

MARRIED & GAY:

by Roseanne King

"The Kinsey report of 1948 really let us guys off the hook. It said homosexuality was just a phase, something we'd get over. I'd had homosexual experiences, but felt they were just a phase and I got married anyway."

Earl, gay father of two teenage girls, was married for eight years. His divorce followed his realization of his sexual identity and his resolve to act on it.

What percentage of married people in the U.S. are gay and why did they marry? Did they tell their spouses? Do they lose contact with their husbands or wives and their children if the spouse discovers the truth? The questions are intriguing and the answers profoundly affect many gay people and their families.

According to Brenda Maddox, author of *Married and Gay: An Intimate Look at a Different Relationship*, Dr. Albert Kinsey's study showed 11 percent of married males between 21 and 25 as having "incidence" of homosexual experience. Around age 45, that incidence dropped to about 2 percent. Kinsey acknowledged that the rate of activity was probably much higher in married men as a result of their reluctance to report incidents which might endanger their marriages.

Lesbianism, and lesbians in heterosexual marriages, was finally addressed in 1953 with publication of Kinsey's *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*. That study maintained that lesbians were less likely to marry into straight relationships than were gay males, and that homosexuality affected 13 percent of the total female population. That contrasts with Kinsey's 1948 estimate that 37 percent of white American males had at least one homosexual contact resulting in orgasm.

Married gays have existed throughout history and the list includes such notables as Julius Caesar and various other Roman emperors and English kings Edward II and James II, called "James the Queen." Edward fathered four children and James had seven. Tchaikovsky, Fredrick the Great, John Maynard Keynes and Tyrone Power would be included in the listing. Letters from Eleanor Roosevelt to her friend Lorena Hickok lead to definite speculation that their relationship was more than platonic.

Why did they and others like them marry into heterosexual relationships? Reasons differ from case to case, but strong and similar elements enter into many.

Marriage has been pushed as a cure for homosexuality for many years by well-meaning and misled counselors, clergy and families. The young gay male is advised to find himself a wife and settle down with a house in the suburbs, a double car garage and 2.5 children. Earl and others have believed their feelings for people of the same sex were a "phase" in sexual development.

Maddox quotes a divorced gay man who advises women suspecting their prospective mates of being gay to "run in the opposite direction. They make terrible husbands. Nobody has ever abandoned homosexuality because of marriage in my experience. Nobody. They always revert to it. It is stronger."

Victoria (not her real name) says that same strength of feeling holds true for the lesbian in a straight marriage. Involved in a heterosexual relationship for over a year, her identity as a gay woman is beginning to reassert itself at the expense of her relationship with her husband.

"Over the months, my feelings have changed. The feelings are stronger, especially lately," she said. She recently became involved with another woman and her husband makes frequent and angry accusations about their relationship. Victoria did not tell him she had had an intense, year-long affair with a woman immediately before becoming involved with him.

A major motivation for Victoria's marriage was "the fear of what people would think. It was the image of being with a man, the idea I would be seen as more of a woman.

It hasn't worked out."

Those people who are aware of Victoria's recent lesbian involvement "don't talk about it." The fear of adverse opinion has lessened for her and she now says she believes she "might be able to work it out with my mom."

The desire to be a parent is one of the major reasons gay people get married. Earl said, "It was a big factor. I'm very parental and I love kids."

Children also mean it becomes more difficult to get out of a heterosexual marriage. Victoria will face that if she decides to come out, her baby is about a year old and she fears physical abuse and the possibility he might try to take the child. She worries, too, about the effect the disclosure and related trouble with her husband would create for the child.

Divorced gay parents do run into problems when their former mates discuss their identities with the children. Earl's daughters are "very supportive." Things might have been different if his ex-wife and her current husband had had their way.

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The husband wanted to adopt the girls following his marriage to Earl's ex-wife, but Earl refused to allow it. He had unlimited visitation following the divorce but was "hauled back into court" following his wife's remarriage. The visitations were limited and became "very difficult."

When the girls were in elementary school, their mother told them it would be in their best interest to allow their new stepfather to adopt them. "Your Daddy's a queer. If your friends find out, you won't have any friends," she told them.

Their positive reactions to his lifestyle are partially due to the fact that they saw their father "in a very warm, loving relationship with another man. My lover and I were together 11 years," Earl said.

If the desire for children makes gay people

