3 Memoirs About Strong Moms and Gay Sons (and HIV)

May 8, 2015 By Trent Straube

Happy Mother's Day, Gawd DAMNIT!!!

Of course I've been thinking about my own mother lately--LOVE YOU, MOM!!!--but as May 10 approaches, three other mothers have also been on my mind: Mama Jean, Betty Hodgman and Dollsie.

They're the stars of three memoirs, written by their gay sons, that I reviewed for the POZ Planet article "Mommies Dearest." All three women are worth another shout-out in my blog, particularly Mama Jean and Betty.

Why? Well, I had the pleasure earlier this week of attending Jamie Brickhouse's launch party for *Dangerous When Wet*, held in New York City at Chelsea eatery East of Eighth.

The memoir focuses on Jamie's relationship with his overbearing mother and his problems with booze. At the party, Jamie told the crowd that in addition to helping him deal with those issues, writing the book served another purpose: his coming out as HIV positive.

Jamie said he harbored four "hopes" for his book, that it could help people better understand four different issues he had struggled with: Those who are alcoholics. Those who attempted suicide. Those who are HIV positive. And those dealing with Lewy body dementia (which his mother suffered from).

Never one to end on a down note, Jamie insisted we all make a toast to Mama Jean, mimicking her trademark, "Gaaawd DAMMNIT."

You can read more about Jamie and Mama Jean in his New York Times op-ed "*Finding Liberation in Two Deaths*."

George Hodgman signs copies of “Bettyville” at Barnes & Noble.

Earlier this spring, I attended a Q&A and book reading at Barnes & Noble for George Hodgman’s memoir, *Bettyville*. If you’ve read the New York Times profile on him or listened to his Fresh Air interview, then you know the story: Successful, openly gay Manhattanite returns to rural Missouri to care for his elderly mother, Betty.

Hilarity ensues, right?

Well, yes. But not in the usual fish-out-of-water scenario you might expect. This is no homos-amidst-the-hillbillies tale. Small-town life, Hodgman discovers, is on life support, a victim of modern farming, Walmart and meth. And his mother, now in her 90s, is suffering from dementia.

Judging by the discussions at the Barnes & Noble event, a lot of people are grappling with caring for elderly (and ill) parents.

I’m a fellow small-town Missourian, so I related to *Bettyville* on many levels. But everyone will appreciate Hodgman’s wry sense of humor and his mother’s headstrong observations. The book’s a real treasure--and it makes a great Mother’s Day present.

Sergei Boissier, author of “Damage Control.”

And lest he feel left out, let’s end with an image of Sergei Boissier, author of “Damage Control,” another mom-related memoir I reviewed in POZ Planet. The memorable tale also involves an overbearing mother and addiction—but with the joyous twists of sobriety and fatherhood. Alas, I’ve not met Sergei personally, but I didn’t want him—or his mom, Dollsie—to feel left out.

Happy Mother’s Day!

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