

# Flowers for San Francisco:

## One person's gesture of support became an international movement

BY NOËL LYNNE FIGART

The marriages in San Francisco have taken all of our attention over the past couple of months: the legal aspects, the political infighting, the media reaction, the popular voice, the flowers.

Yes, the flowers. It started in Minnesota. Greg Scanlan and Timothy Holtz of Minneapolis were discussing the marriages in San Francisco, and Holtz commented that he would really love to show his support. Scanlan said, Well, you can always send flowers.

The idea spread, as ideas often do, across the Internet. Scanlan and Holtz emailed friends and family to encourage them to follow suit. In a *LiveJournal* ([www.livejournal.com](http://www.livejournal.com)) forum Mary VanLaecken posted what her co-workers were doing, and asked that people spread the word. Wouldn't that be cool, VanLaecken said, if people from all over the country - gay, straight and otherwise, started sending flowers to the people waiting in line to get married?

Suddenly orders flooded a San Francisco flower shop that sported a rain-

bow flag on its website. As the orders piled up, other gay-friendly flower shops were called and brought into the business of giving out flowers to the newlywed couples.

This is a brilliant idea, said Darren Barefoot, a technical writer from Vancouver, BC, but I immediately recognized a problem. The flower shops apparently charge about U.S. \$45 to deliver these flowers. That's probably market value, but it's a bit steep for individuals who might want to help out (particularly if they're paying in Canadian dollars or other weaker currencies) but can't spare fifty bucks.

Barefoot then proceeded to create a fund that sought donations for the purchase and delivery of flowers to the couples waiting in line to be married. As of mid-March, when the marriages were halted by a California court, the fund had collected and distributed over \$14,000 dollars.

Eleanor Lang, a resident of New York, heard of the campaign and decided that instead of buying a new raincoat, she would send flowers. Unexpectedly, she received a thank you note a few days later. It was so great, Lang said. I got a letter with a return address I did not recognize, and it turned out to be a thank you note

from a newlywed couple. The couple had been standing in the rain for three hours when they received the flowers, then had to wait another eight before it was their turn to be married. They told Lang that the flowers gave them a lot of support during that time. Two pictures accompanied the thank you note - one of the couple standing in the rain, and another of the newlyweds in their dresses.

They were just beautiful, Lang said. They didn't look like they had been standing in the rain for all that time. Lang found herself in tears upon reading the letter. But the funny part, she said, Was when my 15 year old found me. She said, What's with you? I handed her the letter and after reading it, she also cried.

It wasn't only residents of urban liberal areas that got into the act. Messages came from North Carolina, Georgia, and the Midwest. As reported on Sfgate.com, one couple received this message: I'm an 87-year-old grandmother wishing you well.

Because of the overwhelming workload, many San Francisco natives volunteered to help with the deliveries. Josh Jasper, a bi activist living in San Francisco,

helped with the flower delivery. Instead of going to a high-end florist, he went to a flower wholesaler and brought several bouquets to be handed out.

It was amazing. The Civic Center is titanic and the line stretched around the building. There were families, people dressed in anime-style clothing, some in drag, some in fancy dress. But most people were dressed conservatively, like people would for a wedding. They seemed to be dressed in whatever they could find quickly.

Jasper commented that protesters were gathered in one corner to keep them from milling around among the people in line and creating a disruption, though, you could still hear them scream obscenities.

Flowers weren't the only thing being handed out. Many of Jasper's family and friends helped pass out coffee and tea from a local company.

I felt like I was witnessing history, Jasper said. I wish people would look at the faces of the people getting married and see them as individuals. I wish they would just talk to them one on one and hear their stories. ▼

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## Information Please: New England Queer Resource Guide Online

A new electronic guide to g/lbt resources and organizations in northern New England is now available online. This is the third edition of the guide, collected and compiled by Rainbow Resources of NH, Inc. and the Gay Info Line of New Hampshire, but the first directory to be published exclusively on the internet as an Adobe PDF document.

Just under 600 organizations, agencies and businesses are listed in this directory with electronic, phone and mail contact information plus a 50-word description for each entry. The Lifeline PDF guides are available for free download to anyone or any organization that requests them. Hard copies of the directory are available for \$10 to cover printing and shipping costs.

Rainbow Resources of NH, Inc is a nonprofit organization founded to provide free access to current information for and about the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community of New Hampshire. Any business, organization or group in NH, VT, ME, and northern MA can be listed in future editions of the Lifeline at no charge.

The information is organ-

ized into 41 categories, from social to support groups, from spiritual groups and churches to publications and event organizers, from bars and restaurants to therapists, from real estate services to civil rights advocates, from domestic and sexual violence agencies to gift and retail stores, among others. Within each category resources are listed by state, town and then listed alphabetically by name.

OITM participated in collecting information and distributing copies of the second edition of the guide in 1998.

For further information go to the Rainbow Resources site at [www.rainbowresources-nh.org](http://www.rainbowresources-nh.org), reply to this email, or write them at 26 South Main St, Box 181, Concord, NH 03301. ▼

## Hepatitis A Alert

According to an alert issued in mid-March, Vermont and Massachusetts health officials are alerting people who ate at Two Brothers Pizza in Ludlow, MA between February 25 and March 6 that they may have been exposed to hepatitis A.

Two Brothers Pizza is located at 103 West St. in Ludlow, MA, east of Springfield, MA on the Massachusetts Turnpike (I-90).

A food worker at the restaurant was diagnosed with the hepatitis A virus.

As a precaution, health officials are

urging people who ate cold or uncooked foods such as salads, sandwiches or condiments — or anyone who can't remember what they ate at the restaurant during this time, to contact the Vermont Department of Health or their health care provider to discuss hepatitis A prevention options.

Dr. Cort Lohff, the Vermont State Epidemiologist said in a phone interview that as of March 18, five days after the alert was issued, no calls had been received from Vermonters with hepatitis A concerns related

to the alert.

Hepatitis A is transmitted by person-to-person contact and also by consuming food handled by an infected individual. Hepatitis A is a contagious viral illness that affects the liver. Symptoms include fatigue, poor appetite, fever and vomiting. As the disease progresses, dark urine, pale stools and jaundice — a temporary yellowing of the skin and eyes — may occur. Symptoms generally appear three to four weeks after exposure. The disease is rarely fatal and most people recover in a few weeks without any complications. However, prompt preventive treatment can minimize the chances of becoming ill.

Lohff cited recommendations by the CDC that men who have sex with men should

also be vaccinated for Hepatitis A. The vaccine is a two-dose process, he said. Anyone can discuss the need for vaccination with his own physician. Or, Cort said, within a few months, the Vermont Health Department will be making hepatitis A and B vaccines available with federal funds for high-risk populations, including men who have sex with men. The department, he said, is still working on the protocol for the vaccination program.

The Vermont Department of Health can be reached at 802-863-7240 or toll-free within Vermont at 1-800-640-4374 between 8 am and 4:30 pm Monday through Friday. Information is also available through its website: [www.healthyvermonters.info/](http://www.healthyvermonters.info/). ▼