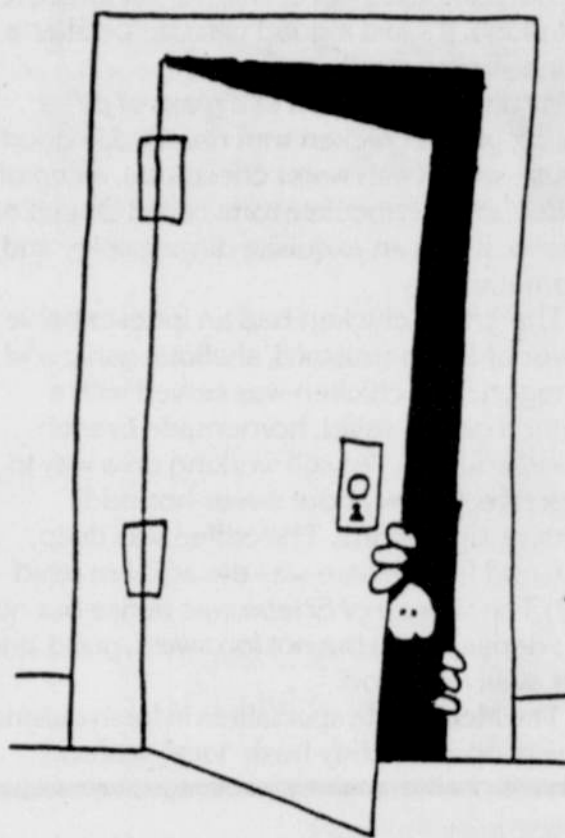


Assignment for a writing group

Coming out stories, we decide, that's what we'll write about next. How safe, how politically correct — painful probably, but we'll all understand and sympathize; it'll bring us closer. Already I feel different, bitter, not quite at all of you, though it would be easy to put it there, to pretend that you're to blame for my loneliness. I could tell you about Nicola, we were nine, teaching other what we knew, never reaching orgasm, rolling around together in the hot summer nights; by fall she denounced me, giggling with her friends, whispering I was a lezzie, we were scared, I would have turned on her too, given time. Or Joanna, my best friend for eight years. We were lovers in the sense that we had a relationship, tried to work things out though we never made love. But the story I want to tell you is different and although it took me several years after this time to name myself, this night was the turning point. Not a pretty story... if I tell you, will you understand?

It was a bitter time — a time many of us go through, we want love and women but we get fucked by men, liquor and some chemical tuning our pain to a fine scream that lives somewhere behind our eyes, waiting, while we continue to search in the wrong direction.

Another man I barely knew. Going to his apartment one evening on a date, a little high and a woman opens the door, doesn't look like his sister. His fiance he says, and I prepare to leave, too well trained to feel hurt or betrayed, though it must have been there somewhere, maybe behind the eyes. But he says stay, let's all be friends, and I've nothing else to do that evening and little pride, so we go out dancing and the booze and music gets me high — I'm dancing and I'm sexy and I



don't care — he's taken, she doesn't look bad, okay, I'm having fun, it's alright. I flirt with him a little, he flirts with me, she flirts with both of us and something turns and eases in my belly and it's not just from the drinking.

At two we're all at his apartment again, giggling, I go to pee, look in the mirror and they come in, asking me to stay, she reaches for my hand again, as she's done before, it's okay, I think, it's only for thrills and, besides...

He watches us then, her hair catching in my mouth, her neck so soft, so much softness everywhere, no pain, no rush, a little drop of sweat mixed with perfume on the crease of skin at her armpit; the terrifying curve of her breast twisting my gut, an agony of desire and tenderness I never felt with a man. We forget him, watching, we kiss, exploring, questioningly, not thrusting, lacework of cool fingers on perfumed skin; breath unsteady, dipping below the waistline, tracing the arches of bones, burnt by electricity in the hair, my hand brushing the tenderness between her legs. I kneel before her, guessing, nuzzle apart the wet petals, seeking what I

know to be the source of heat from her, we're lost...

He laughs, he pulls her to him and he fucks her, I sit small in the corner, watching, trembling with touches left unfinished.

Fall 1980

A day in the life

— Dennis Peterson

My life has had four conversion experiences. By the latter I mean a climatic moment that is the culmination of an emotional or intellectual storm that has been brewing for some time. The first three have been brewing for some time. The first three have been religious and the fourth was my coming out, and yet they are all interconnected.

At fifteen I met a girl who was a Baptist and invited me to her church. My mother had been raised Catholic but had left it with much bitterness, and my father was raised Lutheran and considered himself a Christian but did not attend church, so I was left to my own devices as to formulating my God-concept. After several months in the church I had an extremely cathartic experience, as were all my conversion experiences to come, where I became aware of a crushing burden of guilt I had been carrying with me for some time and accepted Jesus as my personal saviour. Although I am now an atheist I look back at this moment as one of great beauty and accept its validity insofar as it was the first of four steps to a deeper self-awareness. Although I had discovered a source that I felt cleansed me of all past sins, there was still a need to return to Jesus again and again to remove the most recent stains exuded by a guilt that explosively vented its pent-up bile from time to time. I remember tearfully praying almost every night to be forgiven for I knew not precisely what.

The next step came in college when I read Nietzsche, the "God is dead" philosopher. He wrote that so much that passes for moral training is only an enslavement. It's like train-

ing a lion by whipping and starving it until it is willing to do your bidding because of its exhausted state. The lion is not any "better," only more submissive. It's all very convenient for the audience, but the lion has actually been de-moralized. Not all those who are religious are so broken; some find great joy and fulfillment in serving their God, but for me it was only a crutch for a weary soul. I felt refreshed because as an agnostic my slate was wiped clean, but I felt an emptiness and hungered for a new message.

I have had a lifelong fascination with religions on an intellectual as well as an emotional basis. I poured over the literature with renewed vigor in search of a new master. I came across Judaism and felt as if I were going back to the roots from whence Christianity sprang and to the original which I had only known before in distortion. Again let me not take offense at my honesty which is only meant to reflect my personal states and not some universal truth. I lived an Orthodox lifestyle for ten years, married, and raised three children. Although many Jews seem to suffer from acute guilt, I never served Hashem (God) from a sense of guilt, but from one of a duty that I had voluntarily and gladly taken on. The one flaw was that this duty was taken on in an attempt to obliterate or at best sublimate my sexuality.

The nuclear family is central in Judaism in a way that no other religion can hope to match. The conjugal bed, birth of a child, training, reverence for parents, and eventual marriage of the children are inextricably woven into the fabric of Jewish life. Many of my childhood friends were homosexually active and I came to believe that homosexuality was universal but, like masturbation, a subject that was not discussed in polite company. I believed that marriage would save me from myself and my old urges. A familial religion seemed perfect.

The last (or perhaps only latest?) step has been coming out. My sense of duty and moral responsibility now springs from my innermost soul and is not imposed or taken on as a servitude from without. The moral tasks I have set for myself are increasing self-awareness, raising consciousness in others about being gay and against all forms of prejudice, and helping people who are physically challenged see their special strengths. All of these conversion experiences have been traumatic. In this last step I have had to forsake a religion that helped me cope with every conceivable aspect of day-to-day life, sever a symbiotic relationship with my former wife, create a new manner of relating to my children, and abandon a carefully constructed philosophy of my union with God. In the end I believe that I and all the people with whom I come in contact will profit from the honesty of my confronting myself.

YOU'LL "FALL" IN LOVE WITH OUR SEPTEMBER SPECIALS!

WHEEL BEARING REPACK
DRUM BRAKES \$12.95
DISC BRAKES \$17.95

COUPON
FREE!
COOLING SYSTEM INSPECTION
• PRESSURE TEST COOLING SYSTEM •
• TEST COOLANT PROTECTION •
• INSPECT HOSES & BELTS •
(EXPIRES SEPTEMBER 30, 1984)

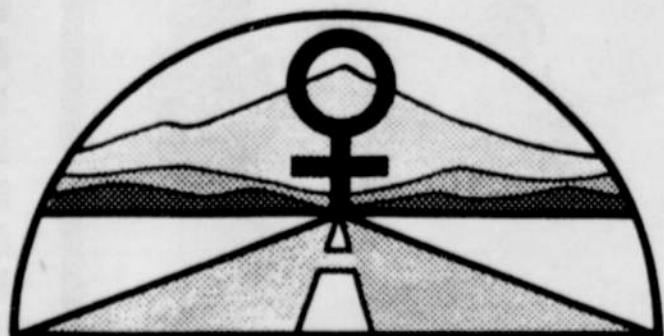
AUTO TRANS FLUID CHANGE
• DRAIN, REMOVE & CLEAN TRANS PAN
• INSPECT LINES
• VALVE BODY, LINKAGE
• INSTALL NEW SCREEN OR FILTER & GASKET
• ADD UP TO 5 QUARTS NEW TRANS FLUID
MOST CARS \$19.95

PORTLAND'S DISTINCTIVE
AUTO REPAIR ALTERNATIVE

OWNED & OPERATED
BY WOMEN

NEW HOURS!

MON-FRI 8:00-5:30
SAT 10:00-4:00



HERIZON
AUTO REPAIR

- TUNE-UPS •
- BRAKES •
- ELECTRICAL •
- CARBURETORS •
- GENERAL REPAIR •

COMING SOON:
AUTO CLASSES

2653 NE UNION AVE. PORTLAND, OREGON 97212 281-8139

Jacqueline's SEE VUE MOTEL



replaces
kitchens

Reservations — 547-3227
Seven miles south of Yachats

Have a unique experience — build a fire — enjoy the sea in the style of Hemingway. Antiques, plants, and always some of Jacqueline's sourdough bread. Patchwork Quilt Suite available by the week for summer vacation. Two free nights out of seven.