

We are a Family

Maira

Taking a walk after dinner, the kids up ahead on bikes, I want to hold her hand, to reach up her neck with a kiss. I wait till we get to the alcove near the pony, and there while the children collect fallen apples and clover and other favorite pony delights I look for that familiar sparkle, the one that keeps me going through the longest of days. I love her as she gathers me up and steals a kiss, as I feel her body warm and strong against mine. Moments like this I forget that we are different, that it is unusual for two women to love each other, to raise a family together. I see her as my mate in every sense of the word, and it feels natural.

I didn't know what it would be like for my children, having my lover move in with us. She and I spent many long hours discussing the how's, the time it would require for everyone to adjust. But when they all fell in love with her just as easily as I, we weren't all that surprised. Here we are now, finding what was once a lost band is now a family. This is the best we have been together, the most love flowing between us all, ever.

We laugh when our littlest son climbs into our bed and wedges into the warm place between us, calling us his "two mommies". So easily he has shown his love and affection. I see that without the world's prejudices, he loves us as purely as he feels our love for each other. This is not always true with our oldest son, entering those confusing teenage years. He is, at times, uncomfortably aware that his house is different, and must face the age old question, is different OK? But as a family we debate, argue, cry, and laugh along side of each other.

They were all out there together, my lover with the kite string in hand, the flying shark soaring, all three children with

their heads held back, eyes toward the heavens. Maybe the world needs to see our love, to see us so natural, to see us as a family. I reach to hold her hand. She doesn't pull away, but I feel tension as we walk past a couple and their children. We are functioning under an optimistic umbrella that seems to protect. It is staggering to me that so much of what I take for granted, such as loving this woman, is not accepted. Even our daughter can't fathom why we're not able to marry. "But you love each other," she says. In her mind that's good enough. In her heart that's good enough.

Like so many of the issues facing lesbians and gays, being a family brings you right up against the fears of the common mind. I hear how damaging it will be for the children. I hear how confusing it will be for them. Never mind that they love her as much as I do, never mind that when we return from our weekend away it's her they run to, never mind they don't want me anywhere near the laundry room anymore, having put up with years of grey clothes, they love her bright wash. That's the good part, that all in one moment, in a real moment, years of grey can be washed out. I feel that and the children can feel that. We are all drawn together by this love. Quite interesting how that happens when you create a space like we have.

Living as a lesbian couple in Northern Vermont carries its own set of problems and concerns, some shared by all families, some unique. My partner and I are committed not because we have to be, not by blood ties, but by love, by our shared love for our family. As the autumn nights grow cooler, we look forward to nights around the fireplace, the weekends spent winterizing and throwing the football around. We are up against much prejudice. I move my hands around our bodies, asking for light to protect us in these dark times, for

energy to shield us from the cloudy thoughts. But as we sit around the supper table I feel the strength, in our perseverance, in our right to be who we are, in the love that grows like a web between us all. It takes doing it, it takes living it, to expose the old ways of thinking, the old fears. We are a family.

Maira and Mary Jean were wed in a private ceremony October 12, 1991 in Maine.

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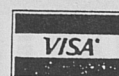
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