Tales from a Multifunctional Family by Alison Wearing

My father and stepmother have been together for 13 years. They met, ahem, in a bar. My father spotting my stepmother, plied himself on the next bar stool and opened with the line, “so...what have you been up to tonight?” Miraculously, a conversation ensued. They spent the rest of the evening talking about opera.

“my stepmother is actually more of a fairy stepmother, if you know what I mean”

The next morning, my stepmother handed my father a telephone number and said, “Now CALL ME.”

A year later, they moved in together. Now they have two dogs and a subscription to Opera magazine. But they’re not your average couple. They’re both fulfilled. In fact, they have the sort of relationship I admire. They are two distinct individuals, who are in each other’s company simply because they adore it.

They’re also not your average couple, because they’re both men. Which means that my stepmother is actually more of a fairy stepmother, if you know what I mean.

My father “came out” in the late seven-

phone went silent. Dinner parties stopped. I felt like our house had been quarantined.

I was 13 when I was told, “Your father loves men.” Having grown up in a small town in Southern Ontario, I was unprepared for this news. I thought it meant that my father loved my brothers and not me. But that didn’t last long. You’d be surprised how quickly kids can figure things out.

I spent the rest of my teen-age years learning how to be a good liar. I came up with creative answers to questions about my parents’ divorce and about the man he lived with. I even remember telling someone that my father used that funny “v” when he spoke because he had just

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Kids Club FunPages - pull out center 4 sheets

Kids Club pull-out section with a special focus on AIDS

Director Greg Louganis interviewed by a 12 year-old fan

Exclusive to Just For Us

Scholarships for COLAGErs

Winter 1996-97
Dear People,

I got your address from the internet. I live with my mum and her partner Sue. I have been aware for some time that my kind of family is inferior in the eyes of most. I have been very interested to read about COLAGE as I have never come across a U.K. equivalent. I would be very grateful if you could give my address to anyone interested in writing the old fashioned way to an English girl. I am 17, I’ve got three younger siblings, I like the group Oasis, the TV show Absolutely Fabulous, and letters! I hope somebody writes back. I’ll reply to everyone!

Thanks a lot,
- Lily Spencer, Sheffield, England

Dear Lily,

It is great to hear from you. There aren’t any organizations like COLAGE in the UK, but there are ways to meet folks. You should contact “Happy Families” PO Box 1060, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN1 1QE. 01302 766061. You can also contact Anne Blackstone of the Lesbian Parenting Group in London 0277 249 957. Also, look for a new book of intercessions with folks with gay parents coming soon from Cavell; the author is Lisa Jaffin.

Anybody who wants to write to Lily should call/write or write the COLAGE office and we’ll get you in touch with Sue.

Sue Eders

A Proud Son

Dear COLAGE,

My name is Corey, and I have two moms. I’m 17 years old, “straight,” and I’ve been “out” to my moms since grade school. They are very active in my high school band parent organization and are wholeheartedly accepted by the other kids and parents. So I’ve even, even though we live in a conservative area. It’s true. Love is all it takes to make a family, and I’ve been blessed with the best. I’m very proud of my two moms for never hiding, and of my dad for accepting and supporting us all the way he has.

Sincerely,
Corey, Beaverton, OR

PS I know the key to “coming out” successfully and would be glad to help other kids on mine.

Dear Corey,

Sounds like you’re doing cool stuff in Beaverton. Way to go! Any way you want to e-mail Corey for the secrets to his success? Contact the office and we’ll give you his e-mail address.

Anybody Else Out There?

Dear COLAGE,

First of all, thanks so much for replying [to my earlier email]. In the past, I have been sad that no kids of lesbians live in my area, and all kids are very ignorant towards the topic. It’s taboo where I live. I would definitely love to meet kids of lesbians. Two years ago I went to a summer camp called Mountain Meadow, which is a camp for children of lesbians, bisexuals, and single parent families. We had daily meetups and had some really good discussions about what we had in common. I am also aware that many kids would like to admit that in the past I have tried to hide my mother’s lifestyle from my friends, and have been very selective about who I choose to tell. Right now, there is a sunbather with a rainbow and a pink triangle hanging on our front door, but so far, no one has given us much of a problem. If you could, please connect me with other kids of lesbians. It would feel good to have friends/boyfriends who are aware and don’t have a problem with it. Thank you so much.

-Kate, age 14, Woodinjg, NJ

Dear Kate,

Thanks for writing. Have you heard about the COLAGE conference this summer? It will be held in Philadelphia July 24-27. It is always a good time with about 100 kids of lesbian parents (you can bring your partner too if you want) spending bonding time talking about our issues and also having plenty of fun.

COLAGE Kids Club!

My fiancé and I are an openly lesbian couple raising three kids that could greatly benefit from a kids club like this. Our oldest boys are very socially aware about alternative family issues and knowing other children in the same types of families interests them tremendously. We have recently joined a lesbian and gay parents group in Northern Ohio. Our family is very proud of the educating we’ve been doing in our community—every small step helps, right? We consider your kids club a giant step.

Kaithe and Mia, mom
Wooster, OH

Letters to COLAGE can be sent, faxed or emailed to us. Please include your name and phone number, and mention if you’d like to be anonymous.

Eunice Hansen, of Lincoln, Nebraska, recently had a law suit with her neighbor. Part of the money was donated to COLAGE.

Emily Rosen, a Realtor, of Palo Alto, CA, recently had a law suit with her neighbor. Part of the money was donated to COLAGE.

Jupiter, New York

Dear All,

I have a stroke and part of his tongue was paralyzed. I kept my father behind a protective layer of stories and I hated it.

I hated the paranoia that came with having so many secrets. I hated being told that I came from a dysfunctional family (and, it was implied, that I should therefore prepare for a life of crime and general misery), by people whose “functional” families seemed often to be cesspools of muddled emotions.

And I never understood why it was okay that some fathers were sexist, beer-guzzling sport thugs, but the fact that mine was mild-mannered opera queen was unacceptable.

Today, I look around and breathe a sigh of relief, grateful to have been exposed to alternative lifestyles at such a young age. Imagine being given the opportunity to question traditional relationships before you are old enough to get into one.

I hold my father and Michael’s relationships in very high regard. Nowadays, I emulate it, though as an incurable heterosexual, I never fall into traditional roles, because there isn’t any. Having a gay father means that I am surrounded by charming, attractive men. None of whom is trying to pick me up. Having a gay father also means that I can talk to him about my sex life. And he understands. Occasionally, he offers advice; and get this—it’s helpful. Okay, okay. He’s a father like any other. He never runs out of financial advice, he worries when I travel, he is anxious for me to settle down and find a “real” job, and lately he’s even starting asking about grand- children. But I forgive him this. After all, it is he who taught me what it is to forgive.

Alison Weisinger is a Canadian writer and calls herself “the proud daughter of a homo.” This piece originally appeared in the Toronto Globe & Mail 20.VII.94.

“Never understood why it was okay that some fathers were sexist, beer-guzzling sport thugs, but the fact that mine was a mild-mannered opera queen was unacceptable.”

My Amazon Mama: Keep my head up, but nothing else.
She can scream like a banshee when need be but she wears the same dress under business suits.
She knows the ways of the land but never does flinch from pain nor live her life tame.

My Amazon Mama taught me how to fight and be polite. Live without fear and know a woman’s care.

My Amazon Mama raised me in a cobalt blue-dipped, honey-lipped leather later hat; big-throats, tough-skinned, loyal-mouths who worship the stars and love the hunt; and read the stars and know the healing arts.

My Amazon Mama taught me well: Speak Truth. Do Not Run. Know Your Strength. Look directly into the barrel of a gun. Woman Warrior. Whistle through every age you face their rage burned raped crushed or mistreated you refuse to subordinate your Amazon spirit. And Mama because of you I am an Amazon Warrior too.

Jyl Safier Lives in Berkeley, California. She is working on an anthology of writings by daughters of lesbians called the Lavender Heart Project.
Olympic Diver: Greg Louganis!

Zack: Let's start with your childhood. When did you discover that you were gay? Did kids make fun of you? How did your parents react?

Greg: Growing up I just felt "different." I didn't put sexual orientation to that feeling until later, around 16. Some kids made fun of me, yes. I came out to the world (friends and family knew pretty early on) at the Gay Games in 1994. My mom’s reaction was great.

Zack: When did you first take up diving? Did you come out to your teammates? What was it like being in the Olympics? What is your most prideliful achievement?

Greg: I took up diving at age 9. Yes, I came out to some of my teammates. Being in the Olympics is nerve wracking! Some teammates were supportive but there was a lot of jealousy, primarily because I won so often. My most prideliful achievement is my book, because it seems to be making a difference.

Zack: When you found out you were HIV-positive, how did you feel? Who did you tell first?

Greg: When I found out I was HIV-positive, I was numb, but my doctor and cousin encouraged me to continue training. The first person I told was my friend Debbie - she's like a big sister to me.

Zack: Do you have any advice for kids who have gay parents? Any advice for kids who have someone in their life who is HIV-positive or has AIDS?

Greg: My advice to kids who have gay parents is know that you are loved and very much wanted. It's not easy being gay and a parent. If you have someone in you life who is HIV-positive or has AIDS, give them lots of hugs - we all need them.

Zack: Thank you!

If you want to interview a famous gay person, contact COLAGE, maybe we can help! (415) 861-KIDS.
Project: Design Your Own Quilt Panel

One of the beautiful reactions to the AIDS epidemic is the AIDS Memorial Quilt. People have made Quilt panels for their friends and family who have died of AIDS. Use pictures and writing and anything else to show how you remember the people who have died. If you want, please send it to us to show other kids.

Step 1:
Draw or paint the name of a person who has died, or who you want to remember, like “Dads who have died of AIDS”

Step 2:
Around the name, attach or draw things that you think about when you think of this person. Things like:
- Pictures of them or you
- Recipes
- Parts of clothing they like
- Poetry or phrases you or they liked.
- Drawings of them
- Anything that feels important.

Step 3:
Once you finished, show it to people so that they can know how you feel. When someone we care about dies, it can be scary and sad, happy and sometimes even a relief, especially if they were in pain.
There is no right way to feel when someone dies. You may not even feel anything.

More for kids about AIDS...

Books:

Video:

About “My Dad”
by Denise Connell

Denise: When did you write this book?
Breana: I don’t know. I was in Kindergarten.

Denise: Why did you write it?
Breana: My teacher told me we were going to write about people we love. I asked if I could write about someone who died. She said yes. I asked if I could write about my dad who died of AIDS.

Breana: It’s a little bit funny and a little bit sad.

Denise: Who’s in your family?
Breana: Me, Gregg [her dad’s new boyfriend] and David [dad].

Denise: Is there anything you want to tell other kids who have parents with AIDS?
Breana: I know it’s sad, but you know they’re still with you.

Denise Connell lives in San Francisco. Her dad is gay.

When I was three, he tickled me a lot, and I tickled him back. We played horse.

Sometimes I fell off on a soft couch, not on the hard ground.

Continued on page 10
Submissions!

Whenever you send stuff in (the address is on the front page), please make sure to include the following:
1. Full name, address & phone number written clearly.
2. Club membership #.
3. A self-addressed and stamped envelope, if you want your submission back.
4. Include your shirt size. If we use what you send us, we’ll send you a COALGE t-shirt or another gift.

Puzzle Solution

The last issue of the FunPages had a challenging connect-the-dots puzzle. The clue was that it was someone who had helped a lot of lesbian and gay people.

Answer: Harvey Milk!

Milk was a politician in San Francisco, one of the first people elected to office to stand up for the rights of gay people. Sadly, he was murdered by another politician who was afraid of the freedoms that Milk stood for.
When I was four, my dad got sick. We took him to the hospital. He got tubes and sleeping medicine. But he didn’t have to stay long. He came to my grandma’s house with me and my stepdad, David.

But he got worse. He was throwing up. He got AIDS.

I knew something was wrong. I was afraid he was going to die. And he did.

I was very, very sad. I cried very hard.
Erika: Tell me about your family. When did your mom come out?

About the Author

Breanna Dickson wrote "My Dad" when she was 5 years old. She is currently 7 years old and living in San Francisco. Having recently moved from Denver with her two Dads David and Greg. Breanna is in the 1st grade. Her favorite color is purple.
COLAGE
Group
Update
by Kara
Ramson-Walsh

Welcome to the 96-97 COLAGE
Steering Committee

The COLAGE Steering Committee is the groups of folks, all with lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender parents, who coordinate the activities of COLAGE.

They are elected through the mail by a vote of the COLAGE membership.

To reach any member of the Steering Committee please contact the COLAGE office.

This picture was taken at a three-day meeting in San Francisco this August.

Clockwise from upper left:
Sarah Lisswiler (193) 452-3727

If you or someone you know is in one of these areas, get in touch. They are each interested in starting a group for kids with gay parents.

Fresno, California
Christina Wesley (contact the COLAGE office for more info)
Sacramento, California
Michael O'Donabag (916) 442-0185
Willits, California
The Blanchedet Family, PO Box 71, Willits, CA 95490
Atlanta, Georgia
Julie Kaplan, (404) 712-2246.
Lincoln, Nebraska
Emily Hansen, (402) 421-3844
Albuquerque New Mexico
Jennifer Schneider, (505) 344-1096
Long Island, New York
Long Island Gay and Lesbian Youth, Bayshore, (516) 685-2300
Toronto, Ontario
Kim Burroughs (416) 321-6425
Kitchener/Waterloo, Ontario
Sarah Lisswiler (519) 742-3727

There are two things a Community can give its children:
Roots to grow and Wings to fly.

Look for details on COLAGE's exciting new campaign emphasizing the importance of kids with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender parents.

Join GLSTN's Back-to-School Campaign
Help make your school a place where the lesson of respect is taught, rather than that of bigotry.

Submitted by GLSTN

The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Teacher's Network (GLSTN) launched their Back-To-School Campaign in September. In the Campaign, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender adults and their supporters are asked to write a former teacher or administrator at a K-12 school they attended, share their experiences there, and ask what is being done to eradicate the homophobia that is so pervasive in our nation's schools.

You can participate in the Back-To-School Campaign by following these simple steps (and/or suggesting your parent(s) do so):

1. Choose a teacher or administrator from a school you attend, or attended.
2. Write her or him a detailed personal letter that uses your experiences at that school to illustrate what homophobia does to young people. (Contact GLSTN for a sample letter.)
3. Ask for a reply that specifies what they will do this year to end homophobia in their school or classroom.
4. Send along a copy of GLSTN's packet, "What You Can Do: Ideas and Resources for Educators Working to End Homophobia in Schools," available free of charge (contact GLSTN for copies of the packet).
5. Copy your letter to GLSTN so they can use it to raise awareness among other educators.

For more information about the Back-to-School campaign or about COLAGE, contact them at: GLSTN, 2124 Broadway #166, New York, NY 10023. (212) 727-0135

COLAGE Notes

The three day COLAGE conference in Minneapolis this past July was a great success. The first day was a never before tried idea - a ropes course. We spent the day outside scaling 50 foot walls, swinging through the trees, flying over swamps and much much more.

The second day we were so close after our outdoor adventures that we felt like one big family. We talked alot in the workshops some of them new, and some of them old.

Chris DiSfioffino and Michael Cohen, our expert facilitators, each received a collage of pics from past conferences from COLAGE as thanks for all their hard work.

So...Have you been dying to go to a COLAGE Conference? Did you miss us in Minneapolis? Did you have such a great time in Minneapolis that you want to come again? Well thank you for your calendar.

The COLAGE Conference 1997 will be in Philadelphia, July 17th - 20th.

We will be starting off with another surprise event in the City of Brotherly Love. Information on how to register will be sent to you soon. Looking forward to seeing you in Philadelphia!

Have you been on TV?

Have you or your family been on the news, a talk show, a documentary? Have you seen stories about us and caught them on tape? We're hoping to put together a video library and a "be a light parents and kids" video. Please call Roseanne Johnson (612) 951-5437 with leads, or send a copy of the tape to the COLAGE office.