



TRETTER LETTER



June, 2006
Volume 2 Number 1

NEWSLETTER FOR THE FRIENDS OF THE TRETTER COLLECTION

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First International ALMS Conference is a Giant Success

By Ani Sorenson



The first international conference on GLBT archives, libraries, museums and special collections (ALMS) held at the Elmer L. Andersen Library at the University of Minnesota May 18-21, 2006 is now behind us. This conference, the brainchild of Jean-Nickolaus Tretter, was a collaboration between the U of M, Quatrefoil Library, and the Tretter Collection in GLBT studies.

Elizabeth Kerekere of New Zealand's keynote kicked off the conference. She charmed the crowd with passionate stories about the struggle of the Maori people under European rule and the progress made in the

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FROM THE CHAIR

I had to smile as I looked over the planned contents for this issue of the newsletter.

We begin by hosting an International Conference at the University of Minnesota in cooperation with the University Libraries and Quatrefoil Library. And then we are off with Jean, taking the fight for liberation to the streets of Moscow (more about this trip in a later edition). Recent additions to the collection include the Log Cabin Republicans, transgender fiction, and materials from Sweden and Sri Lanka. And my favorite article, because it is my personal passion, an overview of Lesbian Pulp Fiction.

This list only begins to capture the diversity and complexity of the Tretter Collection and our communities. From the beginning, Jean Tretter's focus has been international and

local, historic and contemporary. Most of all, his vision has always been inclusive of every representation of the GLBT community that he could uncover. I am sure when he began all of this, many years ago, he had no idea the task would become so global, so challenging or so expensive (who could have imagined bidding wars on GLBT memorabilia?). Or so rewarding.



Perhaps that is why Jean so often seems like a kid in a candy store when talking about his "work." I hope you find this issue of the *Tretter Letter* newsletter enjoyable,

informative and provocative. And I encourage you to celebrate Pride by making a contribution to the Tretter Collection to help support the work of preserving our history.

No one will do this for us. It is up to us to make ensure that we claim our place, yesterday, today and tomorrow.

ALMS Conference continued from Cover Page
lives of our GLBT family in New Zealand. Speaking in her native tongue as well as English she shared ancient stories, songs and the very tangible success of her activism. Elizabeth ended her presentation by inviting her partner Alofa Aiono to join her in a final song that all present will not soon forget.

The Elmer L. Andersen Library proved to be the perfect venue for the conference. Thanks to U of M staff and conference volunteers.

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TRETTER LETTER

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THE TRETTER COLLECTION

<http://special.lib.umn.edu/rare/tretter.html>

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Tretter Letter June, 2006

Sri Lankan GLBT Rights Organization archives with the Tretter Collection

When Emily Paul visited the Twin Cities in Fall of 2004 to attend Interpride, she had no idea she'd be presented with an unexpected opportunity by catching up with one of her college professors, Tretter advisory board member Linnea Stenson.

Linnea continues the story: "Emily sent me an email and told me about Equal Ground, the GLBT rights organization she worked for in Sri Lanka. When we met for coffee, one of the first

questions out of my mouth was whether or not Equal Ground was archiving their materials anywhere. When she responded that they were not, I told her about the Tretter Collection."

Founded in 2004, EQUAL GROUND "is working toward a society in which the fundamental rights of all people are respected." Recognizing that human rights transcend both religious

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ALMS Conference continued from page 2

Barbara Gittings gave the conference's second keynote address with a rousing and inspiring presentation of the history of GLBT activism in America. She is a kind and brave example of the difference one person can make in the world. Barbara continues to inspire us all not only as an early GLBT activist but as an active and dedicated elder of our community. Thank you Barbara for all you have done to validate the way we live and love.

James Carmichael spoke of his personal and professional struggles as a gay man in the southern US. Jim accepted the challenge of singing to the crowd with memorable results. Throughout the weekend all present were captivated by his gentle charisma and his exceptional fashion sense.

The Weisman Art Museum hosted a top-rate reception. It was a wonderful opportunity to socialize and circulate in another impressive venue.

Frank Kameny gave the keynote address on Saturday afternoon. Frank reminded us that we stand on the shoulders of giants. With succinct historical references Frank drew the crowd back to the early days of the struggle for GLBT rights. A pioneer whose work on the front lines of the movement, Frank's work set legal and

social precedents that served to authenticate our humanity. Many attendees paused to give thanks and acknowledge the gift of freedom Frank and others like him fought so hard to deliver.

The final conference speaker, Andreas Pretzel, delivered a moving and profound presentation on the persecution of homosexuals during the Holocaust and his work to make sure their lives are remembered. No one left his talk unmoved. His assertion that our community must step in as the family of those persecuted resonated powerfully among the participants.

As I reflect on the conference, my overwhelming feeling is gratitude. I wish to give a heartfelt thanks to all the attendees of the first GLBT ALMS conference. The time I spent with people in the conference and after hours showing off my city was amazing. Thank you conference presenters. Thanks to the University of Minnesota for supporting this historic event. Thank you and happy 20th Birthday to the Quatrefoil Library. Thanks to those members of the Tretter Board who worked so hard on the planning committee and presented at the conference. I so enjoy being associated with you all. And lastly what words are there to describe the commitment of Jean-Nickolas Tretter? He is a treasure for our community.

Thank you Jean. ▼

From the field....



What's happening in national & international circles.....

By Angela C. Nichols
Director, University of Minnesota - Duluth,
GLBT Services

UMD GLBT Director Remembers Founding Days and Documents History

This summer the University of Minnesota Duluth's GLBT Services Office proudly heads into its 7th year of development since its founding in August, 2000.

As the first person hired to direct this office, I remember walking into (now Solon) Campus Center 66, the first location of the office. There was a desk with a computer, a telephone, and a \$4,000 operating budget. When I walked into that office, I knew that history was occurring and whatever happened would be remembered historically. Every day of our GLBT life is living history and this is the point from which I operate on a daily basis, pitfalls and successes included. I remember ordering G2 roller pens, paper, file folders, letterhead, envelopes and UMD business cards. Then, the first round of hate mail came. I dealt with that the best I could.

It was time to build upon what was already visible and growing at UMD. The student group had existed since the early 1980's and was just changing its name from the University Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Association

"From the field" continues on page 8

Odd Girls in the Twilight: Lesbian

By Linnea A. Stenson

The 1940s and 1950s brought considerable changes to the lives of women in the United States. World War II brought an influx of single women into major metropolitan areas. Their newfound independence and economic strength gave them freedoms they had not had since World War I. As well, they tended to live in highly sex-segregated communities, both in the armed services and in civilian housing, which allowed lesbians to find one another in a manner that had been nearly impossible before. The growth of the number of bars that catered exclusively to homosexuals began to foster a semblance of group identity. The publication of the Kinsey reports startled the American consciousness with scientific evidence that the frequency of homosexual activity, for both women and men, was significantly higher than previously thought. Finally, the publication of Donald Webster Cory's The Homosexual in America in 1951 (and The Lesbian in America later in 1964) presented a new view of the homosexual: that of a persecuted minority. All these factors played into the "bloom" of lesbian novels that

occurred during the 1950s and early 1960s.

The paperback revolution begun by Pocket Books in 1939 made books affordable and sex (of any sort) made

scarcity of paper, the 1950s saw an upsurge in the number of works having a lesbian theme. While most "pulp" paperbacks (which were so named for the inexpensive paper on which they were printed) had little

redeeming value, nonetheless, more lesbian novels were published in the 1950s and early 1960s than at any other time in history. For lesbians, the pulps offered evidence that they existed. The emancipatory

potential of pulp novels lie not simply in their storylines or covers, but rather in the cultural practice of consuming them, which allowed lesbians an opportunity (within an otherwise rigidly heteronormative system of representation) to re-imagine themselves and the world around them.

(It should be noted that a number of "gay pulps" were published at this time as well. From James Barr's The Occasional Man to James Baldwin's Giovanni's Room, these texts functioned in a similar manner to those about lesbian women, even if they were not published in the sheer



them saleable. While the 1940s saw little in the way of lesbian fiction published due to military need of cellulose for explosives which in turn created an unprecedented

Pulp Fiction of the 1950s and 1960s

numbers that lesbian pulps were published, as gay male sexuality has not had the same allure to straight, and especially straight male, audiences that lesbian sexuality has.)

Given the political climate, it is not terribly surprising that so many novels with a lesbian theme were published during the 1950s and early 1960s, considering that for the most part they functioned as Radclyffe Hall claimed *The Well of Loneliness* should function: as stories that warned of the dangers of a lesbian life.

Nonetheless, lesbians voraciously devoured these novels, despite the moralizing, the prejudices, and the frequently awful writing. These novels were inexpensive, generally 35 to 40 cents during the mid-1950s, and their length seldom ran more than 200 pages. The characters in them are almost without exception white and young. The colorful and luridly designed covers, often featuring two women embracing or in various stages of undress, signaled “lesbian” to even the casual browser, and were widely available at corner drugstore book racks and newspaper stands. (There is a whole ‘sub-genre’ of lesbian and gay pulps that are highly pornographic; because of local obscenity and zoning ordinances, these would not have been sold at the local Walgreen’s.) No distinction on the cover could signal which of these

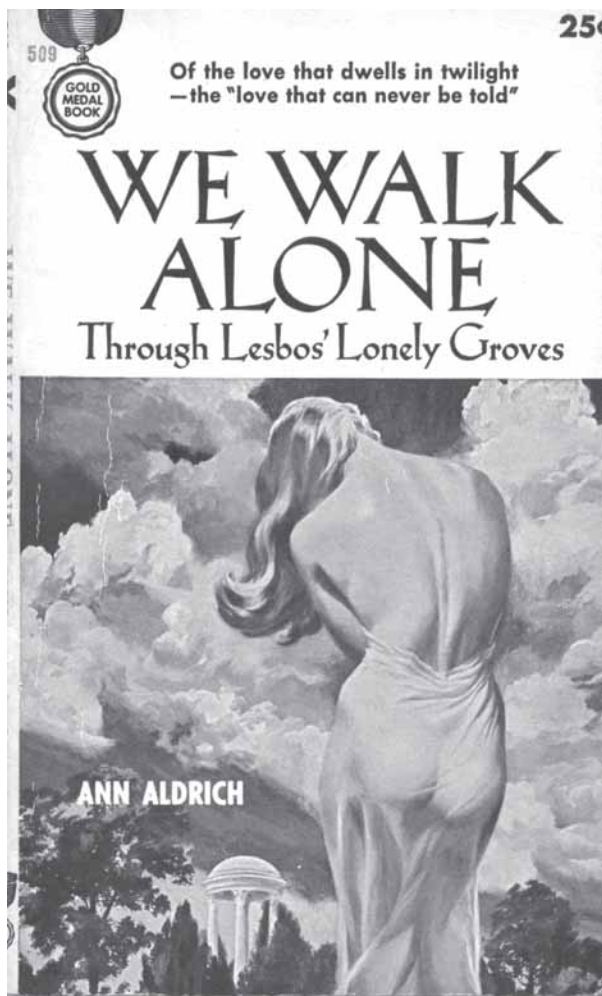
novels might be somewhat sympathetic. Nevertheless, a number of fairly good pulps were issued, started perhaps by the publication of Vin Packer’s *Spring Fire* in 1952, which

lesbian. Despite the cautionary intent of so many of the pulps, these latter-day “penny dreadfuls” often served to inform women, who might otherwise not be in contact with other lesbians, that there were others like themselves out in the world.

In fact, some of the pulp novels themselves make explicit reference to their own importance in the formation of identity and community. For example, in Ann Bannon’s *Journey to a Woman* (1960), Beth is caught in an unhappy marriage and yearning for her lover from college. She finds herself reading pulp novels. “On her shopping trips she picked up books—every book she could find on the subject of homosexuality and Lesbianism.... Most of them were novels with tragic endings” (74). When she travels to New York City to visit with the author of one of the novels she’s read, Beth finds when she visits the gay girl bars “[t]hey recalled scenes from Nina’s novels to her.” As Bannon suggests here, these novels are guides to “gay life.” To the extent that printed material reflects how a culture perceives itself, lesbian pulp fiction may be said to describe the landscape in which the lesbian reads about herself and participates, vicariously, in her community.

One woman, interviewed for the Canadian documentary *Forbidden Love: The Unashamed Stories of Lesbian Lives*, recounts how she and her girlfriend, dressed in their butch and fem finest, left their home in Toronto and traveled to Greenwich Village because they had learned from the pulps that that was where lesbians

“Odd Girls” continues on next page



sold an astonishing 1.5 million copies. Ann Bannon read this novel, and it inspired her to write her own series of lesbian novels, beginning with *Odd Girl Out* in 1957 and culminating with the ‘prequel’ *Beebo Brinker* in 1962. Claire Morgan’s *The Price of Salt*, published in 1952, established that the conflict in her novel was not that of the protagonist’s lesbianism, but rather the prejudices the world holds against the

NEW ACQUISITIONS

Collection of Transgender Novels

as part of a generous donation from Jane Fee featuring fiction from the latter half of the twentieth century.



1



Various Swedish and Nordic materials along with organizational materials from the International Lesbian Gay Cultural Network (ILGCN) of Stockholm, Sweden.

2

Minnesota Philharmonic Orchestra

musical scores and organizational papers, a donation from MPO, America's first GLBT symphonic orchestra. Materials graciously processed by Margaret Ostrander.



3

Odd Girls from page 5

were. Audre Lorde describes pulp novels as “the gay-girl books we read... avidly”. The books provided a confirmation for Dorothy Allison: “I wasn’t the only one even if none had turned up in the neighborhood yet. Details aside, the desire matched up. She wanted women; I wanted my girlfriends. The word was Lesbian. After that, I started looking for it”. Barbara Gittings declares that “the fiction, despite stereotypes, despite unhappiness, despite bad characters, was much more positive [than nonfiction].... Then I was so glad to find that my people existed, that there was literature about them.... There was definitely a sense of community, and of history”.

These iconographic representations of gay and lesbian identity and culture worked to police homoerotic desire while subversively providing open confirmation that such desire existed. Contemporary reissues of many of the better written pulp novels (with more positive portrayals of lesbians) can be found on the shelves of your local independent feminist bookstore: Cleis Press has reissued the “Beebo Brinker” series by Ann Bannon, Vin Packer’s Spring Fire, Della Martin’s Twilight Girl, and Three Women by March Hastings; The Feminist Press has reissued Valerie Taylor’s The Girls in 3-B. As well, it’s easy to find books on pulp covers and collections with excerpts of a number of those novels not currently available in full reprints. And of course, what twilight girl home is complete without a Satan Was a Lesbian fridge magnet?

If no other anecdotal evidence existed, the presence of these books today in GLBT archival collections like the Jean-Nickolas Tretter Collection presumes their importance to gay and lesbian identity and community during the period of their publication. ▼

Tretter Letter *June, 2006*

Thanks to the generous support of our donors.....

We gratefully acknowledge the following individuals for their support and give thanks to countless others whose generous spirits have made our work possible:

- Sanford Berman - Edina, MN
- Shamey Cramer - Los Angeles, CA
- Stuart Ferguson - Sydney, NSW, Australia
- Barbara Gittings & Kay Lahusen - Wilmington, DE
- George Hamm - Minneapolis, MN
- Elizabeth Kerekere & Alofa Aiono - Porirua, New Zealand
- Mike Pincus - San Francisco, CA
- Andreas Pretzel - Berlin, Germany
- Xenia Bussie - Berlin, Germany
- Quatrefoil Library - St Paul, MN
- Phil Willkie - Minneapolis, MN
- The Estate of Harold S. Kahm
- James Lawrence & Peter Wilson - Minneapolis, MN
- Future Lisa - Minneapolis, MN
- Bill Schiller - Stockholm, Sweden
- Dr. Linnea Stenson - Minneapolis, MN
- Lisa Vecoli - Minneapolis, MN
- George Swan - Minneapolis, MN
- Harvey Hertz - Minneapolis, MN
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- Michael Johnson - New Alm, MN
- Michael Welch - Minneapolis, MN
- Eric Dollerschell - Minneapolis, MN
- Kim Waldof - Minneapolis, MN
- Richard Donald Shields - St Paul, MN
- Dr. Anne Phibbs - Minneapolis, MN
- Steve Kahm - Minneapolis, MN

Tretter Letter *June, 2006*

Tretter Collection Receives Log Cabin Republicans Materials

National Political Group Selects Tretter Collection as Repository for the Organization's Historical Papers and Other Materials

The Tretter Collection is pleased to announce that it has been chosen to serve as the repository for materials from the national Log Cabin Republicans. With dozens of local chapters across the country, the Log Cabin Republicans serves to bring together party members to work within the national organization to address the needs and interests of gay and lesbian Americans. The acquisition adds a valuable part of American political history to Tretter.

The collection has received materials that include agenda, notes, membership lists, newspaper and magazine articles and other items.



Researchers and others interested in viewing or using materials in their work may contact the Tretter Collection archive to arrange for access to this body of work. ▼

"Equal Ground" continued from page 3

doctrine and social approval, we have created an organization within which persons of different political affiliations, age, class, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability and personal constitutions can work together toward an equitable society."

Their mission statement is simple:

**"Equality for all Sexual Orientations:
Human Rights for every one."**

When Emily returned to Sri Lanka, she wasted no time in discussing the matter with her life partner and Equal Ground founding member Rosanna Flamer-Caldera. Together they brought the proposal to the board of Equal Ground, where it received approval. Emily writes that "My fellow EQUAL GROUND Trustees are as enthused as I

am at with the prospect of having our material archived in the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota." EQUAL GROUND members have been collecting and organizing their materials to be shipped to the Tretter Collection; an intern joined them in May 2006 who will help with this task.

Emily and Rosanna will both be visiting the Twin Cities in late summer of 2006, and will bring along EQUAL GROUND materials to be archived, particularly video materials. While visiting, they are planning on taking a tour of the Tretter Collection's archival space in Andersen Library.

(More about EQUAL GROUND at: www.equal-ground.org) ▼

"From the field" continued from page 3

(ULGBTQA) adding letters along the way, changing its name to be known as the Queer Students Union. This year, the QSU changed its name again to the Queer and Allied Students Union (QASU).

Since the GLBT Services office opened, I have worked with the student group to create a predictable cycle of events, and continued to grow the office in new directions. Some highlights included the founding of three foundation funds for students: The Cruden-Riggs GLBT Scholarship, the GLBT Leadership Fund, and the GLBT Program Fund. Currently, the Cruden-Riggs Scholarship is sitting pretty with about \$13,000, and a goal of \$25,000 for each fund. Additionally, the GLBT Services Office joined the Multicultural Learning Resource Center unit and became mutual allies to one another. Furthermore, Q&A: UMD GLBT Queer Alumni and Allies was founded by Cheryl Reitan and Bill Shipley, and partnerships with the community at

large continue to be successful and mutually supportive.

For example: GLBT Services has hosted the Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus for two benefit concerts in the past three years to provide funds for the Cruden-Riggs Scholarship. Costs to bring the chorus have been underwritten by local residents, businesses and campus and community organizations. Additionally, the faith-based community of open and affirming places of worship have been continuous supporters and attendees at OutFront Minnesota's JustFair GLBT Lobby Day at the capitol. This year, GLBT Services chartered two coach buses for the trip, with a large portion of riders from the community at large.

New things on the horizon for the next fiscal year include a formal recruiting cycle of GLBT students from Gay Straight Alliances in the state, community events and festivities and more fund development efforts to increase support for GLBTQA students. As

I write this, a proposal for the first Introduction to GLBT Studies course at UMD, which has already received promised funding by the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, is on the agenda for the Academic Affairs Committee meeting. It will be housed in the Cultural Studies Program of the Sociology/Anthropology Department.

Looking back, UMD is a much different place because of this office and the support given to it by the campus and community at large, including individuals, businesses, other GLBT organizations in the Twin Ports of Duluth and Superior, and the growing open and affirming faith-based community, which includes hundreds of allies.

Finally, I would like to formally welcome aboard our new System-Wide GLBT Director, Anne Phibbs. ▼

"Be the change you wish to see in the world." - Gandhi



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