

SPECTRUM

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Will I cry tomorrow?

Susan Stanford was desperate. How could this happen, and to her? Matters had gotten too complicated. She needed to simplify things.

It was not so much her career — a university professor in psychology — that weighed so heavily on her mind. It was more so her traditional (Quebec) Catholic upbringing, even her own previous strong pro-life views, that now caused her turmoil. But most of all it was her shambled marriage. This she wanted desperately to save, she convinced herself. She had to do something, all the more so because her present crisis resulted from an adulterous affair.

Susan Stanford decided on a course of action. It appeared most sensible to her, given her situation. She could not, however, bring herself to say "the word", even to herself. Furthermore, she had to continually slam the lid on her thoughts and emotions, in a desperate move to neutralize them.

As she entered the clinic she was gripped with great fear and apprehension. She tried to comfort herself by repeating what the staff had assured her. The "procedure", as they were calling it, would be quick and safe. It would remove the unwanted "tissue", the "lump of cells", from her body, and she would be able to "go on" with her life.

Within a few minutes of submitting to the abortion the life that had been growing within her was expelled. But her life did not simply "go on". On the contrary, she came to experience in a heart-rending way that more than tissue was removed from her body in that "procedure room". She came to learn that a great part of her died that day in 1975.

Stanford had not been told that she would undergo post-abortion emotional trauma. The "procedure" did not provide the solution she had sought. Instead, she went through a vale of tears, a divorce, alienation from parents, withdrawal from friends, and attempted suicide. Aborting her baby brought her to the edge.

It took Stanford quite some time before she was able to reconcile to herself what she had done in her desperate situation. And, she was not able to remove the pain and turmoil on her own. Her healing process came through a spiritual journey; a return to God and her Christian roots. Her guilt and loss were eliminated when in desperation she fell on her knees to confess to God her great sorrow for what she had done, and

when she asked for forgiveness.

Her inner healing journey became complete through a "committal service", held alone with a priest-professor from Loyola University. In that emotion-laden service her baby lost its anonymity. Sensing that it had been a boy, she named it, and then she "handed her baby over to the arms of Jesus". Only after this committal was Susan Stanford finally able to "go on" with her life.

Is Susan Stanford's case unique? Is she only one of a very small minority who have some regrets about their abortion? Perhaps. But according to Stanford herself, post-abortion trauma is more wide-spread than most realize, and certainly more than abortionists will ever dare admit.

In 1982, seven years after her abortion, Stanford left a senior academic position to open a private practice in Portland, Maine. She had a new mission. Shocked to realize the effect the abortion had on her own life, she began to counsel women with similar ex-

periences. She has now been made aware of how many others have undergone similar devastation. What is even more surprising, she has discovered, is that behind much of what she terms "presenting problems" - - relationship difficulties, depression, emotional withdrawal, decreased incentive, career failures, etc — lies the trauma of an abortion experience.

According to Stanford, one of the most universal after effects of abortion is the feeling of guilt and loss. Ninety (90%) percent of the women she counsels experience some level of guilt feelings. Furthermore, research indicates that most women suffer one or several of the following symptoms after an abortion: unresolved grief, chronic guilt, anniversary depression, psychosomatic illness, drug and alcohol abuse, suicide attempts, psychotic breakdowns, or other lesser resultant effects.

One article (*Medical Hypoanalysis*, Spring 1980) revealed that in a study of 64 women

G(g)od(dess)(es) and lesbians

Religion and Lesbianism in 500 words or less. This not going to be easy. Some people write books about the conflicts that exist between my orientation and most Christian churches.

I was born into a Baptist household. My mother is what I call a Bible-stroker. I spent a lot of my youth in church groups, and was "called to the altar" pretty near fifteen times before I figured out that once was generally thought to be enough (ah well).

Somewhere in my adolescence I figured I must be attending the wrong congregation. I began a years long religious quest that has been fascinating if not particularly fruitful. Being a lesbian was not an element in church hoping until very recently, but I have noted the attitudes of the sects I've passed through.

According to my mother's church I'm twice damned: because I'm gay, and because I never did do the baptism thing. Having witnessed the virtual excommunication of a lesbian aunt (and having watched in horror as my extended family literally shoved onto the street a transsexual cousin who had previously been my church youth-group partner) I doubt that the standard water dunking would be enough to qualify my sisterhood in that particular congregation.

Fine. Maybe that's just them. How do other baptists and similar protestants churches approach this? Well, despite the best intentions of tolerance pretty much all of them have to oppose homosexuality at some level. "Love the sinner-hate the sin" works if you're not the sinner in question, with the "sin" being a fundamental part of your person. I'm not a consumer of "the devil spirit alcohol" here folks. You can't reform me through abstinence. Even a celibate lesbian is a lesbian.

Catholicism, which is what my family practiced until two generations back, cannot help me here, either. It's in their creed, as well as the Bible that lesbianism is a sin (not to mention premarital sex, and contraception - which lesbian sex could fall into since it's an act that's not likely to result in a "blessed event"). I realize that some gays, like my esteemed colleague Adrian Park, have managed to unify their religious belief and their sexuality. I wish them the best of luck. What they are battling (if you've been reading along) is not "The Word of God", but translations of it, and the creeds these tradition based churches have been following through the centuries.

Lately there have been churches who are either set up for, or have splintered from their original con-

Metanoia by John Valk

who had abortions, "in every case the abortion was determined to be their major life-offending event." A study of 4000 women, done by Suicide Anonymous, uncovered that 45 percent who had attempted suicide had had an abortion. Stanford, in addition, indicates that those who had abortions in their teenage years did so in a panic response to a discovered pregnancy. Many of those today have regretted their decision, and have said they wished "abortion had not been so readily available, or presented by friends and family as the "quick fix" alternative." Furthermore, little if anything was ever presented to them about "the long-lasting psychological and physiological scars that would result from abortion."

Susan Stanford has written her story in her book entitled "Will I Cry Tomorrow?" She now devotes her life to helping those who suffer the effects of post-abortion trauma. She co-directs, with her husband Dr. Vincent Rue, the Institute for Abortion Recovery and research, located in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

If we glance at today's abortion statistics, over 20 million to date in the U.S. alone, what Stanford reveals about herself and others may cause us to pause significantly. Freedom of choice must entail knowledge and awareness of the options available. Most importantly, it must make all of us realize the consequences of pursuing those options.

The Black Triangle by Tristis Bhaird

gregation (in the case of the United church remained after the more traditionally-minded left) to accept lesbians and gay men as full, open, members. The Community Church was just being established in Halifax when I moved here. I notice that the Unitarian Church is really positive about us, and the Quakers are a cool bunch. I'm glad that there are congregations open to Christians who might otherwise feel they have to join the ranks of the damned in order to be honest with themselves.

There's far more than Christianity on the religious spectrum, however.

Wicca is a gentle paganism that was stomped on by the expanding Christian Church and battered down through the ages. Women are not afterthoughts of creation in Wiccan beliefs, but are an integral part of it. The concept of sex as something alien to a healthy spirit is not present here. Lesbianism is not a big deal one way or another. It is a choice some women make.

I can't comment on the spirituality of the various people who are native to this land because I

only know bits and pieces, but from what I have seen there is more than just tolerance for individual identity within it, there is, ultimately, respect.

I was approached by a Hindu woman a while back. She wanted to know what the big deal was in the West about how intimate women and men got with their own sex. She explained that the taboos she grew up learning were about intimacy between men and women. She wanted to find out what issues are faced when a group stands up against what their society says about who they sleep with.

There's an interesting idea: closet Hets.

Lesbians are not without our own religion. Again, I never did get a clear enough picture of Lesbian goddess worship to say much. The Lesbians who are practicing it are also forging a whole new society out of the muck they've seen around them.

The final religion I want to touch on is Atheism. You've got to have a lot of faith to be an Atheist. You have to believe that

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