

In the interest of children

For same-sex couples, having children is rarely haphazard. P.M. Scott discusses "differences" which may confront both parents and children as they seek to create safe and secure environments.

B Y P M S C O T T

Homosexuals" and "children" are not words one often sees positively linked. Myths of recruitment, pedophilia, promiscuity, mental instability (turning the unsuspecting into raging, discontented faggots or bull dykes; having aberrant sexual interest in young children; abnormally frequent, unreasonably diverse sexual liaisons; mental health which is tenuous at best), these haunt our every turn. It was said recently in Salem that homosexuals have no rights. That includes, in particular, the right to have children. And because of the myths and stereotypes associated with homosexuality, disapproval of lesbians and gay men as parents arises even within our own community.

Four years together as a couple, 27 and 31 years old respectively, with a stable employment history, a successful business, money in the bank. *You* want the strong ties of a family circle; your lover wants to make you happy. The two of you decide to get pregnant. Given this scenario as heterosexuals, no one would question the decision to have children. As a gay man or lesbian, however, one can lose friends,

family.

It's a momentous decision. Rumor abounds with tales of how "the sins of the parents are visited upon the children." Boys with no male role models become confused, ineffectual young men who get sand kicked in their faces. Girls become tattooed, truck driving freaks who chew tobacco and would just as soon run over a man as look at him. It's no more likely that these extremes will derive from same-sex parents than from heterosexuals, but people still seem demoralized at the thought of a lesbian or gay couple having children.

"I felt it everywhere," one woman exclaimed. "You don't know what your're getting yourself into; lesbians don't stay together; how can you do this!" I mean, we did not get a lot of respect for our decision. People didn't have a lot of confidence in our relationship and our ability to carry on being parents. My family thought it was irresponsible."

Most lesbians and gays choosing to be parents have wrestled long hours with the criticisms, problems, stereotypes. They consult books, organizations, other parents, trying to scent out every eventual-ity. Finally, as one lesbian couple said,



"Sure, there were considerations. We realized we'd be raising a child, and his family wouldn't be accepted by mainstream culture: His grandmother is a middle class lady and she can't just show a picture of her grandson and his family. But we figured everybody has some 'difference.'"

Recognizing the difficulties, lesbian and gay parents have decided not to be put off by them.

Impregnation techniques vary — from intercourse with a select, trusted friend to artificial insemination in a mainstream institutional setting. Birthing, too, varies. Many women choose home births when possible, preferring familiar surroundings and the avoidance of moralistic hassles. With your own personal, respected and respectful physician, however, mainstream institutions can be perfectly fine.

For one couple, undergoing an emergency (but not unexpected) caesarean at OHSU, "All the doctors, all the nurses, they were all women. In fact, the only man in the entire operating room was the anaesthesiologist. They were wonderful." The fact that they were a lesbian couple was known and caused no perceptible ripple. Both parents were in the operating room and after delivery the baby could be watched over and petted. Apparently we have, indeed, for now, (and in select settings), come a long way.

Gay and lesbian life is often considered an alternative lifestyle. Certainly institutions of mainstream society are not just automatically accepted; experimental approaches are welcome. Family relationships fall into that category. Friends become family, an extended family to our children. Friends are often called upon or volunteer to provide services normally expected of parents, including pick-up and care of children after school or due to illness. Our friends are counselors for ourselves and additional translators of an adult world to our children. Often a child has many parents, and a diversity of experiences.



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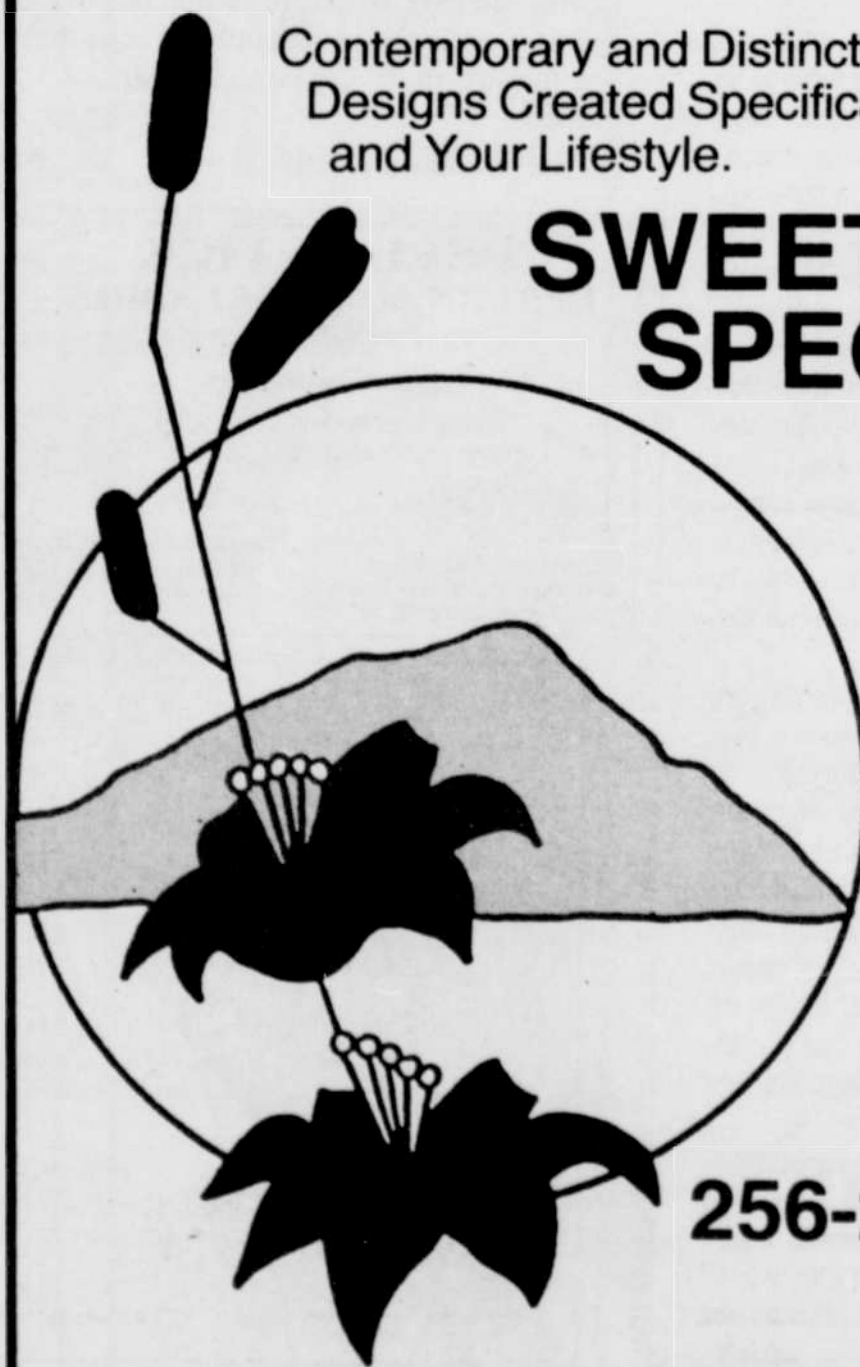
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