When grandpa is gay, challenging old assumptions is eventually inevitable
by Jonathan Wilson

My five year old grandson, Calvin, was riding down the road with his mother the other day. Out of the blue he asked, "Mom, why is the letter 'P' not allowed?" She asked him to repeat his question. Same question. She said she didn't understand the question, whereupon he pointed to a white sign with the letter 'P' overlayed with a red circle and diagonal line. She then could explain, of course, that the 'P' stood for parking and the sign meant that *parking* was not allowed. Nothing wrong with the letter 'P'.

He had taken what he knew to be true -- that the letter 'P' is a perfectly good letter placed consistently after 'O' and before 'Q' -- and tried to test what he knew to be true against a purported prohibition. He must have asked himself, "Knowing what I know about the letter 'P', why would it be okay for 'P' not to be allowed?"

Aside from being rather cute in the vein of kids-say-the-darndest-things, the story is a metaphor. It is a wonderful example of taking known information and testing it against the prohibitions that surround us. It's an example that is replicated with each new generation, by Calvin and millions like him. It happens all the time as we learn new things that are undeniably true. Old assumptions and worn out prohibitions must inevitably yield. Forerunners include equality for women, for people of color, and for people of other ethnicities and other religions.

Here's where it gets interesting. In the tradition of **The Music Man**, the letter 'P' rhymes with 'G' and that stands for GAY. You see, my grandson has a gay grandpa. For more than twice his entire life his grandpa has been in a committed relationship with another man that my grandson also adores. Calvin and I spend lots of time together and it would be difficult to figure out which one of us enjoys more our time together. Together we play games, ride tractors, play with electric trains, color, cook, go for walks in the woods, go shopping, you name it. I can remember when I was growing up and when I was a young adult hearing "old people" talk about how special grandchildren are. It's all true, every word of it. If I do say so myself, Calvin obviously admires and respects his gay grandpa and his grandpa's partner. That we are a couple is, for Calvin, simply a given. He knows that both of us are real people, as good as most and better than some. He knows we are responsible, hard working, supportive of him and his single mom, and LOTS of fun. He will come to know that we have many friends; we love reading, learning, good food, and foreign travel; we respect honesty and courage; we pay our taxes like everyone else; and we vote -- just as he will be expected to do.

And he will test that knowledge against old assumptions and worn out prohibitions. He'll be asking,

- "Why should my gay grandpa not be allowed to marry anywhere and, like his mom, get a divorce if need be?"
- "Why should my gay grandpa, in a committed relationship, not be allowed to give blood?"
- Why should my gay grandpa not be allowed to serve in the US military to defend this country and a constitution that guarantees equality for all law-abiding citizens?"
- Why should my gay grandpa not be allowed to travel throughout the world without fear of discrimination or, potentially, even arrest and criminal prosecution?"

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As he does that testing, along with legions of his contemporaries using their grandpas, their dads, their uncles, their brothers, and their gay friends, and lesbian counterparts, the conclusion will be inescapable. All of these loved ones -- everyone, regardless of gender orientation -- *should be allowed* to do all of those things. We live in a representative democracy; you do the math.

The letter 'P' is used to spell prohibition and prejudice, that's for sure. But it's also used to spell grandpa.

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