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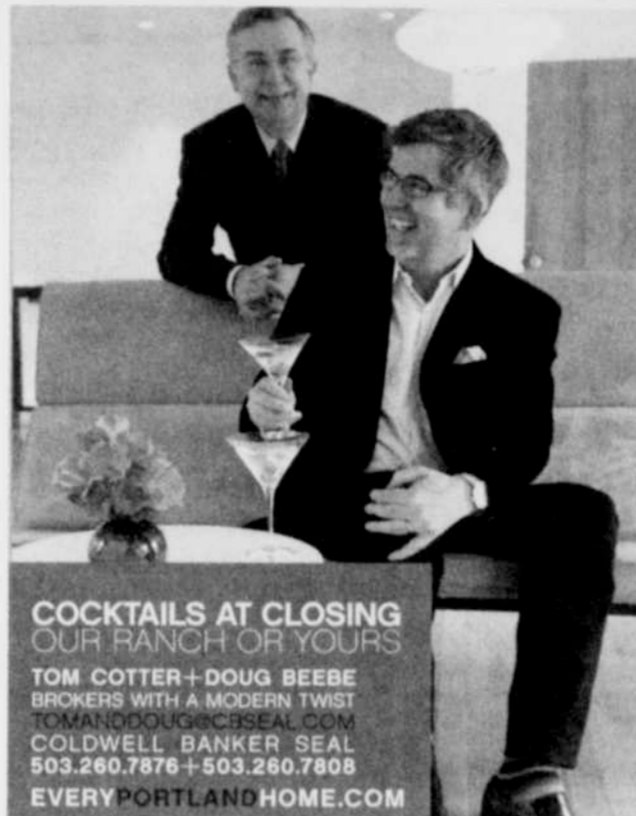
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DEAR MS. BEHAVIOR:

My partner and I are two proud masculine gay men. We are socially and economically successful in the straight world. We've been together for a decade, and are raising a son together, who is now 8 years old. We haven't wanted Jeff to grow up in a gay ghetto, so we've exposed him to a broad range of people and activities, including sports and stock-car racing.

In the last year or so, Jeff has become quite nellie. He flounces, he lisps, he wears scarves on his head, and he watches *Mommie Dearest* over and over. We found a copy of *Oprah* magazine under his pillow. He asked for a formal tea set for his birthday. Plus, we've heard him make his favorite Barbie doll sing the theme song to *Cats*. Jeff is a sweet, wonderful child, but we don't understand why he's so queeny; neither one of us is effeminate.

This feminine behavior is not offensive to us, but we've tried so hard to provide a loving neutral environment for our son, and we worry that outsiders will think that we're teaching Jeff to be gay. What should we do?

—S and R

DEAR S AND R:

If your son showed more masculine signs of being gay (like asking for chaps for Christmas, and hiding copies of *Honcho* under his pillow), you would feel more comfortable, since his queerness would be more closeted. But trying to force him, however subtly, to be the kind of queer you find acceptable will

Nervous About Our Nellie Son



ms. behavior
BY MERYL COHN

We haven't wanted Jeff to grow up in a gay ghetto, so we've exposed him to a broad range of people and activities, including sports and stock-car racing.

In the last year or so, Jeff has become quite nellie. He flounces, he lisps, he wears scarves on his head, and he watches *Mommie Dearest* over and over...

absolutely do nothing positive for your little nellie's self-esteem.

You can try to beat the boy into butchness, send him to a military school where they'll do it for you, or confine him to his room every time he acts faggy. Or, you can do what the best straight parents ultimately do: Accept the fact that you have a lovely poofter for a son, and be grateful for his creativity, sensitivity and sense of style.

Don't worry what "outsiders" think; the ones prone to judging you will do so regardless of what you do or how Jeff acts. And the loving ones will remain that way whether or not your son is a sissy.

Buy Jeff a tea set for his birthday. And throw in a few pretty scarves, just to show him how much you love him.

DEAR MS. BEHAVIOR:

For the past three years, I've been in my first lesbian relationship. I love this woman! But she wants to make love more than I do and feels that I do not want her like she wants me. Now I worry that I am under-sexed or inhibited. Everything else between us is good.

In a previous relationship with a man, I also didn't feel passionate, but I stayed with him because I loved him.

I do want her, but not with the frequency or passion she needs and wants. When we have sex (about once a week), it is intense and exciting. Some negative factors influence our lives together, which affect me. But should those other problems reduce my passion? It doesn't

take hers away. If I really loved her, would I want to make love more to her?

—Confused

DEAR CONFUSED:

First you say, "I love this woman!" Then you wonder if deeper love would make you feel more passionate, even though your tepid response is not specific to this relationship. Does the obstacle to your passion feel physical? Emotional? You say that "negative factors" influence your lives together. This could mean that your mother lives with you, you're broke, the cat pees on the bed, or you have a chronic yeast infection.

You seem to have trouble identifying your feelings, or at least being honest about them. Therapy may help, but you should also rule out a physical problem. If you do nothing, you may lose your relationship, in which case Ms. Behavior would bet that lukewarm sex follows you like a bad dream to the next one. Or, to be less dramatic about it, you may find that you just have a low libido.

But if you are indeed capable of erotic ecstasy, then mediocre sex is a big drag. Ms. Behavior would suggest that you try everything—psychotherapy, an exorcism, prayer, pelvic exercises. This is not just to please your girlfriend, but so that you can see how magnificent unbridled passion will feel to you. Even if it's just for a moment or two.

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