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FALL FAMILY GUIDE



MOMBIAN

by Dana Rudolph | drudolph@mombian.com
contributing writer

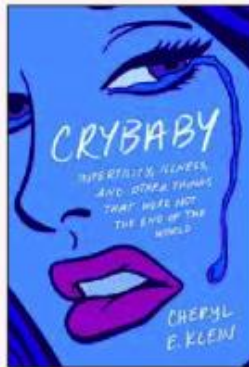
Three Recent Memoirs Chart Queer Families

Three recent memoirs offer differing looks at queer families.

"The Family Outing: A Memoir," by Jessi Hempel (HarperOne). Jessi Hempel came out as a lesbian in college. Then her father was outed as gay, her sister came out as bisexual, and their brother came out as a trans man. Yet their collective queerness is not in itself what caused their White, middle-class family to fracture. Hempel explores what did, a legacy of secrets and past traumas, and how, over years, they managed to heal.

Hempel's mother lived with depression, bound up with a traumatic experience of her youth involving an infamous serial killer. Her behavior was often unpredictable, puzzling and disturbing to young Jessi. Her father, raised by a conservative Christian father, was often absent on business. One can see the cracks in her parents' relationship long before her father came out, and the behaviors the children adopted to protect themselves.

see MEMOIRS, page 5



My Family's RIVF Story

I write a lot about other people's family stories in this column, but this time, I'm sharing the experience my now-spouse and I had with reciprocal IVF (my egg; her womb). I hope it offers some insight and inspiration to others pursuing a similar path.

Preparation

Helen and I had been together for eight years, but focused on our careers, before we decided to start a family in the early aughts. We knew

see RIVF, page 3



Real Children Share Gender Identities and Expressions in New Picture Book

The children whose photos and words appear in "True You: A Gender Journey," by educator Gwen Agna and photojournalist Shelley Rotner (Clarion), are "Girls, boys, neither, both, or just not sure." They are strong, creative, curious, kind, and more, with different ways of showing who they are.

"It's up to you—how you feel, how

you dress, how you act, how you play, learn, and love." Agna and Rotner assure readers, adding, "People might think your body is a clue to who you are. It is what you think that matters."

We are then introduced to a number of trans, nonbinary, and cis kids,

see GENDER, page 8



A Lesbian Mom's Thoughts on Coming Out

Coming out is often described as an ongoing journey. As parents, it is a journey we take with our children. For National Coming Out Day, coming up on October 11, here are a few things I've learned along the way.

I first came out well before I became a parent, but parenthood shone a big spotlight on our family structure. Right from the start, as we were creating our family via recip-

cal IVF (my egg, my spouse's womb), we were by necessity out to doctors, nurses, receptionists, and lawyers, not to mention colleagues and HR staff at our respective employers' as we arranged family leave. I had been out at work, but this expanded the circle of those who knew, and I hoped the visibility would pave the way for others.

see COMING OUT, page 7

New law aims to make California haven for transgender youth

By Adam Beam
Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)—A new law aims to stop other states from punishing children who come to California for transgender surgeries and other gender-affirming care, a move that will intensify conflicts between Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom and other Republican governors amid the

country's escalating culture war.

Newsom signed the law on Thursday, but it won't take effect until January. It is designed to stop Texas and other conservative states from removing children from parents who allow them to receive "gender-affirming" health care, defined as "medically necessary health care that respects the gender identity of the patient, as experienced and defined by the patient."

That would include hormone therapy to suppress secondary sex characteristics and other treatments "to align the patient's appearance or physical body with the patient's gender identity."

The law will block out-of-state subpoenas, stop health providers from sharing information with out-of-state entities related to gender-affirming

see CALIFORNIA, page 11

There's even more "Hocus Pocus" news. Disney has gone from having no interest in the property to wanting to expand its audience. Why not "Hocus Pocus: On Broadway"? Why not, indeed. The musical will be based on the first movie and, while there are no plans for the original trio to star in it, there's nothing to say they couldn't.



more in Billy Masters on page 61

SCOTUS LGBT preview

By Lisa Keen
Keen News Service

The U.S. Supreme Court sometimes makes significant moves long before it hears arguments in a case. Such is true in a blockbuster LG-BTQ case pending before the court in its newly opened 2022-23 session.

In the appeal, 303 Creative v. Elenis, the anti-LGBTQ group Alliance Defending Freedom asked the court to decide whether a business could claim a religious exemption to a state law prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation in public accommodations. The court declined to answer that question but, instead, accepted the appeal to answer a different question: whether a business could claim a Free Speech right to discriminate.

"This is a case about commercial conduct, not speech," said Mary Bonauro, GLAD civil rights project director and lead author of a brief urging the court to rule that the Free Speech clause does not exempt businesses from complying with public accommodation laws.

By examining the Free Speech claim, the court is setting up its eventual decision to have "far broader implications" than a religious exemption to civil rights laws, said ACLU attorney Amanda Shanor at a Federalist Society preview September 21. And as Kelsi Corkran, Supreme Court Director at the Institute for Constitutional Ad-

vocacy and Protection, said at a Georgetown Law preview, the narrowing of the question will enable the court to decide whether any business can simply articulate "any reason" to refuse serving customers because of their sexual orientation, race, gender, or other protected status.

"If there is a Free Speech right to selectively choose her customers based on the messages [the web designer] wants to endorse," said Corkran, "I assume that would apply to any protected characteristic. I think it would apply to a white supremacist who doesn't want to provide services to people of color."

That was the assessment of several legal experts on a number of different panels examining the 2022-23 Supreme Court docket. The new session began October 3, and most panels identified the LGBTQ public accommodations case as one of the session's four major conflicts. Others include voting rights, gerrymandering, and affirmative action.

So far, 303 Creative is also among several LG-BTQ-related cases the Supreme Court might take up this session:

303 Creative v. Elenis - This case, which has been accepted for argument (probably in December), could allow any business in the public marketplace (hotels, restaurants, bakeries, web designers, etc.) to refuse service to a customer by claiming to have some personal objection to treating that customer the same as all others.

While this case is based on a desire to refuse web design services to same-sex couples, it could undermine civil rights for the wide range of people protected by anti-discrimination laws. It pits a one-person web design company against Colorado laws (represented by state Attorney General Aubrey Elenis). The appeal seems a strange one for the court to have accepted, in that no same-sex couple has sought the web designer's services. As longtime marriage equality attorney Evan Wolfson puts it, the case "doesn't even present a true case or controversy and ought not to be before the Court." The fact that the court has taken the appeal suggests the 6-3 conservative majority has decided to aggressively pursue the right-wing agenda.

Shannon Minter, legal director for the National Center for Lesbian Rights, said he finds the court's question limit to Free Speech "extremely troubling."

"The court framed the question to presuppose that designing a website for money in a business open to the general public is 'artistic expression' rather than an ordinary commercial service," said Minter. "That is a radical departure from existing law. It's one thing for the court to change the law. It's another for the court to do so surreptitiously by framing the question in such a highly loaded and novel way."

Boston College Law School Professor Kent Greenwood, at an American Constitution So-

ciety preview, said he believes the court will rule for the web artist.

"I have no doubt which way the court will decide. The court is expanding both its understanding of what speech is and its protection of it," said Greenwood. "Though facially a speech case and not a religion clause case, the case fits comfortably in the court's broadening effort to expand religious protections for religious people...especially those religions that are evangelical and mainstream. The court is increasingly solicitous of religion claims."

Klein v. Oregon: This is a copycat case on a repeat appeal, and the Supreme Court has not yet indicated whether it will take it up. In Klein v. Oregon, the Oregon Court of Appeals ruled that a baker could not cite her religious beliefs in order to violate a state law that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation in public accommodations.

The U.S. Supreme Court vacated that state decision in 2019 and asked the lower court to reconsider the case "in light of" *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado*. Oregon did and came back with the same decision: A baker could not claim a Free Exercise of religion right to violate a state law against discrimination in public accommodations.

Florida v. NetChoice: In this case, Florida appeals to defend its newly passed law that stops social media from "censoring users based on viewpoint." LGBTQ groups say that social media groups should be able to ban hate speech because, "Without adequate content modera-

see SCOTUS, page 11

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RIVF

Continued from page 1

almost immediately that we wanted to do reciprocal in vitro fertilization (RIVF), with Helen carrying my eggs, so that we could both be a part of the process in a physical way. I'm a few years younger, so we used my "fresher" eggs.

We then juggled healthcare, insurance, and law. First, we talked with our regular doctor and got physicals. She referred us to a fertility practice. I also approached my employer's health insurance provider to be sure that IVF was covered—at \$20,000 per attempt, we couldn't have done it otherwise. We had to pay for the sperm ourselves, though, at about \$300 per try.

Next stop was the lawyer to make sure none of the paperwork we had to sign at the clinic would waive either of our rights, since it was set up for egg donors who would not be parenting the child. We also updated our wills and powers of attorney just in case.

At the same time, we started looking at online catalogs from sperm banks. We wanted an

anonymous donor who would have no possible legal claim to the child. Looking back, we might have considered a donor who was "willing to be known" when the child turned 18, but we unfortunately didn't know this was a possibility. We've always been open with our son about his origins, however, and told him what we know of the donor. Mostly, we wanted someone healthy—but that still left a lot of choices. We were almost driven to putting printouts of the finalists' profiles on the floor and choosing the one the cat sat on. (Ultimately, we made the call ourselves.)

Feeling the Egg-citement

Then began the real attempts. We met with the fertility doctor and brought home a large paper grocery bag full of medicines and needles. So. Many. Needles. Helen needed to take hormones to prepare the lining of her uterus to receive the egg. I needed hormones to produce many eggs at once instead of the usual one per month. (I'm not going to specify medications here; there are different protocols in use and I'm not a doctor, so this isn't a recommendation for anything specific.)

Helen started with a "test cycle" of hormone pills to make sure her uterus responded appropriately, then I went on birth control pills to synch my cycle with hers. I still laugh about the fact that the first time I ever went on birth control was in order to have a child.

I then gave myself daily injections in my belly for several weeks. The needles were tiny and nearly painless, though there was definitely a mental barrier to get over. I began to feel a little bloated as my ovaries grew.

Helen began with a daily injection via small needles, and then another for a week or so via a 2-inch needle in her backside, which I had to give her. (It was a bonding experience.) This was in a thick, sesame-oil base and caused some soreness.

We also both went to the clinic every other morning at 6 a.m. for blood tests and ultrasounds. We'd cut out our caffeine for the duration, so that was rough, but we figured it was good preparation for parenthood.

My final injection, to release the eggs, had to be exactly 36 hours before my clinic appointment, when I went briefly under general anesthetic and woke up (babbling incoherently, I'm

told) with the eggs painlessly removed.

The clinic then fertilized the eggs with the sperm we'd had shipped to them. Five days later they inserted the embryos via a tube into Helen's uterus. They usually insert more than one for IVF—this boosts the chances of any one succeeding, but at the risk of multiple births. The doctors recommended how many, based on how the embryos were developing, but the final choice was up to us. This was the most difficult question we faced after selecting the sperm donor.

We then waited for the results—a looong 10 days, especially since over-the-counter pregnancy tests didn't work with IVF and we had to go to the clinic for a blood test instead. The first time didn't succeed.

If at First...

None of our remaining embryos had been good enough to freeze, so we started again from scratch. We chose a different donor, in case the sperm was the problem. To improve egg quality, I also took an additional medication, which re-

see **RIVF**, page 10

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GOP's genteel complicity in madness

Despising Trump while aiding him earns no credit
by Richard J. Rosendall | rosendall@starpower.net
contributing writer

Sen. Mitch McConnell, whose ruthless scheming packed our federal courts with wildly unrepresentative radical conservatives, is at least sensible enough to despise Donald Trump and support federal election reform. For this, Trump threatened McConnell on Truth Social and hurled a racist nickname at McConnell's wife Elaine Chao.

Republicans' internal feuding may be entertaining, but they remain on the threshold of retaking Congress.

Before she was Trump's Transportation secretary, Chao was George W. Bush's Labor secretary. I was a computer specialist at the Labor Department in those days, and I worked on a few procurement panels. One of them involved a set-aside for an Alaska Native-owned business. The department loved its award ceremonies, and I was the designated recipient of a plaque from Sec. Chao on behalf of our panel for doing as we were mandated.

There I stood onstage next to Elaine Chao in the Great Hall of the Frances Perkins Building accepting a meaningless award. During her years at Labor, Chao never put a foot wrong in public. She did make an unfortunate suggestion that the Blacks In Government Choir sing "My Old Kentucky Home" for her husband at her swearing-in, but that was quietly swatted down.

Much of what cabinet secretaries do is ceremonial. They are well dressed, well coiffed, and speak from prepared texts. A sociopath like Trump who goes off-script—who says the quiet part out loud—horrifies

Washington insiders. This is why Chao resigned as Transportation secretary after Trump incited an insurrection at the Capitol. But she willingly served until a couple of weeks before his term ended. She would have served the country better by staying and invoking the 25th Amendment against him, since he still had the nuclear launch codes while being insane.

I am not prepared to reward McConnell or Chao for their complicity in anti-democratic mischief just because they are genteel enough to draw the line at insurrection.

There you have American voters' dilemma in a nutshell.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis may perform tolerably after a hurricane, though the Republicans in Florida's congressional delegation all voted against FEMA aid they will likely boast of later. But Republicans continue to deny the global warming that intensifies tropical storms. Then-Congressman DeSantis in 2013 opposed federal aid after Hurricane Sandy which he now eagerly accepts after Hurricane Ian.

The malignancy of these hypocrites has long been in plain view. So why do millions of voters continue to support them? The straightforward, if unpleasant, answer—to borrow a line from Will Rogers—is that politicians represent their constituents.

Republicans only need a net gain of a few House seats and a single Senate seat to regain control of those bodies. A Republican Senate will confirm no Biden judicial nominees; they will hold judgeships vacant for the next Republican president. A Republican House,

based on revenge rather than anything resembling the people's business, will use manufactured grievances to grind government to a halt with purely partisan investigations. It will impeach not only President Biden but Attorney General Garland. As for a legislative agenda, a Republican Congress will essentially attempt to repeal every bit of social progress since 1862.

A lot of people react to this by expressing disgust with politics generally. But the problem is not general, it is overwhelmingly Republican.

Numerous Republican candidates embrace the lie that only elections they win are legitimate. If they win this time, they will use any means necessary to perpetuate their power indefinitely.

Republicans are epitomized by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, who is resolutely anti-abortion and pro-gun. He cares no more about the reproductive health of women than the safety of schoolchildren.

Sen. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin scoffs at the aforementioned insurrection as a non-issue, opposes marriage equality legislation after initially supporting it, and attacks his Democratic challenger, Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes, for being progressive. Progressives often seem more eager to propose reforms than to win majority support for them; but they are trying to help people, in stark contrast with Republicans.

Republicans' talk of fiscal conservatism conflicts with their record of massive tax cuts and their demands for ever-greater defense spending. America already is the greatest military power in the world. The limited utility of our arsenal against, say, a Russian madman with nuclear weapons is now all too evident.

Why worry about foreign threats while ignoring the looming threat here at home? We must vote as if our constitutional republic is on the line, because it is.

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Managing My Conditions

by Judah Leblang | www.judahleblang.com
contributing writer

I was lying on a gurney at Massachusetts General Hospital, my stomach gurgling and growling after two days with virtually no food: one day of a liquid diet consisting of chicken broth and unsweetened lime-green Jell-O, and a second day of no food, limited water, and massive quantities of a toxic mixture of Gatorade and Miralax.

After spending most of one evening and the following morning ensconced in the bathroom, I shakily walked over to the hospital for my once-in-a-decade colon scope, one I'd been putting off for several years due to Covid, other health challenges, and creative avoidance.

Now I was emptied of excuses, energy, and bodily fluids, as I waited impatiently to get the show on the road. Finally, after a 90-minute wait, a nurse ushered me back to the pre-op suite, where I changed into a white hospital johnnie and stretched out under a heated blanket.

Soon, a nurse was going over my list of medications: various supplements like Co-Q10 along with low-dose meds for high blood pressure, cholesterol, and prostate. "I see you have heart disease," the nurse said matter-of-factly, which I didn't want to hear before going into an operating room (even for a relatively safe procedure).

Some background: My father, a hard-driving Type A engineer, had a massive heart attack at 44, followed by a quadruple bypass at 60, and a second fatal heart attack at 61. Since childhood, I've exercised, watched my diet, and done everything I could to minimize my risks. Yet, two years ago, after a calcium scan, I discovered my faulty genes had caught up with me: I had significant plaque in two arteries and needed to take a statin to reduce my already low cholesterol and to lessen my risk of a heart attack.

Now, back at Mass General, I was relieved to finally roll into the operating room, where I was finally given

a much-needed sedative—two hours of waiting had made me nervous—and time grew slippery and vague; half-an-hour passed and it was over.

As they were wheeling me out, the doctor mentioned that the procedure went well and that they found one small polyp, which he removed and sent out for biopsy. It all sounded routine; I would be notified within 14 days of the results. Still groggy from the sedative, I couldn't really gauge my risk. As I was getting dressed, the nurse mentioned that small polyp, and that it was quite common to find one.

Now, a few days later, I wonder if I'm about to dodge (or get dinged by) another bullet. My mind is clear enough to know that there are no guarantees, and that life as I age seems to call for the management of an ever-growing list of conditions.

Last year I had surgery for a spot of melanoma on my upper arm along with the removal of several lymph nodes; 15 years ago, I had a smaller melanoma on my chest. I have physicians watching my prostate, dry eyes, heart, and now my colon.

So there I was, and here I am, a 65-year-old man who has outlived his uncle, father, brother, and several other relatives, who is pressing up against the glass ceiling of his known world. Am I healthy? Am I sick?

Or am I simply in the reality of life in my 60s in a mortal body, one that doesn't come with a warranty or a money-back guarantee?

Judah Leblang is a Boston based writer, teacher, and storyteller. He will be performing his one-man show "It's Now or Never" at the Beacon Hill Friends House in Boston on Sunday October 23 at 4 PM. Tickets (\$15) and more info at: <https://lu.ma/now-or-never-judah22>

FALL FAMILY GUIDE



Memoirs

Continued from page 1

Jessi came out as a lesbian when in college, but it is her father being outed that set their family on the road to being torn apart, even as each person's long-ingrained habits sometimes made things worse. Yet when things seemed irreparable, "improbably, we grew into a family again—a different kind of family, reflecting a new set of values," Hempel tells us.

How they did so forms the weave of the narrative, which Hempel bases on her own remembrances as well as discussions with each of her family members during the COVID pandemic. She tells of her father's coming out with gusto after being outed; her and her sister's involvement with COLAGE (the organization for those with LGBTQ parents); her brother's transition, her own relationships and those of her siblings; and her mother, who attempts to die by suicide, eventually turning what she learns through therapy into a way to help others. She shows how she and her siblings found

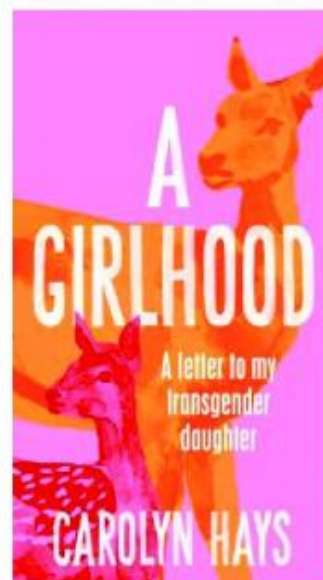
their ways back to each other and to their parents, and even had children of their own. Perhaps most strikingly, she shows how their being queer, and the personal searching and community connections that this led them to, was ultimately a tool for healing.

This is a memoir of family secrets, hidden, revealed, and reconciled. It is a story of personal growth and change, of grief and healing, family and community. Not all families look like theirs, but it will be a rare person who will not gain something from their story.

"Crybaby," by Cheryl E. Klein (Brown Paper Press). Cheryl E. Klein, a failed perfectionist and successful hypochondriac, wanted a baby with her partner—but instead encountered infertility, miscarriage, breast cancer at age 35, and separation. Despite the betrayals of her own body and the echoes of the past (such as her own mother's death from cancer), Klein shows us, sometimes with dark humor, how she found her way through these traumas, and how they even helped prepare her and her partner for their next challenge, trying to become parents through open adoption.

Klein moves back and forth between her adulthood and childhood, exploring how early experiences shaped her responses to later events, but also how change and reconciliation are possible. She is open about living with depression and anxiety, and is not afraid to expose flaws in her own attitudes—but we also see her gradually learning and trying to work things out with partner, family, and friends. While not all these threads are resolved, we also sense that she has gained wisdom from her experiences. Despite her harrowing history, she leaves us in the end with a sense of hope.

"A Girlhood: Letter to My Transgender Daughter," by Carolyn Hays (Blair). Carolyn Hays' memoir is not the first by a parent of a transgender child, but it is arguably one of the best. The book opens with a knock on the door by a caseworker from the Department of Children and Families, there to investigate an anonymous complaint that they were abusing their transgender child by supporting her as the girl that she is. The knock was a turn-



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billy masters

"He doesn't like gay people. Doesn't want them in Russia. And then he's got the wonderful basketball player and he won't let her out. Make up your mind! He's always acting so butch and strutting around. You know what that means, don't ya, uh-huh? The lady doth protest too much!"

—Leslie Jordan gives his two cents on Vladimir Putin.

I have a friend who always gets angry whenever a celebrity dies and the coverage states, "Cause of death is undetermined". Like when **Coolio** was found on that guy's bathroom floor. Or **Anne Heche** drove into that lady's house. So, color me pleasantly surprised when the Brits were more forthcoming when it came to **Queen Elizabeth II**. On the official death certificate, the cause was listed with these words: "old age". Thank you!

Being the Queen is kinda like being the star of a big musical. Who wouldn't have wanted to see QEII strutting her stuff on the West End? If that appeals to you, you're in luck. In 2024, London will see a revival of "Hello, Dolly!" starring **Imelda Staunton**, who plays Queen Elizabeth II in "The Crown". Look, it all made sense in my head.

There's been a curious development in the life of Oscar winner **Dustin Lance Black**. "A month ago I sustained a serious head injury that put me out of commission. Showing little improvement, my doctors ordered me to shut off my brain in hopes of it healing." This sounds scary, and certainly our thoughts are with him. To assist in his recovery, hubby **Tom Daley** took the family to a Greek Island—presumably not the same one I just returned from. I recalled the last time Lance graced this column, which was after a bar fight on August 17th. He and Tom were out at Freedom in Soho with female promoter, **Teddy Edwards**, when Lance suddenly threw a drink in her face. "I didn't have a drink to throw back so I did choose violence, but I wasn't that violent. He got a little tap on the back of the head," said Teddy. You don't think...do you?

How would you like to be a fly on the wall in Tom Daley's bedroom? The diver shared what he and the hubby do every night in bed—and it's as scintillating as you'd expect. "When we get to bed, we always ask each other what our best and worst part of the day was. It's a good opportunity to share something nice, but then also share something that wasn't. It doesn't necessarily have to mean I'm pissed off about him. It could be anything, but just being able to create that conversation." And you wonder why Tom knits! And this was BEFORE the head trauma!

We've got a quick tidbit about **Meghan Markle**, courtesy of the new book, "Courtiers: The Hidden Power Behind the Crown": "Meghan thought she was going to be the Beyoncé of the UK." Perhaps she'll make everyone happy and soon be doing the "Single Ladies" dance!

Even famous people compare themselves to others. Take **Britney Spears**, who truly has been to hell and back...and still looks good in a bikini. In discussing her conservatorship, she said the following: "I'd like to see somebody tell **Jennifer Lopez** to sit down eight hours a day seven days a week...no car. I'd like to see a management team tell Jennifer Lopez to go through what I went through...what the fuck do you think she would do...her family would NEVER allow that." With all due respect, Brit, you're no J-Lo. And Lynne is no Lupe!

You know who's got loads of cautionary tales? **Madonna**. She was discussing relationships with **Frankie Grande**—who knows a thing or two about both tails

and loads. "I was talking to Madonna of all people—talking to the queen—and I told her about the throuple, and she literally said, 'Well, that's not going to end well.'" So, there you have it—Madonna has the common sense that everyone, except for Frankie, has. But like Frankie, I'm sure Madge knows being a human piñata does have its advantages.

I could have predicted it—if I'd bothered to think about it. The reboot of "Queer as Folk" has been cancelled by Peacock. I don't believe it was the quality of the show—but I don't know for sure because I've never seen it. And that's the point. I don't know a single person who has tuned in. Nobody has mentioned it to me. Not even once. Not in passing. Not after the obligatory post-coital, "What's your name again?" conversation. Nada.

During promotions for her latest Disney+ venture (more below), **Sarah Jessica Parker** confirmed what we reported weeks ago—a **Carrie/Aiden** reunion on "And Just Like That...". "Could be, could be. Well, you know, I can't be like cryptic about it anymore". Not after Billy Masters reports it. Just stay away from all exercise equipment.

You want a good time? I have three words for you—"Hocus Pocus 2". Sure, there's nothing particularly new or fresh in this flick. But it made me laugh—especially when I noted it had the fakeset since "Gunsmoke"! I even liked the younger cast members—very "Charmed" (the original, naturally). So, why stop with "2"? Why not another sequel? The girls are up for it. But, please, don't wait another 29 years. By that time, **Bette Midler** will be... well, carry the 2, add in...she'll be dead!

There's even more "Hocus Pocus" news. Disney has gone from having no interest in the property to wanting to expand its audience. Why not "Hocus Pocus: On Broadway"? Why not, indeed. The musical will be based on the first movie and, while there are no plans for the original trio to star in it, there's nothing to say they couldn't.

Speaking of both "Hocus" and "Pocus", our pal **Jay Armstrong Johnson** is reprising his wildly popular Halloween fundraiser "I Put A Spell On You" for Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS. While the last two years have been virtual, the show returns to the stage on October 23rd. NYC's Sony Hall will host the event, which will again find JAJ winched into Winifred garb alongside **Allison Robinson** and **Amanda Williams Ware** as his sisters. Among the special guests will be **Gavin Creed** and **Krysta Rodriguez**. Tix and deets can be found on BroadwayCares.org.

The Sandersons can smell children. But **Shania Twain** has them beat—she's smelled **Harry Styles**, who's not much more than a child himself. After performing with the pop pup at Coachella, she said, "He smells so good, he's so huggable." She added, "He's just a really genuine, nice person. And I think that's really, I mean, obviously he's very talented. But people love him. He's likable. And I think he earned that likability. It was a beautiful moment, it really was. I enjoyed it a lot. It was very genuine." Excuse me—did she say he was likable or lickable?

see **BILLY MASTERS**, page 11



Leslie Jordan



Meghan Markle



Shania Twain

FALL FAMILY GUIDE



Coming Out

Continued from page 1

After our son was born, it would have been hard to hide even if we had wanted to. Someone would comment on how cute he was, and my spouse and I would both respond, "Thank you," making it clear we were both his parents. Then he became old enough to shout, "Hey, Mommy and Momma!" across the supermarket aisle. I was therefore out to people I had never felt the need to share anything with, about my queerness or otherwise—supermarket cashiers, restaurant waiters, and random strangers in the park, to name a few. Kids are conversation starters, however, and I tried to get used to it.

As our son got older, I reminded myself that being unflinching in public about our two-mom family was vital to instilling pride and self-confidence in him rather than shame or hesitancy. This was a privilege we had, though, since we didn't have jobs where we could get fired for being queer (such as the military, still under Don't Ask, Don't Tell in the early aughts) and didn't live in places without employment nondiscrimination protec-

tions. We could be out without risking our family's financial stability. Not everyone was that lucky, or is today, despite (in theory) greater legal protections now. There's still work to be done.

We made a point, too, of showing up at the beginning of each school year for Parents' Night and introducing ourselves to our son's teachers. We didn't say, "Hi, we're the lesbians," but made it clear we were both his parents. The problem was, however, that primarily, I wanted to be known as my son's mom, not his "lesbian mom." The commonalities of parenthood far outweighed the differences of sexual orientation. More importantly, I wanted my son to be known for his own qualities, and not be defined primarily as "the boy with the lesbian moms." Yes, the fact that he has two moms will always be part of his identity, but I want us to be a piece of a much richer whole, not a leading indicator. At the same time, visibility can motivate teachers and schools to be more inclusive and open students' eyes to the fact that families come in all kinds of shapes and sizes. We strove to find this balance.

I have also heard from many grown people with LGBTQ parents that when they were children, especially as they moved into middle school

and beyond, they wanted to come out about their families in their own time and their own way. Even if they are not LGBTQ themselves, our children have a "coming out" process about their families. (I credit Abigail Garner's excellent 2004 book "Families Like Mine" for first making me aware of this.) Sometimes our children will want to be more out about our families than we are comfortable with; sometimes less. This can vary as children navigate the shifting social landscape of schools and extracurricular activities. It may also depend on whether they were raised from the start by LGBTQ parents, adopted by an LGBTQ parent or parents when older, or been older when their parent(s) came out. As parents, though, I believe we need to respect our children's feelings about this. If there are times when our amount of "outness" clashes with theirs (whether greater or lesser), we should have open, honest, and age-appropriate conversations with them so that we can better understand each other's feelings and reasons and try to reach a workable solution.

Being out as a parent is therefore more complex than just dressing our infants in "I love my mommies" jumpers or being outed by our tod-

dlers at the supermarket. It can vary as our children grow, exploring their own feelings about being part of an LGBTQ family and encountering the support—or bias—of others. And for parents who come out for the first time when their children are older, the issues can be different yet again, bound up with the parents' own learnings as they take their first steps out of the closet.

Two things I've learned from children about closets, though, both real and metaphorical. First, while closets can be messy and cleaning them can seem like a burden, there's a feeling of satisfaction if you take the time to sort through the clutter and get rid of the things that have been outgrown. Second, while closets are often alleged to hide monsters, this suspicion can usually be dispelled simply by opening the door.

Happy National Coming Out Day, no matter where you and your children are in your journeys.

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian (mombian.com), a GLAAD Media Award-winning blog and resource directory, with a searchable database of 1000+ LGBTQ family books, music, and more.

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FALL FAMILY GUIDE



Gender

Continued from page 1

who describe their genders in their own words. Sometimes they are sure about their gender, whether or not it aligns with what adults had initially thought. Other times, they are not sure, but as one says, "It doesn't matter. I'm a kid." One page shows a girl expressing support for her nonbinary sibling, while another shows a different nonbinary child expressing their appreciation for their sibling's support.

Notably, too, we see a range of nonbinary identities, not just one: a child who feels like neither a boy or a girl, one who was thought to be a boy but now "sometimes" feels like a girl, and

one whose feelings of gender change throughout the day. As one child asserts, though, "Everyone should feel safe to just be who they are."

The book also notes that "Sometimes kids are just being kids—exploring different things" as it shows children in gender creative outfits. "We are all kinds of kids" it affirms, "siblings, sisters, and brothers ... sons, daughters, children, nibblings, and grandchildren. And friends!" That is, I believe, the first use of the word "nibblings" (nonbinary children of one's sibling) in a book from a mainstream publisher.

Rotner's photos capture the children's delight in being who they are, emphasized by the bright, bold graphic design. The children also reflect a variety of racial and ethnic identities and physical abilities.

Extensive back matter includes an Authors' Note, an introduction to gender identity for caregivers and educators, a educator's note to children, a letter from a trans girl in high school, a letter from the parents of a trans boy, a glossary, resources, and more.

The photos and words of real children make this book extraordinarily powerful, even though its text remains simple and upbeat. It is incalculably important for trans and nonbinary children to see photos of other children like themselves, and for all children to see themselves as part of a beautifully diverse spectrum of gender. These are not just stories someone is making up, but real kids.

Yes, the book will likely face challenges and bans, as do many others that depict trans and

nonbinary gender identities. While I hope it will be harder for people to ban this book as they see the real children speaking to them from its pages, the cynic in me realizes that it will probably be banned in some places all the same. Perhaps, though, it just might give some people pause. This highly recommended volume is worth fighting to keep on the shelves.

Readers may also be interested in Rotner's earlier book, "Families," which celebrates many types of families, including ones with two moms or two dads.

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SCHOOL NAME	CITY/TOWN	AGES AND GRADES	OPEN HOUSE DATE(S), TIME(S)	WEB ADDRESS
•Meadowbrook School	Weston	4-14 years (JK-8)	Visit the school's website for information.	meadowbrook-ma.org
•The Fessenden School	West Newton	4-15 years (boys PK-9)	October 1, 1-3 p.m.	fessenden.org
•The Roxbury Latin School	West Roxbury	12-18 years (boys 7-12)	October 1, 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m. and November 13, 12:30-4 p.m.	roxburylatin.org
•Boston University Academy	Boston	13-18 years (9-12)	October 2, 12:30-2:30 p.m. and November 30, 6:30-8:30 p.m.	buacademy.org
•Commonwealth School	Boston	14-18 years (9-12)	October 6, 6:30-8:30 p.m. and November 13, 2:30-4:30 p.m. (VIRTUAL)	commschool.org
•St. Sebastian's School	Needham	12-18 years (boys 7-12)	October 6, 5:30 p.m. and November 3, 6 p.m.	stsebs.org
•The Winsor School	Boston	10-18 years (girls 5-12)	October 12, 7 - 8:45 p.m. (VIRTUAL)	winsor.edu
•Atrium School	Watertown	4-14 years (PK-8)	October 13, 9-10 a.m. and October 23, 10-11 p.m.	atrium.org
•Beaver Country Day School	Chestnut Hill	11-18 years (6-12)	October 13, and December 8, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.	bcdschool.org
•Dedham Country Day School	Dedham	4-14 years (PK-8)	October 13 and November 2, 8:30 - 10:30 a.m.	dedhamcountryday.org
•The Advent School	Boston	4-12 years (PK-6)	Oct. 15, 9-10:30 a.m. (All school) and Oct. 26, (K Preview) 8:45-9:30 a.m.	adventschool.org
•Boston Trinity Academy	Boston	11-18 years (6-12)	October 15, 12-2 p.m. and November, 15, 6-8 p.m.	bostontrinity.org
•Charles River School	Dover	4-14 years (PK-8)	October 15, 1-3:30 p.m. and November 11, 9-12 p.m.	charlesriverschool.org
•Cambridge Friends School	Cambridge	4-14 years (PK-8)	October 15, 10 a.m.-12 p.m. (IN PERSON) & Oct. 19, 6-7:30 p.m. (VIRTUAL)	cambridgefriendschool.org
•Jackson Walnut Park Schools	Newton	18 mo -12 years (T-6)	October 15, 11:30-1:30 p.m. & November 10, 9:30-11 a.m.	jwpschools.org
•The Newman School	Boston	12-19 years (7-12)	October 15, (IN PERSON) OCTOBER 18, 6-7p.m.	newmanboston.org
•Pingree School	S. Hamilton	14-18 years (9-12)	October 15, 11 a.m.- 2 p.m. and December 8, 6 p.m.	pingree.org
•Belmont Day School	Belmont	4-14 years (PK-8)	October 16, 9-12 p.m. (IN PERSON), and Nov. 19, 9-10:30 a.m. (VIRTUAL)	belmontday.org
•The Sage School	Foxboro	3-14 years (PK-8)	October 16, 11 a.m. Contact school for more information about visits.	sageschool.org
•Park Street School	Boston	2-12 (Toddler-6)	October 19, 9-10:30 a.m. & November 7, 6-8 p.m.	parkstreet.school.org
•The Cambridge School of Weston	Weston	14-18 years (9-PG)	October 22, 9 a.m.-12 p.m. (IN PERSON) and Nov. 9, 7-8:30 p.m. (VIRTUAL)	csiw.org
•Falmouth Academy	Falmouth	12-18 years (7-12)	October 22 and January 21, 2023, 9:30 - 11:30 a.m.	falmouthacademy.org
•The Learning Project	Boston	5-12 years (K-6)	October 22, 9 a.m. and November 9, 4 p.m.	learningproject.org
•Noble and Greenough School	Dedham	11-18 years (7-12)	October 22, & December 3, 6 - 8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.	nobles.edu
•Thayer Academy	Braintree	10-18 years (5-12)	October 22 and October 29, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.	thayer.org
•Waring School	Beverly	11-18 (6-12)	October 22, 2-4:30 p.m.	waring.school.org
•Brimmer and May School	Chestnut Hill	4-18 years (PK-12)	October 23, 10 a.m.-12 p.m. (Lower School) & 1-3 p.m. (Upper School)	brimmer.org
•Cambridge Montessori School	Cambridge	18 mos. to 14 years (T-8)	October 23, 1-3 p.m. and November 10, 9:30-11:00 a.m.	cambridgemontessori.org
•Chapel Hill-Chaucery Hill School	Waltham	13-18 years (9-PG)	October 23 and November 6, 1 p.m.	chch.org
•Shady Hill School	Cambridge	4-14 years (PK- 8)	October 23 1-3 p.m. (PreK-4) and 3-5 p.m. (Grade 5-8)	shs.org
•Meridian Academy	Boston	11-18 years (6-12)	October 24, 7 p.m. (VIRTUAL) and November 15, 9 a.m. (IN PERSON)	meridianacademy.org
•Dexter Southfield	Brookline	4-18 years (PK-12)	October 25, 7 p.m. (grades 6-12-VIRTUAL) & Oct. 29, 9 a.m. (PreK-6-5 IN PERSON)	dextersouthfield.org
•International School of Boston	Cambridge	2-18 years (PS-12)	October 25 - November 3rd (Check website for details)	isbos.org
•Concord Academy	Concord	14-18 years (9-12)	October 29, 9 a.m. -12 p.m. and 1-4 p.m.	concordacademy.org
•Fayweather Street School	Cambridge	3-14 years (PK-8)	October 29, 10 a.m.	fayweather.org
•Milton Academy Lower and Middle School	Milton	5 -14 years (K-8)	October 29, (MS) 2-4 p.m. and November 5 (LS) 2-4 p.m.	miton.edu
•Thacher Montessori School	Milton	18 mos. to 14 years (T-8)	October 29, 10:30 a.m.-12 p.m.	thacherschool.org
•Montrose School	Medfield	11-18 years (girls 6-12)	October 30, 1-3:30 p.m. and December 6, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.	montroseschool.org
•Dana Hall School	Wellesley	10-18 years (girls 5-12)	November 5, 9-11 a.m. (US) and 1-3 p.m. (MS)	danahall.org
•The Rivers School	Weston	11-18 years (6-12)	November 5, 9-11:30 a.m. (MS) and November 5, 1-3:30 p.m. (US)	rivers.org
•Riverbend School	S. Natick	15 mo-14 years (T-6)	November 5, 11a.m.-12:30 p.m.	riverbendschool.org
•Lesley Ellis School	Arlington	2.9-14 years (PS-8)	November 6, 1-3 p.m. (PS-8) and November 16, 7:30 - 8:30 p.m. (MS)	lesleyellis.org
•The Chestnut Hill School	Chestnut Hill	3-12 years (Beginners-6)	November 6, 10 a.m.-12 p.m.	tchs.org
•Fay School	Southborough	5-15 years (K-9)	November 6, 1-3 p.m.	fayschool.org
•Newton Country Day School	Newton	10-18 years (girls 5-12)	November 6, 1-3:30 p.m.	newtoncountryday.org
•The Park School	Brookline	4-14 years (PK-8)	November 6, Times: TBD	parkschool.org
•Tenacre Country Day School	Wellesley	4-12 years (PK-6)	November 6, 11 -1 p.m. and Nov. 15, 7-8:30 p.m.	tenacrecds.org
•Wellan Montessori School	Newton	15mo-14 years (T-8)	November 6, 2-4 p.m. & January 12, 9-11 a.m. (by appointment)	wellan.org
•Ursuline Academy	Dedham	12-18 (girls 7-12)	November 6, 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.	ursulineacademy.net
•The Fern School	Concord	9-15 years (boys 4-9)	November 20, 12:2 p.m.	whereboysthrive.org
•The Rashi School	Dedham	4-14 years (PK-8)	December 1, 6:30-8:30 p.m. & January 22, 10 a.m.-12 p.m.	rashig.org

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FALL FAMILY GUIDE



Memoirs

Continued from page 5

ing point in their lives, but Hays kept the full truth of it from her daughter at the time, afraid of scaring her. Now her daughter is 13, and Hays feels she deserves the “brutal truths” about this—along with “the beautiful truths” of her story as well.

This approach means the book is more

than just a memoir. Written as a missive to her daughter, Hays not only tells their family story but also weaves in reflections and information about gender, motherhood, girlhood, privilege, representation, trans history, and social justice. It is both memoir and guidebook, filled with fierce, protecting love. It is, however, not just a book of lessons Hays wants to teach her daughter, but also in many ways a letter of gratitude for all the lessons her daughter has taught her. Whether you are fa-

miliar with the challenges of being the parent of a transgender child in the United States today or looking to learn more, you will likely be left breathless by how deftly Hays brings these strands together and how, despite the challenges that they faced, she manages to fill the story with hope and inspiration.

This book feels like a vital read for any parent of a trans child, for anyone involved in advocacy or policy related to transgender people, and even for trans young adults themselves. At

the same time, Hays shows how her support and advocacy for her daughter comes deeply from her role as a parent, offering lessons on parenting, love, hope, and self-discovery that go far beyond trans-related topics. Everyone should read this book.

Dana Rudolph is the founder and publisher of Mombian (mombian.com), a GLAAD Media Award-winning blog and resource directory, with a searchable database of 1000+ LGBTQ family books, music, and more.

RIVF

Continued from page 3

quired a no-carb diet for two weeks, I was hallucinating bagels by the end of this time, but something must have worked. Helen was pregnant!

Helen kept going to the fertility clinic every few days for the next couple of weeks to be sure, then they cast her loose to see her regular OB/GYN only every couple of months. This felt like an eternity after being at the fertility clinic

so often. We did end up going back to the clinic regularly for a queer moms’ group they had launched, and were tempted each time to sneak in the back and fire up the ultrasound. (We restrained ourselves.)

Making It Legal

This was all before marriage equality or civil unions. In New Jersey, where we lived, I would not have been able to be on the birth certificate or have any parental rights, even though the child was genetically mine—except that with

the help of our lawyer, we successfully petitioned the state for a pre-birth parentage order, making me a legal parent from the moment of our son’s birth. This required one court visit, but no home study or background checks. We thought we were going to be the first RIVF couple in the state to get such a parentage order; we ended up being the second, happy to be part of a trend. As a court order, this was as legally valid in all states as an adoption.

RIVF was an extra complicated (and needle-filled) route. It’s not for everyone, but we both

value the different connections it has given each of us to our son, who is now in college. To those also considering RIVF (or any path to parenthood), I’d say be patient, try to find the humor in it, and realize it’s just the start of the long but worthwhile adventure of parenthood. Good luck!

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FALL FAMILY GUIDE



California

Continued from page 1

care. And it would give California courts authority to make an initial child custody determination if the child is in California for the purpose of obtaining gender-affirming care.

The law was in part inspired by Texas Republican Gov. Greg Abbott, who has treated gender-affirming care as child abuse and ordered investigations of families who allowed it. A Texas judge has temporarily blocked the state from doing that, but the case is on appeal.

"As so many states work to erase trans kids and criminalize their families, California must always have their backs," state Sen. Scott Wiener said. "California is forcefully pushing back against the anti-LGBTQ hatred spreading across parts of our nation. The rainbow wave is real, and it's coming."

The law has already inspired similar proposals in at least 19 other states, Wiener said. But it's not clear if the law will survive a challenge in court. The U.S. Constitution

in general requires states to give 'full faith and credit' to other state's laws. But it also guarantees people the right to travel to other states.

"At this time, the interplay between these two constitutional provisions and the constitutionality of the other states' laws have yet to be determined, so it is unclear whether this bill will run afoul of the constitution," legislative staffers wrote in an analysis of the bill before Newsom signed it into law.

Wiener's office believes the law is constitutional because it does not change the requirement that California recognize valid court judgments issued in other states. They said the law limits California courts from enforcing subpoenas issued by out-of-state courts and protects information about gender-affirming care provided in California. The law does block extradition to other states, but only to "the fullest extent permitted by federal law," said Catie Stewart, a spokesperson for Wiener's office.

The law continues California Democrats' plan to push back against laws they don't like in other conservative states. Earlier this week, Newsom signed laws to

make California a sanctuary for women in other states seeking abortions now that the U.S. Supreme Court has overturned *Roe v. Wade*.

Newsom signed the law because he said he was taking a stand for parental choice, saying "parents know what's best for their kids, and they should be able to make decisions around the health of their children without fear." That elicited cries of hypocrisy from some critics, who note Newsom has ordered all school children to receive the COVID-19 vaccine—an order that has been delayed until at least next summer.

The California Family Council opposed the law. The conservative group fears the law could be used to entice children to California against their parents' wishes.

"By signing this extreme bill, Gavin Newsom is telling all parents across the country that he knows what's best for their children," said Jonathan Keller, the group's president. "Mothers and fathers in every state should demand their elected representatives push back against this unconstitutional assault on parental rights."

SCOTUS

Continued from page 2

tion policies, digital forums and apps can become breeding grounds for homophobia, bullying (cyber and otherwise), harassment, and misinformation." The 11th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals ruled the Florida law violated the First Amendment rights of the social media companies. It cited such Supreme Court precedents as *Hurley v. Irish-American Gay, establish-*

ing the right of a St. Patrick's Day parade organizer to ban participation by LGBTQ groups. The Supreme Court has not yet indicated whether it will hear the appeal, but several panelists at preview conferences said they believe there's a good likelihood it will.

NetChoice v. Texas: Texas and Florida are often dancing together these days and have done so here, with Texas also passing a law to stop social media from banning certain "viewpoints." This case is still in procedural motions in lower courts, with

the latest—a Fifth Circuit order—that allows the law to take effect while the legal challenge winds its way through the courts. NetChoice asked the Supreme Court to vacate the Fifth Circuit's order and, in an apparent 6 to 3 vote, the court granted that request, keeping the Texas law null for now. Justice's Samuel Alito, Clarence Thomas, and Neil Gorsuch dissented. The case on the merits of the legal challenge will now proceed.

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Billy Masters

Continued from page 6

Lickable brings us to this week's "Ask Billy" question. Gary in Dallas writes: "I just saw photos of the new *American Horror Story*, which included two really hot guys walking down the street holding hands. One of them looked familiar but I couldn't place him. Who are they?"

The one who looked familiar was likely **Charlie Carver**, who appeared with his brother **Max** as one of the Scavo twins on "Desperate Housewives" (the twosome

also appeared on "Teen Wolf"). Charlie is paired with the equally luscious **Isaac Powell** (occasionally billed as Isaac Cole Powell), who was the lead in the short-lived Broadway revival of "West Side Story" and was, for a time, fiancé to the wonderful **Wesley Taylor**. We hear this season's "AHS" is a period piece set in NYC—which should be no stretch for Carver, who was in the Broadway and TV versions of "The Boys in the Band". Both of them are mega hot, Powell is shirtless, their arms are amazing, and their kiss really does look like it could have come out of some vintage gay porn, as you'll see on

BillyMasters.com.

When I'm picturing Bette Midler in a Netflix musical about QEII, it's definitely time to end yet another column. Again, it all made sense in my head. And yet I'm not the one being told to turn off my brain. I can't—I need all of my faculties to maintain www.BillyMasters.com—the site that doesn't entertain you with any hocus or pocus. If you'd like to give me a poke or two, e-mail Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before any of my sexual partners take up knitting. Until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.

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