

Roseburg report

by Billy Russo

Isn't it amazing? Roseburg, "the redneck lumber capitol of the world," has a 24-hour gay and lesbian switchboard. How does something like that happen in a town of 17,000, a town where sex education is not available at the junior college level!?!?

The switchboard started coming together five years ago when a local grade school teacher surrendered himself to the Douglas County Sheriff as a child molester. Dale (not his real name) told the authorities all about his sick life of sin. He was desperate and turned to the authorities for help. After a nine month ordeal (investigation/prosecution/sentencing) he received the maximum punishment allowed by law. He was sentenced to 30 years at the state prison.

What about the help he asked for? Well, he was informed that when he was paroled, he would spend the first 18 months of his parole at the state hospital in a program for sex offenders. Then he would be released into the community again.

With the help of one of my landmates, Lillene Fifield, I was able to reach out to that helpless man. Lillene is a licensed therapist and was able to see Dale regularly during his time in the county jail. We raised his consciousness — he thought he was the only homosexual in the world. And we gave him hope. His parting comment to me, as he was about to be transferred to the prison in Salem, was: "Now I know who the real criminals are." He was referring to the homophobic authorities.

The lesbian community at that time existed in the form of half-a-dozen parcels of land that they designated "woman's space." Most

of them were politicized. The land was spread out around the county, and they came together periodically to share work and to socialize.

The gay men's community of the late seventies came together to party at the homes of three of four local men, none of whom got along with each other. Other than that they interacted in public parks and toilets, only as gay men can do.

Lillene and I, along with two other women living at Trillium Valley Farm, had come from the Los Angeles gay ghetto where we worked at — and around — the Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center (GLCSC).

Lillene and I were appalled and enraged over the way the authorities were "helping" Dale. And we tried to do something about it. I was an officer in the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) and I asked the commander, a wise and gentle man, to help. He offered to speak to the sheriff and ask his assurance that Dale be treated with dignity. And he accompanied me to the VA where we explored

the possibility of getting Dale transferred to the locked ward where we felt he would be treated better.

Lillene worked out a plea bargain with Dale's attorney and the D.A.'s office where he would spend one year in the county jail and then be paroled to the sexual compulsives program at GLCSC. The program is sanctioned by the California justice system.

At the sentencing trial Lillene testified for over half an hour as to the credibility of the program at GLCSC. But in the end the D.A. balked at the plea bargain and asked for the max.

Our efforts failed to help Dale. But many gays and lesbians knew about our efforts and many were impressed. Especially by the fact that Lillene — a queer — testified in front of God and everybody as an openly gay person here in Roseburg. We all got a glimmer of what gay pride is that day. It had a definite impact.

During the following months we talked about how wonderful it would be to be able to

reach out to people like Dale and the many brothers and sisters who lived rurally without a support group. The concept of a hotline appealed to many. It allowed a lot of visibility and also protected our individual anonymity: remember, this is a town of 17,000.

In November, 1980, Wes Luttrell, a well-known, local gay put out a flyer calling a meeting at his place: a potluck to be followed by a discussion about starting a hotline. Thirty people showed up.

Two weeks later we came together again, gave ourselves a name, Gay And Lesbian Alliance (GALA), formed a committee to write a charter, a committee to write a gay men's consciousness raising format (the women already had one), and a committee to set up the switchboard.

By the following spring we received our charter from the state, our first C-R group was nearing completion, the switchboard was set up and operational. And the Switchboard Committee had grown to 17 peer counselors.



Virgo, The Virgin Aug. 22-Sept. 22
The Sign of the Analyzer
An Interpersonal, Mutable Earth Sign
Earth Image — A Cut Diamond
"I Discriminate"

by Douglas Block

Virgo's glyph depicting a scythe cutting grains of wheat symbolizes the bountiful harvest reaped during the cycle of the Virgin. Like the farmer at harvest time, Virgo spends its life separating the wheat from the chaff — developing the faculties of discrimination and attention to detail. While its friends are admiring a beautiful piece of sculpture, Virgo

will attend to the small crack behind the left ear. At a gourmet restaurant, Virgo alone will notice that the soup is a bit salty. Thus, you would not want the Virgoan to review your first novel; yet, you would only be too happy if it balanced your books, for its motto reads, "I leave no stone unturned."

Harvest is a busy time as all must earn their bread through diligent work in the fields. Likewise, the productive, earthy Virgo regards its work as central to its life (Virgo author Leo Tolstoy is given credit for the saying, "Life is labor"). In its work, Virgo perfects itself through mastering a skill or technique. Through the use of technique, the Virgo craftsman can eliminate all waste, impurities and imperfections, thereby performing with ease and efficiency. Nothing pleases the Virgin more than a job well done. However, all work and no play makes Virgo a dull sign, and the workaholic of the Zodiac. Thus, the

overextended Virgo would do well to shorten its eighteen hour workday and make room for family, friends, hobbies and other diversions.

Virgo has traditionally been called the sign of service. (Tolstoy also wrote, "The vocation of every man and woman is in serving other people.") Service enables Virgo to transcend its self-criticism through attending to the needs of others. In so doing, it becomes less aware of its own imperfections and takes a more tolerant view of itself and its environment.

Physiologically, Virgo rules the processes of digestion and assimilation. In the small intestines, site of the assimilatory processes, the body meticulously accepts what is poor and rejects what is not. Thus, Virgos usually pay close attention to nutrition and diet, for "junk foods" put considerable stress upon their already sensitive digestive systems.

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