

AMAZON TRAIL

The invisible lesbian

Lesbian chic notwithstanding, there are many lesbians who are just as happy to remain in the shadows

by Lee Lynch

Sometimes, in this figurative Kansas that constitutes Lesbian Nation, I get the feeling I'm not in Kansas anymore. When I see lesbians in the limelight, I wonder: What is this tattoo craze? When did gender issues get to be more important to lesbians than femme/butch? How come dykes do things to their hair that I associate with queering adolescent boys?

I suspect that the problem of lesbian invisibility has not been resolved by lesbian chic. That the media image of Everydyke is far from a mirror reflection. And that what may be this week's rage in the lesbian ghettos loses momentum as its shock waves reverberate into the rest of the United States where most lesbians live.

The truth is, most lesbians are still invisible—and like it that way.

The invisible lesbian is the librarian who won't meet another dyke's eyes as she checks out Martina's new mystery. The invisible lesbian is the scruffy gas station attendant who turns out to be a girl. She's the lesbian who goes back to live with her parents because that's the only way she can afford to fight her breast cancer. The women who stay married to men and make love with their best friends while the kids are at school. The quiet couples, one a nurse, one a bookkeeper, who only socialize with their straight neighbors.

Aren't these women lesbians, too?

Some dykes actually cringe at the sight of body piercing. Their tastes in leather run to purses or billfolds, pumps or Birkenstocks. Sex clubs are an alien concept. Personal ads are a source of entertainment or fantasy, not sex partners, for them—although they may subscribe to one of the quiet newsletters that connect women-loving women.

Rather than nude posters on their walls, many lesbians tack up cute puppy pictures and, if it feels safe, their favorite "Dykes to Watch Out For" cartoon—though some don't even relate to the word dyke.

They may be moved by flirtatious femmes, but the butches clam up within a yard of one. Cuddling is a fine form of foreplay as far as they're concerned, and campfire smoke the most potent aphrodisiac they've ever used. Some dare to buy lesbian videos, but many get all romantic just singing Girl Scout songs. Sex toy demonstrations aren't their cup of tea.

Lesbians can even be prudes.

Though they like the idea of dyke community, a lot tend to be stay-at-homes. Their only links with other lesbians, if they're really brave, are the Naiad mailing list and a subscription to *Girlfriends*. If some like to observe traditional holidays with their birth families and can't bring their lovers, there's always one couple that holds open house barbecues or cooks turkey for 50—and welcomes the strays.

Despite the radical-right hysteria about gay marriage, lots of lesbians wouldn't think of it. They don't believe in it, don't feel they need it, or fear to be that out. On anniversaries they go to the Red Coach Inn and celebrate with wine or ice cream sundaes for dessert.

Even if they're only an hour's drive from lively dyke scenes in New York or Seattle, Chicago or Dallas, try and pry them from their horses, bridge groups, hiking, gardens, bowling tournaments or volunteer work with the women's shelter. Far from the big cities there might be a Halloween or Valentine's Day dance, but who wants to drive at night; the music's too loud; the dance starts too late; or they can't get a sitter.

They'd rather watch *Star Trek*. Any generation.

Lots of us are in the slow lane.

They're as likely to be at an environmental demonstration as a queer one. As likely to donate money or time to animal rights as gay rights. To vote Republican as Democratic—or not to vote at all. On National Coming Out Day an invisible lesbian might agonize through telling her best friend at work (who'd guessed years ago) and vow never to go through that again.

Leather and lace may be the fabrics of

choice for many dykes, but many more wear flannel shirts bought for two bucks apiece on clearance at Walmart with J.C. Penney's jeans—the ones that were a really, really relaxed fit even before relaxed was in.

Do they get to be dykes even if they wear dorky clip-on sunglasses? If they've got about as much desire to go on an Olivia cruise as they have to go to war? If even the thought of watching the Dinah Shore Golf Classic bores them silly? If on vacations they stay in RV parks chock-full of straights and have a great time? If they never learned line dancing, and outdoor music festivals exhaust them? Yep, they count.

Some dykes just want to be cool in the Castro. Some want to change the world by marching on Washington. There are those who want to sweep women off their feet. And others who'll fight to add lesbian literature to the curriculum.

But what about those who spend Friday nights clipping Safeway double coupons? And Sunday afternoons after church sealing their foundations to stop the skunks from settling under their houses? Those who work their butts off to keep their jobs and health insurance and to pay off their Fords.

Can they keep their dyke cards?

The invisible lesbian may have no tattoos, no causes, no gay community. She may not even have a lover.

But she's loved a woman somewhere, some time. She's a lesbian.

Lee Lynch lives in rural Oregon and is the author of several lesbian novels, including Cactus Love, Morton River Valley and The Swashbuckler; she has a new book coming out this fall.



Bikes For FUN!
CICLO
SPORT SHOP
925 SW 10TH PORTLAND 227-3535
91 S STATE LAKE OSWEGO 636-3521

10-7 M-F
10-5 SA
12-5 SU

\$425
529 reg

DIAMONDBACK 95 Ascent
Full Chromoly Frame,
21 Speed STX Equipped -
Just a Super Bike!

So Much FUN...

**Will Put A Smile
On Your Face,
GUARANTEED!**

**BIANCHI
CANNONDALE
DIAMONDBACK
SCOTT**

AMERICAN CHOREOGRAPHERS SHOWCASE
Sponsored by Philip Morris Companies Inc.

FORCING FLYING FLOWING THE DANCE...

MAY 10-24
CALL 2-BALLET
TICKETMASTER 790-ARTS

OREGON BALLET THEATRE
JUST YOUR LOCAL WORLD CLASS DANCE COMPANY

Blaine Covert ©1994

Ragingly Yours

Fridays 5-6pm

KPSU 1450 AM

The Highest Price Paid for Your Life Insurance Policy Period.

You take an important step toward controlling your financial concerns when you choose **Funds For Life, Inc.** We are unlike any other viatical service in the industry in two important aspects.

- Funds For Life, Inc. never purchases insurance policies from its clients, we represent you, not the buyer, therefore, your best interests are our primary concern.**
- Funds For Life's competitive bidding process guarantees that you receive the highest possible cash settlement.**

When you call, our caring professional staff is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to assist and help you. Each client transaction is held in the **strictest confidence.**

You Deserve More

than the net worth of your insurance policy. You deserve Funds For Life. Call **Funds For Life, Inc.** anytime at **407-420-1200** or toll free at **1-800-556-0807.**

FUNDS FOR LIFE

407-420-1200 or 1-800-556-0807