

# Letters Home

by Ron

I attended my first gay wedding last fall in Los Angeles. My brother and his lover were married in a ceremony that was well attended by their families, friends and co-workers.

Gay union ceremonies are rare even in California. The reason that my brother and brother-in-law decided to have one is that they wanted to live their lives as positive gay role models. The look at their gayness as an integral part of their personalities and they wanted to give the people that were important in their lives the opportunity to share their happiness.

Their ceremony was designed by the two of them. They invited the oldest gay couple in their circle of friends to preside over the ceremony. Friends who knew them before they were a couple spoke about their memories of them. Friends who only knew them as a couple spoke about their commitment to one another.

Both men wore white. They spoke about the beginnings of their relationship, growing as a couple, resolving interpersonal problems and the qualities that attracted each one to the other. Their ceremony was concluded with a kiss that demonstrated their hope for the future, tender-



ness in the past, and love in the present.

There were many differences from a traditional wedding. This ceremony was not conducted to mark a new beginning but was a reaffirmation of a stable and evolving relationship. The seating for the ceremony was mixed so that friends would not have to decide which side they should sit on. Both sides of the family sat together. The cake served at the reception was from a flat cake and not a stacked wedding cake.

Although some traditions were eliminated, I am sure that many new traditions were started that day. Many of the gay and lesbian couples that were present were talking about how they would like to have the same type of ceremony for themselves. The fact that this marriage was taking place suddenly gave them the courage to dream that the same type of ceremony could be a reality for them also.

I am happy that my brother is married. We have accepted his spouse as part of the family. They both flew out to spend the

holidays in Vermont this year.

Marriage is a state of union that is created by two people who are united in love. Gay marriages are legitimized through the power of the friends and family present at the ceremony. No piece of paper is needed from the state. The state lawmakers will eventually recognize gay unions because it is the right thing to do. The mean spirited and discriminatory laws that restrict same sex marriage will someday be overturned because there will be so many open gay marriages that it will not be unusual and will be an affirmation of what already exists.

I'm glad that my brother invited me to be present at his gay union ceremony. He gave me the chance to publicly let him know that I support him and will be there for him. It allowed us to affirm the validity and importance of this relationship in his life. He explained that much of the discrimination that gay people experience is self imposed discrimination. He went on to explain that he would have been discriminating against himself if he failed to invite the whole family. (Parents, siblings, grandparents, cousins, nieces, nephews, etc.) It would have meant that he thought that his gay relationships were in some way inferior to straight relationships.

I'm proud of him.

## NO \$ DOWN !!

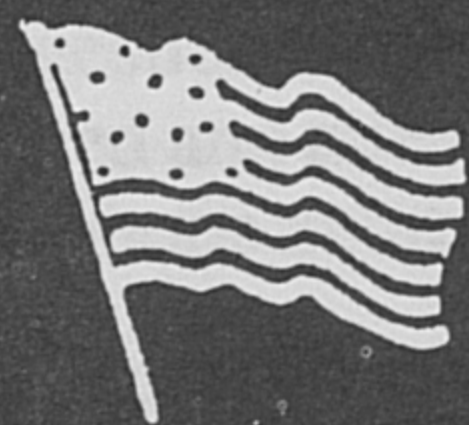
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