

June 24, 2008

Same-Sex Marriage

It's been very exciting working in City Hall these past few weeks.

On the morning of May 15, the Supreme Court of California overturned the ban on same-sex marriage. In a 4-3 decision, the justices ruled that people have a fundamental "right to marry" the person of their choice and that gender restrictions violate the state Constitution's equal protection guarantee.

At noon that day, a press conference was held at City Hall. Busy at work, I nearly forgot that my workplace was the epicenter of marriage equality in California. When cheers erupted from the rotunda, I bolted out of the office to watch the historic event.

Beneath the City Hall dome were Mayor Gavin Newsom, City Attorney Dennis Herrera, and hundreds of supporters. The Mayor gave a beautiful speech. He said, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." Oh wait... what he actually said was, "...It's about millions of people, and their parents and grandparents, their friends and their families. It's about human dignity. It's about civil rights. It's about time in California!" Applause echoed throughout the building.

[To watch Mayor Newsom's speech, click here.](#)

Chapel of Love

The Supreme Court decision took effect 30 days after the ruling. On June 16, lesbian pioneers Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin were the first to be wed in San Francisco. The Mayor performed the ceremony in the privacy of his office. Immediately afterwards, the brides joined the waiting crowd on a balcony inside City Hall. I was just a few feet away as they made a speech and shared their wedding cake. It was incredible... both the speech and the cake! I even got a souvenir wedding napkin with their names printed on it.

The next day was truly amazing. There were over 100 weddings in City Hall. It was a festival atmosphere! The press was everywhere. Outside, supporters laughed, hugged, played music, and danced. Every time a couple emerged from City Hall with a marriage certificate in hand, the crowd cheered and applauded. The same was true inside as couples descended the grand staircase in the rotunda having just been wed. Cheer after cheer, all day long. I sat outside amid the crowd during lunch. The positive mood was so uplifting.

I wore my American flag necktie that day. I had never been so proud to be an American.



