

A teenager, an old dog and their lesbian mom walk into the...

By [Martha Spong](#)

October 15, 2012

A colleague asked a few months ago, "Why did you stop writing for the local paper?"

I pondered, then smiled. "My last child at home is 17, my dog is a rescue from so close by I don't want to reveal his provenance and I just came out to my congregation."

He chuckled, "Those sound like three great columns to me."

Yes, yes, we laughed. But these topics felt tender, especially the last one. I had to grow accustomed to new information about myself, looking back into the past to wonder why I didn't know better and what took me so long and why God, who made me as I am, hadn't intervened sooner? Because this felt like an intervention, a moment of truth, one I could not deny later the way I had the other time the universe got me to look at myself in the mirror and see who I really was.

I was 37, divorced, mom of 3, and my new best friend wasn't like any of the other girlfriends I'd ever had before. She was more dashing, less domestic, and not straight. We met for coffee, lunch, dinner. At the end of each meeting, we got out our books to see when we could get together again. It was 1998, and calendars were made of paper.

She had a pair of tickets to an event and invited me to join her, and we agreed to meet for dinner beforehand. I prepared carefully. I put on makeup. (I rarely wear it.) And as I looked in the mirror, I had a moment of knowing myself as I hadn't before.

I liked her as more than a friend. I was getting ready as if for a date.

A period of self-examination ensued, lasting many months according to the journals I kept at the time. Later I laughed it off as my "lesbian wannabe phase," a time no doubt influenced by sadness over a broken marriage and a lack of confidence around men and really what I liked about her were the ways she resembled a guy and ...

And I convinced myself that this was not my path, not that there's anything wrong with that, and I began looking rather desperately for a man to validate my existence.

Recently I went back to those entries to refresh my memory about the dates, and I read a confession, written to myself, about the power of my feelings not only for this friend, but for other women I knew at the time, specific other women whose company gave me a charge. How carefully did I pack these feelings away, that I was able to actually forget them?

Being gay seemed complicated. Think of all the things I would have to explain, all the people who would have to re-learn my identity.

Especially me.

Many years went by. I got married again, and I gave it a good effort, if by "it" I mean telling myself a story about being straight and also telling myself that this was marriage. This was what men and women must be like together. And if the love wasn't deep and pure and lasting, it must be my fault for being an inadequate wife. I saw couples who really loved each other many years into marriage. I saw older couples in airports and wondered what held them together. I thought, "I don't see that happening for me. Why not?"

As it turned out, it took more than a look at myself in the mirror to get the message across to me. The plain of my life already storm-scorched, I pulled myself into a protective shelter, frightened of what might come next. Revelation came with the force of hurricane lightning, blowing open the doors enclosing my heart.

Now when I see a long-loved couple, I know I can be one of them.

*Originally posted at [Reflectionary](#)*