

manage her staff and manner of relating interpersonally with her current employees. It is not our wish to see Old Wives' Tales close down.

Heidi L. Conn	Leslie C. Kenny
J. Sheppard	Maggie Cloud
P. Newland	N. Wharton
M. Boone	Jackie Cox
J. Akey	Kit Minten
L. Moore	Alyce DeRouchie
K.E. Edmisten	Kristen Knapp
Jill Sandleben	Janna MacAuslen
Tina Conn	S. Newsom
Rose Stodick	L. Clay
R. Lane	Naomi Morena
Pan Sammons	Linda J. Gardner
Elaine M. Kassouf	Jeanette Spencer
Rena Sandler	

## and then . . .

The original "anonymous" letter to *Ragtimes* stated it was written by "friends and former employees" of Old Wives' Tales. Since it was anonymous and did not claim to be written by current employees, how could I have intentionally terminated one of its co-authors for writing it?

The person to whom their latest letter apparently refers is Maggie Cloud. I think it would be interesting for readers to have the opportunity to read the actual letters that I wrote to Maggie Cloud, beginning with January 3 notifying her of my reasons for terminating her; January 4 to her and to Naomi Morena; and January 9.

If you will compare this series of letters, all written by me within one week (not "a couple of weeks later") with their latest letter, I think you will see that although I felt it necessary to terminate Maggie's employment, I was trying not to prolong the conflict or to escalate it. Compare this to their letter which relates parts of my letters out of context and makes it sound as if I was trying to make things somehow more difficult for these former employees. Quite to the contrary, I encouraged them to get professional counsel and ultimately decided not to contest their receiving unemployment benefits although as an attorney I knew that I had sound grounds for doing so.

In my original response in *Ragtimes*, I suggested that the problem between myself and certain former employees was a lack of mutual respect. They did not feel comfortable working with me and I did not feel comfortable working with them. That they did not feel comfortable working with me is certainly demonstrated by their vigorous, continuing attempts to keep this issue before the women's and gay community.

The last paragraph of my January 9 letter to Maggie talks about "the easiest thing" for

me to do. I am not doing the easiest thing. Old Wives' Tales is still a women's center. It is not (and never has claimed to be) a resource center or counseling center. I don't recall that any of the members of this group attacked the old Women's Resource Center for failing to respond to women in crisis — but it certainly did considering that many days no one answered the phone at all, much less to counsel women in crisis or even refer them to counseling. What is the goddess-proclaimed compulsory definition of women's center that I am transgressing against? Is the Portland Feminist Women's Health Clinic wrongfully using the term "women's" because they do not provide the full range of health and medical services that women need? Is "A Woman's Place" misnamed because as we all know it is essentially "A Lesbian's Place."

I would hope that *Just Out* will not accept their assertion that they have heard through present employees that my relations with resent employees are not amicable. Enough anonymity! Let *Just Out* obtain the names of these supposed present employees and interview them instead of taking the word of those who have not been inside the restaurant for weeks or months! Let *Just Out* verify their claim. (If such present employees do exist, their names do not have to be divulged by *Just Out's* reporter.)

Finally, it should be obvious that if their intent was to make me re-examine my relationships with staff, they have certainly done all that they could. Further exchanges like this should clearly be useless. Either I am serious about improved relationships and am putting my energy into those improvements, or I am not. Nothing that they or I can say for publication is going to prove anything. I suggest that the community "check back" in six months or a year with *current employees* — that's the only way anyone is going to know anything.

— Holly Hart

## our investigation.

by Roseanne King

"I really enjoy working here."

"She has good intentions, but she came across as very confrontive."

"Holly has the right to do whatever she wants."

"She gave preferential treatment on the basis of personality rather than skill."

"In the time I've worked here, I haven't seen Holly lash out at anyone."

Comments surrounding the controversy at

Old Wives' Tales restaurant are as varied as the opinions that establishment evokes. Accusations of tokenism, verbal and emotional abuse, unwarranted wage cuts, misrepresentation, lack of promotion and raise procedures and excessive turnover have been met with angry denials and vocal support from the restaurant staff and supporters.

The restaurant, Old Wives' Tales Restaurant and Women's Center, is owned by Holly Hart. At the center of the controversy are complaints voiced by ex-employees and a civil rights claim filed against Hart alleging discrimination against Hispanics.

According to a group of ex-employees, many of whom choose to remain anonymous, the problems at the restaurant have existed for some time. Current employees acknowledge Hart can be a difficult woman to work with, due largely to excessive amounts of stress and other problems inherent in restaurant management.

"It's one thing to work in a restaurant, it's another thing to own one," Cindy Thompson, kitchen manager, said. Thompson has been with Hart since before the restaurant officially opened.

The current difficulties arose in mid-November, following what Naomi Morena called her termination. Hart maintains Morena quit by walking out on her shift.

Morena said she asked Thompson for permission to leave the restaurant during the lunch rush, citing her inability to handle Hart's verbal abuse any longer. She had worked at OWT for about two years. According to Morena, that permission was granted.

Hart said that contention is "patently absurd." Since she was in the restaurant at the time, "just ten feet away," Thompson would not have granted anyone leave to walk out during a shift, Hart said. Thompson agrees that she did not grant permission to Morena.

The night following the termination, Maggie Cloud, Morena's roommate and also an OWT employee, called Thompson. Morena said Cloud sought only to verify Morena's status through the call. Thompson and Hart claim Cloud asked Thompson to falsify the facts and say Morena had been fired. Hart terminated Cloud the next day.

In her first unemployment claim, Morena was denied benefits following unemployment's call to Hart. She said Morena had quit by walking out on her shift.

Morena appealed the ruling. Hart was served with a notice to appear at the appeals hearing, and opted not to attend.

"My decision not to appear does not mean I agree with Naomi," Hart said. "I just decided to let her have it." Unemployment benefits were approved following the hearing.

"I only wanted what I felt was just," Morena said. "I'm still trying to get the paid vacation that was due to me and I want the recom-

mendation I think I deserve after two years of hard work."

According to Morena, two witnesses at that hearing testified that Thompson had granted her permission to leave OWT.

Morena's civil rights claim against Hart and OWT, alleging discrimination against Hispanics, was filed in mid-November. It was a result of a discussion with the Civil Rights Board and "a lot of tokenism" at OWT, Morena said. Hart denies the charge and cites examples of employment and promotion of Hispanics.

Also at issue in the controversy is Hart's billing of the restaurant as "a woman's center." In a letter first published anonymously in *Ragtimes*, the writers maintain OWT staff is not equipped to handle calls regarding crisis situations or resources in the community. Exterior signs advertising OWT as a women's center were painted over in late November.

Emergency numbers for women in crisis are always next to the restaurant phones, for referral to agencies equipped to deal with the situations, Kerri Hart, dining room manager, said. Holly said the restaurant gets "scads of calls" inquiring about the women's bars in town, which do not bill themselves as such. Naming OWT "a women's center" does provide a link between women unfamiliar with the community and available resources, she said. The OWT staff stressed that the establishment regularly tries to provide free space for women's events.

According to James Andrews, OWT customer, Hart's management style and problems with her workers do not affect the restaurant's atmosphere. "It's a comfortable, warm and friendly place. There are some problems, but nothing a working person would consider serious."

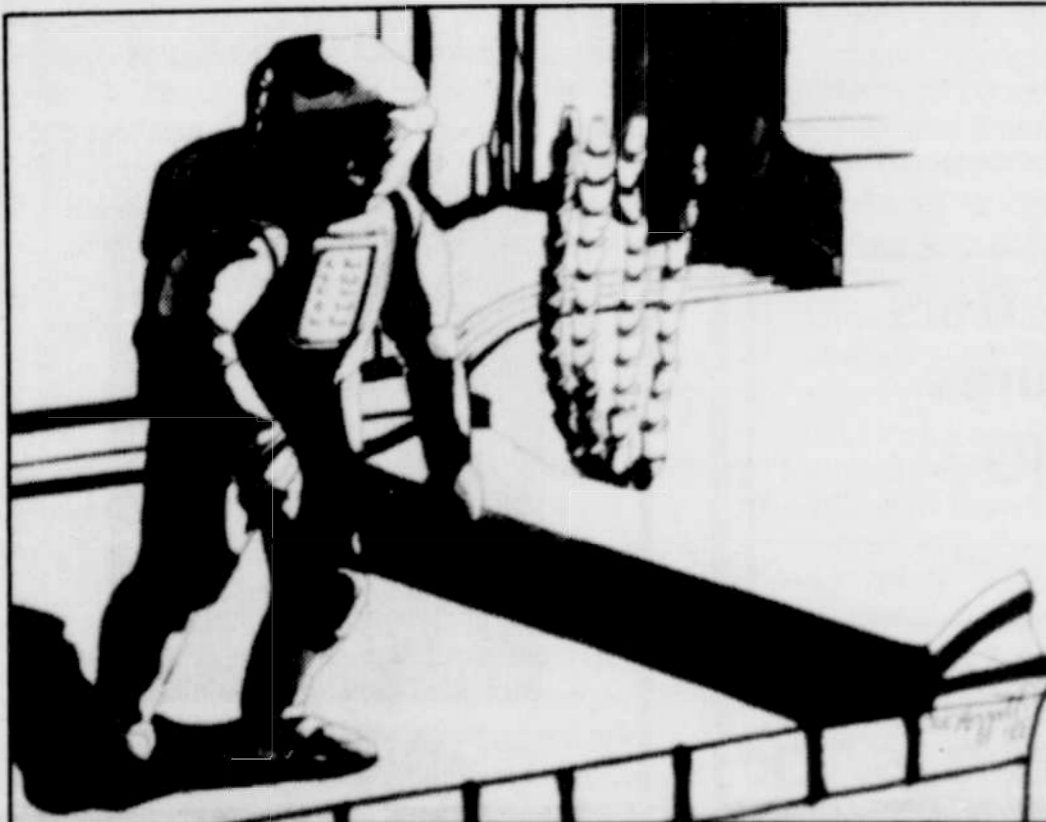
Andrews said his college-age daughters have been OWT patrons for "two to three" years.

Management style at OWT has changed dramatically, according to all concerned, since just before the birth of Hart's daughter in June, 1982. She began a management team, rather than trying to run all aspects of the restaurant herself. According to Hart and the OWT staff, pressure on Hart was relieved and so was much of the tension.

Morena maintains "Things got better because she wasn't around. Holly doesn't know how to deal with stress."

Changing Hart's attitude and management style were cited as motivations behind the anonymous letter regarding OWT. Most of Hart's existing staff do not feel those types of changes to be of major importance.

Morena thinks changes have resulted from the conflict, but she qualifies it this way, "I feel like what's been accomplished is Holly's been forced to look at her management. I honestly don't think it's going to last."



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