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My 2 Mommies

A Bucks county woman who helped plan the 1996 artificial insemination of her same-sex partner told a judge yesterday that she should also be entitled to parental rights for the resulting little girl, who is now 5.

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Andrea Troy, 37, who lived with partner Denise Juliano for 10 years until they split up in 2001, testified that it was she who performed chores such as taking the child to daycare and accompanied the little girl on vacations.

Troy, who currently lives in Buckingham, essentially said that she should be considered an equal with the biological parent of child Ashley, who was born on March 6, 1997.

"We were in this [child raising] together from the first day," Troy told Bucks County Judge Alan Rubenstein as the first day of the custody battle came to a close in Bucks County Courthouse.

Troy, who works at a major New Jersey pharmaceutical company, said she would like shared custody of the girl she has known since birth. "We were family," she said, recalling the child's birth at Doylestown Hospital.

Juliano, 40, currently has custody of 5-year-old Ashley, and only allows her former partner two overnight visits per month, noted Troy's attorney, Jeff Williams.

Williams conceded that Pennsylvania law does not officially recognize a gay marriage, but said his client should still be entitled to parental rights due to her active participation in Ashley's birth and subsequent upbringing.

Juliano disagrees and is apparently willing to fight to keep her biological child. But Troy told Rubenstein that she had planned to have the baby with Juliano back in June 1996, and even helped search the Cryo-Bank sperm-donor catalog to find the perfect DNA.

"We started with eight [sperm donor] possibilities, and eventually

narrowed it down to three," Troy told the judge. Juliano eventually chose the sperm of a man who listed his occupation as "aeronautical engineer," and the couple had the sample sent Ex from California to their physician.

Troy said she then accompanied Juliano to the artificial insemination appointment in Elkins Park, Pa. where a doctor successfully inserted the DNA.



Several weeks later, the excited couple began buying pregnancy testing kits. Eventually, Troy volunteered to be the labor coach during the couple's Lamaze classes, and even accompanied the expectant mother during delivery.

"Ashley came out the birth canal, and I was there to cut the umbilical cord," she recalled. Troy said she slept alongside Juliano's bed during the two-day hospital recovery, and even joined the new mother during breast-feeding classes.

A month or two later the couple hosted a baby shower at a Lambertville restaurant, and began planning a christening.

But a priest at Mt. Carmel Church in Nockamixon Township, Bucks County, would not accept the way the child was conceived, and the couple eventually had the baby christened at St. Lucee's Church, a more accepting establishment in northern New Jersey.

Troy went on to show Rubenstein her photo albums, which showed the two

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parents and Ashley vacationing at various popular spots, including Walt Disney World and Long Beach Island.

Troy said she also took Ashley to ballet classes and frequently drove her to daycare class and other appointments.

But Juliano's attorney David Lador painted a different picture as he called several witnesses to testify that it was the biological mother who performed most of the nurturing and care.

Tracey Butler, a nanny who watched Ashley from 5 weeks old to 16 months, said Juliano seemed more "touchy-feely," as a parent and was way more of a hands-on mother than Troy.

Another witness, Barbara Stevens, who works with Troy and Juliano at the Rahway pharmaceutical company, told the court that it was always Juliano who wanted to have a baby.

Another witness, whom the couple met during a same-sex vacation in Provincetown, Mass., said Juliano at one point talked about donating one of her eggs to Troy so she too could be a mother.

"The idea was that the second child would be related [to Ashley]," the friend testified.

Meanwhile, Troy said her family, as well as Juliano's, eventually came to grips with the idea that the two women were in a same-sex relationship, and that the baby was a result of artificial insemination.