

Kort's Korner



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Joe's practice specializes in sexual addiction, childhood sexual, physical and emotional abuse, depression and anxiety.

He offers workshops for couples and singles. He runs a gay men's group therapy and a men's sexuality group therapy for straight, bi and gay men who are struggling with specific sexual issues.

His therapy services are for gays and lesbians as well as heterosexuals.

50 First Marriages: One Person, One Partner

After Massachusetts legalized marriage for gays and lesbians earlier this year, my partner Mike and I decided to plan our summer vacation in Provincetown and tie the legal knot after 11 years together. This wasn't our first marriage, however. And there were no divorces in between—we were never married to anyone else. And the other 49 marriages we intend to have will be the same: one state at a time.

This statement sounds like either a riddle or a paragraph from the life of Elizabeth Taylor or Zsa Zsa Gabor. The truth is, we were religiously wed under Reform Judaism in the fall of 2000. Our family and friends joined us, and for us it was a romantic, emotional, affectionate and spiritual day. However, as we all know, it was not legal. Under Reform Judaism, all we had to do was agree to raise our dog Jewish and we assured the rabbi she would have a "Bark Mitzvah." For us though, this marriage was political. We wanted to be a part of the process of legalizing marriage for gays by participating as it unfolds. As in the movie, *50 First Dates*, we're intending to hold 49 more first marriages.

Ironically, only four hours after our legal nuptials in Massachusetts, we learned that California had nullified the 4,000 marriages they licensed over the summer. What a

letdown! And we knew that the minute we returned to Michigan, our license would be nullified as well—but we didn't care. We wanted to go through the process anyway.

Before arriving in Provincetown, we contacted Massachusetts officials, who told us that before we could proceed with the marriage, we needed to have our blood work done. Upon our arrival, we began telling people that we were there to be legally

married. Store owners, cab drivers and even people in restaurants were slipping us the names and phone numbers of those who will perform gay marriages for out-of-towners, but they told us to keep it on the QT. It was like being in the middle of a mystery novel. But to be honest, it actually made us feel like second-class citizens.

At town hall, we decided to just go in quietly and complete the paperwork. Everyone behind the counter immediately

congratulated us. So much for keeping a low profile! We were ushered to a room where a lesbian couple from New York was filling out the same forms. They were very nice, and all four of us laughed and joked about how this felt so adult, so "grown up."

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Continued on reverse

I thought about two books I've read, *Why You Should Give A Damn About Gay Marriage* by Davina Kotulaski and *Gay Marriage* by John Rauch. Both speak about how we, as gays and lesbians, are forbidden from joining the adult fraternity of married couples. I resent that to no end, and resented it even more after reading it in the books. I particularly like the way Rauch puts it:

“Marriage confers status: to be married, in the eyes of society, is to be grown up. Marriage creates stakes: someone depends on you. Marriage creates a safe harbor for sex. Marriage put two heads together, pooling experience and braking impulsiveness... We all need domesticating, not in the veterinary sense but in a more literal, human sense: We need a home. We are different people when we have a home: more stable, more productive, more mature, less self-obsessed, less impatient, and less anxious.”

He points out that even if you're not married, the sheer prospect of marriage is a great domesticator. “If you hope to get married,” he writes, “and if your friends and peers hope to get married, you will socialize and date more carefully... you make yourself marriage material.” I am 41 years old, and have been an adult for long enough that I deserve to be treated like one.

When Mike and I turned in the paperwork for our marriage license, pride and honor overwhelmed me. We fell in love with each other all over again. Just as when we married religiously before, now doing it again legally brings back the romantic times of our early experience together. Marriage is a way to re-romanticize your relationship!

We were so excited about this political adventure now turning into an emotional and romantic one again, that we decided to buy more rings! Yes, gay men and jewelry jokes aside, we decided that our initial bands had been engagement rings. Now, our diamond rings from our religious ceremony would become our formal religious rings and our new rings would be our legal rings. We're making up gay etiquette as we go along!

Entering the jewelry store where we found what we wanted, we discovered that newspapers around Massachusetts had nicknamed this store “the Gay Tiffany's.” A couple who had been together for 52 years had bought their rings here, and appeared on “Good Morning America,” as did these jewelers who sold them the rings. The jewelers showed us the couple's photo and pictures of others who bought rings from their store and married in P-town. I actually started crying as I looked at the picture of these two men who waited 52 years to make it legal! Then when they took our picture, I was filled with pride and honor.

After we bought the rings, we now had to wait three days for the license to become official and meanwhile, find ourselves a justice of the peace. We called several and left messages, then found one who answered her phone when we called. I could hear her smoking like a chimney as she talked incessantly about the injustice to gays and how she loved being part of this momentous occasion for us. She scheduled our appointment for April 12, Thursday—right after we picked up our license.

The day came. We took photos going to town hall, going in, picking up our license, and coming back down the stairs holding our license. I have to tell you that holding that piece of paper meant so much to me!

We met the minister, who in person was as nice and pleasant as she'd been on the phone. A lesbian couple and their friends cheered us on as we kissed, following the minister's prompting. It felt right. It was right. We were applauded at shows when asked by Lesbian comics Kate Clinton, and Margaret Cho, and a drag queen (who did a really bad Cher!) if anyone got married while in P-town.

And there we were, legally married. For the remaining two days of our trip, we were legal kin!

Getting married was a politically and romantically joyous experience. I cannot wait for our next 49 chances.

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