



Dedicated to helping LGBT people build and strengthen their families.

Birds of a Feather

"I just saw a European-American man with an African-American baby." Jack, Mona and I were in Barnes and Noble, and Mona had noticed a family that she thought might have much in common with our family.

"Was he with another guy?" I asked.

"No, but I don't think he was wearing a wedding band," Mona responded. Of course the presence or absence of a wedding band can be a distracter nowadays.

Research findings pose few differences between the children of out queer parents and straight parents, but I'm sure that our kids grow up with a keener sense of gaydar. They "get" what I once heard singer-songwriter Holly Near explain, "If you think someone is gay and you're wrong, it's a mistake not an insult."

Our kids are just more willing to make a mistake about someone's sexuality or gender identity. And if they're wrong, so what!

Driving our daughter and her friend home from a day camp this past summer, Mona announced, "My archery teacher has heard of COLAGE." Mona used the acronym rather than the full name, Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere.

I glanced into my rearview mirror and noticed that Mona was wearing a smirk, while her friend Claire sat there totally oblivious of the coded message that had just transpired between daughter and father. The two girls have been friends since kindergarten, and, like all of Mona's friends, Claire knows that Mona has two dads, but this doesn't make her an aficionado of queer acronyms.

After we dropped Claire off, I asked "Okay Mona, tell me how you found out that your archery instructor knows about COLAGE?"

"Well he had a bag from Don't Panic." Don't Panic is a queer t-shirt store on Commercial Street in P'town. She continued, "...and he wasn't wearing a wedding band." She's kind of stuck on this wedding band clue.

"That still doesn't tell me how you found out that he knows about COLAGE."

"I figured he might be gay, so I said that I belong to COLAGE, and he said, 'I've heard of COLAGE.'"

"You're too much," I laughed.

"I also said that we go to P'town every summer for Family Week, and guess what?"

continued on page 2

"What?"

"He knows about Family Week too!"

Truth-be-told Mona's expert investigation caused me to wonder also if her archery teacher might be one of Robin Hood's merry little men. Mona's teacher may have been straight as an arrow, but I can appreciate why she got into this game of connect the dots. She's not the only gaydar queen in our family.

When Mona was a toddler, Jack and I took her to see a Sesame Street Live performance. Two guys with a toddler about Mona's age sat directly in front of us. I struck up a conversation, enjoying the possibility that we had run into gay dads. As my comments became more transparent, one of the men informed me that the other man was his brother and that the baby was his nephew. Neither man acted insulted. Why should they? They seemed like nice guys, and I had thought – more honestly hoped – that they were gay dads.

A Jewish friend once told me that his grandmother insisted that Perry Como was, "a nice Jewish boy." She liked him and that was all the evidence she needed. In a way, her insisting he was Jewish was a compliment. The brothers at Sesame Street Live were simply my Perry Comos.

Mona and I are frequently on the same gaydar wavelength. Recently, we were ordering sandwiches in a neighborhood deli. A new kid was working there, maybe 20. For whatever reason I assumed he was gay. We talked. He ended his comments saying something about his girlfriend. As he turned away, Mona and I looked at each other with an I-don't-think-so expression plastered across our faces.

And last spring, in line for Bush Gardens, our gaydar paid off. We had a great conversation with two new gay dads and their toddler son. Back in Barnes and Noble, Mona led Jack and me to the isle where she had first spotted the man and the baby. "Now just walk down the isle pretending to look at books," Mona said. We were on a quest, but unfortunately the man and baby had fled.

Mona, not being one to give up easily, tracked them down at the checkout line. The baby was adorable, and the ringless dad stood in line holding his adorable baby and a book. We couldn't make out the book's title.

In retrospect, we should have introduced ourselves. Maybe he was a dad. Maybe he wasn't. Maybe he was gay, maybe not. Regardless, we wish him the best and there's nothing wrong with assuming that he was a gay dad. Even straight guys can use an occasional compliment.

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