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A GAY & LESBIAN NEWSLETTER ON COUPLING  
**COUPLES**

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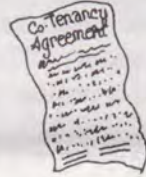
August 1991

**FYL..**

**S**tudy of long-term lesbian couples. Been together two years or more? You and your partner will fill out an interesting questionnaire which takes 40 minutes. Research results provided. To participate call Deborah collect at (718) 398-2248, or leave a message. Your help is appreciated.

**T**hesis: Gay/Lesbian couples sought for thesis project. Couples who have been together at least one year and who are willing to respond with honest answers to a questionnaire are being sought to participate in a graduate thesis. Confidentiality is assured. Interested persons may contact R.A. (Mitch) Mitchell at (617) 524-9206, or write 11 Chilcott Place #2, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

**J**oan Nestle and John Preston invite queries for an anthology of essays by lesbian and gay men on their relationships with one another. The working title is "Brothers and Sisters." Original manuscripts preferred, but previously published essays will be considered. For more information and a set of writers guidelines, write J. Preston Box 5314, Portland, ME 04101.



# Agreements

## Get It In Writing

by Donald Vaughan

**T**his is the fourth of a four-part series on buying real estate together. The first three parts appeared in the last three issues of *Couples* and dealt with the pros and cons of buying property, the process of determining what type of place to buy and how to finance it, making and closing the deal and running the property.

### ▽ Co-tenancy Agreements

Property rights of gay and lesbian couples, unlike their officially married straight counterparts, are not determined by a well-developed set of statutes and court decisions. Instead, we as members of couples are responsible for defining our own rights and obligations concerning property we buy together, or which is acquired by one member during the life of the relationship. Although this can be a burden, since we need to take the affirmative act of entering into a written agreement and can't rely on a set of existing laws, it also is an opportunity to tailor a couples' rights and obligations to meet the specific circumstances of its members.

To begin with, a co-tenancy agreement should be in writing and contain those provisions necessary to make it enforceable in the state where the real estate is located. A couple should consult competent legal counsel on this. These agreements should address as least six issues.

- Will the couple own the property in equal or unequal shares? This question often is determined by the couple having different abilities to make payments towards the down payment, the monthly expenses, or maintenance costs. Sometimes, differences in financial contributions can be offset by contributions of other kinds. For example, one member may have more financial resources but the other has more time to devote to maintaining and restoring the property, just likes doing that type of work or is better at it. A co-tenancy agreement in those instances should refer to these extra obligations.

- Who paid what towards the down payment of the property, and how will those payments be treated? If payments see *Agreements page 7*

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## Reading...

The Nations first Gay and Lesbian Library was unveiled recently in New York City. The Pat Parker/Vito Russo Center Library was named in honor of the late lesbian poet Parker and the late author Russo. The library's opening was packed with noted guests ranging from publishers to politicians, authors to editors.

## The Bookshelf

Some books we discovered which may be of interest to our readers:

▼ Hot off the Press! *The Spousal Equivalent Handbook - A Legal and Financial Guide to Living Together* by Johnette Duff, J.D. and George G. Truitt, C.P.A. C.F.P. 1991. A must for gay and lesbian couples!

▼ *Permanent Partners- Building Gay and Lesbian Relationships that Last* by Betty Berzon Ph.D., 1990. Practical guide for Gay and Lesbian home-builders.

▼ *Ceremonies of the Heart- Celebrating Lesbian Unions*, Edited by Becky Butler, 1990. Explores the lives of 27 couples who have affirmed their relationships with rituals.

▼ *Staying Power-Long Term Lesbian Couples* by Susan E. Johnson, 1990. The first nationwide study of Long Term Lesbian Couples.

▼ *Counseling Same Sex Couples* by Douglas Carl, Ph.D., W.W., 1990. This book lays the ground work for treating same sex couples.

▼ *Gay Relationships for Men and Women* by Tina Tessina, Ph.D. An authoritative guide to making and sustaining long term gay relationships.

# THE OTHER SIDE

## Reflections on a Year Lived Alone

By Celia Hunter



It was almost exactly a year ago that Nikki and I broke up after more than three years together. "Together" in a manner of speaking. Throughout our relationship we lived in different states. Sometimes I think that part of the reason we broke up when we did was that the time was coming when we could finally choose to live together, or at least in the same town.

Though I lived alone before the break-up, I was use to thinking of myself as part of a couple, and there have been lots of adjustments. Suddenly I was spending my weekends in Vermont and not on the road; suddenly I had no one to spend vacations with, no one to talk to about the funny or frustrating things that happened every day; no one to whom I was special.

I've had to struggle with the fear that in being single I've simply reverted to my natural state, that I'm hard to get along with, and that no one else will take me on.

There is a lot of time in a year to run through a whole range of emotions—over and over again—and I have. I've been angry, hurt, and lonely plenty of times. I have sometimes felt left out of a lesbian world that seems to revolve around couples.

I hear how lesbians turn their ex-lovers into their best friends. That hasn't happened with Nikki and me, and I don't know if it ever will. Right now we have no contact at all. While I miss having her in my life, I'm not ready to be friends.

I could go on in this vein, but I don't want to. You get the picture. I'd rather talk about some satisfactions I've had being alone, and there have been many. In not

having another person to consider, I've had the space to think and learn about myself. I've learned to think about myself as a separate person again—to find out what I want and what I like. I've started to make plans for myself, rather than adjust to someone else's. I've had time to develop new interests and become involved in new activities.

Although I have definitely been single—I haven't even dated, whether out of fear or lack of opportunity I can't really say—I've hardly been a hermit. I've put lots of time and energy into forming new friendships and revitalizing old ones, time and energy that simply weren't available before.

These days my friends come in a variety of shapes, genders, ages, and sexual orientations. I have a few gay male friends for the first time, besides the women friends who have always been at the center of my life. I never had much to do with men in my younger days, and it's been weird and sometimes wonderful to show up at gay/lesbian functions with a male escort. I tell myself that I can live without a lover if I have to, but I would die without my friends.

While I was part of a lesbian couple, I was very closeted and constantly afraid of being found out. In the year that I've been alone, I haven't worried so much about what people think of me, both within and outside the community. I've let go to a great extent of thinking that being a lesbian means subscribing to a certain set of behaviors, attitudes, expectations, even appearance—the notion of "political correctness" that has never seemed to fit me very well. With this freedom, my delight and pride in being a lesbian has increased a hundredfold.

Simultaneously, I have come out in



ways I never could have imagined a year ago—to co-workers, to strangers, politically, in print. This has been an incredibly liberating, at times terrifying process. I often don't recognize myself any more. It ought to be possible to grow individually while part of a couple. I hope that's true, but for me, for whatever reason, these changes would not have occurred if I had been in a relationship this past year.

Having so much freedom can be scary, but I kind of like it. I have spent my time alone, doing whatever I felt like—reading, thinking, sometimes just watching television or talking to the cats. I needed some blank spaces in my life, and I've been glad to have them back. I enjoy my own company again.

This is where I am right now. I wonder where I'll be in a year. To be honest, I hope I'll have moved on. The time, space and solitude to redefine myself and grow into this new definition have been precious.

I hope I've reached a point where I can take this new knowledge and use it within a relationship, and that I'll be brave enough to try if the opportunity comes. Meanwhile I've learned that I don't have to fear being single, and that sometimes it's necessary.

Having now survived the break-up of two long-term, serious relationships, I realize I can't count on going through life with one other person, no matter how romantic that sounds. The only person I can count on going through life with is me, and the journey will better if I like my traveling companion.▼

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## INTERVIEW

# Fighting For Couples Rights

by Sherwood Hughes

*COUPLES interviewed Todd Barr-Sawyer on the subject of gay and lesbian couples rights activism. Getting involved and exposing your life to scrutiny are only a few of the rewards . . . read on:*



Todd had always known he would marry, and that he would marry a man. So it was not strange for him to be planning his wedding to Jonathan in the spring of 1990.

He was not surprised by the barriers he would encounter, but was amazed perhaps by the notoriety he would gain by his actions.

Todd and Jonathan Barr-Sawyer have been together for just over four years. They were wed in a Unitarian Church in Portsmouth, New Hampshire on June 23, 1990. There were 150 people at the wedding (some friends, others just well wishers from the town). Todd and Jonathan dressed in white dinner jackets and tuxedo pants, there was a six layer cake in replica of a house they had lived in—in short the day was a gala event. The minister that married them had done his first gay wedding some twenty years earlier.

Before the wedding, Todd, an airline employee, enrolled his partner in the airlines' health and travel plans which were available to all employee spouses. The airline granted the honeymoon flight pass two weeks before the wedding and approved health benefits on their wedding day.

After the wedding Jonathan had some dental work done which was paid for by the airline health plan. In September of 1990, Jonathan needed hospitalization for minor surgery. The health carrier approved all of the pre-hospitalization plans. Yet, in November, the airline still

had not paid the hospital bills—in fact, they informed the couple that Jonathan could not be considered a spouse and he was therefore dropped from all company benefits including the health insurance.

Frustrated and angry, Todd decided to bring the story into the open and informed the media. Articles in major city newspapers, and several television talkshow appearances followed. Because of the high publicity of this case, Todd and Jonathan now travel constantly, speaking whenever and where ever they can; The University of Southern Maine, Donahue, Herald, and People Are Talking, just to name a few. They have gotten tremendous exposure.

I asked Todd why they were doing it, what motivated them? He said that they want to educate people—it's that simple. They want to raise the conscious of the American public that alternative families to exist and these alternative families need the same benefits and protections that traditional heterosexual families enjoy. Neither Todd or Jonathan gets paid for their appearances, interviews, or lectures, but they get the self satisfaction of bringing gay partnership issues into the limelight.

Todd feels that major changes are on the way. He gages society's pulse from the many talk shows he has been on. Most people are overwhelmingly supportive. Those who do debate the issues he points out are mostly religious or "hard cores" as he puts it.

For the time being, Todd and Jonathan are working with Mary Bonauto, an attorney with Gay and Lesbian Advocate Defenders (GLAD). Their case against the airline will probably go to court soon. Meanwhile, Todd would like to spearhead a bill in Portsmouth New Hampshire that would recognize domestic partnerships.▼

### Upcoming Issues...

- ▼ Family: Contested Will (A True Story)
- ▼ Weddings: Other Peoples' (Of Course!)
- ▼ A quiz: Just How Married Are You?
- ▼ Nothing In Common (A Romantic Tale)
- ▼ Safe Sack (Keeping Your Love Life Alive)
- ▼ Death and The Couple (More Legal)
- ▼ Cartoons (Gay and Lesbian Style)
- ▼ Drawings to Suit Your Lifestyle
- ▼ Owning (and running) a Gay Country Inn
- ▼ Anniversaries, News notes, Information...



## Anniversaries...

Dr. Mark Pope and Mr. Shahri Kadsan will celebrate their 10th anniversary on Aug. 18th in San Francisco.

.....

On August 29th, Del Fuller and Thom Mendez will share their 13th anniversary. Way to go guys!

.....

A belated happy anniversary to Mac Speights and Bob Titus. Mac writes 'It will only be two years next week, but a beautiful 730 days indeed!'

.....

Kenneth Osherow and Sherwood Hughes will celebrate two years together on August 26, 1991.

.....

Everyone here at TWT Press wishes you the very best in the years to come.

Don't forget to send in your anniversaries. Let's make this column reach the bottom of the page. ▼

## Ideas...

If your looking to socialize with other couples, start a couples group.

One of our readers wrote in to let us know that he and his lover had started a group: "Six male couples have formed a couples group on Long Island. Our monthly get togethers have included suppers, egg-decorating, play-going, touring NYC via waterways, and hiking state parks. We have all felt enriched by such a group and want to encourage others to begin on our suburban island."

If you're from the Long Island area write to: Titus-Speights, 43 Dewey St., Huntington, NY 11743.

To start your own, a few classified ads at a modest cost will bring you many responses! One couple we know started a dinner club, and another a pool party club. Good luck. ▼

A h summertime! How I hate it! While the vast majority of people disagree with me, I dread the 'big three'—June, July and August—when the humidity teams up with the heat to make nearly every day unbearable. I walk around for twelve weeks muttering, "I wish it would snow!" For those of you still reading, don't worry—for while you have been enjoying the steaminess of the

show one day while waiting for the Green Line at Blanford Street. One enthusiastic couple, cavorting in the rear conductor's booth of the street car, found themselves above ground in brilliant day light, oblivious to the fact that the darkness ends rather abruptly after Kenmore when the tracks leave the tunnel and rise above ground. I am sure that more than a handful of you can look back to an encounter

## On The Lighter Side: On With The Show

by Scott Margolin

Northeast (only to be out done by the steaminess of the Southeast), I have been enjoying the refreshing briskness of northern California. What a relief it was to have shivered my way through San Francisco's fifty-some degree nights the first two weeks of July. And how ingenious those giddy Golden Gate dwellers are when it comes to getting by without a sweater or jacket as night chills the air.

A wonderful sight I beheld every night, the parade of couples, arms entwined, strolling down the streets of the various districts, from the Castro to Haight-Ashbury to North Beach, some same-sex couples, some opposite-sex couples, all lost in the romantic wanderings of their own heats. This phenomenon piqued my curiosity, and I began to curse the fact that such same-sex behavior is not accepted in other areas, Provincetown, Key West and other gay retreats excepted. And then my ever-fertile mind took a few leaps forward. If people are walking arm in arm in public, what else have they done in public? Rephrased, when and where do the gentle tingles of romance give way to the passionate throes of lust and desire?

Let's all be honest for a moment. Just where have you had to stop to warm up and let your fingers do the walking? Let's discuss alleys. Hmmm? Any memories coming back? Who among you has mauled a partner amid the garbage cans and dumpsters of Public Alley 433? Can anyone fess up to any sexual behavior on the "T" (subway)? I was treated to quite a

(display) along the Charles River, the little waves gently lapping against the rocks while the river rats dance about your feet. There was, in fact, a mattress hidden there under some bushes, thoughtfully provided but alas, thoughtfully removed.

Alright ladies, it's your turn. Have any of you forgotten the rest of the world on a surf-pounded beach? Perhaps a screening of *The Silver Fox* stirred emotions and feelings that could not be restrained. But that's terrific: come on, don't be ashamed ladies, life is full of secrets... and I keep them!

How many of you have made love before a nice big living-room window? Of course a display window at Bergdorfs' would be the ultimate showcase from which to please your viewers if windows are your thing. Would any of the fifth Avenue passersby even blink, though, possibly considering your performance mild by comparison to what their New York eyes have seen over the years?

Perhaps as an encore to your already long repertoire of superb performances, would be your very own nude float in next years Pride Parade, upon which you could possibly do anything that crosses your mind.

As for me, well, let's just say I keep warm with a sweater. My public audience has been limited to Zoey, my cat... On with the show! ▼

*Scott Margolin* lives in the Boston area and is a contributor to COUPLES.



# PSYCHOLOGICAL

## MENTAL ABUSE

### What is it and how To Stop It

by Patrick Letellier, M.A. & David Island, PhD.



Lesbian and gay domestic violence is any unwanted physical force including sexual abuse, psychological abuse or property destruction inflicted by one partner on another. Implicit in this definition is that the two men or two women are involved in some relationship together. Abuse and violence are used by a batterer to maintain power and control over his or her partner. Through the intentional use of violence, or the threat of violence, the batterer creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation to get his or her partner to do what is wanted.

Physical battering, sexual abusiveness and property destruction are relatively clear concepts to most people. When most of us think about domestic violence, we envision those kinds of abuse. If your partner strikes you with fists or deliberately cuts up all of your credit cards, you know you have become a victim of domestic violence. In fact, however, psychological abuse is the most common form of domestic violence, and it is often the hardest to understand clearly. Even though many victims report that psychological violence causes them the most pain, it gets less attention than physical abuse. Psychological abuse is verbal and non verbal harassment. Such harassment includes, for example, name-calling, criticism, threats, the perception of threats, ridicule, humiliation, and public embarrassment. A partners obsessive jealousy is often a major them in the harassment. Psychological abuse damages the self-concept, erodes self-esteem, isolates victims and can be just as debilitating as other forms of abuse.

It is important to understand that

many forms of psychological abuse are crimes in most states. In California for example, some forms of psychological abuse that are crimes include: threatening letters, annoying telephone calls, prowling or wandering on the private property of another, drawing or exhibiting a firearm or deadly weapon, violation of a court order to prevent domestic violence, assault with intent to commit great bodily injury. Psychological abuse is serious and can often be defined as criminal conduct. Batters need to learn that they are not safe from prosecution by "merely" threatening or intimidating their partners. Gays and lesbians as a group must become clear about the criminal aspects of domestic violence if our community is ever going to take seriously the unwelcome phenomenon of partner abuse.

Bear in mind that all domestic violence centers around a pattern of abuse perpetrated by a violent person to maintain control and power over his or her partner. In psychological abuse the abusive partner repeatedly says things to the victim in order to intimidate, create fear and demean. Words hurt and have serious consequences. Of course silence, withholding of affection, and non-verbal actions, such as slamming doors or pounding fists on the table, may may also be present. Typically, however, verbal comments, especially threats, are at the core of the abuse, and they are usually accompanied by a critical, angry or judgmental tone, "If you look at that woman again, I'm going to..." "You idiot! You always ruin our trips by making wrong turns." "Why weren't you at home at noon today when I called?" "Can't you ever do anything right?" "Have you ruined dinner again?"

Victims of psychological abuse also

hear this main message: *You're Not Good Enough.* "Your too fat. You're socially inept. You're not attractive enough. You're not feminist enough. You're too gay. You're not gay enough. You do dumb things. No one else would want you."

The effects of psychological abuse are long-lasting and may even have a greater impact on the victim than many forms of physical abuse and material destruction. For instance, the physical scars of a beating may heal in two weeks, but it may take years to repair the damage to self-esteem caused by constant criticism. Low self-worth, headaches, sleep disturbances, and constant anxiety from living in an atmosphere of fear are but a few examples of the wide scope of long-term psychological effects resulting from psychological abuse.

You do not have to be hit or have your possessions destroyed to become a victim of domestic violence. Psychological abuse, in and of itself, qualifies as domestic violence. To determine if psychological abuse is occurring, ask yourself: Is the abusive action unwanted? Does it hurt? Have you asked that it cease? Does it continue? Are you afraid or intimidated? Can you see an abusive pattern in your partners behavior? Do you feel controlled by your partner? Are you adjusting your behavior in hopes that the abusiveness will stop? Remember, you are the sole decision-maker. And when the answers are "yes" you are probably experiencing psychological abuse and are a victim of domestic violence.

David Island and Patrick Letellier live in San Francisco and are the co-authors of the new book, *Men Who Beat The Men Who Love Them: Battered Gay Men and Domestic Violence*, to be released in August by Hawthorne Press (Harrington Park Press). ▼

### Don't Forget

Send us your anniversaries, news notes, articles, ideas, stories, and comments. We enjoy hearing from you. Give us the names of friends who might want to subscribe. [ED]





## Mail Bag...

**W**e love the mail—it helps us to keep going and it often puts a smile on our faces. Overall, our reception has been mostly positive. We encourage our readers to let us know what they think. Here are some of the comments we've heard...

Thanks for such a great source of information! *Marc, Oklahoma City*

For young couples as well as older ones, this is good for them!  
*Cheryl, New York City*

Great Publication! It affirms that we are part of a special group of people. This is just what our community needs, keep up the good work.  
*Michael, Los Angeles*

Your series of articles on buying real estate inspired my lover and I to buy a home. We really appreciate your publication...Thanks!  
*Paul and Mitch, Philadelphia*

I am pleased to subscribe to your newsletter. I support your intent and the need for such a publication.  
*Mauriel, Fort Wayne, Indiana*

We have found COUPLES to be most informative and of great interest to us. We enjoy the news notes and useful information. We've been together eight years and would love to write an article for *Couples*.  
*Rodger and Sam, San Francisco*

Just received my first issue of *Couples* and hasten to get off my check. This is an important publication.  
*Geffery, Chicago*

I found your series on domestic abuse informative. It may have saved my relationship.  
*Tina, Fort Lee, New Jersey*

Your newsletter is fabulous, professional, informative, challenging and well worth the subscription price of \$30.00 annually.  
*Rev. M. Scroggie*

## COMMENTARY

### Time Out

By Louis Defrancis-Block



**H**ave you ever found yourself arguing with your partner over what you know to be a trivial issue? Have you given vent to your anger and frustration from work when it is uncalled for, only because your lover said something to set you off? Have you alienated the one who would truly understand the situation and give you sound advice given the chance? Do you later regret your actions because you know that your lover simply said the wrong thing at the most inopportune time and your reaction was too heavy handed? Then maybe you just need to spend a little time by yourself occasionally.

Being with the person you love is among the finest experiences in your life. It is by spending time together that we learn about one another and give our love a chance to flourish. Yet, one thing that many couples fail to realize, especially newer younger pairs, is the importance of time spent alone, apart from the person you love.

Often times, allowing each other the opportunity to be alone, gives us a chance to reflect on what has been spinning through our minds; the things we've learned; the problems we have to solve. Being alone gives us time to verbalize issues that weigh upon us most. It gives us time to think of ourselves as individuals.

Holding together a relationship takes more than cuddling on the couch while watching a movie, enjoying a romantic candle-lit dinner, or even making wild, passionate love. An intricate part of any relationship is trust and respect for your partner. Respect grows from time spent together, and increasing trust in one another allows us to spend time apart without jealousy or worry.

Lovers need to learn to spend time alone as well as together. Time which can be spent apart with friends or pursuing a hobby or jogging through the park. Each person needs time alone to organize thoughts and consider problems. Without this time, couples often grow tense with each other because outside forces, such as work, etc. that generally create the most stress, have not had a chance to dissipate.

Being alone adds to the strength of a relationship, it does not or should not create greater problems. Everyone needs to have time alone and even to be a little selfish or self-indulgent if a relationship is to grow and stay healthy. In an ideal world, outside stress would not cross the threshold of our house, yet this is never the case in today's world. We are incapable of always thinking of other people, each individual needs time to enrich their life outside the home and office.

On today's health conscious world jogging and cycling have become extremely popular solo pastimes. Going for long walks alone in the woods or just sitting on a park bench watching the people pass by are also good ideas. Simply find the time to be alone. Whether you take separate vacations or just spend an occasional evening alone; if you take an active role in your personal time or simply take a more passive position, your mind continues to turn and mull over the more important issues in your life and even those more mundane thoughts for which we never take the time.

Plan to spend some time alone in the next few days doing something that you truly enjoy. Tell your lover to do the same. Then, have a quiet, romantic, candle-lit dinner for two. A mixture of time spent alone and time spent with the one you love can only serve to strengthen any relationship. ▼



## AGREEMENTS

*Continued from page 1*

were made in unequal amounts, will the person paying the lesser amount reimburse the one making the greater payment for one-half the difference? Will interest be owed? Or will there be an increase in the share of gains going to the greater payer proportionate to his or her larger contribution?

- How will title to the property be held? Usually, these choices have to do with inheritance rights: holding the property as "tenants in common" results in each owner being required to leave his or her share by will, or if no will is made allowing it to be subject to the applicable laws of intestate. This generally means that, unless a will is written which provides otherwise, the surviving member of a couple will not receive any share of the decedent's interest in the property. Holding title in some form of joint tenancy with rights of survivorship would result in the survivor receiving the decedent's share, regardless of whether a will is made. Many view joint tenancy as being more secure, since family members can more easily contest a will than undo the transaction creating the joint tenancy.

- How will the monthly payments on the mortgage, insurance, real estate taxes, condo and other applicable expenses be paid, and what about less predictable costs for maintenance and repair? There are tax benefits to be distributed with regard to some of these payments, such as interest on the mortgage and real estate taxes, and the co-tenancy agreements should address who gets what of those, too. A tax advisor should be consulted, if you're unsure of or need more information.

- How will gains or losses be distributed from the sale of the property? One thing to keep in mind with regard to monthly payments on the mortgage and any sale for less than the then-remaining mortgage balance is that most loans create

"joint and several" liability, meaning that each member of a couple is responsible to the lender for repaying all the borrowed money, despite what any co-tenancy or other agreement between the couple may say. A co-tenancy agreement, then needs to address the rights of one party should he or she be forced to pay more than his or her allotted share, due to the other member not having the resources to do so, or for any other reason not doing so.

- How will decisions on whether to sell the property be made? Well drafted co-tenancy agreements provide for mechanisms to break deadlocks, such as bringing the matter to an arbitrator, or giving each party a right to buy the other out.

- How can one party buy the other out if a disagreement arises or the relationship ends? This area, more than any other, is one for which good legal advice should be sought. Since we don't have the ability to appeal to a divorce court to resolve disputes at the termination of a gay or lesbian relationship, we are left either at the mercy of judges deciding our affairs on the basis of laws or decisions which don't necessarily fit our situation (disagreements in business partnerships, for example) or we must enter into binding and enforceable agreements on our own.

Most co-tenancy agreements will provide for a mechanism of the party who wants to sell, offering his or her share to the other at a price determined by pre-agreement, appraisers, or otherwise. If the offer is not accepted within a set time frame, then the party desiring to sell usually has rights to place the property on the market at a price determined by appraisers, brokers, or other generally neutral third parties. The agreement may also set the other major parameters of the sale: how large the deposit should be, what amount of financing would be allowed as a contingency, etc.

Another issue to be considered is whether the obligations of the parties should be secured by mortgages to each

other of their respective interests. This sounds harsh, especially when co-tenancy agreements are (ideally) entered into right before or after buying a wonderful new property, when all seems rosey. However, it is much easier to reach agreements than than later should the relationship start to encounter problems. Having the ability to foreclose out the interests of a party who is not living up to his or her responsibilities is a very effective tool towards resolving disputes.

### ▽ Selling the Property

Regardless of whether the property is being sold under the forced sale provisions of a co-tenancy agreement or by mutual consent, the sale is likely to have significant tax implications for the couple. Issues of determining the amount of taxable gain from a sale, and distributing this between the sellers, using the "like-kind exchange" provisions for the tax code to defer gain, the requirements to roll over gain from one principal residence to another, and using certain exemptions from gain from the sale of a principal residence, all need to be considered. Legal advice is useful, too, with regard to negotiating the sales contract with the buyers.

### ▽ Conclusion

In the end, owning real property together can be an experience complete with rich economic and emotional rewards for a couple, and fraught with financial and relationship burdens. A moderate amount of planning going into the endeavor can go far to safeguard the former, and lessen the latter. ▼



### MOVING???



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## Workshops...

**T**hey go beyond "she never takes out the garbage, her socks are always on the bathroom floor and I cleaned the litter box last..." They are about being loved, understood, and respected. Learning "survival skills" for conflict resolution and empowerment in the relationship are the main themes of upcoming workshops for lesbians. These workshops are designed for anyone who is currently, has been, or will be in a relationship.

Unlike many communication skills seminars, Chicago based therapist Cheri DeMoss' are different in that the participants leave with a precise understanding of what can be done to improve communication on real issues. She deals with recognizing and understanding the importance of boundaries, self-esteem, and intimacy. She is specific about what to do when a partner backs away and explains a very learnable method of expressing feelings.

DeMoss will be doing several programs for women throughout the summer/fall in Chicago. The cost is \$20 per person, (312)338-2889. ▼

## Travel...

**P**ublishing giant, Random House, recently released a new travel book: 'Are You Two... Together?: A Gay and Lesbian Travel Guide to Europe'. The book is a compilation of essays and practical information for gays and lesbians traveling to Europe. It is a must for first time travelers, or anyone who wants to see the gay side of Europe with a lover (or even just gay friends). Where as most travel writing is for heterosexuals, this book is strictly gay and lesbian.

The authors, Lindsay Gelder, a former Ms. writer, and Pamela Brandt, lovers of 13 years and frequent travelers, give the reader a grand tour of Europe. Although mostly gay sites are covered, lesbian information is abundant. The authors point out that gay and lesbian travelers have a resource others don't have—an international community.

Even if you don't plan to travel abroad, you may enjoy *Are You Two... Together?* just for pool side reading. Check it out, a must for any reader. ▼

## Ceremonies...

**F**or those wishing a Christian union ceremony, they can always contact their local Metropolitan Community Church. Each pastor will have his or her own guidelines and suggested fees. However most will offer a variety of ceremonial and ritual ideas, as well as helping the couple make the ceremony uniquely their own. Sent by: Reverend M. Scroggie, MCC, P.O. Box 10091, Eugene, OR 97440, (503)345-5963. ▼

## News Note...

▼MANASSAS, VA—With the permission and support of their parents and school administrators, Heidi Leiter, 17, and her companion Missy Peters, 20, attended the Osbourn High School senior prom, as an out lesbian couple, according to *Outlines*.

Osbourn students commented that although some may think it gross, nobody would try to stop them from attending; most were supportive.

## Back Issues

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