, which I will be happy to share with anyone who needs to have information. I've just finished reading two very wonderful books over the past several weeks, and would like to recommend them highly: The Color Purple, by Alice Walker; and A Woman Sealed in the Tower, by Betsy Caprio. Both books are available at J. Read: Books in Portland, who keeps a whole table on Feminist Spirituality, and also happens to be a wonderful woman with lots of information. Also, don't overlook Ellie Haney and the womyn of the Feminist Spirituality Community as very valuable resources.

Finally, I want to close with the offer to spend time: a written, phone or personal visit with any woman who wants to share her spiritual journey, especially if you feel led into the ordained ministry in one the institutional churches. May Sarton, in her powerful book, A Reckoning, says that womyn need to share their stories. I think this is especially true of our spiritual stories, and womyn who seek ordination need the love and prayer and grace that comes when we can embrace ourselves as wounded healers.

I look forward to this year's subscription "from home". My love and prayers are with you.

Elizabeth M. Kaeton

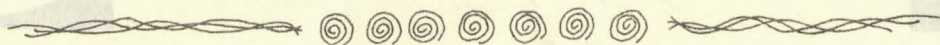
A Community of Living, of Art



Being a devout, practicing ex-catholic, I experience intensely ambivalent feelings toward women's spirituality and ritual. In technical language it's called approach/avoidance. So, it was with mixed emotion that I anticipated the ritual that would conclude the 5 day August retreat of women artists living and working together at Birdsong Farm. However, by the fifth day, my mind was sufficiently blown to be receptive.

I went to Birdsong because I felt blocked as a writer, because I wanted to live and work with other women artists, because I felt sad about the state of my relationship with another woman in the group and wanted to try and reconnect with her. What happened was that the six of us who came lived well together. We worked well and we played well. We laughed a lot and we shed tears together. Personally, I began writing again in earnest. I reconnected with tears and gladness with the woman I felt estranged from. I chose to be open, as each of the other 5 women chose to be open, and we were not disappointed. Out of this feeling, this overabundance of feeling, came a day long ritual that included 20 or so women who came for the event.

It was a beautiful late summer day. The ritual scenario was to all prepare for the ritual - long strips of muslin to paint on were stretched on the grass; paint, paper, colorful pieces of cloth for dress, long strips of glittering red and silver milar, blue, red, white nylon sailcloth streamers. Everyone created sculpture in the field behind the farm. The goddess, being in a playful mood, sent us wind to ship the sculptures into life so the wood creations we made and placed in a circle danced and the milar hanging from their branches glinted in the sun and bedazzled like fire. At ll we gathered to walk to the garden and thank the goddess for the harvest. The scene looked like a Brugel painting. We carried instruments, bowls of food, a banner, and we sang. Martha read her poem of "Ram" a woman who came to talk to her, a woman who wept because we have no cloths of our her-story. As she read, her painting of RAM on cloth billowed in the wind. A tableau retelling the story of planting and harvest was recreated in the garden, an ear of corn was harvested to be brought into the house for winter. We then walked through the woods to the field with our food and instruments for a picnic. After the meal, I read a fable about how the field got its lace - the field we sat in was dotted with Queen Ann's Lace. After we ate, we went back to the farm to make last preparations for the ending ritual. Liz had conceived the idea of ritualistically burning the field to release the spirits of the earth, to prepare the land for the next year. We painted our faces, gathered our instruments again, brought RAM to lead us on her billowing cloth. Chris, as jester, led us in a corn dance again into the field. She leaped and bowed. We sang. Beth played her violin, everything from the blues to hungarian gypsy music. We gathered around the glittering sculptures. We brought gifts forward, what we wished to take with us into the winter ahead, what we wished to leave behind. Women came forward, leaving the cold dismal places of distrust, taking with them hope and vulnerability. Earth, birch bark, tears, corn were laid on the strips of muslin we had painted on before. The cloth was gathered up and given to Cynthia Finn to keep at the farm. Then it was time for the burning. A Balkan yell rose and FIRE came running toward us. She stood among us dressed in fiery milar and a great lightning streak across her face. She told us



in a strong unflinching voice that it had been a long, long time since we had last been together. That last time we were burned. Fire. She lamented her misuse - the way she has been used to hurt us, the fire in the lungs of cigarettes, the fire of bombs. Then the call came to burn the fields. A shout went up, the sculptures were lifted, women ran through the fields waving milar through the air. The sun was setting, glinting, flashing in reds and rose and silver. Cries were everywhere, shoopings, yells. Beth played her richly discordant Hungarian music on her violin as she walked through the field. It was wonderfully strange, empowering and pagan. After the ritual burning we gathered in a great circle and sang the full moon up over the trees, a Czech mountain holler that Beth taught us. We called to one another and to the moon in that ancient, deeply yearning tongue. The moon rose and the abundance of the day filled up and over.

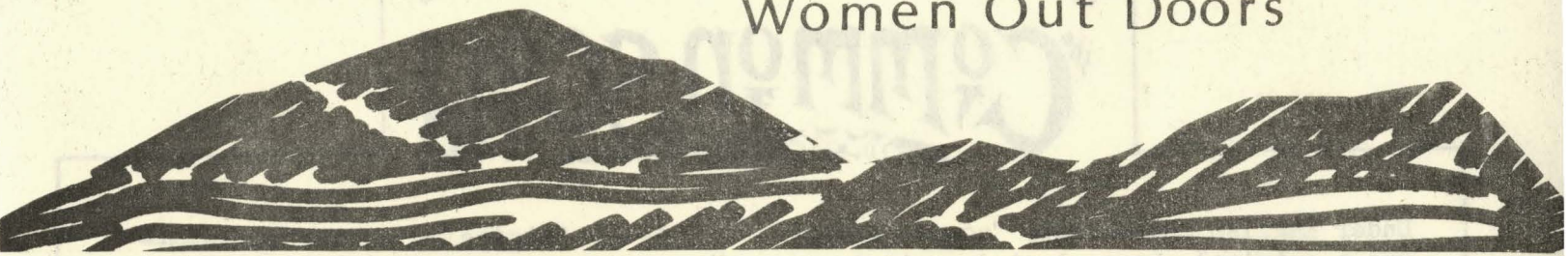
by Nicole d'Entremont

A VISION OF A SOLO WITCH

given/shared by Celestina Ramos
(a.k.a. Willowaters)

I am a Maiden of the Craft, a solo witch, searching within myself for understanding of the female principle of the universe. Today I lit red and white candles of inspiration, burned frankincense (the Goddess listens where it burns), and my waking vision came: Wimmin and Spirit...I could see all wimmin of every shape and color dressed equally as daughters of the Great Mother...all as my sisters, and within the circle of life these sister-wimmin engaged in the communal act of fighting for, and building a future. I could see my sister-wimmin surviving and winning back the Earth as Our Mother, each woman necessary, each gift she brings is sacred...I could see Our Goddess dominate, our wimmin's values rise as we join hearts and minds in joy! feasting! loving! freedom! I have claimed this vision of the female bonding between us to the Goddess...the energy of my solo-witching I focus with love for you my sisters. Blessed be!

Women Out Doors



We sat on the summit, high above the surrounding lake-studded valley, waiting for the sun to set. The orange light fanned out across the sky, coloring our faces with the warm glow. We sat in silence, together, yet alone. Four women, the sky, and the mountains.

We had walked all day in the warmth of early September, sweat dripping off our chins as we hiked up the mountain. Sure we were tired, but it had felt so good to feel our hearts pumping in rhythm to our deep breaths as we pushed just a little bit further. We had stopped periodically to rest and look out over the mountains, each time from a different vantage as we gained elevation. The trails were lined with red, yellow, orange mushrooms popping through carpets of moss, the blueberries and bunchberries added their bright colors. The day had been truly beautiful.

We came together that weekend at Bigelow Mountain through Women Outdoors. Each of us had our personal reasons for being there, each of us with different skill levels. One of us had never backpacked before, while another had hiked for a month in Alaska. But we all worked together in a non-competitive atmosphere, taking turns leading the way, sharing bits of information and talking about our anxieties. We came away feeling good about ourselves and as if we had shared some place special.

That's what Women Outdoors is all about. It's an organization in which women who like to be outside can come together to share their interest. It's an opportunity to learn, share skills and extend limits. It's a network. "Women Outdoors is a cooperative venture, a place to learn, give, and grow."

It is a national, grass-roots, non-profit organization that is guided by a board of directors, three of which are from Maine. It consists of local chapters throughout the country. Each chapter has a character and direction of its own, determined by that group. Some enjoy spending Sunday afternoon picnics while others prefer week-long canoe trips.

The goals of Women Outdoors are to: "build a facilitating network in which women can get in touch with other women who share similar interests and values, create a supportive network which encourages women to expand their leadership and outdoor skills, and encourages an ethic of stewardship of our earth."

There are two local chapters in Maine, Northern and Southern. We combine our energies for newsletters and trips to make activities available to women through our the state. We are interested in a wide-range of activities from a morning of bird-watching to week-long backpacking. If you like to hike, bike, swim, canoe, rock-climb, snowshoe, explore, or ski, come along. We would like to emphasize that these events are not only for those with experience but also for new-comers to the great outdoors. For more information call Teri at 774-4044 and Debbie at 948-3131.

Teri Granger

the Common Scold

Under English Common law, "common scold" was a criminal charge levied against "women addicted to abusive speech." Men could not be so charged. We name this newsletter "The Common Scold" to honor all of herstory's scolds. We honor the women who dared to speak their minds, the women who dared assert themselves, the women tried and convicted by all-male juries. Let us all be guilty of the charge "common scold."

Editorial Policy

The Common Scold is published monthly by the Newsletter Task Force of the Collective. Our purpose is to provide women with a forum for our feminist voices. We will only print material by women, and will consider for publication any material not deemed racist, sexist, classist, heterosexist, ablebodied or ageist. We reserve the right to edit material on matters of length and content. No revisions or rejections will occur without dialogue with the author. The viewpoints expressed are not necessarily those of the Newsletter Task Force.

Submission Guidelines

We encourage women to submit articles, graphics, poetry, cartoons, reviews and announcements. We appreciate type-written submissions, though handwritten submissions are also welcome. Deadline for submissions is the 10th of each month. All submissions must include the author's name, address, and phone number (if available) should we need to contact the author. Within the pages of the Newsletter, names will be omitted upon request. Please enclose SASE if you would like your work returned to you.

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In the beginning the Lord God formed Adam and Lilith from the dust of the ground and breathed into their nostrils the breath of life. Created from the same source, both having been formed from the ground, they were equal in all ways. Adam, man that he was, didn't like this situation, and he looked for ways to change it. He said, "I'll have my figs now, Lilith," ordering her to wait on him, and he tried to leave to her the daily tasks of life in the garden. But Lilith wasn't one to take any nonsense; she picked herself up, uttered God's holy name, and flew away. "Well, now, Lord," complained Adam, "that uppity woman you sent me has gone and deserted me." The Lord, inclined to be sympathetic, sent his messengers after Lilith, telling her to shape up and return to Adam or face dire punishment. She, however, preferring anything to living with Adam, decided to stay right where she was. And so God, after more careful consideration this time, caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and out of one of his ribs created for him a second companion, Eve.

For a time Eve and Adam had quite a good thing going. Adam was happy now, and Eve, though she occasionally sensed capacities within herself that remained undeveloped, was basically satisfied with the role of Adam's wife and helper. The only thing that really disturbed her was the excluding closeness of the relationship between Adam and God just seemed to have more in common, being both men, and Adam came to identify with God more and more. After a while that made God a bit uncomfortable too, and he started going over in his mind whether he might not have made a mistake in letting Adam talk him into banishing Lilith and creating Eve, in light of the power that had given Adam.

Meanwhile Lilith, all alone, attempted from time to time to rejoin the human community in the garden. After her first fruitless attempt to breach its walls, Adam worked hard to build them stronger, even getting Eve to help him. He told her fearsome stories of the demon Lilith who threatens women in childbirth and steals children from their cradles in the middle of the night. The second time Lilith came she stormed the garden's main gate, and a great battle between her and Adam ensued in which she was finally defeated. This time, however, before Lilith got away Eve got a glimpse of her and saw she was a woman like herself.

After this encounter, seeds of curiosity and doubt began to grow in Eve's mind. Was Lilith indeed just another woman? Adam had said she was a demon. Another woman! The very idea attracted Eve. She had never seen another creature like herself before. And how beautiful and strong Lilith had looked! How bravely she had fought! Slowly, slowly, Eve began to think about the limits of her own life within the garden.

One day, after many months of strange and disturbing thoughts, Eve, wandering around the edge of the garden, noticed a young apple tree she and Adam had planted, and saw that one of its branches stretched over the garden wall. Spontaneously she tried to climb it, and struggling to the top, swung herself over the wall.

She had not wandered long on the other side before she met the one she had come to find for Lilith was waiting. At first sight of her, Eve remembered the tales of Adam and was frightened, but Lilith understood and greeted her kindly. "Who are you?" they asked each other, "What is your story?" And they sat and spoke together, of the past and then of the future. They talked not once, but many times, and for many hours. They taught each other many things, and told each other stories, and laughed together, and cried, over and over, till the bond of sisterhood grew between them.

Meanwhile, back in the garden, Adam was puzzled by Eve's comings and goings, and disturbed by what he sensed to be her new attitude toward him. He talked to God about it, and God, having his own problems with Adam and a somewhat broader perspective, was able to help him out a little--but he, too, was confused. Something had failed to go according to plan. As in the days of Abraham, he needed counsel from his children. "I am who I am," thought God, "but I must become who I will become."

And God and Adam were expectant and afraid the day Eve and Lilith returned to the garden, bursting with possibilities, ready to rebuild it together.

*With Karen Bloomquist, Margaret Early, and Elizabeth Fanians.

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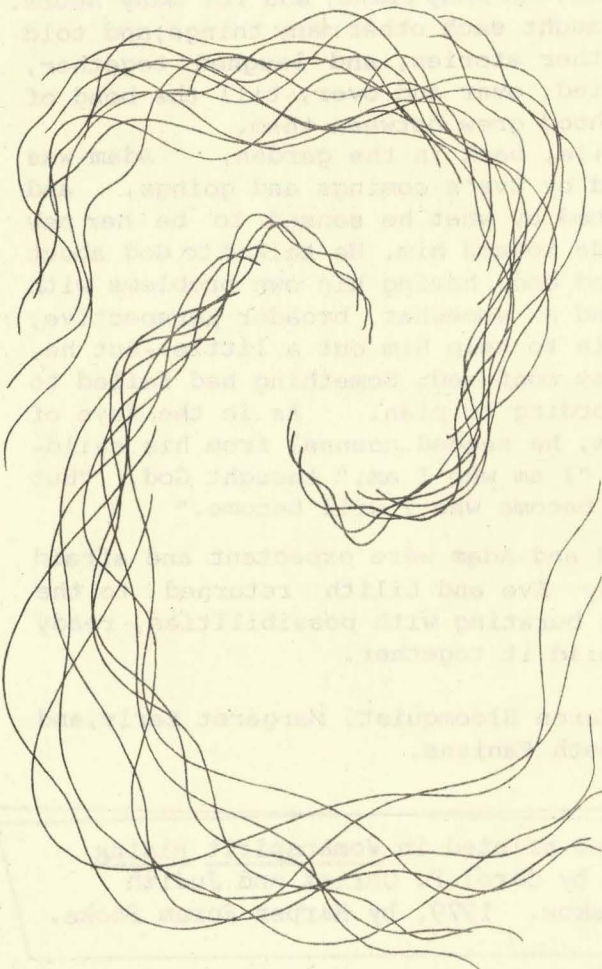
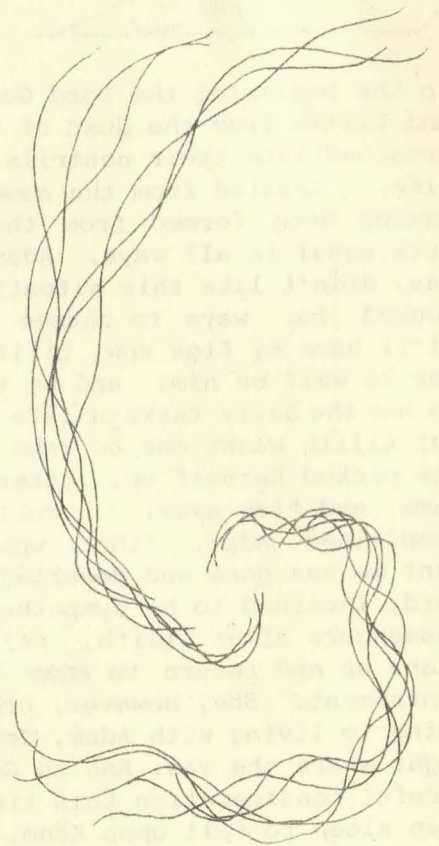
COIGN OF VANTAGE

From where I stand
little white boys are forever
playing Monopoly with my life.
DES and IUDs are dice and my
body is the token heading for
"FORFEIT".

From where I sit
on this filthy bus, women bear
too many fresh coleus leaves on
cheeks, wrists and knees.
Even the Holy Stigmata can infect.

From where I lie
justice, democracy and Original Sin
are phantoms keeping our eyes toward
the wall. It is impossible to execute
a lie for long without drawing blood.

These Lesbian eyes are eagles spreading and
folding their wings like seismic waves rolling
from the other side of the earth.



One Night Reunion

she smoked a cigarette
while i chatted in lavender
sleepiness,
our hunched shoulders
touching like the good
friends
we were...
fourteen once more
and close in the moist
curves
of the other's memory--
chasing summer with bare thighs
necking under tenement stairs
shaking trees for snow
kicking bottles in midnight lots
and being oh so bold
with our stark glances,
it all came back...
we tossed wildly in waves rolling
from hair to fingers
teeth and breasts
it has been awhile, she said.
it has been awhile, i echoed.

Terri L. Jewel
1476 South 4th Street, #3
Louisville, KY 40208

Litany of Empowerment

- A. In the beginning was God
In the beginning, the source of all that is
In the beginning, God yearning
God, moaning
God, laboring
God, giving birth
God, rejoicing
And God loved what was created.
And God said, "It is good."
- B. Then God, knowing that all that is good is shared
Held the earth tenderly in her arms.
God yearned for relationship,
God longed to share the good earth.
And humanity was born in the yearning of God
We were born to share the earth.
- A. In the earth was the seed.
In the seed was the grain.
In the grain was the harvest.
In the harvest was the bread.
In the bread was the power.
- B. And God said, "All shall eat of the earth."
"All shall eat of the seed."
"All shall eat of the grain."
"All shall eat of the harvest."
"All shall eat of the bread."
"All shall eat of the power."
- A. God said, "You are my people,
My friends,
My lovers,
My sisters,
My brothers.
All of you shall eat
Of the bread
And the power.
All shall eat."
- B. Then God said,
"Let there be bread!"
And God's sisters and brothers, God's friends, knelt on the Earth,
planted the seeds
prayed for the rain
sang for the grain
made the harvest
cracked the wheat
pounded the corn
kneaded the dough
kindled the fire
filled the air with the smell of fresh bread
And there was bread!
And it was good!

A. We, the brothers and sisters of God, say today:
 All shall eat of the bread,
 And the power.
 We say today,
 All shall have power
 And bread.
 Today we say,
 Let there be bread!
 Let there be power!
 Let us eat of the bread and the power!
 And all will be filled
 For the bread is rising!

B. By the power of God
 People are blessed,
 By the people of God
 The bread is blessed
 By the bread of God
 The power is blessed.
 By the power of bread,
 The power of people,
 The power of God,
 All are blessed.
 The earth is blessed
 And the bread is rising!

Adapted from A Litany by Carter Heyward
 The Rev. Dr. I Carter Heyward
 Episcopal Divinity School
 99 Brattle St.
 Cambridge, Mass. 02138

Announcements

Justice Needs YOU! on Nov. 8th.
 The Maine Association of Handi-
 capped Persons is trying to pro-
 mote fairness and equal opportuni-
 ties for handicapped people. They
 are accepting contributions and
 membership dues, and are encouraging
 people to vote YES on the Court-
house Access Bond in the up-coming
 elections. Call 774-4360 for info.

Women's Support Group for women
 in transition, in a safe environ-
 ment, using guided meditation
 and other techniques, to enhance
 self-awareness and discover ways
 to deal with fears and build on
 talents. Held at Swedenborgian
 Community Church, 302 Stevens Ave.,
 Portland and led by Rev. Susan
 Turley-Moore, M.Ed. and LCSW.
 For more info, call 772-8277.
 Group will run Wednesdays, 7-9pm.

The Feminist Spritual Community
 meets every Monday at 7pm, at the
 State Street Church.

The Alliance to Preserve Repro-
ductive Choice holds meetings
 the 2nd Tuesday of each month,
 7-9pm at the YWCA.

The next meeting of The Collective
 will be November 20th at 4pm, at
 Jennifer and Bunny's, 20 Whitney
 Ave, Portland, 772-3457.

Greater Portland N.O.W. meets
 the 4th Tuesday of the month at
 7:30pm at the YWCA.

Women Outdoors

Nov. 5th - day hike at Grafton
 Notch, Me., for info call
 Teri at 774-4044.

Nov. 12 and 13th - weekend
 backpack in Northern Maine,
 for info call Dodi Maxwell
 at 948-3131.

NOVEMBER

1

YWCA Workshop
'Alzheimers Disease'
open to all

2

3

• 4

Nov 5 & 6
Shingling Party at
Dale's House
call 729-6701 (days)
for directions

5

6

Feminist
Spiritual
Community
1pm State St
Church

7

Alliance to
Preserve
Reproductive
Choice
7-9pm YWCA
VOTE TODAY!

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Feminist
Spiritual
Community

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Collective
Retreat/Bonding
Ritual
Call Ann 797-3227
or
Deborah 722-3093

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Feminist
Spiritual
Community

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Portland
N.O.W. Meeting
7:30pm YWCA

22

Post-Abortion
Support Group
7-9pm YWCA
(no fee)

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Feminist
Spiritual
Community

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