



Sarah Kemp

CORNELIUS SWARTY

the willpower to leave.

That story, however, is largely in dispute. The court discredited much of Kemp's testimony, and according to Kemp, Judge Katherine Tennyson refused to hear much of her abuse defense. In an unusually reproachful written decision, presiding Judge Tennyson wrote in December of last year that Kemp was "not believable," and "willing to say what it takes to achieve her desired outcome without regard to the truth."

To that end, the Shineovich side submitted 110 exhibits of evidence to support their claim of a mutual relationship, including proof of Shineovich's participation in the funding of the inseminations, choosing of the children's genetic profiles and in naming Paul, now 7.

Ultimately, that argument prevailed in so much as Shineovich was awarded legal parent status and visitation rights to Agatha and Paul.

Pioneering parent

Shineovich wants to put the fight behind her. She met her daughter Agatha, now 4, for the first time in February of this year. Unsupervised visits began in June. Last month, she took both kids camping on Mount Hood.

"She called me 'mom' right away," said Shineovich. "It's obvious the kids want me in their lives. They're happy."

That happiness comes at a high price. Shineovich now makes regular child support payments as a result of the settlement. But since there were no laws governing the dispute at the time, Shineovich's lawsuit burdened her with roughly \$400,000 in legal expenses.

"What's worth more, being in debt the rest of your life or having your kids?" posed Shineovich. "The laws weren't there so I had to carry the legal costs. But there are now hundreds of non-bio moms who have rights to their children."

In September, Shineovich was a special guest at a lunch honoring pioneering same-sex parents from around the country at this year's National LGBT Bar Association Conference. There, she got a sense of how important her struggle for equality is for others.

"I had tears in my eyes," she said, recalling people who thanked her for her sacrifices. "I met adults who were the children of alienated gay parents. They would come up to me and say they wished these laws existed when they were little."

Moving on

Looking back on it all, Kemp still seems confused about her motivations.

"I have so many regrets," she said. But Kemp has found peace of mind as well. "This family has been living on pins and needles and in the center of chaos for years. It's time for us to be normal and happy and to move on and to stop the fight. We're ready to be happy."

Shineovich holds no ill will either, even after a five-year battle, close to half a million dollars and estrangement from her children.

"I know Sarah loves her children and that she thought her way was best," said Shineovich. "But I opened the door if Sarah and Carmy should ever have children. Everyone should have the opportunity to know and love their parents." ☐

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