

The Amazon Trail

by Lee Lynch

You don't realize how deep your roots go till you pull them up. How where you've been, who you've been there with and what you did have shaped, or bent, or straightened you. Though I never feel straightened, in Oregon, I sometimes feel bent.

My lover, who's Floridian by birth, and therefore familiar with phenomena like a lot of sky, or which wind is likely to be a harbinger of rain, or sunsets, was discussing the location of something or other on her rural land. She said it was west of where we stood.

"You mean near the stream?"

"Creek. In Oregon it's a creek. And no, I mean west," she said with certainty.

I looked around me, envisioned a compass in my head, but just like in Girl Scouts, didn't know which way to point it so I'd know where the rest of it went.

Kindly, patiently, she said, "The sun. Think where the sun rises, where it sets."

Once more I scrunched up my eyes and envisioned like crazy. I just couldn't visualize it. I had no idea where the sun rose or set.

My lover groaned, but not for the reasons I would have preferred. "Think," she instructed me, for luckily she'd also lived in New York City where I was raised, "of the house up the road as the Bronx and the creek as the Hudson River."

"Oh!" I said happily. "The Bronx is north. So the stream is west. The creek," I corrected

myself quickly.

See what I mean? I've carried the city with me so thoroughly I think in city language.

So it is, too, with living on the Amazon Trail. We carry our culture with us wherever we go.

My friend Sue the Intrepid Hitchhiker, for example, called this week. In her progress from Portland to my home, she managed to weave herself in and out of a net of ever more southerly dykes who welcomed her presence, her stories; fed her, gave her beds and rides and generally helped avoid all but the briefest encounters with anyone of the het persuasion.

Once here she butted in and out of my workroom as I readied material for *I Know You Know*,* a new, very professionally produced magazine; for *Bridges**, a magazine for lesbian professionals; for *On Our Backs**, a magazine of lesbian erotica.

Once more, Sue had homed into a lesbian nest.

And Christmas. What do dykes do in the Western bible Belt to survive Christmas? Why travel the Amazon Trail to celebrate it, of course.

What do dykes do in the Western Bible Belt to survive Christmas?

We had a party on the day of Winter Solstice. Complete with a Christmas tree and huge turkey devoured by meat eaters and vegetarians alike. From as far north as Eugene came an assortment of dykes whose lesbianism colors their perspectives as clearly as my city-bias colors the country.

There were Daphne and Judith whose store "It's a Natural" on 2nd Avenue, in Myrtle Creek has become a lesbian and gay con-

nection along the Amazon Trail. Then there was Charlotte Mills of Bookmakers in Eugene, I a teacher of self-publishing whose expertise is inspiring a host of lesbians to preserve and disperse our culture on paper. Gail Bowser, an improvisational actress whose personal theater group entertains dykes as well as depicting us, was there. A woman who teaches bookbinding, another who earns her living making false teeth and is turning that skill into art, another who's an avid reader and therefore supporter of lesbian authors and presses, a doctoral candidate who'll soon be another lesbian teaching women's herstory — they were all there along with the little boy lucky enough to be growing up in the midst of us.

They all took turns reading from my self-published story "Christmas At a Bar," a lesbian Christmas story.* As Tee Corinne said by way of introduction to the story: "We need both to create new celebrations and to claim and reclaim old ones."

And we did just that. We followed, finally, paper bag lanterns to a bonfire and sat singing a mix of spirituals and dyke songs into the cold dark night. We celebrated our varied cultures: Christian, women's, lesbian, with our varied voices blending — or not blending — but all creating a voice in the night, a strong clear one brought together by the invisible thread of the Amazon Trail.

I sang too. Furtively nostalgic. After all, weren't we gathered just south of the Bronx, listening to the flow of the Hudson River?

I Know You Know, 5335 No. Tacoma, Suite 14, Indianapolis, IN 46220
Bridges, 812 6th Ave. #6, Oakland, CA 94606
On Our Backs, PO Box 421916, San Francisco, CA 94142
 Bookmakers, 385 E. 11th #3, Eugene, OR 97401
Christmas At A Bar, PO Box 804, Grants Pass, OR 97526



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