CROW'S



Roughing It in the Bush

With Apologies to Susannah Moodie

BY CROW COHEN

'm writing this by the sweet pond at the Northeast Women's Musical Retreat in Marlboro, CT, which happens every year on Labor Day. Come to think of it, I actually wrote last year's October column from the very same place, as a matter of fact. I guess there's something magical about this pond after all.

I wasn't going to come this year, because my ego has been a little fragile lately (it's been a rough year for me emotionally, yet life goes on as they say). But my Aunt Sadie is celebrating her 90th birthday not too far from here, so how can I avoid at least dropping in and paying my respects to a women's festival that has been alive (more or less) for 18 years?

For a few years, the NEWMR planners couldn't find a place to hold the festival, even though they've had money to purchase property for a permanent site since 1991. I guess they haven't found a suitable location.

Meanwhile, for the past few years, they've held it at this 4-H camp. Except for the old horse manure lying around, it's not a bad place. The pond is private enough for naked swimming, and I found a patch of woods in which to pitch my tent, where no one else comes around - I can actually camp here, not just jam myself into a tent city.

I like NEWMR because it's small, it's close to Vermont (relatively), and the night concerts are indoors, which makes for a rowdy nightclub atmosphere without the booze, drugs, or cigarettes - perfect for me.

Sure, there's a lot missing. The food is wicked mediocre when you consider how much the women's movement has figured out about the politics of food. (The Michigan festival's fare is

vastly superior, and they feed over 5000 women every year!) The workshop offerings were pretty pathetic as well, from my perspective. Most of them were related to foot massage, tamborine banging, improving your lovely home, managing your capital, or playing the newlywed game - not a radical concept in

Oh well. It's a damn good thing I've lowered my expectations big time in terms of stimulating political discussion, except for the gig I've thrown together with a couple of buddies for the last 3 years - "Dyke Talk," one of those "add on" workshops.

something Nevertheless, keeps drawing me back year after year, feeding that tiny glowing coal of hope deep within. I figure if I hang around the remnants of the movement long enough, even when it's hardly recognizable, then something will shift - maybe within, maybe without - something small and subtle, barely perceptible except to those who keep searching for it. The trick is to be open to "it" without expectation, patience, quietly stringing together a bunch of ordinary

days, which is where my deepest joy comes from anyway.

This is exactly the opposite of the stance I took back in the '70s, when I tried to force the issue, banging down doors, demanding (with grandiose expectations) that the revolution overturn the world as we knew it right then on MY terms, goddammit! Then I say to

acknowledging oppression from the stage, and she's not afraid of letting her wild side out, backed up by her African-American culture, which has been a tremendous gift to the movement.

Cris Williamson is a bit selfabsorbed, but I have to admire her tenacity. She has had an inspiring love, respect and commitment for Lucie Blue Tremblay's black jeans any day.

Do I sound a little looksist? It's not about body shape. It's about remembering that clothes can be a bonding factor. Public figures make statements whether they intend to or not, so what's Jaime trying to say – that we have a right to wear anything we like? Yeah,

I figure if I hang around the remnants of the movement long enough, then something will shift.

myself, "Those days are long gone, Crow. Who knows what it will take nowadays? A marriage reform law? A bunch of dykes drumming instead of analyzing or even singing lyrics? A gigantic march on Washington driven by big bucks?" What do I know? It all feels out of my hands. It always has been, but I was too arrogant to notice back then.

I have to say, the spark is still there for me at those wonderful NEWMR concerts, though. Toshi Reagon cranked up the energy (and the decibels) until I was "one with the noise," as she recommended. She has tremendous integrity when it comes to

women's music for the past 20 years, and when Olivia Records went out of business a couple of years ago, she started her own record label instead of selling out. Good for her. I just wish she'd acknowledge one or two oppressions other than the sexism of the music industry.

Jaime Anderson was a hoot - I loved her song about women learning to accept their bodies no matter what size or shape, but does she have to wear those frumpy dresses? I can't figure out if she's just parodying ladies, reclaiming her femme or just thinking they're attractive. Give me Cris' t-shirts and shorts or

and...? (I did enjoy her cream-colored semi-sparkly shit kickers, though.)

In general, those fabulous women-only concerts give me a dose of adrenaline that lasts a few weeks anyway, and I'm glad they still happen. Those signers for the deaf during concerts are always an added treat to women's festivals.

Will I come next year? Probably, whether I plan ahead or not - one foot in front of the other, god willing and the creek don't rise (not likely, given the ozone droughts these days).

And now, time for a little skinny dip before I head out to Aunt Sadie's birthday party.

a school

Imagine

· Where students are free to do what is most interesting and important to them

Cedar

School

 Where being treated with respect is an absolute right

Ages 5 - 19 453-5213 redcedar@wcvt.com

Hardscrabble Road, Bristol 05443

p.30 Villas Margarita

Privacy, seclusion and fabulous scenery in the rainforest near beaches, snorkeling, sailing, kayaking, hiking, nightlife, etc!

TREE HOUSE VILLA: New, 2-bedroom, full kitchen, large pool, private veranda. \$700/wk per couple

Fajardo, Puerto Rico 00738-7005 787/889-2098 margarita@pinacolada.net

Quite Simply...

The finest collection of Furniture, Carpeting & Accessories in Vermont

Rutland House Ltd.

162 south main street (802) 775-2911



rtes 11/30 ¥ in the heart of manchester center, vermont (802) 362-2001

from all over vermont: (800) 649-2911

Primitive Rug Hooking Class Oct. 6, 13, 20, 27, Nov. 3rd Includes: 5 sessions of instruction, patterns, and tools needed to complete a booked chair seat . \$65.00. Call 860-1488 for details. HOURS: TUES-SAT 10-6, SUN 1-5, CLOSED MONDAY 207 FLYNN AVE. BURLINGTON, VT

JEWISH WOMEN INTERNATIONAL

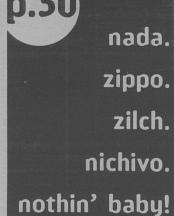
their grandmothers, mothers, sisters, daughters, partners, and friends.

With Jyl Lynn Feldman author of Hot Chicken Wings and Cravings and Ruth Berman and Connie Hurtz, subjects of More Than a Love Story

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1999

in affiliation with Brandeis Women's Studies Program, Brandeis University, Waltham, Ma.

> To receive a registration form or for more information, call 1-800-232-2624 or 1 -413-774-2256 or email KLMDri@aol.com Pre-registration is required by the facility



Placing a non-commercial classified in OITM doesn't cost one red cent.