



VINCE'S VIEW



*Dedicated to helping LGBT people build and strengthen their families.*

## My Gay Lifestyle

Shopping for my twelve-year-old daughter and my ninety-seven-year-old mother, I walk up to the cashier in Rite Aid with a package of Stayfree pads in one hand and a package of Depends in my other hand. I'm tempted to purchase a box of condoms just to prove to the handsome cashier that I'm still alive, but—the economy being what it is—there's no sense in wasting money. He stuffs the pads and Depends into a plastic bag, and I shuffle out of the store.

There's no one to blame but myself; this shopping is a consequence of my gay life style. If only I could go through one of those ex-gay programs, then with a little work and a lot of denial, I too could live the straight lifestyle and have a "real marriage." Then, whenever my mother needs Depends or hair dye or pantyhose, I could tell my wife to run to the store while I press the TV remote. And whenever my daughter needs whatever she may need, I could again yell into the kitchen, from my Naugahyde recliner: "Honey..." But alas, while caring for my mother, raising a child, cooking, cleaning, writing, and spreading the gay agenda, who has time for recovery? And to ask Jack, my partner of thirty-three years, to do more than he already does (which is a lot), so that I can become straight...well where's the motivation in it for him? Granted, he's one of the most understanding men that I know, but...

Most recently, my lifestyle cast me into the most perverse of experiences. My daughter came home from school and said that she wanted to buy a bra. She's been wearing sports bras for a couple of years, but—pressure being what it is in a girl's locker room—she wanted "real bras." I searched online, measuring for bras, and prayed that my computer would not be confiscated, for fear that my perversion would be discovered. No matter how often I measured, I couldn't break the code. Thirty-four H couldn't be right. Then I remembered that a local JC Penny's second-floor housed a clandestine lingerie department—isolated from less seductive apparel like overalls and galoshes.

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As Mona and I rode the escalator, I felt my chest tighten. Fortunately, when we reached the second floor, we were the only customers, and a kind saleswoman took pity and agreed to measure Mona. Of course, Mona had to tell the woman about my errors in attempts at measuring. Next, Mona pointed out the bras she was interested in, Flirtitude. "All the girls wear them," was her reasoning. I noticed that some of them had padding on the bottom. Pushup bras! I protested! Even those of us caught in the clutches of the gay lifestyle have our scruples. Mona and I argued as I stood among the Flirtitudes, squeezing bras to separate the t-shirt styles from the pushups. Suddenly I realized just how hopeless I was. Squeezing bras in a sea of silks and lace and satins did nothing for me. I may as well have been squeezing grapefruits at the local food co-op. Who was I kidding? Recovery programs could never help me.

After much squeezing and arguing, Mona and I left the store weighted down with a sack full of bras. It was Christmastime, and right outside of Penny's sat Santa Clause. I could tell from his smirk that he knew I had just done something naughty. I tried to sneak past him, but Mona announced, "I want to have my picture taken with Santa." I couldn't believe my ears. In vain, I reminded her that she was twelve years old and that she had just bought Flirtitude bras. But she refused to see the logic of my argument. I knew then that conservative evangelicals were right (as in correct). Queers should not parent! My gay lifestyle had led my daughter to make a mockery of Santa, and now we have the photograph of Santa, Mona, and a sack full of bras as a constant reminder.

Later that evening, Mona and I talked about all the amazing changes that she's going through, and we chuckled about our shopping excursion. I reminded her that there are women in her life that she can talk to (or shop with for bras) should she feel the need. I also reminded her that there is nothing about her that makes her dads uncomfortable, even if we're not very good at figuring out bra sizes. Being men raising a daughter has presented us with many wonderful challenges, but so has being European American parents raising an African American child, and the list goes on. Most important, we work hard to remind Mona, through our words and through our actions, that she can come to us with anything. Just another one of those flaws in our gay lifestyle