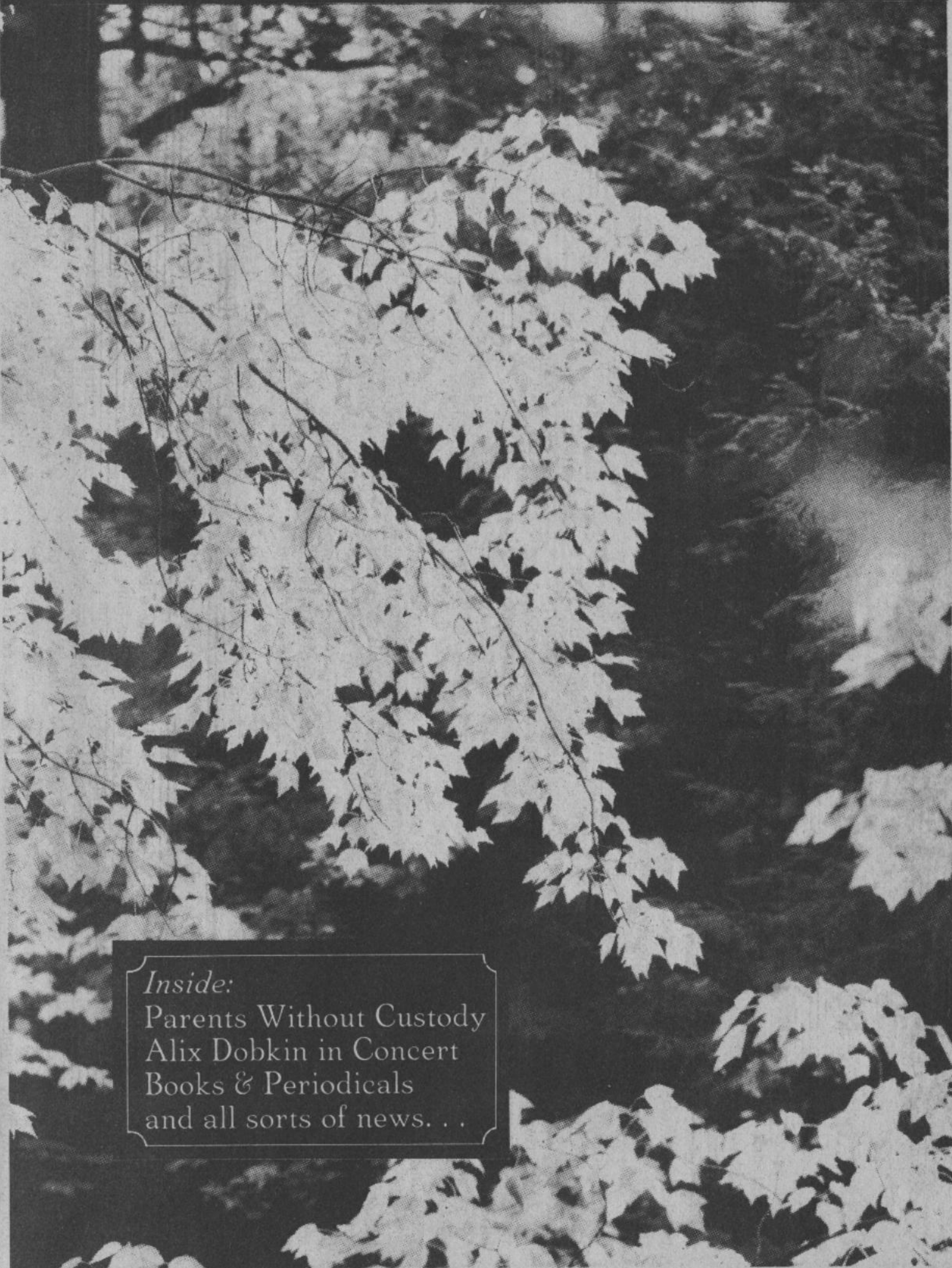


# SPECTRUM

A Cooperative Newspaper for the Tallahassee Community

November Eve, 1981 Issue 27

FREE



*Inside:*

Parents Without Custody  
Alix Dobkin in Concert  
Books & Periodicals  
and all sorts of news. . .

## Parents Without Custody:

# No Longer Accepting Second-Class Status

by Virginia McCool

Why does the local pastor ignore the letter I sent him regarding my child's double standard of values? Why do the schools ignore my interest and concern for my children's academic progress? Why am I treated as if I don't exist?

My story is not unique. There's a whole bunch of us non-custodial parents in the world with stories to tell, and they all sound amazingly the same: we pay the bills, but don't get to pick out the merchandise.

Being a non-custodial parent wasn't going to be easy. . . we knew that. But what we didn't know was that when we moved out, we also gave up our right to be a parent. What a shocking realization. . . especially when according to the law, we only divorced our spouses!

Admittedly the law doesn't *say* we divorced our children. And, of course, everyone — society, the church, my family, and even my ex-spouse — will rally 'round the ideal of the law.

Why, then, are we treated differently? Why are my children not allowed to write or send school papers and art work? Why are my kids not allowed to phone collect? Why are my parents and I not included in celebrations, like church confirmation?

In the eyes of the law, even after divorce, the presumption of parental right belongs to both parents. The Bible gives us equality: "Honor thy father and thy mother." Why, then, when I have never been suspected of child abuse, neglect, or *anything* criminal, am I, the non-custodial parent, denied parent equality?

And the answer comes back that I, as a parent of my children, must no longer exist. I must, therefore, have divorced my children.

The courts will defend only our right to pay our child support; they will not defend our right to a loving and growing relationship with our children. Why do the courts fail us? The reason

is clear: we are the "scarlet" people of our society. We non-custodial mothers, a minority in the world of non-custodial fathers, are even *more* "scarlet." And the reason is that society has come to expect the father, not the mother, to "leave" the children; the anomaly is always looked upon with condescension.

Leave? There's the rub. So many people — and especially those who believe in the absolutes of marriage and family and who would never seek a divorce — perpetuate the myth: We non-custodial parents leave, abandon our children.

It's simply not true. We do not abandon our children. We do not divorce our children. Our emotional ties don't become less because we aren't there to blow noses, tie shoes, or give nighttime hugs and kisses. If anything, our feelings become stronger.

We are left with quality time instead of the quantity of time we used to have, and so we are very deliberate to make every minute count. Regardless of our good intentions, however, our ex-spouses accuse us of entertaining and spoiling the kids. And we do. What other option do we have? We're damned if we do, and damned if we don't.

We non-custodial parents must stand up and be counted. We must raise the national consciousness as to the inequities in our divorce and child custody laws. We have allowed ourselves to believe the guilt trip that society has hung around our collective neck.

"Yeah," we say to ourselves, "I'm really a rotten person for leaving my kids. Those poor little waifs. My God, I've ruined their lives forever!"

"Yeah, I understand," we tell our ex-spouses, "the kids' grandmother is coming to visit and they haven't seen her for six months. Well, geez, neither have I, so. . . Okay, I understand. Sure, let me know when it's convenient for the kids to come, and I'll make flight plans. Thanks."

And we do that. We say "thanks" for nothing and stand in line. So many negative signals reach us from our ex-spouses, from society in general, and even from the courts that we begin to believe the message of the masses. We humbly accept our second-class status.

Today's courts operate under the *parens patriae* doctrine. This means that in a custody dispute, the court will intervene as a dispassionate, yet wise and benevolent "father" and make decisions in the best interest of the child. Decisions made "in the best interest," however, do not necessarily make them right.

It's hard to understand, but the courts actually believe that it's in a child's best interest to deny him his (or her) right to a growing relationship with *both* his (her) parents.

I couldn't believe it was happening to me. My ex-spouse was denying me summer visitation with my kids. I was forced to go to court and ask that the court uphold the language in my divorce decree which unequivocally stated that the kids were to spend summers with me with their father receiving reasonable visitation privileges.

To my amazement the stand-in social worker, *in the best interest of the children*, recommended that these kids be denied 40% of their summer time with their mother! And the judge, that wise and benevolent *father* who didn't care enough to even attend the court hearing, upheld it!

Given that the family is a valid and precious concept, and that neither parent divorces his/her children, then the "extended" family, as it may now be called, still exists. The courts should be nurturing this struggling nucleus by honoring the presumption of parental right and the right of the child with a rule of 50/50.

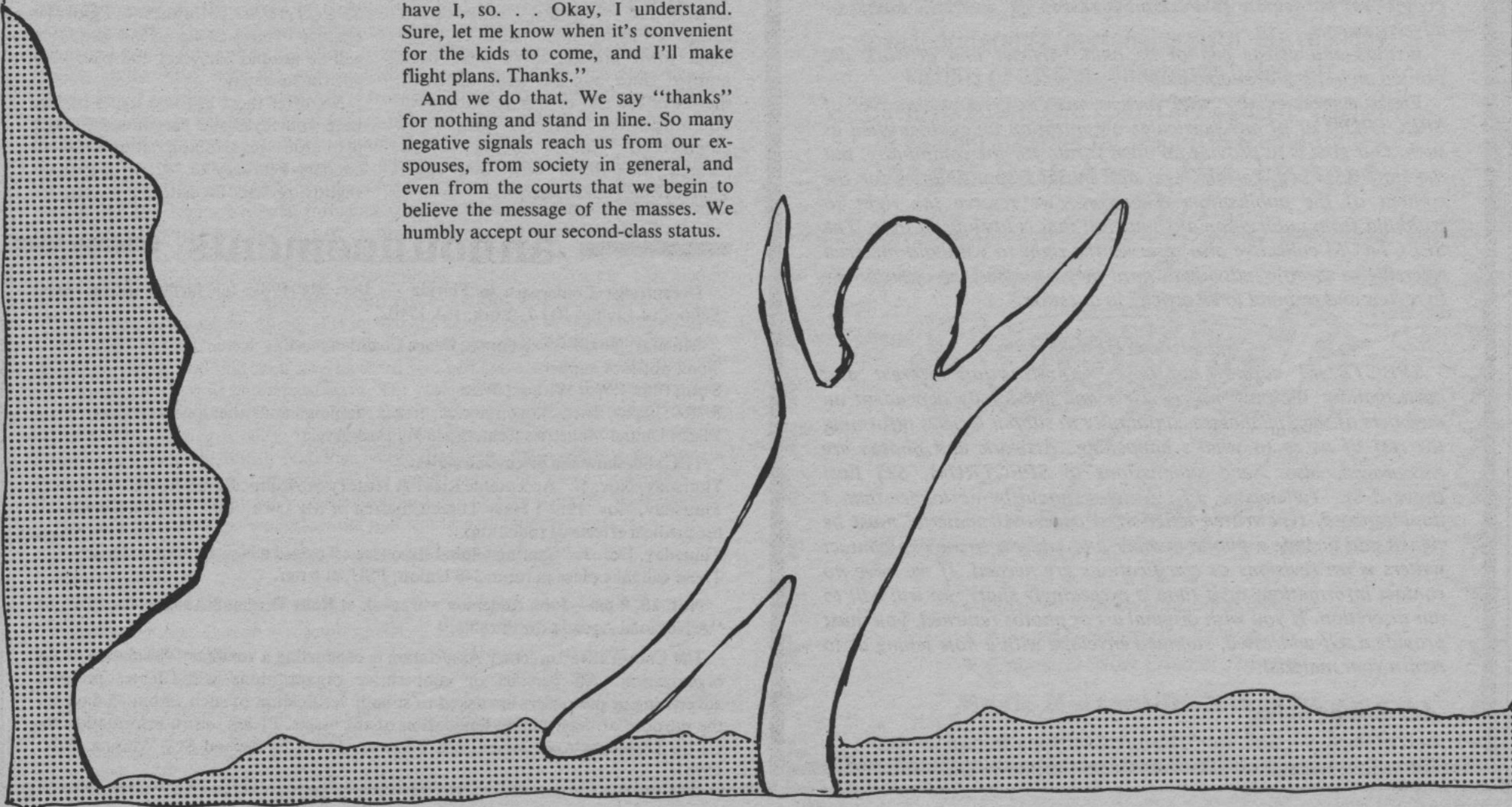
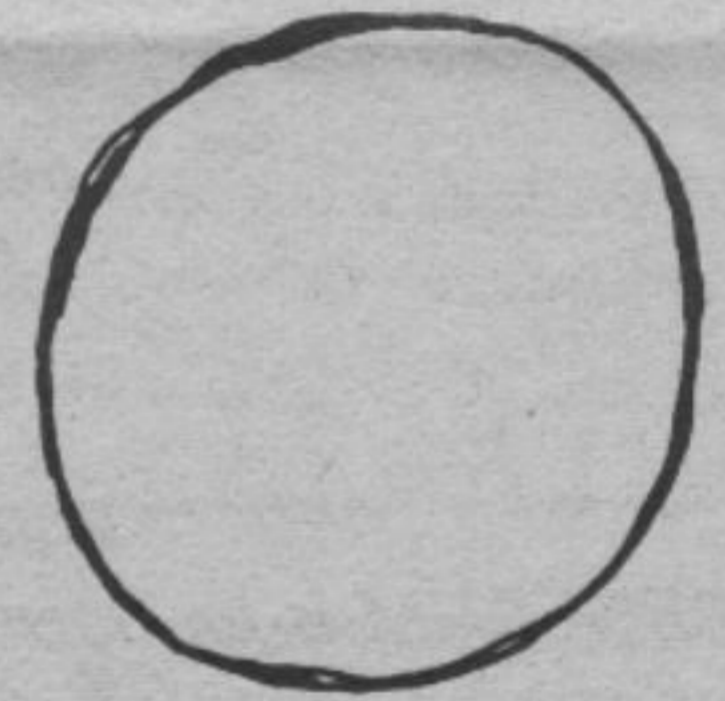
There is never going to be an exact splitting of time so that each parent gets precisely 50% of his/her time with the child. That's an unreasonable expectation, and the rule of 50/50 certainly does not imply that.

What it does mean, however, is whenever a question arises as to whether time should be spent with a parent, the decision should always go in favor of the parent who has had the lesser amount of time with the child. The pendulum should always swing toward the mid-point, always toward equalizing the time.

With the Rule of 50/50, the court action mentioned above would never have happened. Since the children resided with their father during the school year, there would be no question but that any and all of the children's summer time belonged to them and their mother.

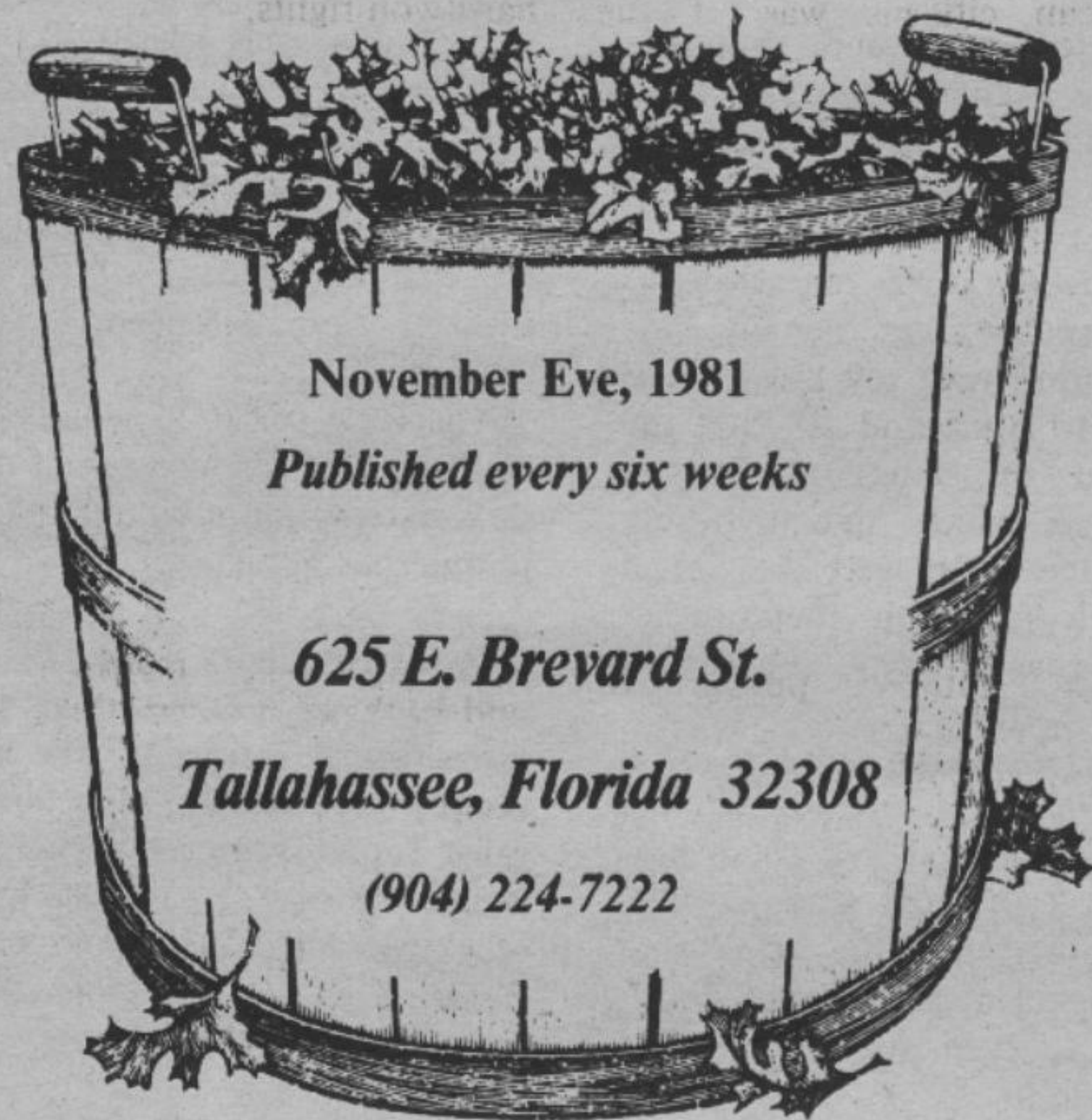
The Rule of 50/50 would knock the keystone out of our present-day adversary system, and it would collapse amid thunderous applause.

*Parent Equality exists to bring the problems of non-custodial parents to the national forefront. We are particularly interested in being contacted by other organizations working on this issue. Please write to: Virginia L. McCool, Executive Director, Parent Equality, 415 N. Monroe St., Tallahassee, Florida 32301.*



# SPECTRUM

A Cooperative Newspaper for the Tallahassee Community



## The SPECTRUM Collective:

Larry Teich • Tana McLane • Margie Menzel • Louise Beauchamp  
 Vicki Mariner • Frank Brown

## Special Help From:

Amy Arbogast

## What SPECTRUM Is:

*SPECTRUM is an open forum for the Tallahassee Community. Emphasizing events, developments and activities in the alternative/progressive/cooperative culture here, we encourage people to participate with contributions of articles, labor or advertisements.*

*Writers and artists cannot be paid. Articles and artwork are printed on a space-available basis.*

*Views expressed by the writers are not representative of SPECTRUM or of any particular organization unless identified as such. Our goal is to provide an open forum for the community, but the staff does bear certain legal and moral responsibilities for the content of the publication. Therefore, we reserve the right to withhold from publication any material that is libelous in tone. The SPECTRUM collective also reserves the right to withhold material referring to specific individuals until they have had the opportunity to review and respond to all articles in question.*

## Submissions Guidelines

*SPECTRUM cannot continue without your interest and participation. We have no reporters and are totally dependent on members of the Tallahassee community to submit articles informing the rest of us as to what's happening. Artwork and photos are encouraged, also. Send submissions to SPECTRUM, 625 East Brevard St., Tallahassee, FL. Articles should be no longer than 3 doublespaced, typewritten letter-sized pages. All material must be signed and include a phone number and address so we can contact writers when revisions or clarifications are needed. If we have no contact information, or if time is exceedingly short, we will edit to our discretion. If you wish original art or photos returned, you must provide a self-addressed, stamped envelope with a note telling us to return your material.*

## Advertising Sales:

Larry Teich — Call 224-7222 for advertising information.

## SPECTRUM's Evolution

### SPECTRUM in '82

by Tana McLane

Lately in this column I've been trying to keep you, the readers, informed as to what's been developing internally with this newspaper. During 1981, we've started to address who we are and where we might be headed as a newspaper collective on a political level as well as in matters of practical process.

As this issue of *SPECTRUM* comes together, there are many interesting things starting to happen. The first is the in-depth written feedback we've received and are printing in this issue. Both a member of our editorial collective and a member of our community who has never participated in *SPECTRUM* before have taken the time to give us their criticisms and specific suggestions. In the continuing effort to keep our processes accessible to others, we share critical evaluations of the paper by Margie Menzel and Ben Green.

Other areas of this publication are undergoing internal scrutiny, also. For all the beauty we are able to churn out, for the forum we attempt to provide to Tallahassee's alternative/political community, there is still often the feeling of failure, of futility. This is a totally volunteer project you see before you, as we mention all the time. There is a high level of burn-out we must always plow our way through in order to face yet another production cycle. Through all this, we've grown more aware of the ramifications of publishing alternative news, and the community responsibility so many confer on us. Perhaps only unknowing idealists would start such an undertaking.

Through all this, however, it feels as if *SPECTRUM* will survive, and happily -- qualifiedly so. We face not only rising production costs today, but also the fact that the printing company with whom we've worked closely for three years has been sold to a large, anonymous Chicago corporation currently buying up all sorts of other small town presses. We have been notified since our last issue appeared that as of the end of this year they will no longer be able to print any commercial "jobs," being forced instead to publish only their own *Thomasville Times-Enterprise*.

This leaves us in somewhat of a scramble to find a new printer, change the format somewhat to fit a new press, establish new relationships that take time to flourish, and generally re-orient ourselves to doing business in new ways. We have a positive lead which we expect to work out, but the prospect of making the jump leads us to greater questions of what that effort implies. Just how committed are we to continuing this publication? What changes do we need to make at this point? Our group is smaller right now than it's ever been, a fact that is both good and bad: easier to make decisions and work together, but a real overload of physical work and responsibility.

This is not exactly a crisis, but it is a moment in our own publishing history at which we must pause to reflect and evaluate. We will be thinking this out over the rest of 1981 as inquiries are made as to how to continue. It would be well to hear some more feedback from our readers during this time. Let us know your ideas on all sorts of things, and we'll take them into consideration as we meet and plan.

This is the last guaranteed *regular* issue of *SPECTRUM*. Our next issue, due out December 16, will be the Tallahassee Feminist History Project. The Project is on its way and is exciting to watch come together. Many things will be happening around it right up to deadline. If some of us look a little crazy through the month of November and the beginning of December, you'll know why. It's going to be much bigger than the usual issue of *SPECTRUM*, and is going to be jam-packed with wonderful things concerning feminist action and thought as it's been experienced in Tallahassee, plus much more. Sherry Rauch is the contact person for the Project, at 224-8299. We are looking for the usual advertising for that issue, but rather than emphasizing current sales, etc., we ask advertisers to think of this issue of *SPECTRUM*/Tallahassee Feminist History Project as a souvenir issue that will be around for years and plan their ads for longevity.

So, after these last two issues of '81, keep your eyes and ears tuned for our probable resurfacing sometime in January-February of '82, in a perhaps slightly revised format.

## announcements

**Decentralist Conference in Florida — Dec. 20, 1981; for further details write School of Living, RD 7, York, PA 17402.**

### Monday, Nov. 9—Tallahassee Peace Coalition meeting

7 pm, pot-luck supper

8 pm, film: "War Without Winners"

8:30-9:30 pm, discussion on nuclear freeze campaign and other local activities  
 Place: United Ministries Center (548 W. Park Ave.)

### TPC slideshow and discussion series:

Thursday, Nov. 5: "Acceptable Risk? A History of Atomic Power in the U.S."

Thursday, Nov. 19: "I Have Three Children of My Own" (Dr. Helen Caldicott on the medical effects of radiation).

Thursday, Dec. 3: "Sharing Global Resources: Toward a New Economic Order"  
 These will take place in room 346 Union, FSU, at 8 pm.

**Nov. 18, 8 pm—John Anderson will speak at Ruby Diamond Auditorium, FSU, on "A National Agenda for the 80's."**

**The Cooperative Directory Association is conducting a voluntary dissolution of the organization. All persons or cooperative organizations with debts, pre-paid advertising or pre-orders are asked to submit verification of such within 45 days for the purpose of determining liquidation of the assets. Please return information to: Co-op Directory Association, c/o Trustees, 114½ E. Second St., Winona, MN 55987**



# making connections

by Louise Beauchamp

It's hard to imagine a million Americans demonstrating over anything, and certainly not the policies of another nation. But that's how many West Germans -- proportionately -- turned out in October to protest American arms policy.

It was the largest demonstration in that country's post-war history, attended by one out of every 250 West Germans, a total of 250,000. They have realized that they will be the victims of any limited or unlimited nuclear exchange between the U.S. and Russia, and they don't like it.

They don't like the NATO plans to base Pershing 2 and cruise missiles in West Germany, and they don't relish the thought of being the "shooting gallery of the super powers," said the leader of the peace movement. Many of the demonstrators said what they want is to live away from the two power blocs, "hopefully in some kind of neutralized status."

Wouldn't we all.

It took Ronald Reagan to solve the dilemma of nuclear waste disposal. The man has a way of slicing through a complex problem with an answer so simple it leaves the victim in shock.

The problem with waste is that it's worthless, right? And nuclear waste is so deadly that either the public or the power companies will have to pay through the nose to store it for hundreds of years. But in the world according to Reagan, nuclear waste is not worthless. It is the raw material for nuclear bombs.

His military planners have advised him of a "looming shortage" of



Illustration by Charlie Chase

plutonium for weapons, according to a *New York Times* story. With a flash of the Reagan brilliance, he must have realized that by getting the government involved in reprocessing spent reactor fuel, he could kill two birds with one stone.

After the Defense Department takes what it wants of the reprocessed fuel, one of the first beneficiaries will be the Clinch River breeder reactor. Clinch River is an experimental reactor that is supposed to produce more fuel than it consumes. Under the Reagan plan, it will get its start-up charge from the reprocessed fuel from reactors that it will be providing with more fuel.

Maybe killing two birds with one stone is the wrong metaphor. It could be the Reagan thinks he's found the goose that lays the golden eggs.

There was a small nuclear accident in Virginia this month when a truck carrying barrels of uranium dioxide flipped over on a curve and strewed the

barrels across the median strip. Officials were on hand to reassure everyone that "no radiation was released."

In addition to buying up and reprocessing their waste, Reagan wants to aid the floundering nuclear power industry by promoting reactor sales to underdeveloped countries. The sales are "a terrific tool of foreign policy," commented Energy Secretary James Edwards.

Documents are being drafted by the executive branch to propose what is called a new "nonproliferation" policy.

Actually they are the framework for a new surge of proliferation, striking

down many of the steps that have already been taken to slow the spread of nuclear weapons. The restrictions have apparently been "irritating" and have damaged "the U.S. image as a reliable nuclear supplier," according to the draft document.

My dictionary doesn't list nonproliferation, but it does have proliferation: "to grow by multiplying new parts, as by budding, in quick succession."

Reagan has also decided that the public should pay to clean up the mess at Three Mile Island. He didn't phrase

continued on page 8

## TREE WATCH

by Ann Bidlingmaier

Despite an overflow crowd of 120 *Tree Watch* members and concerned citizens at the October 20 County Commission meeting, three of the five county commissioners declined to take action on the adoption of an improved tree ordinance. Instead, the newly proposed ordinance will be "discussed" at a November 10 meeting among the commissioners at 1:00 pm on the second floor of the Leon County Courthouse.

Commissioners Jim Crews and Bob Henderson indicated they would be willing to consider moving ahead with the proposed tree ordinance, but Commissioners Gayle Nelson, Doug Nichols, and Lee Vause stated that they preferred to delay any direct action to replace the current ordinance which *Tree Watch* members say is outdated and ineffective.

*Tree Watch*, formed in April by FSU professor Dick RuBino and high-school English teacher Ann Bidlingmaier, has drafted an improved tree ordinance. Attorneys, biologists, foresters, builders, nurserymen, planners, and environmental specialists have donated their technical and legal expertise in order to formulate an ordinance at no cost to the county. Under the new ordinance, trees smaller than the current 36-inch standard diameter would be protected, an environmental review board would be established, certificates of occupancy for newly-constructed buildings would not be issued until ordinance requirements are met, and civil as well as criminal penalties could be assessed.

### WHAT CAN TALLAHASSEE CITIZENS DO TO PROMOTE THE ADOPTION OF THE ORDINANCE?

1. Write letters to the editor of the *Democrat*.
2. Call the commissioners' office at 488-4710 and leave a message for the commissioners to listen to the desires of the community to act on the improved tree ordinance proposal.
3. Contact developers, builders, architects, and engineers whom you know and impress upon them the need to preserve Tallahassee's most valuable resource—trees.
4. Notify owners and managers of establishments which have been inadequately landscaped or have caused the unnecessary removal of trees, and tell them of your concern. If you choose to boycott such establishments, let the proprietors know why, and write letters to district offices, if necessary.
5. Let those builders who *have* preserved trees know that you appreciate their efforts.
6. Contact Dick RuBino at 644-4710 or Ann Bidlingmaier at 386-7751 and let *Tree Watch* know of your concern.
7. If you see any trees coming down, call Environmental Services at 488-9306, or call Dick or Ann.

And watch for the calendar commemorating Tallahassee's trees going on sale November 14!

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**Drawstring pants**  
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**224-1694**

# Remembering Carl Harp. . .and What We Almost Did to Help

by Meg Keene

*"The prisons have made me what I am. The prisons have made me a revolutionary, the prisons have made me progressive and political, the prisons have made me a human being. They have made me the man I am and will be. I am fortunate. It destroyed other people, it even killed many of them, not just physically.*

*"I have been caged, isolated, segregated, alienated, classified, reviewed, denied, put off, put on, beat up, gassed, starved, tortured, shamed, humiliated, degraded, subjected to fear, paranoia, frustration, depression, rage, and sorrow, a sense of loss, and digital sodomy.*

*"I have been used, lied to and about, played as a pawn, ignored, sensationalized, scape-goat-ized, and so much more that words alone cannot tell you about this existence. I feel a hurt so bad, so deep, a rage so consuming that love can save me from myself."*

Carl L. Harp  
From Bayou LaRose

I first became acquainted with Carl Harp's story through HAPOTOC: Help a Prisoner Outlaw Torture Organizing Committee, an anarchist prisoners' aid group operating out of Amsterdam. I have been a member of this group for about six years and have read Carl's impassioned letters, information about him and other news from prison, in the Hapotoc newsletter. In 1973 Carl was convicted of murder and rape, sentenced to four consecutive life sentences with a minimum of 95 years. Hennie Mulder of the HAPOTOC Collective in Amsterdam visited Carl and also did research (paying \$400 of her own money for the research). She came back to Holland convinced that Carl was innocent. Most of Carl's time was served in the State Penitentiary in Walla Walla, Washington, where he became a political activist and was involved as a jailhouse lawyer. He helped establish Men Against Sexism and the *Anarchist Black Dragon*, a prisoner's publication.

On May 9, Carl Harp, Shane Green and Clyde Washburn seized the Classification and Parole building at Walla Walla. They took ten hostages and held the building nonviolently for 12 hours. No one was hurt. During that time, they were in constant communication by phone and bullhorn with media, prisoners and people inside. They talked about the maltreatment of prisoners and cruel conditions inside prison. The majority of prisoners supported them with more than 200 prisoners staying in the yard to keep the guards from attacking. The three instigators peacefully surrendered after one hour in front of news reporters and cameras. The hostages later said they were well treated by the prisoners.

A few hours after surrendering peacefully, the three were thrown into solitary confinement, "the hole," a behavior modification unit. They were denied due process of law and hired private attorneys as the state legal aid refused to take their cases. Their mail was sometimes censored and they were not allowed visitors or contact with the media. They reported to HAPOTOC that their food was spiked with pills and that they were told confidentially by a guard that one of them would not make it through this ordeal.

On July 8, 1979, several prisoners in solitary confinement protested against inhuman treatment. A riot squad of 16 men was sent, beating the prisoners and spraying them with mace while handcuffed to their cell bars.

Carl demanded that the beatings stop. He was beaten, too, and raped with a billy stick. He was brought to the hospital with severe rectal wounds.

In May, 1980, a lawsuit was filed by Carl and other prisoners against the state for the treatment received the previous year. The trial ended with a victory for the inmates. The judge declared the prison in Walla Walla cruel and inhuman. Carl was awarded \$7,000 in damages for being kept illegally in segregation. The charges for taking hostages were dropped in 1981.

Last winter HAPOTOC printed Carl's letter stating his fear that he was going to be killed. He wrote, "More than a few people know this who should be doing something about it, legally or otherwise, yet they are doing nothing. I don't know how to handle this except try with what help I've got to do something about it myself. I fear that what help I've got is not enough. It's so obvious what's going on and why, but it seems like nobody cares. When I'm killed or seriously hurt, though, they will not make me their hero, their martyr, and I don't want to be a hero, a martyr....I just to win to love, myself and others like me, for my friends and loved ones!"

Then the October 24 issue of *Gay Community News* provided the following: Carl's body was found in his cell at Walla Walla on September 5, in what associates say was murder at the hands of prison guards. According to Scott Weinstein of the Solidarity Committee of Montreal, Canada, guards killed Carl to silence him, and that a suicide note found with the body is counterfeit. A member of the gang within

the prison had reportedly told Carl some time before his death that the gang had refused to accept a contract on Carl's life offered by prison guards. Carl circulated an open letter revealing the plot against him and voluntarily entered protective custody for his own protection. He left protective custody after a week and was found dead a few days later."

You can contact Hennie Mulder (she could probably still use funds to repay her research) through HAPOTOC, P.O. Box 10638, 1001 Amsterdam, Holland, or through Corrie Courtens, HAPOTOC, P.O. Box 22523, Fazantenhof Bijlmermeer, Amsterdam, Holland. They have published a pamphlet by Carl, "I'm Gonna Be Free."

Also, *Love and Rage: Entries in a Prison Diary* is available from Pulp Press, Box 3869, MPO Vancouver, B.C., Canada, and also available from Solidarity Collective, Box 5052, Station A, M5W 1W4 Toronto, Canada.

## Funeral Flowers

Carl Harp was murdered to death  
I read today 6 weeks later.  
I never thought it would happen.  
Finally, to all of him.  
It won't happen to me.  
I've been a good girl and I work for a living  
compromise  
only write unrewarded, nervewracked  
to the loud TV at work  
I've been good and kept my mouth shut,  
minded my own business  
Those terrible Nazis just folks  
like you and me with a job to do.  
I do my job and I keep my mouth shut.  
Good girls don't get murdered  
unless they are someone else.  
Carl Harp wasn't someone else enough.  
I almost wrote letters and almost did something to help.  
Read his letters — warnings, pleas  
in private at home, in the sanctity of my living room  
in the privacy of my private life.  
He said they are going to kill me.  
someone I almost knew  
Something I almost did was murdered to death and  
these words not quite regrets return him  
reincarnate effectively as funeral flowers.

— MK

Mon-Fri: 10-7  
Sat: 10-6



649 W. Gaines  
Tallahassee  
222-9916

## MEMBERSHIP MEETING—Sunday November 1, 2:00 pm at the Miccosukee Land Co-op community shelter.

Election of 2 Board of Directors and final vote  
on by-law changes are on the agenda.

One of Leon County Food Co-op's stated goals has always been to provide education of benefit to the individual and/or the community. To this end, we announce a workshop on basic finances to be given Sunday, 15 November, in the afternoon. Running about 4 hours, the workshop will cover such topics as statements, analyzing statements, budgeting, capital, and involving and educating members. LCFC's Board and staff are invited to attend and there will be 10 to 15 places open for other interested LCFC members. Printed materials will be used, and although the focus will be on LCFC specifically, we feel that folks will be able to apply this information to other co-ops/businesses as well. We ask that you commit your time before the workshop by signing up on a sheet that will be provided at the LCFC Info Desk. For more information, check that desk or call 878-3676. Everyone welcome!

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Coming Up —

## Alix Dobkin in Concert

by *Birds of a Feather Productions*

Like every other musical genre that has invoked the voice of cultural expression, women's music today is filled with delightful variations. Offering something for everyone, they range from the classical influences of flautist Kay Gardner, to the jazzy blues of Teresa Trull, and onto the bluegrass sounds of Robin Flowers and Woody Simmons. There's even a Lesbian folksinger with a balkan touch who delights in celebrating the role women play in her life with the clear, sweet voice of an angel — the one and only Alix Dobkin.

A veteran performer of the Sixties folk scene, Dobkin sang politically-oriented songs in coffeehouses across the country before her coming out date in 1972. At that time she started singing strictly women-oriented music. In 1973, Dobkin made musical history with her album, *Lavender Jane Loves Women*, the first album of "womens music" entirely engineered and performed by and for women. Since then, she has continued being one of the most joyfully outspoken voices in the wilderness for Lesbian women everywhere. Her latest albums, *Living With Lesbians* and the more recent *XX Alix*, mark her continuing voyage in the evolution of a lesbian/feminist consciousness.

Dobkin's concerts often carry the

mark of controversy due to the women-only policy that she asks be enforced during them. It is a mark of misunderstanding that continually frustrates her. " 'For women only' doesn't mean 'closed to men' as much as it means open to women," Dobkin says. "It's a special treat to have something that is for 'women only'. I would betray trust if I admitted men. I hope straight women can say, 'You stay home, this is a woman's concert'."

Unlike some of her musical sisters, Dobkin is anything but standoffish when it comes to interacting with the women she meets at her concerts around the country. She makes a point of reaching out and getting to know the community of women in which she is performing and her concerts are usually accompanied by informal get-togethers afterwards.

Women in Tallahassee will be able to experience just how special Alix Dobkin and her music are when she comes to town on November 19 to celebrate the release of her newest album, *XX Alix*. She extends an open invitation to all women in the community to come join with her for an evening of togetherness in song.

For more information concerning the concert, call the FSU Women's Center at 644-4007.

## Why They're Boycotting Mother Earth News

A SPECTRUM subscriber sent this news item from RFD, a quarterly publication which blends political, healthful and homesteading ideas for gay men. The resolution described in the following reminds us that people working for a better life and social change must come to terms with their own participation in the oppression or deletion of others.



The following resolution was adopted by the membership of Northern Lambda Nord, Caribou, Maine, August 1981:

RFD magazine is a quarterly journal for 'Country Gaymen Everywhere'. The *Mother Earth News* is a homesteading/back-to-the-land publication with a very wide general circulation.

According to a recent issue of RFD, *Mother Earth* has a policy of refusing RFD advertising. A phone call to *Mother Earth* in North Carolina has confirmed their policy of refusing all lesbian-gay advertising. They stated that their readers had complained about seeing gay or lesbian items in *Mother Earth*.

The Membership of Northern Lambda Nord adopts the following resolution:

"WHEREAS, *The Mother Earth News* professes to be a publication for

back-to-the-land and rural peoples, and "WHEREAS, lesbians and gaymen live not only in urban areas but in rural communities as well, and

"WHEREAS there are gaymen and lesbians who are back-to-the-land people, homesteaders, and small farmers, and

"WHEREAS, *Mother Earth* magazine has a publicly stated discriminatory policy towards lesbians and gaymen by their rejection of all gay- and lesbian-oriented advertising,

"BE IT RESOLVED, that the Membership of Northern Lambda Nord, the lesbian-gay male organization in rural northern Maine and northwestern New Brunswick, calls on all lesbians, gaymen and our friends to boycott *The Mother Earth News* magazine by: (1) cancelling any current

subscriptions and notifying *Mother Earth* of the reason for the cancellation, (2) refusing to purchase *Mother Earth* on the newsstand and notifying *Mother Earth* of the reason for refusal to purchase their publication, and (3) sending letters to Ms. Beverly Roots, Advertising Services, *Mother Earth*, P.O. Box 70, Hendersonville, NC 28791 USA, demanding an immediate end to their blatantly homophobic and discriminatory policy towards gaymen and lesbians.

"This boycott shall be terminated when *Mother Earth* alters their discriminatory practices."

The women and men of Northern Lambda Nord urge our sisters and brothers to support this boycott effort.

*Mother Earth* also has a syndicated radio program throughout North America; we urge our friends to notify

the radio station in their area which carries *Mother Earth's* program of the discriminatory practices of *Mother Earth* and to ask the station for their support.

Contact Northern Lambda Nord at P.O. Box 990, Caribou, Maine 04736.

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## Book Review

# A Work of Insight and Bravery

by Tana McLane

If you love good stories about realistic women, read the ones Jane Rule has included in her book, *Outlander: Short Stories and Essays*. Published by Naiad Press, *Outlander* is a wonderful collection of Lesbian fiction and exposition.

Lesbians are not of one womanly stereotype, and Rule's book offers fly-on-the-wall views of all sorts of Lesbian lives, clear and simple.

The book is such an excellent work that I have contemplated this review for many months, and have felt awed and intimidated about approaching it. I do not have a Lesbian experience spanning decades, but I appreciate the enormity of Jane Rule's experience and perception. She is a writer of the calibre of Adrienne Rich, of a different style but of that same soaring quality. And, as I start again and again to write this, she becomes more accessible but no less awesome in her talent to put the reader squarely in her stories.

*Outlander's* first story, "Home Movie," is most beautiful and delicate, capturing the sunlight of Greece, the names of flowers, and the scent of romance and discovery. Like a deliciously light aroma, the story seems to exist on the fringes of the writer's imagination. It is the perfect entrance to the writing of Jane Rule.

Rule's eyes have seen and understood the breadth of Lesbian lives and she renders the satisfaction and pain and questions and choices inherent in the experiences these women build together. She stepped into the light as a Lesbian decades before the modern feminist/Lesbian movement made it somewhat safer to do so. The bravery and insight of that early and necessary choice reflect in her stories, lending strength and clarity. There is also humor and love and wisdom here, qualities which whole human beings bring to our shared experience.

*"... a person's sexuality, like all other aspects of their lives, should be recorded clearly and accurately if it's to be broached at all."*

In "Outlander," the short story, two women past their youth bond in need and hope. The younger woman aids the elder to avoid an imminent death by alcohol and the two move to an old farm and begin to build a life of self-sufficiency, neighborly connection and a growing love between them. The tale, though in short story form, has the psychological proportions of an epic. It deals with the hard work and family struggles, the losses due to war, and the eventual winding down of real life that we so desperately need to hear about.

Rule magnifies her characters' lives, bringing them to the forefront, no longer letting us skim over or obscure them. She holds a broad definition of Lesbian

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# OUTLANDER



**JANE RULE**  
short stories and essays

sensibility and delves into sensuality as well as the other important details of life. She believes sexuality is a major clue to our whole selves.

In "The Killer Dyke and the Lady," Rule reenacts the poignant and sometimes delightful *tete a tete* between a "butch" and "femme" Lesbian who are thrown together as speakers at a conference. The two women are evenly matched in strength and footwork and their wonderful dialogue and thoughts create a rare balance which enlivens a tale familiar in the longstanding community of Lesbians.

The twelve essays which end the book are lovely pieces of writing, also. At first, I found it impossible to let go of the luxury of Rule's stories and switch into essays, especially since the first, "Sexuality in Literature," seemed dense and academic. But I returned to them later in another frame of mind, and upon reading them, I'm glad they're there. They offer more insight into the thoughtful experience of the author and most of them are fairly short though rich and well developed. Jane Rule is much more visible and her voice more direct in the essays. But often she continues to write about life itself, bringing theory to life and practicality. In the essays, she notes ironically that her work is not present in school libraries, that certain well known feminists/Lesbians/activists reflect the conflicts she sees enacted in the Lesbian community everywhere, that the singular act of gay men or Lesbians coming out of their closet is not the singular answer to making the world a safe and supportive home for these people.

These essays, difficult to sum up briefly, are actually little discussions revealing a historical perspective of how things are, from a thoughtful Lesbian's point of view.

In "Private Parts and Public Figures," she criticizes the biographers of three literary women who have obscured the fact of their subjects' Lesbianism, either through outright perversions of the truth or through cluttering their writing with so many nonsensical details as to evade the truth, both with the similar result of denying Lesbianism in famous figures. Rule's point is that a person's sexuality, like all other aspects of their lives, should be recorded clearly and accurately if it's to be broached at all. She says, "We do not want or need biographers who come to the lives of their subjects with a tidy or political theory for analysis and judgment. What is required is the knowledge that, if sexuality is a legitimate subject for the biographer, the cliches of the culture are not sufficient for dealing with it. Explaining or explaining away sexual identity and experience are not the point. Restoring human beings to their wholeness in our perception of them is the job of biographer and citizen alike. As long as who and what we desire are treated as broken-off secrets of our lives, trivial for men, all-consuming for women, we will go on understanding very little about what it is to be human, in public or private."

Jane Rule is a writer who is at home in fiction or essay, and who has given us *Outlander*, a bountiful gift of warmth, insight and bravery.

*Outlander* is published by Naiad Press, Inc., P.O. Box 10543, Tallahassee, Fla., 32302. It's available locally at Co-op Books, 652 W. Tennessee St. \$6.95

# Periodical Reviews

Continued from last issue

by Larry Teich

In the last issue of *SPECTRUM*, I presented a group of publications pertaining to co-ops which exchange with us. In this issue are the rest of the publications in various categories that have sent us a copy either for review or in exchange. This is just to let you know they exist, how much a subscription costs, how to contact them, and a brief description of content.

**Plowshare News** — from the Plowshare Peace Center, P.O. Box 1623, Roanoke, Virginia 24008. No subscription price stated but donations would sure help. Their own description is best: a monthly publication of Plowshare, an education and resource center on peace and nonviolence for Southwest Virginia. The source is Roanoke but the issues are universal.

**Southern FIGHT-BACK** — published by Southern Organizing Committee for Economic & Social Justice (SOC), P.O. Box 811, Birmingham, AL 35201. \$5 a year or \$1 if unemployed. The newsletter reports on "grass-roots actions for justice in Southern communities." Civil rights, racism, union and worker issues are all covered to provide those in the

Southeast with current information in various cities.

**Organizing Notes** — published 8 times a year for \$10 by the Campaign for Political Rights, a "national coalition of religious, educational, environmental, civic, women's, Native American, black, latino and labor organizations which have joined together to work for an end to covert operations abroad and an end to political surveillance and harassment in the United States."

**Tallahassee Peace Coalition Newsletter** — P.O. Box 20168, Tallahassee, FL 32304. Monthly — \$2.50 a year. "To communicate information about war and peace issues, especially in the Tallahassee area." The Peace Coalition also maintains an extensive library (hours 10-4) in the education building of the First Presbyterian Church (not affiliated) at 110 N. Adams St. Phone — 904-222-5845.

**Come Unity** — 7419 Third Ave. N., St. Petersburg, FL 33710 — \$5 per year. "Dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of human rights — civil, political, economic, social, and cultural



—." A well-balanced monthly from the Tampa/St. Pete area reprinting articles and quotes from other sources around the country.

**Communities** — journal of cooperative living. Send \$10 a year for 5 issues to Box 426, Louisa, VA 23093. This is a national magazine devoted to in-depth discussion of living (and dying) in community. You can also send for their special resource — A Guide to Cooperative Alternatives.

**Green Revolution** — P.O. Box 3233, York, PA 17402. Subscriptions are on a donation basis. Produced by the School of Living to promote the concepts of its founder Ralph Borsodi, focusing on decentralism and land trusts as a means toward world peace and equity.

**CO-PARENT: The Survival of the Post-Nuclear Family** — "is for and about the next generation and those who care for them." Published 5 times a year. Subscription is \$1 per \$1,000 of household income to P.O. Box 92262, Milwaukee, WI. "Culturally, we must persistently undermine every system for conditioning the gentleness out of men, the brilliance out of women and the individuality out of children." — Mark William Kendall, editor.

**M.** — Gentle Men for Gender Justice. Box 313, 306 N. Brooks St., Madison, WI 53715. "A quarterly publication for men and women who want a society

free of sexism and who are discovering each other and the need for support."

**Rainbow Visions** — "Serving Florida's New Age Community." P.O. Box 6337, Hollywood, FL 33021. \$6 per year — monthly. A statewide new age journal covering all the usual topics and offering a new age services directory.

**New Roots** — 8 issues a year for \$10, published by the Northeast Appropriate Technology Network, Box 548, Greenfield, MA 01302. A national magazine which "reports and explains what's happening in appropriate technology and how it affects you." It focuses on the Northeast U.S. but is very comprehensive and useful.

**Womansight** — news for Texas women. \$5 per year, P.O. Box 64974, Dallas, Texas 75206. A complete monthly look at all the issues and events affecting women in the Texas region, with an emphasis on politics, music and sports.

**Which Way? Witch Way** — journal of Druidic and Occult Lore, published by Craeftgemot Witancoveyne, Inc., R.R. 1, Box 601C, Pompano Beach, FL 33067. \$12 a year. Covering Wicca, pagan lore, the psychic, magic, poetry, science fiction, and political and information networking. This is definitely a different point of view but important to see. You can't really expand your awareness much by looking in a mirror.

## Connections, from page 4

it that way, of course. What he said was that the "government" will pay to get rid of all the high-level radioactive waste -- regardless of cost.

When the utility companies try to tell us how cheap it is to use nuclear power, this is one cost they won't be counting. You can bet your bottom dollar.

• • •

But there is one thing that Ronald Reagan would like to do that is more dangerous than the arms race and more deadly than his support for nuclear power. It is more subtle than his attitudes towards women and minorities and it will touch more people than his economic program. It is the stifling of dissent, and he's doing it now.

Reagan is working on a presidential order that will roll back the restrictions that keep the CIA and FBI from spying on, infiltrating and secretly influencing American groups and individuals. The guidelines were first written by Gerald

Ford in 1976, in response to the abuses of the sixties and seventies. They were augmented and formalized by Jimmy Carter in 1978.

Since Reagan took office, the flow of information from the government to the public has shut down to a trickle. The National Security Council has become off-limits to reporters. Both the State and Defense Departments are saying less than they used, with spokesmen generally giving out written statements instead of responses. At the CIA, Reagan appointee William Casey has stopped the routine briefings of journalists on important international affairs.

In a democracy, everything depends on the ability of the people to be informed. We are supposed to be safe from political threats or deceptions. If we sometimes make a lousy choice, at least it is an honest mistake. Reagan may not doubt our honesty, but he apparently wants to make sure we don't make any...um, mistakes.

# HOW BODYTONE WORKS

This unique new system which has come to Tallahassee at Bodytone of Tallahassee, Inc. in Eastwood Office Plaza, has brought much excitement and controversy with it.

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The curious fact is, however, that the muscles don't care where the signals come from. They will contract in exactly the same way if the signal to do so is transmitted from outside the body. Bodytone's device is designed specifically for this purpose. The 'brain' of the machine is powered by ordinary torch batteries. It transmits sophisticated signals through the leads to carbonized rubber contact pads placed over the muscles. When switched on, it sends signals to selected muscles which contract and relax rhythmically until switched off.

Perhaps even more remarkable is that you can actually adjust the strength of the contraction by simply turning the control dials. This facility has been built in to the device for two reasons:

1. the larger body muscles need greater stimulation than the smaller ones, and
2. just as in normal exercise, the beginner must start with a little exertion and then, as muscle-tone improves, build up gradually to a really healthy work-out.

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Leon County Food Co-op

# Board Tracks

by *Norrine Cardea*

*As the air chills:* As always, the food co-op board of directors is swamped with work that must be done. We are slowly, steadily making progress.

With renewed energy and vacations behind us, we tackled, among other things, the final draft of the staff's benefit package. Now they, too, will have vacations at needed intervals with a running list of alternates to fill in while they are gone.

Carol Calvert is resigning as coordinator of LCFC. She will be missed, but she promises to remain an active member of the co-op. Two new coordinators will soon be part of the staff collective, one to fill Carol's administrative position and the other to be storefront manager. Agnes Davy, current storefront manager, is shifting to warehouse manager, about which she seems quite happy. In this new position she will supervise a growing part of our business as well as train and supervise our assistant coordinators (AC's).

Agnes is also to have an office, it seems. She and the other members of the staff collective are enthusiastically plotting to move two walk-in coolers. If successful, the new office partition will be adjacent to the warehouse loading door. It will finally provide adequate workspace for all coordinators and a meeting area.

We have had many qualified applicants for the two coordinator positions; the board of directors and staff now face the difficult task of selecting two of them.

The entire membership faces another critical question. In the face of surging growth, we must plan for that growth. In our tradition of accepting no traditional value judgment without close scrutiny, we are not assuming that bigger

is naturally better. The co-op is rapidly growing, but the participation of our members is very low. Have you noticed that we are always out of raisins lately? There is often no one to handle stock and re-pack. Are we leaning towards a consumer-oriented store in which more paid personnel are required, or will our volunteer system sustain us? Please help us answer these questions. You can be quite effective in shaping the outcome of our plans.

We will discuss these ideas at the membership meeting on Sunday, November 1st (2:00 at the Land Co-op). Last membership meeting, we participated in exercises on the importance and practical aspects of planning (produced by that industrious group, the All Member Workshop). In the next stage, we will cover such topics as mandatory orientation for new and renewing members (with the intent of keeping all members informed not only about how the co-op basically works, but about current important trends), a possible ceiling on the membership, and new policies for board of director elections.

If you would like to become involved in dynamic changes, experience a seat on the board of directors. We will be electing two of you at the meeting on November first. We have regular monthly meetings at the United Ministries Center, and often a cozy, informal board of directors meeting once or twice in between in which committee work is done. If you would like to volunteer your time in this way as your share of the effort it takes to see LCFC succeed, please join us. Work credit is available for committee members as well as board members.

# Is the Good Life General Store a Co-operative?

by *Rita Schwab*

When the Good Life General Store was founded in April, 1979, it was intended to be a general store co-op — a member-owned-and-operated cooperative. Cooperation is a joint effort for the mutual benefit of all members. This effort, including working together and energy input as ideas, suggestions, and physical work, is what the original members had hoped for.

Today the Good Life General Store has over 650 members. This is a substantial number considering it has existed for only two and a half years. These members have paid their \$5 yearly membership fee. Most come in to shop once in a while at their discount member prices. The extent of their input seems only some critical negativism, rather than any concrete suggestions. Some members even work two hours once or twice a year, so they can get their 10 percent discount on their next \$50 purchase. Any amount of work is greatly appreciated. However, what we really need are various reliable persons who can work at the store on a regular basis with a set schedule. We need people working once a week for two hours each or once a month for four hours each. Each worker should have a regular routine and should be able to work as independently as possible.

I have to mention and give my appreciation to the few loyal members (countable on one hand) who have worked steadily at the store either once a week on whatever was needed or once a month, helping with tedious inventory counts. And, also, thanks to the few that put in their effort and made the front entrance cheerful-looking by planting some pretty flowers this summer. Those few people seem to be always the same folks. Their number is so small that their amount of work is only a drop in the bucket.

Good Life needs help from volunteers if it is to survive.

\* The front of the store needs to be kept cheerful and weeded. Where are the landscaper and plant lover?

\* Our roof is leaking badly. We need a person with roofing knowledge to

volunteer some time and effort and fix the roof. The leak gets the store and merchandise wet every time it rains. This is an urgent matter and needs to be taken care of immediately.

\* We need a cleaning and maintenance crew. The store gets dirty easily from its sandy environment.

\* Much more so, we need input and suggestions. Let us know what the store should carry. Bring in addresses of wholesale suppliers, write business letters and seek correspondence.

\* We urgently need someone with bookkeeping experience. Bill Brown, who patiently and accurately has kept the books for the past year and a half with little or no pay (thanks, Bill!) needs a break.

\* We need to stock the store with Christmas gift items. All you people who have consignment things, please bring them in. Help us and make some money for yourself.

So, please show your interest and energy and prove that the Good Life General Store can exist as a cooperative store.

On Sunday, September 27, a general membership meeting was held at Myers Park. Present at this meeting were one facilitator, two staff members, three board members and three old friends of GLGS. Four new board members were to be elected that day. However, the attendance was so pitifully low that only a temporary Board of Directors could be elected consisting of Jerry Johannsen, Tom Kelley, and Bill Brown. They called another general membership meeting on October 18 at the Miccosukee Land Co-op following Paul Peacock's benefit. At that time their board membership expired.

The general membership meeting at the land co-op was a short one, with the intention only of electing a new Board. From the 15 people present, five new board members were chosen: Randy Van Oss, Tim Kellogg, Steve Service, Tom Kelley, and Julie Howard. Welcome, friends, and thank you for volunteering! Hope you will have a productive and pleasant year as board members.

## The Endless Dialogue

by *Nancy Muller*

Should the co-op sell meat? Should we open our arms to another two or three thousand memberships? Expansion — up or out? A chain of LCFC's throughout Florida, the pride and Publix of cooperatives (clean and friendly service!)? Computerize, mail-out balloting, changing membership fees, a mandatory orientation (aghast, but what does that mean?). To limit the membership (what? and limit folks' rights?) or become lost in a sea of nameless faces (still smiling).

Renovations — swimming pools, Atari games (plug 'em right into the computer), conference space, library, I want a movie house....What is this endless dialogue of goals and mission statements, prattle about planning; "the planning climate" for goddess sake, words with endless definitions, people with endless dreams. And a business with thousands of owners, a business just waiting to take off with the help of those folks....WHO ARE these planning perpetrators?

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# To reach beyond ourselves...

by Ben Green

Margie Menzel's otherwise excellent preview of Kristen Lems' upcoming concert [seen in *SPECTRUM's* Autumnal Equinox issue] was badly tainted for me, and for several others I've talked to, by the thoughtless remark about "Solidarity Forever" in the first sentence. I'm sure that saying: "Anyone who expects Kristin Lems to lead a chorus of 'Solidarity Forever' is living in a fool's paradise. Her songwriting is vastly more creative than that..." was done more out of ignorance than malice, but it reflects a deeper problem that I'd like to see *SPECTRUM* address.

In particular, I think that *SPECTRUM* has filled a very valuable function for the alternative community in Tallahassee, but I'd like to challenge you to expand your perspective to cover the concerns of working people, too. Although I enjoy most of the articles in *SPECTRUM*, oftentimes I feel like it's the same group of us talking to ourselves. I think it's very important to expand outside of the young, white, counterculture perspective that dominates the pages of the paper. Issues such as co-ops and feminism affect people of all ages, races, class backgrounds, and current working conditions, but *SPECTRUM's* articles on those topics do not.

For instance, I would love to see some feature articles that reflect the amazing diversity of people who belong to and shop at the food co-op. The elderly black women who shop at the co-op and the farm families from Taylor County and south Georgia who

drive down every week to buy their groceries are part of the reality of our co-op, but I doubt that pages and pages of book reviews in *SPECTRUM* make them feel that way. We have a lot to learn from them. There are people who buy medicinal herbs at the co-op who have been using them in home remedies for decades. There are people going through the registers every day who were born at home, had their children naturally at home, and are probably sitting on top of a wealth of information about midwives and home births that we haven't even dreamed of. I think too often we've operated on the premise that those sort of things sprang to life in the sixties, when in fact, they've been a living part of working class southern culture for years. For *SPECTRUM* to truly represent the alternative community, we need to go find those people and listen to them respectfully.

Once that barrier is broken, the topics that will make for good articles will be limitless: interviews with some of the "old wave" co-op people who belong to LCFC, articles on gardening and animal husbandry from 65 year old farm women from Thomasville, articles about working mothers, house raisings, traditional music, and on and on. I'm not suggesting turning *SPECTRUM* into *Foxfire VII*, but only making it reflect more accurately the composition of who we really are in this community. There's a rich culture at our fingertips if we grasp it.

Oh yeah, a last thought on "Solidarity Forever." This song,

## Solidarity Forever

*It is we who plowed the prairies, built the cities where they trade;  
dug the mines and built the workshops, endless miles of railway laid,  
now we stand outcast and starving, 'neath the wonders we have made,  
but, the union makes us strong.*

*They have taken untold millions that they never toiled to earn,  
but without our brain and muscle not a single wheel can turn.  
We can break their haughty power, win our freedom when we learn  
that the union makes us strong.*

*In our hands is placed a power greater than their hoarded gold,  
greater than the might of atoms magnified a thousand fold,  
we can bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old,  
for the union makes us strong.*

written in 1912, is unquestionably the greatest anthem ever written for working people in this country. It has inspired more people, set the pace for more marching feet, sent chills down the spine and tears down the cheeks of millions and millions of working people, men and women, for almost 70 years. Today, in the afterglow of "Solidarity Day" in Washington on September 19, where half a million people of every description stood together in a show of unity that has never been equaled in the history of this country, Margie's passing ridicule of that song seems incredibly twisted and inane. There is no excuse, ever, for praising one liberation songwriter by ridiculing another.

My guess, from everything else Margie said about her, is that Kristen Lems would lead a chorus of that song, and proudly, too. I sure hope so.

Margie Menzel replies:

*You're right that my reference to "Solidarity Forever" was grossly insensitive, and you're also right that Kristen shares your reverence for the song. Her criticism of the remark was as thoughtful and constructive as your own. My intention was not to ridicule, but to illustrate a disparity of styles, yet re-reading the article through your eyes showed me how badly I blundered. Sorry. I'm really glad, though, that you put the energy into writing and sharing, and I endorse your suggestions for SPECTRUM. Thanks.*

**The next issue of SPECTRUM will be the Tallahassee Feminist History Project. Look for this special edition in all our usual locations starting December 16.**

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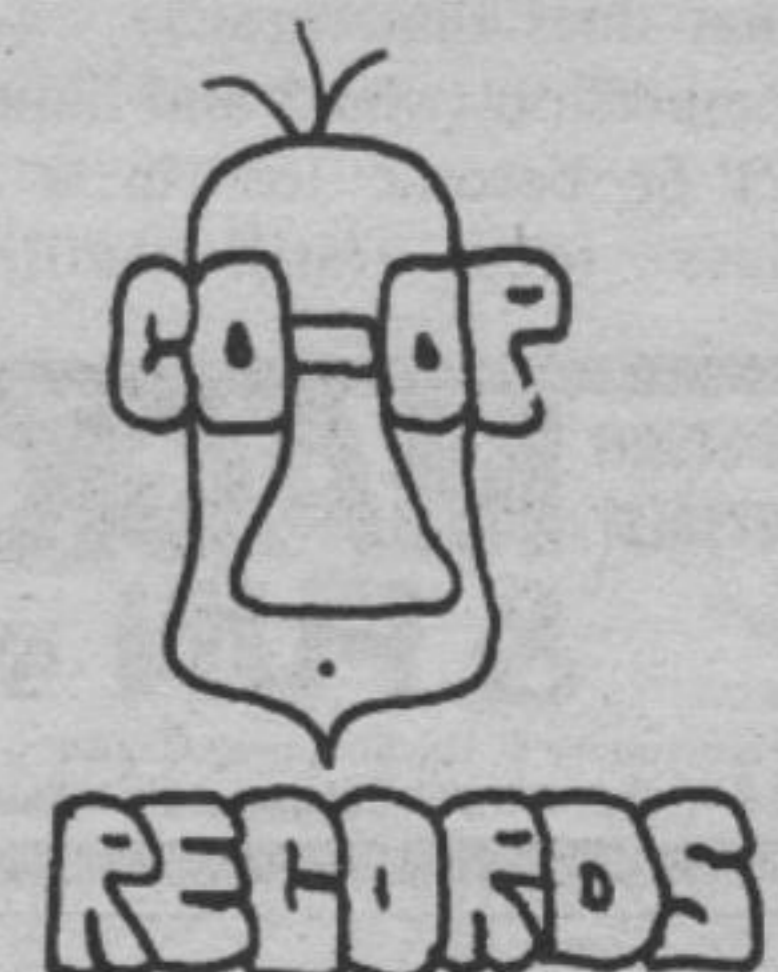
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# and more criticism

## Letter to the SPECTRUM Collective

by Margie Menzel

Ever since *SPECTRUM* started three years ago, we've been subject to the criticism that the paper's content isn't "political." It's an old argument; I've learned to anticipate who'll use it and how. Yet I've also felt that way myself from time to time.

Nevertheless, my response to these criticisms has always been the same: that the political significance of *SPECTRUM* doesn't lie in its content. I've always believed that the inherent value of the paper is based on its ability to function as an alternative to the Tallahassee print media, as a forum for those who won't serve as receptacles for what someone else designates "news." It's a decentrist concept, I think, for any publication to function in response to and conjunction with a readership that is not simply passive. Journalism should be less an industry from which differing political data and opinions are screened, and more a participatory, shared-responsibility exercise in which the media *respond* to the public need instead of *creating* it.

I've made that argument so many times in the debates over *SPECTRUM* that it's taken on the trying-to-convince-myself tone of a child walking past the graveyard at night. Three years down the road, I'm wondering if it's valid anymore.

The first collision over *SPECTRUM*'s editorial policy came right at the beginning. It was the first issue, and the Feminist Women's Health Center had submitted an article on its proposed transfer agreement with TMH. (I had written it, actually.) The question was whether or not it was slanderous to print that several members of the TMH Board had a conflict of interest about the agreement. We sought legal advice, but it wasn't so much a matter of what could *legally* be done to us as what might be done to us anyway. So we decided to exercise caution. The FWHC eventually withdrew its support from *SPECTRUM*.

Editorial Collision Number Two was about a submission on South Africa. The editorial policy that we established as a result was that we would only deal with issues of local significance. This too has changed with time. Take our coverage of the Nestle boycott, for instance; it's only a local issue in the sense that a local group is involved and that we encourage support for the boycott. The thing is, though, that the same could be said of the apartheid issue.

Still, without splitting hairs about the necessity of the editorial policy's evolving over time, there's no denying that *SPECTRUM* has alienated a large segment of the political community along the way. That seems only natural, given the conflicts that have erupted amongst Tallahassee activists, but the result is that *SPECTRUM*'s content has ceased to reflect a genuine "spectrum of opinion," I'd hardly lay all the blame for that at *SPECTRUM*'s door; a co-operative newspaper can only rely on contributions. Still, it's hurt us.

We've tried to be more active about soliciting articles from groups with whom we don't work directly. In fact, we've offered to write them ourselves, with the cooperation of the group in question. Quite frankly, if a group denies us the right to criticize it, to agree with some of its analysis but not in toto, then it has no place in a co-operative newspaper. On the other hand, there have been some groups that might not allocate time or energy to write for *SPECTRUM* but which haven't been averse to our writing an article under their outline.

Okay. Up to this point, I've had my personal doubts but always resolved them in support of *SPECTRUM*'s policies. I've been and continue to be out of step with the rest of the collective about a great many things, but I never felt the need to go so far about it before. One of the discrepancies is, as I mentioned earlier, that I know nothing of production and have never contributed to *SPECTRUM* in that way. The balance of my priorities is weighted more heavily on the content side than it would be if I were on the production crew. That's why I get especially upset over the increasing criticism of *SPECTRUM*'s content. No one ever objects to the paper's layout, but many people find the paper not only politically irrelevant but essentially uninteresting and pretentious in terms of its content. These criticisms have been leveled not only by those with an axe to grind, but by folks whom I know personally to embrace the same basic priorities as the collective members. Much of the criticism has been thoughtful and constructive, not malicious at all.

To be honest, I've never been interested in much that appears in *SPECTRUM*; as I said, it's the concept to which I am committed, not the content. Not many of the submissions are relevant to me. For example, we carry quite a lot about the Leon County Food Co-op, with which the extent of my involvement has been shopping on a very irregular basis. *SPECTRUM* grew out of the old LCFC newsletter, so it seems natural and right to me that the paper's content should reflect the large amount of support and input we've always gotten from—and given to—the Food Co-op. Still, I feel strongly that *SPECTRUM* is too much an in-group newspaper, and many folks think that *SPECTRUM*'s journey is taking it back toward its roots as the LCFC newsletter. I don't want to see that happen, and I've been disturbed by *SPECTRUM*'s progression toward insularity.

Of course, I'm hardly objective about the importance of writers, but there's an important political concept involved here: One of the integral functions of a cooperative newspaper must be to demystify the media and widen the access to skills of communication. To me, that means that *SPECTRUM* ought to consider skill-sharing one of its essential, unwavering functions. That includes writing. I think *SPECTRUM* should do its utmost to encourage submissions from outside the collective, give the writers plenty of time and constructive help for editorial revisions, and limit the amount of space given to collective members. And if people have any interest in learning production, they ought to have access to our technical skills as well, even if they can't be much help at first. I realize that that's impractical on a short-term basis, but in the long run it's the best political strategy to give as many people as possible access to media. Otherwise, we're functionally monopolizing channels of communication as surely as does the *Democrat*.

Basically, I feel that *SPECTRUM* tries to avoid controversy too much, not in the sense of conflict with the Reagan administration but in the sense of conflict

within the Tallahassee political community. "Too controversial" is a continuing criticism of things I've written or have wanted to write; it was the objection, for example, to my suggestion that we address the Spriggs-FWHC case. Now that's pretty silly, it seems to me, because most activists in the community have a good idea of what we think even if it isn't in print, just as most activists can anticipate the editorial policy of the *Democrat* or the *Flambeau*. It irks me that it's possible to read *SPECTRUM* cover to cover for three years and still miss out on issues of great local significance—which, after all, is supposed to be what we're all about. As a minor and slightly mischievous aside, I might point out that saying nothing on a controversial issue isn't going to alleviate criticism for our analysis, but merely arouse contempt for our cowardice.

One of the most insightful criticisms I've heard is that *SPECTRUM* exists "in its own world," one of the tenets of which is literary pretentiousness. I don't see the members of the collective, myself included, as being of unusual literary ability, and this, coupled with an insistence upon implementing the language and values of academe, results in a truly classist approach. When I reflect that the best writer I know has no formal training and expresses herself beautifully in terms that would doubtless be rejected by *SPECTRUM*, I can see how many potential contributors might find the paper alienating and/or intimidating. That hurts everybody, both in practical and conceptual terms. I have the urgent sense that the collective must re-evaluate its direction and make the revisions necessary to be a true "cooperative paper for the Tallahassee community." Here are the suggestions I believe must be implemented:

**1. A written editorial policy.** We need to be absolutely open about what gets into *SPECTRUM* and what doesn't. We should explain all our policies and publicize every revision as it is made. How can the community take any responsibility for *SPECTRUM*'s editorial direction without knowing what it is?

**2. Skill-sharing.** I think I've already developed my reasons for this suggestion elsewhere in this letter. It's an essential.


**3. An accessible approach to the editing process.** We need to establish a deadline far enough in advance of production weekend to allow for revisions by the writers, discussion of rejections before publication, and so on.

**4. Better planning.** The content of *SPECTRUM* would improve immeasurably if we were to outline our goals for each issue, designate writers, and generally attempt to be more creative about our subject matter.

**5. A willingness to address controversial issues.** 'Nuff said.

**6. A regular community beat.** It's my understanding that Tana is planning such a column, but I think it would be better for her (or whomever) to act as a facilitator and contact person, so as to avoid reflecting individual priorities as much as possible.

One last thing. I've been truly remiss in a lot of ways, but most of all in allowing these hassles to alter my relationship with the collective. I should have done something like this a long time ago. Hopefully, it will be understood exactly as it was intended: as a constructive, not a destructive, reflection of my commitment to *SPECTRUM*.

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