

"I Do!"

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with 110 appointment requests at the clerk's office, according to news reports.

"Couples across the Commonwealth are joyful, happy and grateful that for the first time in U.S. history, we can receive the critical legal rights and protections that come only through marriage," said Vermonter and PR consultant Marty Rouse, campaign coordinator for MassEquality. "May 17th is a historic day: it's the day that marks a new chapter of equality for gay and lesbian families."

Rouse added, "A lot of what is happening is spontaneous, but a lot of it is planned. When you look at most gay events, who's in the forefront: young gay white men. Look at who is out front on marriage: seniors and women."

Marriage is "not a done deal after May 17," Rouse added. "I'm raising a warning flag: the opposition is not going away. The real test will be in the primaries and then the general election. And we're likely to face a ballot initiative in 2006 or 2008 regardless of whether we win or lose on the state amendment" to prohibit same-sex marriage equality. "I'm happy for Massachusetts and the world, but if we can be strong, victorious, out there, organized, the more likely it is that we will win."

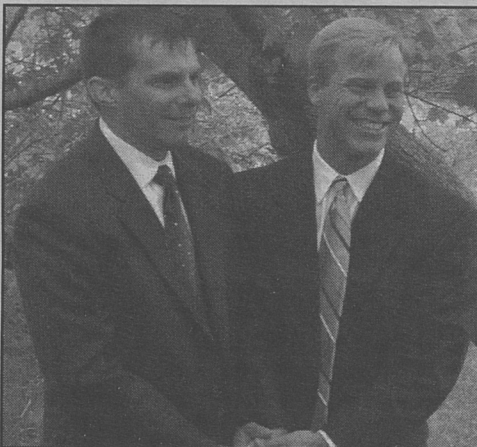
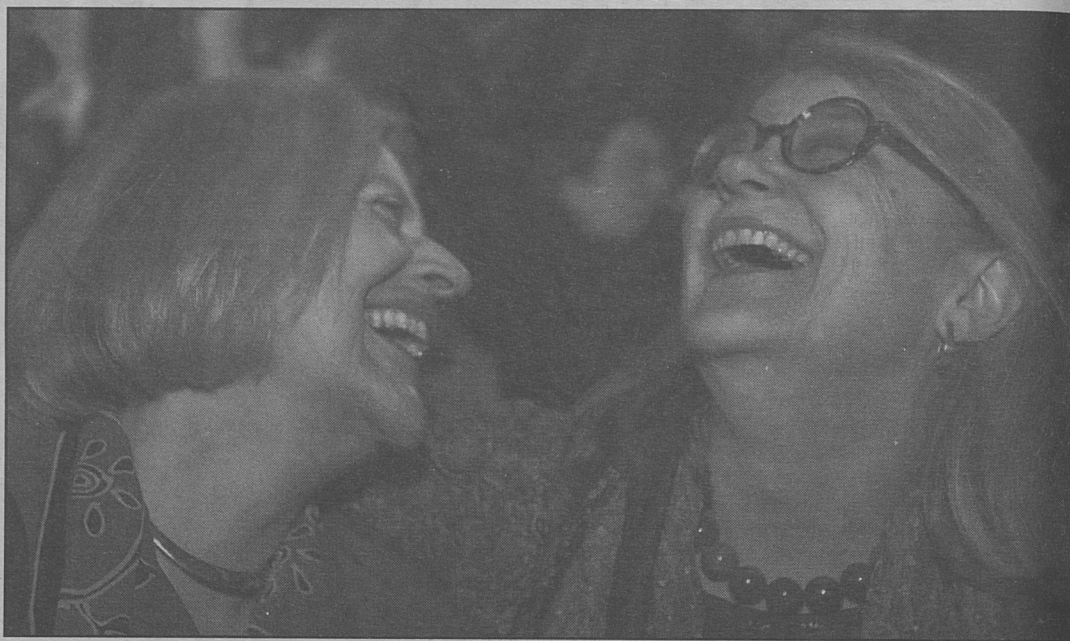
Another source of hope in Massachusetts is that several openly

gay candidates are running for the Massachusetts legislature because of the marriage issue, Rouse said. They are running against legislators who have had no opposition or voted in favor of the anti-gay amendment. "That's huge," Rouse said.

New York couples pilgrimaged to Boston to help celebrate and some to seek marriages they could then take home and leverage into state recognition. State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, a Democrat, has suggested the state would recognize Massachusetts marriages; Governor George Pataki disagreed. Rhode Island's Attorney General joined with Spitzer on behalf of his state.

In Washington, six same-sex couples chose May 17 to apply for marriage licenses at DC Superior Court in the nation's capital. They and their supporters, including members of the National Black Justice Coalition, Metropolitan Community Church, the National Coalition for Transgender Equity, and Marriage Equality Now-DC, then rallied on the courthouse steps.

Vermonters celebrated the further step that Massachusetts took. A group of about 50 people partied at 135 Pearl to celebrate the historic day with wedding cake, performances by out gay comedian (and Vermont House candidate) Jason P. Lorber and lesbian comedian Deb Renshaw, and calls to rally "soon" for full marriage equality here. ▼



top: Dorothy Austin and Diana Eck in Cambridge, Mass. Above, left: Christopher G. McCarry and Michael J. Sullivan of Alabama, first to wed in P-town. Above right: Holly Puterbaugh & Lois Farnham cut the cake in Vermont on May 17.



In Memoriam: Baroness IV Ariel

On May 9, Linda Holden, age 51, of Underhill, died suddenly from a brain tumor. Her death shocked and saddened family, friends, and members of the Barony of All Vermont, a predominantly gay fundraising organization that is part of a nationwide Court system. The following remembrances came from her son, Michael Holden ("Autumn" in the Barony), and Kris Rowley ("Baron I Kristoff").

"Ariel was one of those Moms that every gay child wants to have. Even though she didn't understand my lifestyle at first, she accepted me with open arms. She loved me for who I was, her son.

"In 1999 Ariel was diagnosed with kidney cancer. She fought it bravely and seemed to have won the battle. In February of 2004 we found that the cancer wasn't beaten. It had spread to her leg, and in April

we found out that it had spread to her brain. She fought the cancer with everything she had, but in the end it was too much for her. When her time was up, she left peacefully, surrounded by the love of her family, friends, and other loved ones." – Autumn (Michael Holden)

"Ariel was full of surprises. She was raised on a farm here in Vermont. She led a simple life. She married her childhood sweetheart, Kendal, 35 years ago, raised her son and daughter, and was a member of the Grange and the American Legion. The meaning of GBLT was totally foreign to her.

"When her son, Michael, came out, Ariel loved him for who he is, not what he is. She was like that with everyone. Ariel joined the Barony of All Vermont to support Michael (Autumn), but it became much more than that for her. She made her own friends and found her own place in our organization. But she did not judge.

"She had so much fun with everyone and really loved and cared about so

many people. She got to experience her first strip show, got drunk with us for the first time in many years, and simply cut loose. Not only did she learn to break down her own preconceived barriers within the Imperial Court System, but we also learned not to judge a book by its cover where she was concerned! So much for the simple farm girl from Vermont!

"The theme of Ariel's reign was Music, Love, and Laughter and she lived it every day. She gave love and received love. Her laugh was infectious. She filled the hearts of her friends with music. She was a very special lady and will be missed by so many people. We are honored to have had her as our Baroness and our friend. I know that I will miss her very much." – Baron I, Kristoff, Barony of All Vermont

The May 22 Barony event in Brattleboro that was to have been a surprise in Ariel's honor became a memorial to her life and brief reign in the Barony of All Vermont. ▼