

vember 1992, and a February 1993 hearing date in the Supreme Court was scheduled. When they arrived at the courthouse, Jane and Deborah saw the reporters and cameras and wondered who else might be in court that day before they realized that their case was the focus of attention. Prior to their court date, they had discussed what to do about the press. They agreed that, although at that point they wouldn't use their last names, they would talk with reporters. Part of what they wanted to do then, said Deborah, "was to let other people know about it."

Jane described their "fifteen minutes in the spotlight." They received several call from the press, and agreed to talk with a reporter from the *New York Times*. Since the reporter indicated that the editor wouldn't run the story without last names, and they saw no compelling reason for trying to maintain anonymity, they agreed to the use of their full names. They had no idea when the article would appear. According to Deborah, "One Sunday morning Jane's sister called and said, You're in the *New York Times* - in the front section." To see their names in the *Times* was, admitted Jane, "a rush." They received several other calls from the media, including the Maury Povich Show and The Jane Whitney Show, which they turned down. They did however talk with Anthony Brooks from National Public Radio. He came up to Vermont and interviewed them for the NPR evening news program, *All Things Considered*.

When asked if she felt that their privacy had been compromised, Jane responded, "The issue becomes larger than the privacy" although she said that it has been a coming out process of sorts for her. "sometimes I think...when I'm out driving around, everybody knows I'm a lesbian. That's sort of

weird." When they saw the story on the news with the headline : Lesbian Mother, "And there was my picture," said Jane, "It was a lot different after that....any barriers that had been there were gone."

And then they waited. Deborah had heard that all the big Supreme Court decisions came down on Fridays, so for a long time they maintained a weekly phone vigil. After awhile they returned to their daily routine, and so when the phone call came on Friday, June 18, 1993, it was a surprise. What had started out as a matter of fact response to a denial of insurance coverage evolved into a precedent setting Supreme Court decision.

The decision of the Vermont Supreme Court that a same sex partner may become the adoptive parent of the natural mother's children was the first by any state appellate or supreme court to address this issue. It reversed the Washington County Probate Court's denial of the two adoption petitions field by Deborah Lashman and Jane Van Buren.

Deborah, the newly adoptive parent, acknowledged that it was wonderful to have the Supreme Court affirm and recognize the relationship that she has always had with her sons. Both she and Jane agreed that the best interests of their children had been served. "all that I wanted," said Jane, "was what should have happened a long time ago. I mean, what's the big deal?"

Jane and Deborah have several friends who are considering filing adoption petitions. All they want is what's best for their children. Perhaps it won't be a big deal. ▼

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