

University of Mississippi

eGrove

Queer Mississippi (Complete Collection)

Queer Mississippi Histories Project

10-12-2013

Atkins, Gail and Gwen Demeter interview about Silver Circle

Gail Atkins

Gwen Demeter

Rose Norman

B. Leaf Cronewrite

Follow this and additional works at: <https://egrove.olemiss.edu/queerms>



Part of the [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Atkins, Gail; Demeter, Gwen; Norman, Rose; and Cronewrite, B. Leaf, "Atkins, Gail and Gwen Demeter interview about Silver Circle" (2013). *Queer Mississippi (Complete Collection)*. 68.
<https://egrove.olemiss.edu/queerms/68>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Queer Mississippi Histories Project at eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in Queer Mississippi (Complete Collection) by an authorized administrator of eGrove. For more information, please contact egrove@olemiss.edu.

Gwen Demeter and Gail Atkins Interview about Silver Circle 10-12-2013

Rose Norman and B. Leaf Cronewrite (Mary Ann Hopper) interviewed Gwen Demeter and Gail Atkins at Womonwrites, Saturday, October 13, 2013

Contact:

1758 Odell RD

Holly Spring, MS 38635-9039

Phone 662-564-2715

Email is not a reliable means of reaching them, but it's gwendemeter@hotmail.com or gailandgwen@aol.com)

Gail Atkins has serious memory problems from diabetic dementia, but did participate in this interview, though Gwen does most of the talking.

See also "Silver Circle Sanctuary: Beginnings and Legacy" in *Sinister Wisdom* 98 (Fall 2015), in press. Leaf Cronewrite wrote this story in Gwen Demeter's voice, using these interview notes as well as her own notes from a follow-up interview at Silver Circle on November 18, 2013. Only the October interview was recorded, and a large part of that recording was lost due to operator error (notes below).

NOTE: *This is not a formal transcript. We hope to get funding for professional transcriptions, but at this point we are taking notes during the interview, excerpting pertinent parts of the interview, and then editing the result for publication and/or archiving. The interviewee may change or add anything attributed to or about her in these edited notes, including completely rewriting the interview as a personal memoir.*

These edited notes will go to the archives at the Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture in the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Duke University, along with the unedited audio interview.

Rose's Notes Taken While Listening to Audio and Referring to Notes

[Looks like I paused the tape by accident toward the beginning and lost a lot of what I had thought I was recording, so separate notes at the beginning cover material not on the tape]

Rose: Let me do a review. The key dates are

1970, Gwen's divorce

1975, Gwen and Gail meet at a NOW meeting. Gwen is living at Lone Star, but things don't work out (Gail is into monogamy), so then Gail goes off and marries another woman that year, Connie Gallina, and those two are together monogamously for five years. Lone Star is a small farm near Memphis, where Gwen lives with some lesbian separatists and a man named Malcolm (the house is in his mother and uncle's names).

1980, Gwen and Gail get together permanently, and they got it clear that Gail was “over that monogamy business” (Gwen), “and we’re still not into that monogamy business” (Gail). Gail doesn’t get along with Malcolm, so it all blows up with Lone Star.

After 1980, Gwen and Gail lived three places before finding Silver Circle:

1. first with two older women (Jack and Brenda) in a 10-bedroom house in Memphis
2. then with Deborah Cunningham and her boyfriend Jeffrey at the duplex (in Memphis?). Deborah was an old friend who had polio as a child and was in a wheelchair (quadriplegic). Gail is still in graduate school at Memphis State. Gwen had been working part-time on “wife abuse,” while living at the farm (Lone Star).
3. and then another communal house in Memphis, this one on Young St. with Robin, Alicia, and Cherie. It was while they were in the house on Young St. that they started looking for land. Alicia and Cherie broke up, so Cherie wasn’t around when they bought the land. Alicia was then with Robin when they bought the land.

(Next is from notes taken during the part where the tape was paused and I thought it was running.)

Georganne/WolfSpider came to the land and was part of a spirituality circle. They had to call the land to them (see below). WolfSpider had lived on Owl Farm (women’s land in California) and in San Francisco. Then Wolf Spider came back home and lived at Lone Star while Gwen & Gail were there. Also Em (now transgendered, but not then). At the ritual, they put out what they were looking for. Some wanted sand and desert. Others wanted trees. Gail and Gwen had been looking at a lot of land and were tired of looking. Gail said she wanted it within a week. Gail said, “ ‘I’m not looking, they’re going to have to call me.’ And they did!”

Right before this, Malcolm sold Lone Star to the granddaughter of the “Pink Palace” guy in Memphis, so Georganne had to leave, and she moved in with them at that house on Young St. Lone Star sold and vacated Feb 22, 1982.

Finding the Silver Circle Land Valentine’s Day weekend 1982

[The tape is running now. Rose meant to *get them to tell some of this story to the tape again, but didn’t. Gwen repeats some of it, but thinks it’s already on the tape*]

They first saw the land on Friday, Feb 13, 1982, and then took everybody out to see it on Feb 14. A “gas line” [by which she means “gas pipeline”] is not far from their boundary, and this is a concern.

Gwen: OK, so we had this big ritual. And Gail says she’s not looking, they have to call her, and they did, and we go out and look at it [2-13-82]. Gail feels like this is it. My feelings aren’t so strong, because I’m thinking how much it looks like the land in Arkansas that Malcolm bought, but much more private, plus I never know things for sure.

So we bought it the next week. [They paid \$15,000 cash.] Pat [Dunbar]’s business fronted some of the money [an interest free loan for \$5000], Alicia had \$5000. We paid cash.

Gail: It shocked them [that they paid cash]

Gwen: It’s 40 acres with nothing on it but pine trees, hills, cactus, sand, dry creek, wet creek (part of the year)—

Gail: And it was beautiful. It was pure 'n T beautiful.

Gwen: I brought my time book so I can look up some of this. [*see timeline later, culled from the time book*]

Leaf: So no water or electricity?

Gail: Electricity was running through it.

Gwen: We hauled water for awhile from Keel's Country Store, 3 miles away, and also from an art professor at Memphis State who owned land right up the hill from us, and they had a well. We used milk jugs.

Gail: How did we meet him?

Gwen: Probably making phone calls. Nobody had phones back then. [*I think she means they were borrowing the art professor's phone to make calls.*] Pat later hired old Mr. Keel to do some work on her cabin. Actually, she hired him to work for her sheet metal shop in Memphis, but that was a 60-mile drive. He needed a few hours to get his social security up, and his eyes weren't that good. So he did some carpentry finishing work for them on our bathhouse and Pat's yurt. That kind of got us some points with the neighbors.

Naming the Land

[*Not on the tape*] They thought of naming it Pleiades because of it being 7 women. Pat Dunbar owned Memphis Sheet Metal. They put up a mailbox and they had some silver paint, so Gail painted a silver circle on it so the truck could find them. That's how it got its name.

The Buildings

Gwen: Pat Dunbar didn't know our skills, and she was into new and innovative things (so was I), so she had wood cut and sent down to us to build a [geodesic] dome kitchen. Unfortunately, she didn't buy enough wood for an overhang to avoid water splashing the house. So we built that dome kitchen first.

Gail: Which still stands there.

Gwen: Ayla's re-done the outside and the roof. [Later says Ayla has covered most of the plywood with metal.]

Leaf: So who all built it?

Gail: Me and Georganne.

Gwen: Bluejay was there during this. Bluejay was lovers with Georganne (Wolfspider).

People whose names are on the deed:

Pat Dunbar and Annabel - they are still a couple in Tuscaloosa now; Annabel a librarian, her father in construction laid down a great driveway for them

Alycia Brickner – known as Slope, now in California

Robin Madison - she has other names, now in California

Georganne/ Wolfspider

Gail and Gwen.

Bluejay was there then (was lovers with Georganne), and came from Diana's land [*probably OLHA, which started in 1981 in Arkansas, not Sassafrass, which had fallen apart by then*]. Bluejay's view was not to put it in anyone's name, but in a trust. But this was after everything was signed. So it had 7 women's names (see above) and sole feme, without right of survivorship, so none of your relatives can inherit from you. [Unclear whether it's with or without right of survivorship.]

Rose: So you've got the land, you've got a deed with seven women's names on it. Did those seven women want to live there?

Gwen: Pat and Annabel did not plan to live there. It was kind of Pat's survivor place in case things went wrong in Memphis, an earthquake or something. So they built a modified yurt. After we went through our walls going in and out on the dome kitchen, she saw in *Mother Earth News* that you could build one with straight walls and put a cable around the outside to hold the roof up, so you didn't have to have a post in the middle. So that's what she built.

Gail: And it's gorgeous.

Gwen: And it's sturdy. She screwed that sucker together every which way. A lot of women have lived in it. Sharon and Glenda, Lee Curry and Mitru, Ayla, Bee (Belinda), Jeanie and Paula Mariedaughter that live in Arkansas now (they worked with *Spinsters Ink* and later bought land in Arkansas).

Leaf: Where were ya'll living when you first bought the land?

Gwen: When we first bought the land, Gail and I moved into a tent with our queen sized bed. It was the rainiest year in years. On one of our trips to Memphis, we bought an old, wood camper shell to put on Gail's truck (red Ford F150). We moved the bed into the back of the truck, with a manual typewriter, and a drip coffeepot on a shelf behind the cab, and the two cats and one dog (we put the dog in the cab at night), a radio on the side. We had electricity by then. Electricity went right through the land, so we could get electricity right away, for power tools.

First thing we did was that dome kitchen. At first Georganne built a very small, 8 x 2' shed for tools. Actually, our kitchen at first was a clothesline with plastic over it, tent-wise. That didn't last long! This was a very organic group. Hadn't thought anything out much

Georganne had her own tent. Bluejay had a van or something. Robin and Alicia were staying in town, can't remember why, maybe Robin had a job (she taught sign language). They brought a tent out one weekend—and we warned them to check on the weather—but it was Alicia's birthday, and they wanted to celebrate on the land (this must have been February or March, a month after we bought the land). We still had a house in town, and we'd gone into town because we knew a storm was coming. They came out without looking at the weather, and stayed in their tent. An ice storm sealed them in overnight. Took an hour to crack the ice next morning. Alicia liked baths, and we had not much bathing facilities. We had water to pour over you, water we had hauled. They moved to California soon after.

Gail: The accommodations were not suitable.

Leaf: But their name was on the deed? And they hadn't considered how they would live there?

Gwen: I don't know what their plan was. When we moved out there, we were getting into all kinds of spirituality. And somehow I had the idea we would be able to raise our walls with humming, like the Pyramids, maybe levitate the walls into place (laughter).

Gail: That didn't happen. We raised them the old fashioned way.

Gwen: We had plans for a communal house, but that never happened.

Gail: What really made it possible for us to stay out there was that camper on the back of my truck, that and the dome kitchen.

Rose: So first you build the toolshed, then the kitchen.

Gwen: Yeah, we had trouble with the water moccasins. Georganne was standing on a table shooting a gun at a water moccasin in our tent kitchen. So that's when Pat sent the stuff down to build the dome. That was when Bluejay was there, Bluejay and Wolfspider [Georganne].

Gail: That went up pretty fast, that kitchen.

Gwen: Yes, and we had, Sue Watson was another person, a pharmacist. She donated some wood floor from her farm. They were tearing down a building or something. So we got some nice hardwood floor for the kitchen. [Leaf: she stills lives around there] She moved a camper trailer on our land some time later. Now she has her own place.

Leaf: Where was Bluejay staying?

Gwen: with Georganne? No, she may have had a van. They were big on having your own place, your own space. Bluejay was trying to get Gail and I to have separate bedrooms.

Gail: Which I was not interested in, and I'm real hard to get to do something if I don't want to do it. Nearly impossible.

Gwen: Pat Dunbar was very generous. She bought us boots. She bought us down jackets [Gail: a down comforter]. She bought supplies, she sent food. Thing we never thought we needed, but that came in handy!

Leaf: And were you still working on your degree? Is that why you needed the typewriter?

Gwen: Yes, it was during that time they wanted Gail to re-do her whole dissertation. And Gail didn't know if it was worth it. I told her to wait and see. We got water about Thanksgiving, so from February to Thanksgiving we hauled water. We used an aluminum cart that Pat Dunbar had made. We pulled that cart of the hill to the [professor's house]. Luckily, when it was full, we were coming down hill. It was big, big wheels, never rusts. We still have it.

It was that fall you [Gail] decided you needed to go to work so we could have money to buy a well.

Gail: I went into Holly Springs to see about a teaching job.

Gwen: They snapped you up!

Rose: So it's fall 1982, and you need a well

Gwen: That Thanksgiving we went to Merrill's [in middle Tennessee], and we thought we'd blocked things off so nobody could get in to steal things. We'd had some things stolen, and we had our tools in a tent. But the well man came while we were gone, got in and dug the well. We thought he was coming when we got back. So we're still not sure how deep it is, but I think it's 250'.

Leaf: When did you start building your house? Or what was the next structure out there?

Gwen: we worked on our cabin. [Consulting time book.] "Spring and summer 1982, built dome and gardened."

Rose: That's a lot of structures the first year. Shed, dome...

Gwen (consulting timebook): Ok September [1982] we started Cedar Place and Dogwood. Cedar Place is our house. Dogwood is the house Georganne and Bluejay built that Ayla lives in now. I left out that in February and March, it was so cold and rainy that Wolfspider, Gail, and I took a trip to the Gulf Coast for a respite! We took off in the red truck. I don't know if we took our animals, surely our dog. In November, we had two new members. Cher Stewart, my ex-lover, a New Orleans/Memphis artist, she moved a school bus in. She bought that bus in New England and drove it through Knoxville during the Olympics. And Sue Watson moved a trailer in that November. She's the pharmacist, taught at Old Miss, lived in Oxford, had a lover in Memphis. She had been at our ritual and said "We're going to have to really look for land this week." She and Deb found land later, ten miles away, and had festivals there for two or three years. Frannie bought land somewhere else, up in Tennessee.

Filename: Silver Circle Cedar Place
1990 B&W

Caption: Cedar Place, the main dwelling at Silver Circle (1990).

Credit: Line drawing by Gwen Demeter, with permission of the artist.

Drawing used in a collage of "Landyke Dwellings" created for SW98.



Leaf: Well Springs Festival was a big festival. We could put it in our cultural issue. I went to it all the times that it happened. It was a few hundred people, well-organized.

Gwen: They got turned onto women's land by going to the Hensons' festival [Spirit Fest, in Mississippi].

Leaf: That's what inspired them to do Well Springs Festival. I can figure out the years of those later.

Gwen: It was mainly just Gail and I working. When we got to the roof part, we had to get Georganne to climb up there and nail the aluminum on the roof. We were working the spring of '83. [From timebook reads that Georganne returns in the spring, having gone north for the winter!] We moved into Cedar Place as soon as we could. We had a roof and plastic and a north wall when we moved in.

Leaf: So a year from when you bought the land, you moved into your house, or pretty close?

Gwen: Yeah, we must have worked on it that winter. March of 83 we were exhausted, and were really getting on each other's nerves. Pat Dunbar offered us a vacation to Denver and Yellowstone to drive her father's car out there for him.

Gail: When we drove into Yellowstone, there was snow as high as these walls!

Gwen: I was having stomach pains, and trying all kinds of things to heal it. The first day after we drove west, they went away and didn't come back.

Sue bought her place in the spring of 83, sells Pat her pole [pole??], and takes her small travel trailer. (Sue still lives on that land, about 10 miles away from Silver Circle). She and Georganne did not get along while we were gone to Denver. Their buildings were too close together, about 100 feet apart. Sue had night fears and left her light on. Georganne didn't like that, so she built a privet hedge between their houses (which we're still trying to get rid of).

Rose: So you started with 7 and then there's 9? And now Sue leaves.

Gwen: well, not everybody was living there. Pat and Annabel never lived there (well, they spent a night in a travel trailer while they were working on the yurt, and they did not have a good time—Annabel had never held a hammer), Alicia and Robin left, that left Georganne/Wolfspider, and us. Sue and Cher came, separately, in separate vehicles. Sue left in the spring of 83, and Cher moved her bus to Sue's land over at Water Valley in the fall of '83. I don't remember when Bluejay left. She didn't stay too long. She was there for the beginnings, a month or two, and then moved on. So that leaves three of us on the land [Gail, Gwen, Georganne/Wolfspider].

Leaf: When did Ayla show up?

Gwen: Well, Earth visited us in November of 1983, on her way from North Woods (she stayed in Cher's bus).

Gail: She did art work in New Orleans, so maybe she left her bus while she did that.

Gwen: Spring of '84 we started the bath house. Merrill and Mary B-J were there. Mara and Jude were there (I think Jude goes by another name now). We're working on our house all that spring and summer, but it must have been pretty livable by then. I think Merrill and Mary stayed with us in the house when they came. We added the porch later.

Gail: That's a good thing about post and beam. You can get the roof on.

Gwen: Fall of 84, our apprentice, Athena, came. She fell in love with Sue, and left in the spring of 85. And we went to LEAP that fall (in Melrose, FL, on women's land, the North Forty). Janet Gold something came in the spring of 85. She was writing a book. She and her girlfriend were in a carpenter collective, and they put up a shed for us by our house. We had all the stuff, and they thought it would be fun.

Gail: Which was a wonderful place for our tools.

Leaf: Didn't the other toolshed hold up?

Gwen: It was way down at the other end of the land. August '85 Pat and Annabel started the yurt.

Gail: That was an interesting experience.

Gwen: The yurt?

Gail: Them trying to build together.

Gwen: I'm thinking Pat may have had some guys from her work come out and build the foundation [for the yurt]. It's the only building on our land that has a concrete foundation built down into the land, just pilings into the ground. We were having a garden back then, trying to grow asparagus and snow peas,

and everything else. We also tried to have a garden in the back field where there was more sun. That was a fiasco. No water back there. Walking up this hill through the pine woods.

In the fall of '85 Katie and Morocco came to apprentice with us. Also Cathy Speed and Marianne [who come to Womonwrites) came to visit. They saw us in LC.

Spring of 86, Katie and Morocco are still there. Pat and Annabel move from Memphis to Tuscaloosa. Wolfspider left October 1986. I think she moved back out west, back to San Francisco. That winter, 1986, Gail put her PhD on hold and stopped. December 23, 1986, first bath in bathhouse! And we had a ritual with our moon lodge people, and we slept with our heads together in a circle, January 1, 1987, in the bathhouse (Emily, Francie, Denise, all straight women, and us). I don't know why we didn't have any lesbians there.

Spring of 87 Mariposa came to visit and lived in a tent. She was from Arkansas, I think. Jeanie and Paula came and stayed in the yurt a while, part of the summer. They were saving money to buy land in Arkansas.

We met Ayla the summer of '88. She had written us that she was coming around the time of Mary's party. So we met her there, and I think she came back with us. (Wit's End "Unfinished Revolution" party was always in July, around 4th of July.)

Geodesic Dome (kitchen, 1982) –quotes from Gwen's time book

"Spring and summer built dome kitchen and gardened." Got a lot of things donated for the dome kitchen, which went up pretty fast. Sue Watson donated hardwood flooring. Pat Dunbar was very generous. Bought boots, down jackets, supplies, a down comforter, sent food—"Things we never thought we needed, but came in handy."

Yurt (1985)

Pat and Annabel did not plan to live there. Pat saw the land as a fallback plan, and built a modified yurt (once she saw how the dome building didn't work so well). "It's gorgeous." (Gail) "It's sturdy." (Gwen) A lot of people have lived in it. This is the only building on the land with foundations deep in the earth.

Cedar Place (Sep 1982)

Gwen & Gail's cabin. Mostly Gail & Gwen did the work. Georgane had gone north for the winter. They had a roof, plastic, and a north wall when they moved in in the spring of 1983. By March, they were about ready to kill each other, so they took a vacation. Pat Dunbar had them to drive her father's car out for when he was gambling in Las Vegas. They drove to Yellowstone. By 1983, Merril and Mary BJ, Earth, and others are visiting and probably able to stay at the house.

Dogwood House (Sep 1982) – Georganne’s house that Ayla now lives in.

Residents (other than Gwen and Gail)

Ayla Heartsong has lived there off and on over the years. For a long time Ayla would come for the winter, and go back to Wisconsin in the summer to farm with Trish. “Trish and Ayla helped us build” (Gwen)

Belinda, maybe a couple of years.

Mitru, Lee Curry (who now lives in Portland, OR).

Jeanie and Paula Mariedaughter from OLHA (worked with *Spinsters Ink*) lived there a year.

Had an apprentice from San Francisco, Athena. (They had several apprentices helping them build.

Advertised in *Maize or LC.*)

Timelines of Silver Circle (from Gwen’s time book)

Original 7 women whose names are on the deed

1-2. **Pat and Annabel** – never lived on the land (spent one night in a travel trailer), but built a yurt in 1985, then move to Tuscaloosa (from Memphis) in 1986

3-4. **Alycia and Robin** – spent one month in a tent, then headed for California (after a weekend in a tent when there was a ice storm in February. Gwen thinks they met Sally Gearhart and lived on her land [Gearhart wrote *The Wanderground*, 1978].

5. **Georganne** (aka **Wolfspider**). Lived with them in the house on Young St. in Memphis, and was part of spirituality circle—had lived on Owl Farm and in San Francisco. Then came back home and lived at Lone Star while Gwen & Gail were there. At Silver Circle, was lovers with **Bluejay** (whose name is not on the deed, but spent some time there) – Georganne/Wolfspider uilt Dogwood House and lived there til October 1986. Bluejay came to Silver Circle from Arkansas (Diana’s land group), and told them they would do better to put the land in a trust rather than to have people’s names on the deed.

6-7. **Gwen and Gail** – built Cedar Place in 1982-83 and still live there.

8. **Sue Watson** – joined them in November 1982 and lived on the land in a travel trailer (she and **Deb Kaufman** later bought land 10 miles away and still live there—never communally owned, but they had Well Spring women’s festivals there.)

9. **Cher**. Moved to the land in a big school bus in November 1982. Had problems with alcohol. Moved on in fall 1983.

Winter 1983 – Earth visits and stays in Cher’s bus

Spring 1984 – Gwen and Gail start on the bathhouse. Visitors include Merril and **Mary B-J, Earth, Mara and Jude**

Fall 1984 – **Athena** comes to them from California as an apprentice. They attend LEAP in Melrose.

Fall 1984-Spring 1985 – **Naj** (“Jan” spelled backward) is on the land, involved with Sue Watson.

Janet Gold – (wrote a book) They have a carpentry collective, and Janet Gold & ____ build another toolshed (on a different part of the land from the original toolshed).

May – Connie and Laurie

Spring 1985 – Gwen’s first Womonwrites. Athena leaves?

1985 **Pat and Annabel** start the yurt.

Arden Kate from Little Rock has her 46th birthday party in Little Rock
Ruth Ready (Reddy?) from Jackson, MS) goes to Arden Kate's birthday party and meets somebody. They move to Arkansas.

Fall 1985 Katie and Morocco are apprentices on the land
Cathy Speed and Marianne Baliles come to visit.

Spring 1986 Katie and Morocco are still there.

March 29, 1986 Pat and Annabel move to Tuscaloosa

March 1986 Isolation after Katie & Morocco leave
Late garden at kitchen. Working on bath house.
Susan Vaught and Susan Short and Ruth
Visited Pat & Annabel (in Tuscaloosa) on the way to Womowrites (borrowed Annabel's car)

Summer 1986 Home to North Carolina with Cathy Speed and Marianne Baliles.
Pauline Gold and Karen Osborne (from Florida?)

June 6, 1986 To Jo and Jenna's and Midwest Festival. Meet Lee Lanning, Sasha, Man, Hertha

August 1986 Ruth and Mona visit.
Kate Ellison and Beth visit. Red bird at yurt
Connie went into Easatwood

September 1986 Castleberry and Dupree in Little Rock

October 25, 1986, Georganne/Wolfspider picks up her stuff (stove, fan) and leaves for good.

November 1986 Fort Smith Retreat (Kathy Buckalew)

October 1986

Jeanie Neath moves into Dogwood at some point after Georganne/Wolfspider leaves.

Winter 1986 Gail puts her PhD work on hold.
Susan Vaught and friend, Trisha & Nancy (Navy lesbians)

12-23-1986 First bath in the new bath house
Exchanged gifts / Pat & Annabel in Holly Springs. Sue's for Xmas.

12-29-1986 Robert & Robbie visit

1-1-1987 Ritual at the new bath house—Moon Lodge women come out and sleep in a circle in the bath house (head to head). Straight women are Emily, Francie, and Denise. G&G

Spring 1987 **Mariposa** visits land. Wants to come back and live in tents

Summer 1988 Mariposa facilitates afternoon lesbian workshop (??)

Jeanie Neeth and Paula Mariedaughter, lesbian writers from North Carolina, live at Silver Circle over the summer (till July), then go to St. Paul, AR. They also go to Florida to watch dolphins (??)

August 11, 1987 Margaret, Bobbie, Shirley Sun before 8-11 Full Moon Ritual

Christmas 1987 Connie & Laurie having problems.

Womonwrites 1988 (check dates, May or June) JEB, Minnie Bruce, Lee Lanning, and Jae attend.

Summer 1988 Arrange to meet **Ayla Heartsong** in middle Tennessee at Mary B-J's Wit's End for her annual July 4 "Unfinished Revolution." Then Ayla goes back to Silver Circle with them.

Fall 1988 Crystal hunting in Arkansas (Johnnie, Kim, Vicki, Audrey, Arden)

Nov 2, 1988 New shitter at Cedar Place.
First electric heated baths

Thanksgiving, 1988 Toby arrived
Ayla and Julia Dragonfly

January 8, 1989 – Tiga's first snow (lite)

February 1989– Emily's car wreck (Gail's sister)

June 1989 – [Emily's?] "kids come to live with us after WomanWrites."
July 4th at Wit's End (Ayla, Sandi, Marsha, Jes)
Trip to North Carolina

Fall 1989 Emily and kids move to Millington

Winter 1989 Ayla and Trish.
Barn building (lasts into spring 1990)

January 1990 German lesbians visit

February 1990 Flood almost kept Trish and Ayla at Silver Circle.
Built barn (B, Vicki, Andrey, T&A, Fran). Trish, Ayla, Lexe fenced and gated Cedar Place Garden

January 15, 1990 Lexe's visit from Germany via Mau and Sasha's

Spring 1990 Nurse Carmen through pregnancy (?)

S

ummer 1990 Emily moves next to Patti Lynn

Vacation to Louisville (Ru and landras), Ohio (Joanna and Gert), Michigan (Kate & Lisa), and Wisconsin (Trish, Ayla, Jaz/Connie)

October 1990 Ben Torch and Ethereal (Sissy) arrive

Winter Ayla and Trish looking for farm over phone. Mitru, Trish, Jose in Vermont
Julie
Sabine arrives after Christmas

Spring 1991 Gertrude goes North with Ayla
Julia, Clark, Kathie _____ - and Bev
Grace Stangon
Toren & Mitru, Odesea

Summer – Sabine and Amy Edginton ride with G&G to Womonwrites. Drop off Sabine at Atlanta airport.
July 4 Unfinished Revolution at Wit's End
Trip to Louisville. Ru & landras separate
Using barn shitter?

Winter Begin addition: B, Rose, Mitru, Stacey
Box & posts & strings

November 1, 1991 Spirit Fest – Z Budapest, after Connie & Deb held up
Mitru, Leigh, Coyote come

February 14, 1992 10th anniversary. Celia Wildroot, Carolyn King

2/28/92 Pat letter of rec., and Gail Sky non-renewed.

Spring 1992 Meet Spider, Pat, and Gail (June, arrives for 15 months)

Feb 14, 1992 Mitru and Leigh break up. Anniversary party, 10 years, Celia, Carlynn Ray
Walled in shitter / Leigh? Liixchel (Mass) Lee & Mitru's age.

June 1992 Gail Sp arrives after Womonwrites

Winter 1992 Insulated and land floor, rafter, roof
Trish and Ayla fighting—one more year

Spring 1993 B and Mitru separating
Framing & siding

Summer 1993 G&G alone a lot

Oct 1- 2, 1993 Breathwork in Memphis

Fall 1993 bSpider Gail returns to Michigan

Oct 14, 1993 Susan and Mitru arrive
Wiring house. Josepha's first visit (Oct)

Winter 1993 Insulating walls, ceilings, windows

November 1993 Ayla moves to Mississippi

December 1993 Greenhouse finished

Spring 1994 Mitru's 30th birthday (2-10-94)
Painting the addition
Ayla sick with ovaries—leaves 10 days later

April 8-9, 1994 breathwork

Summer 1994 Spiders helped open wall/window.
Moved bed from loft after Womownrites
B & Ayla move to Byhalia, MS

Fall 1994 Susan and Mitru to Pennsylvania (Women's Resources, 4 months)
Frat boys steal sign and mail box (3 nights)
Dixie came out
To Merril's for her birthday (November)

December Jane Cooper got her trailer moved.

January 1995 Dogwood workshop set up.

February 7, 1995 SNOW

[From here only copying events where women move to land or live on it]

Summer 1995 – Spider Gail moves down.
(Mary B-J moving to Philadelphia, summer 95)

Gwen's Croning – attended by Jackie, Fran, Roberta Alvmerez, Mitru, Suan, Eadie, Audrey, Pat, Gail, Wm, Deb, Ky

Oct 20-22, 1995 3rd Well Springs: Mimi, Alix Dobkin,

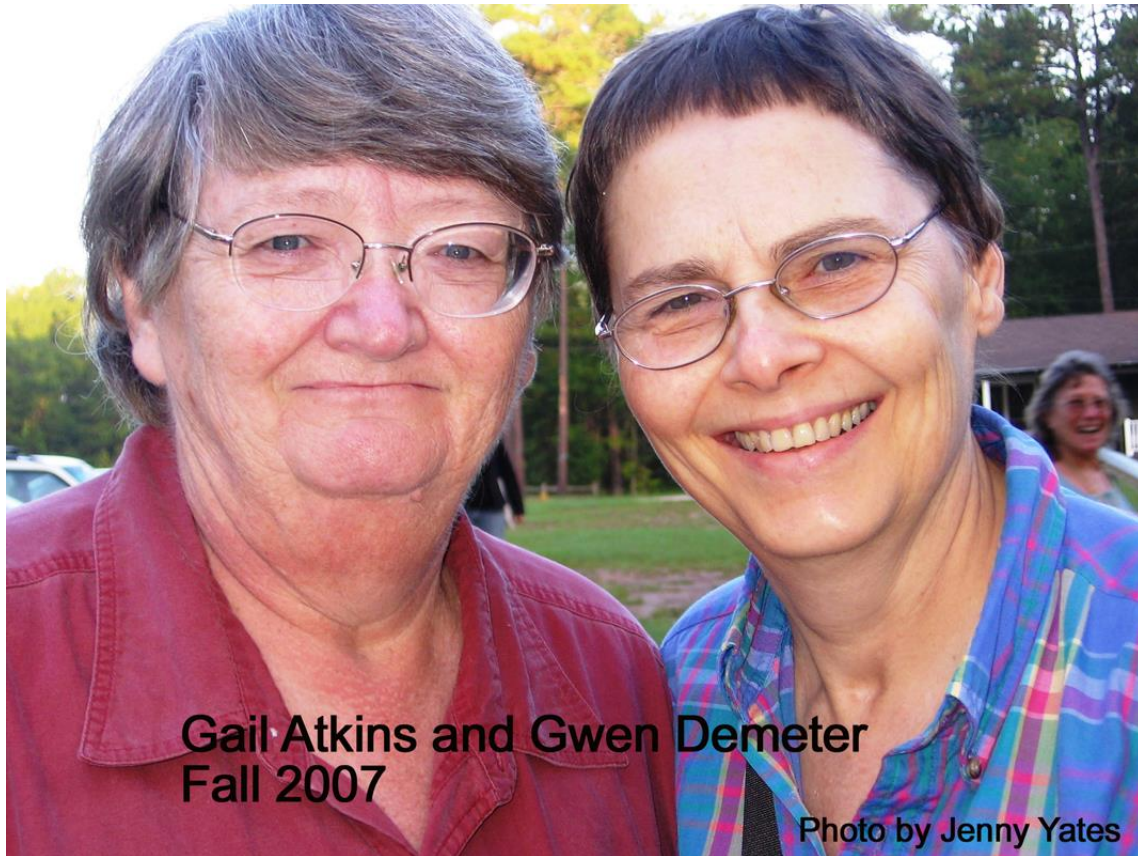
Dec 18, 1995 Carol Igoe and Sacha Marine arrive to help build bathroom. Dec 30, set post, square

Jan 22, 1996 Carol and Sacha leave.

January 25, 1996 Diana Taylor leaves for Texas

March 13, 1996 Susan and Mitru move shitter. Deck 3/31 to 4/12

July 13, 1996 Mitru and Susan move to Stroudsburg, PA



**Gail Atkins and Gwen Demeter
Fall 2007**

Photo by Jenny Yates

Gail and Gwen at Womonwrites, Fall 2007. Photo by Jenny Yates. From Womonwrites photo archives, and used in 35th anniversary slide show.

Rose's Notes Taken During Interview, October 12, 2013, at Womonwrites

Connie Gallina (now dead), Gail's first "wife" (had a marriage ceremony in 1975?) and were together monogamously for 5 years. Later Connie turned out to have a multiple personality. Lots of drama.

Lone Star – a small farm just outside of Memphis (probably in city limits now), maybe 3 acres. Lesbian separatists raising and selling vegetables. Elizabeth, Josepha, (Malcolm, a man, had many women lovers, including Gwen), Donnetta Yandell (now dead; was roommates with Gail after she broke up with Connie).

1970 Gwen divorces her husband. Begins to come out, but has boyfriends and girlfriends.

1975 meets Gail at NOW meeting to form a sexuality and lesbianism task force. It was supposed to be for conversation between straights and gays, but it was mostly lesbians who showed up (about 70 people total). Out of that came a support group that Gail started and Gwen joined.

Still at Lone Star (land is in Malcolm's mother and uncle's names). Malcolm and Gail couldn't stand each other. That's why it didn't work out to stay at Lone Star. "None of my other lovers threatened him" (Gwen says). His straight girlfriend did shitty stuff to Gwen, like unplugging their fridge and not telling them. Lots more of this stuff.

Get Gail's poem "Garden Gate," about the day she saw Gwen in the garden wearing panties with a double women's symbols on the bottom. Memorial Day weekend 19__ . Gail spent the night with Gwen that night and for a week. They slept together but did not have sex for a week because of a previous experience they had together. Got it clear that Gail was "over that monogamy business" (Gwen), "and we're still not into that monogamy business" (Gail).

Malcolm was very threatened by all this and bought some land that he could put in women's names. Couldn't figure out whose names to put on it, and Gail offered.

1980. So it all blew up with Lone Star, and they went to visit some older lesbians at Memphis (10 bedroom house), Jack Jones and Brenda (these are both women), who offered to have them live there. Didn't last because Jack and Brenda were monogamous, and Gwen and Gail weren't. (Brenda was close to Gail's age, so 40s; Jack was at least in her 60s, very old seeming to them—dykey, smoking, checking her stocks on TV).

Move into house with Deborah Cunningham and her boyfriend Jeffrey. It was a duplex, and Deborah and Jeffrey lived downstairs. Deborah was a old friend who had polio as a child and was in a wheelchair (quadriplegic). Gail is still in graduate school at Memphis State. Gwen had been working part-time on "wife abuse," while living at the farm (Lone Star). Never had a shelter, but used the Y, their homes, Catholic sisters' residences.

Another lesbian communal house in Memphis: Alicia Brickner and her hangers on: Robin Madison? Cheri ____, They were there when they started looking for land.

1. Jack

2. Deborah and Jeffrey

3. House on Young St. (Robin, Alicia , Cheri—Alicia and Cheri broke up and Cheri left, and it's Robin and Alicia. Later Wolfspider moved in). "That was where we had the ritual to find land."

Maybe 20 women came for that ritual. Some were interested in land, and some were just there for ritual. "We had started a small spirituality group" (mainly Alicia, Robin, Gwen&Gail).

Later Georganne/WolfSpider came to land and was part of spirituality circle—had lived on Owl Farm and in San Francisco. then came back home and lived at Lone Star while Gwen & Gail were there. Also Em (now transgendered).

At the ritual, they put out what they were looking for. Some wanted sand and desert. Others wanted trees. Gail and Gwen had been looking at a lot of land and were tired of looking. Gail said she wanted it within a week. Gail said "I'm not looking, they're going to have to call me." And they did! Right before this, Malcolm sold Lone Star to the granddaughter of the "Pink Palace" guy in Memphis, so Georganne had to leave, and she moved in with them at that house on Young St.

Valentine's Day weekend 1982 [see the story she tells here]

First saw the land on Friday Feb 13. Took everybody out to see it on Feb 14.

"Gasline" by which she means "pipeline" is not far from their boundary.

Lone Star sold and vacated Feb 22.

The land was similar to the land in Arkansas that Malcolm bought, but much more private. (See description.) Gwen isn't sure, but Gail is sure it's the right land. They paid \$15,000 cash, using \$5000 Gwen had, \$5000 Dunbar (interest free loan from her business), and \$5000 (Alicia). 40 acres with nothing on it but pine trees, hills, cactus, sand, dry creek, wet creek (part of the year), "and it is beautiful" (Gail). No utilities. "We hauled water for awhile." From Keel's Country Store, 3 miles away, and also from a professor at Memphis State who had land. Pat hired Mr. Keel to do some carpentry finishing work for them on their bathhouse and Pat's yurt (he needed some hours to get his social security up). Used an aluminum cart they still have. Got a well for running water on the land by Thanksgiving of that first year. The well man came while they were gone, so not sure how deep it is, but think it's 250'.

People whose names are on the deed:

Pat Dunbar and Annabel ~~Stephens~~ (they are still a couple in Tuscaloosa now; Annabel a librarian, her father in construction laid down a great driveway for them), Alycia Brickner (Slope, now in California), Robin Madison (has other names, now in California), Georganne/ Wolfspider, Gail and Gwen. Bluejay was there then (was lovers with Georganne), and came from Diana's land (OLHA?). Bluejay's view then was not to put it in anyone's name, but in a trust. So it had 7 women's names (see above) and sole feme with right of survivorship.

Robin and Alicia lasted on land 1 month.

Georganne was there 3 years

In November 1982, 2 new members:

Cher Stewart, Memphis/New Orleans artist, moved in with a big school bus she lived in.

Sue Watson, pharmacist who brought the rabbit shit; taught pharmacy at Old Miss. Had a lover in Memphis. She was at that ritual with Deb Kaufman. Sue was living in Oxford, and at the ritual said they needed to work on finding the land that week. She moved off the land the spring of 1983. Later Sue and Deb bought land. It wasn't communal land, but they had Well Springs festival there several times. Several hundred people attended.

Naming the Land

Thought of naming it Pleiades because of it being 7 women. Pat Dunbar owned Memphis Sheet Metal. They put up a mailbox and they had some silver paint, so Gail painted a silver circle on it so the truck could find them. That's how it got its name.

The Buildings

Pat Dunbar didn't know their skills, and what they could do. So she had wood cut to build a dome kitchen. So they build that kitchen first. Unfortunately, they didn't buy enough wood for an overhang to avoid water splashing the house

When they first bought the land, Gail and Gwen moved into a tent, as did Georganne, her own tent (Bluejay had a van or something). Robin and Alicia brought a tent out one weekend (they were staying in town, maybe Robin had a job), a month later (it was a birthday) and they came out without looking at the weather. An ice storm sealed them in overnight. Took an hour to crack the ice next morning. They moved to California soon after.

It was the rainiest year ever, so they bought a camper shell to put on Gail's truck (red Ford F150). Into the truck they put a queen sized mattress, a manual typewriter, and a drip coffeepot on a shelf behind the cab, and a radio on the side.

They had electricity from the beginning, a line through the land. Georganne built an 8x2' shed for tools. Then they build a kitchen, when it didn't work to use a tent for a kitchen (trouble with water moccasins in tent kitchen).

Dome (kitchen, 1982)

"Spring and summer built dome kitchen and gardened." Got a lot of things donated for the dome kitchen, which went up pretty fast. Sue Watson donated hardwood flooring. Pat Dunbar was very generous. Bought boots, down jackets, supplies, a down comforter, sent food—"Things we never thought we needed, but came in handy."

Yurt (1985)

Pat and Annabel did not plan to live there. Pat saw the land as a fallback plan, and built a modified yurt (once she saw how the dome building didn't work so well). "It's gorgeous." (Gail) "It's sturdy." (Gwen) A lot of people have lived in it. This is the only building on the land with foundations deep in the earth.

Cedar Place (Sep 1982) – Gwen & Gail's cabin. Mostly Gail & Gwen did the work. Georganne had gone north for the winter. They had a roof, plastic, and a north wall when they moved in in the spring of 1983. By March, they were about ready to kill each other, so they took a vacation. Pat Dunbar had them to drive her father's car out for when he was gambling in Las Vegas. They drove to Yellowstone. By 1983, Merrill and Mary BJ, Earth, and others are visiting and probably able to stay at the house.

Dogwood House (Sep 1982) – Georganne's house that Ayla now lives in.

Ayla has lived there off and on over the years. For a long time Ayla would come for the winter, and go back to Wisconsin in the summer to farm with Trish.

Belinda, maybe a couple of years. Mitru, Lee Curry (who now lives in Portland, OR).

Jeanie and Paula Mariedaughter from OLHA (worked with Spinster's Ink) lived there a year.

Had an apprentice from San Francisco, Athena. (They had several apprentices helping them build.

Advertised in *Maize* or *LC*.)

Spring 83 Sue moves off the land (taking her trailer), and bought her own place about 10 miles away (still lives there)