

Society's Misfits

Jane Dwinell

On December 12th I had the extraordinary privilege to attend the Flirtations Concert in Burlington. I went with my partner and two children; we volunteered prior to the concert setting up for the post concert reception. The five hours we spent at the Unitarian Universalist Church were filled with fun, laughter, conversation, music and camaraderie. Sayer, age two, and Dana, age five, were welcomed and played with by several people and, unlike many functions we at-

tend, no one seemed to be bothered by their presence. The highlight of the evening for Dana - and her parents - was when Jon and The Flirts dedicated the song "Everything Possible" to her and Sayer (Dana and Jon have had a penpal relationship for the past year and a half).

For me, the evening also brought home my invisibility as a bisexual. In both the hetero and homosexual worlds I am perceived as different than I really am; both assume that I am straight, especially when I appear with my male partner, who is also bisexual. Having moved out of the lesbian separatist world eight years ago when I fell in love with Sky, the evening was also bittersweet. I miss being part of that sub-culture, and my sadness is most acutely felt when I attend concerts - the women's music scene was such an important part of my life for so many years. Concerts provided a safe haven to be myself, to be out, to be affectionate in public with my lover, to be with others like me - something that was desperately missing in my everyday life.

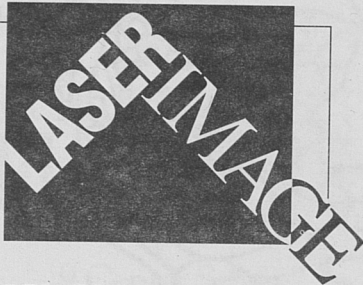
I was so full of so many feelings after the evening that I was curious how Sky felt - after all, he had appeared to be part of an apparent model nuclear family in a crowd of mostly gay men and lesbians. It was fine with him and completely comfortable. As he put it so bluntly, "I was just another misfit in a room of society's misfits."

Then I realized the implications of his comment. It's true - we, Sky and I, are considered "misfits" by mainstream society because the lifestyle choices we have made detour so abruptly from "expectations". We have chosen to co-parent our children by arranging our other interests and activities around our children and other parent's schedule. Dana and Sayer do not go to daycare or babysitters; they

are with one or the other parent most of the time - and with their father as much (if not more) than their mother. They go to meetings with us, on trips, to concerts - they participate in our away-from-home lives as much as possible. Many people are offended by their presence; a precious few welcome them at court, at the nursing home, at Town Meeting. Our second misfit choice, an extension of the first, is that Dana and Sayer homeschool.

Our third and fourth misfit choices also blend together - we are committed to doing for ourselves as much as possible - raising our food, providing our power, doing our own carpentry and repair work - and thereby do not commit ourselves full-time to a career and the income that would come with it. We live on about \$10,000 a year, sometimes even less. We do have professions and take pride in our work, but our main time spent is with our children; even in this year of politicians babbling on about "family values", such a choice is not looked upon favorably by our consumer-centered, money-desiring society. These four choices only begin to touch in our total "misfit-ness."

Just as I felt I had to spend a lot of time speaking up for my sexual, and emotional, choice ten years ago, I find myself doing the same thing now with people who don't understand why Sky and I don't have full-time careers in our particular fields ("You have so many talents, you're just wasting your time at home with your kids") with incomes to match. We are simply following our hearts 'just as all of us are with our gay, lesbian or bisexual expressions - in reality, we have no choice; we must be the way we are, whether society likes it or not. I thank The Flirtations for expressing that thought so eloquently and deliciously with their music, their laughter and their words. ▼



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