



# Womanspace

*Our voice in the lesbian community*

*April 1999*



Womonspace is online! Check out our web page at <http://www.gaycanada.com/womonspace/>

## SPLINTERS FROM THE BOARD:

- ♦ A social evening to thank Womonspace volunteers will take place in April. Volunteers who have recently moved are asked to leave a message at 482-1794; we don't want to miss anyone!
- ♦ A big thank you to Doris Rank for her \$100 donation to Womonspace. Doris was at our February dance with surveys for her research on internalized homophobia.
- ♦ We are seeking ideas for a new Womonspace logo. The submission deadline is April 18, 1999. Drop off your design at either the newsletter meeting on April 11 or the Board meeting on April 18 (see Calendar of Events for times and locations), or mail them to Box 128, Main P.O., Edmonton AB T5J 3K4. Prospective logos will be published in the May issue and members will be asked to select one.

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## WE WELCOME SUBMISSIONS

We are always seeking submissions of interest to local lesbians. Letters to the editor, book, concert and movie reviews, political and social commentary, short fiction, poetry, photographs and artwork are all welcomed. Write to *Womonspace* (Box 128, Main P.O., Edmonton AB T5J 3K4), attend a newsletter meeting, visit our website or leave a message at 482-1794. Topic for May—Lesbian gardeners. June—Lesbian comedy. July—Spirituality

### Contributors:

Lisa Austin, Laurie,  
Liz Massiah, Lindy  
Pratch.

*Womonspace* is a publication of Womonspace Social and Recreational Society of Edmonton. We are a nonprofit organization. The newsletter is produced by, for, and about lesbians in Edmonton and the surrounding areas. Our purpose is to inform and entertain our members and any other interested lesbians. The opinions expressed in any issue of *Womonspace* do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Directors or the Newsletter Committee. The events, organizations and establishments publicized are not necessarily supported by Womonspace.

*Womonspace* is produced on a volunteer basis by the Newsletter Committee. We welcome submissions. Material submitted becomes the property of Womonspace. We reserve the right to edit for length and content, and to refuse publication. Articles or letters to the editor may be sent to: Womonspace, Box 128, Main P.O., Edmonton, AB T5J 3K4. Womonspace members may submit classified advertising — up to 3 lines free — at any time. *Womonspace* seeks advertising that is lesbian-positive to help defer publications costs. Womonspace does not necessarily endorse products or services offered. We reserve the right to refuse ads. For rate information, and to place an ad, please leave a message: 482-1794. The editor is Lindy Pratch.

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# LESBIAN BED DEATH

## The Laverne and Shirley Syndrome

by Lisa Austin

"Lesbian Bed Death" is a touchy subject about... well... lack of touching. I spoke to a few lesbians about this controversial subject and they suggested that a definition of LBD in this article would be prudent. It will also, hopefully, prevent my house from being firebombed by angry readers. One firebombing can ruin your whole day.

My unofficial definition of Lesbian Bed Death is: "The chronic and/or prolonged absence of sexual contact between a lesbian couple which does not result from a physical, emotional or psychological condition. Moreover, the absence is not a mutual decision." Researchers will take exception (as well they should) to the terms 'chronic,' 'prolonged' and, even, 'sexual contact.' These terms are subjective and must be defined by the couple themselves (see Liz Massiah's article on page 8).

The most important part of that definition is the concept of mutual decision-making. In my experience and conversations with others, it is usually one member of the couple who finds the absence of a sexual relationship unacceptable. It is alarming to me how many women I talk to who are in this situation—or have been at some point. What the heck's going on here?

I don't have an answer. (If I'd said that at the beginning, you would have stopped reading.) Sometimes I think it's about power and control. Imagine a couple in which one has a low sex drive and the other has a high sex

drive. The low sex drive person likely always gets sex when they want it. The high sex drive person, conversely, only gets sex when the low sex drive person wants it. Hardly equitable. Who do you think feels more powerful?

Intimacy and sex are subjects a couple can never afford to stop talking about. Relationship negotiation is hard work that demands we step out of our fears in order to really listen and be open to solutions.

### QUOTES:

Lesbian sexologist JoAnn Loulan and others have attributed bed death to a variety of causes related to the complexity of female sexuality, including the tendency of committed lesbian partners to experience fusion or merging.

*The Lesbian Almanac,*  
Berkley Books, New York, 1996

The way lesbians talk about the sexual slow-down that takes place in many long-term relationships, you'd think we were the only people on the planet that it happened to.

Erin Gill  
"Our Very Own Passion Play"  
*Diva*, Jan/Feb issue, 1999

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# TIPS FOR STAVING OFF LESBIAN BED DEATH

by Laurie

**1. Get rid of your television.** Nothing kills a romantic mood like being told, "Not now, honey—*The X-files* is on." Unless you yourself want to soon be joining the ranks of the ex-files, seriously limit your TV watching... and absolutely NEVER install a television in your bedroom. It's bad enough if you're re-arranging your daily schedule around the afternoon soaps, but if you're trying to squeeze in orgasms between *Friends* and *Frasier*, you might as well be having sex with your remote control. (Perhaps you already are.)

**2. Celebrate Valentine's Day once a week.** Corny but effective. Many of us have frenzied schedules that don't allow for a lot of quality time with our lovers. Often we work all day, bump into our partner at bedtime and are too tired to even think about brushing our teeth, let alone doing the wild thing. But you'd be surprised how setting aside one mutually agreed upon day (or night) a week for candles, chocolates, and soft kisses can spruce up a sex life that's starting to go stale. A half-hour cuddle doesn't have to lead to mind-blowing orgasms, but if by chance it does... BONUS!

**3. Play "Remember When."** If the frequency of your romantic romps has dwindled from twice a day to twice a year, remind each other of those lusty early encounters when you couldn't keep your hands off each other. "Remember when we were first dating, and we danced at the club until 3 a.m., and it was 30-below when we left, so while we were waiting for the car to warm up we started necking in the front seat... and ended up

making out in the back seat... right there on 104th Street! And the next day I gave Chris a ride home from work... and when she reached for the seatbelt she pulled out your bra..."

**4. Resist the Urge to Merge.** We've all known couples who move in together after the first coffee and remain joined at the hip forever after. Financial benefits of cohabitation aside, we all need a little breathing room. I'm no therapist, but if you're wearing each other's clothes and finishing each other's sentences, you probably need to get out more—*separately*. I am not suggesting going on dates with other people—polyamory is a whole other ball game. But for many people, taking a class, joining a sports team, or just going for a walk alone can provide valuable time away from a dangerously-close-to-stifling situation. (Watching TV in separate rooms does NOT count as time spent away from each other.) The bottom line: you don't have to do everything together. If codependency is already strangling your relationship, STOP doing your laundry together; DON'T STOP having sex together!

**5. Talk. Often.** Let your partner know if you're not happy with the frequency of sex you've been having (or not having). Don't expect her to read your mind. Assuming there are no medical or geographical reasons for the slowdown, it just may turn out that you're both missing the sex—and both assuming the other doesn't care. "I thought *you* weren't interested in sex any more." "What you do mean—*you're* the one who never seems to want to do it..." Sound familiar?

**6. Relax—and make your own rules.** It's a very stressful world—and goddess knows, sex is a great way to relieve stress. But it's tough enough to unwind after dealing with jobs, kids,

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parents, banks, cranky neighbours, bad drivers and homophobic politicians without adding sexual performance anxiety to the tension. So take a hot, soothing bath, light some aromatherapy candles, put on some soft music... and just snuggle.

A satisfying sex life doesn't have to mean exchanging bodily fluids with a monogamous partner a certain number of times a week. Lesbian sexual activity can range from holding hands and cuddling to hot, throbbing marathon sessions where you take the phone off the hook and don't come up for air for three days. Don't despair and assume LBD has set in simply because you're "only" having sex once a month when all the glossy clit mags are insisting that's "below average."

For one thing, there's nothing "average" about lesbians! And besides, sexual "statistics" are not very reliable because they're based on responses from human beings, who tend to exaggerate (why am I being polite—we lie like rugs) when discussing our sexual experiences, particularly when stamina, prowess and/or frequency is involved. If having sex once in a blue millenium is enough for you and your lover, it's nobody else's concern.

## COMING NEXT MONTH: A NEW LOOK

Our newsletter is undergoing a facelift! Starting with next month's issue, *Womonspace* will be a new size and format. The revamped version will retain many of the same features you look for every month, along with a few changes.

As this April edition goes to press, the Alberta government has just announced its platform on gay rights issues—almost a full year after the Supreme Court ordered the province to include sexual orientation in its human rights legislation. Lawyer Julie Lloyd will sort out what it all means in the May issue of *Womonspace*.

Feature topic next month: Lesbian gardeners.

## QUOTES:

LBD only matters if one of you wants to have sex and can't communicate this to your partner. The 'problem' lies not in our lesbianism but in the fact that we find it hard to talk about what our sexual and emotional needs might be.

Emma Healey

"Double Trouble"

*Diva*, June/July issue, 1996

The love is still very strong, but the physical expression has mellowed. Maybe because we live together, the urgency has been removed. It's like when you live in a place, you don't go to the museum.

Patricia,

who has been with her girlfriend

for 23 years, quoted in

"Our Very Own Passion Play,"

*Diva*, Jan./Feb. issue, 1999

## WHAT'S HAPPENING? Groups and Weekly Events:

**GLCCE** (Gay and Lesbian Community Centre of Edmonton) is located in suite 103, 10612-124 Street. Office hours 9 AM to noon Monday to Friday and 7-10 PM for drop-in, peer support counselling and library services. Films on Wednesdays. 488-3234. Peer support is also available through email; [glcce@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca](mailto:glcce@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca) website: [www.freenet.edmonton.ab.ca/glcce](http://www.freenet.edmonton.ab.ca/glcce)

**Gaywire** lesbian, gay & bisexual radio show on FM 88.5. Thursdays from 6-7 PM.

**Sonic Sisters** women's music radio program on FM 88.5. Tuesdays 7-8 PM.

**Lambda Christian Community** evangelical lesbigay church; worship 7 PM Sundays, 11148-84 Ave. 474-0753.

**Metropolitan Community Church** weekly worship, McDougall United Church, 10086 MacDonald Drive (riverside entrance), Sundays at 1 PM—with children's church school available—and at 7:15 PM. Youth Group on Tuesdays at 7 PM. Also at McDougall, **AFFIRM United** meets at 7:30 PM the last Saturday of each month. Call Tess or Phyllis at 474-0862.

**Unitarian Church of Edmonton** welcomes lesbians and gays. Services of union available. Sunday services at 9:30 and 11:15 AM, 12530-110 Ave. 454-8073.

**Classics**, a social group for lesbians over 40, meets on the first Sunday of the month at 2 PM. Call Donna at 456-1008.

**Youth Understanding Youth:** a fellowship of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders, aged 25 and under, meets Saturdays from 8-10 PM at GLCCE. All youth welcome. 488-3234.

**PFLAG/T Edmonton:** support and education for parents, families and friends of lesbians/gays/bisexuals/transgenders. Meets the 3rd Tuesday of each month, 7:30 PM., GLCCE. Call Lynne at 462-5958.

**Northern Titans Gay & Lesbian Bowling Association** meets for 10 pin every Saturday at 5:15 PM. Pins and Cues (Westmount). \$12. A group supper outing after bowling is also organized each week. Call Garry, 426-6311.

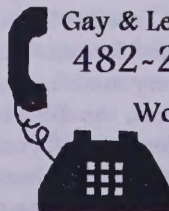
**Outreach** is a University of Alberta group for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered students, staff and faculty. Meets Tuesdays at 5 PM in the Heritage Room in Athabasca Hall. Email: [outreach@gpu.srv.ualberta.ca](mailto:outreach@gpu.srv.ualberta.ca).

### Hangouts:

**Bagel Tree Cafe** - 10345 Whyte Ave.  
**Buddy's** - Upstairs pub; 10112-124 Street.  
**Jazzberrys Too Cafe** - 10116-124 Street.  
**The Roost** - Private club at 10345-104 Street.  
**Secrets** - Women's bar at 10249-107 Street.

Gay & Lesbian Info Line:  
482-2855

Womonspace: 482-1794



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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

**SUNDAY, APRIL 11, NOON**

## *Womospace* Newsletter Meeting

Stop in and say hello to the newsletter dykes at the Bagel Tree Cafe, 10345 Whyte Ave.

Deadline for submissions for May issue on the topic "Lesbian Gardeners."

**SUNDAY, APRIL 11, 11 AM - 2 PM**

## Pride 99 Brunch Fundraiser

Featuring a breakfast buffet and entertainment at Secrets Bar and Grill, 10249-107 Street. The funds will be used to finance our Pride celebration in June. Tickets \$15 at Secrets or call 488-3442

Email:edmonton\_pride@hotmail.com

**SUNDAY, APRIL 11, 7:30 PM**

## Linda Tillery & Cultural Heritage Choir

Arden Theatre, St. Albert. Tickets \$21.50; phone 459-1542.

**TUESDAY, APRIL 13, 8 PM**

## Rainbow Business Association

Gay-friendly business owners meet the second Tuesday of every month at the Garage Burger Bar, 10242-106 Street.

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 14, 7:30 PM**

## Dionne Brand Reading

Winner of the Governor General Award for poetry in 1997, Dionne reads from her second novel, *At the Full and Change of the Moon*, upstairs in the Bloomsbury Room at Orlando Books, 10123 Whyte Ave.

**FRIDAY, APRIL 16, 7:30 PM**

## Sonic Sisters

Singer/songwriter Cori Brewster and friends in the Bloomsbury Room at Orlando Books, 10123 Whyte Ave. A pass the hat event.

**SATURDAY, APRIL 17, 7:30 PM**

## Black & White Affair AIDS Benefit

Silent auction, hors d'oeuvres and dancing to the music of The Kit Kat Club and Big Breakfast Boogie Band. Advance tickets \$30 at AIDS Network, 488-5742; \$35 at door. Winspear Centre, 9720-102 Ave.

**SUNDAY, APRIL 18, 3 PM**

## Womospace Board Meeting

GLCCE, 103, 10612-124 St.

**FRIDAY, APRIL 23, after 4 PM**

## Teachers Social/Support Group

Monthly gathering of gay and lesbian Edmonton and area teachers. Second Cup, 11210 Jasper Ave. Call Barrie; 432-9144 or Grant; 432-1660.

**SUNDAY, APRIL 25, 8 PM**

## Laura Love Concert

The Afro-Celtic folksinger plays the Winspear Centre, 428-1414.

**SATURDAY, MAY 1, 8 PM**

## EVM Concert, Let Your Spirit Soar

Lesbian and gay gospel music with guest conductor Gregory Payne from New York City. Convocation Hall at the University of Alberta. Call 988-4620.

**SUNDAY, MAY 2, 6 PM**

## Liatris Society Perennial Exchange

Divide overgrown plants and share them with queer gardeners. Seeds and houseplants welcome also. Call 483-4080 for more information.

**SUNDAY, MAY 9, NOON**

## Womospace Newsletter Meeting

At the Bagel Tree Cafe, 10345 Whyte Ave. Deadline for submissions for June issue on the topic "Lesbian Comedy."

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## SPEAKING OF NORMAL

by *Liz Massiah, MSW, RSW (780) 415 5443*

Dead bed. This phrase describes the lessening of sexual activity between lesbians who have been in a relationship for an extended period of time. The high powered, lusty beginnings of intimate relationships that gradually erode into infrequent sex.

Frequency of sexual contact in couples is affected by many things. Fatigue, illness, depression, certain medications (anti-depressants and high blood pressure drugs to name just two) decrease libido. There is the lack of time in many of our lives. There are issues of communication and trust. Factors related to power and control often get played out sexually. One partner may either demand or refuse sex as a way of being in charge.

Unresolved experiences of sexual abuse and assault—as a child, adolescent or adult—also affect our ability to be sexual. Then there is the whole whore/virgin dilemma, all those messages about “good girls don’t”; not to mention the messages about the nastiness of lesbian sex that we are all raised with and hear regularly. That, combined with a sexually obsessed yet sex avoidant culture, also gets in the way. And then there is all the stuff about who initiates what, when, where, how and why—and who has more or less sexual experience. And who wants vanilla sex while another wants “down and dirty and raunchy,” or maybe to act out their power and control stuff using sado-masochism.

Add menopause, peri-menopause, hysterectomies and hormone replacement therapy into the mix. And child rearing and nursing and late night feedings...

And then there is the question of what is sex anyhow? Lots of folks figure that anything that

isn’t missionary position sexual intercourse just doesn’t count. Gay men often talk about not having had sex unless they have anal sex. Despite having wonderful orgasms together with lots of touching, it’s not sex unless it’s intercourse.

So is it sex to a dyke if there is no penetration? What do you and your partner mean by being sexual? Is it the cuddle in the morning, the backrub in the bath, the casual caress of her breast or your bottom while doing the dishes?

Research shows that the highest frequency of sexual activity is in gay male couples, then heterosexuals, then lesbian couples. The famous Anne Landers poll showed that most women want to cuddle anyhow, more than have orgasms.

And who says that if it’s sex you have an orgasm? Now let’s get into the topic of female ejaculation and not being a proper dyke unless we do that too. So much for the neatness inherent in dyke sex—now we want wet spots!

Intimacy includes being sexual. That means connecting, communicating and sharing. And taking risks—lots of risks. Or is it just another bodily function, like peeing, that feels so much better when it’s finished—but is basically an inconvenience? Or is it a sacrament, full of mystical, sacred meaning? Or is it different from time to time? Are we trying to fit it into someone else’s notion of being sexual? One report I saw suggested that any couple that has sex less than six times a year is a non-sexual couple. Does that mean that the six times they have great sex don’t count?

Are you experiencing yourself and your partner in a sexual way that meets your needs? If one of you is discontented, how can you do something different to make it better between you? Sex needs to be talked about. My bet is that if one of you is silently fussing about your sexual relationship, then the other is too.

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## BETWEEN THE COVERS

### At Edmonton Public Library

by Lindy Pratch

Two German women fell in love during the Second World War. One was the wife of a Nazi soldier and the other woman was Jewish, living underground to avoid being sent to a concentration camp. Their true story has been the subject of a book, a documentary, and now a movie.

*Aimée & Jaguar: A Love Story, Berlin 1943* (HarperCollins 1995) was written by Erica Fischer and translated by Edna McCown. It won a Lambda Literary Award for biography. The most remarkable aspect of this story is that it exists. Lilly Wurst (Aimée) has an amazing memory for details. She also kept a diary and had stacks of letters and poems that she and Felice Schragenheim (Jaguar) had written to each other, as well as photographs and many official documents.

This story of their love brings a turbulent time in history to life. I feel fortunate to have had this intimate glimpse into what it was like to live then in Germany.

I was shocked to learn of the anti-semitic immigration policies in other countries which contributed to the deaths of thousands of people who had the money to leave Germany but nowhere to go. In 1941, for example, there was an 81% decrease in the emigration quota into the USA, compared to the previous year.

The author's condescension toward Lilly irritated me and I was impatient for more action in places where the volume of detail became overwhelming. The final third of the

book is mostly comprised of diary excerpts and this section is quite gripping.

In the epilogue, Fischer tells of her frustration with Lilly and writes "I had to use harsh measures to tone down Lilly's overprolific memory." The author also admits to recording some events with "self-righteousness" and to being "furious" with Lilly because she had walled up her life and clung to the past. Fischer draws a parallel between the holocaust and the "ethnic cleansing" happening in Bosnia while she wrote. The epilogue added much to my understanding of my reaction to the book and to the larger social issues it raises.

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A thoroughly enjoyable time can be spent with Abigail Padgett's new thriller, *Blue* (Mysterious Press 1998). Blue McCarron is a reclusive social psychologist hired to prove a 61-year-old widow did not actually murder the man found in her frozen food storage locker... even though she has confessed to the crime. The intrigue lies in what her story may be covering up. Meanwhile, Blue is still grieving the disappearance of her ex, Misha, when a new love interest enters her life. Blue's study of primates and her resulting understanding of human male and female behaviours is a very interesting thread through the narrative.

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*Bending the Landscape* is a new series of original gay and lesbian writing. *Science Fiction*, volume 1, (Overlook 1998) received a Lambda award last year. In the intro, editors Nicola Griffith and Stephen Pagel talk about aliens—the Other. "Lesbians and gay men have, in our 20<sup>th</sup> century western culture, been the Other: as the century is about to change, we believe we are less so. The writers in this volume have different views about how things might turn out." Read these stories and think about who might be right.

## MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS PRIVILEGE

The Womospace winter "recruitment" campaign was a resounding success. Borrowing a page from Ellen DeGeneres, we recently held a membership drive in which all women who purchased or renewed memberships between Nov. 21, 1998 and March 20, 1999 were eligible to win a toaster oven.

The response was excellent! More than 80 memberships (including two-for-\$25 couple packages) were purchased during the four-month campaign. Womospace presently has 173 members.

Thanks to all of you who continue to support Womospace, and hearty congratulations to Dilys, winner of the Black & Decker prize valued at \$70.

Members get in to Womospace events at reduced rates and receive the monthly newsletter in the mail approximately 10 days before it is distributed around town.

**Dear Womospace,**

Just a note of thanks for the Toast-R-Oven. I have recently been working very hard to qualify... with little success. (And had all but thought the statute of limitations had run out on my previous endeavours... just kidding.)

Here's a toast to you!

**Thanks,  
Dilys**



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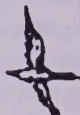
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The newsletter will have a new format starting with the May issue. Ask for a rate sheet with new sizes.

*Classified ads are free  
for members*

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**Female Ball Hockey Players**

Practice at 4 PM on Sundays with good coach. No experience required; minimal equipment. Call Dolly, 471-2182.

**Women's Touch Football**

L'Amazons team seeks players for season which begins in May. No experience necessary. Call Rae, 465-7468 or Mary Lynne, 454-6404.

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# No Dance in April

## Next Womonspace Dance

### Saturday, May 15

Alberta Avenue Hall

9210 - 118 Avenue

9 PM - 1 AM

FOR WOMEN ONLY - NON-SMOKING



#### WOMONSPACE MEMBERSHIP FORM

Box 128 Main P O, Edmonton AB T5J 3K4 Phone: 482-1794

Confidentiality Assured

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**12-Month Membership Fee: \$15/single \$25/couple** (with one newsletter)

**\$15/Associate** (Friends of Womonspace; newsletter only).

Cheque or Money Order payable to Womonspace (low income available)

New Member  Renewal  Associate  I would like to be a volunteer Yes  No

Please mail my newsletter to my home

I will pick up the newsletter at dances/events  **Total enclosed \$** \_\_\_\_\_