

Lesbians Continued from Page 1

The happy pair, who wear similarly styled engagement rings, will be considered single for the rest of their lives because they are lesbians.

Burke-Madell

Although they consider their relationship special and unique, they are not so different from straight couples. As is common today, they plan to hyphenate their married names, becoming Maureen and Robin Burke-Madell. And they have many of the same concerns heterosexual couples do.

"Just like any couple, we have to balance school and our relationship, which isn't the easiest thing to do," said Maureen, noting that until Robin graduated last term, both women were full-time students. Now Robin has a full-time job.

"And we have to do the same exact everyday things that other couples are doing," Robin added. "We're worrying about

shopping and dinner and studying. It's very typical."

With the upcoming wedding, Robin and Maureen face the same huge bills other couples encounter when they get married.

"We're doing everything that is traditional to do at weddings," Robin said. "It's hundreds of dollars on the wedding out of our own pockets. We're not getting any support financially from our parents."

Support and recognition for a relationship is one area where similarities between different-sex and same-sex couples end. While parents of straight newlyweds are generally excited and happy, parents of gay and lesbian couples often begrudge that support.

"I think my mom is somewhat concerned about me getting married," Maureen said. "She says it has to do with my age — I'm 22 — and I partly be-

lieve that, but I partly don't believe that. She comes from a Catholic background and that has influenced her opinion.

"She tries," Maureen added. "I can see efforts that she

makes and improvements. But it's still not the kind of support that I would like a mother to give a daughter and I would think a mother would give a daughter."

Less freedom

It's not just a lack of parental support that gay and lesbian couples suffer, said Robin.

Turn to Lesbians, Page 8

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