

# BOOKS

## Quick Takes on Two Queer Books

BY ELIZABETH A. ALLEN

**Is It a Choice? Answers to the Most Frequently Asked Questions About Gay and Lesbian People**  
By Eric Marcus  
HarperSanFrancisco, 2005  
Paperback

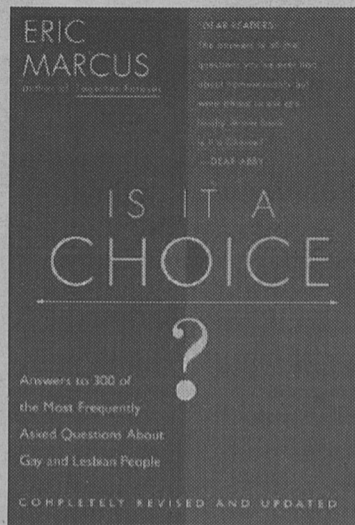
**D**o you wish that you had a witty comeback for that relative who asked you over holiday dinner, "So...how long is this 'gay phase' supposed to last?" Are your siblings still bringing up questions about your sexuality that you thought you had explained several years ago? Or are you yourself looking for a collection of lgbtq resources just for your own information and peace of mind?

In that case, it's a good thing that Eric Marcus's 1993 classic, *Is It a Choice? Answers to the Most Frequently Asked Questions About Gay and Lesbian People*, has come out (pun intended) again, heavily revised and with a new introduction. Over 12 years, two previous editions, 75,000 copies and multiple languages, *Is It a Choice?* has acted as a primer for queers, their allies and anyone who has ever wondered about lgbtq people. Now updated

ed to contain information about gay marriage, religion and gay people, and the most recent advocacy and information groups, Marcus' book is ready to educate a new generation.

Marcus notes in his introduction that he's "chosen to stick pretty much to the broad middle of lesbian and gay life." So, if you're trying to explain transgendered identities or BDSM culture to others, you'll want to look elsewhere in books that specifically address those topics. What you've got here is a basic guide to such inquiries as "What is a homosexual?," "What do gay people do on a date?" and, of course, the burning question of the decade: "Do all lesbians own Subarus?" (The answer to the last one is a resounding no. I came out about eight years ago, and I still haven't received my congratulatory car.)

On topics like coming out, parents of gay kids, religion and more, Marcus provides simple, factual answers. For example, about gay dating, he writes, "What gay people do on a date varies as much as what heterosexual people do on dates." Emphasizing the common humanity of all people no matter what their sexuality, Marcus models a calm, accepting attitude that may be especially helpful to, say, anxious parents or close friends. Even on subjects as

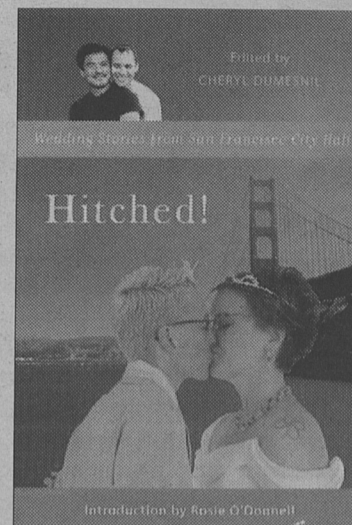


touchy as queer sexuality and faith – "The only thing that many religions agree on about homosexuality is that they don't agree" – Marcus keeps a cool head, presenting information in an orderly manner and leavening it with welcome humor. His all-around patience and reasonable tone make *Is It a Choice?* accessible and informative. While the 2005 gift-giving season is over, I still recommend stocking up on a few copies of this book and handing them out when necessary to combat confusion and ignorance.

**Hitched! Wedding Stories from San Francisco City Hall**  
Cheryl Dumesnil  
Thunder's Mouth Press  
October, 2005  
Paperback

**"Y**ahoooo! They're doing it before we are! How did that happen?"

When I read in the *Boston Globe* that queer couples in San Francisco were getting civil marriage licenses on February 12,



2004, over three months before gay marriage could actually start in my home state of Massachusetts, those were my first words. And I wondered if I had missed something. Had marriage suddenly become legal in California?

The answer, of course, was no. Despite the state's anti-queer-marriage DOMA, San Francisco town clerks were, at the direction of mayor Gavin Newsom, issuing marriage licenses to queer couples. The event started when Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin decided, with their lawyer's help, to quietly challenge the bias in the DOMA by getting married after 51 years together.

Word spread rapidly, though, and the Lyon/Martin single action of protest became the catalyst for almost a month of marry-making and merry-making. Before the California Supreme Court stopped the weddings, over 4,000 gay and lesbian couples from around the world had gotten hitched. Despite long lines, bureaucratic drama and protests, thousands

upon thousands of queers and volunteers transcended civil disobedience and proved nothing less than the power of love.

If you're like me, you probably danced around happily at the news, but you may have not had more than a general sense of community with those involved. Now, with Cheryl Dumesnil's *Hitched!*, you can hear their stories firsthand.

Culled from interviews and narratives that newlyweds wrote themselves, Dumesnil's book collects 50 wedding stories of all types: from the celebrity celebration of Rosie O'Donnell and her partner to that of Mooneyan and Lakke, with Lakke's service dog, a black Lab, as an attendant. Some stories focus on the triumphs and tragedies of relationships leading up to the big day, while others document the generosity of impromptu volunteers who made the weddings possible.

The diverse stories share a common element besides the sexual orientation of the participants. Every single couple in *Hitched!* is full of joy...no, make that ecstasy. The book radiates so much pure happiness that it's almost overwhelming. If you're currently disappointed by the state of queer rights in this country, or if someone you know doesn't believe that queers can be happy, bring out *Hitched!* Along with *Is It a Choice?*, *Hitched!* makes a strong, elemental statement in favor of our common humanity, no matter what our sexual preference. ▼

E.A. Allen celebrates marriage equality and reviews books in Boston, Massachusetts.



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