

# Letters Home

If you have an experience connected with coming out to family or friends, please send to Out In The Mountains. We would be glad to include it in this column.

## Connie

by Dru Daugherty c. 1988

Unlike the rest of my brood, she most resembled her father's side of the family. She was a beautiful newborn and grew into an adorable child—a dead ringer for the dark-haired, banged, chubby cheeked Campbell Soup Kids! She was a sensitive teenager, almost trying too hard to be too good. And, she was born with an infectious giggle which erupts, still, through her entire body.

Maybe because she was the oldest, she expressed a real motherly concern for her siblings, possessed a strong sense of responsibility for them. A Virgo/Libra Cusp person, she has a hard time making up her mind, always strives for perfection in whatever she does. She's short—4'11"—quite round and buxom, with large expressive brown eyes, and a head of thick, healthy hair most people would envy. She's a hugger. She loves to talk—real talk, mind you, no bull. She's into feelings, spirituality, growth, and she's forever getting into jams because she cares so much about other people.

I don't remember when Connie came out to me. It just wasn't that important. I was much more concerned about her decision to be a single parent and I had known, instinctively, for years. Maybe it was easier for me than for a lot of parents because I've always been receptive to all people. I was also very in touch with my own physical attraction to other women, so this wasn't a startling revelation to me. But, I was curious.

We used to talk about homosexuality a lot. Now we talk about how it affects her life, her relationships, her sense of herself. We talk of her sisters' reactions: "Is she going to raise her daughter like a boy?" We talk of her fears and the guilt that has resulted from the judgments of others. We also discuss the questions she has about bringing up a child in an alternative lifestyle.

Sometimes, when she makes the five-hour drive to visit for a weekend or a holiday, we go dancing. I love to dance with Connie! She sort of burrows down, gets



into it, grins, and lets it all out! I do the same. We make eye contact, laughing in the side at what others might be thinking, and leave the floor, our arms around one another.

She's a good person, a good mother, wonderful daughter, my Connie. And, I have this deep, ever-present ache inside for her. If there were choices, I don't know what anyone would choose to love their own son this way. It is not a gay life. It is a hard life.

*Ms. Dru Daugherty writes a column in Woman and is a regular contributor to the Times Argus Commentary Page, Courier and the Wilmington Cracker Barrel.*

## How Gay are the Holidays?

by Eileen

For many lesbians and gay men the holidays are not a time for celebration, but a time for hiding, lying, or denying the realities of our lives. In the aftermath of the winter holiday season I find myself reflecting, along with many of my friends, on this year's experience—how it differed from the years before, and how far we still have to go.

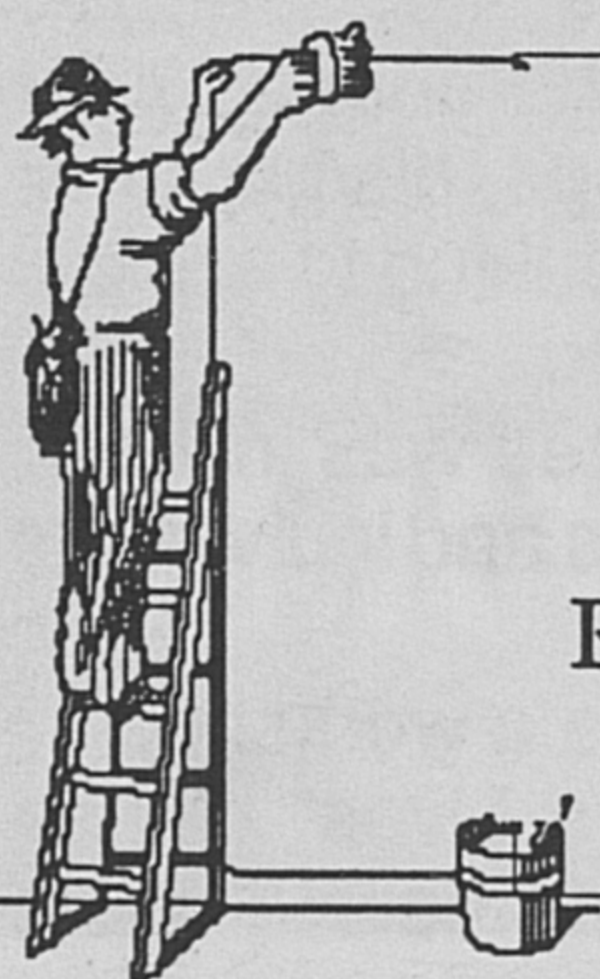
I'm one of the lucky ones. My family knows that I'm gay and accepts my lover into family gatherings. In fact, we had a delightful, low-key Christmas this year with my parents, my sister, my lover, and myself. But I've been through the uncomfortable "she's just a friend whose family doesn't really celebrate so she wanted to come home with me" story and the "we each want to spend the holiday with our families" separation method and the "we'll make our own holiday here" choice. In fact, I daresay I've probably run through all the choices in one year of holidays alone.

But even this year there was something missing. We hold a little bit back when

we're at their house. We don't touch too much; we tone down the nicknames. I'm not entirely sure why. But that's another story. The point is we do—we change when we get together with our straight families and I know that we are not alone in this behavior. In fact, I often don't notice that I'm doing it. I only realize when I get home that I feel as though I can let go and relax finally, as if I'd been on my guard for awhile. And I'm one of the lucky ones.

Then there's location. In their own space they can accept me much more easily than they can accept me in my home surrounded by my gay friends. They don't know any other lesbians besides me and my friends. When I go to their place they deal with me as the daughter they know. When they come to my place they have to deal with me as an adult with a life of my own, a life they don't entirely understand.

But is the gay holiday experience that much different from the experience of many straight children? I don't know. Certainly, I know many straight couples who deal with the problems of whose parents to visit when, who encounter parents or siblings who dislike a spouse or lover, and who find themselves changing in the presence of critical parents. In some ways the issues are the same. We as children have to learn to see our parents as human beings with all their faults and realize they try to love us the best they know how. But the issues become more complicated when you add the sexual preference component. And the complications make me wonder sometimes if holidays are steps forward in our lives, times to celebrate, or obstacles on the road to a true gay celebration.



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