

# Marriage Roller Coaster

It's been a roller-coaster summer for same-sex couples wanting to get married. Couples were married in Massachusetts, some of them from out of state in defiance of the governor's threat to void their marriages by applying a 1913 law (see p.1 for related story).

North Carolina's legislature adjourned in July without passing a constitutional amendment prohibiting same-sex marriage – a victory for supporters of marriage equality.

Missouri voters, on the other hand, in August passed a state amendment barring same-sex marriage by a more than two-to-one margin.

Then came the ruling in Washington by a lower court saying that the state's exclusion of same-sex couples from marriage violates the state's constitution. The language of the ruling went beyond legalese in honoring the plaintiff couples as exemplary citizens who should not be excluded by the state from any of its rights and benefits. Celebrations were muted in recognition of an upcoming review by the state's Supreme Court.

Finally, just before press time, California's Supreme Court voided the 3,995 marriages between partners of the same gender performed at the direction of Mayor Gavin Newsome in San Francisco last February and March. The first same-gender marriage there was performed for long-time activists Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon just two

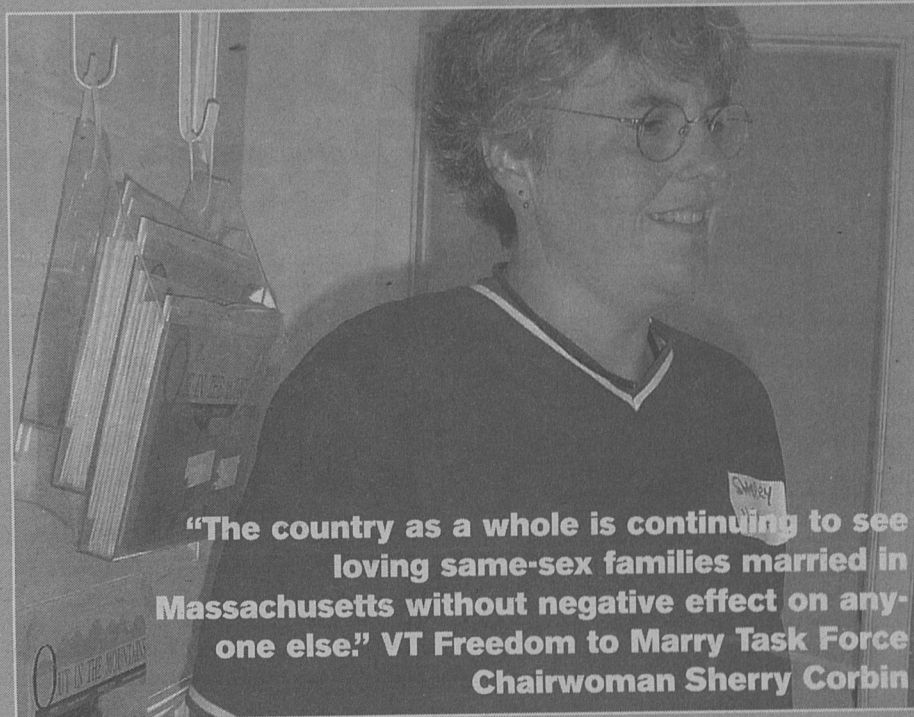
days before their 50th anniversary.

"Del is 83 years old and I am 79," said Phyllis Lyon. "After being together for more than 50 years, it is a terrible blow to have the rights and protections of marriage taken away from us. At our age, we do not have the luxury of time." One consequence of the Court's action is that if one of these two women were to die before the other, the surviving partner would have no right to social security or pension benefits.

The issue of whether excluding same-sex couples from marriage is against the state's constitution was not resolved in that ruling. The court considered only whether the mayor of San Francisco had the authority to defy a state law to issue the licenses. Lawsuits challenging the state's stand on marriage are currently in Superior Court.

Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force chairwoman Sherry Corbin said, "I'm not happy about Missouri, but we've recognized that these setbacks will happen. The country as a whole is continuing to see loving same-sex families married in Massachusetts without negative effect on anyone else. Nothing is cut in stone – it can always be changed."

Corbin suggested that the right wing's anti-gay campaign will backfire as more and more Americans – gay and straight – say to themselves, "'This is wrong. I'm going to make my views known.' Which



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means we've got to register to vote and get absentee ballots and use them."

In the final analysis, she added, "Marriage is between the two partners. It doesn't affect anyone but the individuals."

"Those thousands of committed couples didn't sit for hours in the rain for nothing," declared Beth Robinson, one of the attorneys in Vermont's marriage lawsuit that

resulted in the political compromise of civil unions. "Their dedication to their commitments to each other – to their families – catalyzed the nascent freedom to marry movement across the country, and there's no turning back." ▼

## Atlanta Man Organizes National GLBTQ Boycott

Atlanta, GA – When President George W. Bush announced his support of the gay marriage ban on February 24, 2004, something snapped in Dale Duncan and Joe Henderson, a gay couple together for ten years living in Atlanta, Georgia. Both men decided it was time to do something.

Henderson jokingly suggested that gays stop doing wedding-related services for a day: no hair styling, no wedding planning, no cake decorating, no bridal gowns. From that suggestion came the idea for an economic boycott. But of what?

The suggestion was made that gays, lesbians, questioning, transgendered and all their allies drop out of the economy for one entire day. "No purchases of any kind," says Duncan. "No cell phone use. Take a personal or vacation day off from work. If you're a gay or lesbian

business-owner, close up shop for the day."

The goal of the one-day boycott is to impact the bottom line. "Let's face it," says Duncan. "It is imperative that we show this nation exactly what type of impact we, as a group, have on the economy. We hope that will, in turn, drive change."

Duncan invested \$3500 of his own money into a website and has applied for nonprofit 501(c)3 status. Until he receives official approval, Duncan is seeking a 501(c)3 organization to act as a sponsor.

One of Duncan's goals is to procure a full-page ad about the boycott in *USA Today*, to the tune of \$325,000.

"That's why we're taking donations," says Duncan, "so that we can advertise in publications and possibly on radio stations throughout the country to make people aware of

what's going on and what the boycott is all about."

Also on the website is a petition where people who are planning to participate in the boycott can sign up, thus giving good, clear numbers for the potential impact.

Duncan has received support and endorsements from Robin Tyler of dontamend.com, civilmarriage.com, comedienne Margaret Cho, dcdiversity.com, and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Margaret Cho's website, loveisloveislove.com lists supporting the Boycott for Equality on her website as one of the twelve things to do to combat the marriage amendment.

"It is going to take as many of us as possible, and our allies, to make this work," says Duncan. "If the numbers are in the thousands, that's when it's going to make a noticeable difference."

How does Duncan plan to

track the impact of the boycott?

"If a large number of people don't use their cell phones for the day, cell phone companies will report a significant drop in usage the following day," Duncan says. "If a significant number of employees of a major company take the day off, it will be evident in that company's productivity."

For people who cannot participate on the day of the boycott, there are other ways to show support. "We suggest having fundraising parties," says Duncan. "People can have cookouts and parties and take donations. We want them to keep whatever it takes to cover the costs of having the fundraiser and they can donate the rest to Boycott For Equality to go towards the advertising."

They also may contact Duncan and request business-sized cards with information about the

boycott to help get the word out.

Some business-owners have voiced concern to Duncan about closing their business for a day. "But I tell them to look at the bigger picture," Duncan says. For example, if they are already partnered, I ask them to think of what they will lose should something happen to them or their partner. Domestic benefits. Social security benefits. And just a slew of other rights and benefits the straight community is automatically awarded.

"So I ask them, 'How can you not afford to close up shop for one day? How can you NOT afford to take a stand on this issue?' Especially when so much is at stake." ▼

For more information, visit the website at [www.boycottforequality.com](http://www.boycottforequality.com) or e-mail [info@boycottforequality.com](mailto:info@boycottforequality.com).