

One Potato, Two Potato



A Special Newsletter of the Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance

LOBBYING DAY

The Friday before the march was declared lobbying day. On the plane ride down at dawn on Friday I was madly reading the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force briefing paper on the Federal legislation. I didn't want to be flipping through papers during the meetings so I wrote the numbers of the civil rights bill, the AIDS bills, the Hate Crime statistics bill and the Immigration and Deportation Amendments (introduced by Barney Frank).

Diane Elze had set up meetings with each Congressional office. The schedule was furious: Rep. Brennan at 10:30, Rep. Snowe at 11:15, Sen. Cohen at 1:00, and Sen. Mitchell at 2:15. Each meeting was in a different building. As we walked around the Capitol complex between meetings, we met other gay and lesbian lobbyists and fell in with one person with AIDS (PWA) who had just come from a meeting with his Senator where 100 gays and lesbians were present. Five of us (Diane, Sonny, Susan, Randy, Scott and myself) met with the staffs of Brennan, Snowe, and Cohen. For the meeting with Sen. Mitchell our group grew to 10.

The Senator is worried that if the civil rights bill passes, employers will then feel that they must ask what a person's sexual orientation is on an application.

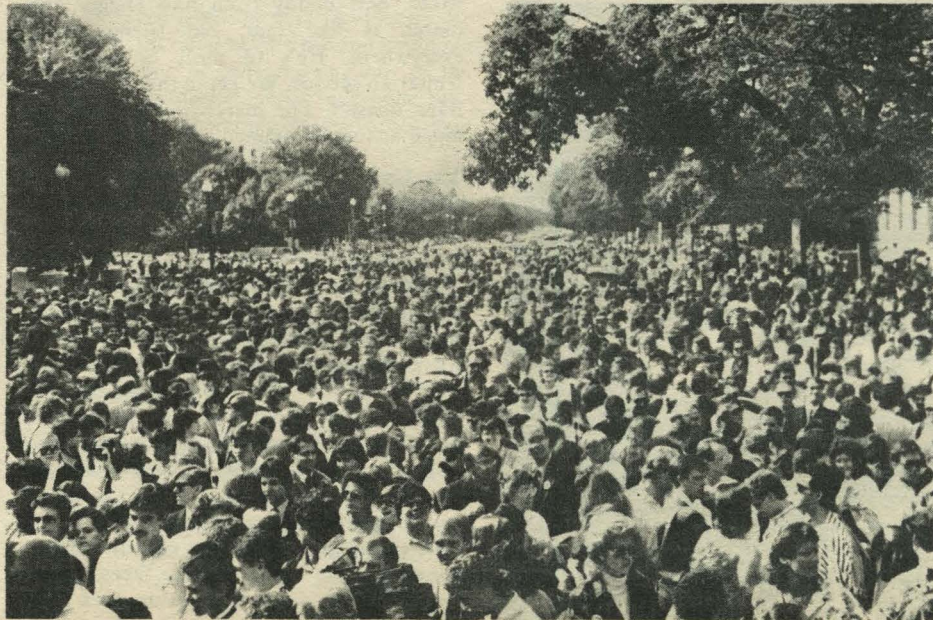
Senator Mitchell met with us in person and was the only one to do so. At the beginning of the meeting I thanked him for his vote on Judge Bork and everyone in the room spontaneously clapped. He seems farther ahead on our issues than our other Congressional delegates. He said that he believes that gays and lesbians are discriminated against and that he would be open to signing onto the civil rights bill if we can answer one question for him. The Senator is worried that if the civil rights bill passes, employers will then feel that they must ask what a person's sexual orientation is on an application. He said he wanted something in writing. MLGPA is working on this. I was touched when Senator Mitchell asked detailed questions of Sonny about AIDS and what it is like to be on AZT and how much it costs. He wanted to know how often he took the drug. When Sonny said that he took it every four hours, Mitchell wondered if Sonny woke up to take a pill in the middle of the night. Sonny responded that he set an alarm.

Susan observed to me at the end of the day that the meetings were very well choreographed and went so smoothly that it seemed as if we had practiced. I would start by talking about AIDS legislation and Sonny would talk about the personal side of AIDS. Elze would then mention the civil rights and the crime statistics bills. Randy throughout all this would be giving the gay business perspective. When we were talking to the republicans, Randy leaned on the table in a conspiratorial way and said, "Look, we know that Cohen or Snowe are probably not going to sign on as a sponsor of the civil rights bill, but I really want to urge them to sign onto the hate crime statistics bill." We covered all the bases.

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October 11, 1987 will live forever in the minds of those who gathered in Washington D.C. for the National March for Lesbian and Gay Rights. Hopefully, the activities of that week helped demonstrate to the nation the seriousness of our people's goals.

Many Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance members were in Washington. All were impressed by what they felt and saw--each in his or her own way. To help preserve the power of the feeling, and to share with those who did not attend, they wrote these stories. And, the line from our favorite chant became the masthead of our special newsletter.



The argument rages on over how many attended. The photo above illustrates the crowded condition of the Ellipse on Sunday afternoon. A 20 acre field with elbow-to-elbow lesbians and gays has to contain more than the official estimate of 200,000. Organizers first estimated 500,000, then upped that to 650,000.



We were there. We lobbied, we marched, we wept, we laughed and hugged, and we hope our presence was of some value other than that of a personal experience. And, we hope you enjoy reading about our experiences. **ELZE Photos.**

PRESS COVERAGE

As I "airport-hopped" my way home to Augusta from the March on Washington D.C. for lesbian and gay rights, I picked up the October 12 Monday morning papers of the eastern seaboard: "The Washington Post," "The New York Times," "The Boston Globe," and, of course, "The Kennebec Journal." The flight went by quickly as I reveled in reading the accounts of the events of the day before. The march was the front page story, with a large photo, featured directly below the masthead in each paper. Though they all adopted the U.S. Park Police estimate of 200,000 people participating (we all know there were at least a half million of us there) the press took us seriously; front page coverage, worthy of more than a paragraph.

The stories all noted the theme of the march and rally; an end to discrimination

and more funding for AIDS. The march was likened, in size and in spirit, to the civil rights demonstrations and anti-war protests of the '60's. All of the stories took particular interest in the participation of 200 persons with AIDS in the march. The lead photo in "The Times" was that of the PWA's in wheelchairs, being wheeled past the White house. The speeches of Reverend Jesse Jackson and Whoopi Goldberg, especially their words about AIDS and to the people with AIDS were featured. Goldberg: "Did Reagan send them a letter of encouragement? No. (referring to the three brothers in Arcadia, FL). "Did he explain that there are some ignorant people out there acting in a frightened way? No. I want to know why he has not said to the children with AIDS. 'I am your president.'"

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THE ATMOSPHERE IN GAY-FOR-A-DAY D.C.

As I write I cry for the memory of that day. The prevailing feeling on October 11, in Washington, D.C., was one of open-hearted love. Not just homophilia, but the universal kind of love of which most religions speak and few of us ever experience. I cried then too -- how else to respond to the oppression to which our march was a witness, how else to respond to the sufferings our people have endured as the almost abandoned victims of AIDS, how else to respond to the wonderful Black gospel choir who inspired us early in the morning on the Ellipse as we gathered, how else to respond to the speaker who dedicated his words to the memory of Bayard Rustin and counseled us not to forget that we stood on the shoulders of giants, the gays gone before who had made this day possible.

How bizarre that circumstances require so much good energy gets wasted in a ridiculous battle against reaction and prejudice.

So, did we sob our way through the day? Heck, no. We had a blast. But the tears were there, lying close to that feeling of great joy. No doubt this emotional expansion was in part due to our numbers which freed us from the fear of harassment. Those of us who had managed to get to D.C. a few days before the march were already caught by the feeling of delight and excitement that eddied through the town. Pink triangles everywhere! and smiles and greetings -- in the subway, in the streets, in the restaurants, in the galleries. Heady stuff! Can that feeling and we could bankroll the movement for the rest of its necessary life!

One potato, Two potato, Three potato, Four. When we get home we're gonna bring out some more!

How many Mainers were there? HUNDREDS! There were so many of us that we didn't all know each other. But we knew where we belonged, behind the huge blazing banner that proclaimed MAINE LESBIAN/GAY POLITICAL ALLIANCE. We were wicked proud.

For those of us who have been out for a while it was also a time of reunion. What joy of friendship can equal that of finding though years may pass and paths may separate, that we are still there for each other when it counts. There were inevitable disappointments. Some couldn't be there for reasons of health, money, family, work, etc. Others were dead. I searched and searched for my Rose of Sharon, she wasn't there, nor was my friend who attends a radical law school -- despite the fact that the school was represented. The absences as much as those present highlighted the reasons why we marched and the choice that has dogged us: being who we are and suffering the social/professional consequences or trading visibility for acceptance.

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REAL PEOPLE, TOO

Thursday, October 8. Work is done, the house is clean, the cats are dropped off, and we're on our way. The mood is festive when we meet Fred at Woodford's Cafe in Portland. A brief bite, a quick conversation with a friend who happened by, and we're off again - this time straight through to Hartford. 11 p.m., Econo Lodge: we get their last room available, not exactly at bargain rates, but there's a king sized bed and an in-room jacuzzi. The bridal suite? I sleep fitfully for the next six hours. The thermostat is weird, and the temperature hovers around 80 degrees.

Friday, October 9. A cold clear morn greets us - quite a contrast from our hot, steamy room. Our first stop is a downtown breakfast place where to Miles' delight we get a huge starchy inexpensive feed - the first of many such melas to come. It's a beautiful day to travel - sunny, crisp, clear - the kind of weather that lets you know what fall is all about. I'm glad we decided on the scenic



route over the more direct interstate. As we drive through the towns and cities of northeast America, I read aloud from *Bob Damron's Address Book* to get a feel for our America. All too often the only resource available is the local rest stop or adult book store. The trip is quick and uneventful. One last stop before D.C., a rest area 20 miles outside the city. Surprise! The place is alive with faggots and dykes. There are lines to use the phones - last minute directions and instructions abound. All smile conspiratorily at one another. The atmosphere is electric. Our time has come.

5 p.m. arrival in D.C. Traffic is heavy as we crawl toward the Capitol, the only landmark we know. An hour later Fred has been dropped off, and we're comfortably lodged at Geri's Dupont Circle apartment. "How gay the neighborhood seems tonight," quips Geri, as we sit in her favorite eatery. In truth, we could be dining in the Castro from the clientele. Much against our desires, exhaustion finally sets in, and we're in bed by 10:00.

Saturday, October 9. Breakfast over, I call Don, my first significant other. It's been 5 years since we last saw each other. We went through some thorny times before I left San

Francisco - the march proves a much needed reunion. I'm surprised to discover an entire SF contingent at Don's apartment - Doug, Michael, Leah and Barbara. We've all changed over the years - more gray, more waistline, less hair. Don, Doug and I head off on our own. Don's tour eventually leads us to the IRS building where the **GAY WEDDING** is in progress. There, under an arch of black, white and silver balloons, approximately 2,000 couples acknowledge their relationships. The crowd, hands joined, encircles the couples with love - a very new age celebration. A few women are in tuxedos or wedding gowns but most choose jeans. Ditto for the men. Don comments on the irony of being at a mass gay wedding with his ex-lovers on either side. Somehow, though, just being on the fringe of the crowd is the beginning of our healing process. It feels right for us to attend together. Later, Miles tells me that it was similar for him being there with his best friend Geri. This is indeed a magical time.

After the wedding, we head toward the Lincoln Memorial where tourists from

middle America mix with dykes with babies in an arm and men walking hand in hand. No one seems shocked at the sight of hundreds of same sex couples blatantly being themselves. We stop at the Vietnam memorial - a simple but powerful dedication to the thousands of men who didn't come home. A single lavender rose lies propped against the base, a reminder that we were there too.

7 p.m. I'm tired and hungry and thus almost pass up Quaker meeting of Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns. Fortunately, there is food when we arrive, so my spirits revive. Several hundred of us are gathered as the silence begins. During the next hour individuals stand to speak on the power of love, on what it means for so many of us to be gathering in the nation's capitol. As I listen, the words to a Holly Near song run through my mind: "We are a gently, loving people, and we are singing, singing for our lives." At the reception after worship, friends tell us the city is filling up, that it's nearly impossible to get a dinner reservation anywhere. Predictions for tomorrow's turnout are 300, 400, 500,000 people. But rain is in the forecast. I keep my fingers crossed: don't let it rain.



Sunday, October 11. The weather doesn't look promising - dreary and overcast. I dress for warmth. Miles and I go in search of Baza, Miles' best buddy from San Diego. The march is like that; old friends from everywhere. He's to meet us after his Unitarian service. We get to the church, but Baza doesn't. The march is like that; too much activity crammed into too little time.

The Unitarian service is moving: love will find a way. There are three bus loads of UU's leaving for the march. We board the first one. Along the way we pass a steady stream of people working their way to the gathering site. Everyone is friendly and spirits are boisterously high. It's not unlike Market Street the morning of a Gay Freedom Day Parade. The sheer volume of people gathered is an impressive sight. There must be hundreds of groups waiting to assemble - lesbian mothers, gay doctors, college groups, church groups, PWA's and of course, representatives from all 50 states. An official looking dyke directs us to the Maine contingent. So many familiar faces. It's as though the July 4th Symposium had been transported en masse from Orono to Washington, D.C. Lots of hugs exchanged - I'm glad we decided to march with Maine. These are my people. We're gathered by

The energy is nearly overwhelming. I'm tired, hungry, and cold, but fortunately, not wet as it still hasn't rained. The lines for food are too long to deal with. I share coffee with Baza's friend Phillip (yes, Baza has been found: everyone and everything in good time) and sit back and watch. Despite my physical discomfort, I'm feeling very content and very full today.

Across the mall, a world away from the frenzy of the rally is the "Names Project." The quilt is made of 48 sections, each 45 feet square. One thousand nine hundred and twenty names are displayed. Each individual three foot by six foot panel gives the name of someone who had died from AIDS. Forty eight states and six countries are represented. The atmosphere is subdued. Figures move silently along; those who speak do so in hushed tones. Many sob quietly, some cry ragged choking tears. All about friends and strangers are locked in tearful embrace. Across from me, three men cry together. One of the three is near collapse as he cries out in agony - "If only I'd been there, if only I'd known." During the four years Miles and I were in Tokyo we lost five friends. That loss is once again dangerously close to the surface. Grief envelops my body, tears fight for release. Jeremy's name is



Photos by Elze

10:00, 2-3 hours later we're still huddling together for warmth. The march has started but our little band still waits. Around 2 p.m. we move slowly and fitfully toward the parade route. The on again, off again drizzle is still in a state of limbo. We're moving now, we're on the road. The bystanders' applause takes the chill out of the air. Whoever thought 400 fags and dykes from Maine would be marching and chanting thier way down Pennsylvania Avenue. "For Love, For Life, we're not going back." It's good to be alive today. Everywhere cheers and bantering from the sidelines. We Mainers really are special.

It's after 3:30 when we finally reach the mall at 3rd Street. The crowd is massive: 500,000 is not uncommon for S.F. parades, but this gathering is far in excess of any I've seen before. Sis'tah Boom is beating out rhythm from the stage. It seems that every few hundred feet someone from my past appears. Can there be that many gay folk in the world! Hugs and addresses are swapped.

lovingly embroidered across a brightly hued sunburst. Yes, Jeremy, I remember that day seven years ago when you came to S.F. - 21 years old, fresh out of Erie, Pa. How Dan marveled at your innocence. And now you, too are gone. When I find John's name, the flood gates open. Tears for big, gentle John. Six foot three with a teddy bear under that leather jacket. When you moved in, Joni left our bed and slept only with you. She shared your pillow - cat hair, bleas, and all. The memory of our last meeting is forever etched in my mind. You knew when it was goodbye. The tears are cleansing; a weight has been lifted. I'm grateful to have had this time and place to remember. The lesbian and gay community are taking care of one another. We're healing AIDS with love. And the world is a little saner, a little healthier because of us.

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RIDING THE RAILS TO WASHINGTON

I'll begin by giving some logistics of the train connection from Maine. On Friday, October 8, a group of about 29 of us met at the Shop n' Save parking lot off route 295 in Portland to catch a 6 pm chartered bus to Boston. In Boston's South Station we met up with others and finally we were about 50 strong for the train ride to Washington, D.C. Thanks to Robin Lambert who handled the details with AMTRAK for us. Our train left Boston at 8 pm, and after travelling all night, we arrived in Washington, D.C. around 8 am on Saturday, October 9.

Our return trip began after the march on October 11. We started gathering in D.C.'s Union Station around 8 pm. Our train was scheduled to leave at 10 pm., but was delayed and didn't leave until midnight. Again, we rode all night, and arrived in Boston at approximately 10 am. Monday morning. Our original group then boarded our chartered bus and arrived back at our starting place in Portland after a short two hour trip.

I want to give a few personal observations about the trip. I had a preconceived notion of the train trip - that there would be a great deal of camaraderie on the train. This was true to some extent on the train ride to D.C., since all of us Mainers sat in the same car. However, even then, the interactions were mostly of a personal nature, and did not include the group as a whole. I did not sense a group focus. Getting to the march was the focus, and people seemed self absorbed in that process.

As I mentioned previously, there was a two hour delay in leaving Washington, which directly affected our Maine group and kept us from sitting in one car together. Because we had a group ticket, which was intended to enable us to sit together, we were placed at the front of the crowd waiting to board.

All of us returning to New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Maine had to stand for more than two hours in the depot and deal with our baggage as we were sent to wait at two different gates for our train. Finally we were all herded into one large enclosed corridor outside the train platform.

As the delay lengthened, the crowd behind us became quite agitated. There was some shouting and arguing. Some people were becoming very upset, and I began to be nervous, especially because our group was directly in front of the doors to the platform, and if the group behind were to surge forward and we couldn't get out, it was possible that our group could have been injured in the crush of bodies. At the point when it appeared to me that there would be a riot, AMTRAK personnel appeared and led the waiting throng off through other doors, dissipating the crisis. Consequently, we boarded last and could not get seats together as a group. We ended up being scattered throughout two or three cars and consequently had little cohesiveness as a group.

In my opinion, and in the opinion of some others I spoke with, there was a marked difference between how we from Maine handled the delay and how those from New York and Massachusetts handled the same situation. We were quite calm, just waiting for the process to happen and be on our way. However, our neighbors to the south were quite aggressive and vocal in their displeasure. When I observed the two groups' different reactions to the same situation, I knew that I was proud to be from Maine because of the way in which we conducted ourselves.

On top of the trouble at the station, on the return trip there was some trouble with drunks being loud and abusive. I did not see this personally, though two women and a man passed through my car, carrying beer cans and making derogatory remarks about the "queers" on the train. Afterward, I was told that the police were called in Connecticut to remove someone from the train by force. Those incidents were in such contrast to the peacefulness we experienced while in Washington, D.C. that they provided a harsh jolt back to the straight world.

Now, about the food served on AMTRAK. Probably the least said, the better. Essentially it was fast food for the masses, though I was grateful for a hot cup of coffee and danish in those early morning hours. I guess I had a romanticized vision of train car dining from watching the movies. Well, it's certainly not the Orient Express, more MacDonald's express.

While in Washington I did have a wonderful experience on the subway, called the Metro. Late Sunday afternoon, after the march and rally were winding down, I set off for Dupont Circle, after hearing that it was the gay section of D.C. The subway station I entered appeared to me to be a huge concrete canyon. Fortunately, it was full of gay men and lesbians and there was an air of festivity. While waiting for the train, someone waved a rainbow flag, a symbol from the march, and the crowd cheered. It was a unique and emotional experience for me. When the subway train arrived, we all squeezed into cars already full of gays.

At Dupont Circle, a steady stream of gays emerged from the cars. Riding up the escalator, I looked behind me and could see line after line of gays moving out of the station. It seemed that everyone was shouting and cheering, happy to be there and to be with each other.

The march on Washington was a not-to-be-forgotten experience for me. To be in the streets, full of gay men and lesbians, felt wonderful. For once, we were in the majority, and it was powerful. I know I was personally empowered and self-affirmed. After spending two days in our capitol surrounded by my family of queers, I was exhilarated.

Another emotional experience occurred for me that doesn't relate to the trains when I went on Saturday with a friend to see the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. It was very crowded there, with a continuous line of people viewing the memorial. I watched faces in the crowd and thought to myself that I saw evidence of very little emotion. People looked like they were just viewing another Washington monument. However, a few times I did notice a person who seemed affected by the experience.

Later, in thinking over my visit to the memorial, I remembered hearing Sonia Johnson remark that every year in the United States 10,000 women are murdered. That means that every 5 years in this country as many women are murdered as the total number of soldiers who died in Vietnam during all those war years. I realized that our government would never build a monument to the memory of our sisters who are slain, 10,000 every year, in a war against women that is worldwide and even more vicious and senseless than the one that happened in Vietnam.

I also thought about the 20,000 people who have died from AIDS and wondered if they would ever have a monument. Well, on Sunday I did find their monument when I saw the AIDS quilt. I was touched so much more emotionally by the quilt than I was at the Viet's memorial because here the names of the dead were sewn onto the quilt by the loving hands of friends, mothers, sisters, lovers. And through the work of those hands I felt the spirit of those who had died. I imagined I saw them as people - alive and at work and at play, laughing, crying, living, dying. Their names were not chiseled in cold stone, but rather made out of the common material of our everyday lives - thread, cloth, ribbon - by a loving and bereaved community.

For all the emotion, for all the train issues, all the delays, the inferior food, the lack of sleep, I ask myself would I make the trip again and in the same way? And all I can say is - you betcha!

And despite the woes, I am grateful that the train transportation was available to get me and others to Washington, D.C. Thanks to all the organizers who made the trip possible.

And thanks to my sisters and brothers who, with their gentleness and love, transformed Washington for one weekend into a city we could call our own.

Winnie Rideout



Photos by Elze

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Storming the Supreme Court

A CD Journal

by Elze

Monday night, October 12, 1987

How I love us. We filled that church tonight, to the rafters, over 750-strong. Dykes and fags. All of us gathered here for the same exquisite, exhilarating purpose — to break the law. Never have I felt so filled with power and pride.

One by one, we introduced our affinity groups. The Hard Wicks, Safe Sex Sluts, Lesbian Feminist Terrorists From Hell, Black Triangles, Queer and Present Danger, Last Minute Group, Sassy Sodamites, PWAs and Their Friends, Radical Faeries, I'm With Her, ACT UP, United Fruit Company, Lesbians Rising in Resistance, Little Auntie Imperialists, Spinsters Opposed to Nuclear Genocide, Shameless Hussies, Army of Lovers, LIPS, and many others, and us — The Mad Muses.

We laughed, we cheered, we stamped our feet, we screamed ourselves hoarse in appreciation of our humor and creativity. Such wonderful lightness to protest such heavy injustice.

The men struggled tonight. Much less familiar with consensus decision making than the lesbians, some men were like bewildered children struggling to understand how decisions got made that they didn't agree with.

Much needed to be accomplished in tonight's five-hour pre-action meeting. Each affinity group sent representatives to small group meetings dealing with specific topics. When we reconvened, a decision to promote lesbian visibility was announced. A lesbian affinity group would lead the action. A few men protested, not understanding the decision was final. And then they witnessed hundreds of their brothers cheering the decision. They stopped resisting. They shut up. With foreheads furrowed, looking puzzled, they sat with it. An important lesson learned, I hoped.

Channel 9 arrived, a CBS affiliate, and we granted them permission to film. We began to chant, "We Want Justice." We stood up, cheering, clapping, chanting louder and louder until the sound was deafening. I began to weep. And then I chanted between sobs. I'm so proud of us.

Lesbians ran the show tonight. The one male organizer who spoke publicly acknowledged the leadership of lesbians in planning the civil disobedience action. The men in the church cheered, clapped, and stamped their feet, while the lesbians, sporting knowing smiles, thought silently, "But, of course."

Five hours later, I'm heading on the METRO to my uncle's in Alexandria, exhausted, elated, and so very proud of being queer.

Tuesday morning, October 13, 1987, In Transit to D.C.

Let's see. Heavy jeans, heavy sweat-shirt, long-sleeved T-shirt, turtleneck, heavy socks, twenty-dollar bill and driver's license stuffed in sock, sturdy sneakers. Take off the earrings and labyris. OK. METRO map, several pieces of paper tightly folded, and Gina's crystal tucked in pocket. (The guard in the jail recorded "pet rock" on my list of confiscated possessions.)

Uncle Bill, my 51-year-old gay uncle, slept through this departure. He didn't really approve.

On the bus to the station, I blankly stared at my METRO map, which by then was engraved on my brain, but it helped me feel more secure. A man about my age, early 30s, in a three-piece suit, trenchcoat, with briefcase in hand, sat next to me. He asked me if I needed help to figure out where to go. "Oh no," I said. "I know it by heart, but thank you." He then said, "Good luck today." I wondered how he knew. My practical garb must have given me away. Or perhaps I looked like a dyke about to face an army of cops. Turned out he's a graphic artist, and in his spare time he draws cartoons for *The Washington Blade*. A nice way to start my day. We are everywhere.

Tuesday morning, D.C.

"I'll never find my affinity group; I'll never find my affinity group," I say to myself, as I walk from the METRO station to the Supreme Court amidst hundreds of people gathering. I just knew my dream of participating in this action would be shattered. How would I face my friends back home? Oh, goddess, please help me find them. Please help me find them.

The opening ritual had already begun, led by Starhawk. There they are. Ah, safe. Signs and banners, buttons, bubbles, kisses and hugs, everywhere. We danced, we sang, we spiraled, we circled, we wove a web of love and unity. We brought our friends and lovers to the circle. We invoked our lovers and friends who have died from AIDS, our lesbian mothers and gay fathers who have lost their children, our comrades who have been victims/survivors of homophobic and sexist violence. We invoked Barbara Deming and other lesbian warriors. Hell, we brought everybody there to be with us. And we blessed the earth and ourselves. And we wept. Many of us, with joy and love and anger and pride.

Engraved prominently across the front of the U.S. Supreme Court building are the words, "Equal Justice Under Law." We are so right to be here today. Damn them. Damn them.

Tuesday morning, Pre-Arrest

We couldn't get anywhere near the speakers, there were so many people. Food, Not Bombs, a collective from Massachusetts, fed us. Goddess only knows what made me eat. My stomach had been taken over by butterflies. But I ate. Good thing, because it was the last food I'd have for almost 24 hours.

Waiting in line at the port-a-jane, I talked with gay historian Allan Berube. I saw his slide show, "Marching to a Different Drummer: Lesbian and Gay Americans During World War II," in Toronto in 1985. He's wearing a T-shirt on which is printed a photograph of his lover who died from AIDS.

I periodically glance toward the courthouse to see the police gather...and gather...and gather. The lines are up. The streets are blocked. Buses stand ready to cart us away. They're all wearing riot gear. I'm afraid.

I love my affinity group. Clear-thinking and calm. And Minga always has a song.

There goes LIPS, the lesbian affinity group leading off the action. It's hard to see what's happening over there. I think I see the PWAs on the steps. The first set of steps is covered with people. The PWAs sit down. Everything looks very confusing. We trust it's a case of organization in the midst of chaos. It reminds me of the white water rafting trip I took down the West Branch of the Penobscot River. When the guides said, "Paddle," you paddled, and you didn't ask questions. We had a near-perfect run. When the CD organizer says, "Go," we'll go.

Tuesday morning, Storming the Court

It's our turn. We link arms. Sarah, Minga, me, Joan, Susan J., Denise, Julie, Susan M., Shirley, Amy Beth and Sally are doing support work. We sing "When the Dykes Come Marching In," more out of nervousness, I think, than a liking for the song. Singing helps you feel your courage. I found that to be true many times during the next 48 hours. Singing helps you feel what is important.

With heads high, eyes riveted on the eyes of the policemen in front of us (They were men; I saw no women until later.), we walked up to the barricade, squeezing as close to the police as we could. I had to tell a television cameraman to move.

All the heartfelt words I had planned to share with the police quickly left my brain. All I could spit out was, "Excuse me, sir. I need to speak with my Supreme Court justices." I ended up saying that over and over, paraphrasing it now and then, as I looked this Black police officer in the eye.

He'd occasionally smile, and once he said, "Actually, I'd like to go speak with

them, too." Meanwhile, still with arms linked, we were taking mini-steps forward.

It's difficult to walk past, over, under, or through a wooden barricade with a line of cops standing shoulder to shoulder. We edged closer and closer. I saw Julie push the wooden barricade. Finally, the police parted and let us walk to the plaza in front of the building.

"Please sit down so you don't get hurt," he bellowed. Three of us stayed linked together. I kept walking, conscious of Sarah and Minga next to me as I gently tugged on their arms. I wanted to see how far we could get. I also totally believed in our right to walk up the steps and go inside. "I have to go speak with my Supreme Court justices, sir," I said to this new cop looming before us. We got a little farther. Three more descended on us. We sat. I saw a group of PWAs being taken away.

Tuesday morning, The Arrest

They handcuffed us. I chose non-cooperation. Most of us did. I saw the cops roughly roll Sarah over to handcuff her. I thought for sure my arms were going to be pulled out of their sockets. Goddess, this hurts. One on each arm, they pulled. My body instinctively tightened. I think it helped. Down the steps was the worst. Once to the bus, I decided to walk. I prayed we'd be put on the same bus. We were.

The eight of us who are white watch to make sure Shirley, who is Black, does not get treated differently.

Tuesday morning, Post-Arrest

Arrested around 10:30 or 11 a.m. Maybe earlier. For us the action ended quickly. From the bus, we watched people dragged and processed. They pulled one man down the stairs face front and dropped him heavily on the ground. We yelled angrily out the windows. We had become Jane Doe, Connie Lingus, Jane Doe, Sharon Kowalski, Jane Doe, Adrienne Rich, Sharon Kowalski, Jane Doe, and Jane Doe.

I'm so proud of Julie. Tall, thin, narrow-faced, proper Wellesley professor who, a month ago at the CD training, adamantly stated she'd do whatever had to be done to leave as quickly as possible after her arrest. But right now, she's Adrienne Rich.

We sang and danced on the long stairwell outside Cellblock B with The Names Project, old tunes, new tunes, made-up tunes. They chanted "We Like Dykes." We chanted "We Like Fags." The guards made us, the women, move to the front of the line. They thought we were instigating the noise. We were.

The first of many holding cells. Hours and hours of waiting, hunger, and boredom. How I wish I had tried to bring in a book.

"Do you want to stop right now and have a meeting?" I asked my comrade when I saw an officer pressuring her heavily to answer a series of questions. She nodded, looking scared, puzzled, and relieved all at once. "We're going to stop now," I politely said to the officer. I then did the same with another comrade and her interrogator.

I didn't die. I said "NO" to a cop and I didn't die, and I don't feel like I'm a bad person.

We met, we hugged, we made decisions, we sang, we cheered people filing into cells. "We Like Dykes" and "We Like Fags" were chanted frequently during the next 24 hours.

Nine Mad Muses arrested. Nine still with us after the first processing at Cellblock B.

Tuesday, Later

Over to Superior Court. They lost our paperwork. Back to Cellblock B. Back to Superior Court. The third holding cell. They all have stainless steel toilets with a very narrow rim. We join LIPS, the first group arrested. Oh, goddess, I'm in a cell with Amber Hollibaugh. Oh, my heart. This alone was worth the arrest.

The officials screwed up the paperwork of one of the LIPS. They're afraid she'll be separated from them. All the LIPS will stay in solidarity with her if the court of-

ficer doesn't take her, too. Should that happen, and the officers want to take us first to be arraigned, we'll refuse.

The lawyers come. They fill us in on the legal hullabaloo. I notice I feel irritated each time I hear the legal rundown. What is that about? I want all of us to stay...and stay...and stay... That's what.

The lawyers come back later and tell us 840 people have been arrested. We cheer, we weep with pride. I want all 840 of us to stay...and stay...and stay. And why the fuck did we tell the cops everything that was going to happen? They were too well-prepared. (Though they weren't prepared for the numbers.) This isn't a fuckin' game. Why does it feel like we're playing a fuckin' game? Why the fuck aren't we coming back to do it again the minute we get out? We aren't taking ourselves seriously. Why the fuck aren't we taking ourselves more seriously?

Tuesday, Later

Some of the Mad Muses are giving their names. They've decided to pay and leave. Enough of us are staying. "Adrienne Rich" is still with us. I love you, Julie.

LIPS leave to be arraigned. We wait... wait...wait. Then to a holding cell behind the courtroom. There are many of us and the cell is very small. More legal info. They're going to charge us with parading and demonstrating. The plea bargain? If we plead guilty, they'll drop one charge, fine us \$50 rather than \$100, and/or sentence us to three days in jail. Or, we can pay \$100 and leave with no record. Last chance for that option.

We go around. Several affinity groups are represented. "I'm going to plead guilty and refuse to pay the fine," I say. "I'll tell the commissioner I'll contribute the money, instead, to my local gay and lesbian youth group."

There, I said it. Oh, shit. I could end up in the slammer. I miss Sherrill. I'm scared. I think about my mother. What if no one else goes with me? What if everyone changes their minds at the last minute? What if I get hurt? What if? What if?

"You are doing, absolutely, the right thing for you to be doing," I tell myself. And I remember the AIDS quilt. And I remember the vision of 800,000 dykes and fags taking over the capital. And I think of all the injustices I read about in the gay and lesbian press, day after day. And I think about the military budget. "This is, absolutely, the right thing for you to be doing."

Six of the Mad Muses, Julie included, will plead guilty and refuse to pay the fine. Others choose that, too. A couple women, from another group, will plead not guilty, with the intention of not appearing for the trial. That won't be the first bench warrant out on them, they tell us. Several women will pay the \$100; others will plead guilty and pay the fine. We give them our names.

Hours pass. They keep calling us Adrienne Rich, Jane Doe, Sharon Kowalski, Connie Lingus. And they're getting our numbers screwed up.

I wish Sarah would stay. Damn it. I'll miss her.

Tuesday, Later

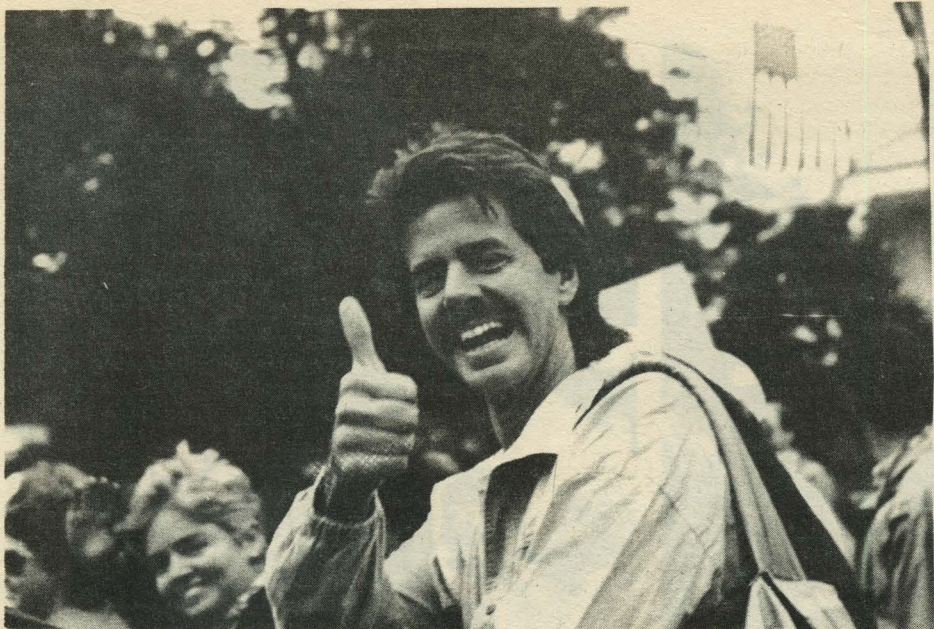
"I have a dream that someday gay men and lesbians will be granted equal protection under the U.S. Constitution, and that's why I'm here, Your Honor." Oh shit, I called her "Your Honor." I didn't want to fuckin' call her "Your Honor." She tells us the court cannot accommodate our offer that we send the money elsewhere. "No, ma'am, I will not pay the fine. I choose three days."

Lorrie, a woman from another affinity group, tells her, "I am guilty of being a lesbian. It's something I've dreamed of being guilty of forever." Lorrie chooses three days.

Denise chooses three days.

We tell our other comrades what we did as they file into court while we file out. Joan, Minga, Julie, and Susan J. will choose three days, they tell us.

Denise and I and Lorrie hug when we return to the holding cell. We're proud. But with a new layer of fear. We cry.



Wednesday, October 14, D.C. Jail

It must be 2 a.m. and we're still being processed. Joan, Susan, and Minga are no longer with us. Denise peeks out of the shower and asks the guard for "more of that shampoo." We roar. She was referring to the insecticide we'd been handed. You learn how to let it run through your fingers unnoticed.

Bright orange jumpsuits, cotton and polyester blend, ripped here and there. You're lucky if you get one that doesn't pull at your crotch.

We hear they wake the women up at 3 a.m. to eat breakfast. Denise finds a bug in her oatmeal. They're still calling her Connie Lingus. With us now are Terry from The Names Project, Pat from Seattle, and Jen from California. I eat only an apple, because I want to feel as good as I can. If I eat this food, I'll feel like shit.

Wednesday, October 14, Later

Maybe it's 5 a.m. We're on our way to our cellblock. "Are you those gays that got arrested yesterday?" a Black woman yells from behind the electronic gate. With her stand about 15 other women, all women of color. We nod. "Alright! Alright for the gays! Alright for the gays!" she yells, raising her fist in the air. We chant until our gate opens. As we take our leave, she says, smiling, and with a twinkle in her eye, "There's some butches in there, if you know what I mean."

All the guards are Black. All the inmates we see are Black or Hispanic or Asian or Native American. Except us. We're not surprised.

Wednesday, Later

Number 36. That's my cell. The narrow electronic door clangs shut behind me. My home for two days. I'm relieved that the small, narrow window on my cell door is not covered with glass.

The walls are institutional pastel yellow. Sanitary napkins line the narrow, cold, steel rim of the toilet. Female ingenuity at its best. The boxes come in handy, too. M., a Hispanic woman in on drug and prostitution charges, described to me the fine art of clandestine coffee making using the sanitary napkin boxes. 14 days in isolation if you get caught.

I'm so glad to be able to sleep.

Wednesday, Later

My cell door clangs open. "I guess that means I'm supposed to walk out," I say to myself. I see Julie, Terry, Pat, Lorrie, Denise, and Jen. We're given a lousy choice — to submit to a complete physical examination, or stay on medical lockup, meaning you can't leave your cell for meals or for the couple additional hours they let you out. Shit, I thought. If I'm going to be in here, I want to be able to talk with the other women.

Terry and Jen choose medical lockup. The rest of us follow the guard to the infirmary. I'm afraid again.

"Do you have a problem with nervousness?" the intake worker asks me. I burst into laughter. With a smile, I say, "I'm in the D.C. jail and about to undergo a complete physical, and you're asking me if I have a problem with nervousness." She laughs, too.

Tommy, a gay technician (He came out to each of us.), ripped up some of my paperwork in an attempt to save me from some tests. No luck.

The fuckin doctor made two women bleed. He scraped and scraped and scraped.

The nurse got mad when she noticed my paperwork missing. Yes, there were ways we were treated differently than other inmates. Yes, it's because we're white. Yes, it's because we're more privileged than the other women here. The racism, the internalized racism, the sexism, the internalized woman-hatred, the classism, the homophobia sicken me. But I still don't want my blood drawn and some fuckin male doctor's hand up my cunt.

We missed lunch. They serve it at 10 a.m. They offer us trays of food back at the cellblock. I decline. One way you keep centered here is to not eat. It's easier for them to control and intimidate people who are bouncing off the walls from the diet. Keep them aggressive, out-of-control, and unfocused. It's dangerous to have clear-thinking, assertive prisoners in here.

Julie grabs a tray and walks in her very upright way over a table. She sits. Then, turning around, she asks the guard, "Do you have any napkins?" Everyone, inmates and guards included, burst out laughing.

I laugh too. Then I go back to my cell and cry. That fuckin exam was awful.

Wednesday, Later

They let all the women out of our cells for about an hour in the afternoon. M. lends me a book from her stash. We make phone calls. We don't know our departure date. We aren't sure if they'll count our first day in holding cells towards our sentence. We talk with the March office. We learn quickly not to sit on the tables as we use the phones next to them. "We eat on those tables," a Black woman yells to me, as I break the cardinal rule. I apologize. I tell my comrades so they won't make the same mistake.

I cry hearing Sherrill's voice. And Sage's, and Susan's, and Mars'. I missed Sherrill's birthday.

Goddess, this place is noisy. The radio blares from the control center, so the TV gets turned up to the max so people can hear it, and everyone screams their conversations to be heard above the TV and the radio.

"Where's my wife?" a woman shouts, racing past.

I talk with some of the women. Y. is a lesbian and pregnant. "I've lived the lesbian life since I was 13 years old," she tells me. Her baby is due today. G. awaits sentencing for murder. Her male lover got life today for murder. She's crying. I try to comfort her.

Back in the cells.

Wednesday, Later

The door clangs open. Supper time. I'm ecstatic to see over-boiled zucchini and three scrawny celery sticks on my tray. I offer my meat to the woman across from me. "Sure," she beams, looking at me as if I lost all touch with reality. She offers me her vegetables. "I never eat this rabbit food," she says, laughing. I take them, thanking her profusely. I distribute the rest of my food to the women near me. All of

them give me their zucchini and celery sticks. "We'd just throw them out," they say. I'm deeply touched.

They let us out of our cells for an hour or so after supper. Denise and several other women are sitting around a table reading something aloud. I walk over. *Whorehouse Sluts*, or something like that. They're reading the lesbian sex scenes. Goddess, most of the women in this cellblock are lesbians. I want to laugh and cry at the same time.

I hang out there for a while. Then I go sit with some other women. R. tells me about her husband and children and the good job she had before she landed here.

B.'s been here for nine months waiting for an opening in a drug treatment center.

Story after story of women being locked up for fighting back in self-defense, or for trying to survive on the streets.

Back to our cells.

Later, Don't Know What Day

The door clangs open. Goddess, what time is it? It can't be time to get up yet. "They're letting them out," I hear several women yell. "They're letting the gays out."

"We're leaving," I say to myself in disbelief. I run over to M.'s cell with her book I borrowed. "I wish all of you were coming with us." We say good-bye to the women watching us from their tiny cell door windows. I'm so relieved we're getting out. I'm so fuckin sad the rest of them are staying. This fuckin country. I hate it. I hate it.

Three hours must have passed between the time we walked out of our cells and the time we walked into the fresh air. They put us out on the streets at 2 a.m. with no money. They said we'd have to come back the next day for our money and personal possessions. Fuckers. They probably always put women out alone in the streets at 2 a.m. with no way to get anywhere. We, at least and thank goddess, had a large band of loving support people waiting for us.

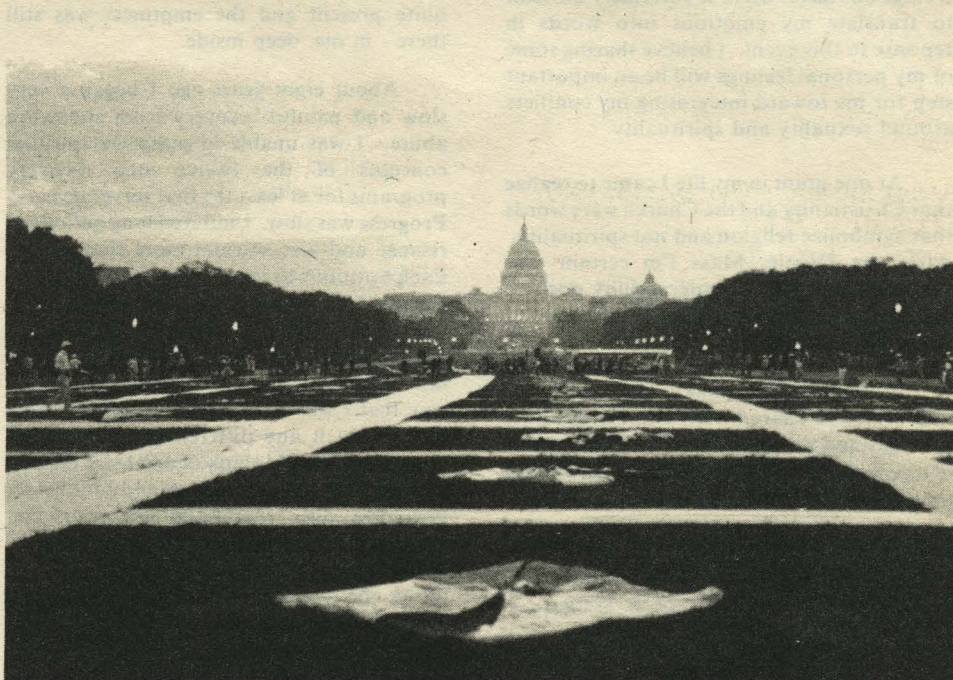
There's Sally. We hug and hug and hug her. Cheese, crackers, apples, oranges, bananas, juice, peanuts...a food orgasm. Then we're brought to a church where we sleep the rest of the night.

Thursday, October 15, 1987

The Senate passed the Helms amendment, I read in the newspaper. I can't believe it. I can believe it. And I get in touch with a very important reason to do civil disobedience. Unless we do it over and over again, it doesn't eliminate the oppression. But it *does* change the people who do it.

We changed. I saw Julie change right before my eyes. We learned stuff about ourselves that we didn't know before — what we'd die for if it came to that, our ability to say "No," our power in a collective process. We saw ourselves shatter self-imposed limits. It's like a chain breaks that's been keeping your brain in check.

I'm still sifting through the experience. I don't know what everything is that I should learn from it. But I do know I'd do it again in a minute. And I know I'd do it in Augusta.





THE DIGNITY MASS PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Of all the possible choices, why would a lesbian feminist in Washington D.C. for the Gay Rights March choose to attend a Catholic church service? In my own mind, lesbian feminist is a phrase incompatible with Christian Church, of any denomination, due to the patriarchal nature of that institution. Having recognized the impact of patriarchy on my own life as a woman, as a feminist, as a lesbian, I feel that my interest in the church may be somewhat of an enigma. Trying to find a balance in my life between sexuality and spirituality has been, at the least, perplexing. I'm drawn to try to understand how any feminist or how any lesbian or gay man can successfully integrate the Church as a positive aspect in their lives. I feel my own struggle to do so has been long, painful, and mostly unsuccessful.

Attending the Dignity Mass had quite an impact on me. The experience has been profoundly thought provoking. I believe taking part in that service provided a space for some healing to take place in me. I keep trying, but have found it extremely difficult to translate my emotions into words in response to this event. I believe sharing some of my personal feelings will be an important step for me toward integrating my conflicts around sexuality and spirituality.

At one point in my life I came to realize that Christianity and the Church were words that symbolize religion and not spirituality. After the Dignity Mass I'm certain that Christian worship is a successfully positive experience, and a deeply spiritual one, for many gay people.

In order to help make sense out of all this, I wish to share briefly some of my own spiritual and religious history. I was raised in a very small village fundamentalist church that called itself nondenominational not was in strong alliance with the conservative Baptist churches in the area. I was a sensitive child who believed adults and accepted what they told me as factual. I never questioned their validity. I internalized the fear, hatred and lack of self-respect beamed at me by many of the religious leaders and teachers of my childhood. When I left home at the age of seventeen I also left the church. As an adult I returned several times, trying different branches of Christian fundamentalism -- looking to fill the emptiness deep inside. I always left, disappointed and disillusioned, unable to accept many of the beliefs but never quite shedding the hope that I should be able to find love, acceptance, peace and happiness in the church. This pattern accompanied me through the next twelve years of self-abuse, no self-esteem, fearfulness and abusive relationships. I never found the spiritual fulfillment that I wanted and needed.

After much pain and difficulty, I began to make some different choices for my life. First I became a feminist, then later came to recognize myself as a lesbian. I became aware of how the patriarchal attitudes of the church had affected my life and how incongruent those attitudes were with my life choices and experiences. I was also raising a son and I wanted to provide positive spiritual experiences for him - I was still wanting those for myself. One happy day I found the Feminist Spiritual Community which was wonderful for me but not a possibility for my son. So... I found a more liberal Protestant church that I attended with my son. There were feminists in the congregation and one of the ministers was a woman whose ideas were very feminist although she did not identify herself as a feminist. There was at least one gay man in the congregation that I knew. I suspected there might be lesbians in that church, too, but I never knew for sure. That particular church practiced the Christian principles that it said it believed. The church members did a lot of good in their community and I saw them as a positive example of Christian love. But... it still didn't fit - it didn't feel like quite the right place for me. The patriarchal attitudes were quite present and the emptiness was still there - in me, deep inside.

About eight years ago I began a very slow and painful recovery from substance abuse. I was unable to grasp the spiritual concepts of the twelve step recovery programs for at least the first several years. Progress was slow. I suffered long periods of relapse and was suicidal more than once. Each bottom was lower than the one before. Finally, last spring, at the lowest point in my whole life, I gave up. I quit struggling and acknowledged my own "unableness". I did not want to continue to live my life in the way that I was living it and I did not know how to do it any differently. I had tried everything I could think of and I was tired of trying. I felt utterly hopeless and completely powerless over everything and everyone, including myself and my life. Since then, I have become more willing to do all the things the twelve step programs suggest for recovery. That was six months prior to the march. During those six months I had begun to feel a spiritual connectedness to the universe and to other people. I had begun to feel love and peace in my life, and self-acceptance. Thus...I arrived in Washington at a new place in my life. Many of the things (probably all of them, in some way) I chose to do during that time in Washington were things that I felt would enhance the new spiritual growth taking place in me.

One of those things was to attend the gay AA meeting on Saturday night, along with hundreds of other recovering gay and lesbian people - about one third of them from California, I think. That was a wonderful meeting and I left there having received and strong message of hopefulness and possibility.

One of the other things I did was to attend the Dignity Mass. In my adult life I have done very little to share with other people. I have wanted so much to write about this experience -- but doing it has been very difficult.

Dignity is an organization of gay Catholics who are no longer allowed to hold their services in the Catholic church. "A Special Liturgical Celebration for the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights" was sponsored by Dignity Washington at St. Margaret's Episcopal Church.

The church was filled to overflowing - my guess is at least five hundred people attended this service and about ninety-five per cent of those people were men. From my limited experience in attending Catholic mass, I would say the format of the service was probably quite similar to most Catholic masses but that the content was probably quite different. The music was wonderful and included The Dignity Contemporary Choir, The Mt. Vernon Brass Quintet, and the organist Joseph O'Donnell who was great. Everything inside the church was exactly as I would have expected with one important difference. The Gay Liberation banner, with all of its brightness and beauty, was present in place of, and at the station of, the Episcopal flag. The language of the service was both as gender inclusive and as degenderized as possible, I think.

Some Noteworthy Moments:

the message - delivered from the pulpit by Paula Reider from San Antonio. She was both realistic and encouraging - also, a wonderful storyteller. One thing she reminded us of that has stayed with me is that gay people could get all the rights and legislation they could possibly as for and that might not make our lives much better. Because those things will not diminish other people's bias, prejudice, and hatred. That was pretty discouraging to hear.

The Rite of Blessing and Sprinkling Water - The church leaders came up through the aisles shaking long fronds dipped in Holy Water over the entire congregation. The blessing included prayers to both Loving Father and Nurturing Mother asking for forgiveness and healing, protection from all illness and evil, freedom for all our bodies and souls from all danger and hatred, and pureness of heart for each of us.

Readings - In contrast to each other, three readings from letters or documents written by church officials from high places. One was a general statement that spoke of love and acceptance toward all people, regardless of differences. Another was a letter of derogatory tone stating their feelings about homosexual people in the church and how they should be "cared for" (i.e. discriminated against). The third was the wonderfully empowering statement adapted by Dignity/USA, which I was deeply moved by.

The Communion Service - The entire congregation participated, forming lines in the directions of the four corners of the church. I wanted to participate in this and I did, although I really felt self-conscious - not quite knowing what to do at a Catholic communion service. It is done rather differently than the Protestant ones I'm familiar with.

The Call Of The Departed - A person from each of the ten regions of Dignity USA stood in their place and read long lists of the people from their regions who had died from AIDS. The church was still during this service except for the one voice reading slowly, solemnly, and loudly enough to be heard-occasionally faltering - and the quiet weeping of hundreds of people feeling their sadness, pain and love.

Awake from your slumber!
Arise from your sleep!
A new day is dawning for all those who weep.
The people in darkness have seen a great light....
We are sons of the morning
We are daughters of day
The One who has loved us has brightened our way
The Lord of all kindness has called us to be
A light for his people, to set their hearts free
...Let us build the city of God
May our tears be turned into dancing!
For the Lord, our light and our love, has turned the night into day!!!

This hymn was sung with enormous pride, joy and strength. The tempo is upbeat. The voices ranged the entire scale and swelled to full volume. The power of this singing filled me to overflow -filled the church, filled the city, and I know reached out into the universe - healing as it went. Caught up in the power of this moment, I wept with joy and laughed in celebration. I wanted to embrace everyone I could reach - to hug them, kiss their cheeks, and shout my gladness and pride. All this was reflected back to me in the faces of the dozens of those near me. What a miraculous moment - A Gift. I am filled just to remember it.

To me, the words of this hymn express the essence of each of us. Those in Dignity, in the gay movement, those joined in the fight against AIDS, and all the people in this world who are growing in love, acceptance and willingness to make a difference in whatever way they can. These strong words express hope, self-acceptance, celebration and faith.

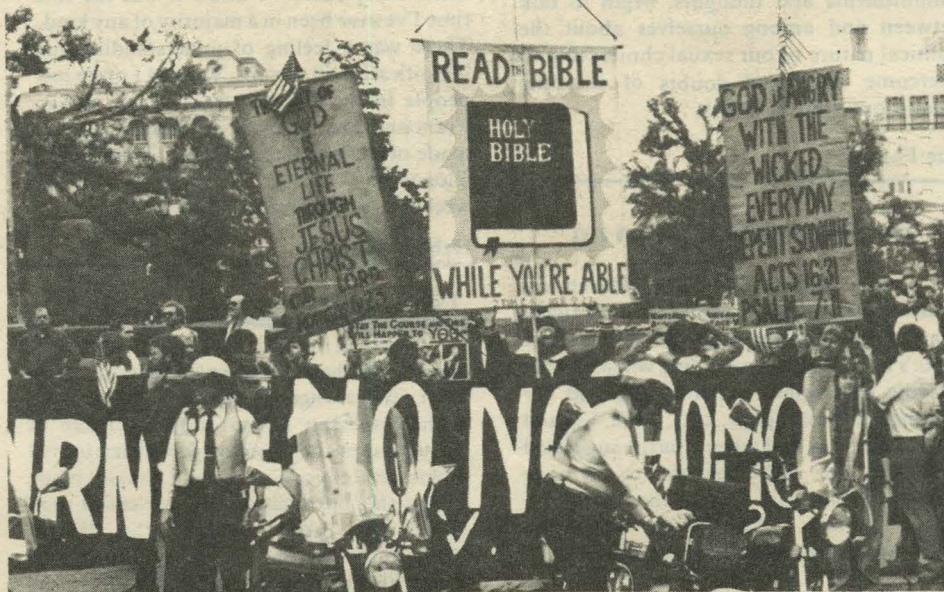
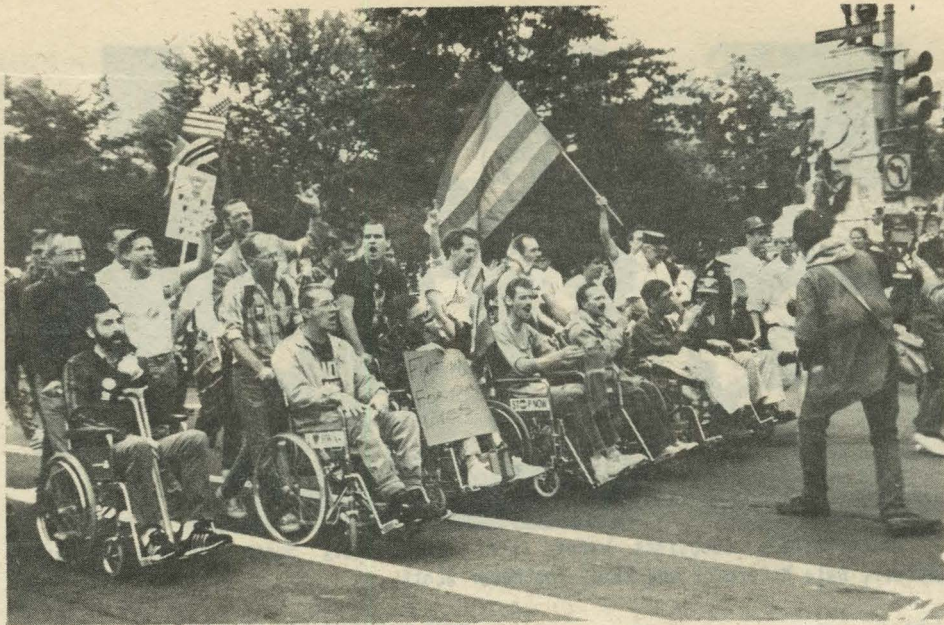
I still feel I have not adequately expressed my feelings about this meaningful moment in my life that I will never forget. The Dignity people are a shining example of faith despite the force of oppression in all their lives. I am grateful to have shared that time with them -- and to have shared this writing with each of you.

Anne Wing

Someone had the good sense to plan on feeding the masses. There are three different grains, fruit, vegetables, soup and juice. A sensible meal - sigh, no frills, no coffee. Donations accepted. The press conference begins at 10:00. The speakers are competent, prepared, non-confrontational. They say why we're here, present our grievances and list our demands. As I listen, I can't help but wish they were a bit more stirring, a little less respectable. As the conference draws to a close, a voice from the crowd bellows "this time give the correct numbers." The first speaker retrieves the mike: "the turnout for the march was 650,000. NOT 200,000 as reported by the media." The crowd echoes its assent. We're tired of all the lies.

To be arrested one has to slip through the police line and enter the plaza area behind. An official decision has been made to allow only ten to twenty protestors at a time to go through police lines. With 600 or so waiting to be arrested it's obvious that it's going to be a long wait, but gay people know how to amuse themselves: "2-4-6-8, how do you know your wife is straight?" brought nary a smile from the officers. However, a chorus of "Gay cops don't smile" did the trick. Singing was another pastime - the standards from "When the dykes go marching in" to "We shall overcome" to "Hokey Pokey" filled the air. Overall, the demonstrators and supporters were a lively, well-behaved bunch. The one show of violence occurred when protestors who tried to push through before their turn were clubbed by an over-enthusiastic cop. Said cop was immediately removed from demo duty. The powers that be knew that for this one day "the whole world is watching." After a while, even the cops loosened up, trading quips with the crowd, asking about home towns, recommending restaurants and their favorite tourist attractions. Under all that armor, it appears that cops can be people, too. The end of a long day, the final contingent gets arrested and the cops go home.

Alan Hamm



The photographs by Diane Elze give us an intimate view of the occasion. Diane has captured more than a record of a moment in time. Look at the faces. They accurately portray those things we all were experiencing--the joy, the sadness, the seriousness, the elation of being a people coming together to show the world who we are and to demand our rightful place in that world.



Atmosphere, continued

Marvelously inventive banners testified to the artistic strength in our community. The many marching bands were glorious in attire and effect. At the risk of sounding chauvinistic I submit that no drum majorettes have ever stepped higher. There were some great signs. One of my favorites was a quotation from some Helms clone that read: "If we give Civil Rights to homosexuals, everyone is going to want them!"

Yes, the energy in Washington was high. Overall the feeling was of vibrant solidarity, compassion and love. How bizarre that circumstances require so much good energy gets wasted in a ridiculous battle against reaction and prejudice. Yet, we marchers were empowered by our experience. Reinvigorated we will continue the struggle.

Sive Neilan

* * * * *
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SEX AND POLITICS

I wasn't able to go to the March on Washington on October 11, but over dinner last week, I heard all about the town Meeting on Sex and Politics. Sponsored by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, it was one of the most interesting events in a very exciting weekend, according to my two friends, downright provocative.

There were four speakers and three commentators, though most of the thought-provoking ideas came from the speakers in the first half of the program. Sex, it was said, is down-played in the gay community, in order that the life-style be more acceptable to the general public. Instead, we stress "love." The only way sex is discussed these days, is in the context of AIDS and safe-sex. This is dangerous, according to one speaker, because it negates the validity of our own sexuality. "Sex positive" is a phrase which came up. John Preston spoke of needing to feel proud of our choices, not to be apologetic, not to defend our sexuality as something which we can't help. Over the years, I am sure we have all heard our well-meaning defenders (at legislative hearings, for example) speak for gayness as something beyond our control. Even in the midst of "gay and proud" rallies and gatherings, the prevailing theme is our love for one another, minimizing always our healthy sexual feelings and attractions.

Jade McGleughlin's presentation was about "lesbian bed death." Lesbians talk about "it" endlessly, but don't do it anymore. A great many women are more into politics than sex, perhaps avoiding their sexual desires. When, she asks, do we get together to talk about the positive things about sex, about innovation, about sexual desire? What, in fact, do we do to create it in our lives? According to McGleughlin, it's the desire itself which is dead, and to develop it, we need two things: 1) a safe place, and 2) recognition by someone in power, someone who matters to us. Heterosexuals, for example, get that recognition and encouragement from their parents. We have very few, if any, role models who validate our lesbian sexuality. We find ourselves, instead, always defending ourselves, getting stuck in the same old arguments, the same old places. As a result, we are never given the opportunity to push ourselves to our limits. When we do push ourselves politically, it becomes erotic (or at least it can, if we don't avoid that outcome); hence, sexual excitement is introduced into our lives.

Carrying the sex and politics link to an interesting conclusion, Margaret Cerullo says, in response to the Hardwick Decision, that every time we make love, we engage in civil disobedience. But the real fight is not for the right to keep our privacy private, but in fact, to be able to be public. Are we, in other words, trying to re-install the locks on our closet doors, to keep them out and us in? It's "time we take that show on the road," said Cerullo. Everyone cheered.

Finally—though perhaps not originally presented in this order—Billy Jones represented the "fringe element." It's important, he said, to validate and acknowledge those in the community who are more threatening in their sexual practices than most of us are, such as those who are, or choose, man/boy love, s&m, hookers, transvestites, or prisoners engaging in sex. He believes that when the gay community puts down those among us who are less acceptable, it is much the same as the rest of the world turning against gays and lesbians as a whole. Although the fringe element may play a valuable role as front-runners for the rest of us in our struggle, I have certain misgivings. We are asked to accept, without question, all these diverse groups (and others, I'm sure), lumped together as the "fringe element." While we may acknowledge each one's right to follow his or her own course, we should not necessarily feel obliged to endorse activity or behavior which we find personally unacceptable. In effect, this is much closer to the reality of the analogy which Jones gives. The gay and lesbian community may never get a personal endorsement from each and every straight person in the world, but we expect nothing less than equal rights.



Among Maine's lobbyists were: (l-r) Diane Elze, Susan Farnsworth, Bert LeClair, Dale McCormick and Randy Toothaker Scott.

The conclusion seems to be that we must begin. We must renew and refreshen our commitments and thoughts, begin to talk between and among ourselves about the political nature of our sexual choices and to overcome fears and doubts of standing behind our vital sexuality.

Sue Farrell

ORGANIZING MAINE TO GO

I first heard about the March on Washington last spring, after the civil rights hearing (LD 602) in Augusta. We were at Slate's in Hallowell unwinding when Charlie Grindle mentioned a march planned for October in Washington, D.C. Well, Val and I loved the idea and when Charlie suggested rounding up some people to arrange transportation and spread the word, we agreed to help. The Maine March on Washington Committee was born.

Some time slipped by and I found myself trying to set up a meeting during the summer. Several people had expressed an interest in getting involved and we really needed to sit down and come up with a game plan. (A piece of advice - try to avoid summer organizing!) After several memos and phone calls we did manage to hold our first meeting. Lucie Bauer was the star attraction - she brought information that Midcoast NOW had received from the people in Washington, D.C. who were planning the march. That was the first information of any kind (except the date) that I had seen in Maine and it was a relief! Now we had an idea of what was going on and what needed to be done.

During the weeks that followed, it became apparent that meetings and the committee structure were not the way to go. In order to reserve busses, trains, and hotel rooms we needed to know by early August how many people from Maine were planning to go and we had hardly started working yet. Michael Rosetti (who organized the summer Portland March), Diane Elze, and MLGPA came to the rescue and the organization began to take place by phone. Michael started looking into train seats, Diane worked on busses, and I looked for transportation within Maine. Meanwhile, Carl and Mitchell were spreading posters in Augusta, Lucie was valuable mid-coast resource, and other people (thank you, Sadhbh!) pitched in.

We had some disagreement about how many people to expect from Maine. Diane was optimistic, Michael was pragmatic, and I had no idea what to expect. (We eventually fell somewhere in the middle with close to three hundred Mainers going to Washington, D.C.) How to get everyone there? We decided to have two options available, either by train or by bus, that would encourage people to go. Going by train would give people the whole weekend in Washington, D.C., while going by bus was the economy route - drive down, march, and drive back. We hoped that both methods would give the passengers a chance to get to know each other and capture the atmosphere of the march.

Michael and Diane found a hotel close to downtown Washington, the Hotel Harrington, for the Maine contingent. People riding the train needed a place to stay Saturday night, along with several people who were driving or flying down. The hotel was an experience in itself. What a feeling to

walk into the lobby after a 14 hour ride and see March on Washington buttons and t-shirts everywhere! I know it was the first time I've ever been in a majority of any kind. There was a feeling of understanding and identification in the air. Val and I often met people in the elevator from as far as San Francisco and as close as Boston and we made new friends from Maine. It really was a once in a lifetime experience. For one weekend, we were all safe to be out!

Debbie Atwood

Lobbying Day continued

The thing I found most helpful about the meeting is that I now know who to call in their offices when we have a problem. Each Congressperson has an aide in charge of health issues and another specializing in civil rights and education. I have already made use of this information, when I called each office to lobby against the Helms amendment to the AIDS appropriations bill. This amendment would not allow any federal money to be spent on educational programs that "promote or encourage, directly or indirectly, homosexual sexual activity." This amendment would prevent the frank and open discussion of sex that is essential to good AIDS education.

Here are the names of the staff in each Congressional office. Cut these numbers out and put them in your address book or on the bulletin board so you too can call them. They want to hear from you.

Rep. Brennan Prtld: 772-8240 DC 202-225-6116 Staff in DC, Pat Davis - judiciary. Lori Lemley - health. In Prtld, Mary Farrell. Maggie Murry.

Rep. Snowe Prtld: 780-3394 DC: 202-225-6303. Staff in DC, Jane Calderwood - health, Nancy Lewis - civ rts.

Sen. Mitchell Prtld: 780-3561 DC: 202-224-5344. Staff in DC, Chris Williams - health, Anita Jensen - civ rts, in Prtld, Jeff Porter.

Sen. Cohen Prtld: 780-3575 DC: 202-224-02523. Staff in DC, Winthrop Cashdollar - health, Kim Cothell - judiciary.

Dale McCormick

March Finances

MLGPA Treasurer Diane Elze had provided a financial report on the march. After a total expense of \$10,760.67, only \$689.60 comes from the treasury. Here is the breakdown:

Expenses	
Postage	270.79
Printing	308.20
Hotel	1,356.60
Travel	7,845.00
Bus Parking	6.00
Banner	50.00
Phone	195.88
Supplies	6.60
Donations	
Distributed	721.60
	\$10,760.67
Income	
Donations	925.00
Hotel	1,141.07
Train	5,100.00
Bus 1	580.00
Bus 2	2,325.00
	\$10,071.07

Press Coverage continued

From "The Washington Post" the headline was: "Hundreds of Thousands March for Gay Rights." Continuing: "Shoulder to shoulder, arm in arm and hand in hand, hundreds of thousands of lesbians, gay men and other homosexual rights advocates from across the nation marched past the White House to the Mall yesterday, demanding an end to discrimination based on sexual orientation and appealing for more funds to fight AIDS. The marchers, including many dying of acquired immune deficiency syndrome, the disease that has so devastated the gay community, staged a spirited, colorful procession down Pennsylvania Avenue NW, held a long afternoon rally near the Capitol and made a somber pilgrimage to a giant quilt unfurled on the Mall at sunrise in memory of the estimated 25,000 who have died of AIDS in the United States."

The Post noted that the march "would have astounded Oscar Wilde, the 19th century author and playwright once jailed for engaging in what he called 'the love that dare not speak its name.'"

The reporters paid particular attention to the diversity of the folks, defined by signs, T-shirts, and banners who participated. There were the 24 students from Grinnell College in Iowa who rented two vans and drove 20 hours, the retired nurse from Cleveland who said it had taken her 50 of her 70 years to come out, and a California couple, parents of a gay man who had died three years ago of a condition unrelated to AIDS.

The Post closed its story with the words of Dan Bradley, who headed the Legal Services Corp. during the Carter Administration and who now has AIDS. At the rally he spoke, saying: "I want my obituary to say that in 1982, after years of struggle and a lifetime of fear, I finally had the courage to say, 'I'm gay, I'm proud, I'm gay and I'm proud.'"

"The New York Times" gave the most restrained coverage of the events. In its usual small print, the headline read "200,000 March in Capital for homosexual Rights" (the only paper to use the word homosexual instead of gay in the headline.) It cited a U.S. Park Police estimate that 50,000 people had gathered by 1 p.m. (are they kidding?) and quoted an organizer's estimate of 300,000 (the other papers at least noted that there were 500,000 people, according to organizers.)

With a photo of a sea of people holding their hands high during the rally feature, "The Boston Globe" article headline read "200,000 gays and supporters rally in Washington to press for rights." The Globe focused its story on the comparisons and differences between this march and that of 1979.

"The scene was markedly different from 1979, when the first gay rights march was held here. Many members then sought to keep their sexual preferences private and rallied to protest government interference in the lives of gay people. Crowd estimates at that march ranged from 25,000 to 100,000.

In the years since, marchers said, more homosexuals have acknowledged their sexual preference and have learned to flex their political strength by helping to elect dozens of gay candidates to office.

"In 1979, there was a smaller awareness. Today, there is a more general awareness that political decisions affect people's lives," said Rev. Edward Haugen, 45, of Boston."

And, then there was the "Kennebec Journal," Augusta's daily, with front page coverage as well. "200,000 march on Washington for gay rights, more AIDS funds." The Associated Press story, though slim on details, provided a reasonable snapshot of the intensity and spirit of the day. I would have added a bit of local interest to their story: the Maine chant of "One potato, two potato, three potato, four. When we get home we're gonna bring out some more!" It was good to bring it all back home.

Debbie Curtis