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# MONTANA

## WOMEN'S RESOURCE

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Spring 1984

### *Creative Women*



## Flowers, Friends

by Shawn Marie Gray

Our friendship....  
Covered by a field of snow  
Walked on and much worse  
But nothing is forever  
Please sun, shine bright  
Let us bloom.  
I need to see the light  
Thank you  
Nothing is forever  
Snow melts  
We are growing  
Smiles and happiness fill the season  
Nothing is forever  
I want to live by you always  
Please God, don't let anyone pick you  
Away from me.  
But nothing is forever  
I am lonely  
You are gone  
But maybe you won't stay away....  
Nothing is forever, right?  
The flower....stepped on  
Please snow again.  
So no one can see me growing  
Alone  
Without you....forever.



## Meditations for Women

© Jean Sirius

- ☆ *I am a channel for the powers of healing and of change.*
- ☆ *I unite my will with all womyn who are making new the world.*
- ☆ *I am trust in my sisters: my spirit responds to their love.*
- ☆ *I am compassion for confusion, especially my own.*
- ☆ *I am a summer stream in the dry lands, miraculous and full. My willows are the only trees for miles.*
- ☆ *My eyes grow sharper and stronger every day. I eat what my body needs. I let my body be, all the way out to her edges.*
- ☆ *I am centered and calm, I let life ripen and fall, my will is one with the goddess.*
- ☆ *I see both outward and inward. My prophecy is clear and true.*
- ☆ *I accept all gifts of the goddess calmly, without anxiety, without wanting more, or less, or forever.*



# Creation Now

by Danette Curry

We feel. We experience. We see. We touch. We create. Consciousness is rising and opportunities for exploration and accomplishment are increasing. There is no time like the present for womyn to venture forth, alone or in groups to begin the manifestation of our future reality. A reality of our choosing, of peace, harmony, love, joy, newness and oldness. We can reclaim what is valued from the past and change what we don't like about the present.

We have the technology to create a world free of hunger, pollution, boredom, waste. Never before has so much time and energy been put into knowing ourselves. There is a multitude of techniques to explore personality, spirituality and change behavior.

In *Woman on the Edge of Time* Marge Piercy describes a future society which is fluid enough to accommodate individual expression. By nourishing children and guiding them lovingly the group solidarity is maintained. Power games between the sexes, races, or interest groups are no longer played.

This society has taken the best of high technology and reclaimed village life. Children are not separated from adults in schools but receive learning about the real world in the real world, from friends of all ages. Older people are integrated also. Mundane tasks are performed by machines, leaving people free for more fulfilling work.

Our futures, which begin each moment, are limited only by our imaginations. It is possible for us to have what we want and yearn for. On the individual level each can begin to live a life which will usher in the "new age." First we need to love and accept ourselves, then others. We need to believe we are worth the very best and that it is possible for us to foster change. Each day we can listen to our inner voice and take one step toward that goal which is our heart's desire.

We have the choice. We can live our lives in "quiet desperation" or we can aim to exercise our highest potential.

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# Women's Spirituality Succeeding

by D. Golas

I can only barely touch on what I consider to be the success of women's spirituality and the counterpart, how our spirituality will help us succeed.

There's no way I can think of women's spirituality without first thinking of the Mother, the feminine aspect of Spirit. She is not merely represented but is physically present in our Earth. The manna in the desert She has given us, *is Her body!* To recognize that and give thanks when you eat the Earth is to share in holy communion with Her.

Our spirituality, as women, is inextricably connected with the moon. She's our grandmother of many names—Luna, the Giver of Visions. When you need inspiration, turn to the moon. She has long been known as the Muse of the Arts. It is a long, and patriarchally distorted twist, to lunacy. Lunacy is considered a mental derangement associated with certain phases of the moon. Anne Kent Rush in the book *Moon, Moon* clarifies how the twist occurred.

"It was clear to ancient agricultural peoples that crops grew seasonally in tune with the cycles of the moon, and that women's menstrual cycles and animals' mating cycles were also on a lunar rhythm. The moon was the ultimate principle of fertility in the universe. The moon brought dew in the night to moisten plants after a day's drying. The moon presided over the darkness in which plants germinated. The light of the moon drew life out of the seeds as they slept underground; it drew plants up with the same force with which it drew monthly blood from women in an earthly replica of its own cyclical growth and replenishment. The necessity of the moon and its cycles to all fertility and its regulation was indisputable."

"The cyclical pattern of rebirth was one of the major messages shown by the moon in her periodic disappearance and return, her diminishing and her growth. She went away, but she always returned. What people learned from the example of the lunar cycle was the basic pattern necessary for renewal. Rest, meditation, vision and gestation were as revered a part of the cycle as production. Without one, the others suffer."

"After reading in mythology and ancient cultural customs, I think I've come to the root of this moon madness. These words refer to activities of groups and behavior of individuals exhibited during the seasonal lunar festivals.

This ceremonial behavior at one time was considered sacred in the highest order, and then, with the advent of sunworship and patriarchal castes, the rituals were forbidden and branded *madness, irresponsible.*"

"One also discovers that in very ancient religions the word 'virgin' did not mean 'non-sexual'—it meant 'unmarried'. Vestal virgins, the virgin Diana and the Virgin Mary were originally personifications of independent balanced female power, they have been gradually altered to become images of women which support patriarchal systems."

"Restoration of balance is the task of every aspect of the women's movement and involves a restoration of moon consciousness."

Our herstory is coming to light again and we are of the privileged few in the world to experience it. With every privilege comes a responsibility to ourselves and others. It is for each of us to discover ours.

Women's spirituality is also about corn—the oldest food developed solely by human beings. We as ancient agriculturists worked in harmony with the Corn Mother and genetically created it from a tiny grass. For centuries we as women have grown and prepared the food that has fed the world. To be in touch with our own spirituality is to feed each other.

It is about our actions because they are the reflection of what we truly believe. It's about recycling. How can we truly be Her daughter and rape her by wasting Her resources? It's about returning the power of our menstrual blood to the Earth as a giving back some of the life energy She has given us, instead of throwing it away like garbage. It's about celebrating the cycles of life, the equinoxes and solstices, the births, the menstruations, menopauses and crossing overs.

It's about the occult (that which is unseen). (In this culture they hide so much of the truth that women's studies could be considered occult.) It concerns the use of our spiritual and psychic energies magnified by the power of the circle and other gifts of the Earth. (I have a nuclear disarmament fantasy: that on the day of a nuclear test, circles of people all over the Earth will ask the Spirit of the Metals to cooperate with the peacemakers and refuse to function on the missiles.)

Women's spirituality is about love and all vibrations that raise our soul-self. Every religion that I know of has techniques to raise vibrations: singing, dancing, drumming, meditation. Quartz crystals and colors also



affect vibration. The universal concept that comes closest to embracing vibration is *light*. The power of our prayers is magnified by lighting a candle for them of visualizing them in light.

It is also about being in the present, the place where healing occurs, where we experience our oneness with the universe. Meridel LeSueur in her book *Rites of Ancient Ripening* brings that oneness home in her poem "No Enemy Faces":

None of it was true about our enemies.

We have none.

Women never birth enemy faces

An enemy face is never born

No walls, barriers, closed wombs

The barren and the breastless summer sings  
To the face of lovers.

Birth is with others

and given.

We succeed spiritually to the extent we have begun to live in our Unity, when it's OK:

For a boy to be respected by his peers for his sensitivity;

For a young woman, who has just come into her moon  
(menstruation) to share the happiness of that event  
with her entire school class;

For a lesbian to love a man;

For a grown man to kiss his father on the lips;

For women to leave our jobs, with pay, and go to the  
moonhouses when menstruating to open ourselves  
to our creative energies;

To discuss bisexuality or homosexuality at our friends'  
parents dinner table;

When masturbation, loving ourselves, is discussed as  
freely as brushing our teeth;

When illegitimacy is no longer a term ever used in  
reference to a child.

If we mark the beginning of attempts to overthrow the matriarchy around 1500 BC, then let's remember that our struggle is over 3,400 years old. I think women's spirituality is in the infancy of its rebirth. Most of our time has been taken up with cooking, diapers or meeting our other survival needs. Our struggle has brought growth and we have tasted our freedom. It's a nectar we'll never relinquish. Worshipping as we choose will do nothing but nourish us. We have many a growth spurt to look forward to.

We have succeeded by the undoing of oppressive laws one by one and creating more loving alternatives. Our alternatives will be seen as a threat by those who are vested in the present system of slow but sure suicide. There is a sister who may be put on trial for her naturopathic healing skills. There may be many trials in this community before we're through, but if we stand as one, it will come to an end.

We no longer have to carry brooms to wipe away our footsteps to gather in a circle. We no longer *have* to live with a man. We are no longer denied the right to vote. We are no longer ignorant and powerless to control our fertility. We no longer have to shave our legs and armpits. We no longer can be denied an education. We no longer can be kept from seeing each other. This magazine testifies to our commitment to grow and learn together so that we may each carry our load of the struggle, when and where we feel able, so that the sisterhood may grow stronger and honor our Mother.



H. Barker



by Katie Ayers

# Women in Sports: A Personal View

by Sally Mauk

(dedicated to my tall, five-year-old niece Amy—destined to be a basketball star)

I loved sports growing up; but when I was a teenager, my competitive sports experience consisted of catching my brother's fastball, as he warmed up for an American Legion-sponsored game; shooting baskets with my brother and his friends in our backyard, as they practiced for their high school games; and playing rag football with—you guessed it—my brother and his pals, as they practiced moves for their league play. I was as bona fide a jock as they were, with one big difference: sports for them was a serious business—sanctioned by school officials, parents, and an adoring public. Sports for me was "play" and even sometimes a nuisance, if my participation was not "needed" (i.e. if enough "guys" for a team showed up in the backyard.)

The resentment I often felt then is deeper in hindsight; deeper because times have changed, and I can see what organized sports for girls has done for those born ten, or even five years, later than me. The physical rewards are obvious; less obvious are the rewards of being cheered, instead of razed, for being able to shoot a basket well, or throw a good pitch. I often wonder how different my self-image would be, if my interest in sports had been encouraged, rather than occasionally tolerated. I'd still have a chipped front tooth from banging into Steven E.'s head during a rag football game—but if I had received sympathy for making a good effort instead of a scolding—I know some things about my life (except the tooth), would be different.

I'm delighted of course that changes have occurred. Every time I attend a girls' game, hear the roar of the crowd, and see the looks of pleasure on the athletes' faces, I cheer till I'm hoarse. I'm not cheering because they're winning the contest; I'm cheering because they have the opportunity to participate in the contest *at all*.

The significance of that participation, at its best, means those young females will view their bodies with pride and care; and will feel that physical strength and agility are worthwhile, desired, *female* attributes. They will, in other words, learn what young males have always learned: that being active is more creative than being passive.

If this sounds a bit too dramatic, too significant a weight to put on a young girl learning how to dribble a basketball, or swing a bat—ask yourself why there are still large numbers of people who want to prevent girls from having that seemingly unimportant knowledge. Ask yourself why sex equity in Montana high school athletics is being settled with the threat of a lawsuit; or why competitive team sports for women effectively ends when

they graduate from college, while men have the opportunity to compete until it is *time* for their bodies to rest?

Could it be that those who want to stop (the by now, I hope, unstoppable) progress of women in sports, fear what the progress really means: that women will learn and use the best of what sports can mean for the individual participant—initiative, pride, self-confidence, self-assertion. If one fears those attributes in women, teaching us to dribble could be dangerous; applauding a driving lay-up, could be revolutionary; wildly cheering us on, could change the world forever.



# Ema

by Mary'n Hallock

Her rheumy eyes blink wide with sad surprise to find herself like this. Her fine, strong body exists only in her memory now. What is left is a thin reed sustained only by her stubbornness. She is terribly afraid of her inevitable death.

Ema's face is creased with her thousand worries, which are mostly significant only to her. Her forced, abundant leisure is filled with dreams of disaster. She worries that her daughter works too hard, eats too much, sleeps too little. She worries that the IRS will find fault with her returns and take everything. She worries that her granddaughter will die, or be maimed by an assortment of calamities.

Her wrinkles are, to her, a symbol of the ugliness of her soul. Ema says, when asked to go visiting, "Oh, they don't want to see *me*, I'm so ugly. I have nothing interesting to say." Truthfully, she might say, "I hate myself. Why would others do less?"

She moves carefully through her days, hoarding the energy she needs to do the dishes and the laundry. These are her self-assigned tasks which she extorts from herself for the sin of being a burden on her daughter, for being old. It is not enough. She tries and fails many times a day to do things she is incapable of, trying to pay her way. It doesn't matter that her daughter assures her endlessly that she is not a burden. Reason doesn't suffice, for it is clear to Ema, painfully clear, that she can be nothing but a problem.

Ema was used, when she was vital, to doing for herself in everything. She farmed by herself for years, having watched her dear husband die slowly and then her son, instantly. She dug fence-post holes and mended the old, swaying buildings until even she (long past all her neighbors) saw the futility of it. Ema moved to town then and supported herself and her daughter and half her relatives, through the Depression. It is no wonder that the bite of dependency is so bitter.

The joys she has are meager. She sits, every morning, at the kitchen table, reading the newspaper from the town she lived in. She scans the obituary columns with the magnifying glass she must use, looking for the names she knows. That is the only place they receive acclaim now.

She keeps up with the world news. She clicks her tongue and wags her head at all the sadness and deceit. She does not claim, as many older people do, that the world was much better when. For Ema, it was not better, it just was.

She is not senile, though she worries when she forgets a name or where she puts something, that she is slipping. Perhaps, sometimes in her sleepless nights, she wishes she were. Maybe that would be preferable to her clear, stark succession of endless days.

# Unfinished Woman

by Dorothy Gerrish

I am very little  
a wish of smoke  
a tamarack needle  
a grain of sand  
a whiff of salt spray inland  
a small cry, a feather floating down  
a petal  
an indentation  
a broken hoop

I am a mountain woman  
a medicine woman  
a searing desert  
a wave climbing jeweled to the sky  
a raucous bluejay flashing in the sun  
a tidepool  
a copper bracelet  
an astro flower blue

I am a changing chameleon  
a bristlesone pine on high  
a mountain cataract disappearing underground

I am a woman of the Coyote Clan  
I go both before and come after  
I sing you a song of joy

I am a wanderer, a searcher  
a gatherer of seeds of knowledge  
Both the student and the teacher am I

I am the daughter of many mothers  
From the source of my cataract  
From my emerging river  
I offer you my ripening harvest  
And bid you sup of my current  
As I wander in search of my sea

# We Belong Here

by Sheila Smith

This article is adapted from a speech given at the "Take Back the Night" rally held in Missoula in October. It was run in the last *Montana Women's Resource*, but the last four paragraphs were inadvertently left out. Here it is again in its entirety.

I've been doing a lot of thinking in the last year about two topics—peace and incest. I've come to the conclusion that we can't have one until we get rid of the other. I'm also convinced that it is women—feminists in particular—who will do both of those things. Our vision is one of respect, cooperation and empowerment of all individuals. It is not the traditional male vision of achieving power through domination. I believe that there are a few men who have given up that traditional male vision, but I personally still look to women for responsible leadership in the peace and anti-violence movements.

Incest, like rape, sexual harassment, sexual discrimination and battering, is male domination. One out of four girls (a conservative estimate) is sexually assaulted before she reaches the age of 14. More than half of that is incest, and the most common type of incest is father/daughter. 97% of perpetrators of incest are male. More than 87% of incest victims are female. This is clearly a manifestation of male violence against women.

It is hard to imagine how a father could ignore his daughter's needs for safety, security, love and affection and supersede those needs with his own need to achieve power through domination.

One woman has said that incest is a training ground for the role of an adult woman. It is an exercise in powerlessness—a message that the female role is to be available for sexual servicing. That her needs and dreams don't appear to make a bit of difference in the world.

A few weeks ago I was harassed while walking on Front Street in Missoula. I was with a male companion at the time, and though women are less often subject to harassment in the company of a man than when alone, that didn't prevent this particular carful of adolescent boys from screeching unwelcome comments at me. The friend I was with felt threatened, and turned around to head back to the car. He was concerned about a potential violent encounter with them. I, on the other hand, felt quite certain that this episode of harassment would be confined to cowardly yelling from the protection of a moving vehicle. I was angry, of course, but also angry at my friend who didn't prove to be very supportive in the situation. I figured out later that his only experience with street harassment occurred in a large city, in a low-income, racially segregated area where he was perceived as not belonging. He accepted that designation. But I refuse to

accept that I don't belong in downtown Missoula on a Saturday night! Women, if we are to accept those terms, would not "belong" anywhere, because there are no public places where we can be sure we are safe from harassment. When I relearned from that experience is that we are all survivors.

It isn't that we are in the wrong place, that we wear the wrong clothes, or that we are the wrong kind of people. It's that there are so many men around with the wrong attitude! In fact the status quo is made up of men with bad attitudes. Their answer to everything is aggression. One guy has a bad day at work. He goes home and batters his wife. Another guy feels humiliated when a woman points out an error he has made at work. He breaks into another woman's home and rapes her. Another man feels sexually rejected by women his own age. He goes home and sexually assaults his 7-year-old daughter.

It is men's perception of us as "other," as less than equal, as less than human, that perpetuates male violence against women. It is their fear, their anger, their clutching on to hierarchical forms of power, their narrowness of vision that has brought us to the brink of nuclear decimation as surely as it has delivered to us a problem of incest in epidemic proportions.

We must keep demanding attention, make our voices heard, because I believe it is women who will make a difference in the world. Our values on relationships, on growth, on cooperation and peace will change the world. Our process towards freedom from violence, towards peace, would not be the same as Ronald Reagan's (and all that Ronald Reagan has come to represent). His idea is to provoke enough terror in everyone that they do not question his power.

It is obvious to me that we, women, are survivors. That we have the courage it takes—and we have proven our courage countless millions of times in this male-dominated woman-abusing system—to change the world. We have rejected the male view of us as victims. We are proving that tonight by being here at this "Take Back the Night" march.

We will not accept that we don't belong here, or that we have nothing to offer. We are offering our courage and commitment and vision of a better world—where all can live free from fear of male aggression—whatever form it takes, whether that be economic exploitation, incest, battering, racial or sexual discrimination, rape or war.

We are saying that we know of another way that we already practice in our lives. And that it's time, that it's past time, that we were *listened to* and *learned from*.

The Women's Resource Center presents an

# **Anniversary Celebration**

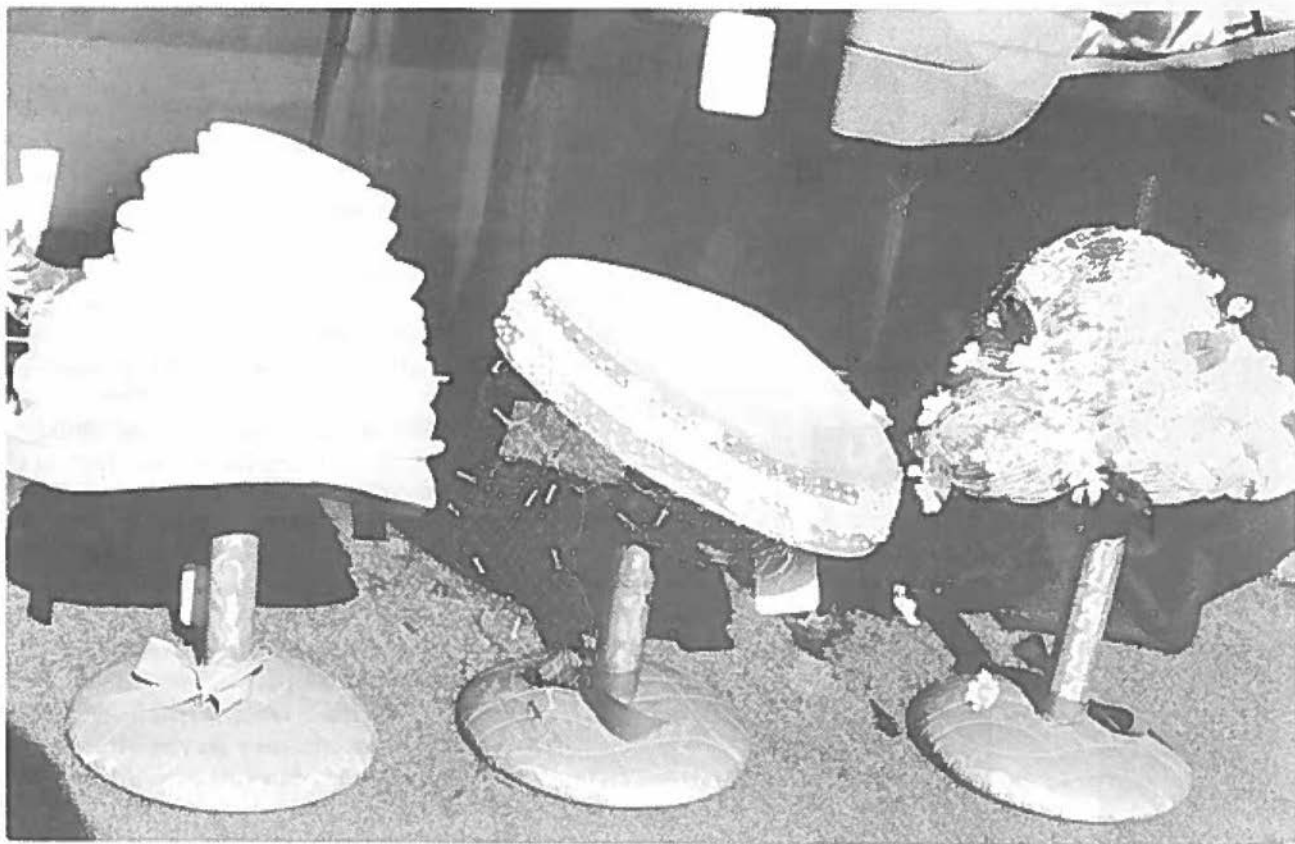
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*10 years in the University Center*

**Saturday evening, May 19    8:00 to Midnight    UC Ballroom**

Featuring the *Jane Finnegan Quintet* (includes members of *Cheap Cologne*).

\$5 per person, includes food and drink. Cash bar.

Brought to you by the Women's Resource Center .....*working for Montana women for 15 years.*



by Nan Joy



by Mary'n Hallock



# Sister Survivors

D. Golas

Let me sit with you in a circle  
for we are equal  
we are all strong women  
for we have endured much and have survived  
we have been injured  
and are finally finding the ways to heal ourselves

we are a unity of mind, heart, body and spirit  
we cannot fully heal ourselves without healing all  
for it is within our nature to seek harmony, unity, love  
the balance that within lies happiness.

but this world is upside down  
it teaches pain, how to fight, cheat for money or fame—  
how to lie to those we love, abuse our bodies  
and the Earth that supports our very life  
it teaches that females are less capable  
that people of another color are not our sisters and brothers  
(so much has been lost in not knowing or respecting  
each other)  
it teaches us to waste Earth's resources  
do we really believe they are merely for our taking?  
it is time to stop and begin to turn the world  
right side up again  
the beginning is when we examine the relationship  
of our actions with our own beliefs

it also taught us not to show our feelings  
that anger is wrong  
and it's even worse to express it  
anger becomes harmful only when it is suppressed  
or expressed in a way that is harmful to self or others  
there are healthy ways to feel angry, strong  
growing in new directions  
in knowledge of self and others  
doing so can become a medicine  
by allowing ourselves to feel our feelings  
we become more clear and honest with ourselves  
the most deeply rooted feelings come from our basic  
human needs: companionship, love of self and  
others in balance, sunshine, water, food, shelter  
and unity with Spirit.

our mother Earth provides us with the  
companionship, water, food and shelter  
we must make the effort to gather them for ourselves



we are a unity of mind, heart, body and spirit  
to each give a part of your day  
each must be fed  
health is achieved in the balance  
it is there for the choosing  
knowing that it is hard work  
but knowing also that we are not alone  
even when we're not aware of it,  
the sun is giving us life

it is a struggle to find the balance of love  
of ourselves and others  
for each of us is different  
because we are unique in all of Creation

Earth is our teacher in finding unity with Spirit  
she is the balance of life that nurtures ours  
she provides all that we eat, wear and live in  
there is harmony in the songs of birds, rushing water,  
thunder, within each flower and its  
balance with the rocks and minerals  
and their balance with all the plants and trees  
and theirs with the many leggeds,  
those that fly  
and the wind

sit down with the Earth  
put your bare feet upon her  
so that she may draw out from you  
your pain, your fears, your insecurities  
your unhealthy ways of thinking and feeling  
she is our mother and can heal us  
we must open and allow ourselves to be healed  
direct our energy into healing ourselves  
and by so doing, magnify our power in our lives

the mind heals through opening, allowing the pain and  
anger  
to come out  
so then we can feel hope, trust, love, faith and joy  
it is to the extent that we have felt pain  
that we are also capable of feeling joy  
for our ability to feel has been stretched and is growing  
it is always OK to feel what we feel  
it is in our actions where we must be responsible  
to ourselves and others

the body can heal by eating food in its most  
natural state  
by exercise that pushes us just a little  
beyond what we thought we could do  
strength of mind accompanies strength of body

the spirit can heal by seeking unity  
with the love force that has created us

I am a better person for having known you  
thank you

In struggle for peace of mind and with love



# The Hand That Rocks the Cradle.....Wants a Raise

by Janet Bush

Monica has an 18-month-old baby. While her husband is at work 5 days a week, she attends to this small person's health and safety, cleanliness and feeding, education and socialization. From the wee hours of the morning until bedtime Monica diapers, nurses, talks to, catches, kisses, cooks for, carries and cleans her toddler. She goes to bed early, expecting to be wakened at least once each night by the needs of her child. Monica has been educated to discount the value of her job so much that the work she does is invisible. "I wish I could make some money here at home, so that I'd feel like I'm CONTRIBUTING to our household," she says. Her husband agrees, "I expected you to be working by now."

Joyce is also a mother. Her man goes to school during the day and works a late-hour job at night, so Joyce manages the household: baby, chickens, rabbits, vegetable garden, freezer and woodpile. She is up with the baby at 7:30 every morning (her husband sleeps in because he must be rested to go to work) and she waits up late at night for him to get home so that they can talk together. "I'm seeing the doctor this week," she says, "to have my hormone levels tested—I want to know why I'm never interested in having sex anymore." Joyce is exhausted. She's oblivious to her physical condition and the work that creates it because it is work that doesn't count.

It takes heavy cultural conditioning to make these otherwise sensitive, intelligent women unable or unwilling to acknowledge the labor that they perform daily in their homes. Yet an American woman who chooses to be the primary caretaker of children chooses work of such little status as to be invisible. In spite of her exhausting job with its grueling schedule and relentless demands, a mother knows that she "won't get anything done" today.

This attitude is reinforced by a chorus of voices that discount her day-to-day activities. Her employed friends tell that she's lucky to be at home with so much free time on her hands. Her husband won't wake up to feed the baby at 2 a.m. because he has to go to work tomorrow. Her mother-in-law, incensed that the man-of-the-house packs his own lunch, flatly states that being a mother is NOT a full-time job. The women in the TV commercials derive unrealistic pleasure from their laundry's white-white collars and their tasty instant-soup potroasts. Sociologists, ignoring the everpresent diapers and mashed bananas, teach that a woman's family role is to provide emotional warmth and stability for her household. And on Mother's Day the greeting cards carol, "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world!"

The actual physical work that a mother does earns none of the RESULTS that the American work ethic values: pay, achievement, career advancement, self-determination.

Childcare is cyclical and changing by nature—today's tasks must be repeated tomorrow, and when a comfortable routine is finally established a child outgrows it. The U.S. Census Bureau considers the mother-housewife a "non-jobholder." As such she is entitled to no paycheck, no sick leave, no coffee breaks, no vacations, none of the status earned by the lowest paid industrial worker.

Childcare is often blurred with another "invisible" job—housework. The two jobs have come to be synonymous; similar in their low economic status, their repetitive service nature, and their mythical "naturally feminine" condition. This blurring has made us lose our awareness of the differences in their objectives. Childcare teaches gradual independence to dependent beings. A parent's job is to put themselves out of business. Housework, endless and socially undesirable, is service and maintenance tasks performed for capable but higher status members of the family.

Women who have sought status and its accompanying power in our society have often done so by entering the traditionally male world of "real" work. The feminist movement has improved conditions for women by advancing issues of reproductive freedom and childcare, but there has been no change in the status of the full-time stay-at-home mother. Our low estimation of her work is the source of the imbalanced, unequal relationships upon which family life is built. When childcare is worth so little (in Missoula, \$1/hour) the mother who stays home with children is expected to augment her services by doing housework, to "earn her keep" in the eyes of the wage-earning partner. She does not share an equal voice with her employed spouse in decisions regarding money and leisure time. A woman who chooses the job of full-time mother usually sacrifices her identity as a productive, powerful person.

A working mother is also crippled by attitudes which trivialize the importance of childcare. It is her responsibility to earn a living AND provide adequate care for her kids, but she must not allow the two realms of "home" and "work" to conflict. Unless her spouse or another trusted associate is willing to be caretaker, she must try to find a conscientious, well-trained caretaker among the crowded, unregulated, unsubsidized home-daycare system.

It is convenient for the dominant members of our society to ignore the costs of childcare, for then they don't have to pay them. So we are conditioned to find little value in the occupation. The work of childcare is kept invisible by making it worth a very low hourly wage. It is not legitimized by business or government subsidization. And most workers who provide the service do so privately,



without benefit of Social Security or other institutionalized plans for financial security.

Monica and Joyce need to become aware of the social context in which they mother. When a mother recognizes and respects the work that she does, she can reassess her status in personal family relationships. She can distinguish the duties of childcare from the stereotypical demands of housework. She can compare her job as caretaker to her husband's job, and divide the childcare and housework equally after working hours. She can recognize that she is entitled to half of the family paycheck. She can expect to be given time away from the house and kids regularly, just as any other worker is entitled to breaks and vacations. And when children's cries pierce the night she can let it be known that she, too, must be at WORK tomorrow.

(Janet Bush facilitates a reading/discussion group about mothering at Women's Place. The 6-session class will be offered again next fall. Watch for it!)



# Fishing

by Liz Karr

## Arrival

The float plane hums over the gray, sullen ocean. Islands lush with cedar and hemlock speckle her vast domain. No roads, cars, police—the bush of southeast Alaska.

The primitive beauty of this country leaves me speechless. I was being transported away from anything familiar. The unfamiliar is to Pt. Baker, a small fishing village on the northern tip of Prince of Wales Island. I am to work on a boat there.

The ocean is our landing pad. We slowly descend. The plane skips over the wake, we have arrived. I step onto the dock; a greenhorn, broke and feeling alienated by the stares of the locals. It was far from a welcoming party.

Joseph Sebastian, my captain, walks up to greet me. I met this man a few weeks before over a cup of coffee in a small cafe in Sitka, Alaska. We exchanged hellos and went to meet the essence of every fisherperson, the boat. Joe caressed it with his eyes. "Her name is 'Time & Tide.' You will be as much of her as I am. Treat her as though she's yours. She demands the respect."

As the days progress I begin to understand what those words mean. "Time & Tide," a beautiful old troller with strong, graceful lines, provided our livelihood. She supplies us with the mobility to work, the shelter to eat, drink and sleep and protection from the stormy seas and violent squalls. One must learn her capabilities and limitations in order to keep her afloat and self alive.

## Fishing

An angry June storm is slanting cold rain against the wheelhouse. The piercing sound of the alarm bursts my tranquil slumber. It's 5:00 a.m., time to light the stove, put the caffeine on. Joe ignites "Time & Tide," we pull the anchor.

It's the third day of the halibut opening, two remain. My hands throb, I've never pushed them to the point where I could hardly move them. They are quickly forgotten when we spot our buoy ball in the distance. This was a deep set, 60 fathoms. The skate of gear lays on the ocean floor, held down by an anchor on each end. Hooks are baited and attached to the line. We pull up the anchor and attach the line to a drum on the stern of the boat. We start to reel it in. Joe's in the hatch, I'm at the wheel.

"Fish on!" the skipper bellows. I go to assist, gaft in hand, it was a big one, over 150 pounds. The fish's angry eyes gaze. Joe lays a blow stunning it. I gaft it in the head. We flip it around belly up to keep its mobility to a minimum. We pull, straining arms and backs. The frenzy it transmits causes my arms to vibrate. We got it on board, the halibut thrashes murderously, its bulging double eyes staring with desperate malevolence. I land another blow to its head, throw it in the hatch. One must be efficient as possible, never rushed.

"Fish on!" Once again we perform the task. This continues throughout the day and into the night. There is an occasional break to grab a bite, bait more hooks and

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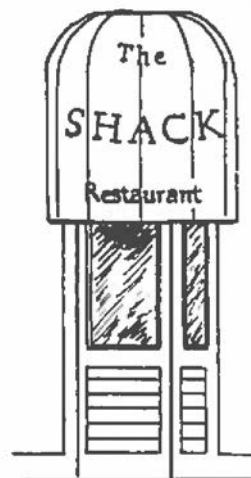
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wipe the halibut slime off one's face.

Barbaric, but this is the reality of the trade. I feel an affinity with the doomed creatures as we bring them in. My rationalization is that they are part of the food chain. We are all predators, humans but once removed from the jungle.

#### Departure

I feel a clutch on my arm. It is Fleabag, an old-timer.  
"Where are you going?" he asks.

"I'm going to Washington," I reply.

He sighs and responds, "You're going back down there? Isn't it insufferable down there?"

I can't respond. I get on the plane and watch Pt. Baker slowly disappear amongst the islands and ocean. I am going back down.

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