

Exodus to Mass. for legal gay nups

By ALISON GENDAR
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

PROVINCETOWN, Mass. — Dozens of gay couples made history when they were legally married in Massachusetts yesterday, but many from out of state remain unsure whether their marriages will be recognized back home.

In this oceanfront town on the crook of Cape Cod, the tally for the first day was a dozen weddings, and 138 more couples are waiting in the wings with newly minted marriage licenses.

"And this is just in one town, in one state," said Cary Raymond, 52, after he and his partner of five years, Jon Goode, 51, became the first gay couple in town to tie the knot legally yesterday.

Hundreds cheered as a justice of the peace joined the two men with the words that gay and lesbian couples fought hard to hear: "By the powers vested in me by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts . . . I pronounce that you are legally married."

But as Provincetown celebrated, battle lines were drawn.

President Bush chose the day that Massachusetts issued its first gay marriage licenses to renew his call for a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage across the nation, even as wedded gay couples pledged to test the powers of their new marriage licenses.

"This is one small kiss for us and one giant kiss for humankind," said Erin Golden, 45, who married her partner of 25 years, Eileen Counihan, on the beach with their 10-year-old son between them.

"I'll file a federal joint [tax] return. They will kick it back, we'll get lawyers and see what happens," said Golden, who lives on the Cape.

Couples from Vermont to Minnesota got married in Provincetown because the community said it would not follow Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney's edict to bar out-of-state couples from getting a state license.

Brooklyn couple Nancy Goldstein and Joan Hilty said they would take the fight to the courts to make sure the license

they get this week in Provincetown carries all the same rights at home in Boerum Hill.

"This is just the first step," said Goldstein, 43.

New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer has said in a nonbinding opinion that New York should recognize marriage licenses issued in other jurisdictions, but the issue may end up in the courts. Connecticut will not recognize the Massachusetts marriages, and New Jersey's attorney general said the matter is still under review.

Alabaman John Sullivan and his partner of six years, Chris McCary, couldn't get married in their home state, so they came to Massachusetts to be recognized as "spouse and spouse for eternity."

"Our marriage license might not be worth much in Alabama today, but someday it will," Sullivan, 36, said.

And one of their neighbors in Anniston already has changed. "Our little Baptist widow woman next door asked us if our paperwork went through," Sullivan said. "Change is happening."



RON ANTONELLI DAILY NEWS

Chris McCary (l.) and partner of six years John Sullivan, who couldn't marry in their home state of Alabama, help themselves to wedding cake yesterday after tying knot at town hall in Provincetown, Mass. "Change is happening," said Sullivan.

NATIONAL
5/18/2004