

(LESBIAN MOTHERHOOD from page 1)

workers, the gay community, and passersby is a strange brew of reactions. Most men, except for my gay male friends, have a strange fear toward me. It seems as though all pregnant women are aliens to them to be treated with caution and respect. The fact that I am openly gay presents an additional risk to them. I often feel that they startle as they pass me in hallways or street corners as if I were some beast--a beast only passed with garlic, a cross, and never looked straight in the eye. Being a computer whiz kid protects my job situation from any discrimination. Female co-workers seem calmer and friendly with me now. At first, they seemed unsure of their feelings, asking such questions as, "Did you use the real thing or artificial?" My reply was always, "Well, I used sperm, whatever that is." They have resolved their feelings, deciding that they have more in common with me now that I am to be a mom. They had grown to like me as a lesbian and an "eccentric," but now they can talk to me like one of the "girls." The highlight of this period with them is when I sat in the midst of 45 "ladies" at a baby shower they had surprised me with. There I was butchy as ever with a bright yellow corsage and Susan femmy as ever being treated as the proud daddy. They became confused, saying such things as "Gosh, it will be such a pretty baby with your eyes and Susan's hair." Suddenly, you would see them look up embarrassed remembering that was not exactly how it was done.



Gay male friends watch the process with wonder both from the perspective of female genitals and giving birth. A male friend who visits my office often to "check in" said with great awe, "You know it really is a powerful image--a woman giving birth." I am amazed upon occasion when I sit with male heads on my belly listening for baby sounds and movements; I, a once steadfast separatist. I have also come to realize that it is harder for a gay man to realize his parental desire. They are faced with the very difficult process of adoption or finding a surrogate mother.

The lesbian community has been very supportive with my endeavor. I received a few condolence phone calls after women heard I was carrying a son. I have been eyed with curiosity by lesbians who do not know me; I suppose they wonder what persuasion I am. A lesbian feminist from New York at a gay conference declared that my

pregnancy was politically incorrect. Needless to say I was amused by another rendition of an oldie but boldie theme.

Health professionals have had to restructure their thinking to a certain degree, as Susan and I show up at doctor visits and prenatal classes with all the cute married heterosexualsexuals. We supplied by OB-GYN department of NCMH with a four-page legal birth plan stating our desires and views on the birth procedure. This written document hopefully will insure us a certain amount of control over how we are treated as women, patients, and lesbians. Their reactions have been either veiled hostility, uncertainty, or active friendly participation at the fact that we are knowledgeable and assertive about our health care and are also openly lesbian. Lamaze class has been a pleasant and educational experience with the help of a black female family nurse practitioner who is a nice mix of alternative and traditional medicine.

How do I feel? I am joyful over this actively growing, moving person inside of me. I am terrified at the changes he will have over me. I plan and consider his life three and five years ahead, sorting through my dreams, nightmares, and realities. I waddle around very uncomfortably, murmuring, "I want my body back," feeling vulnerable in this once stocky, muscular body which is now a ripened, soft avocado. I wonder about how the gay community will handle my son and me. Issues such as day care and lesbian custody rights have become realities to me, rather than just political movements. I have learned a new kind of intimate relationship, a relationship with a male stranger whom I love and feel very protective of. This decision was based on an expansion of myself, and I am amazed at how much I expand physically and emotionally each day.

-Gloria

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Gloria delivered 10 1/2 lb. Robert Michael on Oct. 6, 1985. Congratulations to Gloria and Susan!
-ed

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