



AWA'RE



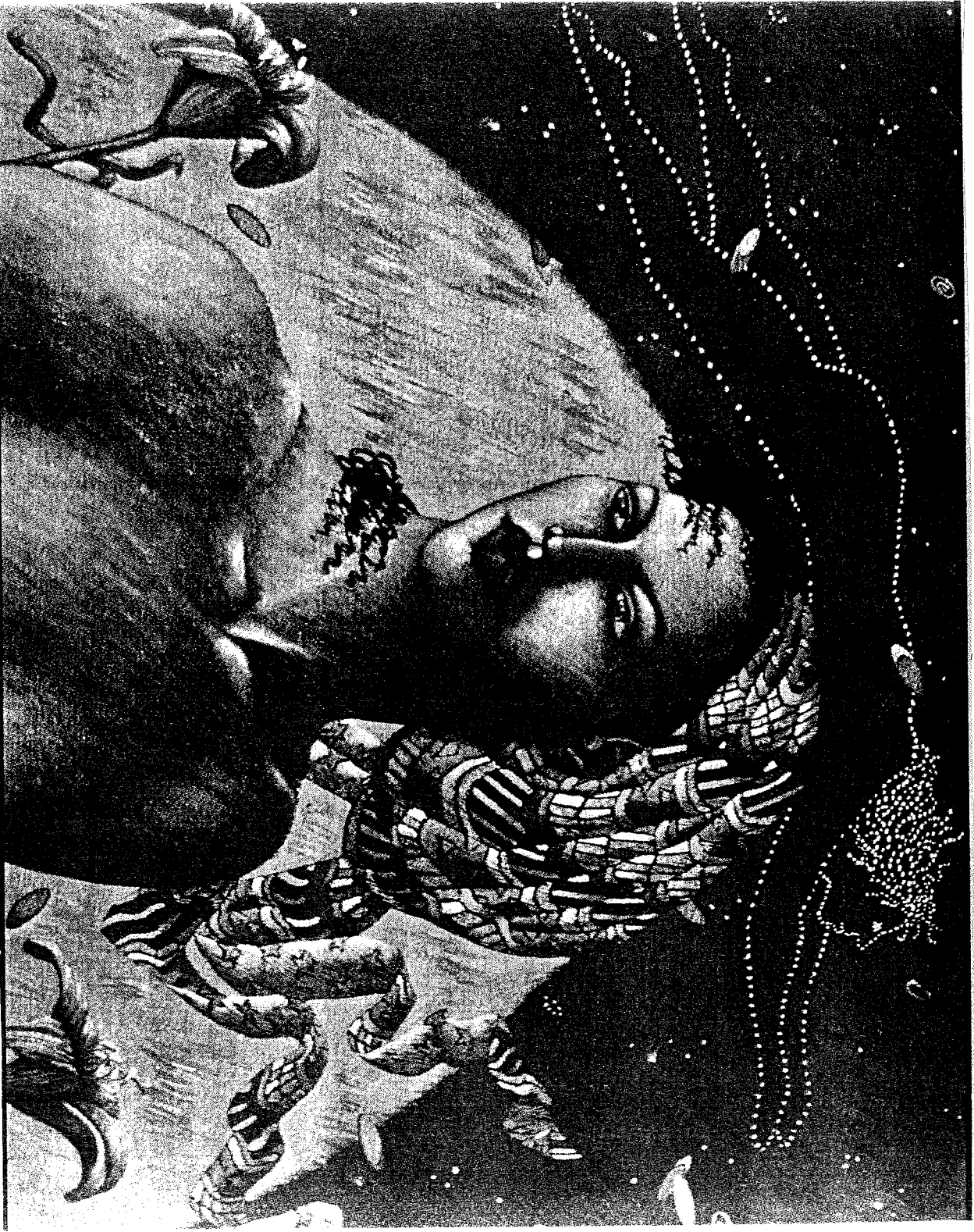
NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED BY ANTIGONISH WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

RESOURCE CENTER

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WINTER 1993

WOMEN AND SOLITUDE



SOLITUDE - A RETURN TO THE SELF

Barbara Hayes.

In a culture which emphasizes relationships and the pursuit of relationships with others as the chief source of human happiness, solitude can be for many a difficult, seemingly unnatural experience. In our busy everyday lives of family, friends, social gatherings and work, we are constantly bombarded with demands and communications from phones, radios and TVs. Some of us may even have phones in our cars, or cellular phones we take with us when we work outdoors (Heaven forbid!). In these circumstances, where is the room for solitude?

If indeed we are lucky enough to enjoy hours or days of solitude, what resources do we tap into? In a solitary mode our imagination is drawn upon. The development of one's imagination serves as a basis for creative achievement. Imagination is very active in childhood, and more developed in children who spend time alone. Lucy Maud Montgomery's heroine, Anne of Green Gables, referred frequently to the need for "scope for the imagination". Lucy herself, as a child, experienced solitude and a harsh emotional environment. Her sense of separation and isolation forced the development of her imagination and her creative talent as a writer.

Many people of creative genius were solitary for intermittent periods of their lives , and out of this solitude came their greatest work. Artists, sculptors, dancers, musicians, and deeply spiritual people achieved peak experiences often in solitude. This solitude is often described as a union with the self. One can find a peace and wholeness in solitude which often eludes us in busyness and action -- but then it can be argued this solitary state can be with us even in action! Everything we struggle with in life is a struggle with the self in reaction to our experiences with the world, both the inner and the outer world.

The Bronte sisters, George Eliot, and more recently May Sarton, to name a few, were women whose creative genius blossomed in solitude, and they have much to tell us. We will include in this newsletter extracts from May Sarton's Journal of a Solitude, a chronicle of a woman's experience.



All are invited to

WiseCracks



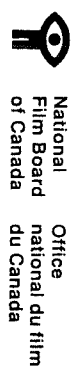
WISECRACKS, a witty 90-minute feature documentary, explores the world of female comedians on stage and beyond. Gail Singer, one of Canada's pre-eminent film makers

("PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST AS AN OLD LADY", "LOVED, HONOURED AND BRUISED", "ABORTION: STORIES FROM NORTH AND SOUTH" and the feature film "TRUE CONFECTIONS") has created a racy, revealing cocktail of American, British and Canadian female comics performing their best lines to live audiences and daring interviewers.

The well-measured mix of seasoned performers, rare archival footage and stunning newcomers elevates stand-up comedy to new heights of wit and wisdom, and tells the story of how women really do comedy.

Starring: Phyllis Diller, Whoopi Goldberg, Sandra Shamas, Jenny Lecourt, the Clichettes, Faking It Three, Geri Jewell, Jenny Jones, Ellen DeGeneres, Paula Poundstone, with Lucille Ball, Carole Burnett, Eve Arden and many others.

A Gail Singer film



National Film Board of Canada Office national du film du Canada

♥ TUESDAY, FEB. 16 B 7:30 PM

WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE



Celebrate International Women's Day

MARCH 8 1980 MARCH 8 1980

The Antigonish Women's Association will be celebrating International Women's Day with our ANNUAL CABARET. We are hoping this year to have the ROSE VAUGHN TRIO perform as our special guests.

WOMEN ONLY.

MARK MONDAY, MARCH 8 on your calendar and watch for the time and location to be announced.

JUDY DONOVAN WHITTY ON SOLITUDE

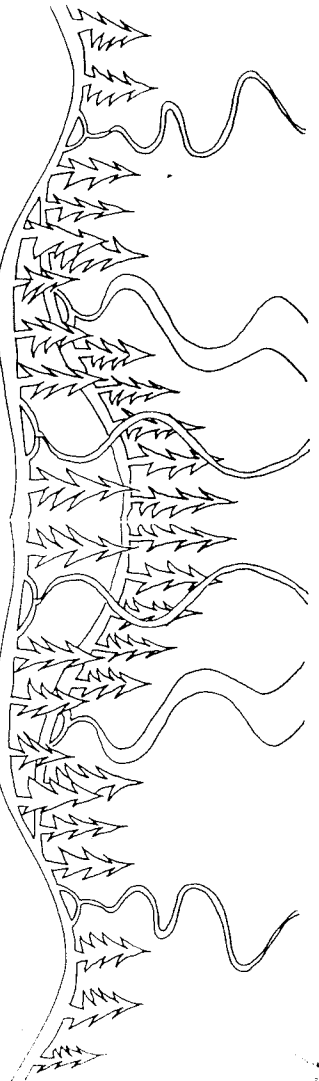
As I saw it, I had two options - wind up in the N. S. Hospital or find "solitude" somewhere in Antigonish!

Over thirteen years ago during the month of June the above states exactly how I was thinking/feeling at the time. Who could I turn to? Bethany, Motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Martha. Someone on the end of that telephone line must have realized that I was in need - now. I wasn't put on "hold", or given a third degree nor forms to fill out! I do recall being emphatic that if I did not get a "break" from everyday family life/work/people I would end up in the N. S. Having spent six weeks internship there as student nurse only two years earlier I definitely did not wish to wind up "inside" as a patient! What is called the Renewal Center was to be empty for the whole weekend and if I didn't mind that I would be so totally alone the space was mine to use. It was exactly what I wanted - noone to talk to, no telephone- and practically no responsibility.

Visualize if you can - my spouse arrives home having taught all week, and looking forward to enjoying Friday. I request that he and the older two children (approx 7 and 9) drive myself and the baby to the Center. He was surprised and he did oblige but he observed that it would be far more convenient if I waited a few more days and school would be over for the year, etc... I could not wait. I needed my solitude NOW. So off I went with playpen in hand to double as a crib and they moved me into the Renewal Center - such a suitable name for an abode that allows one to "replenish"! I can still see the two older children looking puzzled at their Mother going off for the weekend but only such a short distance from our own house! Not their idea of a "sleep over", this space that could sleep over forty people!

And so it began - my personal "solitude". I read, I prayed/meditated, I "blanked". The baby still slept in long stretches so when several different nuns offered to "baby sit" so that I could go for a walk in the magnificent woods behind Bethany I took them up on their kindness. They were thoughtful and unobtrusive about this offer...a message was brought to me and all I had to do was respond. It was so good to go for a sunny June "hike" in the woods - to not meet a person - and just "listen" to the woods, squirrels, birds etc... "talking"...this was my idea of solitude - gradually a peaceful serene feeling came to me over the Fri-Sun stay which I like to think I kept with me for years. All I have to do is visualize one of the longer trails I hiked uphill and recall how it was worth the trouble when I got to the top and looked down and saw a clean, noisy brook - a soothing sound with "quiet" all around me. When I visualize that I am transported right back to the pleasant feeling this experience evoked. That's what I needed to feel - the quiet, the "solitude" that I could not find at home with all our usual noises around us from the TV to telephones, etc., etc.

I did mention to "someone" at Bethany that it would be wonderful if other young mothers (or not so young) could experience such a weekend - apparently they had offered such a group experience once but it never caught on..? Anyway, would that we could all leave responsibility behind (or most of it) and find what money can't buy - Solitude! Never to be underestimated, this thing called solitude did for me what nothing else could at the time. I thank the good women of Bethany and hope that someday others can experience what I did - a "healing centre" for women.



MEMBERSHIP

Why be an A.W.A. member?

- the more members, the more important our voice. We represent a certain number of women, which makes others stand up and listen!
- moral support for the work we do.
- get our newsletter.
- elevates the image of women and lobbies for improvements in the political/economic/social status of women.
- involvement with the women's centre.
- benefit from the various social(fun!) and political activities the A.W.A. initiates.
- meet exciting and interesting women!
- the centre is a source of all kinds of information for and of women.
- where else can you buy A.W.A. T-shirts specially designed by a local artist!
- benefit from the increased understanding of women's issues as a consequence of the work of the centre in the community and province, and the resulting international links.
- centre a place of encouragement.
- supply another voice to implement change and improvements in women's issues -strength in numbers! The more organizations and women pursuing an issue the more likely a change will occur.
- a sheltered place for women to build strength.
- A.W.A. offers an alternative view with respect to local issues.

Be a member-call the Women's centre!



June 1990

SOUTH WEST NOVA CITIZENS FOR CHOICE IN HEALTH CARE

FOUNDING PRINCIPLES

SOUTH WEST NOVA CITIZENS FOR CHOICE IN HEALTH CARE has been founded under the belief that the citizens of Nova Scotia and Canada have the right to choose the type of and approach to health care that best suits their personal philosophy, cultural background, religious or personal belief system.

AND THAT the governments of Nova Scotia and Canada have an obligation to legislate, regulate and administer a health care system that recognizes this right of citizens to alternative choices in health care.

FURTHERMORE the governments of Nova Scotia and Canada should cease to support the total monopoly the followers of allopathic medicine have established over all aspects of our public health care system.

AND FURTHERMORE the government of Nova Scotia should actively restructure the health care system to allow the legal participation of well established traditional alternative approaches to health care such as homeopathy, naturopathy and herbology.

AND FINALLY that all citizens should take responsibility to enhance their own health and support all approaches to public health care that contribute to the physical and spiritual health of the citizens.

Membership open to any interested person. Send \$5. to:

Shirley Atwood, RR 2, South Ohio, Yarmouth Co., NS B0W 3E0

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS

NEWSLETTER

Sue Adams
May Bancroft
Judy Donovan Whitty
Diane Welsh
Barbara Hayes
Janie Humphries
Diane Alcorn
Katherine Winlow
Lucille Harper
Katherine Reed

CALLING ALL RURAL WOMEN IN N.S.

The Canadian Congress of Learning Opportunities for Women (a voluntary group) wants to hear from you - if you've recently gone back to school or if you'd like to attend university or college in future. We're conducting a study, so if you have an opinion or experience to tell about, (the barriers you've faced, the solution you'd suggest) call:

564-5647

leave a message and our project co-ordinator will call you back for a telephone interview.

SOLITUDE ?

As usual when I start thinking of the subject that I'm going to write about, I end up with even more questions! The subject of solitude is one I combine with the ideas of loneliness and aloneness and ideas I have thought about only fleetingly. It could very well be that these ideas aren't even related! I will write about my various thought processes I went through without doing much reading or research on the subject!

I have never lived alone so I don't have that type of experience with solitude. I went directly from family to marriage. Although I suspect I might have more solitude as compared to parents because I don't have children. I did go through a few years of being by myself during the week while my husband worked in Halifax. The first day or two during the week seemed to be the hardest in terms of getting going on things. I moped around the house with lots of things that could be done. This kind of thing seemed to happening more in the winter. In good weather I had lots of initiative to do things outside. It eventually got easier but surprisingly slowly. I also became fairly careful about how I did things because of possible injuries (ie. bleed to death after I cut myself with the saw!). I realized how little daily contact I had with others. This did not seem to worry me as much as a possible injury! I must say it was nice to have some time to myself and not worry about living "around" (the schedule etc.) of another person. But I always knew my husband would be back on the weekends: so did that count as real solitude?

Most of the time during the day I'm alone but in a way it feels like there's a constant conversation going on but, just not aloud or with someone else! I enjoy the solitude of the woods, being away from any human related things. Sometimes I think I would have made a good hermit! But I don't know if I would like that all the time! Could be that I lean toward human interaction at my instigation. I don't like to have human-related (not necessarily people) things (ie. houses built right next to me or barking dogs) forced on me. Probably why the thought of living in the city would not be relaxing! Can you feel solitude in the city even with all that human imposition? Or can it feel even more lonely considering how many people are around and how little "real" interaction there really is?

I often wonder if working (outside the home!) parents are able to get much solitude. Having to deal with work/people all day and then coming home to the various demands of the family. Do/can they put aside time for some solitude? I realize now that when I go to town (shopping etc.) I enjoy the aspect of contact with the people I know and keep up with their various events etc. But at the same time I am often very happy to get home and the quietness that is there. I also have periodic feelings of having to "get away", but the solution seems to be to visit someone, not to go off by myself somewhere.

Society seems to put an emphasis on people being and doing things with others. It almost is as if by wanting to be or do things alone (feeling comfortable with solitude) there is something wrong with you (you're "different"). I can't help thinking that to feel comfortable with solitude etc. means that you're a strong person.

I wonder about the influence and impact of TV on the issue of solitude. It is easy to turn on the TV to keep you "company" therefore you don't have to deal with the idea of solitude or being alone. Is this a bad or good thing? Is solitude a "scary" subject to have to deal with?

Will solitude be increasingly difficult thing to find due to expanding population, and increasing expectations from us and our time? It could be that a lot of people don't even want to think about it. Could it be that it means different things to each individual? In being exposed to solitude, I can't help thinking it would make us stronger and we'd get to know ourselves better. But to initiate it is the hard part! Solitude seems to be a more positive thing than loneliness or certainly aloneness!

May G.B.



CONFERENCE ON MEDITATION IN THE CHRISTIAN AND BUDDHIST TRADITION

"SPEAKING OF SILENCE"

March 19th to 21st
Mount St. Vincent University, Halifax

Registration must be done by March 13. Call 457-6243 for info or to register.

February 9th By MARY SARTON.

It is RATHER like living in a vast cosmic mood-swing here now. I managed to get the car out yesterday and did some quick errands because another storm was in the air. It came, all right, with strong wind, snow, then lashing rain, temperature just above freezing. I woke to trees iced in silver and an April sky, sunlight breaking through clouds. Now in the last half hour it has suddenly become ominously dark, all clouded over, the clouds nearly black. The wind is back.

* And it is the same inside me--violent mood-swings. It would be a real deprivation to have no phone here, but on the other hand how devastating a voice can be! I feel myself sucked down into the quicksand that isolation sometimes creates, a sense of drowning, of being literally *engulfed*. When it comes to the important things one is always alone, and it may be that the virtue or possible insight I get from being so obviously alone--being physically and in every way absolutely alone much of the time--is a way into the universal state of man. The way in which one handles this absolute aloneness is the way in which one grows up, is the great psychic journey of everyman. /

I have said elsewhere that we have to make myths of our lives, the point being that if we do, then every grief or inexplicable seizure by weather, woe, or work can--if we discipline ourselves and think hard enough--be turned to account, be made to yield further insight into what it is to be alive, to be a human being, what the hazards are of a fairly usual, everyday kind. We go up to Heaven and down to Hell a dozen times a day--at least, I do. And the discipline of work provides an exercise bar, so that the wild, irrational motions of the soul become formal and creative. It literally keeps one from falling on one's face.

That is one way to keep alive in self-made solitary confinement. I have found it useful also these past days to say to myself, "What if I were not alone? What if I had ten children to get off to school every morning and a massive wash to do before they got home? What if two of them were in bed with flu, cross and at a loose end?" That is enough to send me back to solitude as if it were--as it truly is--a fabulous gift from the gods.

Contrast is one key, and within every day the deliberate creation of diversity. This morning I cheered myself out of depression by saying, "Your reward for the morning's work will be to clean out the liquor cupboard." It is a mess, but a viable mess compared to that of the paper cupboard, despite the rat poison strewn around because I saw a huge rat crawl up the wall in there one day.

Each day, and the living of it, has to be a conscious creation in which discipline and order are relieved with some play and some pure foolishness. God bless Punch, who makes me laugh aloud!

My greatest deprivation is to have no huggable animal around. I miss the two old cats dreadfully.

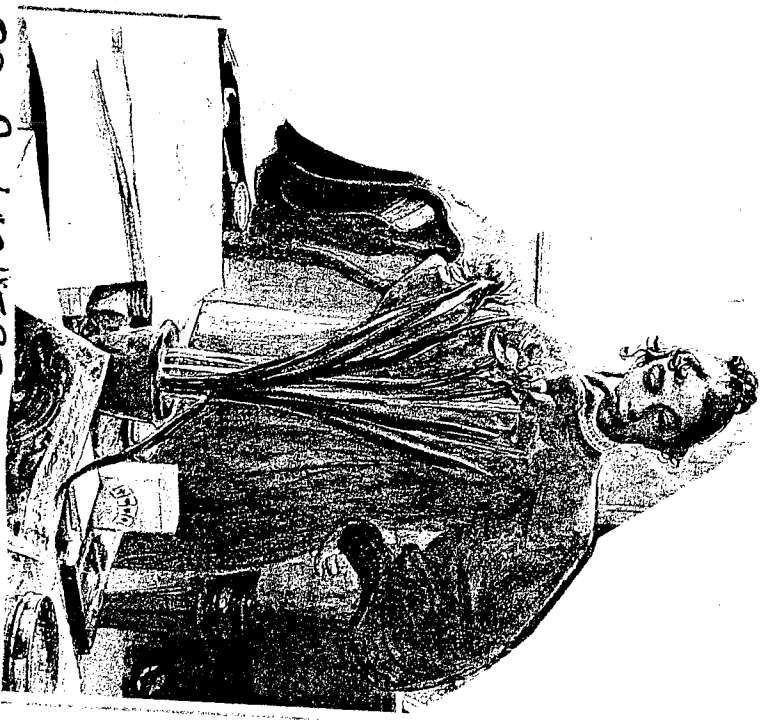
May 9th

AFTER THAT GOOD DAY, (I did write a poem and roughed out the second one) it has rained consistently and horribly. The daffodils are all beaten down *again*. But in the house I have magnificent orange parrot tulips with a very sweet scent, and white roses from my birthday; so, though my eyes are sad (looking out on the ravaged garden), my nose is very happy, smelling these sweet smells.

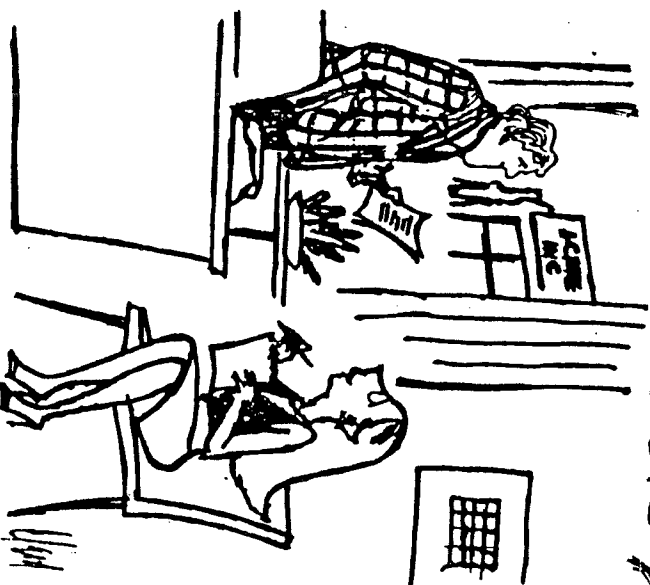
My capacity for weeping is really becoming a grotesque affliction. What is the drug that stops tears? This morning I have written a few "real" letters, real as opposed to dutiful, and that always helps to tell me where I am. It is a bleak plateau at the moment in the inner world. But we need only to come to terms with reality to have some foundation on which to stand firm. When I got up, every breath I drew came out of pain, mental anguish, so acute for a time that I was immobilized by it, trying to breathe. Finally I put clean sheets on the bed, fed the birds, Punch too of course, and the greedy marmalade twins who come and glare at me through the kitchen windows. I do long for a lovable (they are not) and loving animal. It will be splendid when the pussies come

back for the summer!

I feel a bit firmer now. It always comes back to the same necessity: go deep enough and there is a bedrock of truth, however hard. It looks as if I were "meant" to be alone, and that any hope of happiness is *not* meant. Am I too old to acquire the knack for happiness? Too old, perhaps, ever to take in another's life to share with mine on a permanent basis? If so, I must make do with what I have... and what I have is a great richness of friends and a positively ardent love of nature. Not nothing!



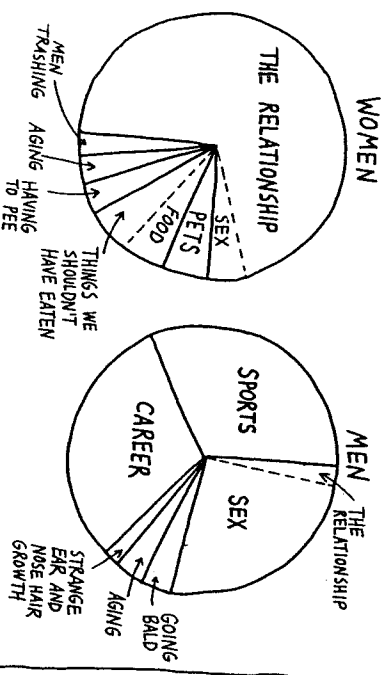
ON A LIGHTER NOTE



I am efficient. My last boss stopped coming to work for three years before they noticed.

--UAW-LUPA

THOUGHT FREQUENCY AS PIE CHARTS



Quentin Tarantino ©1991

Sometimes it's just not possible to find the solitude we seek "in our own back yards". This is a brief guide to a few of the retreat locations you might want to consider for a special time away.

Akala Point

Barbara Jannasch describes this as "a place for people to get away from their daily routine, a chance to rest or study, a place to change, to heal." It's a not-for-profit, hostel-style retreat at the edge of the sea near Peggy's Cove. An emphasis is placed on an ecologically-balanced lifestyle.

Accommodation varies from dormitory space to shared rooms to private accommodation. Vegetarian meals are provided.

Rates for Individuals

1 night, 3 meals \$62

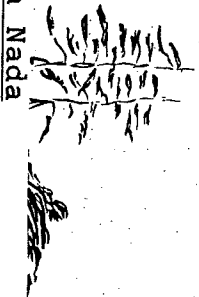
Weekend: Sat - Sun noon
4 meals \$80

Fri nt - Sun noon
5 meals \$112

Weekly: 7 nights, 3 meals a
day \$331

Various programmes and workshops are also scheduled.

Telephone (902) 823-2160



Telephone Nova Nada

902-749 6553. Located at a wooded site on three linked lakes in Yarmouth County, Nova Nada is a Carmelite monastery which welcomes retreatants regardless of spiritual tradition.

Simple cabins (hermitages) provide accommodation, and stays of any length may be arranged. Three evening meals a week are eaten communally; other meals are prepared by each retreatant in the hermitage. Donations of food are welcomed.

write.

SA. Suzie

RYAN
NOVA NADA
Kemptville
Yarmouth
County
N.S.
Bow 170

Hiking trails, canoes and kayaks are available. Retreatants are asked to follow the monastic rule during their stay.

Charges are very reasonable.

Because the hermitages are often booked long in advance, it is important to reserve early if a particular period is sought.

Gampo Abbey

Located near Pleasant Bay, the Abbey is a monastic setting for monks and nuns of the Buddhist tradition; others who wish to meditate in this beautiful environment for a limited period of time are also welcomed.

Retreats may be made in cabins or within the monastery building itself. When possible, an instructor will help those new to the practice of meditation. Vegetarian meals are eaten communally.

While staying at Gampo Abbey, retreatants are expected to observe the monastic rule, including periods of silence.

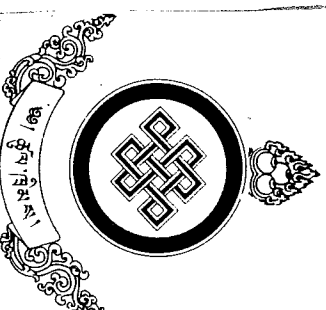
Rates for Individuals

\$22.00 per night, including meals.

No charge is made for those who volunteer labour during work periods.

Telephone (902) 224-2752
Fax (902) 224-1521

As the Abbey schedule often includes periods when instruction is being given and accommodation for visitors is unavailable, you should check quite far in advance, when possible.



Tatamagouche Centre

Many of us are familiar with the workshops and programmes offered by the Tatamagouche Centre (ACTC), but individual retreats are also a possibility.

Only a 2-hour drive from Antigonish, the Centre overlooks a vista of water and trees. Rooms are provided, and cooking facilities can be arranged.

Because of the numerous activities held at the Centre each month, calling ahead is essential to ensure that space is available.

Costs may vary, depending on what arrangements are made for meals, but are generally very reasonable.

Telephone (902) 657-2231

AMRC CONTINUES WORK ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Last March the Antigonish Women's Association published 'No Place For Home: Women and Housing in Antigonish', a study of the rental housing situation in Antigonish. In this study we documented the need for more affordable housing in Antigonish. We substantiated the housing conditions women coming to the Women's Centre had been concerned about. Rents were high, vacancy rates were low and many rental units were sub-standard and some in dangerous condition.

An October 1992 CMHC review of rental units across the province found that Antigonish had the highest rental rates and the lowest vacancy rates in Nova Scotia.

We are continuing to focus our work on poverty and the lack of affordable, suitable housing as it affects women and their families in Antigonish. Some of the activities we have undertaken over the past several months include:

- 'key informant interviews' - informal discussions with community leaders, (principals, professionals, municipal councillors) who have contact with low-income people, with a focus on generating ideas toward addressing poverty issues and the needs of low-income people in this community

- presentations/information-sharing sessions with local churches and service clubs regarding our housing study and our work with women living in poverty, as well as the host group's perspectives and ideas

- development of the Women's Housing Focus Group, a small group of women who are living in inadequate, unaffordable housing currently or have lived in such housing in the recent past. The women have met several times and articulated their needs for and concerns about housing.

- becoming a founding member of and active participant in the Society for Affordable

Community Housing in Antigonish (SACHA). We are a group of agencies, organizations, institutions and individuals with an interest in bringing more affordable housing to Antigonish to address the needs of families and individuals who want to own their own homes but cannot afford large mortgages. We are working as well to address the needs of women who need short-term or second stage housing and hope in the long term to develop a housing strategy to meet the needs of such special need groups as homeless adolescents, young mothers and others.

Working with SACHA has been exciting. In a short period of time we have been able to move forward quite quickly with our intention of creating more affordable housing. Currently, John Aylward of Atlantic People's Housing Limited is undertaking a feasibility study for us and looking at possible buildings, building sites and cost. We are looking for a suitable site within a three kilometre radius of Antigonish.

We hope to be able to create modest housing which would be accessible to families and individuals with an annual income in the \$12,000 to \$30,000 range. As a part of the feasibility study we are developing profiles of potential user families. If you know of someone who would like to participate in this information gathering part of our work please ask her to contact us at the Women's Centre, 863-6221.

Lucille Harper
Katherine Reed



SOLITUDE IN NIGERIA, WEST AFRICA

One image of many comes to mind when I think of solitude. I am thinking of time spent with my dog on an island in Georgian Bay. That was an experience of physical isolation from others, quietness, and vast expanses. Lots of water, sky, and rock.

That is one type of solitude I have known. But solitude, in my mind, is as different as the situation itself, as different as everyone's experience.

I experienced a very different kind of solitude in Nigeria. I was living in Ibadan, a city of about nine million people, so there was no lack of people nor room to swing a cat. When I was there it was the Harmattan season - the time when the cold winds from the north blow the fine dust from the Sahara Desert down upon Nigeria, giving her a constant dust fog. But that is Nigeria. The source of my solitude was mostly my skin. As a white woman, I was judged by hundreds of years of colonialism, syndicated, stereotypical T.V. shows which the "developed" world had discarded, the advertisement industry, and of course, Hollywood. I was the embodiment of that stereotype. I was not heard or seen. My self was already decided upon, which created my solitude. I was outside most people's experience and yet I could not pick my nose without at least a hundred people noticing. A very strange reality to be in!

The only reprieve I experienced was when I left Ibadan and stayed at a leprosy hospital with people in another part of Nigeria. The most wonderful reprieve was the kids who wanted only to experience and understand this strange looking person. They wished a smile which I more than gladly gave back! The most important thing I learned again is that the world of solitude is transcended by a smile; "Freedom is what we do with what has been done to us." (Sartre)

A very wee story of my time in Nigeria.

Katherine Winlo.



SOLITUDE

Fundamentally, we're alone in the world as manifested by our birth and death, which no one can do for us. Each of us has a unique perspective on the world, having both a body and a set of experiences that, although similar, are never identical to anyone else's. On the one hand, our uniqueness makes life interesting, colorful, and diversified; on the other hand it makes life challenging, since it is sometimes difficult to make ourselves understood. Thus, sometimes we feel lonely and misconstrued; at other times we feel elated that we have been able to communicate and share deeply something which we have kept trapped inside of us for fear it would be misinterpreted.

Yet, when we speak of solitude, we're not talking about loneliness, which is often associated with solitude. Our lives are so full with various people and activities that we rarely have the opportunity for solitude. If we do have the occasion to be in solitude, there is usually a task at hand, such as reading, writing, or painting. We are often fearful of being with ourselves. To me, real solitude has both silence and stillness; it is taking courage just to be, with no task at hand.

This happens for me during meditation, where the only instruction is to sit with a straight back, either in a chair or on a cushion, and to be attentive to one's breath. If the situation can be arranged so that one can be by oneself for an extended period of time maybe days or weeks, then there is solitude. Obviously, thoughts and emotions will arise as one sits quietly with one's breath. The real challenge comes in not being judgemental about the contents of one's mind - neither holding on and embellishing, nor rejecting and repressing one's thoughts... getting rid of the oughts and shoulds in one's life and being both curious and open to what arises. It is a kind of mental housecleaning, letting the dust settle and the mind untangle... making friends with oneself in one's entirety. When given the space in loving kindness towards oneself, confusion will be clarified. Perhaps a kind of crystal-like clarity will emerge, and one's innate wisdom will surface.



I liken the monastics and yogis who spend years in solitude, to the trees in the rain forest who quietly purify the air through simply breathing, being completely themselves, neither grasping nor ignoring.

Janey Humphreys



SOLITUDE - THE STATE OF BEING OR LIVING ALONE



It is Sunday, January 24, 1993. I am alone and content. The day, up to now, has been filled with little moments: a quiet breakfast, the inevitable day-dreaming as I remain at the table over-looking the Harbour, then, picking up here, re-arranging there, reading bits from Peter Gzowski's Latest Morningside Papers, and a couple of my favourite Alden Nowlan poems, all the time tuned in to CBC Radio, the day moves on.

Solitude, for me, has rarely been a problem. I remember so many solitary times: taking Dad's fishing pole and a can of worms to the little river near my home, pushing the worm onto the hook with a twig (I just couldn't handle that wriggling creature), and maybe, just maybe, catching a trout. I remember, after inheriting an old pair of cross-country skis, spending many a sunny winter afternoon wandering alone through orchards, sliding down small hills, just enjoying being alive.

By the time I reached High School graduation, it was apparent "the voice" was in control of my future. I remember as a child of twelve or so being put in the back row of the Church senior choir (the alto section of course), by my grandmother, who was also Church organist. Sometime before that I was taken from my Grade 5 classroom and put in the front row of the High School Choir.. I remember being embarrassed by my hair ... my mother put it in "wringlets" for the occasion...probably to help keep me some perspective...I might sing with the older students but I was still a little girl.



Finally High School Graduation came and I was asked to sing at the event. My teacher suggested "Where'er You Walk" by Handel, definitely heady stuff by Berwick standards ... but I loved it and sang with delight. Later my very best friend commented, "Dianne, I liked your voice better before". Before WHAT?!

Even in these instances I was surely developing a sense of the solitary..the state of being alone even in a crowd.

Nevertheless, solitude is rarely a problem. It keeps me in touch with my husband, Russell, who died in 1988, and with my youngest child, Peter, who died in London in 1989. I was alone, watching the late night news, on August 20, 1989, when pictures of the pleasure boat disaster on the Thames, were being shown. Peter had told me the Wednesday before that he was going to a birthday party on the Thames on Saturday evening. I slept little that night, and after several phone calls the next day, had confirmed what I already knew: Peter had been on that boat.

There have been times of great loneliness but these have been part of the process and not overwhelming. The ability to be alone has been part of the saving grace; having the time to read, listen to music, (as I write Tony Bennet is serenading me) to dream, to remember, to continue growing and learning. It refreshes me for those glorious moments like the past Christmas, when all remaining children, their spouses, and children, helped fill the house (and as it turned out, Bauer Theatre) with laughter, love and lots of music. Their return to their own lives and agendas, has left me with more memories to help fill those hours of solitude until the next visit.

by Dianne Alcorn

PART-TIME WORK IS A WOMEN'S ISSUE

Workers at the Bergengren Credit Union are on strike. One of their major outstanding issues is part-time work and job security.

Part-time work is a women's issue - one that contributes to the feminization of poverty. Over the past fifteen years there has been a steady trend on the part of employers, both provincially and nationally, to move toward hiring more part-time and fewer full-time workers. Part-time work is less well-paid, less secure, has fewer benefits, and slim prospects for advancement. This has real implications for women who are three times more likely than men to work part-time. About 80% of the entire part-time workforce in Nova Scotia consists of women.

For some women working part-time is desirable and enables them to balance childcare, housework and parenting obligations with their work outside the home. However, for most women working full-time outside the home is a necessity. Some women provide the only family income and it is the full-time income of other women which keeps their families living above the poverty line. The National Council of Welfare has estimated that there would be 50% more families living below the poverty line if the woman was not working. Increasingly, women need and want to be working full time. This is true of many of the employees at the Bergengren.

The feminization of poverty is an ongoing condition. Women are paid 64 cents for every dollar a man earns. Seventy-five percent of women aged sixty-five or over live below the poverty line. Ninety percent of single parents are women and tend to be poor.

Part-time employment is associated with poverty because of the low number of hours, low hourly pay, few fringe benefits and lack of protection under labour laws or collective agreements. Only 23.7% of all working women are unionized. This figure drops

dramatically for women who are working part time.

A study published by the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1989, identifies part-time employment as potentially stressful for women. Work stress, recognized as one of the leading health problems for women, causes a variety of psychological and physiological disorders. Stress is heavily linked to jobs with few opportunities, benefits, promotional opportunities, poor job security and no access to the potential advantages of union representation. These are often aspects of part-time work. Such stresses are compounded for involuntary part-time workers who may have financial worries, difficulty in arranging part-time childcare, and a lack of self-esteem resulting from their second-class status in the workforce and society.

Banks have a deserved reputation for exploiting the labour of women employees while making huge profits. A 1989 study showed that women bank workers outnumber men seventy to one and earn 56% of a man's salary. This salary gap can only increase with the increased hiring of part-time workers. Part-time workers earn salaries which fall well below the poverty line.

Therefore, when we understand that women are more likely to be hired for part-time work, that part-time work virtually ensures an income that falls below the poverty line and exclusion from union protection we understand poverty as a form of economic discrimination targeted largely towards women. If we understand this discrimination as a means of controlling and limiting women's economic independence, we understand this control of one gender as a form of economic violence that falls with a continuum of the societal violence perpetrated against women.

The striking workers at the Bergengren Credit Union have put their families, income

security and lives on hold because they know that if job security is not an issue recognized and supported by the Bergengren management and board of directors, then they and others who will be hired after them, lose any hope of being able to provide a secure income based upon a fair exchange of their labour for themselves and their families.

Lucille Harper

UNION OF BANK EMPLOYEES, LOCAL 2107 MAJOR OUTSTANDING ISSUES

JOB SECURITY:

The threat of hiring part-time workers to replace full-time positions has become a reality during the course of these negotiations.

Only one full-time employee has been hired since 1989.

Since September 1992 the employer has hired seven (7) part-time employees in addition to two (2) part-time students currently employed.

Full-time jobs are being divided up into several part-time positions. For example, the wages of two (2) full-time employees have been divided up among six (6) part-time employees.

As a result job security for full-time employees is in jeopardy.

JOB PROMOTIONS AND TEMPORARY VACANCIES

Management would like to have an unfettered right to promote regardless of seniority. Language proposed by management is opening the door to favouritism and restricting any recourse an employee may have to challenge unjustly being bypassed.

HARASSMENT

Every employee has a right to be treated fairly and equally. A general harassment clause asking the employer to strive to maintain a harassment-free workplace has been rejected.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

The present grievance procedure does not allow for the union to have access to the grievance committee of the board of directors. The union feels given the opportunity to present policy grievances to the board would resolve many disputes before arbitration and at the same time save the Credit Union members and the union thousands of dollars.

TRAINING

In an effort to better serve credit union members, the employees are proposing a training clause that would ensure all employees are properly trained to do their jobs, i.e., any newly hired employees, employees being promoted or temporary vacancies.

For more information contact:
Marion Hartery 863-5309
Carla Gillis 863-5837

MEMBER ACTION REQUESTED

The strikers need your support. They request that individuals call Bergengren board members and ask them to resolve the strike immediately. A list of board members is available from strikers on the picket line or at the Women's Resource Centre.

Any donation to the strike fund would be appreciated. Strike pay is negligible and the strikers' families are going without that essential income.

If you want to find out more about the issues, stop and talk with the strikers. Walk with them awhile in solidarity.

Please make the phone calls. It is outrageous that our credit union has abandoned its workers to the streets.



SOLITARY REFINEMENT

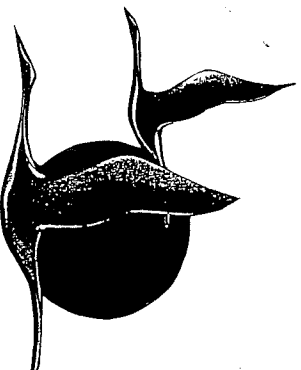
Diane Walsh

There are so many solitudes: the imposed solitude called punishment, so favored by penitentiaries and designed to induce penitence; the chosen, embraced solitude of mystics seeking union with nature; the therapeutic solitude so desperately needed by exhausted mothers; the merely tolerated, distraction-filled solitude of those who work alone; the purely lonely solitude of those who feel no ecstasy, no oneness, only separateness and fear. Upon reflection, I find solitude a very busy word; by solitude do we mean simply the absence of people's bodies, or do we mean the absence of all traces of human contact- no books, no T.V., no radio, no phone? Are we solitary in the company of non-human friends? Are we solitary in a crowd of our own kind? Perhaps we all occasionally- and some constantly- carry solitude with us like a portable wall. I think Thoreau expressed such a temperament very well in Walden where he wrote, "I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude. We are for the most part more lonely when we go abroad among men [maybe Thoreau needed more women friends] than when we stay in our chambers."

Perhaps it is because I do not systematically nor regularly practise a state of deep, undistracted solitude, that I find when it does occur, it is like a visit from a fine, sometimes long-lost companion. It intrigues me that some people choose solitude as a lifestyle, a permanent partner. While I acknowledge that a hermit's life may be an

unhealthy flight from the pain of human relationships, I think it can also be a courageous type of resistance... a resistance to the modern pressure to do, to couple, to join groups, to produce. The life of a "hermit" can be easily criticised as a shirking of social responsibility until... the Great Canadian novel is published or the art work acknowledged. Is solitude only redeemed by productivity, as a means to an end? Is that why it is often not a priority? I find that in the company of people it is too easy to react instead of to think.

For me, undistracted solitude is where real thought occurs... not the "monkeys playing in trees" thoughts, the snatches of advertising jingles and bits of remembered conversation, but real thought- reflection, resolve, and acceptance.



Bethany

For those who want a retreat close to home, the facilities of Bethany are available for those who need or want some solitude. All beliefs welcome. Accommodation is in single rooms, and meals are provided in the dining room. A small kitchen with snacks is available.

Groups also book Bethany for directed retreats, so it's wise to call in advance, when possible.

Rates for Individuals

\$35/night, including meals
\$55/weekend "
\$65/weekend with a spiritual director

Telephone 863-4726

Nova Quest

Located in Blomidon, this centre sponsors workshops in the shamanistic tradition and focusses on "wellness education". As well as organized programmes, the facilitators assist in designing day, weekend, or week long private retreats.

Rates for your special time alone are available upon request.

Telephone (902) 582-7369
or (902) 538-3977

Wilderness Challenge

Judy Crump of Musquodoboit Harbour is working on establishing a programme of experiential learning for women. To be run 4 times a year, the programme is modelled on EVE (Ending Violence Effectively), combined with methods of Outward Bound. It's geared for women who are survivors of abuse.

Contact Judy to ask how plans are progressing!

J. Crump
RR #2, Musquodoboit Harbour
N.S. B0J 2L0
Telephone (902) 889-2975

When we characterize childhood, what comes first to mind may be the almost unbelievable energy level, coupled with a whirlwind of activity - bike rides, Ninja Turtles, soccer, Super Mario... I know that my childhood was filled with these (or their 1950's equivalents), yet the images that are now most potent for me are ones of time spent in solitude.

A special aura surrounds these memories of afternoons when time disappeared in a drift of clouds or the mesmerizing swell of waves. It amazes me that I can call up so vividly the exact scent and prickling of hours spent lying in a field of sweet hay, or the fascinating dance of water-sparkles on the underside of dilapidated wooden bridges.

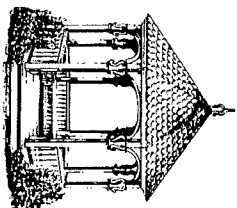
Does anyone else recall the quickly-checked flicker of irritation as her best friend discovered her sitting on that rock by the enchanted brook, and dragged her off for a game of tag? Or when her little sister discovered that special, secret place of quiet reflection?

I am convinced that most children need, and find, solitude to balance their need for company and action. It may seldom be recognized as such.

I clearly recall the confusion when my mother would ask on those days, "And what did you do this afternoon?" Slightly defensive, and more than a little perplexed, I would mumble, "Nothing...", knowing it wasn't quite true. I had been doing something, something very important that I couldn't name. The process of defining

one's self in oneself is not easily articulated by eight-year-olds. Perhaps it's better so. Otherwise the magic wrought by solitude might vanish.

Sue Adams



A Place for Solitude

Have you ever wished for a quiet place, away from the bustle of work and the demands of home, for just a few hours of solitude?

For the last couple of years, I've thought, on and off, of building a simple ashram or meditation house overlooking the hills and valleys of Keppoch. Something about the idea was incomplete, though - and so I hesitated.

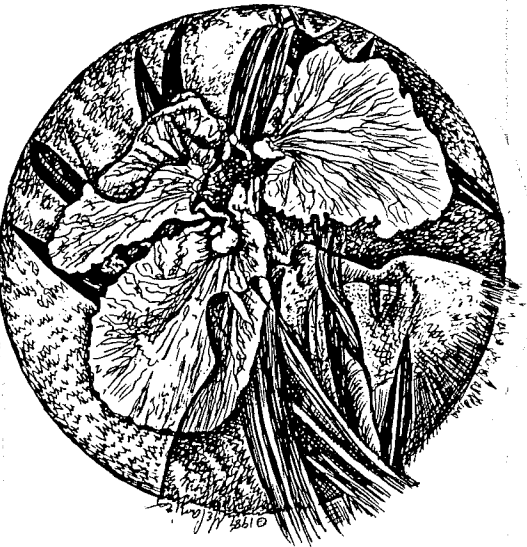
Now I've realized that what was missing was an element of sharing, with other women, the planning, building and enjoying of such a space: the communal energy and joy that balances the peace of solitary reflection.

So, I would like to offer the space and materials for us to create a place for ourselves. Together we could design and build a small retreat where women could meditate, read, pray, sing or just be alone for a time.

With enough women, a couple of weekend work parties would do it! Does this sound exciting, or crazy? Or both? Would the Keppoch mosquitoes pick it up and carry it off before we could finish it? What about a naming party to dedicate it?

If anyone finds this idea inspiring, let's get together and talk! Can we do it? Of course we can!

Sue Adams



A GROUP FOR ADULT FEMALE SURVIVORS OF
CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE IS PLANNED FOR
EARLY SPRING. FOR INFO CALL THE CENTRE