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## Living OUT BY SALLY SHEKLOW

# Thankfulness Feast

Thrilled to be alive and in love.

**B**efore I start peeling my Thanksgiving yams, let me pause and consider what I'm thankful for. While other Americans ready their turkey basters for their other use, I step back from life's chaos and appreciate the miracle of being here. Considering all the wild motorcycle rides, hitchhiking adventures and potent psychedelics I've survived – not to mention the mercury, lead and red dye #3 – I'm thrilled to be alive at all.



I wake up every day to the warm cuddly body of my true love – how lucky is that? Thank you to the cosmos or the divine or whatever brought her to me, and to the encouragement, wherewithal, and restraining orders that saved me from my many previous bad choices.

I thank Alix Dobkin, Meg Christian and Margie Adam and every dyke musician who provided the soundtrack for my early coming out and coming to my senses years. Thanks to the DJs who played women's music on obscure FM stations before Melissa and kd and the Indigo Girls proved you don't have to be in the closet to make a living.

I am thankful for Ellen and Martina and Rosie and every out lesbian who ever stood in front of a cheering crowd, and for every soft, strong hand I've held. I am grateful for women's land and woman-only space and women's festivals and healing circles of bare-breasted witchy wisdom.

Thank you to rennetless cheese, tofu and brown rice, and the organic food movement. Thanks for the feminist natural foods collective where I learned about whole grains and sustainable agriculture, even if – or maybe especially after – I occasionally lose my convictions and pull into a Burger King.

For every dyke who ever drove a truck or a tractor or a nail and showed me how. For lesbian moms raising kids with a new idea of what women can be. Thank you to *Shadow on a Tightrope*, Fat Lip Readers Theater, *Radiance* magazine, Camryn Manheim and everyone who ever stood up for the fat girls and challenged this diet-obsessed, cellulite-hating culture and showed me I can be big and beautiful. In which case, thank you for chocolate and crème brûlée and Julia Child.

Thank you to the wonderful women of the women's health movement who taught me about my clitoris and showed me how to look at my own cervix and how to get unsweetened yogurt up my vagina to cure a yeast infection. To the reproductive freedom fighters for putting their lives on the line so I could get a legal abortion at a Feminist Women's Health Center in 1973, and a good job there 20 years later.

**T**hank you to the sex outlaws and the feminist erotica writers and publishers and to Annie Sprinkle, Susie Bright and Carol Queen and to every woman who preaches pleasure and challenges Puritanism and patriarchy. Thank you to Good Vibrations and the Hitachi Magic Wand and especially to EWEB for keeping the juice flowing to my house.

I am thankful for Sappho and Gertrude & Alice and all the lesbian lovers who came before me (in both senses of the word.) To the dykes and drag queens at Stonewall who fought the riot police in the streets of 1969 New York and gave birth to the Gay Pride movement. To every lesbian, gay, bi, trans, intersexed, two-spirited, and queer person and to every ally who has marched, lobbied, canvassed, voted, or spoken out for freedom, justice and equality.

Here's to Harvey Milk. And to everyone who takes his advice and braves sweaty palms and nausea – not to mention disinheritance, excommunication, and violence – to come out to parents, children, students, teachers, and the person next to them on the airplane.

Thank you to every peace-loving person. To strong women and gentle men and everyone in between for questioning authority and challenging gender stereotypes and being your whole magnificent creative self.

Whew. Now, on with those candied yams.

Writer Sally Sheklow of Eugene is thankful to have her work published in alternative, women's, and LGBTQ publications across the U.S. and internationally. Sally's teaching writing this winter term at LCC, see [www.lanecc.edu](http://www.lanecc.edu)

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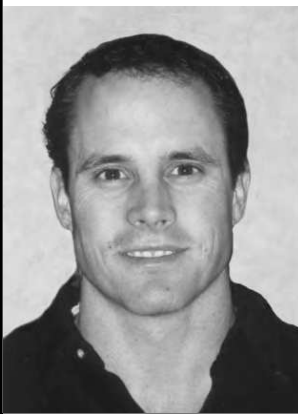
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