

Family

Private Lives/Social Change (continued from page 9)

a general expectation that Craig would come to the wedding. The invitation came addressed to both of us (as have invitations to weddings from co-workers). He had been to the engagement party. But Craig chose not to go. He tried to explain why he would not enjoy the day. There are many reasons why it would have been painful. Many of my relatives, while well-intentioned, would have said things which would have angered him. He would have spent the entire day explaining who he was. He would have been under the magnifying glass of family examination. He would have spent the day showing everyone that our relationship is every bit as valid as my sister's. And after ten years, that wears very thin.

The process of coming out takes one from one's own self to family and friends and eventually to a public presence (those two nice boys in the old farmhouse with the beautiful gardens). There is a widening circle of openness from the individual out to the larger society.

There is a different series of transformations which the larger society goes through, beginning with an awareness of our existence (for better or worse), to a tolerance for our presence, to an acceptance of us as members of the human species, to an appreciation of the special contributions we make, to an enjoyment and celebration of our differences. This circle begins with the protection of relations among strangers and proceeds through increasing degrees of familiarity to neighbors and co-workers, until finally defining family itself.

There is still a need to have our relationships accepted as the social building blocks that they are and to extend to our partners the benefits of a legal marriage. I

would really like to have Craig included under my health insurance policy. It doesn't need to be called a marriage. The current jargon is domestic partners. (As a footnote, when a domestic partner ordinance was passed in Seattle, over 80 percent of the people registering were heterosexual. Think about that.)

Only when our relationships bear an official stamp of approval will it be possible to answer the hate and fear with a positive alternative. A Hate Crimes law and Civil Rights legislation may provide some protection, but those laws tell people what not to do. A domestic partner law would enable us to take a big step forward. This is not to say that all gay and lesbian people want to be in a sanctioned, primary, permanent relationship, but many of us do and, to some extent, are.

Which brings me back to families, from that which we are born into to those which we create. Human beings are social creatures. Our families are our strongest allies. I thank mine, though not often enough, for the support they have given me and Craig. I urge them to take stronger stands on my behalf. Though most of the time we talk about the weather, our jobs, and our homes, underneath it all we are still talking about our love for each other.

When I last went back home, I gave my mother, my father, and both my sisters gift subscriptions to *Out in the Mountains*. Maybe they will pick up some of the details of our lives and see the ways in which we are similar and the ways in which we are different. The initial reviews have been positive. Let's see if they renew on their own next year.

OITM Update

Recent meetings of the *Out in the Mountains* staff have been packed with news and discussion, some of which we would like to share with our readers.

Most importantly, a recent financial report showed that we are in danger of losing valuable ground monetarily due to the increased size of the paper and a recent rise in the price of printing. Though grant monies have come in, they cannot be used for the actual production of the paper - we continue to rely on advertising revenue and subscription income for those costs.

We have begun a statewide subscription campaign, and we urge our readers to help us stay alive by subscribing if you haven't already. While it is true that the newspaper is available free of charge at a number of locations, we depend on sub-

scription monies to continue that practice. We feel it is essential that we carry on with free distribution, particularly since some of our readers cannot afford subscriptions and/or cannot have the magazine mailed to them at their home addresses.

There is a great need to increase our awareness of events in the southern and eastern parts of the state as well, and we ask that readers please contact us with information or (even better) articles about what's happening out there. Likewise, we are looking for distribution points in those areas; if you know of any, please let us know.

As we expand, we find ourselves becoming swamped with work. More than ever, your input is needed for the continued survival of the paper.

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