

Out in the Mountains

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Learning to Love / Learning to Grow

by Gwen Shervington

I've been out as a lesbian since 1979 and have gone through many changes around this love/sex stuff. Before I moved to Vermont in 1978, I had started hanging out with my cousin, a gay man, and his friends in New York City. The brothers were all so wild, crazy and carefree. To this day I truly enjoy being around gay men when they carry on.

I was a lot more comfortable hanging out with gay men than with lesbians. With gay men I could just be myself, they certainly didn't have any expectations of me. But with lesbians it was different. I felt uncomfortable and unsure of myself. Was I supposed to act a certain way? To be flirtatious or open to being flirted with? Even though I was definitely turned on by women, I became a shy little puppy when my cousin's lesbian friends were around.

Nonetheless, a year after I moved to Vermont I decided that I would become "one of the children". I was attracted to women, always have been, no use denying that part of myself anymore. It made complete sense for me to love and be with women. A woman would understand me. She would know how I feel. We'd be able to be totally supportive to each other because we are both women.

My first relationship lasted about a year and a half. The last six months were spent in vicious battling. There is a very thin line between love and hate. We crossed over from love to hate completely. Our mistake was trying to hold on to something that could never be because of our immaturity and personality differences.

We were very much in love, but we didn't have what it took to work through our differences. We didn't communicate effec-

tively. We kept agreeing to "Try it again" without making the necessary compromises and changes. I was jealous of her relationship with her friends. I handled this jealousy by sleeping around. We moved in together and the relationship plummeted quickly into disaster.

I learn from my mistakes, Every hard situation teaches us a lesson. From my first wife I felt my lessons were to let go quickly when things start to feel bad and to never move in with a lover. I carried these lessons into my second relationship. This relationship lasted two years. We didn't live together. As soon as she wanted to do something I thought was fucked-up, I bailed out and ended the relationship. Perhaps I let go of her a little too quickly, four days to be exact, but we never crossed over the love/hate line. We love each other to this day.

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The Freedom of Coming Out

Robert J. Hearn

Gay Pride Week was celebrated this year with a few Bicentennial overtones. A common slogan: "We've had enough, we want OUR freedom now." However, until Gays can claim the freedom inside their own guts, they are not ready to take on family, friends, much less society.

There is certainly no one road to personal freedom for a Gay person. I can only share parts of my own journey and inner struggle.

Who could say when this journey began? Freud would be right in going back to birth, the first two or the first five years. But I would share some of the things which I have experienced in the last 25 years.

Twenty years ago, I was living with a beautiful wife and three wonderful kids in Texas. As pastor of a liberal and progressive Protestant church, I was a very respected member of the community, and had

just completed a term as President of the Rotary Club. Certainly I was thought of as "straight" by everyone, even myself.

At this time, I made a trip to Detroit to attend a church convention. At the YMCA I met a beautiful gay man from New York and we ended up spending three days together. After making love with him, I felt my whole world spinning and at times it seemed totally upside down. There was confusion, guilt, and pain; but, also a joy that I had not experienced before.

After returning to Texas as a "straight minister", I called a psychiatrist friend and went to talk with him. After telling him what had happened in Detroit, he nearly panicked. He placed himself on call 24 hours a day, and insisted that I must get to New York for professional help.

I entered therapy with the determination to get rid of my homosexual problem. After two years of struggling, I began to

change my goal and started trying to live with my feelings. Just before my fortieth birthday, I realized that I was ready to give myself the freedom to be gay. Neither family nor friends knew the full extent of my celebration, I was certainly not out at this point.

While my wife and I were enjoying a sexual relationship, I grew frustrated and began to feel that it was grossly unfair to her for me to have my primary sexual relationships with gay friends. A separation was finally agreed upon.

Having always been very close to the children, I found telling them about the separation the hardest and most painful thing I had ever had to do. Not only were the kids upset, but they were very confused since they knew that my wife and I loved one another and were friends.

After a year, I was ready to tell them

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