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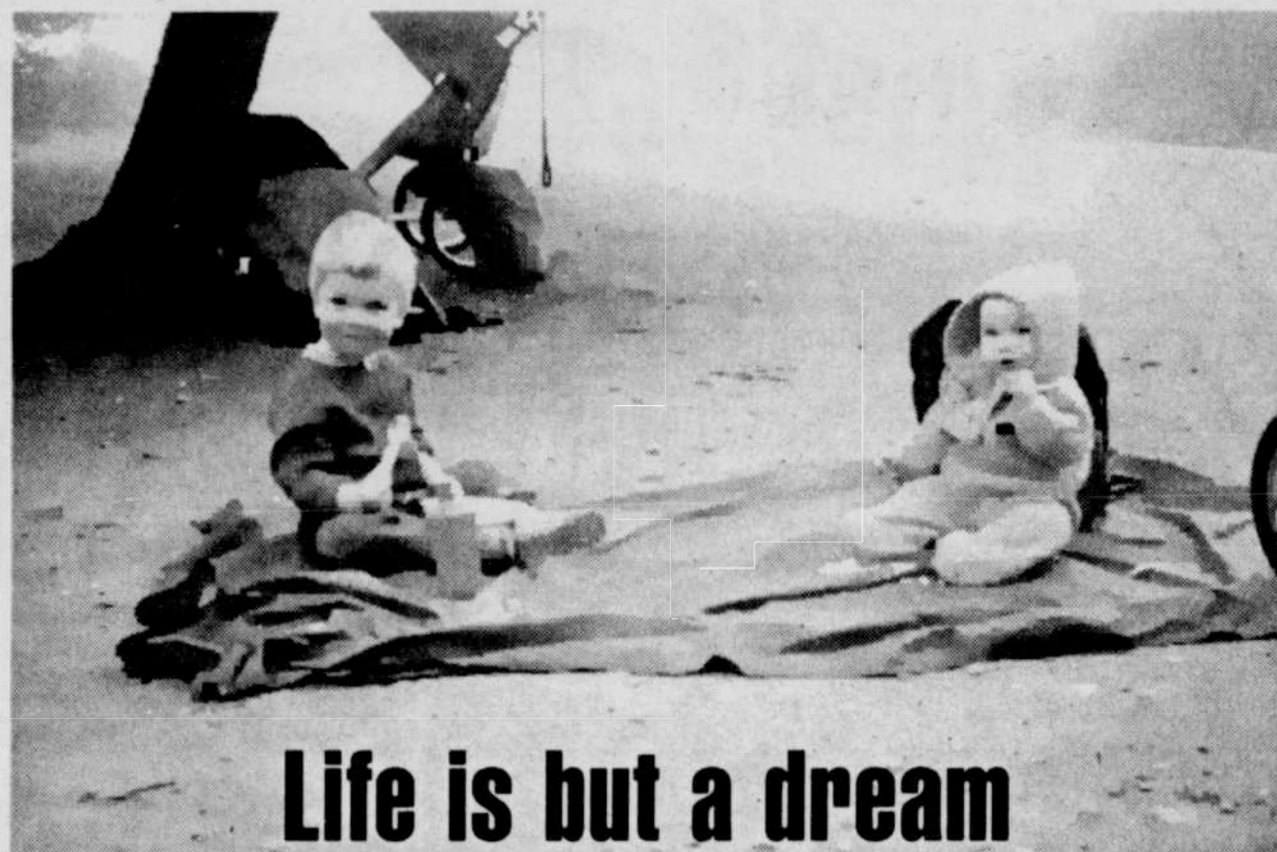
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**HUMOR**



**Life is but a dream**

No Grown-Up Time for this Auntie

If you ever want to have a really great summer vacation—by great I mean coming home with a pint of sand in every pocket—take some kids to the beach. (We dykes who aren't parents miss out on so much, like the sensation of jammy fingers probing our facial orifices.)

Lucky for us, our lesbian-parent friends welcome childless dykes as their kids' Benevolent Aunties. On our weeklong summer vacation we had a good ratio with seven adults to four kids. More than half the adults were Aunties.

Naturally, being lesbians, it was more complex than that. Two of the moms have been a couple for a long time and adopted their two daughters from different orphanages in China. The single mom, who recently started dating one of the Aunties, shares custody of her two girls with the kids' other mom, her ex. (They each conceived by the same donor sperm and adopted the other partner's baby so the sisters are biologically related.)

These things are hard to explain to straight people who always want to know who the father is, but the kids figured it out right away. "Look! They have two moms just like we do!"

If you're going to spend a week in a beach cabin with a herd of girls between 3 and 9, it's good to have as many Benevolent Aunties along as possible. That way when the Aunties take the kids to play on the beach, the moms are freed up to enjoy some—wink, wink—"Grown-Up Time."

One day we Aunties accompanied the kids on a long expedition—collecting feathers and shells and inspecting seagull poop—to give their moms Grown-Up Time. I noticed a certain something in the air when we got back to the cabin, but it was hard to tell for sure because at the beach everything smells like the ocean.

One of the benefits of not having children is that with other people's kids you can play as hard as you want and quit at any time. Unlike real parents, you are always free to take some space when you've had enough. Space is what parents call that brief sliver of time between bedtime and sunrise cartoons.

Little kids sure are fun, though. By some fluke of nature, they never have to go potty before you leave the house. Can there be anything as satisfying as lifting a kid up into the seated position so she can lean over and watch herself pee on the sand? All Aunties quickly learn to carry extra Kleenex around for just such occasions.

And who has really lived until they've put four exhausted kids to bed? Children are great at creative stalling tactics—just one more story, an extra goodnight kiss, another trip to the

**Living OUT**  
 by Sally Sheklow

bathroom, one last glass of water and, inevitably, a performance of "the butt dance."

The best entertainment on our vacation were the kids' evening theatrical productions. These shows involved elaborate introductions, death-defying balancing acts, surprisingly realistic portrayals of circus animals and a whole bunch of cartwheels.

The first show was performed on the cabin deck, with resin chairs set in rows on the lumpy beach grass. Adults were given tickets and had to find the seat with the matching number on it, just like at a real show.

The 8-year-old master of ceremonies introduced the acts and doubled as dog trainer and lion tamer. The youngest abandoned her role for a seat in her mama's lap, so there was no trained seal, as previously announced.

Before bedtime, it was fun to all snuggle up close to each other around the campfire. We sat on the smooth, sun-bleached driftwood logs and dug our bare feet into the cool sand while roasting marshmallows and singing children's songs. I am already considering hypnosis for getting the chorus of "Baby Beluga" out of my head.

But how I loved watching the kids—the girls who see us big, strong, confident dyke friends and lovers as their role models—singing and laughing together. These girls will know a lot more about what women can be than any of us did growing up. And they'll know how cool it is to have lesbians in their lives, despite the inevitable teasing from other kids.

On our last night, we sang around the campfire for hours, long past the kids' bedtime. No one wanted it to end. We took turns saying what our favorite memory was going to be and promised to make a week in August at the beach together our annual tradition.

A roasted marshmallow high kept us going until we launched into the final song of our vacation. Could there be anything sweeter than little girls' and women's voices together belting out a six-part round of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat"? Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily. ☐

SALLY SHEKLOW is now accepting tips for getting sand out of Levi hems at [www.wymprov.com](http://www.wymprov.com).