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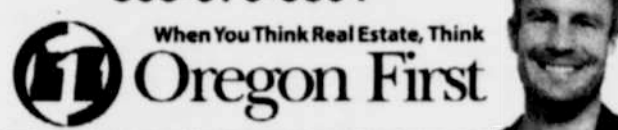
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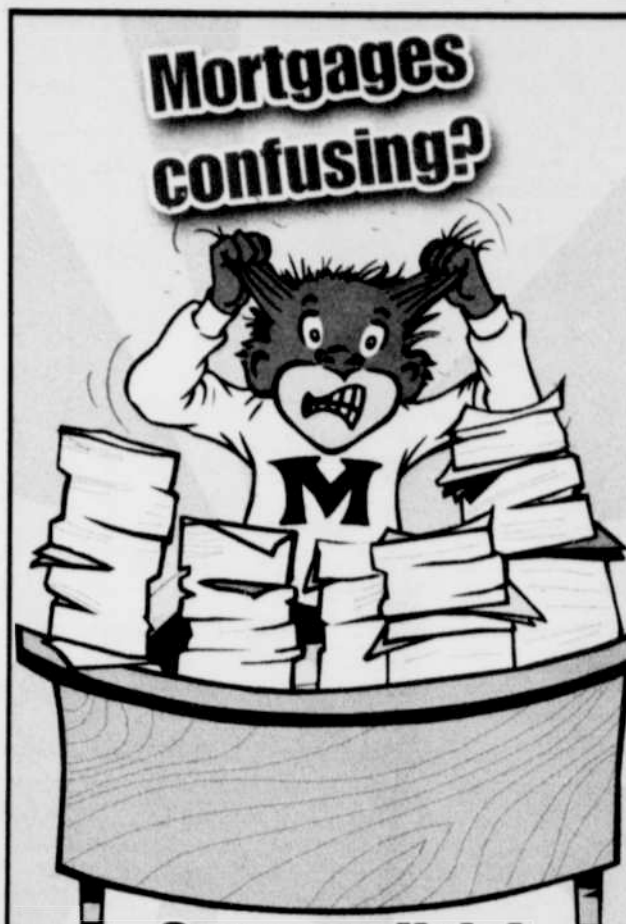
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Who's Your Daddy? Not Me, Please!

DEAR MS. BEHAVIOR:

My old straight friend Debra recently called me and asked me for a strange favor. Her 12-year-old son, Gabe, recently came out to her. Since Gabe doesn't have any gay men (or any men at all, actually) in his life, Debra wants my husband and me to spend time with him, as role models. The thing is that we are not exactly kid-friendly gays, and I am not sure I am (or want to be) a good role model to anyone, really. I suppose we could muster a movie or musical or something at least once or twice, but we might hate it.

I know for a fact that we are not Debra's only gay friends. I don't get very many days off and I don't even know this kid, so I am wondering if I really have to do it. I care about Debra and I don't want to hurt her feelings. But would it be rude to say no to



ms. behavior

BY MERYL COHN

"Debra wants my husband and me to spend time with him, as role models. The thing is that we are not exactly kid-friendly gays, and I am not sure I am (or want to be) a good role model to anyone, really. I suppose we could muster a movie or musical or something at least once or twice, but we might hate it."

spending time with her kid? What would we say? The whole thing feels awkward!

HELP!

— No Daddy Detail Please

DEAR NO DADDY DETAIL PLEASE:

No one is taking away all your days off or

threatening your freedom or roping you into being a faux daddy, either. More likely, Debra likes you and admires your relationship and thinks Gabe would benefit from exposure to you and your husband. Is it possible to feel flattered instead of defensive? Maybe it will help to remember that you're not being

asked to babysit for an infant, and also that you do have the option to say no.

But before you make a firm decision and nix the idea of even an occasional outing, why don't you at least meet the kid? Take him to brunch so he can learn what gays do on the weekends (but don't serve him a mimosa). One little meeting doesn't mean you'll need to have a meaningful relationship with him. But you might actually enjoy yourself or learn something or feel good about making a new friend. Of course there's always the possibility that you'll have a dreadful time, but what's really the worst that could happen?

If you absolutely refuse to even give it a chance, just tell Debra that you're an old curmudgeon. She'll probably know what you mean.

Meryl Cohn is the author of *Do What I Say: Ms. Behavior's Guide to Gay and Lesbian Etiquette*. Send questions or correspondence to msbehavior@aol.com.