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10TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL



Finding kinship with a colleague

by Anndee Hochman

It began over a beer. Renée LaChance and Jay Brown were both working at Portland's gay newspaper, the Cascade Voice. They spent frequent after-work gripe sessions at Wilde Oscar's, a gay bar a few blocks from the downtown waterfront, sharing frustrations about their jobs and the paper.

Soon the meetings became planning sessions—for a new gay and lesbian newspaper. Sometimes Jay and Renée would sit on the lawn near the Willamette River, with Renée's dog Punky in tow, and toss ideas back and forth. They scoured a thesaurus for suggestions on the name of their new publication, checking the listings for "out."

Leak out. Get out. Come out. Way out. Just out.

Just Out. That was it. They recruited Rupert Kinnard, a graphic designer, to design the prototype and began to publish a 24-page paper twice a month on a skeletal budget, from an office so small they had room for only one desk. Jay sold his antique couch for \$300 so they could pay the first month's rent and telephone bills.

Workplace groups can replicate the worst of family life—rigid hierarchies, power struggles, communication sticky as a clogged rainpipe. Even in the best situations, co-workers are often transient figures in our landscape. The project—the play we're producing, the fund-raiser, the campaign—defines the terms and depth of our attachment.

But sometimes there is more. Renée and Jay slipped noiselessly over that boundary between work and family into limitless terrain.

They made an incongruous pair. Jay was tall

and gangly, with gray hair fringing both sides of a bald spot, gold wire-rims and a puckish face pitted with acne scars. Renée was short, stocky and 24 years younger. At first, they fought. Renée wanted to place an ad on an eighth page slotted for news. Jay insisted they needed the space to cover an important event. They made a stubborn, sometimes cranky match, yelling at each other in the tiny office or out on the ratty wooden platform they generously called their "loading dock."

But if Jay and Renée clashed over editorial matters, they agreed completely on the subject of family. Both were ostracized by their relatives, although Jay mailed a copy of the paper to his parents each issue. For each of them, biological family churned up feelings of loss, anger or the farce of having to pretend. They made a point of shunning traditional holidays. Instead, they celebrated their birthdays, Lesbian and Gay Pride



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