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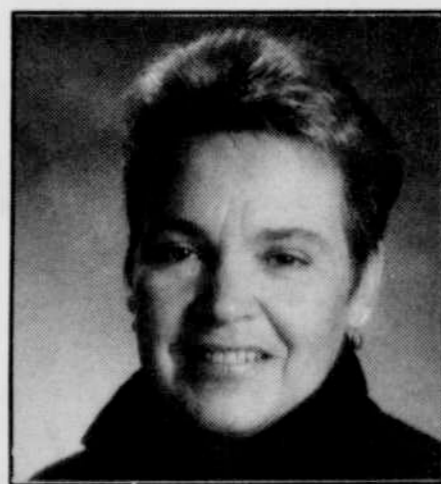


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NATIONAL news

FOSTER'S NEXT ROLE: MOTHERHOOD

While the mysterious Oscar-winning actress is notoriously tight-lipped about her personal life in general—and sexuality in particular—Reuters reports that in early March Jodie Foster dropped a bomb on gossip columnist Liz Smith.

"Yes, I'm pregnant. I couldn't be happier," Foster said. "But no, I'm not going to discuss the father, the method or anything of that nature."

Foster told Smith she plans to be a single mother. A child star by the time she was eight, the actress was herself raised by a single mother.

Foster, 35, is reportedly in her first trimester. She is currently producing three movies, including one aptly entitled *The Baby Dance*.



QUEER CHARACTERS KNOW NO BORDERS

Conventional wisdom holds that there's not much available in the United States that's not also available in Canada, and vice versa.

According to the *Toronto Sun*, that wisdom now holds true for lesbian television characters: In February, the Canadian show *Traders* unveiled a plot twist involving character Sally Ross (Sonja Smits) and an old flame, Rita Hutchison (Martha Burns).

Traders' co-executive producer Hart Hanson told the *Sun* that Rita and Sally will offer audiences an on-screen embrace and kiss in a public place, but there will be no sex for the duo—"depicted or implied," he stressed.

Though few predict the lesbian story line on *Traders* will generate as much controversy as *Ellen's* outing, Hanson told the *Sun*, "We may get letters up the wazoo."

LESBIANISM MAY BE DETERMINED IN UTERO

Researchers say they have found the first strong evidence of a physical difference between lesbians and heterosexual women—a finding that the inner ears of lesbians work more like those of men.

According to an Associated Press report, the discovery adds new support to the theory that



sexual orientation may be determined before birth.

Researchers at the University of Texas at Austin published study results March 3 in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. Their interpretation of the data is that the inner ears of lesbians have undergone "masculinization," probably from hormone exposure before birth.

"Their auditory centers have been masculin-

ized and the presumption is that so have the sites in the brain that direct sexual preference," says Dennis McFadden, the lead author of the study.

Dr. Michael Bailey of Northwestern University agrees that this compelling research may be "consistent with the biological origin of lesbianism."

The inner ear difference between lesbian and heterosexual women was detected by measuring the function of the cochlea, a key sound amplifier in the inner ear. The test McFadden used measures a very slight sound that the cochlea makes in response to a soft clicking sound.

Generally, the cochlea amplifier in women is more sensitive than in men, giving women an increased ability to detect very soft sounds in a very quiet room, he says. Females, with their more sensitive cochlea, respond more powerfully to the test than do men.

To test for differences between the sexes, the researchers recruited more than 200 adults divided into four groups: lesbians, gay men, heterosexual women and heterosexual men. The sexual orientation of the subjects was determined by questionnaire, and some from each of the four groups were later identified as bisexual.

The results indicated that lesbians' click responses were significantly weaker than those of heterosexual women. The signal was weaker still for all males, both gay and straight. Bisexual men and women were in the middle, although researchers say there were not enough subjects in that category to draw firm conclusions.

MEDICAL GROUP REJECTS GLMA BOOTH

In a decision that critics say highlights the reasons why some lesbians may not receive adequate medical care, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists has rejected a request by the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association for exhibit space at the group's annual conference.

After waiting five months for the decision, the San Francisco-based GLMA, a national organization of gay and lesbian physicians, received a letter March 3 stating, "Your service would not benefit or be of interest to the majority of our membership."

GLMA President Michael Horberg says, "We are outraged that a physicians' organization dedicated to improving women's health care would not understand the importance of educating its members about the specific health care needs of lesbians. Every ACOG physician is undoubtedly already treating women who are lesbians, and the information that we can provide to these physicians can help ensure that these patients receive quality health care."

GLMA's request for exhibit space was part of its ongoing work to increase awareness about gay and lesbian health issues at medical conferences. ACOG's event was selected because many gynecologists are unaware that lesbians have specific medical needs and because ACOG is the nation's leading group of obstetricians and gynecologists.

"Lesbians often don't obtain gynecological services because they fear encountering homophobia from their gynecologist, and their health suffers because of this," says Dr. Jocelyn White, a GLMA board member and co-editor of the *Journal of the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association*.

White, who lives and works in Portland, adds, "ACOG's mission is to educate its members about all women's health issues, yet their decision to reject GLMA shows they are willing to ignore the medical needs of millions of women."