This issue of The Empty Closet is lovingly brought to you by the women of the U of R Gay Liberation Front. Insights into women have been few; insights into gay women almost negligible. It is to the ever-increasing activity and reflections of gay women that this issue is dedicated.

OPENED

It's there, slightly opened
my heart beats when I look out
I'm not sure what waits - out there
Right now I want a cradle
not of wood, of flesh
But I fear - it's different now
knowing what I know
It's there, slightly opened
I always thought it was
painted ugly
you know, evil
a nun said it was
sick demented
I still wonder
It's there, slightly opened
I have this friend
I'm not sure, but she said
she loved me
We touched once and giggled
It's there, slightly opened
I want to step out
with her - together
It's there - Opened

T.A. Robinson
FEELING FREE  or,

Carefree on Christopher Street

three hundred and fifty miles and six hours in a car—with me driving. me! driv­ing to new york city with my closest straight friend and an intriguing gay lady who needs a ride—to see her lover. she is telling me how horny she is, she! who is going to see her lover in six hours—what about me?

and the ride goes on and on and we feed each other m and m's and talk of parents and home and friends and coming out and by the time we reach the city—i think i may be falling in love.

and so, summer-separated parts of rochester get together in nyc on friday night and others get together at the street fair saturday where we throw darts at dr. rubin's salami and play and drink and see newsreels and old friends and glory be—meet some new ones.

and we get to know our friends and our lovers in a new light. holding hands in public doesn't induce tidal waves of para-nola. me and karen can look at lenny bruce and know it ain't that much better now but it must be some 'cuz we are on our way to d.o.b. dance.

where—the ladies are hopping and dancing in style and topless and bobby mceee's there and the ladies from ro­chester get it together with a riverview stomp and i love us all but i still feel bad that rj can't come in. and we sing on prince st. and we sing on the fire escape and i kiss karen and she kisses me. and i kiss a second karen and she kisses back and i feel free and alive and beautiful. and my lady and me dance through a few sets without realizing the music has stopped. it's hotter than hell—she is wet and i'm wet and we get stuck together...

and on sunday rochester again at the firehouse and trucks over to christopher street where we march for sixty blocks with 5000 sisters and brothers past the hotel crowds and the preaching old lady who tells us we're going to rot in hell and the ballet troupe who nearly fell 10 stories making sure we know that they're with us. the heat the thirst the tired feet—by the time we get to sheep's meadow, we are all one...

into the park, eating ices, stripping down a bit. loving. feeling happy. feeling gay and proud and relaxed.

back to the city to commune with an old lover or perhaps a new-found friend. say a few goodbyes—then it's back in the road and three hundred fifty miles to go—and stopping off for coffee in the real world while holding hands with my lady.

leans the fanatic pendulum

again, again, and thick the falling
tick of time, the thrust, the pound.
the grumbling dust, the crumbling
ground
and myriad ghosts are calling.

there is no song until a song
is sung and is no more. appalling.
i am not as i shall last.
i am a tomb, and all my past
and myriad ghosts are calling.

Carol de Simone
A letter from home

Many gay brothers and sisters are uneasy about their parents' possible reactions to their way of life. Very often we assume that our parents will condemn our choice of lifestyle, but this is not always the case. The readers of the Empty Closet might like to share excerpts of a letter from two unusually broadminded and understanding parents.

"Well, honey, I think I will get this letter written and on its way to you so I can quit writing it mentally and concentrate on the things that I want to say to you, and I do hope that you will read this all the way through before you jump to any wrong conclusions. OK?

"Somehow, I am rather surprised and disappointed that you have so little faith in our love for you and understanding for you that you feel you must either avoid contact or resort to lies to cover up something which you feel we might not approve of. Why not give us a chance? You might find that we are far more understanding than you give us credit for.

"First of all, you are no longer a little boy. But you are still our son and brother that we love. You should be quite capable of making your own decisions as to job, friends, and way of life. Do you know that we have accepted this fact? Well, we have. We realize that as an individual, such choices are up to you, with no censure from us. It is just as much your right to choose your friends and way of life as it is our right to choose ours. Whether we would choose your way doesn't matter. Neither of us have ever been in the habit of criticizing another person's choice in running his own life. That is not our way, even if that person is our son.

"Perhaps some of the questions we have asked when you called have been misconstrued as 'prying' or an attempt to run your life. Nothing could be further from the truth. Remember we will always stand behind you ready to help if you need or want us. However, we have no desire whatsoever to try to run your life, or interfere or to give advice where it is not wanted.

"Somehow, the most important point I want to make seems to be the most difficult to put into words. Don't you understand that it would be far easier for your family which knows and loves you, to accept the fact that you are avoiding us because you think we might not approve of your way of life, then it is for us to feel that you avoid us because you simply don't care about us, and want us to leave you alone?

"Many things are far more openly accepted today than they were even 10 or 15 years ago. There is no longer the stigma attached to the 'gay' life led by two consenting adults that there once was. We would in no way feel we have a right to criticize or condemn—that is YOUR own personal life, and such decisions are entirely up to you. I only hope YOU can realize and accept this attitude on our part.

"Well dear, I guess that is about all I have to say. I hope you will realize that we feel very strongly that your life is YOUR OWN to live as you see fit. We do not expect you to justify or explain your actions to us. Just remember that we love you very much, and always will. If you do feel that you want our advice or help from someone older (and I hope wiser) then just ask.

As ever,

Mom & Dad
My self-sing now unto her self, all young-
milk-white; two velvet pearls: my song and she.
My self-bring me upon her wonderous mouth;
my soul, stiff in the waiting of my tongue,
now taste the tremor of a soul unsung—
but seeking to become, to sing, to see.

Afraid of how the careless stars are strung,
yet still a soul might ache to be so free—
bound to the North, but straining to the South...
a soul soars but as far as it is flung...
My self-sing now unto her self, all young milk-white; two velvet pearls: my song and she.

Carole de Simone

It is fall in Rochester and it is becoming increasingly cold. The sun makes a few brief appearances now, but she is relenting to the winds which blow the doors shut and force the frail under-graders and the city folk to button their overcoats. A few brave souls will venture outside their dorm rooms or wherever they call home in search of companionship. A few will even undo their heavy jackets and unburden their heavy hearts by swimming nude in the women's pool. My mother informed me this summer about a group of radical male politicians who stripped down before each meeting because they felt that clothing was a type of protection; and so they stripped themselves of at least some of their defenses. And so as I'm floating around the women's pool feeling quite free because we don't even have to wear bathing caps anymore, I feel very unfree still. And I think about the impossibility of writing an article for the Empty Closet.

I think about words. Those radical men no longer had clothes on, but they had to deal with words—rhetoric and empty words. I wasn't free in that pool because certain words had not been spoken in Rochester, New York when the sun was still shining a bit and the winds foretold the coming of a long, cold winter....

I couldn't write an article without at least a little bitterness, and that made me sad. I had to think about my audience—shouldn't we be celebrating? Shouldn't we be telling the (excuse the expression) "straight" world how infinitely proud and happy we are?? And why the hell should we
be always happy- we're human, God damn it!

My initial bitterness was a people problem (by "people", I intend any and all categories, minority and majority groups you'd like to include) - not a gay problem. The bitterness of hearing and reading again and again the same screaming idealists crying "love", "peace"; but having no time to go beyond words. The same cries for radical reform coming from people caught up in their wordy meetings and meaty wordings (Oops-caught myself slipping into the clever-phrase syndrome. Beware that they have no time for a lone person- we need mass organization, you see) have lost an awful lot of sensitivity.

I was referring above to a gay scene. But my objections to the non-gay scene seem very similar. The very liberal U. of R. undergraduate population just could not handle learning that their neighbor could love, totally love, a member of the same sex. "Oh, I accept it, but I don't understand it," they might say. "Acceptance is such a kind word... something like "tolerance". Or how about "Well, let them do their own thing, man- but I wouldn't want my daughter to marry one."

Well, I don't know if I want my daughter to marry one either. Because the world won't let them be proud and happy to express a beautiful emotion.

I wish that my words could have meaning. I wish that people could respect themselves and their neighbors- that they could be open to the calling of their own hearts and the hearts of their friends- that freedom and love and peace would not become part of everybody's rhetoric.

My words have been too many and I fear that I have failed. I wish that I could erase the words "fear" and "failed" from the sentence I just wrote... And I hope that I have not lied to myself and to my audience in any of these words. Perhaps soon my pool of tears will be filled with tears of joy, and we will all float free- together.
PEDLOW’S TALE

Invited but not acknowledged
She sat in your midst,
Hearing words of wisdom and love.
But never hello.
I shall return one time more,
She said to herself,
And if still not greeted
It shall be my last.
Return and listen
She remained till
A stranger approached her offering
Her hand.

She greeted the stranger
And embraced her hand,
Speaking words of happiness
She recounted her sad plight.
The stranger smiled
And replied,
I, too, am quite new
And have been here before
And no one ever offered
A word my way.
I, too, decided to return
To find one person,
To talk to her,
Greet her;
While unnoticed to notice.

lizbell

“welcome”
Riverview Restaurant and Bar
242 South Avenue

LOVING
as a Subversive Activity
by Mike

For years there has been one organization after another fighting for what they believe in, people joining together to demonstrate, boycott, or even fight for freedom. It seems that now we have more groups joined together for liberation than ever before.

One of the new movements is composed of a group of people who have been around for as long as people have existed, but who have been compelled to hide behind closed doors. Now they are opening these doors and wanting to live like other human beings, to have those rights that society has denied them for centuries.

Hidden behind closed doors were thousands of homosexuals, fearing society and its oppressive laws. But throughout the United States and neighboring countries, Gay Liberation groups have appeared to help their members overcome the fears that a straight society has placed within them, and to combat the prejudice and intense hatred expressed against homosexual people.

But what caused this hatred? Hatred that the straight society has for the homosexual goes hand in glove with fear, for people hate and fear what they know nothing about. Gay Liberation is attempting to help people understand that that which society has called unnatural is actually natural for thousands of human beings, human beings who want to live and love without fear or harassment.

Can it ever happen that social discrimination be eliminated for all people regardless of race, creed, or sexual orientation? The answer is not an easy one, for an individual must dig deeply within for the answer.

In answering such a question, if you're
straight, you might consider what it
would be like to live in fear or to have
people judge you before getting to know
you because you've been labelled deviant.
If you're gay, the first step might be
to realize that you're not alone.

Gay Liberation is helping people un-
derstand others as well as themselves.
It is composed of many individuals with
different ideas and sexual orientations.
But, in spite of their differences, they
are people who want to make a world of
love and not of hatred.

A dream: a world of freedom from fear
and want, a world where love is equal
for all people.

Women's
Labor Day Action
by Violette Duroux

It was clear after the GLF meeting
dealing with Women's Liberation, that
a few of us wanted to meet separately
from the men.

The following Wednesday, six of us
decided to hold a meeting. I will try my
best to record what happened during and
since the first meeting.

The first point that was made clear
was the need we had for GLF with its
advantages as well as its disadvantages.
Personally, the only disadvantage I can
see would be turning off a few women who
do not want to be associated with men,
gay or not. I think every man in GLF is
trying as hard as possible to give us all
the chances we need to do something for
ourselves, and I would rather criticize
the women for not taking the opportunity
than the men for stopping us.

A need for more political orientation
was felt, which, as far as I can see,
means "women's liberation" for gay sis-
ters. Now, how to reach more women? A
few suggestions were made such as more
dances, a coffee house, social events of
some kind, and above all, the help of
every woman involved in GLF. Anyway, the
word of the meeting was ACTION.

After that first meeting, the action
started, taking some by surprise. The
following Sunday, all of us met at the GLF
Labor Day picnic and a visit to the River-
view followed.

Who could have guessed how much ACTION
was in store? What a surprise! Indeed...
2 years, 5 years of living, loving, hating
each other was resolved (more or less) at
the Riverview in the first hour. Since
news travels pretty fast, the need of any
more commentary is doubtful.

My last words for my radical sisters who
did not take part in the Labor Day events:
a little poem found in "The Useless Sex" is
dedicated to them—actually to all of us:

"When the earth was not called earth
but the navel of the world,
and the sky was not called sky
but the umbrella of the earth,
and the earth was as small as a tray
and the sky was as small as the sun's
shadow,
in those times man was slave and woman
was Lord.
Then the earth was called earth,
and the sky was called sky,
and woman made man her equal.
But the earth still belongs to woman,
as do her children
and the dowry brought by her husband."

Love each other love each other love ourselves

Lesbians Unite!
A Bibliography on Female Homosexuality
compiled by
K. A. Hagberg

Writings on Lesbianism are, to date, very scanty compared with those on male homosexuality. Female homosexuality is little understood and, from a male chauvinist's standpoint, not worth serious attention. Women's liberation is changing all of this, but, for the time being, we are left with a small list of basic books, articles, literary works and films which deal exclusively with the subject of Lesbianism. Due to the ignorance of the compiler, the list is but partially annotated.

Non-Fiction

This study adheres to the "sickness" theory and describes Lesbianism as a neurosis which, in many cases, can and should be "cured". The author resorts to quoting stories from popular "romance" magazines for supporting evidence (Life Romances, Aug. 1953, and My Confessions, Sept. 1953). Caprio maintains that, with the proper education, young girls will not allow themselves to be "seduced" into Lesbian habits.

The author, himself a homosexual, gives a sympathetic, if sometimes ignorant, view of homosexual women.

A catalog of Lesbian writers in history and their positions in their respective contemporary literary worlds. Although seemingly well documented, some of the commentary seems a bit speculative in nature.

The classic results of an extensive sex questionnaire which demonstrates that Lesbianism is a bit more prevalent than is sometimes believed.


**Fiction**


The tragic tale of a woman who is accused of being a Lesbian by a group of cruel children and who kills herself when she discovers the truth of their accusations.

The story of two school girls who fall in love and are then parted by the forces of society. "Je n'ai jamais vu Isabelle"...

**Films**

The following list includes films in which Lesbianism is dominant or important to the theme, plot, characterization, tone, or style of the film. Many of the older films are probably available in 16mm for showings to groups. Comments on and additions to the list would be welcomed.

- *Justine*, 20th, 1969, Dir. George Cukor.

The films of Andy Warhol.

A play which describes a sick Lesbian love affair.

The novel which won the American Library Association Task Force on Gay Liberation's first national book award. One of the first positive, and happy Lesbian novels.
Shattering Oblivion

Busying themselves in caverns honeycombed with unconscious thoughts they rarely emerge from their translucent hideaways. Crumbs of sand fall on their nodding heads as they weave through roots whose parasites clutch to the earth’s womb. Their eyes drip matted browns and grays as their bodies move, rhythmically dragging foliage to define indentations. Looking neither right nor left their oblivion is not yet disturbed. Until a blade falls and shatters it into questions.

T.A. Robinson

THE ELECTRIC WALRUS 1 & II

Bells, Flares, Corde,
Jeans, Body Shirts,
Incense, Posters,
Pipes, Papers

179 and 183 East Ave.
Strange things for strange people

a gay male...

The Women in My Life

Until January of this year, I'd never known a gay woman to my conscious knowledge. Now I am acquainted with dozens, and know at least five I'd call close pals. Knowing I'm gay, male and overt, a straight friend asked me, "Well, what good are these women to you? Wouldn't you rather have an all-male GLF group?" The answer's a two-fold "no."

Considered objectively, I'd rather belong to a co-ed group than a single sex organization. I want to hear the widest range of viewpoints in discussions, in order to form the best opinion I can muster. To exclude all women from this palette of views would impoverish me.

More personally put, I won't agree to excluding my pals. Once you know and cherish five people it's ass-y indeed to think of excluding them by reason of gender prejudice.

A parallel lies here between women in general and all the males I meet for whom I feel no erotic passion. Am I to give ear and time only to those I want to bed? Is there no other "come" possible except
a spermatic flow? Un-uh.

There are both men and women who delight my spirits, stir my mind, and warm my humanity without twanging my passions. I'm enriched by their companionship and stabilized by their continuity in my life.

It would be foolish to generalize about the gay women I know. Each is unique, reaching to fulfill her individual potential. What do they share in common? Well, along with gay males, they've had to work harder to define themselves than have people who can easily fit a "straight" lifestyle.

Because this self-definition is hard-won, they tend to be more realistic about themselves and their world than their straight sisters. They certainly rely far less on "Southern Belle" cuteness to excuse themselves from thinking or doing. There's a blessed lack of baby talk, and all the accompanying "won't you help this fragile little girl, you big strong man" crap.

I'm grateful for this lack of nonsense, since I always felt it demeaning for women to pretend they were less bright, healthy, or strong than in actuality. If I had to support this stance by etiquette book demands, I felt like a hypocrite myself.

It took my eyes some months to shed their social conditioning and to see the true beauty of these bejeweled, booted, denim-shirted women. And for a male who was educated to equate beauty with artful make-up and daily de-hairing, it was a process of growing when I began to like, respect, and cherish my female pals who opened my eyes to their natural beauty. Today, the VOGUE look seems impoverished next to the open, free good looks of our gay women.

The GLF women are much more openly demonstrative to one another than the males in our group. At times this avalanche of hugs, nuzzles and nips rings genuine. At other times it seems like "manners" not far removed from older society women's ceremonial cheek brushing interchanges.

The women say frequently in C-R rap interchanges with our men's group that they're less promiscuous, gossipy, and jealous than men. I think that boast is unfair when matching regular attenders of both genders. I've had my share of language bruises. "Girls" is a put-down; "babe" is taboo; and "lady" a prison of society demands. Some gay women correct my language with graceful good humor. Others seem to over-react with put downs of their own. Summer!

The crisis in our group occurred when some women reported they felt men were excluding them from leadership. This saddened me particularly, since I'd made strong efforts to recruit people to assume the 19 plus chairs of vital responsibility. I didn't give a damn who did it- male or female or undecided- as long as the job was well-done. It cheered me considerably, however, when some of the hard working women in the group told their sister, "If you want a piece of the action, get busy doing instead of griping." That message I comfortably echoed in talking to some male GLF members who could always find time to complain, but never hours to work.

I confess to being an elitist. There are only so many hours in the day- and I allot them carefully choosing what I'll do and whom I'll be with. There are times when I want to rap about being male with my "brothers". It does not bother me, therefore, that I'm excluded Wednesday evenings when the women meet to pool their insights. I do feel, however, that when we're together in total meeting- that "school-girl whisper-matches" could be kept under tight rein in recognition of the fact that we're all one total group of men and women at this point.

If I had to use a word to describe the gay women I know- I'd choose people. Women are neither second-class citizens nor superior goddesses to me. To the best of my own self-examination, I think I expect no less or more from them than I do from my own gender.

Would any women fault that attitude?
OPPRESSION

They say we're sick my darling,
Yet they've given us a shove.
We've gone against society,
Because we choose to love.

It isn't superficial
As some things tend to be,
But comes from deep within our hearts
And grows, increasingly.

Oh freedom, can you hear us?
Can you ease our burdened path?
To be Gay, is to live in oppression.
Yet greater love, no straight man hath.

The fight goes on, as well it must,
So we can live unfettered.
The casualties are worth it all
If Gay Love can be bettered.

Paula Townsend

To Violette

My soul is like a flaming desert
 needing your water
to quench the thirst
and cool the burning
of its parched sands

Many red deserts await you
Water Carrier
your water and loving hands
to irrigate
and plant the seed

Many red deserts await you
Water Carrier
to give birth to green fields

GAY sunshine
(photo reprinted by popular demand)
What's Happening to Us, Women?
by Carol Cloen and Sue Minor

All men and women have the potential to be gay. Heterosexual and homosexual categories are too confining— we are all sexual beings; however, society has socialized all of us into preparation for our heterosexual roles. At birth, women are conditioned to eventually believe that they can only be fulfilled through a man and bearing his children.

The social and sexual expectations placed upon a woman are different from those placed upon a male. The socialization starts when little girls are dressed in pink, coddled, and soon given dolls to play with. The male is instead dressed in blue, encouraged to be rough, tough, and most of all, not to cry. This conditioning continues throughout our childhood.

When we reach puberty, the most crucial period in our sexual development, society intensifies its pressure upon us to start finding a male. We learn how to apply make-up to attract the opposite sex and to hide characteristics considered offensive to the male. Thus, we construct and conduct ourselves to fit the male's expectations of beauty and womanhood. We are taught to compete with each other for a male, and closeness with other women is discouraged. Society has taught us that to be sexually attracted to another woman is sick.

All gay people are oppressed by laws which punish us for the expression of our sexuality and also by attitudes which cut us off from the rest of society. Even our gay brothers oppress us. Many insult womanhood by adopting a passive, flirtatious role constructed from their impressions of glamorous women. Women are also guilty of the same role-playing when they adopt culturally-defined male behavior and dress, act and conduct their gay relationships as husband and wife. Thus, even these women believe what society dictates— that the highest form of love must be that of a man and a woman.

For a woman or a man to be strictly heterosexual is against all natural inclinations. Expressing our sexuality with women is an acceptance of ourselves and a show of love for our sisters. Love in the fullest sense means sharing our innermost depths—depths which society insists we share with men only.

Firm Hands
She may never be
for firm hands have
sent her to a sand box
that has no sand.
The others spin their fantasies
amongst swings and trees
playing games with jump ropes
or balls.
They're separated by a line
that's drawn by firm hands.
Clutching a brown paper bag
stained with peanut butter
no one goes near
the others, they all run
to separate doors
when the bells are rung
by firm hands.

T.A. Robinson
So R.J. comes to me last October and says, "Guess what! There's going to be a gay liberation chapter on the UR campus!" and I think to myself, groovy, right on, hope it works. I would cheer silently on the sidelines. But good ol' R.J. twists my arm and I end up at a meeting--scared shitless about who might see me there--and quite uptight over the fact that these few blatant people would be indirectly representing ME.

And I go to a few meetings--disorganized at first--I'm bored and sad it's not working out--I miss some meetings--these people will never be all together--too bad.

Then I hear that Dr. Nowlis wants a bunch of GLF people to appear in his psych class. Wow--now we're getting somewhere. Sure beats bitching among ourselves. Could be constructive. Would I do it? It would be something like Alcoholics Anonymous. "Good evening, my name is Karen Hagberg and I am a queer." Heavy.

But R.J. twists some more and I chug down a full glass of scotch a half hour before and there I am, guinea pig for a discussion on deviant behavior.

Something wonderful happened that night. The students were downright grateful for our openness. The class lasted 2 hours longer than usual. Dr. Nowlis said a revolution had occurred that evening. Other professors followed suit. Spoke at Geneseo, Brockport, (the class with 4 Rochester cops in it!) R.I.T., MOC, and again at the U of R.

I was always afraid that a familiar face
would appear in one of these sessions and that I would get totally freaked out by the situation—but it never happened, and each time, I was relieved. Oh yes, I could enter a classroom of anonymous faces whose paths I would never again cross, but my friends could never really know me.

And then in June was the TV show. A whole hour of phone-in questions during prime time, for god's sake and would I do it? What a way to blow my cover—what was left of it. NO. I could not do it.

But R.J., by this time welded firmly into my conscience ("But you can talk SO WELL—you have so much to say—people only know sick information—it's your duty, after all—" Damn him!) twisted away and I said yes I'd do it. And so half an hour before this gig I pop a tranquilizer and then someone is counting backwards like at a rocket launching and the man says, "Good evening ladies and gentlemen, tonight's guests are members of the University of Rochester Gay Liberation Front. On my right is KAREN HAGBERG..." Okay, so now everybody knows and I feel like going to school with a bag over my head the next day and I'm careful about not riding busses late at night and I'm ready for someone to spit on me in the supermarket or at least to toss a rotten tomato in my direction from a speeding vehicle, but, boy, was I disappointed. People only said Hey I saw you on TV—RIGHT ON! And then I really knew that all that garbage for all those years was mainly in my own head and not in everybody else's like I thought it was and I know it sounds quaint but I finally felt liberated.

So when good ol' R.J. comes to me this year and says Hey why don't we plan a whole weekend of groovy events to celebrate the first anniversary of the U of R GLF, he for once didn't have to twist my arm. I agreed to coordinate the entire bash with him and maybe by next October a lot more scared people will have something to celebrate.