

# Commentary

## Out From Under the Hood

by Carrie Coy

Losing a partner is traumatic; losing a partner who works on your car is worse.

In the volumes of literature on how to survive the breakup of a relationship, not a word is devoted to the lesbian who in losing her lover, also loses her mechanic. The manuals are silent on how to cope with the loss of an ex-partner's know-how and toolbox. Worse yet, there are no warnings to the newly independent lesbian on the perils of popping the hood alone.

Granted, given time, any lesbian will adjust. She'll either buy her own set of metric wrenches, cultivate friendship with a mechanic, learn new skills, or accept her mechanical ineptitude. In any case, she'll know her limits.

But beware of those dangerous months of transition. Memories of ambitious weekend projects are still fresh in mind, while the details of who actually did what have already blurred.

My final boyfriend and I often worked on my car together. In fact, bumping heads together under the hood was one of our more pleasurable intimate activities. Pre-

dictably, I confused his considerable skills with my own.

Not long after we parted ways, I set out to diagnose the source of a misfiring cylinder. With the dog-eared shop manual propped open on the air filter, I futilely studied the diagrams illustrating the firing order of the pistons, unable to match the pictures to my car. The unfortunate affair ended in a tangle of disconnected spark plug wires and an emergency house call from a local garage.

The experience taught me something that's stayed with me to this day--I really don't like working on cars. They are too loud and too electrical. The notion that something can be propelled forward by a series of small, contained explosions strikes me as mildly dangerous. At the time, the realization was profound. Liberation from responsibility for my car's innards was, in retrospect, a kind of ceremonious separation from the last vestiges of heterosexuality.

It's been years since I've been conversant in the arcane interests of straight men, from baseball to, yes, cars. It took an earth-

quake to realize the World Series was being played in California. I lift the hood of my latest car only to jump start it or add wiper fluid.

A professional woman described similar thoughts years ago in *Ms.* magazine. Stranded roadside when her car broke down, she cursed her ignorance while waiting for the mechanic to arrive. She braced herself for anticipated condescension from the male mechanic and thought wearily of taking a night school course on car maintenance, a subject which didn't interest her. To her surprise, the woman who arrived was neither condescending nor judgemental. The problem fixed, both parted happily.

The lesson, she wrote, is that everyone, man or woman, should be free to excel in ways that are right for them--and free to call for help when they need it, without being judged incompetent or a "typical woman." The woman was not mechanically apt, and had no desire to be. Far from being a gender-related character flaw, her disinterest was a natural extension of who she was.

Women are moving with growing

(Continued on page 15)

## January is a jumping

**MONDAYS** are Movie days at Pearls starting at happy hour with plenty of popcorn to go with your drink.

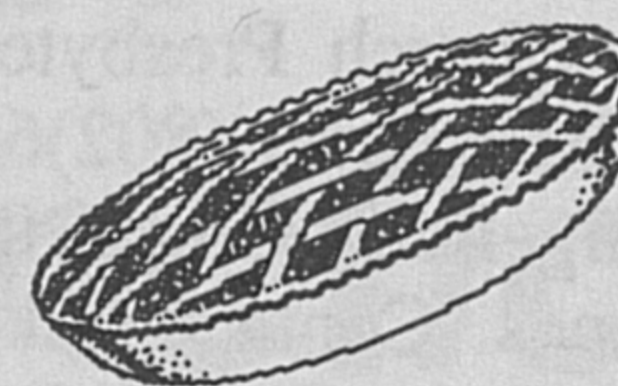
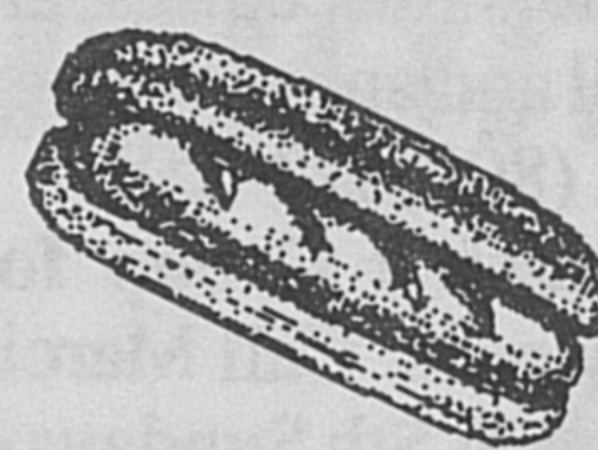
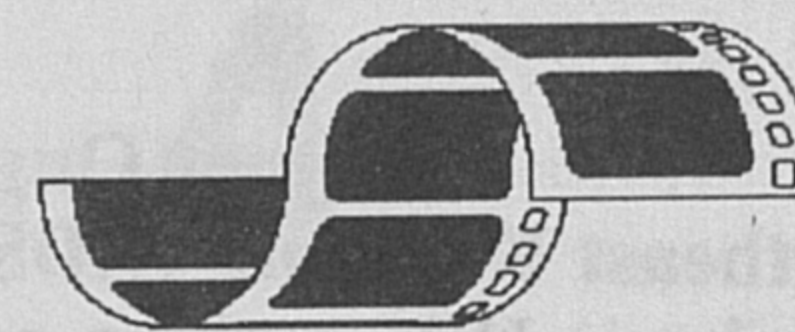
**TUESDAYS** remain our ever popular \$1.00 bud night but now we have hot dogs to go with the buds.

**WEDNESDAYS** we're pouring hot drinks and baking pastries.

**THURSDAYS** are a Mexican happening with frozen margaritas, nachos, wings and Corona's at \$1.75



Pearls 135 Pearl St. Burlington, VT.



### Other Pearls' Dates:

Friday, January 12- Women's Dance No. 62, buffet and dance  
5-9pm \$5.00

Sunday Afternoon January 21st- Bloody Marys, Mimosas, Bingo and Prizes

Saturday, January 27th- **OLDIES DANCE** starting at 7:30 at the old door charge of \$1.00