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For same sex partnerships, proper financial planning can help ensure that you and your loved ones are properly protected. As a Financial Advisor, my goal is to meet your needs in a relationship based on trust and professionalism, working closely with your attorney or CPA to develop a strategy based on your unique situation and objectives.

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COMMUNITY

Gay and Gray: Conversations with Our Elders

BY LYNN MARTIN

When I told this absolutely charming gay man I would help put together a performance about being old and gay, I didn't know what I was getting into. Craig Cullinane had produced a similar performance in Poland with prisoners. It consists of starting out with a core group of people who are willing to tell their stories. It culminates in a staged production that hopefully raises the consciousness of the audience. But, and here's the strength of his vision, it also encourages change in the participants. And it does do both.

We began, four of us over 65, to tell our stories. Craig taped the interviews. He asked a few questions. We talked about our earliest awareness of being gay, our first kiss, our coming-out saga, and whether it made a difference to be gay and gray or was it just about grow-



Living your life over on a stage is a strange experience. You re-see and re-vision who you are.

ing older? We talked and Craig listened. He then extricated common themes, and we began to develop monologues.

Craig realized early in rehearsals that we needed more energy, and so we invited six young people to join us. That immediately added a deeper dimension: an intergenerational view. Brilliant. Craig came up with about nine different scenes. They incorporated changes in mood and pace. There were four scenes of monologues from those of us over 65. It was obvious the coming-out part of our lives was very different for each person. We acted out how younger people view older people, how words like "faggot," "queer," and others affected us. And we danced our way through our first kiss. Living your life over on a stage is a strange experience. You re-see and re-vision who you are.

I realized that being lesbian was only one part of who I am. But I'm very proud of having looked in a mirror and made the choice to come out. It would have been easy not to. And as I stood up on that stage and talked of some of the women in my life, I was aware of how blessed I've been to have them in my life. And it was absolutely delightful to meet the young people who joined

us. Some of them represented voices of the elders who wanted to be heard, but did not want to get on a stage. Some of them did the backstage stuff. They were definitely the glue that held the production together. They were unfailingly supportive. I want to say "hurrah" for the young among us. But especially, I want to praise Craig, who created and directed the production. His imagination and energy are boundless. The process of this production, as I said, is pure genius.

The production sold out three performances even before it was advertised. So hungry is the world to hear our stories. Yes, they are!! The most humbling part of it, for me, was when a poem I wrote about growing old became one of the themes of the production. It was placed in the center of the performance and we did it like a Greek chorus. To see a created work take on a life of its own is an awesome gift. Standing in front of an audience in this way, is very different from doing poetry readings. There I had the text right in front of me. Here I was at 70, when I'm starting to forget things, responsible for monologues; but what was even harder, to know where to be on the stage at the right time. A challenge indeed.

Thanks to a little help from our younger friends, we did it. Craig said his goal was for everyone to finish this process proud to have been a part of it. Yes, Craig, I am. Very proud. And it is true that:

Even as you stand the light changes
 Nothing remains the same.
 My old bones may remember
 lightning quick moves,
 a never ending day
 like an explosion within.

Even then, even then, I was growing
 sunrise into morning, noon,
 evening; midnight approaching
 with its wandering lights,
 the moon's ungraspable shape.

Why should I grieve when I, too,
 submit to the alchemist hand? ▼

➔ Lynn Martin lives in Brattleboro.