

Ask Aunt Gay

Dear Aunt Gay,
 Editors and Readers alike may be tempted to dismiss this letter without a second thought, but I would like to see it generate some serious discussion. My partner and I are one of the bi-sexual couples in the Burlington area. We recently visited part of a major city famous for its gay population.

Being around all those proud gay people, literally out in the streets, I wanted to wear my Gay Pride button. I should mention now that we always walk arm-in-arm, or hold hands. My partner argued that it would be offensive for us to try to pass as gay while being physically affectionate.

My feeling is that only a very bi-phobic person would be offended by such a sight and that we should try not to appeal to that mentality just as we must not appeal to homophobia.

This is not as simple a question as it might first appear. I'm curious, what do you say?

Dear Curious,
 As a bisexual you feel a part of gay culture; you want to show your pride and solidarity with gays, right? I don't think there's anything wrong with anyone wearing a gay pride button, but it could be confusing. How about wearing the button that says "How Dare You Presume I'm Heterosexual!" Or one that says "Bisexual and Proud."

I know there isn't much of a bisexual culture out there compared to straight, gay and lesbian cultures. If there were, you probably wouldn't be wondering about this issue. Are you willing to help create bisexual culture? You two have the sensitivity, pride, and caring to do it.

In the meantime, it doesn't sound like you're trying to pass as gay. It sounds like you're just trying to be your full selves. When that's offensive to reactionary preconceptions somebody's got a problem, but it's not you.

Dear Aunt Gay,
 It drives me batty when women who used to sleep with women and now sleep with men, still call themselves lesbians. The common definition of "lesbian" is a woman who loves and sleeps with women and not men. Why not respect the definition? I know they say they don't feel straight, they feel like lesbians, but they aren't lesbians. Don't you think they should make up some new concept if "straight" and "bisexual" are too rigid and don't fit their experiences?

Dear Batty,
 Sure. I'm all for accuracy. It's a good thing by me anytime a minority can use a label that effectively communicates their reality to the majority. As we learn more about the complexities of each other's experiences, life gets more interesting, and reality-based.

So, ex-lesbians, can you come up with a better term? Are you a non-practicing lesbian, a cultural lesbian, a lesbian-style feminist, a queer queer? I invite you to write in your experiences, and labels that begin to describe them.

Now a question for you, Batty. Do you know why it matters to you that former lesbians be distinguished from current lesbians? Does it make you feel more safe somehow? Is there something you can do to feel better besides trying to get them to change? Perhaps you need time with only lesbians who don't sleep with men. Maybe ex-lesbians would like to meet separately too. I know I get a down-home feeling among my own kind. How about you?

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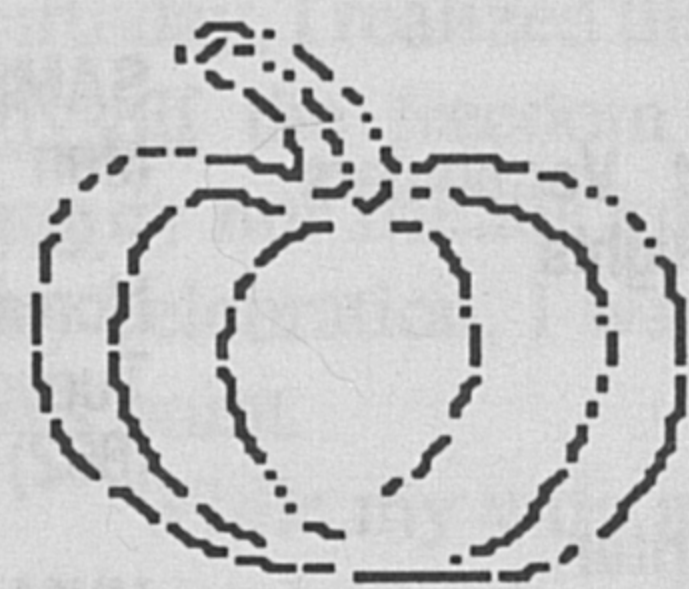
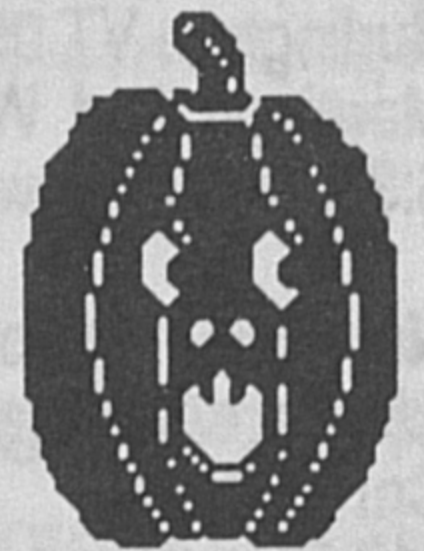
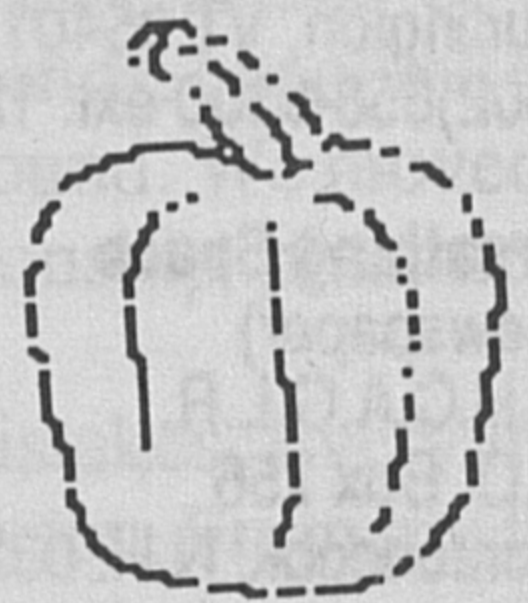
Commentary from page 11 all. But it certainly makes the going more gentle.

Next time: How to deal with the children.

(K.K. Wilder is writing a book tentatively titled *Not So Gay: Women Who Love Gay Men*. To contact her write 17 N Champlain #3, Burlington, VT 05401 or call (802)658-0448).

Gwendolyn

Oops! No Gwendolyn this month.



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