

CROW'S



CAWS

BY CROW COHEN

I sustained a big loss recently and had to shift into taking care of myself in a major way — cling to my spiritual practice even tighter, surround myself with friends, and strap myself in for a roller coaster ride of emotions. In other words I had to get back down to basics reassuring myself I could still function and that, bottom line, I was going to be OK.

I'm glad to say, I feel on more solid ground this month, and need to keep moving somehow in the direction I was headed before my path veered suddenly into a hairpin curve so I had to screech on the brakes. My direction was reaching towards radical lesbian feminism; and frankly, I once more got in touch with how scary it is for me to remain committed to that stance.

I've mentioned before in this column that I've backed myself into a corner with my militancy in the past — turned to drugs; was hanging by a thread of connection to my kids, my family of origin; lost jobs; lost lovers and suffered debilitating depressions. On the other hand, I bonded with community; was able to let out my wild, adventuresome side; sang; danced; laughed; wrote; played harmonica; was intellectually stimulated; and in general, forged a strong, outgoing radical persona.

Radicalism puts us on the fringe, and my particular brand of radicalism, lesbian feminism (which views the mess in the world through the lens of male domination), feels like the fringes of the fringe especially these days when I look around at what most radical folks are focusing on: the environment, gender issues, civil rights reform, racism, anti-war, anti-nuke, anti-capitalism. Fabulous causes, for sure, and all connected to sexism as far as I'm concerned but not always made explicit when doing the work.

Lesbian feminism which speaks in terms of Revolution (coming out from under patriarchy) is a politic which can alienate everyone for miles around. I certainly am in no position to alienate everyone in sight these days.

If there's one thing I've learned this past month, it's that I'll take all the comfort and nurturing I can find from man, woman, child, straight, gay, trans, bi, Black, white, tall, short, whatever — providing the comfort feels healing which it certainly has.

In fact, the person I've allowed myself to rely on the most during this time has been a 57 year old straight, married woman — my AA sponsor. It is she who has urged me most con-

sistently to remain true to my values and beliefs despite my fears of isolating myself with a system of thought which challenges the very foundations of the dominant culture we're all surrounded by.

There's something ironic, almost contradictory, about being bolstered up by a person I could easily cast into the role of "the enemy." She describes herself as a liberal with radical tendencies and with an out-of-control radical past that far exceeded my trouble-

making days.

She does not necessarily embrace for herself my radical-fem theories although she's often fascinated when I rap with her about them. But she recognizes my passion (which took a dive) and she wholeheartedly encourages me to continue with my work of trying to unite the concepts of Serenity and Revolution.

So I just want to say a profound thank you to all my buddies who have put their arms

around me and told me what I needed to hear even if it wasn't what I always wanted to hear. And I also want to thank OITM who surprised me by publishing a rather conspicuous photo of me in last month's issue in a way radical pose when I was hellbent on keeping a low profile.

I guess I've just come out too far in spite of my trepidation. To coin a tired revolutionary phrase — there's no going back. Sigh.

And by the way, a few of us

radfem types have started a new group which is open for membership. It's a radical feminist study group that will meet the first Monday of the month in wimmin's homes.

Also Dyke Talk still happens on the 3rd Monday of the month but has changed locations. See The Source and Calendar for more complete information. Meanwhile, get out there and fight the good fight. It's worth it. It has to be. ▼

FAITH

BY THE REV.
CHRISTINE S. LESLIE

Faith Matters & Holiday Matters

nourishing activities during the Holi-days can help us weather the sadness of missing loved ones, especially those who have died, the pain of being alone, and the pain of having had few, if any, safe and happy Holi-days with our family of origin.

Last but not least the Holi-days are Horrible-days for many people for whom the darkness that surrounds this season, literally and figuratively, creates a sense of despair and dread like no other season of the year. It is my hope that the following 15 suggestions for how to keep The Holy in our Holi-days might be of some help to anyone who would like this year's Holi-days to be different and/or better than those in previous years. I call these activities the gifts that really do keep on giving. They are gifts we give to ourselves so that we have something to give to others in the living of our day-to-day lives during the Holi-days and into the new year ahead.

1) If you are a gift-giver, spend less money and more time on the people you love.

2) Be creative with your giving. For example, frame in simple frames pictures of your friends and loved ones you took of them during the previous year and give it to them with a note about how much you enjoyed the time that was shared. (These pictures hardly ever get into photo albums anyway and just collect dust in some drawer.)

3) If you send Holiday Greeting cards, take the time to write a personal note in each card and tell the person to whom you are writing what they mean to you. Do this even if you enclose one of those single-spaced, annual letters.

4) If you watch TV, pick one day a week during the Holidays when you won't watch TV at all. Treat yourself to one of those books you bought during the year you just haven't found time to read yet.

5) If you drink alcohol, drink less alcohol and more water. You will be amazed

at the difference in your energy level and overall sense of well-being.

6) Organize a group of friends to go caroling at a local nursing home or hospital. It will mean so much to the residents and touch your soul, too.

7) If you are seeing a counselor or a therapist, don't cancel or skip sessions. In fact, add one or two extra sessions to the schedule if this is a particularly hard time of year for you. You are worth the money you might have spent on a less worthwhile gift.

8) If you love to sing, participate in a Messiah Chorus sing-along with hundreds of other people, especially if you never have.

10) If you commute to work, leave the radio, tape or CD player off during one direction of your commute and enjoy the pleasure of your own thoughts.

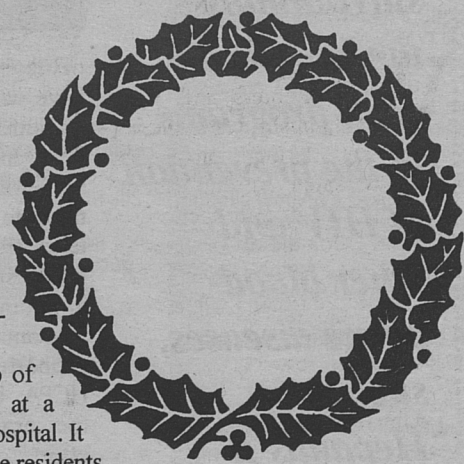
11) Watch a least one showing of It's A Wonderful Life even if you have to rent it.

12) If you put up an evergreen tree in your home, go to a tree farm and cut down your own tree rather than buying one already cut. This is an experience you will treasure forever.

13) Take a walk in the moonlight, or on a clear and starry night. If there is snow on the ground it will be magical. Imagine the heavens filled with angelic voices singing praises to The Holy as you walk.

14) On the Winter Solstice take a few moments to think about what you have done since the last Winter Solstice to bring light and love into other people's lives. If you find that you have a short list, think about ways you might lengthen next year's list.

15) Do something you have never done before that you have always wanted to do during the Holi-days and have never given yourself permission to do. Keep it legal and be safe. Making snow angels in the nude followed by a hot tub could be just the ticket!



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It is my prayer that this year's Holi-days may be a source of healing and hope rather than despair and regret for you. The Holi-days matter in our lives because they touch our lives whether or not we find traditional observances of the Holi-days meaningful. I hope you can find a way to make them a source of meaning and hope and not just consumption and glitter. Create your own list on how to keep The Holy in your Holi-days and do at least one of the activities you identify. You might just be surprised to find out that maybe your faith in The Holy matters more to you than you used to know and your Holi-days may be among the Holiest you ever experienced. ▼

Rev. Christine Leslie, the first openly ordained lesbian in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), is the founder and director of Triangle Ministries, A Center for Lesbian & Gay Spiritual Development near Burlington, VT. She is available for individual and couple counseling, commitment services, grief counseling, workshops, and retreats. She specializes in the integration of sexual-identity formation and spiritual development. Contact her at 802-860-7106 or email her at revcsl@aol.com. Visit the Triangle Ministries web page at <http://members.aol.com/revcsl>