

Introducing myself

by Lee Lynch

Moving down Mt. Sexton out of a sea of clouds and fog, under, incredibly, a rainbow, into this sun-filled, wildflower-strewn valley that first time — I should have known I was coming home. But it took a few more days, it took till our hostesses Tee Corinne and her lover drove for hours to show us Crater Lake. Well, I said, noting silently that Cape Cod had nothing on this incredible volcanic lake, maybe I'd be willing to talk about moving here. Maybe.

That was in June, 1982. Deb Pascale and I had been working in the Naiad Press booth at the National Women's Studies Conference in Arcata, California. Rosemary Curb, co-editor of *Lesbian Nuns*, and Chris Czernik of the Boston Lesbian and Gay History Project were also guests in that crowded household. One night, Tee made several phone calls and out of those apparently uninhabited mountains of Southern Oregon swarmed more dykes than I would see in my first month back in New Haven, Connecticut. Chris presented

her slide show. I read in public for the first time, and Hannah Blue Heron played her fiddle. The group was as exciting and as welcoming as the mountains themselves. Had I stumbled upon a veritable lesbian Mecca? Or should I say Lesbos . . .

Just in case, I moved to Southern Oregon in March of 1984.

"Watch out," warned my friend Taz, calling from her snowed-in suburban house in Connecticut to make sure I was all right. "Don't get involved in any of that *weird* stuff out there. That *witchcraft*."

"I may not drink any more, Taz," I replied, "or smoke, or eat white sugar. But I'm here for the mountains and the culture, not women's spirituality." At least, not for anything *weird*. I'd been to Rootworks and the women there were transplanted Easterners like myself. How could I explain it to her? How just looking through, breathing in, the Southern Oregon air had so bewitched Deb and I we'd packed up a condominium-by-the-sea full of furniture and cats and shipped all of our dreamy-eyed selves three thousand miles westward. Taz' skepticism reminded me of my own reluctant joy in the land.

But she was, in a sense, right to warn me

that behind the rainbows that festoon the rainy/sunny skies, it would be hard here. My acre and a half empire is incredibly demanding. I shudder when the rains come raging through the creek threatening to take with them my already rickety bridges. The distances I travel to buy a Sunday paper or a bagel, to earn a buck, would have seemed impossible to me back East. The brilliant white cast of summer light, the sense of these solid-hearted mountains sitting out the centuries long before me, long after me, have pulled me up sharp, turned me around, forced me to reassess my hasty, compartmentalized Eastern life —

And now I'm here on my own, in training to be a rugged, independent Oregonian. Living, but for my new lover next door, alone in the woods like a back-to-the-women's-land collectivist with all the conveniences. Nights, I walk down a pitch-black fog-shrouded country road where werewolves, for goodness sake, could get me, according to the late night movies I was raised on in New York City. Hauling wet wood, mending the barn roof (from the inside — it was raining), growing all seven tomatoes in my first-ever garden — it's all so new and hard.

But, I tell Taz in letters, it's not at all weird. It feels so natural and I'm so changed with the change in lands.

I've learned how to burn wet wood. I've blazed my own trail up to Mother Kali's Bookstore in Eugene and found as fine a feminist bookstore as any in Connecticut. Ashland is about as far from me as New York City was, but the freeway is a joy to drive compared to Bruckner Boulevard. Bloomsbury Books, in Ashland, an hour and fifteen minutes from me, carries lesbian novels and you can go to good — and bad — theatre year round, including Tennessee Williams' apparently lesbian play "Something Unspoken," in a recent fantastic production. Then there's the "Southern Oregon Women's Writers group,

Gourmet Eating Society and Chords." Despite Taz' fear that my writing style would change radically out here I'm finding this group so supportive, so smart, so unique to Southern Oregon, that they're just what I need.

And look at them! At Hannah Blue Heron whose musical fantasy "From the Other Side of Madness" was performed at the Northwest Women's Cultural Festival in Olympia, Washington last year. At Tangren Pear Time's Child who's self-publishing a fascinating book called *The Auto Biography of Deborah Carr*. * At Tee Corinne, whose most recent accomplishment in Southern Oregon has been her book *Women Who Loved Women*. * At Ruth Mountaingrove, who created with Jean *Womanspirit Magazine* and is still a fountain of poetry and songs and photography. I look at these core group members and thank the mountains for welcoming me so grandly.

It's the Amazon Trail, then, I'm traveling and writing about. Every dyke has found at least a bit of it. For some it leads only as far as the nearest gay bar. Others have criss-crossed the country, the world, connecting with other lesbians along the way. For me, today, it's the I-5 corridor from L.A. to Vancouver. Tomorrow — who knows?

Title "The Amazon Trail" thanks to Carol Tuttle.

**Lesbian Nuns* to be published by Naiad Press, PO Box 10543, Tallahassee, FL 32302, in 1985.

**The Auto Biography of Deborah Carr* available from PO Box 364, Ashland, OR 97520. *Women who Loved Women* available at women's book stores.

Lee Lynch is a free-lance lesbian writer living in Sunny Valley, Oregon. She is author of *The Toothpick House*, *Old Dykes Tales* and her newest novel, *Swashbuckler*, will appear next spring. Her column will be a regular feature in **Just Out**.

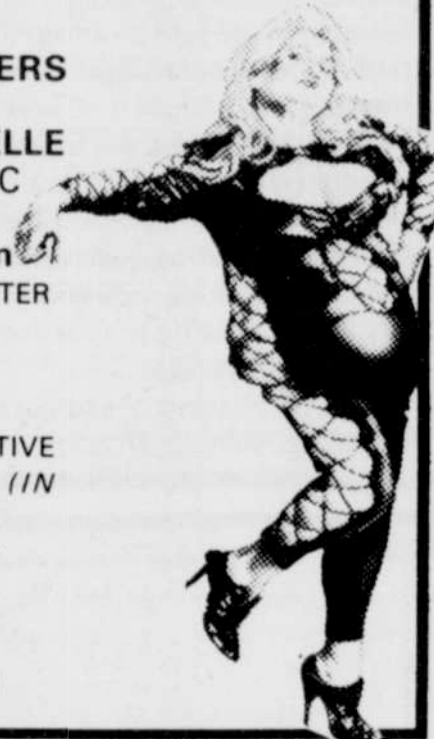
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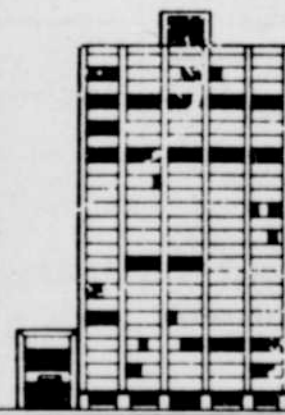
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