

Aunts

As a kid, I didn't think that it was weird to have two aunts. I knew that all my friends had aunts who were married to uncles, and I had one myself on the other side of my family, but even then, it didn't seem odd that my aunts were living together or that I called them both by their first names. By the time I was nine, I realized I was different.

My brother was preparing for his Bar Mitzvah when he told my parents that he didn't want to introduce Maura and Coyote (yes, my biological aunt prefers to be called by her self-adorned nick name, a holdover from the '70s) as his aunts. He thought it would be too embarrassing to explain to his friends that his aunt was a lesbian. Or that she had been with her partner for over fifteen years. He was in middle school and even Asheville middle-schoolers can be cruel and teasing.

Still in elementary school, I thought it was mean that my brother didn't want to admit that Coyote and Maura were both our aunts. My friends didn't seem to notice or care when I talked about them. But then when I was twelve and preparing for my Bat Mitzvah, I understood my brother's embarrassment. Instead of introducing them as a couple, I thought about what I could say. I considered, "My Aunt Stephanie and her friend Maura," or, "My Aunt Stephanie and...Maura..." with no qualifier. My favorite idea was, "My Aunt Stephanie and her roommate Maura." I knew people in college had roommates of the same sex, so I assumed my friends probably wouldn't find it odd to have a 50-year-old aunt with a 40-something-year-old roommate.

My parents assured me that it was my choice how I introduced Coyote and Maura, and my aunts agreed; they wanted me to feel comfortable. I just couldn't decide what to do, and I wished more than anything that Coyote hadn't been a lesbian and that she had a husband who I could introduce as my uncle. I felt bad wishing this because I realized that it would mean Maura would not be my aunt, but at the time, the wish seemed reasonable; Maura could still be Coyote's friend, which