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A GAY & LESBIAN NEWSLETTER ON COUPLING

COUPLES

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I Do...

Flashy in their tuxedos and chiffon dresses, gay activists staged a group wedding outside the Cathedral of the Holly Cross in Boston.

Close to 300 onlookers watched two dozen gays and lesbians exchange vows in a ceremony applauded as a political statement and a demonstration of anger toward the Catholic Church and Boston's homophobic head, Cardinal Benard Law.

Organizers chose the church as the backdrop to effectively demonstrate their frustrations with church dogma. The ceremony in the shadow of the cathedral drew swift and angry reaction from catholic officials who felt the demonstration was a direct affront to Catholic morals—that marriage is a sacrament.

"A lot of people have bought into the idea that gays and lesbians don't form lasting relationships and it just isn't true," said a participant, "we will be able to get married legally one day, there's no question about it—but meanwhile, I'm tired of writing down on forms that I'm single when I'm not." ▼



Other People's Weddings

By Kate Brandt

I had planned to write about my own "wedding" but I can't (yet), so I write about my brother's wedding instead.

I refer to my "wedding" in quotation marks because of course, lesbians (and gay men) can't get "married." Oh, sure, we can have commitment ceremonies, either secular or religious, and we call them "weddings" and say that we're married; but unfortunately, the seriousness of our emotional commitment means nothing when we need to put our partners on our health insurance plan, when we want to adopt children together, or when we want our partners to inherit our possessions.

The lack of a state-sanctioned marriage license—that easily dismissed (by those who can easily obtain it) "piece of paper"—leads to a bound of other papers for lesbian (and gay) partners: wills, guardianship papers, durable powers of attorney for health care, and finances. Then there are the two sets of income tax filings, the two Automobile Club memberships, the two...

Well, here in San Francisco, we lesbian and gay couples are about to get a

"piece of paper" of our own. The voters of San Francisco finally approved a Domestic Partners Bill, in the November 1990 election. It isn't much—it gives us only the right to register our relationships with the city—and it won't do away with the need for durable powers of attorney and all the other legal papers, but it's better than nothing, which is what we had before. And it's historic: as of this writing, no other major city in the United States allows registration of lesbian and gay relationships.

So, we decided to do it: my lover and I agreed to register as domestic partners.

It was a compromise of sorts to our complicated and contradictory feelings about "weddings." I was the one who had always lacked sympathy for my heterosexual female relatives' "marry-me-or-we're-through" ultimatums to their boyfriends (what was the point, I wondered: did you want to live forever with someone you love, or did you just want that darn "piece of paper?"). Yet once I became involved in a committed relationship myself, I longed for some ceremony to

see *Weddings page 7*

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FYL..

Atanta Couples Together—Social organization to support positive aspects of gay and lesbian relationships. Events and meetings vary. Call (404)365-2455.▼

Toll Free—Lesbian and Gay chapters of AT&T are under attack from fundamentalist Christians, who disapprove of the corporation's overt support for an internal gay-awareness week (in existence now for three years and considered an industry model). Apparently self-identified fundamentalists have been cancelling their AT&T long distance service and informing the company they are switching to a competitor. The last time these individuals threatened to cancel their long distance accounts was over AT&T's funding of Planned Parenthood—and they won! Don't let this happen again. Support AT&T's Awareness Week by calling (toll free) 800-323-4357. It is important to let AT&T know that gay and lesbian people are putting money into AT&T.▼

Tour The Castro—Now you can tour The Castro with a fifteen-year resident as your guide. See the most famous gay and lesbian community in the world. Learn gay history, politics, and economics of the area —\$25 per person includes breakfast and lunch—contact Trevor Hailey, *Crusing The Castro*, 375 Lexington St., San Francisco, CA 94110, 415-550-8110.▼

Gay Divorce—Seeking men or women who have been involved in a "gay divorce" and are willing to appear on a TV talk show. Interested in hearing where a division of property, cash or other financial interests were involved. Call Steve Wright at 415-864-2333.▼

B O X I N G

First in War

By Scott Margolin

Are you shoes off? Good! How about your tie or your stockings? Sit back and take a load off and enjoy this page. You won't need a calculator as this is not a personal finance article, nor will you have to go through your strongbox, for we won't be discussing insurance or wills. The only item needed to get through this article is a pair of boxing gloves. Humor is always best when it reflects life, and whether you laugh or use your gloves as you read on depends upon how much time you and your mate spend in the ring. While at work, we think of our sweethearts quite often and look forward to our few waking hours together full of stimulating conversation and physical interaction, but does the interaction become stimulation as our quality time (I hate that expression) unfolds or does our conversation turn contentious? Ready to go a few rounds? DING! There's the bell!

Round one takes us to the supermarket. After work is over, we just can't wait to meet our sweeties, correct? If the market is our first stop after work, skip it. No more dual shopping trips for me; I prefer to go it alone. My choice of certain brands, the way I select my cantaloupes (I have people ten deep in line waiting for me to choose a winner for them) or my penchant for sneaking junk food into the basket is my right and is not up for discussion. I simply cannot put catsup on my hamburgers, I must have ketchup. You don't like my brand of toilet paper? Good! Buy your own! I embarrass you in the produce? Meet me at the register and be ready to bag with paper and plastic and let me shop for what I want. Since we have been barred from every market this side of the Mason-Dixon line as a team, we must deduct grocery shopping from our list of activities done together. Anybody out there in a half-nelson yet?



Round two: a rainy Saturday afternoon, and it's time for a breather (did you catch that one?). Where to pass time together then at the mall? Clothes shopping, however, is another casualty of the "together" activity list. You think my taste is too conservative—I wear too much blue—and I think your taste is all in your mouth. My khakis and oxford cloth shirts will always be in style, but how do they have the nerve to charge for the merchandise you are picking out. After security puts an end to our shopping fits, shall we head to the food court? Since we can never agree on what to eat, I place my order for a salad, find a table and consume my food while you circle the court eleven times, finally make your way over with some horrible fast food and then accuse me of rushing you along (although you could chew faster than that!). There goes another vase and round three hasn't even begun.

Movies are a nice pastime, provided two can enjoy the entire experience peaceably. Why is it that I always go to see an action film with you when I really wanted to see a comedy, but you're never in the mood to read subtitles? And you KNOW it's impossible to butter only half the popcorn. Let's not even bother to discuss who gets to use the armrest on the seats in the auditorium! Well, this movie had better be good, that's all I can say! Kind of makes me wish I were at work—at least there I get paid to argue with the boss.

It is reassuring to know that there are still some remaining things that are on our list of "non-argumentative activities". At a restaurant, I can order anything I so desire—provided we can agree on a restaurant. The beach is nice, too, you bake for hours on end while I head for the shade of the bathhouse. Our clubbing

(NIGHTclubbing not BILLYclubbing) is always fun—the music is so loud I cannot hear your ridiculing my dancing. But above all else, and this is where the boxing gloves come off, I love being at home with you. Home really is a place where love and peace flourish. Our scenes in a market, mall, movie-house, etc. truly are a

spectator sport, but I cherish the relative calm of our home. How true ring the never-heard lyrics of “Loves nest”, the theme song of the George Burns and Gracie Allen Show: “...better than a palace with a gilded dome—is a love nest you can call home.”▼

TRAVEL

Hot Spots

By Kenneth A. Osherow

Imagine cruising the high seas or relaxing together at a quiet sea side guest house. Traveling with your partner can be a time to pursue mutual interests while recovering from the hectic routine of every-day life (i.e. going to work, making dinner, feeding the cats, doing the dishes, etc...) Vacations are a great time to talk about the things you have been neglecting and to rekindle the old sparks of passion and romance. There is something refreshing about being in a new place and in a strange bed which can heighten love-making and make a relationship seem almost new again. This is not to say that couples won't occasionally want to travel alone, especially if the destination does not interest your partner, or if you simply need to spend some time apart .

When traveling together, it is best to pick a location which you will both enjoy such as: oceans and lakes for you water sports fans or the mountains for your rock climbers and campers. Of course you should pick a location and accommodations which are within your budget and plan on bringing a little extra spending money as things have a way of quickly adding up when you are away from home.

▼ Hot Spots

COUPLES recently interview several travel service professionals who specialize in gay and lesbian travel destinations. “The hot spot on the West Coast is definitely Palm Springs located in the desert about two hours from L.A.,” says Jim Boin owner of Yankee Clipper Travel in Los Gatos, California. Apparently the word is out that Palm Springs is no longer for the select few.

In the past few years Palm Springs has become a year round gay resort with many offerings for the gay traveler. With nearly thirty gay hotels, accommodations range from truly luxurious suites to very modest sleeping quarters. The range of prices makes Palm Springs affordable to

almost everyone. A favorite pastime in the desert is simply lounging by the pool and catching some rays. With breathtaking views of the San Jacinto Mountains, Palm Springs gay hotels will dazzle you with 30 sparkling pools and 24 refreshing spas. Warm sunny days give the gay traveler many options to chose from: golf, tennis, hiking, bicycling or the Areal Tramway which takes you 8, 516 feet up Mt. San Jacinto, offering fabulous views of the mountains below.

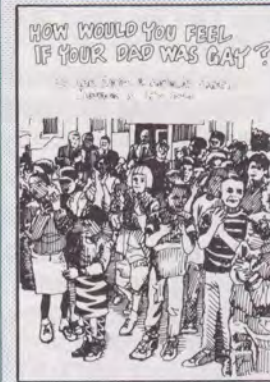
When the sun goes down, Palm Springs becomes a flurry of activity. Treat your taste buds to one of over a hundred restaurants; at least a dozen cater to gay clientele. After dinner pick from one of the many gay night spots. No matter what you choose you will have a chance to mix with the friendly locals and meet new friends from all over the world.

▼ See The Sights

“Of course there is always San Francisco—A very romantic city,” Boin comments, “On the East Coast, Provincetown, and Florida’s Key West seem to be popular destinations. They offer a large

see *Travel on next page*

New for Kids...



Hot off the press is Ann Heron and Meredith Maran's *How Would You Feel If Your Dad Were Gay?* This is the

latest in the Alyson Wonderland line of books for children of lesbian and gay parents. *How Would You Feel...?* is the first book to deal with the day-to-day realities of children with lesbian and gay parents. It explores the issues that face these children in a homophobic world.

Jasmine and Michael are sister and brother, but they have different approaches in dealing with their classmates. Jasmine tells everyone that her dad is gay, when Michael had wanted to keep it a secret. Together, they and their family struggle with the issues of homophobia and privacy. A beautifully written book with big wonderful illustrations. Highly recommended by the editors of *Couples*.

Also available from Alyson Publications, *Families: A Coloring Book* by Michael Willhoite. Families are different and this coloring book reflects that diversity. Recommended for children ages 2 to 6. This hands on publication teaches children that families come in many different forms including gay and lesbian couples.

Both the books are available in bookstores or through Alyson Publications, Inc., 40 Plympton Street, Boston, MA 02118 (617)542-5679.▼

Send us your news notes, articles, anniversaries, stories, etc.... Any friends interesting in COUPLES? Send name and address.▼ [ED]

Anniversaries...

Celebrating their twelfth anniversary on Columbus Day weekend are Kenn Agata and Willy Frank.

They write "...we had driven up to Bellows Falls, VT to stay at the now defunct, Andrews Inn, a gay-owned and operated hotel on the Connecticut River, to take in the Fall foliage. We had a terrific weekend, and since we both love to travel, decided then and there that if we were to spend our years going through life together as a committed couple, it would be nice to have a three-day anniversary each year to do something special.

...for our tenth anniversary we flew off for an extended romantic five-day weekend to Santa Fe and Taos and included the Hot Air Balloon Festival in Albuquerque, New Mexico in our adventure.

...we continue to always strive for devotion and dedication to one another as individuals and collectively as a couple." Congratulations! [ED]

Travel Info...

▼ Contact your agent or call toll free:

- Jim Boin, Yankee Clipper Travel, 1-800-624-2664 (call for information packet—free).
- David Renken, Corners of the World, 1-800-368-8747. (call for newsletter).
- Cynthia A. Marquard, V.P. IGTA, Envoy Travel, 1-800-44-ENVOY.

▼ International Gay Travel Association, 1-800-448-8550 (Recorded Message).

▼ Gay and Lesbian Travel Magazines:

- *Our World*—The international gay travel magazine (monthly), 1104 North Nova Road, Suite 251, Daytona Beach, FL 32117 Tel:(904)441-5367.
- *Outing Travelogue*, (Quarterly), P.O. Box 4513, Portsmouth, N.H. 03802.

TRAVEL

continued from previous page

selection of gay oriented guest-houses, restaurants and entertainment. The gay dollar speaks for itself at these resorts, you can feel comfortable and be yourselves. You can hold hands and be romantic and not feel that people are looking at you."

David Renken owner of Corners of the World Travel, which specializes in cruises and resorts, suggests that couples be themselves, "don't limit yourselves to strictly gay destinations and activities—you're going to find gay people where ever you go. Go out and see the sights!" Renkens' company offers a specialized travel service which creates custom tailored vacations for gay and lesbian travelers. He is available around the clock to assist his clients with any problems. He encourages his clients to let him know about any problems they face while away.

"Many gay and lesbian Couples are traveling to the Caribbean," Renken adds, "and I would be happy to discuss the various islands and their attractions and help you plan a wonderful vacation."

▼ Cruise Ships

Many couples are choosing the high seas for their vacations. There are several companies running gay and lesbian cruises and Boin points out that "cruises are a very good value for your money because the price includes accommodations, meals, and entertainment." A typical cruise on RSVP (for men) and Olivia and Robin Tyler (for women) will run between \$795.00 to \$2,500 depending on the luxury of the accommodations (it seems you pay premium for a cabin with a view) and of course the destination and the length of the trip. RSVP's recent survey found that as many as 55% of the passengers were couples so you're sure to meet many other interesting pairs on board. Departing from both coasts, the ships set sail for Mexico, Alaska, Greece and the Caribbean. Contact your travel agent for current schedules, information and ticketing.

▼ IGTA

Cynthia A. Marquard of Envoy Travel also happens to be the Vice Presi-

dent of the International Gay Travel Association (IGTA). She suggests vacations which are "off the beaten path" having recently come back from visiting two romantic inns in Colorado. She says that some gay couples are looking for destinations where there are plenty of activities and others for quiet get-a-ways in romantic settings. Marquard has put couples in small villas where one partner can read and take it easy while the other can explore and be adventurous. She says that cruises can be enjoyable, if you are looking for a vacation surrounded by many people. "It really depends on the type of vacation you are seeking," she says, "once you decide that, we know if we should book you in a small inn up in the mountains or get you tickets to Provincetown."

Marquard wants the public to understand that there is absolutely no charge for using travel agents, "We don't work for free," she points out, "we are compensated by the airlines, cruise ships, and hotels."

It is usually best to tell your travel agent that you are a gay couple, or you can contact the IGTA which can recommend a gay or gay sensitive travel agent in your area. IGTA members have access to gay related travel information which other agents do not. Boin points out that there are a series of tours coming up for gay couples including an African safari and an Aspen ski trip. The IGTA is not only a network for the gay travel industry, but is also involved in advocacy work for travel related issues. Recently Continental Airlines revised the wording of promotional materials after the IGTA expressed its concern.

Boin notes that gay couples do not necessarily have to travel to gay destinations, "decide where you want to go, and go. If you're out of the closet at home, there is no reason to go back into it when you travel, but use good judgement. If you want a double bed, you're entitled to ask for it." Boin adds, "avoid places that are known to be discriminatory, and use discretion when you are unsure of the tolerance of an area."▼

(See side bar for travel info)

[ED]

FOSTER PARENTING

Struggles and Triumphs

By David Southgate

Every foster parent has a story to tell: the rebellious adolescent who began calling one gay foster parent "Dad;" the Asian anorexic, transvestite prostitute who had never slept in a bed, so slept under it; and the transformation in a child who had been repeatedly sexually molested. Foster parents tell stories with a smile on their faces and sometimes a tear in their eyes.

Ten years ago becoming a gay or

lesbian foster parent in the Minneapolis-St. Paul (and elsewhere) was a long hard battle against the system. Same-sex couples fight for licensing rights was fraught with legal threats and arguments with foster care agency bureaucrats.

The first lesbian couple in Minnesota to receive their license, JoAnn Smith and Mary Gosen, finally succeeded after a series of articles in a Minneapolis newspaper exposed the system's blatant dis-

crimination. They had waited three years.

At about the same time, Don Byrne and his partner were fighting a similar battle. "We went through a lot of rigmarole around that," said Byrne at a recent workshop called "Not All of Us Are Straight," sponsored by the National Foster Parent Association (NFPA). Eventually, after a two-year wait and legal threats, Byrne and his partner were licensed.

Later, they encountered problems over trumped-up housing code violations. "The housing authority person decided that he didn't really approve of faggots having children," and Byrne. So he decided he wouldn't license their home for foster care, although Byrne said the home had undergone a number of improvements. The housing authority worker later backed down after Byrne became angry and ordered the man out of the house. That was a decade ago.

Foster parents today say that Byrne, Gosen, and Smith paved the way for them.

Some caseworkers today are more open-minded, according to a speaker at NFPA's workshop.

Even when the system bucks, it's easier now than it used to be to fight back. Josh Gonsiorek, a clinical psychiatrist and ex-foster parent said, "By simply carbon copying letters to my lawyer, I made wonderful attitude re-adjustments for the bureaucrats." Gonsiorek says the licensing process was quick and painless for him.

Licenses in hand and children teetering on their hips, gay and lesbian foster parents are quick to sing the praises of foster parenting, calling it "a wonderful way of loving," "a loving thing to do," and "very consciousness raising."

Foster parenting has its stresses and problems, though, including society's bigotry, the loss a foster parent feels when a child is placed in another's care, the stress on the couple and foster family, and everyday parenting issues. Gonsiorek said that heterosexual privilege hit him on the head when he became a foster parent. Waiters and clerks glared and were out-

see *Parenting on page 6*

A CASE IN POINT

Plan Ahead

By Danny Cooper



By several strokes of luck, my lover Brady, whom I had met in 1976, and I found an old house, a fine example of Queen Anne

architecture. The house was condemned and about to be torn down.

It had always been a common dream of ours to restore a lovely old home—so we approached the owners about the old place. They agreed and shortly after we signed the papers and began cleaning for restoration. We were very careful that everything was jointly owned.

We worked for several years on the house with many accomplishments and frustrations. We got the house listed on the National Register of Historic Places and in 1984 opened as a gay Bed and Breakfast.

In the fall of 1986 Brady began losing weight, and having severe headaches. We had heard about AIDS, but never closely. His condition became worse and eventually he could hardly move his head without pain. We began looking for medical care in town. We went to four

different doctors who told us they would not treat a person who showed symptoms of AIDS and told us to get out of their offices. We finally found a sympathetic doctor who referred us to a colleague in Houston.

By this time Brady could barley get out of bed. I had taken it upon myself to notify his family. Brady had been very adamant about not telling them—but I had to let them know what was going on. Of course they were scared and concerned. They came directly to our home where they tried to persuade Brady to go home with them and let them take care of him. He refused saying very bluntly, "My place is here with Danny, and this is our home, and this is where I want to be!" They agreed, but they asked if they could come every day while I was at work to take care of him. We agreed to that.

During some testing, a cat scan showed a lesion on Brady's brain. We were all very concerned. Throughout all this, the family was treating me as Brady's spouse. Brady's mother even said to me, "Danny, we know you don't have much

see *Planning on page 8*

News Notes...

▼ EVERETT, WA—The first U.S. daily newspaper to include announcements of gay/lesbian commitment celebrations is under attack by anti-gay activists, reports *Seattle Gay News*. "We expect decency" spokeswoman Val Stevens says "it is abhorrent to Judeo-Christian values to imagine a life-style that does not reflect the values that our nation was founded on." But *Everett Herald* managing Editor Stan Strick says the paper will not back down from its inclusive policy. (*Outlines*)

▼ SARASOTA, FL—A gay couple is challenging a Florida law that forbids them from adopting children. James W. Cox, 30, and Rodney M. Jackson, 26, filed a lawsuit in circuit court last week asking that the 14-year-old law be declared unconstitutional. They maintain that it violates rights to privacy, due process, and equal protection.

▼ NETHERLANDS—A lesbian couple became the first same sex partners to be married in The Netherlands, but their union is of doubtful legality. Puly Wildt and Janna Hoef were married on June 5 in Deventer, one of the first cities in the Netherlands to create a wedding register for same sex couples, according to the *Bay Area Reporter*.

Last year the Dutch Supreme court ruled that the nation's marriage law included only heterosexual couples. However, Dutch law does not prevent cities from creating their own local wedding registers. Until such time as the national marriage law is challenged, the resulting partnerships are best described as not illegal, but not official. The partnerships do not currently obtain the standard spousal rights under the law. (*Windy City Times*)

PARENTING

continued from previous page

right rude to him and his 16-year-old, gay foster son. However, he said, "when he started calling me Dad, it was amazing how the title 'dad' turned me from being a pervert into a respectable citizen. The whole balance of things changed."

Gonsiorek said he and his foster son also encountered bigoted parents who were angered by the idea of a gay foster parent.

Smith and her partner have been foster parents to about 24 children during the past 10 years. She said one of the most difficult things is letting go of foster children. The hardest thing she said is "losing children that you've become terribly, terribly, terribly attached to."

Smith also said that often the couple makes sacrifices. "In a lot of ways having these kids brought us closer," she said.

"But there are problems. We didn't have enough time together. Sometimes there are regrets about that," said Smith.

Another foster parent talked about the issues of family and divorce between partners. Gay and lesbian foster families feel the same pain in a break up that straights do.

Although it's tempting to want to be a role model for gay and lesbian children, according to Gonsiorek, the child doesn't care. "Most of the struggles were about all the mundane stuff: fighting about whether he should drop out of high school, whether he should make a mess in the living room, and all that kind of stuff," he said.

"So I thought that I would be this, you

know, this great consciousness raising champion," continued Gonsiorek. "It was just plain old parenting for the most part, which was a good experience, but that's not what I thought it would be."

Throughout these hardships, foster parents turn to both gay and straight friends and family for support. Although some of Gonsiorek's friends thought he was crazy for becoming a foster parent, those who already had children approved. Family members offered support to Gosen and Smith.

Though the idea of foster parenting may seem exciting for gays and lesbians, Gonsiorek warns that people have to assess carefully what they're getting into.

"There should be a certain amount of planning," he said, "and a willingness to stick with the kid even though things may be rough." Gonsiorek also stressed the importance of knowing your own limits and being up-front with the child about them.

Smith added that a good foster parent should be calm, able to function in a child-filled home, and genuinely care about children.

"I really love kids," she said, proudly referring to their living-room wall, covered with photographs of former foster children. "They call me 'Grandma' and Mary 'Mom' and still come home for Christmas."▼

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Did you know...

DENMARK—718 gay/lesbian couples have been married since the inception of Denmark's gay/lesbian marriage laws. Most of the weddings are gay men ages 40 and above. Only seven divorces. (*Outlines*)

NORWAY—According to the gay newspaper BLIKK, a gay marriage law will be passed in Parliament in early 1992.

Couples would have all rights as bestowed on their heterosexual counterparts, but not adoption rights. (*Outlines*)

Next month...

Herb Moses, Congressman Barney Frank's (D-MA) lover, speaks out about the controversy of what to call your lover: spouse, partner, significant other, companion and more. Also, a pop quiz "Just How Married are You?"

WEDDINGS

continued from page 1

ritualize and memorialize (and publicize) our commitment to one another.

But my lover wants no part of it. Despite being a rather public person in our lesbian and gay community, she has a strong sense of privacy about the personal side of her life. And while she, too, is eager for public acknowledgment of our relationship, she can't imagine standing before a roomful of our closest friends while reciting sentimental and intimate vows to me.

But that's okay; I've never doubted the depth and strength of her commitment to me, so I don't need a public ceremony to reassure me of her love and fidelity.

But while we may be in sync about the emotional aspects of declaring our relationship, politics is something else. Registering our relationship with the City of San Francisco is a way of saying that our lesbian relationship is as important and real as that of any heterosexual couple. Registering our relationship will give us a "piece of paper" that might not help us with tax breaks or health insurance, but will certify to those who might need reminding that we are, indeed, a couple.

Which brings me back to my brother's wedding.

My youngest brother scheduled his wedding for March of this year—in Pennsylvania. My lover and I had already tentatively planned a trip "back East" in June to visit our respective families and to attend a conference. Two cross-country trips within six months would be financially out of the question.

What to do?

I, of course, fussed and fumed.

"No one ever comes to see us in San Francisco, but we have to drop everything to go to New York every time one of *them* decides to get married! And do they acknowledge our relationship? Do you know how many engagements, showers, and wedding gifts I've bought for my

brothers, sisters and cousins? How many of them sent us a housewarming gift when we moved in together, much less a gift celebrating our becoming a couple?"

Mind you, I get along quite well with my family, and I'm out to them. My family likes my lover, and vice-versa. Same with her family.

But a "wedding" gift would have been nice.

So we'll register, and we'll send copies of the registration certificate to everyone, and we'll see what happens. A nice blender, maybe?

A Valentine's day registration! A romantic notion, and no doubt a popular one; the line at City Hall License Bureau will probably stretch halfway to Los Angeles. No, my lover and I decided that if we have to wait until February, we might as well wait until April, and register on our anniversary. Now *that's* romantic.

So by the time you read this perhaps we will be an Officially Registered Lesbian Couple. Perhaps we will be knee-deep in Hers and Hers bath towels from the folks back East.

And so, while I wanted to write this column about my "wedding," it will have to wait. But it will be exciting to share this milestone, to tell you what it's like to go the City Hall and declare publicly my commitment to another woman.

Just don't expect *too* many personal details; my lover would never approve. ▼

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MOVING???

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News Notes...

▼ HAMPTON, FL—Two gay men say they moved from Hampton to Virginia Beach to escape death threats and physical assaults that followed publicity about their relationship.

Matthew Bissette, 18 and Mark Demma, 23 went public with their relationship in May when they attended Bissette's school prom together. Following a June 5th article in the Daily Press of Newport News about their date, the couple say they received death threats.

Information

"Lesbian and gay male partnerships are ignored by the media and the arts," says Mark A. Morrill, photographer for the Domestic Partners Affirmation Project based in Minnesota. Mark has been creating and exhibiting a collection of domestic partners photographs since the spring of 1990. Partner, George Zillgen joined the project this year. Partners interested in participating in the project may call (612) 872-8701 or write DPAP c/o George D. Zillgen 1807 Elliot Ave. S. #3, Minneapolis, MN 55404. ▼

Educational

Lesbian Relationship Handbook is now available. It is a guide for working on healthy relationships and a valuable counseling aid. \$5.95, 36pp. Bulk Prices available. Contact Kinheart Programs on Sexuality and Homophobia, 2214 Ridge #CEH, Evanston, IL 60201 708-491-1103. ▼

PLANNING

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family; so we want you to know that if you get sick, we will take care of you just like we are doing for Brady." A few days later, in completely different surroundings and circumstances, Brady's older brother told me exactly the same thing. Little did I know what they meant by the phrase "...take care of you...!"

Brady went through the brain surgery fine, and when he came out of the anesthesia we were all there laughing and rejoicing. Unfortunately things quickly worsened and my lover died six weeks later in May of 1987. During the funeral his family continued to treat me as his spouse.

A few weeks later, I found a will that Brady had handwritten. He had done it at our home with no witnesses. I presented the will, and his family promptly contested it. A year later, after much fighting, the court declared the will invalid. The next day the family showed up with a court order saying that half of EVERYTHING in the house was Brady's and that I had to leave and could not remove anything from the house.

In the meantime I had two friends staying with me and the police would not

even allow them to remove their own belongings—we all had to leave the premises; even though I clearly owned half.

After six months of fighting the "system", and getting a new lawyer we were allowed to move back into my home. In the meantime, the family had taken everything they thought was Brady's (many of the things they removed were not even in the house when Brady died). But they had the backing of a smart, dirty attorney, and a prejudiced judge so they got away with injustice.

They continue to claim half of everything here, including not only the things that belong to my roommate and new lover, but also things I inherited from my own family.

We had some very distressing courtroom battles in the last four years. It is now September of 1991 and we are still not finished with this mess yet. They have denied my monetary claims against Brady's estate; it has yet to be heard by the courts. They have denied every attempt at settling this and putting it behind us. There last words to me just a few months ago were, "We are content with just owning half of everything, and waiting for you to die so we can settle up with your heirs." Meanwhile, I can live here and

enjoy the beautiful house, but I cannot remove anything from the premises, and am hesitant about bringing anything new into it. I did get an official inventory of what is in the house during one of the court battles, and know that is all they can lay claim to; so some of my fears about new items are diminished. I am waiting for a new date for our next courtroom fight. We did get a new judge this past January due to the former judges retirement. I hope the new judge is less prejudiced; but I will continue to fight no matter.

Many of my friends and acquaintances have been able to use this as a lesson. It clearly demonstrates what can happen when affairs are not put in order. No matter how "long-term" the relationship is, or how close you feel to your "in-laws", please look at the situation and think again.▼

This true story was submitted by *Danny Cooper*, a *COUPLES* subscriber from Louisiana. The importance of agreements and wills, in writing, planned carefully with the aid of a competent attorney, can help to safe-guard you and your partner.

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