WE ARE FAMILY

Being a daughter of a gay parent is mainly the same as having a straight parent. Sometimes, though there are differences, like homophobia from other people such as the government by making only heterosexual marriages legal and recognized, and the obvious difference that my dad's partners are men, not women. I hate homophobia and all other prejudices. But it is my dad's choice whether he wants to date men or women. I am not in any way saying it is his choice to be gay, just that he has the choice to date whomever he wants. Dad has had three partners that I know of and remember. My mom, Robin, (a man), and Fred. I'll talk about them in order.

My dad met my mom when they were both 22. They got married the very next year. I was born seven years later. I don't remember much about the time my mom and dad spent together since they got a divorce when I was only five. What I tend to remember most about those years was the house itself and less the actual events of daily life. After my parents got divorced, I moved out of the house with my mom and lived with her until I was nine. That year she died from cancer. Then I moved back to live with my dad. I had seen him throughout all these years on weekends, holidays, and summer time, so I knew my dad, but not very well. My mom was angry with him throughout the time I lived with her. She would tell me, and everyone else close to her, terrible things about dad. I didn't know who to believe, and after mom died, I didn't want to leave my home. When I first came to live with my dad, I didn't trust him or know which parent was telling the truth about dad. After the years, I learned to trust him, and then to love him. During this time dad came out to me. I had already guessed as much, but had not put a name to it until he said he was "gay."

Dad met Robin when I was five and they became partners the next year. I don't remember ever meeting Robin for the first time. Very few of my memories go back that far, but what I do remember is all the years I spent with Robin and Dad. The best times of all were spent with Robin's daughters Emily, Meg, and Robin. Each one of us had an unusual relationship with the others. Emily and I are best friends. Meg was so kind to everyone that you couldn't help but like her and sometimes envy her. Robin and I had a love/hate relationship. We loved each other, but since she was the youngest, and so the baby of the house, and I had been an only child, we fought like cats and dogs! Even though we fought a whole bunch, I was still very close to all three of them and their father. One day we decided that since we liked each other so much and our dads were partners, that we would find out what relation we had to each other. I went to my dad and asked him what relation we were to each other. To my surprise and sadness, he said "None, other than friends." This just astonished me; that even though dad and Robin were partners and had that relation to each other, we had none, absolutely none! I decided right then that we would be related if I had to make us. We were going to be something to each other even if I had to invent it. So I did. Since my dad was little Robin's godfather, that made us godsisters and as an abbreviation, we took off the "god" and called each other sisters! Emily, Meg and Robin were sisters. After all, it was just adding me. They agreed. Emily, Meg, Robin and I still keep in touch even though our dads are not partners anymore. The seperation wasn't easy for any of us, especially because we kids had no say in it. Dad and Robin are friends and I am still close to my sisters and Robin. Emily was very angry at my dad and disliked him for a long time. Things got easier as time went on. About a year after Robin and dad broke up, Dad got together with Fred.

In the same way I wanted Mom and Dad to get back together after the divorce, I now wanted Robin and Dad back together. Fred and Dad got together anyway. Gay parents do not always have it easy but, neither do their kids. People all around you can be very cruel, teasing and tormenting you because your parent happens to be gay. Sometimes they won't even acknowledge that you're there. Yet sometimes the meanest people of all can be your parents and their partners. Before I go on, I want to make sure you understand what I am going to say is purely my opinion. It may be biased, but I will try to be as neutral as possible and not bash Fred or Dad unfairly, or without pointing out my faults too. I did not like Fred from the beginning. He treated me like I was a little child. I was twelve but he made me feel like a four year old. The only reason I wasn't mean to him from the start was that he was just visiting. Unfortunately, visiting turned to a partnership. Whenever Fred was around, Dad ignored me. I was hurt and angry. I tried telling Dad that he was not paying any attention to me and that I did not like it, but it never sank in. I started to do mean things to Fred and bother him whenever I could. Months later, Fred and Dad broke up. I recently talked with my Dad and my therapist about how my dad and I felt concerning the time he spent with Fred. We talked and agreed that he needed to pay attention to me and include me in his life both when he was in and out of relationships. We also agreed that I needed to not get revenge on dad or his partner, but to try to get the message through by talking. Dad said he would listen to me. Now dad is single and we get along pretty well. I am hoping that dad will find a new partner, but I am not pressing him. Life is semi-normal and I think we are both happy.

The author , Beverly Ellison, is a fourteen year old pagan-feminist who likes cats, Mary Daly, Margot Alder, and Robin Morgan. She likes Portland because it's busy, has great shopping, and best of all it has Equal Protection Portland! She will be going into ninth grade in the fall term at Wayneflete School.

CPR is making this space available monthly to young people who have gay parent(s). We hope young people will contribute articles around the struggles and the joys of growing up in a lesbian/gay/bi/transgender household. It helps to know you are not alone. Reader response to Beverly's article may be directed to her in care of CPR or in a letter to the editor.

Panty Check

GENDER POLICE ARE ALIVE AND WELL AT MICHIGAN

By Nancy Burkholder

Nancy Burkholder was expelled from the 1991 Michigan Womyn's Music Festival on Tuesday morning at approximately 12:45 a.m. While waiting at the main gate for a friend arriving on the chartered bus, Nancy was talking with a group of women around a fire pit. One member of this group informed a security woman that Nancy had said something that made her suspect Nancy was a transsexual. Nancy was approached by security woman and showed them her picture ID driver's license. One of them asked if she was a transsexual. Nancy wanted to know why she was being questioned. The woman replied that transsexuals were not permitted at the festival because the festival was for "natural, women-born women" only . Nancy pointed out that nowhere in any festival literature was that policy stated, and asked the security woman to verify it. Festival producers, Lisa Vogel and Boo Price, were called and verified that transsexuals were not permitted to attend by festival policy. They reportedly refused to speak to Nancy, having designated the security woman their spokesperson. Security women asked Nancy whether she had had a sex-change operation. Nancy replied that her medical history was none of their business but that she was willing to submit to a genital examination to satisfy their concerns about her sex. Security women declined, saying they would not feel comfortable doing that. Nancy requested proof to substantiate the security women's allegations that she was transsexual. They said they didn't need proof, that they "were empowered to expel anyone from the land for any reason that we feel appropriate." Nancy was told she had to leave the festival at once, was not allowed to return to her campsite to collect her belongings, and once expelled, had to find transportation home at her own expense.

In 1992, the MWMF brochure contained wording ("MWMF is a gethering of mothers and daughters for all womyn born womyn...") meant to exclude transsexuals. That year several women went to MWMF to inform participants about gender issues and discuss their concerns. A survey showed that participants favored transsexual inclusion by *more than 3 to 1.* Survey results were sent to festival producers, who have not responded. The 1993 brochure ... contains the same anti-transsexual sentence. This summer a contigent of women will again attend the festival to raise consciousness about gender. We do not debate the *legal* right of the festival to exclude transsexuals, but we ask them to do so in plain language. We do debate their *moral* right to exclude any woman on grounds other than her *behavior* at the festival, expecially when such action is clearly against the will of the majority .