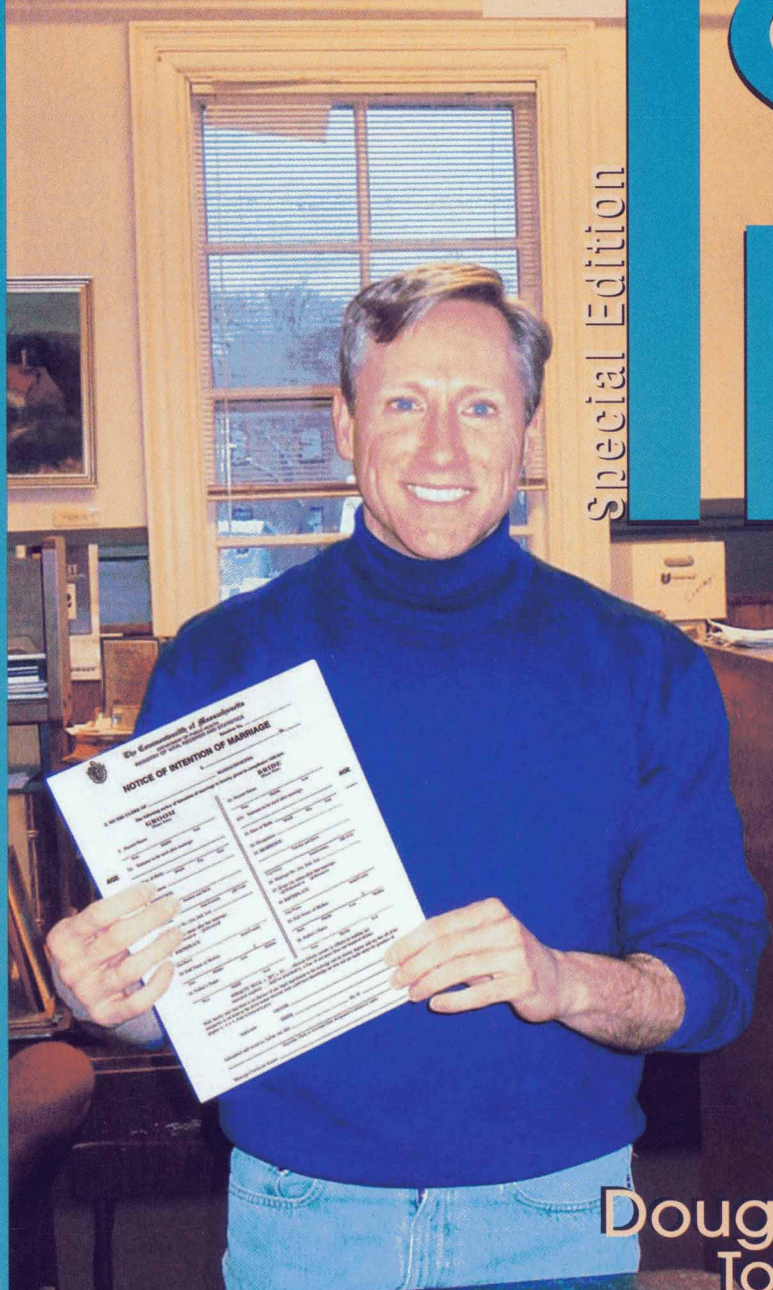


FREE
WEDDINGS LIFE IN PROVINCETOWN

APRIL
2004

Special Edition

WEDDINGS



Doug Johnstone
Town Clerk on
the Cultural Front Line
celebrant & flowers
food & music
photographer & lodging

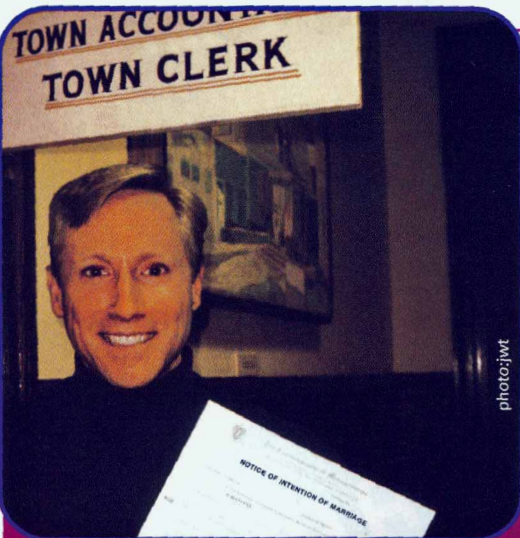


photo:jwt

WebcLIP



WATCH IT unedited
@ liptv.us

03.19.04 5:00p
with John Thomas
@ Town Hall Clerk's Office

BioLIPettes

age = 45

sexual orientation = gay

relationship status = in a
relationship, soon to be married

favorite pet = every one I've ever
owned

housing = own

philosophy = it's great to be here

see me as = competent, for starters

hero(ine)(s) = Mother Teresa

owe thanks to = my partner Ed
who made me who I am today

reading = in the middle of *Middlesex*

music = too varied to mention

most important = to feel good

Doug Johnstone

intends to marry many

"My first thought, when the [Goodridge] decision came down, was 'Oh, my god! I've got to take a personal day tomorrow because I've got to get married!' You know, you have to run out and get married. But I'm going to be really busy when this kicks in, in May & June. We thought maybe late August because it would give us time to plan. As it turns out, [Ed] was thinking of something bigger than I was, so clearly we have to talk about that. Now I'm hearing from other people, but I'm feeling myself - so I'll talk for myself - that somehow somebody's going to do something to take this away & there's a need to do it as soon as possible."

layers of excitement

+

everything will remain
the same

JT: You started the town clerk job on New Year's Eve. You're sitting in a seat that is probably one of the most interesting places to be as far as the whole national gay marriage issue. This is the vortex where more than likely more people will come to get married than any other town in the United States in less than three months. How's it all feel to you?

DJ: I think it's a very exciting time. This would be a great job to have anyway, but when you add the layer of same sex marriage & the historical significance & just the fact that we can actually issue marriage licenses to two men, to two women, that adds a layer of excitement that really makes this job exciting & something I want to come to every day.

I don't know who thinks that we're the vortex. That might be more the press than anything else. I guess everybody needs a focal point. The exciting part about this ruling is that anybody can get married in any town or

city in Massachusetts, so it's hard to say that Provincetown is going to have the most marriages when you've got big cities like Cambridge or Boston that are just as anxious as we are to see this thing passed & actually happen. We only issued 30 marriage licenses last year, so we're going to see an increase no matter what, & that's exciting. I had no idea of the level of interest from the country & other countries & how this is going to affect Provincetown. I came into the job not realizing just how huge an issue this was for the rest of the country. That was a surprise.

JT: Did you ever think you'd see this day?

DJ: Never. Did you? It was so out of the realm of possibility for me that I never considered it. In the background, of course, the buzz the last couple of years was marriage rights, & I was thinking, 'Well, that's nice. I don't think I'll ever see it in my lifetime.' I've been with someone for so long now anyway, it feels like we've been married so what difference would it possibly make to me? I never thought I'd see this.

In the mid-'80s, I was applying for AAA [American Automobile Association] in Los Angeles. My partner was with me. He was already part of AAA, & there was a section on the form for status or something. I said, 'Well, we're living together. We've been together for a long time. We have a joint checking account.' The AAA guy sneered @ me & said, 'Well, you're not married.' I said, 'But if we were married, then I wouldn't have to pay. There wouldn't be any need for me to apply.' & he said, 'Yeah, if you were married you wouldn't have to apply for this. You'd automatically be covered, but you're not married & you never will be.' He was really rude, but I took it as fact that I never would be married. He was saying the truth. I would love to see him today. Well, I'd love to see him in a few months!

JT: It's good to know that now we can have coverage on our AAA policy for our spouses, plus much more.

DJ: Yeah, there are some benefits & I guess that's one of them! @ the time that was a big deal. When you live in Los Angeles, it means more than being here in Provincetown.

JT: Right. So May 17th is the date that all this kicks in?

DJ: Yeah. It actually kicks in on the 16th, but that's a Sunday, so for us we're going to feel the effect on Monday the 17th. As of 8 am we're going to be allowing same sex couples

PtownLIPettes

first time = summer '78

living full time = since '93

places lived = 1

volunteerism = Aids Support Group of Cape Cod [ASGCC], UU Meeting House Bingo, Carrie A. Seaman Animal Shelter [CASAS] & others

favorite place = Herring Cove Beach by Wood End Light

hot issue = for the time being, it's same sex marriage

most want to interview = the guy who was running the Sandpiper my first summer in '78; I wish I knew his name or whereabouts*

to file their marriage intentions. There's a mandatory three day waiting period, so we're not really going to be issuing any marriage licenses to people until the 20th, which is Thursday, but you have to file first.

JT: Even though same sex couples will be able to marry, they still have to comply with the general marriage laws in the state. There are certain things they have to do, right? They have to get a medical certificate.

DJ: Everything will remain the same. Everything that heterosexual couples currently have to do, same sex couples will have to do, so that won't change. There is a marriage blood test form that has to be completed. Maybe two men might laugh @ that, or two women, because they're going to think, 'Well, we're not related. We're not brother & brother or sister & sister,' but it's really screening for syphilis. & two informational boxes the doctor needs to check: one is that there's a rubella vaccine [available for women] & the other is how hiv is transmitted, which they added a few years back.

JT: All right, but there's no hiv test required?

DJ: Oh, no, not @ all. In fact, you can still get married if you have syphilis. It just means that you have to be undergoing treatment @ the time.

continued on pg 8

* If you know who this guy is, email us at editor@liptv.us

1913 law + cannon ball over the ship of state

JT: Let's talk about the 1913 law in Massachusetts that says a clerk can't issue a license if the license wouldn't be valid in the state where the people are from. We've had a very interesting opinion from town counsel lately. Tell us what the clerks in the Commonwealth tried to do to get the state to say something & then where we're @ as far as the town.

DJ: Provincetown isn't alone in this. A lot of town & city clerks are getting questions from people from out of state wanting to know if they can get married here. That's been happening ever since the *Goodridge* decision came down in November. On my first day I got three calls from people, two from Connecticut. I remember them well because I had nothing to tell them @ that point in time. The law certainly wasn't designed in 1913 to keep same sex couples from getting married, but now it's proving to be an interesting sticking point in levying fines against town clerks, or imprisonment, if we should do so knowingly or with intent.

Things have gotten so muddled lately with what's happening in San Francisco & Oregon & New York state actually saying that they'll recognize same sex marriages even though it's illegal in New York. There's no way that I'm going to be able to keep track of all the things that are going on. So we're really putting the onus back onto the couple getting married & saying, 'If you sign the affirmation that currently exists on the filing intention form that you're not aware of any legal impediments & that you're aware of the ramifications of that statement - there's a potential fine for that or your marriage may be invalidated by the Department of Public Health when we file the document - we're not going to look beyond that.' We don't look beyond it now, so we're treating same sex couples the way we treat heterosexual couples. In fact, if a man & a woman signed the forms & they have different names, we wouldn't even know if they were brother & sister. We would issue them the marriage license. It's against the law to marry your brother or your sister in this state, but we don't play detectives, so we're not going to play detective for same sex couples.

We're treating everyone the same, but we do want to make sure that couples from another state are aware of what they are signing. That's our obligation as town clerks to do that. So that's what we intend to do, & that's what town counsel has actually informed us we can do.

The selectmen issued a bold policy statement [directing the town clerk to issue marriage licenses to persons who complete the affirmation statement]. It really did shoot a cannon ball over the ship of state because the governor's office called the very next morning to say that they will have guidelines out. But they never sent any. They contacted our town counsel. Things may change, but if things remain the same that's what we're going to be doing.

great place for a wedding + make sure you have enough

JT: Provincetown. Nice place for a wedding? Why? Or why not?

DJ: It's a great place for a wedding. Just look @ the scenery! The physical beauty makes it a wonderful place to honeymoon. You can get married & honeymoon all in one place in the summer with the nightlife & the varied activities. Or in the winter if you really want the traditional type of honeymoon where you never leave your room; you've got the quietness & the storms. What keeps me here is what brought me here in the first place: the beauty. I actually had my honeymoon in Provincetown in 1979, never thinking we would get married.

JT: It's like having dessert first when you have a meal. Have the honeymoon first, get married later.

DJ: Smarter that way, actually. @ least you know what you're getting into.

JT: I love the quote I read from [town tourism director] Patricia Fitzpatrick in a recent article where she said the wonderful thing about getting married in Provincetown, whether it's a gay or straight marriage, is that you're going to get applauded by the public in the street. That's gay & straight people, all ages. There's a wonderful sense of acceptance.

DJ: We all feel it when we're here. I don't want to say anything goes, because that has a totally different kind of connotation, but

Wanna get married in Massachusetts?

- be at least 18 years old (and bring your birth certificate if there's any question)
- apply in person
- jointly file your "Notice of Intention of Marriage" form with a city or town clerk
- submit a medical certificate, signed by a physician, with your Intention to Marry form or before you get your marriage license; the medical certificate must state that each person is free of communicable syphilis, (2) that a woman intending to marry has been offered a voluntary test for susceptibility of rubella (German measles) and (3) that the doctor has provided aids/hiv educational material to both persons. Get medical certificate forms at Bureau of Communicable Disease Control, Department of Public Health, 305 South St., Boston MA 02130, 617.983.6940, www.state.ma.us/dph/cdc/std/divstd.htm
- wait 3 days after you file your intentions to marry
- get your marriage license (cost: \$4-15 depending on the community)
- use the marriage license you get within 60 days in any Massachusetts city or town
- get married: no witnesses required, but you must have a member of the clergy or justice of the peace complete and sign the original license
- return the marriage license within 60 days of obtaining it to the clerk of the town or city where the license was issued

There are lots of peculiar exceptions to these rules for people in the military or prison or near death or newly arrived immigrants, and women who are about to give birth.

Want an out-of-state member of the clergy to perform the marriage? S/he will need a "Certificate of Authorization" from the Secretary of the Commonwealth before the big event, and it will have to be attached to the completed license when it's returned to the town/city clerk. The certificates are available through the Division of Public Records, Secretary of the Commonwealth, One Ashburton Place, Room 1719, Boston MA 02108, 617.727.2836.

Want a relative or family friend to obtain special one-time permission to "solemnize" (perform) your marriage? You gotta get the Massachusetts governor to ok it. The special authorization is good for one date in one town or city, costs \$25, and takes 4 to 6 weeks to obtain. The "Certificate of Solemnization" must be given to the town/city clerk when the marriage certificate is filed, so everything's on the up and up. To get this certificate, contact the Office of the Governor, Attn: Appointments Office, State House, Room 280, Boston MA 02133, 617.725.4080 ext. 35339. 🗨️

continued from pg 8

people are who they are & it's okay. I'm used to being here. I'm part of society & I am who I am. But now I'm getting calls from Georgia & Utah & Alabama, & they're so keen on coming here & getting married. The kind of questions they ask is a reminder that this is a special place. The rest of the world isn't like this, so why not come here?

JT: Any advice to the first people who line up on May 17th?

DJ: We are soliciting volunteers in the community because it is such an historical event. In time we might really stand back & say, 'Oh, my god! Did we really do that?' Volunteers might ease some of the crunch, but we really have no idea of how many people to expect.

So I would say to people coming in on the 17th, just have a little patience. Bring something to amuse yourself. You got to bring your partner, so maybe that's amusement. I don't know. We are going to try & facilitate the process as quickly as possible. Typically it takes anywhere from 15 to 20 minutes to file your intentions because the information has to be totally accurate, & then you have to read it & sign it, so it does take a little bit of time. We saw San Francisco: that was chaotic & wonderful. We're not San Francisco, but even if we have a small fraction of the people that San Francisco had that can be overwhelming to us. We're a staff of one & a half.

JT: We're not San Francisco, but Rosie O'Donnell & Kelli Carpenter held hands down our streets first!

DJ: Yeah, but San Francisco had 5,000 people in one day. A percentage of that could be 500 or 250 in one day for this office. We've got other things going on too. That's why I want to plan for that. If you're going to have a big party like that, you want to make sure you have enough.

JT: Well, we'll get all our dog licenses in before then.

DJ: You & everyone else, I hope. We'll try & make it an enjoyable experience. 🗨️

TOWN CLERK: MARRIAGE S.O.S.

Be a part of history. Volunteer to help register couples for marriage. Monday May 17 is the big day. Provincetown - 'first landing place of the Pilgrims' - soon will be among the first places in America where same sex couples will be able to marry with full state sanction. (What would those Mayflower denizens think of that?)

Our town clerk can't do it all: will you help him out? Contact Doug Johnstone at 508.487.7013 (fax 508.487.9560) or townclerk@provincetown-ma.gov and say "I DO!"

Ptown Parties food

PTOWN PARTIES

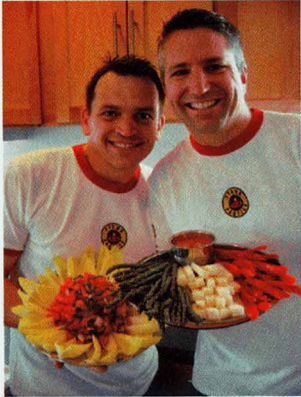
Dave Schumacher & Simon Homes

508.487.6450

Fax: 508.487.6451

ptownparties.com

event planning & catering



Ptown Parties owners David Schumacher and Simon Homes grew up in different parts of the world. David was born in Kansas City; Simon was born in Zimbabwe and grew up in South Africa. Both of their homelands have particularly tasty cuisine, from the ribs of KC to the babootie of Cape

Town. Today they combine their international culinary tastes into a one-stop business that is capable of taking care of an entire wedding (or any other big event).

Metaphysical synchronicity was at work the day that David and Simon met at a 1998 "orphans" Thanksgiving in Kansas City. David ran a catering and event planning business there; he and his friends would invite everyone they knew who didn't have a place to share the bounties of the Thanksgiving table, and Simon showed up.

David had been doing large corporate events with a flair that definitely tilted toward the fabulous. "I had live tigers in the Ritz Carlton. I had a howitzer in the ballroom for a sales meeting with a world war two theme 'Storming the Beaches'." When the economy took a downward turn, "events became 'meat and potatoes' affairs."

David had vacationed in Provincetown before he met Simon, and as their romance grew David and his friends stimulated his travel appetite without providing details. That summer, they arrived mid-week, dropped their bags at the inn, and met a friend at the Boatslip tea dance. Simon walked to the railing and gazed at the horizon. Ten minutes later, David walked up to him, and Simon asked, "Can we live here someday?" David smiled. "We sure can."

They continued to visit Provincetown, became friends with locals, and began to observe something. David says, "We'd notice at a cocktail



reception that the hosts were doing everything themselves. They'd spend a whole day organizing the party. So we asked them, would you prefer to have a full-service caterer with everything ready so you could enjoy the day, go to the beach, rest up, and have a great party?" The answer was obvious.

Now in its third season, Ptown Parties does it all for you and handles every part of a function: ground transport, invitations, lodging, party locations. **The food is beautiful.** The "Blossom" is a specialty of the house, a huge flower composed of greens and sauces; it's an edible Georgia O'Keefe construction.

When asked to identify their favorite food spot in the world, David chooses New Zealand for the native down home hospitality. "It was amazing. We'd stop at gas stations in the middle of nowhere with four or five houses, picture perfect. Every gas station had local homemade pies: fruit pies, meat pies, you name it, we ate it. And there are many Asian chefs there; they make great pad thai." Simon loves Brazilian cuisine: "good fresh food, lots of flavor."



As for America's recent same sex marriage debate, Simon recalls watching a Carol Burnett show with David in which Vincent Price read a speech that Abraham Lincoln made as a candidate. "He never said anything about race, but he said that all men should have equal rights, and you could have said it today." He is proud of the fact when the apartheid era ended in South Africa, the country's new leaders spent years studying the constitutions of other countries before creating a document that is one of six in the world that specifically cites sexual orientation as worthy of equal rights. Although America is not in the forefront of this civil rights movement, he is happy to live in Provincetown: "You can **be as you are** and it's not held against you. We love it here."

Oh yes, David and Simon had their commitment ceremony here in Provincetown... on Thanksgiving 2002. They're home. ☺

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Provincetown Florist co-owners Maghi Geary and Laura Darsch met at a Teaneck, New Jersey Halloween party in the



Everything fell into place like clockwork. Our New Jersey house sold immediately, the flower shop business that I'd had for eleven years sold immediately, this opportunity to buy a Provincetown flower shop opened up, and we found a home. **It was magic.**"

Maghi has had a lifelong love affair with flowers. "I made my first flower arrangements at the age of five by stealing all the daffodils in my next door neighbors' yards. I just wanted to have all the flowers, so I made all kinds of vases filled with them and put them all around my playroom. I don't know what happened to the flowers, but I know what happened to my fanny!" Maghi was undaunted, and flowers remained her passion. Even when she went to college to study psychology she worked her way through school by working in flower shops.

Assuming that the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court does not stay its ruling (as a result of the legislature's passage of a constitutional amendment on March 29) and same sex marriages indeed blossom into reality, "I'll be delirious, because I'll be able to participate in a lot of people's most memorable days, and a lot of my friends will be able to tie the knot. I've been telling friends and customers, 'Look, we don't know if these are really going to be weddings or not' and they say, 'That's okay. We're going to do some-

mid-'80s. Laura was a Playboy bunny, and Maghi was a native American. About fifteen years ago, she told Laura that she wanted Massachusetts license plates for her next birthday because she had fallen in love with Provincetown on vacation and wanted to move here.

Maghi remembers, "We came looking to buy a business and the realtor happened to mention that there was a flower shop for sale.

thing anyhow.”

Of course, Maghi has created beautiful floral arrangements for commitment and union ceremonies in Provincetown for years, but the coming days are, after all, **history in the making**. “It’s fun. Everybody is excited. It’s a big thing especially for us gay people. People have different ideas, and I love working with that. I’ve had people plan luau ceremonies who want gold dust and white orchids on the table. I’m able to satisfy my creative urges, which I can’t generally do when people want only *de rigueur* flowers. For weddings and commitment ceremonies, I’m able to get a feel for the people when I meet them and really do more unusual and hopefully artistic creations.”

Maghi remembers the most unusual flower she ever ordered. “It was a specific orchid for a local woman’s 50th birthday. It was one very expensive and gorgeous flower from Holland. She wanted something very unusual, so I

found the unusual for her.”

Maghi is grateful for just about everything that surrounds her. “I’m blessed with good help, like Kim Oliver, a local woman whose family is from here. I think I am more fortunate than damn near anybody I know because I love my job. I love my product. I adore my customers. And I can take my dogs to work. I’m a lucky human being.”

What about that magic she felt when she and Laura moved here 15 years ago? “I still feel that way about Provincetown.”

other flowers

SERENADE FLORIST

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www.serenadeflorist.com

continued from pg 12



its former glory as a Greek revival style captain’s house whose roots go back to the 1850s. Then he bought the adjacent property and worked the same magic. Now, Benchmark Inn & Central is known for the amazing number of amenities and careful attention to all the wonderful details that make a stay a memorable experience. Most rooms have fireplaces; many have a personal Jacuzzi. Terry cloth robes and fresh flowers

are placed in each room. Complimentary full concierge service handles **all the particulars**.

Wedding and other groups often choose to rent the entire Benchmark Central building with its seven rooms and penthouses, which includes a large cathedral ceiling common room, a spa and sauna room, and direct access to an outdoor heated pool that is open from May through October.

It’s perfect.

other lodging

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Unitarian Universalist Meeting House of Provincetown celebrant

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST MEETING HOUSE OF PROVINCETOWN

PO Box 817
508.487.9344
fax 508.487.6713
info@uumh.org
uumh.org



The Reverend Alison Hyder came to Provincetown after a social work career in Baltimore. Ordained in 1997, she has been Provincetown's UU minister since September 1999. She's a renaissance woman who paints and enjoys performing



Broadway songs among other pursuits. Her easy-going nature and subtle humor help to steer couples through the marriage ceremony creation journey.

What's a wedding anyway? Alison says, "At it's most basic it's a public acknowledgement of a

private commitment to a loving relationship, a romantic partnership. It wasn't always romance, but these days it's a reasonably accurate term, unless you're Britney Spears or Donald Trump."

Provincetown's UU congregation is a stalwart group. "One of the things that attracted me to this congregation is that it is so much a part of the community and has been so important in addressing its needs both spiritually and practically."

Why get married in this particular UU? "It's a gorgeous structure. It has the weight of tradition and **dignity and history** behind it, as well as the backing of the entire North American UU denomination. We voted to support legalization of same gender marriage several years ago and have been doing same sex ceremonies for more than 20 years. The UU church has stood for justice. It has stood for community outreach and action and compassion for years. That means a lot to me."

"One of the advantages of doing a wedding at the Meeting House is that we really help to cre-

ate a ceremony that it tailored to each specific relationship's spiritual and religious content and other particulars."

Alison has officiated at about 30 ceremonies a year, mostly lesbian commitments. About ten percent are straight marriages, and some are straight commitment ceremonies. "There is no difference. I approach all of them exactly the same." The reverend has seen a recent upswing in communications from male couples.

Relationship terminology is getting more interesting. "I've had gay couples use 'wife and wife' as in 'I now pronounce you wife and wife.' I generally use the term 'married couple' and even straight couples don't always want 'husband and wife' - but straight couples don't generally say 'partners for eternity!'"

Final advice? "Go to our website first, because that has a lot of information on it!"

other celebrants

JAMES MACK
UU chaplain
(contact thru UU)

THE REVEREND BRENDA L. HAYWOOD
Provincetown Community Ministries
508.487.7923 (or contact thru UU)

JOAN M. DRYSDALE
Justice of the Peace & Notary Public
same sex unions a specialty
508.487.9053
msdriz@galaxy.net

RACHEL PETERS
Justice of the Peace
508.487.4986

Song of Myself photographer

SONG OF MYSELF STUDIO

349 Commercial St. Provincetown

508.487.5736

www.songofmyself.com

After 15 years as a commercial photographer in Los Angeles, Brad Fowler and his partner Tony moved to Provincetown where Brad opened

Song of Myself Studio in 1996. Since then, thousands of visitors, residents, celebrities, and dogs have benefited from his artist's eye and his ease with the ever-changing technological world of photography.

"This business is all about providing people with really good pictures of themselves." Shooting on location in the midst of wedding celebrations poses

an extra challenge: "I don't have complete control! In portrait sessions people are here because they want to **make a picture**. At weddings they have another thing going on, like getting married and eating and being with friends." His advice: "The best way to go is to do some pre-wedding pictures because that allows for the focus to be on the happy couple."

Brad uses digital cameras and provides color and black & white photos on a dvd for the couples' use. He'll make beautiful prints too; he personally creates all black & white enlargements with archival acid-free watercolor paper that will last a lifetime. 🗨️

photo: song of myself studio



other photographers

VINCENT GUADAZNO

508.487.3922

vguadazno@earthlink.net

LYNETTE MOLNAR PHOTOGRAPHY

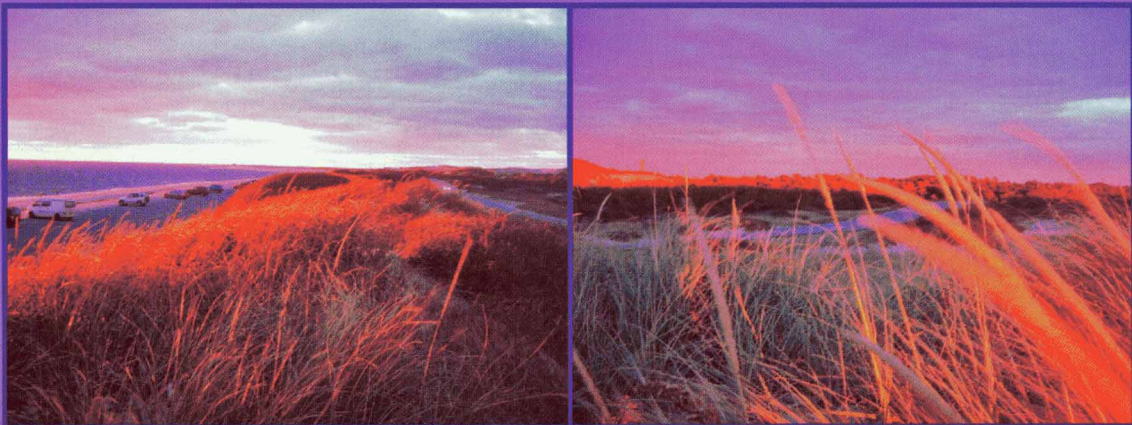
capturing the monumental moments
and the romance in between

508.487.7511

lynettemolnar.com

emailme@lynettemolnar.com

photos taken by Patricia Zur *Herring Cove*



Same Sex Marriage: The View from Europe

By Aaron Wodin-Schwartz

As a University of Massachusetts foreign exchange student at Vesalius College in Brussels, I have been able to watch America's same sex marriage debate from an interesting perspective. My position in the political capital of Europe has enabled many a gratifying query into the legality of the question while the setting of an international college allows students from around Europe and a variety of other countries to discuss the developments with a mixture of **amusement and incredulity**.

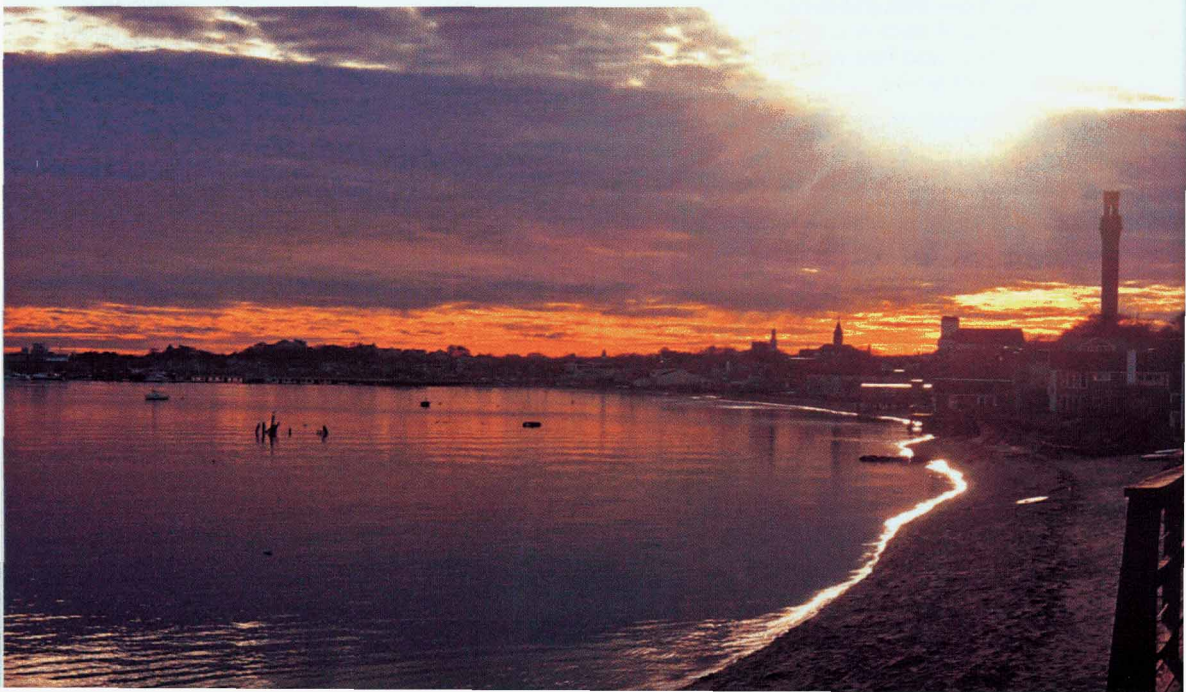
Observing it all from this side of the Atlantic, one of the most interesting personalities to emerge from the midst of the commotion is San Francisco's new mayor Gavin Newsom, who at age 36 is a rather average young Democrat by national standards: a well-off, fourth generation San Franciscan whose career has been largely defined by his fight against the increasingly problematic issues of urban squalor and homelessness. Despite a relatively routine and somewhat mundane political career, just 42 days into his new job Newsom found himself at the center of what has quickly become a controversy of national electoral proportions.

As he listened to President Bush's State of the Union address in January, Newsom realized that "this was not the world that I grew up aspiring to live in, that [Bush] was talking about. I just found some of the words quite

divisive." Newsom reviewed the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court's 2003 *Goodridge* decision in which the Court ruled that a ban on same sex marriage is both undemocratic and unlawful and ordered the state legislature to allow such weddings by May 17 of this year. He examined civil union arrangements in a variety of other states, notably Vermont, Hawaii and Alaska. Then the newly appointed mayor opened city hall for business to homosexual couples seeking legal marriage.

Naturally, several conservative groups quickly banded together to protest the legality of such a move, since California's constitution specifies that marriage is the union of a man and a woman. Yet several judges have so far rejected immediate injunctions, opting instead for a fair hearing in which the mayor's office will be given the chance to back up its actions. The legal justification for the city's position is, of course, that the California constitution grants equality and freedom under the law: **a fundamental principle** that trumps any contrary restriction. Thus, any statute limiting the financial and psychological benefits associated with marriage to a certain portion of the population is inherently discriminatory and unconstitutional.

Meanwhile, the rest of the industrialized



world has been far less shocked by the recent developments in California and Massachusetts than it has been by the morally motivated political counter-reaction of conservative groups nationwide and even by Bush himself, who on February 24th gave his unconditional endorsement for a constitutional amendment banning same sex marriage. In Europe, there is something of a general consensus that the legal ability of gays and lesbians to wed represents a basic and inalienable human right. The European Court of Justice has ruled that **denying marriage licenses to homosexuals is discriminatory and theoretically illegal by European Union standards**. Perhaps more significantly, and in anticipation of the largest ever enlargement of the European Union scheduled for May 1 of this year, the European Parliament recently passed a resolution "strongly recommend[ing] that current and potential member nations grant same sex couples rights that are equivalent to those of opposite sex couples, and to ensure equal rights to GLBTs [gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transsexuals] in general."

Such a resolution may not even be necessary for many EU nations. In April 2001 the Netherlands became the first country in Europe to offer full civil marriage to same sex couples; marriage licenses have been offered since December 19, 2000. After the Netherlands action, Belgium (and the Canadian provinces of Ontario and British Columbia) quickly followed suit with similar legislation. Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greenland (the autonomous region of Denmark), Iceland, Norway, and Sweden all offer registered partnerships providing many of the benefits and responsibilities of marriage, although the area of child adoption in particular still lags in many cases. Even in principally Catholic and conservative countries there are programs providing legal and financial benefits for dedicated same sex couples. For example, France's 'civil solidarity pacts' offer some of the tax, welfare, health benefits, and inheritance rights offered by full legal wedlock.

These decisions have not gone unopposed in Europe. With the possible exception of registered domestic partnerships, which are largely symbolic and also apply to cohabitating heterosexual couples, most legislation has been passed only after vanquishing conservative opposition similar to that now arising in the United States. However, the overriding necessity of **adjusting to social evolution and corresponding civil needs** within many European nations has led to the ultimate passage of such equitable and progressive legislation.

In university communities, there seems to be quite a bit of support for egalitarian marriage laws. Even many of the increasingly rare self-

described 'homophobic' students realize that allowing same sex marriage in no way threatens the manner in which they live their lives. It does indeed seem more than a little ironic that many of the same people who complain of the breakdown of the family unit in the United States also support a ban on marriage licenses. The structure of the institution of the family has morphed from that of the 1950s *Leave it to Beaver* type ideal - an image that actually only existed for a brief period of about twenty years anyway - and a variety of civil institutions have arisen to accommodate these changing social patterns. A ban on same sex marriages, however, would seem to further undermine the traditional family structure by encouraging couples to pursue their relationship outside of conventional channels and thereby establish the norm of non-marriage as a basis for committed coupleship. Furthermore, as eloquently related by a recent study conducted by the Institute for Gay and Lesbian Strategic Studies at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, allowing same sex weddings would actually save the institution of family for those children raised by homosexual parents (an estimated 8,000 children in Massachusetts) and grant them the same financial benefits awarded to children of married heterosexual couples.

My final thought on the entire matter is best summed up by my Polish friend Piotr. While discussing the issue of gay marriage and the general ambivalence toward such a notion even within his Catholic homeland, Piotr expressed a bit of confusion over the recent U.S. controversy by asking: "If America is the land of **democracy, freedom, and equality** under law, then how can these people possibly justify, particularly in these modern times, discriminating significant portions of the US demography based solely on their individual sexual orientation?" The answer is, of course, that there is no legal validation for such a policy. The long-held moral convictions that have prevented legal recognition of a different but equally legitimate and loving commitment are destined to erode by the day as political pioneers in Massachusetts, San Francisco, and an increasing number of Americans from a broad spectrum of geopolitical areas continue their quest for democratic equality and marital freedom. 🗨️

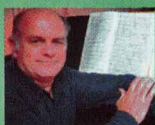
Aaron Wodin-Schwartz is a junior at University of Massachusetts who has toiled and played in Provincetown during the 2002 and 2003 summer seasons. He is a contributing writer for *The Daily Collegian* (University of Massachusetts) and *The Vernacular* (Vesalius College, Brussels, Belgium).

Marriage Melodies music

In the midst of the words and actions within life's rituals, music dances and swirls around us. When two people unite in a loving partnership, they have the opportunity to choose their own soundtrack as thoughtfully as they do flowers, favors, food, family and friends. Although some are comfortable with traditional wedding music, many couples take the time to **think about the sounds** they want to accompany this important event in their lives.



Dozens of musicians who live in the Provincetown area have a lot of experience in creating the power, beauty, and magic of melody and rhythm in commitment ceremonies. Our music community includes classically trained pianists and organists, vocalists, drummers, chamber groups, instrumentalists and composers. If you are planning a special ceremony in Provincetown, treat yourself to music planned and created just for the two of you. 🗨️



JOHN THOMAS
pianist, vocalist, composer
508.487.4184
jwthomas@tiac.net



BOBBY WETHERBEE
pianist, vocalist, entertainer,
composer
617.426.5047
508.487.2295
Rtw1@rcn.com



PATRICIA FITZPATRICK
swinging & sophisticated
jazz for receptions
pfitz3131@aol.com



PTAH BROWN
soulful singing
ptah.brown@verizon.net



JON ARTERTON
singer, founder of the gay
a cappella group
The Flirtations
(& his lover James Mack
is available to sing too!)
508.487.0477
flirts@wn.net



PETER DONNELLY
singer & songwriter
508.349.3701
pdonnelly@vue.org



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