

Everything you always wanted to know about gay marriage in Canada, but were afraid to ask. (Or “Allan & Randy Get Married In Vancouver”)

By Allan Hurst - Version 1.7 – 9/17/15

Once upon a time (in 2003, in this case) it was illegal for same sex couples to wed in the United States of America.

My name is Allan Hurst, and I’m a gay man. On Saturday, November 29th, 2003, I married my husband, Randy Hensley, in Vancouver, British Columbia. We married each other during a square dance weekend event known as a “fly-in.”

A lot of people – both gay and straight – have asked us a lot of questions about what was involved in getting married.

Some people wanted to know more about the legal process, others wanted to know what we did for a ceremony, and still others were curious about why we bothered to go to Canada when we could have registered as domestic partners without leaving the States (in San Francisco or Vermont, for example).

This page tries to answer most of the personal questions. The legal questions, we’ll leave up to the archived version of wonderful page put up by the American Civil Liberties Union on gay & lesbian marriage located at:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20040309171846/http://www.aclu.org/getequal/rela/canada.html>

Keep in mind, this was November of 2003. Same sex marriages had been banned under multiple state legislative acts, as well as the Federal Defense of Marriage Act. The first legal same sex marriages wouldn’t start until May of 2004, in Massachusetts, and those marriages weren’t valid outside of that state. The concept of federal approval of same-sex marriage was unthinkable at the time.

Canada was *slightly* more relaxed about it. In November of 2003, British Columbia was one of just two provinces in Canada (Ontario was the other), which had legalized marriage between people of the same gender.

We both remember glowing during the recession, but here, we look like we’re both in shock. We think our friends D.C. and Judith (just left of center) were in shock, too. That, or we waited too long to serve the cake.



When I updated this article in March, 2005, just two years after its original publication, only about half of Canada's provinces and territories allowed same-sex marriage. Even within Canada, not all provinces/territories recognized each other's same-sex marriages. For example, Quebec's provincial legal system is based on France's Napoleonic code, unlike the other Canadian provinces which have a legal system based loosely on England's...meaning that originally, Quebec wouldn't officially recognize same-sex marriages performed in British Columbia.

Only a handful of countries outside of North America recognized Canadian same-sex marriages. To quote Wikipedia: *On July 20, 2005, Canada became the fourth country in the world, and the first country outside Europe, to legalize same-sex marriage nationwide with the enactment of the Civil Marriage Act which provided a gender-neutral marriage definition.*¹

“Why did you get married at a square dance fly-in?”

The obvious answer is, “why not?”

Some people get married at Niagara Falls, at Disneyland, on cable cars, or riding on roller coasters. Frankly, after reading about all of those ceremonies, we figured getting married during a square dance fly-in was a comparatively normal undertaking.



“What’s a ‘fly-in’?”

In the event that you're not a square dancer, a “fly-in” is a square dance event (generally a weekend) held by a local square dance club, to which dancers from other parts of the country (or other countries) travel so they can all dance together.

“Why did you get married in Canada, and not in San Francisco?”

At the time, especially given the political situation in the USA, we knew that if we wanted to get married, we'd need to do it outside the country.

When we first started talking about it, Canada offered same-sex marriage only in the province of Ontario.

In September 2003, Date Squares – Ottawa's gay square dance club – held a double (same-sex) wedding during their fly-in.



When British Columbia's provincial court joined Ontario in making same-sex marriage legal, we were surprised and delighted. (Vancouver is a lot closer to San Francisco than Toronto.)

That gave Randy and I the idea to not only get married in Canada, but to specifically do so during the Vancouver club's annual fly-in the following November.

Every November for many years, I traveled to Vancouver at (American) Thanksgiving for the annual fly-in thrown by the local GLBT square dance Squares Across the Border. Why not combine our favorite mutual hobby (other than sex) with getting married? It seemed like a good idea at the time. (After the fact, it still does.)

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Same-sex_marriage_in_Canada

Allan (in red) & Randy (in blue) square up for the wedding tip, which was called by Grant Ito and Will Martin. From left to right: Lance, Jeff, Allan, Randy, Eric, and Dan. (Not shown: Michael, standing next to Dan, and Don, standing next to Eric.)



“Why didn’t you go to Vermont and register as domestic partners?”

At this article’s original time of writing (2/23/03), although a Massachusetts court declared that it was illegal to bar same-sex couples from being married, it was not possible for a same-sex couple to be fully legally married within the United States. Vermont allowed same-sex couples to register as domestic partners, which entitled them to some of the legal rights of marriage, but only within the state of Vermont.

“But you live just outside of San Francisco! Why didn’t you get married in San Francisco?”

Even with the February, 2003 same-sex weddings being held in San Francisco ... within a few months, huge court battles resulted. California’s State Department of Vital Statistics refused to accept the same-sex marriage licenses for registration.

We were amused that during the 2003 court battles, we were considered married within San Francisco and then California, and then were considered *unmarried* on August 12th, 2004, when the California Supreme Court ruled that the San Francisco same sex marriages were not legal, and invalidated them. (And our out-of-state same-sex marriage, which had been dragged into the original court case.)

Everyone else squared up for the wedding tip.



At the time, our Canadian marriage was still valid in many parts of Canada and a few European countries. (We used to like to joke that we're also legally married inside the boundaries of any IKEA store.)

Because of the ensuing rapid-fire succession of court cases in California, other states, and finally the United States Supreme Court, Randy once observed that we've been married and divorced to each other more times than Elizabeth Taylor.

Below: Allan signing the marriage licence.



“Didn’t the California Domestic Partner Registry provide the same benefits of marriage?”

The California domestic partner registry provides a few basic rights – such as medical visitation – to same-sex couples.

In 2007, with no conceivable legal resolution to same sex marriage imaginable, we became Registered California Domestic Partners. We also established an extensive (and expensive) set of legal protections for each other, creating a revocable trust so that whether or not we were legally married, if one of us died, the other’s family couldn’t kick out the survivor

or lay claim to any individual or joint possessions.

Up until 2015, when same sex marriage became legal throughout the United States, *none* of the United States cities, states, or counties offering domestic partner registration ever provided *all* of the legal protections and privileges of marriage.

Even with domestic partnership and the web of legal protections we'd researched, at the time, Randy and I both really wanted to be *married*, not just registered as domestic partners.

We felt this way despite the fact that our Canadian marriage—which carries *exactly* the same rights and privileges in Ontario or British Columbia as a “straight” marriage—wasn't legal within the United States.

“So your marriage didn't mean anything here in the States?”

At the time, sure it did--to Randy and me. It also meant something to all of our co-workers, friends, neighbors, business associates, and families. It meant that we cared enough about each other to establish the most permanent legal bond we could think of, and one that meant something to ourselves and those we care for.



Allan & Randy presented as a married couple.



“So what happened when you travelled to Canada after you were married?”

During the period between 2005² and 2015, Randy and I were considered legally married within the borders of Canada, and were entitled to exactly the same rights and privileges of a heterosexual married couple. (This included hospital visitation rights and medical decision privileges.)

If we lived at the same address in the States, we could fill out a joint Canada Customs form when crossing into British Columbia or Ontario. (And we still can.)

² See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Same-sex_marriage_in_Canada to discover the timeline between 2003, when the first province recognizing same sex marriage and 2005, when all provinces and the federal government finally saw the light.

On our wedding trip, we arrived at Vancouver International Airport together, and each of us filled out a separate form. When I walked up to the Canada Customs agent, he asked why I was visiting, and I told him “square dancing,” and that I was also going to be married. He asked if I was traveling alone, and I said no, and pointed out Randy and told the agent that that’s whom I was marrying. The agent

motioned Randy up, and processed us through together, just as he would any heterosexual couple.

It’s tame by today’s civil-rights standards, but at the time, we both thought this was supremely cool and nearly cried.

We experienced the flip side heading home to the USA, when we were required to file separate U.S. Customs forms and be processed separately,



since the U.S. didn’t recognize same-sex marriages as legal.

Neither Randy or I had the time, energy, or resources to be a legal test case for same-sex marriage by objecting to separate treatment at the time.

However, when we returned to Vancouver in November of 2004, we filled out a single customs form, and were processed through just like any other married couple without so much as a raised eyebrow.

“How long did it take you to plan your wedding?”



Here’s where Martha Stewart would cringe (not that that’s a *bad* thing, you understand). The initial planning only took us about two hours.

Half of the two hours was spent researching the legal requirements on the web. Thankfully, British Columbia has a very web-friendly provincial government, and everything we needed to know, we found on the web. (See below for more legal details.)

The other half of the two hours, we spent on the phone with our friends Grant Ito and Will Martin in Vancouver, deciding where, when, and how to get married. We couldn’t have gotten married without their help; at least, not with as little advance planning as we did.

We started this process in late September 2003, and were married two months later, in November. There were about a dozen phone calls involved to friends and members of Squares Across The Border, and one 3-day “survey” trip in early November, about three weeks prior to the wedding date.

During the survey trip, we obtained our marriage licence, checked out bakeries, picked out and purchased a pair of beautiful First Nations handcrafted



wedding rings, and shopped for wedding clothes. We didn't find the clothes we were looking for in Vancouver – solid-colored pleated tuxedo shirts – so we bought them from a local tuxedo store in Hayward, California, not far from Randy's home.

“What did you have to do to get married legally in Canada?”

- (1) Get a marriage licence. This cost us CDN\$100 (about USD\$67), and could be obtained from any private company (such as an insurance brokerage) which had been granted the right to issue marriage licences by the BC Vital Statistics Agency. (We used Coast Capital Insurance Services, on Georgia Street in downtown Vancouver.)
- (2) Find a religious leader (e.g., rabbi, priest, pastor) **or** civil marriage commissioner (similar to a U.S. “justice of the peace”) who has been granted the right to marry couples in BC.
- (3) Two people other than the wedding couple and marriage commissioner must witness the marriage. The witnesses must sign the wedding licence, certifying the ceremony. Our wonderful friends Grant and Will were our legal witnesses, as well as callers for the square dance tip that immediately followed the ceremony. (That's Will signing in the picture at right.)



For information on locating licence issuers and marriage commissioners in BC, we consulted the BC Vital Statistics Agency website, located at:

<http://www.vs.gov.bc.ca/marriage/index.html>

A One Way Trip.

It's worth noting that back in 2003, once a pair of non-Canadian citizens was married in Canada, the *only* way for them to obtain a divorce was if one or both parties live in Canada for a year prior to filing for divorce. This was similar to Vermont's civil union law during the same period. Since then, Canadian laws were changed to allow divorce outside of Canada.

But back in 2003 we knew this marriage would be “for keeps” for a very long time--possibly forever—with no legal way to back out of it.

“Who conducted your marriage ceremony? Was it a Jewish wedding?”

Neither of us is particularly religious, although I was raised Reform Jewish, and consider myself to be “culturally Jewish.” We decided we both wanted a civil ceremony. (We talked about incorporating parts of the traditional Jewish ceremony whenever we decide to hold a Bay Area commitment ceremony. Randy loved the idea of stomping the wine glass.)

We were referred to a marriage commissioner by a couple of friends who had gotten married a few months earlier, but that commissioner wasn't going to be in town for our wedding weekend. She did, however, refer us to the commissioner we ended up using, a lovely and helpful woman named [Karen Eli](#) in Vancouver.

You can find Karen (or any other marriage commissioner in BC) by going to the URL above, and clicking on “Search for Marriage Commissioners”.

If we were doing it all over again, we’d absolutely still use Karen; we both adored her.

“How much did it cost you to get married?”

We thought the process surprisingly inexpensive.

Our out of pocket expenses—*not* including airfare, hotel, wedding rings, or restaurants, mind you—came to just a little bit over CDN\$500 (roughly USD\$350). This broke down as follows:

- Marriage licence: CDN\$100.
- Refreshments: CDN\$300. This included two huge cakes from True Confections and several cases of soft drinks, bottled water, paper plates, and napkins from Costco. After Will teased me for wanting to buy a box of 200 plastic forks, we decided we’d buy a smaller box at a grocery store...then promptly forgot all about doing so until we were ready to cut the cake at the ceremony three days later. Whoops.
- Karen asked us to bring CDN\$95 in cash to the ceremony, which covered the cost of the ceremony, applicable local taxes, and her fee. We added a gratuity on top of that, because she was not only helpful and friendly, but also delivered a wonderful ceremony we were *very* happy with.
- There was no charge for the hall rental, thanks to Squares Across the Border, whose members were kind enough to let us use a hall they’d already rented during a lunch break.

“Where did you buy the wedding cake?”

We started off at Vancouver’s historic “[Notte’s Bon Ton](#)” bakery, where our friends Bob & Jeremy had gotten their beautiful wedding cake. The employee we spoke with became curiously unexcited about our wedding as soon as she realized that Randy and I were the ones getting married. Suddenly it was going take some extra time to arrange a tasting, and the manager who normally handled this wasn’t around, and...we thanked her politely and left, feeling somewhat rejected.

That evening, over dinner, another friend later said she’d heard the Bon Ton wasn’t very lesbian-friendly ... and the Bon Ton bakery clerk’s flat manner suddenly clicked, and a light went on.

Randy and I decided that whether it was just that one clerk, or the bakery in general, we really weren’t thrilled about giving money to a business all of whose employees weren’t pleased at the prospect of earning our business.



Update: In all fairness, since we first wrote this article, we’ve had several confirmed reports that Notte’s Bon Ton has been a warm and gracious and friendly vendor for a number of same-sex weddings in Vancouver. For all we know, the unfriendly lady may not even work there any longer. So

if you're thinking about getting married in Vancouver, we won't steer you away from checking out Notte's Bon Ton as one of your candidate bakeries.

“So... where did you end up buying your wedding cake?”

For our wedding, we ended up at our original choice, a desserts-only specialty bakery called “True Confections” (see their website at <http://www.trueconfections.ca>), which is not only very LGBT-friendly friendly, but which had a truly decadent menu of wonderful cakes.

Not only were the cakes great, but *all* of the employees we talked with and met seemed genuinely pleased and thrilled about preparing our wedding cakes. In fact, our wedding cake specialist had gotten married to her girlfriend a few months earlier, in Ontario.³



For the wedding, since we happened to know that at least a couple of guests in attendance were allergic to chocolate, we decided to serve *two* cakes, both from True Confections' “off the shelf” list.

We didn't have enough advance time to meet with the bakery to design a custom cake (they ask for 3 months)... but we didn't mind, because we loved all of the cakes on their menu.

The “main” cake was Milk Chocolate Hazelnut - which I felt was a poor name, because only the *frosting* was milk chocolate; the cake itself was a rich, moist, deep devil's-food-style dark

chocolate. Oh, yes – and the cake wasn't just large, it was *huge*. One cake can serve 60+ people. In the picture at right, the cake is nearly a foot tall.

The “secondary”, non-chocolate cake was a White Savannah Cream Cake, which involved incredibly rich angel-food cake, vanilla cream mousse, and just a hint of orange liquor. And strawberries on top, in case there wasn't enough sweet stuff in there already. (But it was absolutely delicious ... for a non-chocolate concoction, anyway.)

We wanted to have our cake decorated with flying monkeys or flying pigs, but True Confections' wonderful pastry staff wasn't quite up to that on just a couple of weeks' notice. We settled for the bakery lending us a ceramic cake topper consisting of a pair of “honeymoon pigs” to which they'd affixed large gossamer wings. We returned the cake topper to True Confections a couple of days later.

For our first anniversary, we ordered slightly smaller versions of both cakes for the Squares Across the Border 2004 fly-in ... and there wasn't a crumb left of either cake by the end of the potluck. We had the anniversary cakes decorated with the words “Allan & Randy 11/29/03” and “Thank you, SATB!”



³ A year later, when we called the bakery to order anniversary celebration cakes, we spoke with one of the owners, who confirmed that she and another woman own and operate True Confections...and both of them have each gotten married to their respective girlfriends.

We briefly contemplated a joke in which we would bring smaller and smaller versions of each cake to successive fly-ins, until all we had left is a pair of cupcakes.

“Uh, hold on a second. Did you say you wanted flying pigs on your wedding cake?”

Some people want to be married by an Elvis impersonator in Las Vegas. We happened to want flying pigs on our cake. We don't see a problem with that.

When Randy and I first met, several people told us, “You two will get married when monkeys fly out of my butt.” A few friends with slightly less colorful vocabularies suggested Randy and I would marry “when pigs fly.”

When Randy finally proposed to me (a long story which we won't bore you with here), one of my conditions for accepting his proposal was that I wanted a cake decorated with flying monkeys, and party napkins featuring pigs with wings.

He immediately understood why, and agreed on the spot. It was OK with both of us that we had to fudge a little, and put flying pigs on the cake instead, and use plain paper napkins. The rest, as they say, is history.

“Who took the pictures?”

To save money and have some fun, we bought five disposable cameras at a local drugstore, and gave them out to guests. The resulting pictures accompany this article.

One problem we didn't foresee: the studio space was so huge, that camera flashes were just lost in the room. That's why all of the ceremony pictures are so dark; it was actually pretty well lit in the studio, but the entire room was painted black, and draped with black curtains. Also, one of the cameras turned out to be a dud, and produced no usable pictures at all.



“How many people attended?”

We received RSVPs from about 30 people, planned for 60, and had somewhere over 100 show up. The fly-in had about 160 registered attendees. We were both rather surprised at how many people were there. Randy and I alternate between claiming 100 and 120 people showed up. (It's kind of like a fishing story, where the size of the catch grows with each telling.) It's safe to say, way more than half of the fly-in attendees showed up. This doesn't count my mother, who flew in from Chicago for the wedding, muttering something about finally being able to see me married before she died. (She wasn't ill; it's just a Jewish Mother schtick.)

“Was one of you a bride, or were you both grooms?”

I suppose if one or both of us was into drag--no, no, no. Seriously, we felt that we were both grooms, and that's how we referred to each other. (We now feel that we're both each other's husbands, for what it's worth.)

Technically speaking, however, Randy is the blushing bride. Back in November 2003, British Columbia hadn't yet gotten around to changing their marriage licence application form. My information was put into the “Groom” box, while Randy's information ended up in the “Bride” box.

The final marriage licence didn't show the term "Bride" (or "Groom") anywhere. Honest.

"How did you dress for the wedding?"

We felt due to this being an extended-family event, and being held during a square dance fly-in, we would dress in something a little less formal, yet still fun.

A few weeks prior to our wedding, we saw a couple of friends of ours (Rod & Allen) at a leather club event in Hayward, and we liked their "leather evening wear" look, so we adopted it.

Each of us wore a pleated, solid color tuxedo shirt, black leather bow tie, black leather bar vest, and black jeans and boots. Our wedding guests later told us that this was a suitably elegant yet understated wedding costume. We were pleased with the results.



"How did you come up with the wedding ceremony?"

Karen Ell provided us with several sample ceremonies, which she thought would suit our needs. (After meeting with us, she eliminated anything religious or terribly mushy from the list of samples she submitted to us, for example.) We were quite taken with the first of the samples she sent us, and decided to use that as-is.

We added two pieces of the ceremony, which we wrote ourselves: a preface and vows.

At the wedding, I delivered the preface, explaining what was going to happen, and why we were there in the first place. Karen led Randy & I through the ceremony, and Randy and I each read our own vows.

During the ceremony (Left to Right): Randy, Karen, Allan, Sally (Allan's mom), Grant, and Will.



Karen very enthusiastically seconded our decision to write down and read off each of our vows; it's evidently very common for brides and grooms to misremember or mangle memorized vows.

“What was the preface?”

One of the odd things about getting married was that it caused us both post-traumatic amnesia. This, despite the fact that I'm very used to and comfortable with public speaking, and that Randy in general isn't very self-conscious.

Neither of us can remember precisely what actually came out of our mouths at the time. Randy and I are both pretty sure that I read (and slightly modified on-the-fly) the following speech that I'd written the week before.

What I've put down here is my memory of what I said, rather than what I originally wrote. (Yes, I now wish we'd budgeted enough money to have someone videotape the ceremony.)



Before we get started, we have a few words about the ceremony...

When we decided to get married, we both felt strongly that we wanted to do so in front of not just our biological families, but especially in front of our chosen extended families.

Over the past six years both here with Squares Across the Border in Vancouver, and in square dancing in general over the past eight years, we've created our *own* extended family.

You are that family. [Everybody started applauding spontaneously at this point.]

We're about to start a civil wedding ceremony, which will be officiated by Karen Ell, our Marriage Commissioner, who is licenced to conduct weddings in British Columbia. This is similar to a U.S. ceremony conducted by a Justice of the Peace.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, all three of us - plus our two witnesses, Will Martin & Grant Ito - will need to sign the marriage certificate. When the last signature is made, Randy and I will then be legally married in British Columbia.

After the ceremony, Grant Ito & Will Martin will call a wedding tip, which will consist of two singing calls. Finally, we have cake and soft drinks just outside for everyone to share.

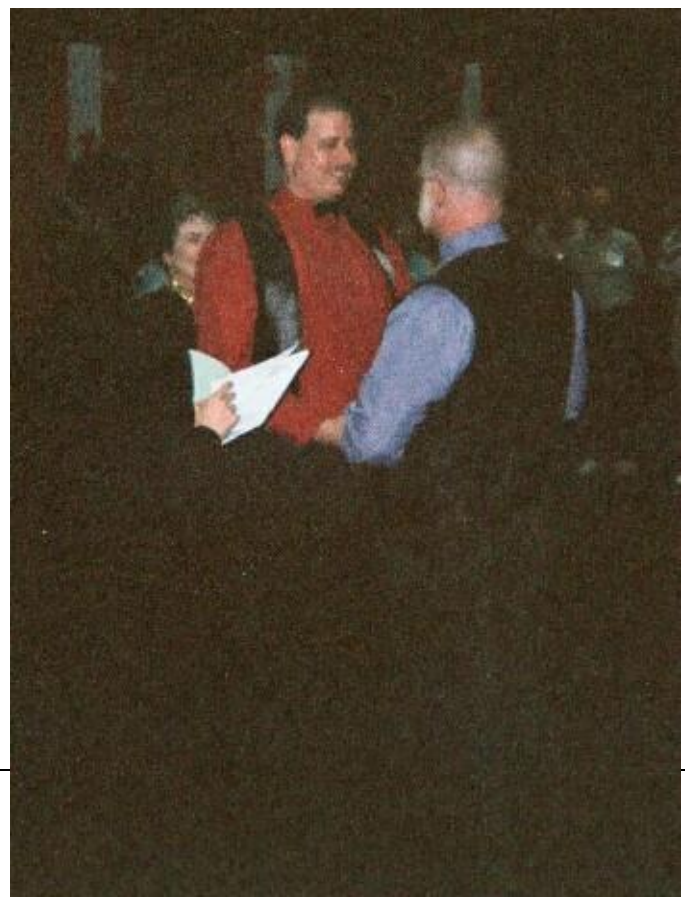
Thank you all for attending, and let's get started!

“What was the ceremony?”

There was a legal formula embedded in the ceremony, which is reproduced here:

We are gathered here today to be a part of this celebration, and come to acknowledge the commitment of Allan Hurst and Randy Hensley to their togetherness in marriage.

The essence of this commitment is accepting of another person as lover, companion and friend. It is



therefore a decision to be entered upon with great consideration for both the other person and one's self. This bond of love between two people is one of life's most meaningful experiences. Marriage symbolizes the intimate sharing of two lives; yet this sharing must enhance the individuality of each partner. A marriage that lasts is one which is continually evolving. Each person growing while developing a deeper understanding of the other.

We are here today to celebrate the love, which Allan and Randy have for each other, and to give recognition to their decision to accept each other totally.

I ask you both in the presence of these witnesses, have you come here today knowing of no legal impediment to this marriage? (We have)

Legal declaration

I solemnly declare that I do not know of any lawful impediment why I, (Allan Hurst/Randy Hensley) may not be joined in matrimony to (Randy Hensley/Allan Hurst).

(Join Hands) Question to both: (Allan/Randy) will you take this man, to be your lawful wedded husband and life partner? Will you love him, and comfort him with kindness, understanding and respect throughout your lives? (I will)

Repeat after me:

I call on those present to witness that I, (Allan/Randy) take you, (Randy/Allan), to be my lawful wedded husband and partner in life. I pledge to share my life openly with you, to honour you, to care for you and encourage your own fulfillment through all the changes of our lives. I make this pledge to you as my friend and my companion, to love and to cherish, as long as we both shall live.

You have chosen to exchange rings today, as gifts to each other to symbolize your love. These rings are a perfect circle, a symbol of the unbroken unity of love. There is no beginning, there is no end. They represent the truth of that law of life: As you give to each other, you receive from each other. As you give your love, understanding and compassion to each other, it will be returned to you enhanced.

Repeat after me:

With this ring I thee wed. Let it be to us one symbol of my love.

Allan and Randy have written their own vows to each other, and will now share them before all of us.

[Exchange of vows.]

Allan and Randy, you have come together in marriage before your chosen witnesses, and have pledged your love to each other. I pronounce you what you have already pronounced yourselves, friends forever and partners in life together in the spirit of love and in the celebration of the beauty and joy of life. Now share a kiss to seal your vows.

“What were your vows, and how did you create them?”

We spent a fair amount of time researching other couples' vows (mostly on the web) before writing our own individually. Our married friends were all quite firm; while they'd be happy to tell us what their vows were, and to look over our finished vows for us, we really needed to write vows that would be meaningful to *us*. We're strange, but we're not *stupid*. We took the hint.

I wrote mine first, and gave a copy



to Randy, to use as a starting point. He didn't see anything in my vows that he thought was (too) inappropriate, and he wrote his own vows to mesh (quite beautifully, I thought) with mine.

But what did we put into them? At the time, we figured all of the usual "love, honor, and cherish" stuff would be covered by the ceremony. However, there were *some* vows that we'd never heard made in a wedding ceremony.

We figured things like communication, honesty, keeping promises, and not boring each other to death were all pretty important. We also both felt quite strongly that the vows shouldn't be 100% deadly serious. We added a few things that were not only heartfelt and truthful, but also funny (without being schmaltzy).

After the wedding, we decided to not post our vows publicly. We'd originally planned a second commitment ceremony to be held in Northern California in mid 2004, and we wanted our U.S. guests to hear the vows "live" before we posted them on the web.

However, that never happened, and we both lost track of our copies of our vows. We figured we'd never find out what it was we each said to the other.

In 2015, the mystery was solved when I ran across a copy of the final version of the vows that a friend had printed out for us on his computer at home before we left to go to the ceremony. I'd evidently stuffed a copy of the vows into the envelope with all of the receipts for cakes and things.

Allan's Wedding Vows:

Randy,

On the day that I met you six years ago, it was evident to everyone else in the room that a spark kindled between us. Even though I didn't openly admit it at the time, deep inside I knew you were the one I was destined to marry. We had an unconventional courtship, and I expect we will have an unconventional life together. I know that you will not be a conventional husband.

Randy, I promise:

- *to support you when you are sick, as well as when you're healthy,*
- *to never go to sleep when either one of us is angry or upset at the other,*
- *to do my part to promote humor, laughter and happiness in our lives,*
- *to only make promises I know I can keep, and to keep the promises I make,*
- *to try to not put you to sleep with boring techie or caller discussions,*
- *to not roll my eyes or sigh when you explain to me once again how much better a manual transmission is than an automatic,*
- *to comfort you when you're feeling down, and share your joy when you're feel up, to try and learn how to drive a stick shift,*
- *to give you my honest opinion and to respect yours, and*
- *to do my best to make you laugh in bed.*

We've both waited six years for this moment, and now we're here. After everything we've gone through, is it any wonder that I'm not quite sure what to say or do next? One thing I AM sure of, however, is: Randy, I love you.

Will you share my life and all that I am with you?

Randy's wedding vows:

Robert Frost once wrote of The Road Not Taken, and many times in my life I have followed his advice, though not always consciously.

It was six years ago this month when our eyes first met, accompanied by that invisible little spark.

I didn't realize it then, but at that moment I seem to have chosen the less traveled path yet again. In the ensuing years, our individual paths have crossed a number of times, only to diverge a short distance later, sometimes by happenstance, other times deliberately.

From this day forward, we now will walk in parallel, side by side, two very individual people as one.

I promise:

- *to consider your needs as well as my own,*
- *to be a source of strength for you and to accept your strength for myself,*
- *to be there when you are ailing, as well as when you are healthy,*
- *to celebrate with you in times of joy and comfort you when you're feeling low,*
- *to give you my honest opinion (and to respect yours, even when we agree to disagree),*
- *to share freely my thoughts and feelings and to listen when you share yours with me,*
- *to do my part to keep humor and mirth in our lives (no matter how bad the pun),*
- *to not go to sleep when either of us is angry or upset (unless that anger is directed toward Republicans), and*
- *to stay focused whenever the conversation turns to talk of server migrations or proper C1 choreo flow.*

*"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference."*

Allan, I love you. Will you let me share my life and all that I am with you? Will you walk with me down the less traveled path?

All of the guests we talked to told us that the vows were absolutely perfect for us.

“How did you handle getting wedding gifts across the border?”

We didn't. Since we hadn't moved in together yet at that time (a story too long and involved to repeat here), we couldn't register anywhere at the moment because we didn't yet know what we'll need.

More importantly ... we both detest the modern custom of shaking down one's wedding guests for gifts. We wanted this to



be about the wedding, not the gifts. We also didn't want to anyone to be bothered trying to schlep gifts either way across the border.

Because of this, in our invitation (which was delivered to all fly-in attendees via email), we asked people, in lieu of gifts to us, to make donations to the Vancouver AIDS Project.

One attendee (thank you again, Dan!) made a donation in our name to another local charity, Loving Spoonful, which provides hot meals to AIDS shut-ins. We thought this was absolutely in keeping with the spirit of our request, and we were both delighted.

“Knowing what you know now, would you do this all over again the same way?”

Not *quite*. There are a few things we would have done differently, such as:

- Instead of handing out five disposable cameras, we'd hand out *50* of the damn things. All of those flashes going off at once would have created brighter pictures. That also would have given us a lot more usable pictures, especially in case of “dud” cameras.
- If we'd been thinking more clearly, we would have bought a huge box of plastic forks and a stack of large (not small) plates at Costco. (If one of your best friends ever encourages you to *not* buy a huge box of forks for your wedding, swat him upside the head, and tell them that's from us.)
- Ask (or pay!) someone to handle set up and teardown. We did it all ourselves ... and we really wished we hadn't. We would have liked more time to socialize with the guests.
- Hire someone to videotape and sound record the ceremony, because after the fact we forgot absolutely everything we each said.
- Have the setup person set up chairs for everyone.
- Designate a ring-bearer *ahead* of time.



“Is this something you’d recommend to others?”

In the present day, of course, U.S. citizens of the same sex heading up to Canada to married is a moot point. We’ve never regretted doing so.

We originally wanted to stage an emotionally-fraught yet legally-meaningless commitment ceremony in the San Francisco Bay Area sometime after the question of same-sex marriage was settled in the States. After we passed our ten-year anniversary, since our marriage had become legal in California (and, subsequently, many other states), we pretty much dropped the idea.

Even if we did ever decide to have a U.S.-based ceremony, it wouldn’t ever be as special to us as what we consider our “real” wedding, up in Vancouver.

Randy and I both know that regardless of the anti-same-sex-marriage laws passed by panicky bigots here in the U.S., we’ll always consider ourselves married under the laws of a more enlightened country. *Thank you, Canada! We love you! Nous vous aimons!*

[end]