

reminiscent of my own.

Sibbett: I had Candace Gingrich presiding over my ceremony also. [Laughter.]

**How was working with Newt Gingrich's lesbian half-sister?**

Sibbett: Fabulous! We met her at the GLAAD Awards last year and very briefly had this little photo opportunity with her. It was fun to reacquire ourselves and to actually sit down and chat for a long time. She is incredible. She is definitely the kind of gal we'd hang out with all the time.

Hecht: She's extremely funny and a great improviser. She kept making up parts of the ceremony when the camera was rolling, just to, you know, goose up her part. It was very funny. She was wonderful.

**Did either of you ever hesitate before accepting your respective roles?**

Sibbett: No. Not for a moment. Not for a moment.

Hecht: No. I think, actually, if the writing was really not up to par, you would be afraid of stepping in. But anything that's well written, you love. Playing characters like these has been amazing for both of us.

**What kind of research have you done?**

Sibbett: Well, Jessica and I try to sleep together as often as possible. [Laughter.]

Hecht: And then we talk about the experience a lot. [Laughter.] What kind of research do we do? Let's see, well...

Sibbett: Research? Gosh, you know, we're just playing people, really. I don't think there's any research to really do.... As Jessica said, the writing is really so well crafted. It's not as if we're uttering words that might be incorrect.

**Do fans of the show recognize and stop you on the street?**

Sibbett and Hecht: Yes.

Sibbett: They're always very positive about our characters: "Oh, we love your characters! They're so great!"

Hecht: The thing about television is you never know who's going to be on that week. I guess *TV Guide* helps. [Laughter.] But in general, people always ask, "When are you guys going to be back on?" And people are really psyched about the wedding. It makes me feel so welcome that they're really invested in what happens to us.

**Isn't it fascinating to have your work become part of the country's consciousness?**

Sibbett: Yeah. You don't really think about it. You kind of think about it as a job, and then suddenly, people are coming up and saying to you, "Thank you for making a difference in our lives." I had this woman come up to me at one of my friends' birthday parties for their kids and say, "Thank you. I've never watched the show, but I've heard about you and I am so grateful that you are doing this part." Wow! Gosh, I'm really making an impact on some

people.

**What other feedback have you received from gay and lesbian viewers?**

Sibbett and Hecht: Positive.

Sibbett: They're just grateful to have some positive role models, people they can look up to.

Hecht: Somebody—in fact, maybe it was David [Crane]—said that he had spoken to a young girl whose parents are two moms, and the little girl said, "Hey, I saw someone like me on TV." And it was Ben, you know? It was great. Also, I got this letter that was really nice from a young college guy. [He] wrote me this very articulate letter about feeling that he had never been comfortable with the idea of lesbianism. Seeing these characters on television really changed his mind.

**Tell me about how your own friendship has deepened since you began working on the show. Did you know each other at all before?**

Sibbett and Hecht: No.

Sibbett: It's such a gift that we got to meet one another. We adore one another. She's a wonderful friend.

Hecht: Janie is, too. There are a lot of interesting things in our friendship that are in some ways linked to the way you have a romance. Jane is very spiritual and has these great beliefs. And you know, when you get involved in a relationship with somebody, you want to know how they think and what's interesting to them and how they perceive the world. That's a big dynamic in our friendship, and I think it has, of course, been really beneficial to have that underlying whatever we do on the set.

Sibbett: We do deeply love one another.

Hecht: We hang out like a married couple when we're on the set. It's so funny. We go to our dressing room and have a little snack together. [Laughter.] "Let's go have dinner." "Let's go have a snack." "Are you warm enough, honey?" We're getting matching jogging suits. [Laughter.]

**What have you learned about the gay and lesbian community from your involvement with *Friends*?**

Sibbett: I think we had a pretty good feel for it. We certainly hadn't gone to a lot of the gay and lesbian functions before.

Hecht: The performers—different people who have come out, and different people who still feel like they can't for whatever number of reasons—that's been quite affecting to me. To see how many people have this really vital part of their own existence that has to be hidden a little bit. I mean, I may

sound naive, but that's been a constant source of surprise.

Sibbett: And we have great empathy for those people who can't fully be who they wish they could be, who can't come out for one reason or another. It breaks my heart. I am so glad that [Carol and Susan] have come out. Wouldn't that be the best dream: for everyone to finally realize who they truly, fully are, and be embraced by society in that?

**Do you see yourselves as activists for gay and lesbian rights?**

Sibbett: Hum. Never thought of it that way; simply as artists, basically, just doing our job, and

We're gentle activists. [Laughter.]

Hecht: We really feel so fortunate to have been able to make any kind of contribution to this cause. It really is a cause. Janie had this experience of going to an honorary event in July. [To Sibbett:] I guess you can tell exactly what it was.

Sibbett: It was the Gay and Lesbian Parents' Coalition International, and it was incredibly moving for me. I had to get up and receive an award on behalf of the show. Jessica was getting married that night, and David was on Fire Island, so I had to go and receive the award and give a speech. It was the most beautiful evening I think I've ever had in terms of people and their love and their commitment and their strength and bravery. I was so moved, I was so moved. Moved to tears. It was really an incredible night.

Hecht: They gave her a standing ovation.

Sibbett: Well... [Laughter.] I think they were giving it for the whole show. [To Hecht:] And you were included in that.

**I'm keeping my fingers crossed that Carol, Susan and Ben will be spun off into a show of their own.**

Sibbett: From your mouth to God's ears. [Laughter.] Jessica and I would love to work together like that.

**What would you like to see as far as Carol, Susan and baby Ben's future on the show?**

Sibbett: Spin-off. Spin-off. Spin-off. Now you've got me thinking of a spin-off.... Obviously, we hope that we get to play this out more and see how the family grows, how the dynamic works with bouncing the birth father.

Hecht: I think one key thing that Janie just said was, "how the family

grows." I actually would love to have more children as part of our family unit. I think it would be really interesting to see how Ross deals with that.... Also, whether or not the fact that we've gotten married makes him feel sort of more left out of the equation. And I love being with all the *Friends* together. I love that.

Sibbett: Because that definitely pushes buttons for everyone else, too. I mean, certainly with Courteney's character. She's feeling her clock ticking. We are a shining example of a beautiful relationship that the rest of the *Friends* can aspire to.

**Isn't it marvelous that Carol and Susan have the most stable romantic relationship on the show?**

Hecht: [Laughter.] A lot of people say that.

Sibbett: [Laughter.] We're the only ones who can hold it together. We're the smart ones.

*Friends* airs Thursday nights at 8 pm on NBC.



Friends co-executive producers David Crane, Marta Kauffman and Kevin S. Bright

hopefully opening up people to a greater truth: that we're all one.

Hecht: Yeah. "Activist" is such an aggressive word...

Sibbett: Active. It's an active word.

Hecht: If you look at it on a purely literal level, we are like voices. We speak the words of people who very often don't get a voice in popular entertainment. That's a pretty aggressive thing to do.

Sibbett: I don't think either of us considers ourselves activists, although we heartily support everything that we're doing and the gay and lesbian community. We're not out marching and stomping, but we go to as many of the events as we can.

**In many ways you're doing work that is as significant as that of people who are out there marching and stomping.**

Hecht: That's so kind of you to say. You want to do all that you can.

Sibbett: And we wish we could do more....

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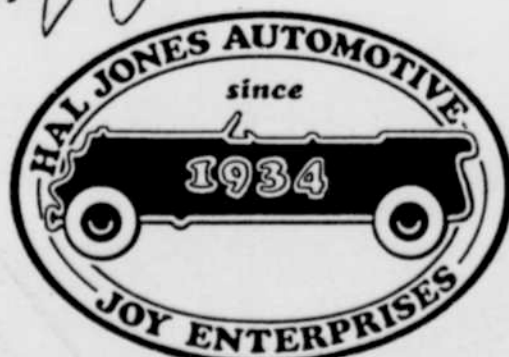
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