

Education for a VT Queen

by Richard Cornwall

In reading May Sarton's The Education of Harriet Hatfield, I was hooked from page one, as Harriet, reflecting on her 30-year-long relationship with her recently deceased partner, asks herself: "Is a good marriage always founded on one of the partners willingly abdicating for the sake of peace?[p.9]" This theme is sprinkled through the book and at the end her brother Andrew, who just came out to her a short time earlier and who, through her, has become close to a gay couple, Joe and Eddie, asks: "So you really believe that in any successful relationship one person dominates?" Harriet responds: "It looks that way. Joe dominates Eddie, partly because Eddie is so much younger. The strange thing is that I think Mother dominated Father."[p.295]

This book draws many parallels between gay couples and straight couples as it attempts the ambitious goal of portraying the interaction of gay and straight in our post gay lib, hatefully religious and AIDS-fearing society. Despite these ambitions, it is a very enjoyable read since Sarton makes Harriet Hatfield such a tangible person who is easy to recognize and who is invitingly open to her weaknesses.

Harriet embarks on setting up a feminist bookstore as a "real center for women". Harriet's "education", which we experience as we read this delightful book, is to acknowledge the need to use the L-word, later to proudly claim she is a lesbian, to take her place among the persecuted[p.276] and to

reject the suffocating, insidiously powerful values of "the embalmed middle-class" [p.274].

The journey from being a lady of Llangollen [p.78], or rather of "Chestnut Hill and all it represents,"[p.169] to a lesbian running a feminist bookshop in working class Somerville is similar to the journey from "respectability" which all gay people face. How many of us have had an aunt or friend say "I have no quarrel with how you choose to live your life, but I can't see and can't understand your talking about it in public. It's nobody's business but your own, surely"[p.126] which is expressed by Harriet's dear friend, Angelica [sic.]. Harriet is aware that "if none of the old and respectable like me ever admit what they are" then the image of gay and lesbian as "the young and exhibitionistic, the outre and the promiscuous, visible and shocking,...will reinforce discriminatory laws and ignorant attack[s]."[p.92]

A key leitmotif of this book is seeking "bridges" between gay and straight and between lesbians and gaymen. For us who are gay in rural America, our lack of gay and female social capital makes these bridges especially desirable. "We were none of us brought up to handle being outside the norm"[p.153] of heterosexism, but Harriet did it at age sixty and May Sarton, a long time resident of rural New England, continues to be a luminous heroine for this queen in Vermont.

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Gay Games Needs 1994 Host

Although Celebration '90: Gay Games III & Cultural Festival is still eight months away in August 1990 in Vancouver, the Federation of Gay Games has already begun the site selection process for Gay Games IV in 1994.

Proposal guidelines are now available for organizations interested in hosting Gay Games IV in their city and country. The Federation's search for the 1994 site has already attracted international attention. Cities in North America, Europe and the South Pacific have inquired about hosting guidelines.

The extensive proposal guidelines for bidders seek information about the potential host organization's legal status, philosophy, administrative structure, community relations, financial strength, availability of sport and cultural facilities, as well as programmatic and promotional plans. Members of the Federation will be available to assist groups preparing bids, which are due by April 1, 1990.

"In terms of establishing an international image for gay and lesbian positive events, hosting Gay Games IV is a tremendous opportunity," explains Federation Site Selection Committee Chair Richard Dopson.

Dopson is a board member of Metropolitan Vancouver Arts & Athletics Association, the group that is hosting Gay Games III upcoming August 4-11, 1990. "By drawing together a diversity of resources, including athletic, cultural, business and tourism, a host city can draw public interest and increase community pride. The Gay Games are not just an athletic or cultural event, but a positive statement about our lifestyle," he says.

Once the Federation receives proposals, it will review and rank them in preparation for board action at its annual convention in June in Denver, CO. Contract negotiations will follow, and at closing ceremonies of Celebration '90, the Federation will announce the host for Gay Games IV.

All organizations interested in hosting the next Gay Games can obtain site selection proposal guidelines by writing The Federation of Gay Games, 584 Castro St., Suite 343, San Francisco, CA 94114.

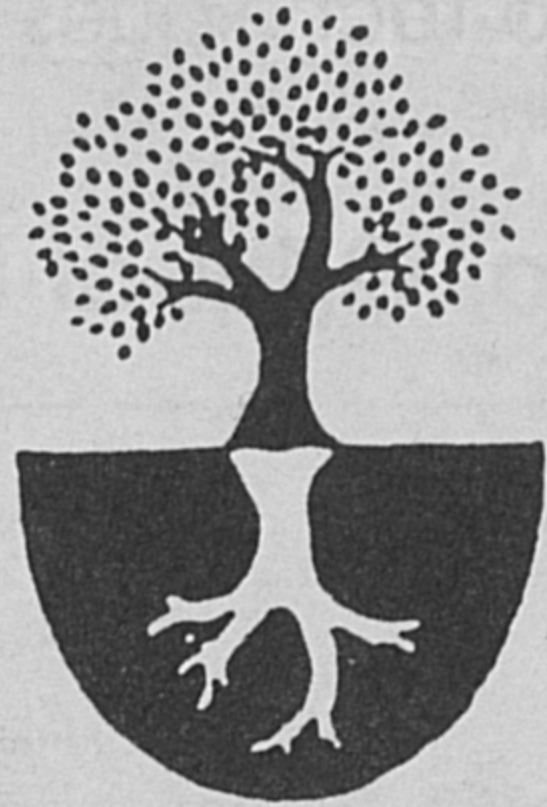
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