

LESBIAN HERSTORY ARCHIVES

NEWSLETTER #14 — JUNE 1993



Audre Lorde

February 18, 1934 — November 17, 1992

WOMAN OF VISION, WOMAN OF HEART, WOMAN OF FIRE — AUDRE LORDE

In the mid-seventies, when the Lesbian Herstory Archives was just making its vision known to the Lesbian world, Audre called Deborah Edel and myself to her Staten Island home. In the plant-lined dining room, she shared with us photographs and early editions of her work. "Take what you need for the Archives," she said. And so we have pictures of Audre in her first communion dress (cover photo), a sturdy standing girl child, her arms filled with celebratory flowers, pictures of Audre with her children, with her friends. One image she gave us, a black and white photograph of herself and her woman lover, holding hands and adorned in their 1950's Bermuda shorts, became the first cover for *Zami*. But even more generous were her appearances at our "At Home with the Archives" events, where she would join a hundred other women crammed into every nook and cranny of the apartment where the Archives was then living.

Later, Audre became friends with Mabel Hampton, always greeting her warmly when Ms. Hampton could manage to get to her readings. Mabel carefully inscribed Audre's name and phone number in her treasured red phone book, and whenever she saw Audre's face in a newspaper or on a book, she would say, "That's my girl!" Among Ms. Hampton's most prized possessions were copies of Audre's books inscribed to "Mabel Hampton, sister warrior."

I remember Audre Lorde in her stances of woman warrior, woman lover. I see her reading from her *Cancer Journals* at a Gay Women's Alternative meeting in New York City and being thanked by a woman who was also struggling with breast cancer. "You keep us going with your words," the woman said. Audre replied, "I will not always be here, but you will find strength inside yourself." I see her introducing young poets at Hunter College, embracing their courage and always asking for more. I see her standing in front of me at a rest stop somewhere in Connecticut, saying, "you know I don't agree with you, Joan" and then saying but "you have to keep on writing." And I see her at a party, flirting and courting and daring.

Audre Lorde understood the need for homes both in the physical and cultural sense. She wrote about the homes that must be left and the ones that must be found. She told us to go far back and to look far ahead all at the same time and to love in the face of mortality. In the early seventies, she was one of the few women who understood immediately why we would dedicate our lives to establishing a home for our collective story. Her generosity and trust, her challenging wry words about the past, her gleam of sensual play, her sternness about inequities, her support of women writing even when what they wrote did not reflect her view of the matter, her belief in an international community of women fighting racism, her tenacity to do things her way and her dedication to leaving a record of her journey whether it be to mark her passage through the Lesbian fifties or through a racist America or through the physical and spiritual battle for her life—all this and so much more are why we see Audre Lorde as a living loving demanding presence for all our days. Her spirit, her words, like a touch, will not leave us.

Afrekete Afrekete ride me to the crossroads
where we shall sleep, coated in the woman's power.
The sound of our bodies meeting is the prayer of
all strangers and sisters, that the discarded
evils, abandoned at the crossroads, will not
follow us upon our journeys.

from *Zami*

▼Joan Nestle

AUDRE LORDE'S COLLECTION AT LHA

Over the late 1970s and early 1980s, Audre donated a portion of her personal collection to the Lesbian Herstory Archives. The five boxes of her LHA collection contain drafts and corrected manuscripts of *Coal*, *Chosen Poems Old and New*, *The Black Unicorn*, *Sister Outsider*, *The Cancer Journals* and *Zami*. In addition, Audre donated a sketchbook containing her poems and pen & ink drawings by Mildred Thompson, a copy of work from the "We Are Among the Survivors" Hunter College poetry workshop held September-December 1982, miscellaneous correspondence from the early eighties - including that regarding early organizing of Kitchen Table Press, a Rhode Island license plate, and copies of alternative and mainstream press articles reviewing her work. The rest of Audre's archival collection now resides at Spelman College in Atlanta. The Lesbian Herstory Archives is proud to share in preserving and honoring Audre Lorde's legacy.



Photo by Paula Grant

From the Audre Lorde Collection.

BUILDING UPDATE

We had three goals for the Lesbian Herstory Archives' new building when we moved in a year and a half ago. First, we had to make the first floor of the building wheelchair accessible. In addition, we had to make the building extra secure for visitors and archival documents, and we had to add shelves and storage areas to accommodate the collection. Finally, we had to meet building codes required for a dwelling occupancy by a non-profit educational foundation. We have accomplished all three of these goals.

Two generous and talented architects, Joan Byron and Lynn Gernert, volunteered to help the Archives accomplish this work. They have worked with members of the coordinating committee to make the building's first floor wheelchair accessible and to guide LHEF through the bureaucratic forest — the maze of requirements, inspections, run-arounds, and revisions otherwise known as the New York City Department of Buildings.

Joan Byron designed an incredible wheelchair accessible bathroom with beautiful fixtures, richly colored tile on the walls and floor, and a frosted skylight to allow light from the stairwell to filter in. Hanna Gafni contracted with LHEF to implement the design with Andrea Selkirk doing the plumbing. Their fine craftsmanship complements the excellence of Joan's plan.

Lynn Gernert took on the task of selecting a workable wheelchair lift for the front of the building. At first, our efforts to add a lift to the front of our landmark district building were met with some resistance from some of the local community board. At an initial public hearing, objections raised included overblown concerns about the "unsightliness" of any modern equipment as it would perhaps sully the turn-of-the-century appearance of the entire block. Another irrational fear voiced was that neighborhood children may somehow become impaled on the wheelchair lift. Given the rounded edges and smooth surfaces of the lift none of us could imagine how this could happen, though the original pointed wrought iron railings lining the block might present a hazard to climbing children. As you might guess, many of the concerns voiced revealed thinly veiled homophobia in a neighborhood that is better known for being lesbian-laden and

"In Memory of the Voices We Have Lost"

The Archives is a place to commemorate lost loves and friends. As people we have been deprived of the rituals of communal sorrow. Many lesbians have already experienced the pain of silent mourning. Often in newspapers, a euphemism for death of a Lesbian is "There are no known survivors." This is not true. We are each others' survivors.

We hope that you will remember the Lesbians in your community, your sisters, your friends, through memorials and letters to the Lesbian Herstory Archives, so that we may all honor their lives. Their voices and lives should not be lost or made invisible when we are no longer here ourselves to tell their stories.

Adrienne J. Smith January 9, 1934-August 10, 1992
Africa Gamble

Jennifer K. Shakespeare 1950-September 15, 1992

Kathy Phipps August 21, 1957-January 28, 1991

LaDonne Schulman August 12, 1992

Lillian (Lil) Mary Stuart Pitcaithly June 27, 1952-February 1, 1993

Pamela Pratt 1958-March 28, 1993

Rebecca Ann Donovan 1946-December 29, 1992

Virginia (Jinny) Lee Thomas September 22, 1916-1991

Zarka Leigh Smith 1968-September 16, 1992

lesbian-friendly.

In a second public meeting with the Landmarks Preservation Commission, the eloquence of Archives supporters, particularly Roz Richter, Janet Weinberg, and Ed Rogowsky, overwhelmed the meeting, convincing the commission to wholeheartedly support our efforts to install the first wheelchair lift in Brooklyn's Park Slope Landmark District. Lynn Gernert worked with the commission to find a lift that is functional, durable, and attractive. The sleek model we installed last month is indeed an incredible device, a minor marvel of the neighborhood.

To make the building safer for archival documents and to cut heating costs, we installed ultra-violet filtering glass in windows on every floor except the basement. This will protect paper, fabrics, and plastic from the serious deterioration the sun can cause. Eric Schweitzer and Steven Rosenbusch of American Electronic Security installed a burglar and fire alarm system that is thorough and easy to use. Elly Spicer and Rebecca Lurie of Womenworks built and installed bookshelves and a library ladder on the first floor. Finally, building code required that we enclose the boiler in the basement, add four fire doors throughout the building, and patch the plaster ceiling in the basement. John Kelly contracted with LHEF to accomplish this drudgery.

Along with members of the coordinating committee and other volunteers — particularly Phyllis Rosechild, Barbie Painter, Suzanne Bernard, and Alexis Danzig — these lesbians and gay men represent those who have given much of themselves to accomplish this initial work required on the building. They represent only a portion of the hundreds who have offered their labor this year to re-open the Archives, on June 20th, in our new home. It is with much pride and gratitude that we celebrate this work well done.

▼ *Polly Thistlethwaite*

Lesbian Herstory Archive Newsletter #14 - June 1993

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Foundation, Inc.

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LHA Coordinators: Amy Beth, Annette Spallino, Beth Haskell, Deborah Edel, Jan Boney, Janet Prolman, Joan Nestle, Judith Schwarz, Leni Goodman, Linda McKinney, Lucinda Zoe, Maxine Wolfe, Morgan Gwenwald, Nancy Froehlich, Paula Grant, and Polly Thistlethwaite.

Newsletter Production: Beth Haskell, Morgan Gwenwald, Joan Nestle, and Janet Prolman.

The Lesbian Herstory Archives exists to gather and preserve records of Lesbian lives and activities so that future generations of Lesbians will have ready access to materials relevant to their lives. The process of gathering this material will also serve to uncover and collect our herstory. These materials will enable us to analyze and re-evaluate the Lesbian experience.

OUR HERSTORY AN ABBREVIATED TIME LINE

The following speech was presented November 20, 1992 as part of the First Annual David R. Kessler Lecture in Lesbian and Gay Studies at the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies, The Graduate School and University Center, CUNY. Joan Nestle presented her speech "I Lift Up My Eyes to the Hill: The Life of Mabel Hampton as Told to a White Woman."

I have been asked to introduce Joan Nestle in relation to her work with the Lesbian Herstory Archives and it is truly a pleasure for me to do so. A project, if it is to survive, needs both visionaries and detail people. The visionary, without the presence of the other, often floats off into space. The detail person, without the other, tends to get too caught up in basic survival needs and does not often enough push the boundaries. Together however, dreams can be realized. The Lesbian Herstory Archives represents just such a success and Joan, with her dreams, has been the Archives visionary.

What I would like to do is briefly weave a tapestry for you, outlining some of the historical moments of the first few years of the Archives, interspersed with Joan's words. Though it is important to remember that Joan is not the Archives and the Archives is not Joan, it is sometimes difficult to do this, for Joan has been at the core of the project from its inception, living and breathing not only its words, but alas, also its dust. Neither Joan, nor I for that matter, will ever know what we would have done, or who we would have been, without the Archives, but that is a moot question, just as it is for those who have children, or those who undertake any project which so fulfills one's life. One only knows that the person helps the project grow and in return the project gives back multifold. And thus it has been, for Joan and for the Archives.

Thanksgiving weekend 1973—the First Gay Academic Union Conference. Out of the women's caucus two CR groups are formed. From one group the core of the Archives emerges in the spring and summer of 1974. The Archives name is developed at a meeting where Joan is not present. Perhaps if she had been there we would have ended up with a more impassioned and less cumbersome name, but she wasn't, and the Lesbian Herstory Archives it is.

June 1975—our first newsletter reaching out to the community. Joan says of herself — "Joan Nestle is a lecturer in English, SEEK Program, Queens College, CUNY. A Lesbian activist who is old enough to remember the darkness of weekend bars and young enough to joyously believe in the liberation of our future. She is a cherisher and wishful creator of Lesbian Literature."

January 1976—the Archives opens for community use with over 150 hardbound books, a small Lesbian "trash" paperback collection, one overflowing file cabinet, an easily countable number of Lesbian periodicals, a small tape and photography section and a bulletin board of messages and fliers.

March 1976—Newsletter #2—includes an announcement of the beginning of a bibliography project and the publication of our first bibliographic research tool...an extensive and exhaustive bibliography of bibliographies. We noted in our collection, and from other sources, 4 bibliographies by Lesbians about Lesbians, 11 about homosexuality, and 26 on, about and for women. From that newsletter... Joan's words talking about various reasons women come to use the Archives: "...several women have come just to be comforted by the living, growing, strength of our community. Perhaps these are the most exciting visits, because they reach the deepest reason for our existence—an affirmation of our continuance in time as a creative, self cherishing family of women."

November 1976—The first grant of \$415 is received from the New York Regional Lesbian Feminist Conference. It is to go towards preservation materials and cataloging the collection.

Spring 1977—The Archives makes its first banner for the Gay Pride Parade based on Joan's words "in memory of the voices we have lost."

Spring 1979—Newsletter #5—from an article written by Joan called *One Women's View*. "The room seems to be a collection of papers, books, stray pieces of paper...just a library. But the vision behind the room is much larger; the room is an entrance way, a portal that leads both to the past and to the future and for me its existence is the expression of a terrible hunger. I am a thirty eight year old Lesbian feminist woman. When I first loved women in the late 50's, I was living the life of a colonized subject. I did not know it then; I thought it was an accident that I found no references in the surrounding culture to Lesbian creations. Sometimes believing the colonizers' view of myself, I did not even search for markings because I knew we were not a people, just deviant, sad wanderers, meeting in dark places. It is the memory of this time, with its sense of homelessness, that is at the core of my commitment to the Archives. The Archives room is a healing place; it is filled with voices announcing our autonomy and self possession. The roots of the Archives lie in the silenced voices, the love letters destroyed, the pronouns changed, the dia-



Photo by Morgan Gwenwald.

Joan and Mabel cut a rug at Mabel's birthday party, Deborah watches, at the old Archives.

ries carefully edited, the pictures never taken, the euphemized distortions that patriarchy would let pass. But I have lived through the time of willful deprivation and now it is our time to discover and to cherish and to preserve."

April 1979—We become incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation under the name Lesbian Herstory Educational Foundation, Inc.

July 21, 1979—The first \$50 contribution is given to start a building fund by Marge McDonald at a slide presentation in a Lesbian bar in Syracuse, New York.

November 18, 1979—LHA holds its first 'At Home With the Archives,' a Lesbian cultural sharing with Irare Sabasu, poet, and Glen Elliott, singer-songwriter, sharing their work.

Fall 1979—in our Newsletter, a note from Joan. "We have been doing the slide show now for over four years, and I sometimes forget how subversive it is. This year we had been invited to show the slides at my workplace, Queens College. I discussed it with my students, explained why we were not including men in the audience and waited for the time of presentation. It had been advertised as a women only event and this proved too much for the crowd of angry white males, who pounded on the door during the whole show, forced the door in and told me that if I had asked their permission, they might have considered allowing us to have the space, but not when we demanded a woman only space. The women had to run a gauntlet of men taunting them with shouts of 'Lesbian bitches' as they left the room. The next day, the off-campus gay students' building burned down. This was the City University of New York, 1979."

February 1980—Our tax-exempt status is recognized by the IRS and we become a 501(C)3 organization. We are in the first group of organizations with the word Homosexual, Lesbian or Gay to be granted this status. Donations are now tax-deductible.

July 1980—Newsletter #6—Joan's introduction to one section: "For Lesbians who have not yet visited the Archives, here is a description of the scope of the collection. It is housed in a room of its own (around 15 by 20 feet) and now spills over into the rest of the apartment. Someday it will live and grow in a house of its own."



The Lesbian Herstory Archivettes march on Washington, April 25, 1993.

Photo by Alice O'Malley

July 1980—our first LHA poster is announced in the Newsletter. As beautiful as the poster is, it sells slowly, for we are told many women are uncomfortable putting the word Lesbian up so boldly on their wall.

December 1981—Newsletter #7—LHA introduces a new section in the Newsletter called Lesbian Herstory Sources. Joan writes the introduction: "If we ask decorous questions of history, we will get a genteel history. If we assume that because sex was a secret it did not exist, we will get a sexless history. If we assume that in periods of oppression, Lesbians lost their autonomy and acted as victims only, we destroy not only history but lives. For many years the psychologists told us we were both emotionally and physically deviant; they measured our nipples and clitorises to chart our queerness, they talked about how we wanted to be men and how our sexual styles were pathetic imitations of the real thing and all along under this barrage of hatred and fear, we loved. They told us that we should hate ourselves and sometimes we did but we were also angry, resilient and creative. We were part of a community that took care of itself. And most of all we were Lesbian women, revolutionizing each of these terms. We create history as much as we discover it. What we call history becomes history and since this is a naming time, we must be on guard against our own class prejudices and discomforts. If close friends are to be part of Lesbian history, so must be also, and to me even

more importantly, the Lesbians of the fifties who left no doubt about their sexuality or their courage."

Fall 1981—The Lesbian Herstory Archives is honored to receive its first two awards. The first is from The Committee for the Visibility of the Other Black Woman "in acknowledgment of the contribution made in support of affectional preferences." The second is from Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund "in recognition of distinguished service, dedication and friendship to the community of Lesbians and Gay men..."

Tonight, Joan, it is your turn to be honored. Honored for your work related to the Archives and honored for your independent creative work.

From a detail person to a visionary...thank you.

▼Deborah Edel

AN ARCHIVES WISH-LIST

Many of our wishes will come true this June 20, 1993 with the Reopening of the Archives in its new home in Brooklyn. There are always items that could be added to make the Archives even better. For instance, an AT&T 5200 Cordless Phone so that we can answer your calls no matter what floor we are on. And our old photocopying machine is beginning to require more repairs than it's worth.

If you could help us out with these items or many others from small to large, let us know by phone, letter, or fax.

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1992 Economic Report for the Lesbian Herstory Educational Foundation, Inc.

In our first few years a good part of our money came from a titling by Lesbian Herstory Archives founders as they could give. Over the years the balance has shifted, so that ongoing expenses are now being met by community donations. 1988 marked the first year that our incoming donations topped \$25,000 and we had to file our first formal 990 with the IRS and all the New York State charitable agencies.

How Do We Meet Our Ongoing Expenses And Get our Work Done:

- ▶ All labor at the Archives is done by volunteers. It is a labor of love and many hard, long hours of work by a core group of women.
- ▶ In the past, we haven't had to fund-raise to pay rent, since the collection was housed in the apartment Joan and Lee share.
- ▶ Our vision and knowledge of what needs to be done is great, but our decisions about expenditures are based on actual income that we do have in hand.
- ▶ We are given generous donations of books and materials from the Lesbian community.
- ▶ We receive donations from individual women who visit the Archives, read our newsletter, hear us speak, or meet us at conferences and believe in the vision of the Archives.
- ▶ Money comes from our donation can at LHA and conferences where women give us dollars and change anonymously, as well as donations for the photocopying which we do in response to information requested in letters and by visitors at LHA.
- ▶ We receive honoraria for the slide show and speaking engagements we do about the work of LHA. We do not charge a set fee but ask that university and community groups with access to funding respect our needs. We often show the slide show to the Lesbian community in situations where we pass the hat. All honoraria and donations we receive for speaking go into the Archives account after we are reimbursed for personal travel expenses.
- ▶ We also receive money from donations for our poster, T-shirts, buttons, and postcards.

- ▶ Monies come from grants from within the Lesbian community and alternative funding sources.
- ▶ Monies come from other sources such as memorial funds, workplace donations, cultural events, donations from other organizations, and donations earmarked for special needs.

How Can You Help?

- ▶ BECOME A FRIEND OF THE ARCHIVES.
- ▶ Undertake a fixed expense as your personal project. Let us know that you want to pay part or all of one of our expenses. We will gladly name it after you or let you choose a name.
- ▶ Send us basic supplies such as pencils, paper, blank mailing envelopes of all sizes, etc.
- ▶ Talk to your local publisher, organization, women's bookstore and arrange for us to get free samples, and review copies of books and journals.

Income for 1992

General Fund:	
Individual Donations	14,551.70
Benefits	4,681.00
Honoraria	2,272.20
Grants:	
Amazon Autumn	5,000.00
Astrea	1,000.00
North Star Fund	3,000.00
OUT Fund: Funding Exch.	3,000.00
Paul Rapoport Foundation	10,000.00
Grants Total	\$ 22,000.00

Restricted Funds	10,950.00
Other:	
Matching Fund	25.00
CUNY-United Way	565.86
Sales Tax Refund	37.61
Building Funds	16,780.10
Sub-Total	\$ 74,989.22
Savings Account Interest	2,697.26
Endowment Account Interest	330.90
Total Income	\$ 78,017.12

Expenses for 1992

Postage/Post Office fees	4,928.86
Printing/Photocopying	4,654.67
Supplies/Stationery	1,717.04
Equipment	1,910.36
Storage Rental	2,577.02
Computer System	4,188.88
Utilities Deposits	1,000.00
Bank Charges	245.46
Services	4,451.90
Materials/Books	229.44
Restricted Funds	7,591.00
Household Expenses	
ongoing expenses/minor repairs,	
materials and supplies	10,611.61
Insurance	1,371.00
Major Materials (e.g. doors/grates)	2,512.81
Contractors/builders	40,081.50
Sub-Total	\$ 54,576.92
Other:	
Loan repayment	10,000.00
Moving expenses	2,297.70
Bank service charges	255.81
Mortgage payment	18,239.10
Escrow on water/insurance	1,650.00
Real estate taxes	3,076.77
Miscellaneous	3,076.77
Sub-Total	\$ 36,616.88
Total Expenses	\$ 120,253.09

Our expenses were particularly high this year due to the construction costs necessary to get our building ready.

Explanation of categories in charts: *Material/books* includes books, pamphlets, posters, resource materials. *Printing/photocopying* refers to outside photocopying, printing of fliers, announcements, newsletters. *Post Office fees* refers to bulk mail permit and box rental. *Postage* includes not only costs of all individual and bulk mailings, but also return postage on bulk mailings. *Supplies/Stationery* includes preservation materials, basic stationery, cassette, audio and video tapes, film, and photocopy toner and paper. *Miscellaneous Household Expenses* includes the basic ongoing expenses such as telephone, gas, and electricity costs, exterminator etc. *Services* includes messenger services, mailing services, and the services of an expeditor to help handle all the paperwork with the Building Department, accountant fees, etc. *Miscellaneous Other* are those little odds and ends like organizational dues, events expenses, ads, registration fees and other such which don't fit in elsewhere but are ever so necessary. *Restricted Funds* refers to those dollars spent on projects for which we were given restricted donations such as \$1200 to help cover the cost of photo exhibits, or \$1900 towards materials for enhancing the visual arts collection, which include mounting equipment.

HOW TO USE THE ARCHIVES FROM A DISTANCE

Since the Lesbian Herstory Archives strives to serve the Lesbian Nation, and not just the Dykes of New York, it is important you understand how to use the Archives from a distance. We may be located in New York City, but we do in actuality provide services to Lesbians the world over. In the last year before moving to our new building we responded to over 3,000 reference requests either by phone or letter. This is no small feat for an all volunteer organization. Of course, there is nothing like a visit to the Archives, and if you are doing any sort of lengthy or scholarly project that requires in-depth research you will have to make the trip to the Archives yourself. There are limits to what we are able to do. However, it is quite possible to use the Archives from a distance, providing you have a clear request and an understanding of how we are organized and what kind of access we have to the information.

The Archives is the kind of place that inspires fantasy. The sheer bulk of the many books, letters, photographs and manuscripts that record and document the history of our people quite simply takes your breath away. The impact is especially great if you are finding it for the first time after many disappointing trips to other traditional libraries and archives in search of some shred of evidence of the women who came before us. And if you happen to be a librarian, which I am, the prospect of gaining any sort of bibliographic control over this terrific collection can drive you nuts.

Organizing, cataloging, classifying and making accessible all of these spectacular resources is a mammoth undertaking. In the complex mind of your average librarian there exists a fantasy whereby every book, article, periodical and unpublished paper is all very neatly cataloged on a big friendly computer that you can talk to like the one on Star Trek and it will crank out a custom-made bibliography for you on demand. Unfortunately, this librarians' fantasy is not yet realized. We do, however, have several classification schemes at work in the Archives that allow you to find what you want.

We use simple schemes to organize our books, files, and special collections. We have thousands of subject files arranged alphabetically by subject — a collection that takes up seven five-drawer file cabinets. Organizational files are arranged alphabetically by the name of the organization; biographical files are arranged alphabetically by the first name of the lesbian; our many hundreds of newsletters are arranged alphabetically by the title of the publication; our collection of unpublished papers and manuscripts are arranged alphabetically by title. The book collection, although quite large, is arranged very broadly by subject. The only way of knowing if we have a book is to go stand at the shelf and look for it; we do not yet have an on-line card catalog that allows for title, subject or author access to this collection, although we are planning one for the future. Until then, if you write or call to see if we have a certain book or periodical, it means a volunteer will go

and comb the shelves and files to look. We do have fairly good access to the periodical collection, so identifying a specific issue of a title can be done with relative ease.

In order to use the Archives from a distance it is best if you have a **specific** request, such as a certain article in *Amazon Quarterly* on lesbian mothers that was published in a February or March issue in 1979, rather than a broad request, such as —“do you have anything on lesbian mothers, if so could you please send it to me” (we have a file drawer full.) There are several excellent periodical indexes to the literature that should be available in your community that you can use for your initial literature search. Clare Potter's "Lesbian Periodicals Index" (Tallahassee: Naiad, 1986) provides subject and author access to over 42 lesbian periodicals from 1947-1982. Dolores Maggiore's "Lesbianism: An Annotated Bibliography and Guide to the Literature, 1976-1986" (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1988) is another excellent source for identifying specific citations. Keep in mind that the strength of the Archive's collection is in the many obscure lesbian/feminist periodicals and



Shirley Willer, *Daughters Of Billitis Officer, NYC Chapter*, from *DOB Video Collection*.

books that were published that no other library or archives bothered to keep. Chances are, we've got that illusive issue you've been looking for. Now, if you are looking for a specific article or two, we can photo copy them and send them to you. If, however, it is a book you are looking for, the best we can do is let you know if we have it or not, or possibly copy a few pages for you. If you have a broad topic you are trying to "find anything" on, such as lesbians in the military, we can search our files and let you know if we have subject files on that topic and how much information is available if you visit.

If you are looking for information on a specific organization, we can let you know if we have files on it or not and if so, how many. We have a list of our subject files as well as a list of our organizational files. Also,

our unpublished papers are logged into the computer and can be searched by key word or author. Our "special collections" are also in the computer. Special collections number around 250 or so and can range from a hefty folder to 8 large boxes full of materials — diaries, letters, photographs, clippings, t-shirts — you name it. These are the kind of collections one just has to go through on her own; the actual contents of each collection are not in the computer, just the name of the person or organization, the dates the papers cover, the basic category of materials (letters, photos, clippings) and how many boxes there are in the collection.

With our move to the new building and dyke-friendly neighborhood we are anticipating many new volunteers to help with your requests. Remember that it does take a bit of time to process these requests, so give yourself plenty of turnaround time. It often takes us 3-6 weeks at least to process a written request. As of July 6th we hope to be back up and running, ready to help you in using the Archives from a distance.

*See LHA Newsletter #12 — June 1991, for a list of reference sources every good public or research library should have.

▼Lucinda R. Zoe