

What is this community coming to?

Country dykes never used to have microwaves. Potlucks and microwaves seem like such mutually exclusive concepts

B Y L E E L Y N C H

A friend called the other night. She was planning the potluck she'd bring to our house the next day.

"Do you have a microwave?" she asked, "or should I bring something for a conventional oven?"

"What has this community come to? I asked Lover afterwards. "Country dykes never used to have microwaves. Potlucks and microwaves seem like such mutually exclusive concepts!"

T H E AMAZON T R A I L

It's true. Potlucks go with alternative lifestyles, at least in my generation, and for some people alternative lifestyles are a more natural way of living. All-cotton clothing, bicycles not cars, belt packs not purses. And often, buying a plot of land, setting up a tepee, building an unusual home or at the very worst, bringing in a trailer. Electricity is often just too patriarchal to stomach, or too expensive to reach these remote sites, and running water is a happy bonus.

The friend in question, as it happens, did buy her own little piece of land and did build her own dwelling. She is also a skilled, if not licensed, electrician and there is no reason in the world why she shouldn't have all the comforts. I just didn't expect it.

Lover, a social worker for older people, suggested, "Maybe it was her mom's and she didn't want it any more."

Well, yes, of course. The hand-me-down system is strong in my family too. "Do you want the air-conditioner?" my mother asked when she moved and it wouldn't fit into her new windows. Or the stereo she never listened to after my father died. I turned my nose up at air-conditioning and didn't need a stereo. Nor do I own a microwave.

"Or," continued Lover, "maybe she learned to cook on the microwave in the breakroom at work."

We agreed this particular friend had already known how to cook, but I thought that was a great concept, and decided to write a story about a dyke who learns to cook just that way.

"How can you eat anything so nuked the molecules have been rearranged?" asks the imaginary dyke's politically correct girlfriend. "Twenty or thirty years from now I'll be able to say I told you so when the headlines read: *AMA Journal Shows*

Microwaves Cause the Big C, Destroy the Ozone Layer, and Reverse the Benefits of Prune Bran."

"Oh," says the dyke, "Don't be such an environmentally prissy, hypochondriacal, peace marching, potlucking stick-in-the-mud."

Soon after, when they're invited to a last-minute potluck, the P. I. girlfriend solves their dilemma by using, of course, the dyke's new microwave.

It's just a matter of styles.

When I was a baby dyke I thought pretty much all the lesbians in the world lived in New York City and looked like the women I saw strolling to the bars on Saturday nights. I had a rude awakening when the women's movement broadened my circle of lesbian acquaintances.

Yet I am returned to those older visions repeatedly.

Yesterday, for example, I spent some time with my friend Norma. I met her at the little lesbian church here in town, a congregation of perhaps thirty women. The beliefs of this church are not aligned with my own, but ain't it nice to get a fix of lesbians anywhere at all on a Sunday morning in the hinterlands?

So I sat in the back row, watching the minister/piano player and the twelve worshippers. I wouldn't feel at all shocked to learn that every one of those hymn-warbling lesbians has a microwave oven in her two-bedroom mobile home. The talk was of the superbowl which was about to start. The feeling was of lesbian family and I was grateful to be included.

The woman I watched most closely, though, could have been making her way along Greenwich Avenue in 1959. She's about 65 years old and was nattily dressed in black. Black pressed slacks, black sport jacket, white blouse (all her clothing looked like severely tailored women's wear), black socks and shoes. Her white hair was short, with a bit of a pompadour in front. She was one good-looking butch. Even with her trace of red lipstick, used perhaps to put color back in her face. She'd recently been quite ill.

What tickled me about her was the very New Age black leather belt pack she'd set beside her chair.

When I got home later that day, Madrone was visiting. She lives on woman-owned land, in a circular house, with cold running water, no electricity and definitely no microwaves. A nature photographer, she makes notecards with her work. She asked what I'd done all day and I told her about Norma, the church, and the good-looking butch in black.

Now it occurs to me that if I'd known about Good-Looking's illness, I could have sent her one of Madrone's cards.

What has this community come to? Nothing to be alarmed about. It's just the country dykes acquiring microwaves; it's just the old gays hitching belt packs around their waists. And notecards, like gay heralds crossing bridges. ▼

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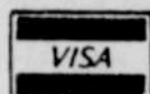


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