

Daddy's Roommate

Continued from page 1

Frank touching Daddy's shoulder). Frank is also depicted putting suntan lotion on Daddy's back at the beach.

The book explains this relationship as follows: "Mommy says Daddy and Frank are gay. At first I didn't know what that meant. So she explained it. Being gay is just one more kind of love. And love is the best kind of happiness. Daddy and his roommate are very happy together, and I'm happy too!"

In a telephone interview, Raiche described how threatening this experience has been to her young boys, which she attributes to the content of the story itself rather than to the family's response to the subject matter: "My nine-year-old son has asked me, 'Mommy, if you and Daddy fight does that mean that you will get a divorce? Will I end up with two Daddies? I don't want two Daddies, I want a Mommy and a Daddy.'" Raiche also explained that her younger son is now concerned that if his cousin comes over to spend the night they can't share a bed, lest people think they are gay. "Children are not at the emotional or developmental stage to understand these issues. As a parent these issues are hard to explain. These are reality questions for kids, but too complicated to explain to a six-year-old."

Raiche wants to see library materials segregated into "age appropriate" sections, on a basis comparable to the ratings of motion pictures that have been widely accepted as a parenting aid. Raiche met with Paula

Baker, Director of the Rutland Free Library, who explained that the Library had earlier adopted both the Freedom to Read Statement and the Library Bill of Rights established by the American Library Association. The Library Bill of Rights specifically precludes the kind of segregation proposed by Raiche, for one of its fundamental tenets is that library materials should not be restricted on the basis of age.

Baker noted that "the Rutland Free Library's policy prohibits removal or having materials made inaccessible because someone finds them dangerous or unpalatable or offensive." Raiche has lobbied the Board of the Rutland Free Library to rescind this policy, which she has suggested is old and out-of-date.

Raiche stated that it is unfortunate that the piece that originally caught her attention had homosexual content, for her campaign has been misinterpreted as an attack against the gay community. Raiche believes that books that depict body parts are equally as disturbing as those that support alternate lifestyles. "If it had been a book about where babies come from, what would people have said then?" From Raiche's perspective, this is a "parental, not a political issue. I didn't mean to offend or insult the gay community."

The *Rutland Herald* on June 4th ran the following statement: "Raiche says she has been unfairly attacked as a homophobe. But she also concedes that she has rethought her own views on homosexuality in recent weeks and has concluded that she is less accepting of homosexuality than she once thought she was." In her interview for *Out in the Mountains*, Raiche asserted that she was misrepresented in that statement. In discussing her views of homosexuality, though, Raiche stated, "the American Psychological Association says that homosexuality is now normal and you're probably born with it. But the APA is also trying to normalize pedophilia."

Raiche's crusade, though having by far the highest visibility of recent efforts around Vermont, is certainly not unique. *Daddy's Roommate* has also been challenged in Sherburne, and libraries around the state have been reviewing their commitments to the Library Bill of Rights. One disturbing element of recent statewide efforts to address censorship issues in our public libraries, apparent in the Rutland case, is the linking of homosexuality with

pornography in these debates. Three trustees of Marshfield's Jaquith Public Library resigned this past December after establishing a more balanced collection was cited as justification for making available the book *Two Teenagers in Twenty*, a collection of essays by gay and lesbian teenagers. The (Barre-Montpelier) *Times Argus* quoted one resigning trustee, Donna Metcalf, as saying she resigned because she "could not support the 'fullest' efforts of the librarian in resisting censorship of library materials," but in a letter to the *Hardwick Gazette*, Metcalf elaborated on her resignation as opposition to the availability of pornography in our public libraries.

Raiche denies that her efforts are part of an organized protest against the availability of gay literature in our public libraries, but acknowledges that she has been supported by the local Catholic Church and Family Friendly Libraries, an organization founded by Karen Jo Gounaud of Fairfax County, Virginia, who is described in the June 4th *Rutland Herald* as "a mentor to religious groups that want homosexual literature removed from public libraries." Gounaud is "part of a nationwide effort by conservative Christians to fight homosexuality, particularly by influencing libraries and schools. Family Friendly Libraries encourages libraries to 'aid in the preservation of the traditional family.'" Gounaud has also been quoted as saying that Family Friendly Libraries "believes that censorship is sometimes 'perfectly legal and constitutional.'"

See related stories "Public Hears Daddy's Roommate," page 7, and "Daddy's Author and the Rutland Controversy," page 9. ▼



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