

A PECULIAR PICKLE

Judith Beckett

I never really had a chance to be in that gay closet I'd heard so much about. When I slept with a woman for the first time in the summer of 1976, she was so happy and excited to discover that we were both Lesbians ... she announced it to everyone we knew!!

The following Fall, I was offered a job at a private school. I decided that I would not come out because—well, it was a school. Anyway, it was only for one semester. My job was to set up a nurse's department before a new administrator arrived. The school was so over-crowded, children were literally falling out of the windows!

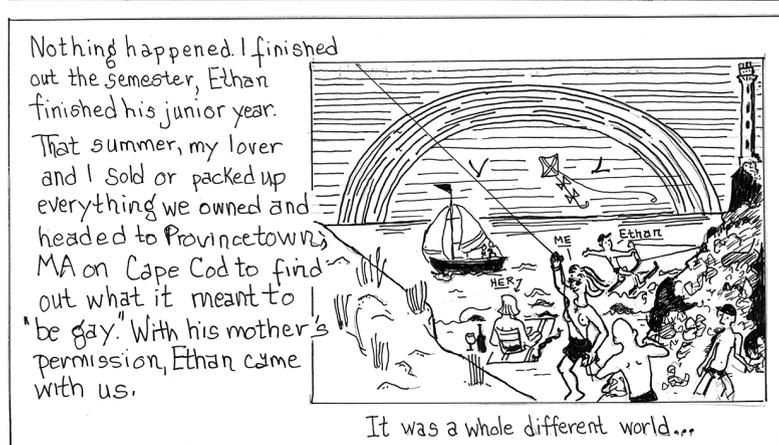
I loved the kids and my new job and by the end of October I thought I had a pretty good handle on things. That is until Halloween when a handsome sixteen-year old came into my office complaining of a sore throat.

I'd never been to a gay bar before but, on that Halloween night, we drove 40 miles to dance at a bar we'd recently heard about. It looked dark and scary—and not just because it was Halloween!

Inside, women and men in costumes made the unfamiliar bar seem even spookier. I saw a nurse bending over another woman in a wheelchair.

As if that wasn't bad enough for my first night at a Gay bar, suddenly I heard someone calling my name from across the room.

beckett
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OPENING THE DOOR

Kelli Dunham

Every spring for the entire decade I worked as a home-visiting nurse with first-time new moms, I had a dilemma. I worked with teenagers and many of them (to their great credit, since all of them were either pregnant or parenting a child under two years old) were still in high school.

Spring in high school is deep prom season and I am a butch dyke.

How did this connect? Every other home I went to, the kid/client would talk about the prom and disappear for a moment saying "I'll be right back," and then reappear carrying her prom dress.

And thus, the difficulty. I knew then, and know now, very little about prom dresses. Next to nothing. "Commenting on prom dresses" might not be exactly something you could put on a care plan; after all there is no ICD-9 (diagnostic code) for "lack of supportive adults in a teen's life" although an argument could be made that there should be. But it was a long-term, relationship-based program. They needed some feedback.

Initially I would nod and say things like "Oh yes, that's nice" and make other vaguely positive comments, but the kids were often looking for more. One sunny Friday afternoon I spent forty-five minutes looking through a book of two hundred swatches of fabric. The client went through each one, asking me what I thought. As far as I could see, they were all the same color: blue. It occurred to me at that point that making conversation about prom dresses is not really something I should do unsupervised.

This was easily remedied by texting some more femininely gendered friends, who then responded with appropriate comments and questions.

Wow, where did you get the shoes?
How are you going to wear your hair?