

In the Life

NO. 18 • SEPTEMBER 1999

NEWSLETTER OF THE JUNE L. MAZER LESBIAN COLLECTION

THE LESBIAN NEWS STORY

by Jinx Beers

PART II: THE LN IS BORN

The Lesbian News was born, all two sheets (four pages) stapled in the upper left had corner, in August of 1975.

It was stuck under the windshields of cars in lesbian bar parking lots with a headline that screamed "WHO ARE WE?" It was placed on cigarette machines in lesbian bars and promptly thrown out by some management as soon as we left the building. We printed 500 copies of Issue 1, paid for out of my own pocket, and I'm sure 450 or more were tossed without ever being read.

The next month we came back with a four sheet/eight page issue and a logo contest, and I suspect more copies were ignored than read. But we persevered and gradually began to realize we were being read, at least by some. Within two years we had replaced the other local publication and advertising was paying the printing costs.

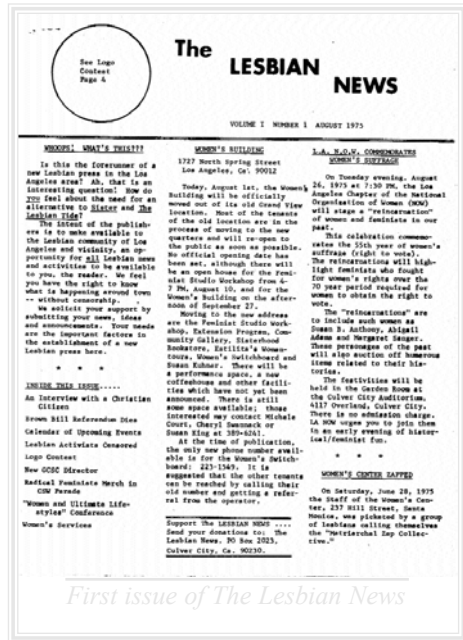
We had lots to say about the need in our community for a newspaper that was open to all members and, during my leadership, we opened the LN pages to nearly every group, even ones I didn't personally support. Admittedly

I balked at the inclusion of the Gay Nazis — I could not bring myself to accept such a concept or be part of it. As it didn't appear to include lesbians, I had a great excuse to exclude them from the pages of the LN. To the best of my memory, that was the only time I refused to accept submissions from a gay/lesbian group, although

there were a few times when accepting material caused me big headaches and loss of advertising.

Let's talk about change for a moment.

The question I'm most often asked today is about how I like the changes in the LN. Changes? Nobody has made more changes than I did! The physical looked progressed from stapled sheets of 8-1/2 by 11 bond, to 11x17 bond folded, to newsprint folded, to tabloid size. We added one color, then two colors. When I finally gave up publishing



First issue of The Lesbian News

Upcoming Mazer Events

SAVE THE DATES

Fall: House Party: A traveling exhibit and sharing of lesbian histories in a private home. This introduction to the collection is designed to encourage lesbians and their friends to support and participate in the preservation of lesbian history.

Sept. 26, '99: Volunteer Party at the Mazer Collection from 2 - 4 p.m. This is a volunteer thank you party and an opportunity for potential new volunteers to check us out. Call (310) 659-2478 for more information.

Bi-weekly: Saturday Work Parties at the Mazer Collection. Call (310) 659-24787 for more information. Your help is vitally important and needed.

Board Meetings: The third Friday of each month, at 7:30 p.m., at the Mazer Collection. Everyone is invited.

the LN after 14 years, we were close to going to a full color cover and regularly printed 64 pages tabloid size per month. For anniversary issues we printed 72 pages or more. But these are only physical attributes and not as important as the content.

We started out writing everything ourselves. Soon we asked a few women to contribute columns. We added book reviews, more advertising, community calendars, events column and news. Mostly news. We exchanged publications with groups all over the U.S. and scrounged out national newsworthy items. We added a few exchanges with foreign publications and added international news. We started the letters to the editor section, added more columns on different subjects, and began classified ads. We included everything we were asked to include — except personal ads.

Personal ads were a bug-a-boo with me and the editorial board. We were convinced if we allowed them they would degenerate into sexist, lookist, agist, racist and any other ist you can think of. Eventually, however, we did take them, but kept a very close eye on the editing. Basically you could describe

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THE LN STORY *from page 1*

yourself, but you couldn't specify what you were looking for as to physical attributes. We liked our concept of personal ads better than the current ones.

We took the first 800 sex line ads and got hell over it. Our position was they were part of the community and you didn't have to call the number. But because of the rate of alcoholism in our community, we did not solicit and would not take advertising for alcoholic beverages.

Which brings up the question, who is "we?" While I was publisher and managing editor, the *LN* was put out entirely by volunteers, including myself. Why? Because *LN* was begun out of my pocket, which wasn't very deep, and in order to succeed we needed to accomplish each issue with as little money as possible. We did reimburse the delivery people for gasoline (most of the time), but that was it. The length of service for volunteers lasted from a few issues to twelve years.

I've been asked how I could handle all of the volunteers. It appears other groups have not been as successful as I appeared to be, particularly times when we had as many as thirty women helping one way or another on an issue (and had to meet a monthly deadline). There are four reasons why it worked: 1) I never asked any one woman to do too much; 2) I understood that being a volunteer lasts only so long and when a woman wanted to leave I sincerely thanked her for her time; 3) when

someone failed to do her job I sincerely thanked her for her previous contributions and suggested it just wasn't the right time in her life to continue with us (in short, I fired non-producing volunteers); and 4) when there was a hole in the work load, I filled it myself.

I went through a couple of relationships over number four; they didn't seem to understand that meeting a deadline was important. In fourteen years of putting out a monthly newspaper, I was late on the streets (meaning after the first of the month) only three times. Once I received a telephone call from a bookstore asking where the *LN* was a week before it was due! When I replied it wasn't the first of the month yet, I was told they thought it was late because it was usually early! How's that for logic! Fortunately Alicia, my 19-year partner who overlapped the last few years of my involvement with the *LN*, is an artist and understands about deadlines. That's not to say she didn't sigh with relief when I finally let the *LN* go.

After the tenth anniversary of the *LN* I realized it was time to think about either shutting the publication down, or finding someone — the right someone — to take over. The latter was not an easy task and took several years, but was finally accomplished with the sale of the *LN* to Deborah Bergman.

The Lesbian News was born out of controversy. Early on we knew it would either fade away when the controversy ended, or become something special. I believe I gave it a good foundation, and Deborah Bergman nurtured it and brought it technically (type and full color) into a new age. There is no doubt in my mind as the *LN* approaches the year 2000 and its 25th birthday, that Ella Matthes will continue this progression. Yeah, the *LN* is special, and we should all be proud of our support over the years.

Long live *The Lesbian News!*

LESBIANS WANTED

To staff the archives one Sunday a month from 12pm to 4pm. Training provided. Interesting research and cataloguing projects to work on. Leave name and phone number at (310) 659-2478.

RESEARCHER NEEDS HELP

Marie Carter is working on her doctoral dissertation at Claremont. Her research is in the area of the butch femme bar culture from the 1940s through the '60s. Anyone willing to answer a short questionnaire or be interviewed can contact Marie at: 310-459-7601 or e-mail: ezmerelda@earthlink.net

Thanks to the following who have recently contributed their time, money and/or personal materials: Anthony, Wendy Averill, Jinx Beers, Gay, Gary, Janice, Claudia, Kathleen, Debra Cardinale, Marie Cartier, Joan, Donna Cassyd, Jane, Tee Corinne, Susanna B., Jeri Deitrick, Sharon, Barbara, Jo Duffy, Dorothy, Karen Fite, Marilee France, Carol, Diane, Ann Giagni, Candace, Barb (Derivative Duo), Caryn Goldberg, Paula Goldberg, Degania Golove, Bobbie, Sherrilyn, Ethel, Shevy Healey, Elosie Klein Healy, Beverly, Beverly, Karla Jay, Susen Marie, Barbara, Camille Kim, Colleen, Sarah, Maralee, Alice Myers, Norma, Carol Nottley (in memory of Ellen Power), Jan Ostrom, Barbara Owens, Barbara, Flo Pickett, Vaughn, Cynthia, Myra Riddell, Mary Ann, Jennifer, Nancy, Judith Saunders, Marcia Schwemer, Selkis Gayil, Jeremy, Pam, Dr. Sharon Siegel, Ruth, Margaret, Valerie, Karen Sterling, Ruth, Francesca Taylor, Sandy Tate, Debbie, Kitty, Judy Twentyman, Nancy, Lisa, Debra, Billie, Alex, and Sarah Wright.

Special thanks to the City of West Hollywood for providing the space we occupy. Thanks to the Getty Research Institute, Naiad Press, Columbia University Press, and NYU Press for keeping us current with complimentary books. Many thanks to Shari Frlot and Durand Williams of the Outfest staff.

If we omitted your name, please accept our apology and let us know so that we can include your name next time. We love and need you all.

June L. Mazer Collection

626 N. Robertson Blvd.
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(310) 659-2478

<http://www.lesbian.org/mazer>

OPEN:

Sunday, 12:00 pm -4:00 pm
Tuesday, 11:00 am - 3:00 pm
and by appointment.

(Please call first to make sure we are open)

Board Members: Jeri Deitrick,
Lillian Faderman, Ann Giagni,
Myra Riddell, Marcia Schwemer,
Judy Twentyman, Sarah Wright.

ELLEN POWER

1940-1999

Feminist - Activist - Sailor

by her life partner Carol Nottley

Having an article written about her life would have surprised Ellen. Ellen thought of herself as ordinary – her life unremarkable. Neither was true. It was just that, while other women took the stage or the microphone, she would be tallying the night's receipts, working the booth, or figuring out how to finance the event. She once said that "there were quite enough stars" in our community. She preferred to be a worker.

Ellen knew at a very early age that she was "different." Like many other lesbians in the 50s, hers was a closeted existence. At 23, family pressures and personal safety concerns prompted Ellen and best friend, Terry De-Crescenzo, age 19, to pool their meager resources and leave Boston for Los Angeles.

At first, California was not that different. Ellen's photo album is evidence of the double life she led. Ellen (the short stop) with her all-women's softball team share a page with Ellen the bouffant-haired, budding executive. Ellen's career was proceeding on-track, her aptitude for organization and accounting made her a natural for the budding computer industry. By 1969, she headed a new computer division, traveling extensively through the United States and Canada.

The influence of the Women's and Gay Movements made a closeted existence intolerable. In 1975, Ellen left the corporate world for good. Uncertain about her next steps, she started a short-lived, but successful sandwich shop at the newly opened Gay Community Services Center on Highland Avenue.

It was an exciting, turbulent time at the Center, especially for lesbians, who struggled against having their identities swallowed up and defined by the gay men's agenda.

Ellen chose to support her community in a quiet way, by choice, always in the background.

In 1976, Ellen became the Center's bookkeeper where she stayed until 1980. It was there I met her.

Together we created the first cost accounting system for the Center, and later forged a life partnership that lasted until her death.

Ellen thought that every gay and lesbian person in LA needed to work at the Center. She believed that it allowed a person to experience and connect with their gay identity, and also provided a way for all of us to "give back."

Also during the mid-70's, Ellen met Jeannine Talley with whom she co-founded Seaworthy Women. Sailing was traditionally a male domain. Women, if lucky, were allowed to crew but rarely to take the helm. Seaworthy offered sailing instruction in a non-threatening environment and the opportunity to sail with an all-woman crew. Their dream was to circumnavigate the globe.

Subsequently, in 1980, Ellen and Jeannine co-founded Women At the Helm (WATH). WATH sought to establish a strong network of women worldwide with a shared interest in sailing, and to advance the status and independence of women on the water. WATH was officially launched at the National NOW Convention in Los Angeles. As membership grew, Ellen assumed a major role in the financing and administrative work of the organization. Within

months, WATH was publishing a quality newsletter to an international circulation and was featured in several mainstream sailing magazines.

Despite the good early response, Women at the Helm failed to attract the membership involvement it needed to survive financially. Ellen and Jeannine decided to go their separate ways.

The Center bookkeeper job developed into a life-long love of nonprofit agencies. Ellen served as Head Accountant at the Alcoholism Center for Women, and as the first Finance Director of GLASS. She lent her talents to the formation of the "Society for Senior Gay and Lesbian Citizens," founded by long-time activist Bob Arthur in 1981. She assisted in setting up the first cost accounting system for the fledgling AIDS Project Los Angeles. Her contributions to these emerging organizations were immense.

Ellen chose to support her community in a quiet way, by choice, always in the background. She was deeply concerned about the plight of many of our gay and lesbian youth. In her honor, a memorial fund was established at the Gay and Lesbian Adolescent Social Services (GLASS), for the purpose of assisting young lesbians with their educational goals.

The Mazer collection will become the repository for articles, newsletters, and photos from Seaworthy Women and Women at the Helm.

MAZER HONORED

The Getty Research Institute, a division of the Getty Museum recently published "Cultural Inheritance," a directory of less visible archives and collections in the Los Angeles area.. The Mazer Collection is proud to be included in the directory – as only 250 out of 634 organizations were selected for the directory. "Cultural Inheritance" is on display at the Mazer Collection for visitors' and volunteers' perusal.



who's got the button?

The political buttons we wear today will someday tell the story of who we were and what we stood for. A rich story is told in the buttons worn by those who came before us. Stop by and see them at the Mazer Collection. *You'll be helping to preserve our heritage by donating your buttons to the Collection.*



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