

Writing Home

Okay! Okay! I know that I had promised some friends to write about my experiences as a Lesbian, but I am well-practiced procrastinator. Perhaps the biggest excuse is the fear of sharing my thoughts and my life with the public. Why even attempt to convey what's on my mind? Maybe if we all share what we feel and what we experience, then we can understand each other better and support each other more. It's tough to be gay and alone!

So what's my story? In the past year and a half, I have gone through a rapid transition from a scared, closed-up, quiet, always frowning individual to a more open, confident, noisy, laughing woman. The cause for the change lies with my coming out as a woman-identified woman, a fact that had laid dormant for too many years. Sometimes I can't believe that I was ever any different than I am today.

Let me back up a bit, to why it took me so long to find my true path. I grew up in the steamy heat of Texas, born to a good Catholic family. Of course, my folks wanted me to have the best education available, so I attended an all girls, private Catholic school run by French nuns for nine long years. By the time I hit the public school system at age 14, I was incapable of communicating with very many of my peers particularly the boys. So instead of being a very social person, I applied myself totally to my studies. This trend continued through college, although I did manage to become more able to socialize. I even had a few relationships with men, but they never withstood the test of time (I always ended them, I never felt comfortable with the opposite sex).

I graduated from the University of Texas with a degree in geology in 1982. A big oil company, Exxon, snatched me up and assigned me to work in a field office in Lafayette, Louisiana. Mostly, I worked in the office, but occasionally I went to the offshore oil and gas rigs. From the beginning, I know that working for an oil company wasn't for me. My conscience bothered me, plus I felt stifled and suffocated by the system. One was supposed to act a certain way. Unfortunately, I wasn't "one of the boys." I simply wouldn't play the game of climbing the corporate ladder to power.

During my time in Louisiana, I became aware of this strange attraction to my own sex. I managed to bury these feelings. But in the process, along with the stress of work, my health began to decline. By the time I quit in 1984, I was in sad shape. I was undecided as to whether I wanted to even live or not. I felt that I had failed because I could not make it in the world of corporations. I felt guilty that I had failed my parents (It's amazing how much they control us, even as adults!). And emotionally and physically I was a wreck.

By quitting the job that I really despised, I began to really take control of my life for the first time. It definitely was frightening, making a decision for myself and not for my family or for society! First I moved to Houston for three months, then on to Austin, an oasis of healing energy in Texas. My search for my new identify was aided by strengthening my body (through diet, yoga and exercise) and my mind (through therapy and meditation). As all this new growth was taking place, that old buried attraction to women surfaced again. But this time I decided to be more aware of these feelings. I still was too frightened to act on them, or even to tell anyone. All the same, at least I let them be there. As time progressed, I began to realize that I had had similar feelings even when I was younger in my teens, but I had failed to recognize them or put a label on them.

Unfortunately, even though I assumed most of my friends would support me if I came out to them, I was too afraid to even hint at the possibility that I may be gay. Actually, they probably already guessed it; one friend was always kidding me and calling me a dyke. But my family was just 90 miles away in San Antonio. I know that if I was to let my feelings out in Austin, I would not be able to stay in the closet and keep my sanity. And I definitely was not ready to announce to my parents that their little girl (I'm after three boys) was a queer.

An opportunity arose for me to move to Vermont and study at the Macrobiotic Health Center in Hyde Park. I knew that I needed some change in my life. Perhaps subconsciously I realized that to be really free I had to get far away from family and

old friends. I wanted a fresh start! I arrived just before Thanksgiving in the fall of 1986. That first winter I spent learning how to live in a severe cold climate. I split wood, bought snow tires, learned how to dress in layers, learned how to drive in ice and snow, shoveled lots of snow, and learned how to cross-country ski.

I mostly kept to myself, savoring the peaceful quiet of the winter. But I did have to work, so I took a job at a ski resort. As it turned out, my boss was gay. She thought that I was an "out" Lesbian, and so was very open with me about her life. Initially I was terrified to spend any time with her. Eventually, however, I noticed a growing attraction to her. For once, I decided to face my feelings. So we went to the movies together and the rest is history. That was the start of a wonderful relationship in which we are both still loving and growing together.

So there! That's my coming out story. Of course, my coming out didn't end there, as I am sure it rarely does for anyone. I next came out to friends, to my mother (maybe someday I'll manage the rest of my family), to my employer and coworkers. The most-attended coming out was at the hearing for the anti-discrimination bill, H247. By testifying before the Judiciary Committee and with all those so-called "Christians" present, I gained new self confidence as a Lesbian. There have been times since I have testified during which I have been afraid of retaliation, but I remind myself that I get angry every time I think of how much most of us live in the closet, living two lives. The anger gives me the courage to go on, bit by bit fusing my two separate lives together.

Rosi B.

