

# Dyke Trek

The next generation

**A** baby's scream pierced the dark theater. I squeezed my wife's hand and whispered, "Let's don't have kids."

Up the aisle trudged two women, whispering embarrassed apologies for their fussing infant.

"OK," Wifey squeezed back, like she always does.

We frequently affirm our non-parenting intentions even though it's been years since our reproductive systems have done more than get us into *women-only* events and pelvic exams. Guppies have more maternal instinct – and they eat their young.

For a million reasons, neither of us opted for the parenting path. It's hard enough taking care of our cats; how on earth would we manage childcare? Not to mention explaining sex, insurance or the electoral college.

It's not that we don't like kids. Our closest friends are moms, and we adore their children. We make treasure hunts, host birthday parties and sit in rapt attention at endless living room theatrical productions. But when it's time to set limits, reinforce boundaries or otherwise lay down parental law, we're outta there.

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Neither of us wants that responsibility, and not just because we're queer. Lots of same-sex couples have babies – although you'd never know it from reading our town's daily paper, which refuses to run birth announcements naming both parents when they're two men or two women. (If you find that shocking and/or appalling, feel free join those of us who've cancelled our subscriptions in protest: 485-1234.)

Despite lack of acknowledgement from our Neanderthal newspaper, same-sex partnerships can and do spawn. Gay and lesbian parents are everywhere – birthing centers, KidSports, the principal's office. I'm in awe of their fortitude to face not only bigotry, but also the requisite tantrums, infections and unidentified sticky objects.

**W**e'd made it clear to the cosmos – no kids for us. Having children "by accident" is generally a heterosexuals-only occurrence. Yet it came to pass, in the mysterious divine scheme of things, that Wifey and I – two dykes resolute in our non-contact with spermatazoa – would welcome into our holy (but still not legally recognized) union an unexpected child. A young woman, actually. She was nearly 18 when she arrived.

My great niece, my brother's granddaughter, needed to get away from her homophobic family. Connecting with me had been her dream since the moment she realized she "liked girls." Now she was ready to set out on her own. She hopped a bus to Eugene the minute she graduated high school – OK, three hours later, but only because that was the soonest scheduled Greyhound. She was guided to us by her mom, who – displaying typical Sheklow-family appreciation of diversity – told her, "Eugene's a lesbian town. You're not going near that place." Such is the motherly counseling that nurtured this child's soul.

Wifey and I found ourselves in the typical expectant parent tizzy – scurrying around to get her room ready, trying to fathom the magnitude of parenting, hiding our bong. Like the witches who flew in to bless the newborn Sleeping Beauty, our friends gathered around and offered their gifts – tool kit, date book, Swiss army knife: not your average layette.

Our kid lived with us for eight amazing months before announcing her departure. Her stay here, while intense and exhausting for us, seemed too short – inadequate to launch her into the next phase of her young adult life. There's so much more we woulda-coulda-shoulda done to help her grow up and get ready for the world, but I guess that's how all parents feel when their kids move on. That plus the guilty pleasure of having your house back.

That night, for the first time in eight months, Wifey and I went to sleep without having to worry how late she'd be coming home and with whom and whether she'd forget to turn off the toaster oven. Just before I dozed off, I reached under the covers, found my wife's hand, and gave it a squeeze. "Let's don't have any more kids."

"OK," Wifey squeezed back.



*Sally Sheklow has been a part of the Eugene community since 1972 and is a member of the WYMPROV! comedy troupe. Her column, which began at EW in 1999, also runs in several other newspapers and magazines around the country and Down Under.*

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