

Coming Out

Isolation *(continued from preceding page)*

by saying that normality was a state of mind. End of conversation.

We didn't talk about this for a couple of years. It was an "off-limits" subject, something bound to bring up feelings that would hurt each of us. But I wanted it out in the open again. I was going to graduate high school that year. I was planning on going to college, where I'd certainly meet others like myself. I believed it was time my mother faced up to who I am.

On the day of the Big Chat, she walked into my room and sat down on my bed. After a few preliminaries that more or less pussy-footed around the subject, I asked her point blank if she would mind if I lived with another woman. Without batting an eyelash, she said she wouldn't mind at all. What a relief!

Things changed, however. The woman I thought to be so open-minded was suddenly different. She kept asking me if I would go to a doctor in order to be "normal" and made comments about having grandchildren. Why had she regressed? Was my mother scared of what others may say if they found out she had a lesbian daughter?

I didn't know how to react to her. I was not back in hiding as far as my mother was concerned. I became once again in her eyes the sweet little girl she envisioned me to be, the one that would have a nice big wedding, grandchildren, and provide her with all she ever wanted in her life to feel fulfilled as a mother, except that my lesbianism was getting in the way of all that. Her "straight and narrow" view of life was quickly becoming too stifling. I would have loved

nothing more than to tell her of my crushes and giggle about the women I've met, but I couldn't. The tension would have been too much for the both of us, so I kept quiet and went my own way as she went hers.

Because of my mother's uneasiness on the subject, I had to establish new support

were held and the people I worked with were asking me what I felt about different issues dealing with gays. This openness was great, but it got me wondering: Am I really that obvious? It's not like I wore my sexuality on my sleeve, but I did have a habit of flirting with some of the female customers and I sometimes mentioned the conferences I went to. It was wonderful to be so open and candid with people who cared enough to

understand, whether gay or straight.

I can't have that kind of relationship with everybody, of course. My mother is still rather uncomfortable discussing homosexuality with me. I guess most people are uncomfortable when the subject comes up, and I have to deal with that. Perhaps this is what coming out of the proverbial closet is all about - taking risks. I took a risk coming out to my mother; I took a risk being honest with my friends; and I take a risk in writing this.

It has been worth the risk, for coming out also means breaking out of isolation, asserting my right to exist as I am without ever having to hide again.

Postscript: This paper was written in 1987. Within those three years, my mother's attitude towards me made a 180 degree flip. She now talks about the issue of homosexuality with relative ease, even going so far as to suggest I need a girlfriend when I told her I wanted a large number of cats for my birthday (of course, she may not have wanted to give me the large number of cats). Anyways, we've come to the point where I could talk about my crushes and such and believe me, it is certainly a relief! Also, people assume I'm gay whether they actually know that or not. That's a relief as well!

"I didn't say much because deep down I agreed with her - Captain Kirk did look awfully strange in pink."

systems. Joining the gay students' group on campus was a start, but I found it rather limited. It met only every two weeks and at times I'd be the only woman there. I found myself in the position once more of finding alternate means of expression.

I did not have to try too hard. Some of my straight friends simply figured me out. One in particular was a friend named Dawn. Dawn knew that an openly gay friend of ours was going to a gay student conference, and she also knew that I was going to a conference around that time, but I was not too specific about where it was or what it was about. When Dawn put two and two together and realized that I was going to the same conference, it didn't phase her at all. Indeed, she became quite conscious of what she said around me. One night we were discussing the new Star Trek movie and she remarked that Captain Kirk looked like a fag in his bright pink uniform. She quickly retracted this statement, apologizing profusely. I didn't say much because deep down I agreed with her - Captain Kirk did look awfully strange in pink.

As time wore on, suitemates were asking me when the gay students' meeting




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