

## Magic Chickens

They hide in large closets

BY ALLIAH ANNODYNE

While I did not know it at the time, my first "coming out" was when I was about six years old. My natural father had rented a room in the house of a gay friend named Jon. During one of my visits, I told Jon that I thought he was gay. Shocked, he questioned my knowledge of the word. I told him that it was good to be gay, but I left out the part about knowing that he loved men. I said that he was gay because he sang happy songs in the shower. Everyone seemed upset, suspicious that some had actually told me. But I don't recall being told. I may have sensed that I would grow up and love women in the same way.

## Youth

Recently, I remembered a running joke that Jon and I had. I was too young to take it for anything but face value. I'm sure this only added to the hilarity of it all. The joke was that chickens were living in the large clothes closet in his bedroom. I would walk in and examine the shelves, looking for nests and feathers. I would question, "where are the chickens? I can't find them." He would explain that these were magic chickens and they hid from people other than him. They could disappear at will. I was in absolute awe; I've always loved the presence of magic.

When I was 14, my father broke up with his girlfriend. Needing a place to stay, he went back to Jon's house. By now, there were about four single men living in the rooms of this huge elegant house. They all trusted that I would be discreet about the fact that they were gay. I knew being gay was something to be

hidden only from a hateful, ignorant society. It was not something to hide from friends, it was not a shameful thing. I was staying at the house one night and my dad had gone out with his future wife. Jon cooked dinner for me and we had a long talk before we ate. My recollection is hazy, but I know that I hinted at by lesbian identity. I had no conscious awareness of it, but I knew I wanted to talk. It may have been obvious to him as I sat explaining what a horrible time I had with guys at a party the previous evening.

It was only about six months later that I fell in love with one of my girlfriends from school. I have never been so happy as the day that I kissed my first girlfriend. After months of being in love with her, I finally realized who I was. I danced home with my new lesbian identity. I was blown away at how I had let myself overlook all of the signs. I know now that it was possible for me to grow up and be a successful person. I had worried that I would make a horrible wife, that I was too head strong to be involved in a traditional marriage. I no longer worry.

I'd like to thank Jon and all the other gays and lesbians who were open about themselves, in and out of the home. This gave me the message early in my life that gays functioned positively in the world. Because they were real people to me, I never fell for the horrible lies society tells about us. Real information outweighs fiction. Positive role models are what led me to be comfortable with being a lesbian. I wear a pink triangle on my coat, and I've seen people look relieved to know for certain that they were not the only gay people in the area. I wear this button because I know my reaction is the same. So...let's let the magic chickens out!

## A fascinating look at lesbianism through the centuries

**Lesbian Lists** author, Dell Richards, will be in Portland to discuss her new book on Wednesday, April 18. The talk will be held at 7:30 pm at A Woman's Place, 1431 NE Broadway, and be followed by a book signing.

## Books

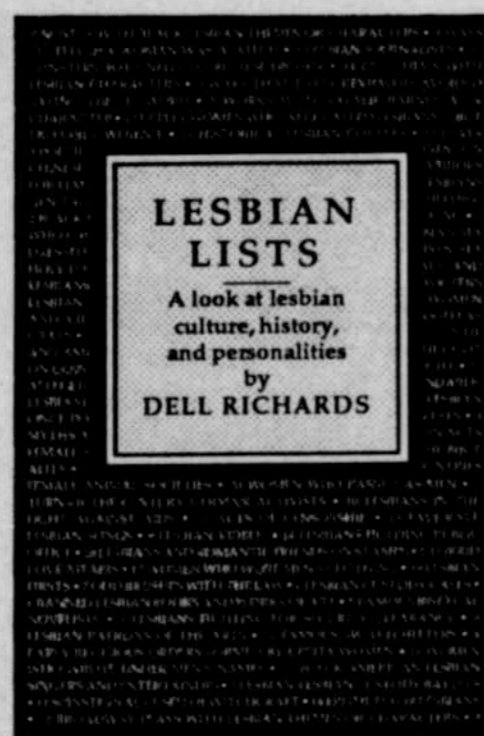
Richards will be in the Pacific Northwest as part of the Northwest Regional Gay and Lesbian Student Conference at the University of Washington, where she is giving a presentation on lesbians throughout history.

**Lesbian Lists**, from Alyson Publications, has more than 100 lists of people, places and things that cover lesbian history from the early Amazon era to modern times.

Richards has taken a wealth of information and turned it into a fascinating look at lesbianism through the centuries with more than 1,000 names and short biographies, ranging from lesbian writers and artists to rulers and aristocrats, actresses and directors, theorists and politicians, witches and nuns, on-screen kisses and slow dances, torrid love

affairs, famous switch-hitters and lesbians who passed as men.

"I felt compelled to write this book because so much of our lesbian history has been deliberately suppressed," said Richards. "To understand the present, we must know the struggle our foremothers fought in the past."



Richards also has published the *rape journal* and been anthologized in poetry and small magazines nationwide, including Judy Grahn's *True to Life Adventure Stories*. She also contributed a chapter to the book, *You Can Do Something About AIDS*.

In 1987, Richards began syndicating profiles of gay men and lesbians to gay newspapers all over the U.S. The monthly features currently are seen by more than 350,000 people in the U.S. and the Netherlands.



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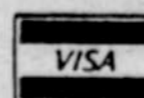


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