

Oregon Daily Emerald



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Multnomah Co. issues gay-marriage licenses

Same-sex couples jump at the chance to obtain marriage licenses in Portland

By Jan Tobias Montry
Managing Editor

PORTLAND — Multnomah County on Wednesday began distributing marriage licenses

to same-sex couples for the first time in Oregon's history, drawing more than 100 eager couples to Southeast Portland to obtain certificates.

Shortly after being among the first same-sex couples in Oregon to receive a marriage license, 40-year-old Mary Li of Portland and her partner, 42-year-old Becky Kennedy, were officially wed. The ceremony marked the first for Multnomah

County, the fourth jurisdiction in the country to recognize same-sex marriage.

More than 100 guests and media officials packed into a small room at the Portland Hilton and Executive Tower at 10 a.m. to witness the emotional 10-minute marriage ceremony. Former

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Lane County awaits advice from counsel

The pending legal opinion will determine if same-sex marriage is allowed locally

By Nika Carlson
News Reporter

While Multnomah County officials are now issuing marriage licenses to gay couples, the future of same-sex marriage in Lane County remains uncertain.

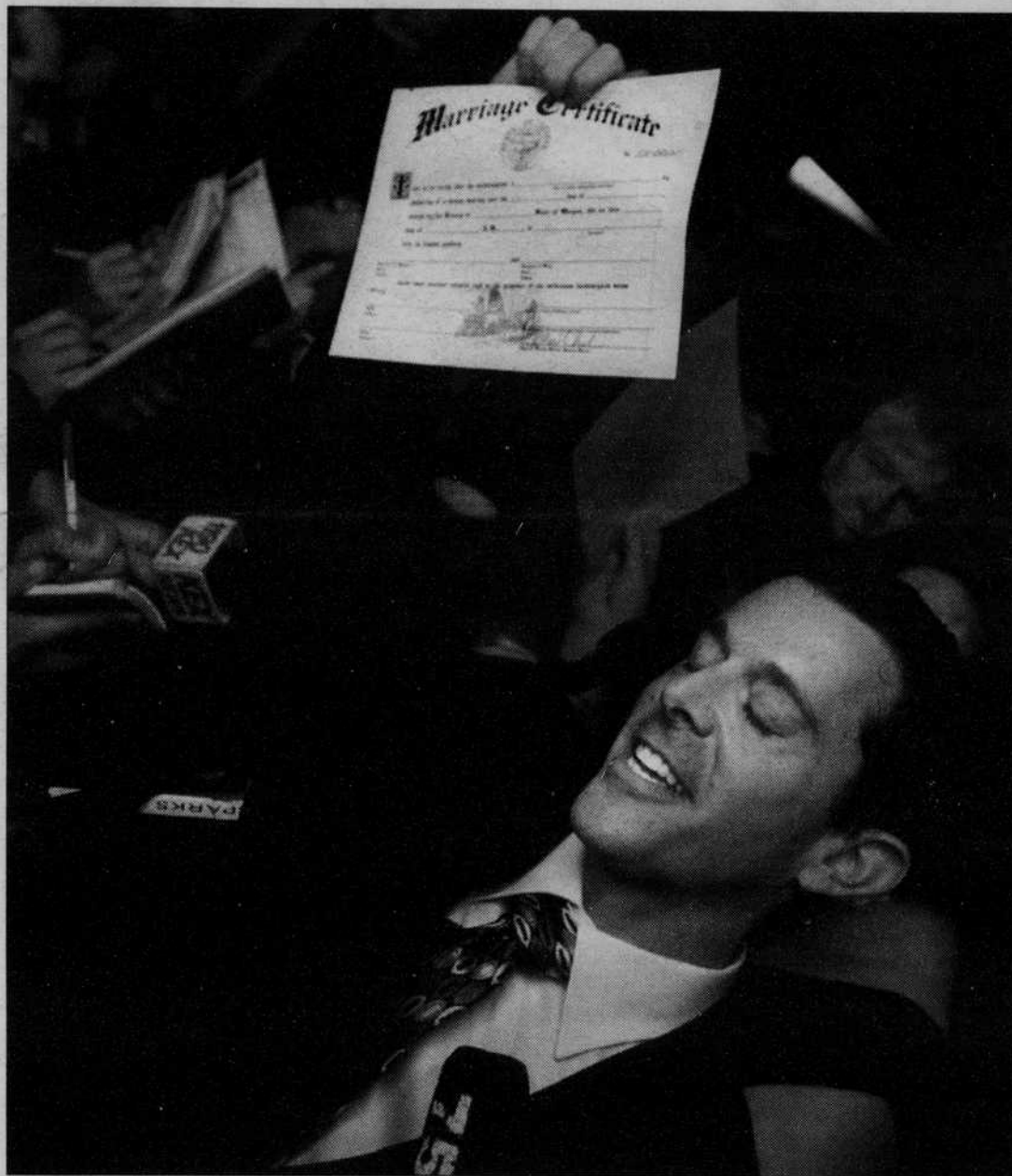
The county, which regulates marriage within its jurisdiction, is not giving marriage licenses to same-sex couples. The Lane County Board of Commissioners, however, is awaiting the opinion from its legal counsel as to whether same-sex marriage is legal under state law.

Legal counsel is unsure when that opinion will be delivered because interpreting the law is a difficult task.

"I need to do a good job on this," Lane County Counsel Teresa Wilson said. "Too many people's lives could be affected by it."

In February 1992, Lane County legal counsel decided that the county was not required under the state constitution to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

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Photos by Erik R. Bishoff Photographer

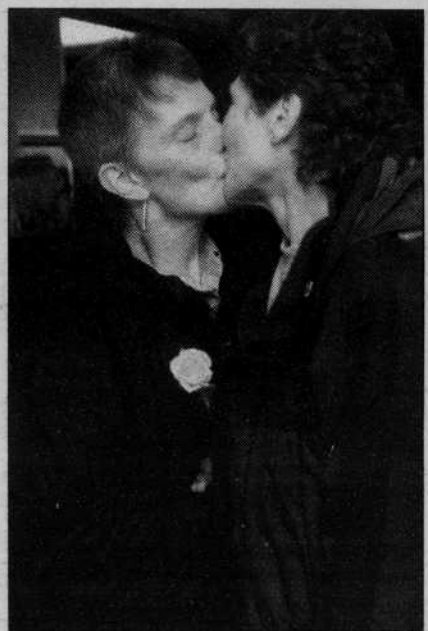
ABOVE: Eric Warshaw emerges from Multnomah County headquarters Wednesday morning. Warshaw and his husband, Stephen Knox, were the first same-sex couple to receive a marriage license. LEFT: Newly married Deborah Penn (left) and Barbara Thompson seal their vows on the steps of the county building Wednesday. RIGHT: Mary Li (left) and Becky Kennedy, the first lesbians to be legally married in Oregon, had a wedding ceremony at the Portland Hilton and Executive Tower Wednesday morning.



OREGON MARRIAGE LAWS

- Oregon Revised Statutes state: "A civil contract entered into in person by males at least 17 years of age and females at least 17 years of age, who are otherwise capable, and solemnized in accordance with ORS 106.150."
- Article I, Section 20 of the Oregon Constitution states: "No law shall be passed granting to any citizens or class of citizens privileges, or immunities, which, upon the same terms, shall not equally belong to all citizens."
- Multnomah County Attorney Agnes Sowle concluded in a five-page opinion that denying marriage certificates to same-sex couples in any county violates the Oregon Constitution, adding that the Oregon law does not specifically prohibit same-sex marriage.
- Marriage certificates issued in Multnomah County are valid statewide and cost \$60, and residents of other counties can obtain a license in Multnomah. However, Oregon marriages may not be recognized in other states, depending on the other state's marriage law.

SOURCES: Multnomah County Attorney and Basic Rights Oregon



Students disagree about same-sex marriage

Some say the practice violates God's plan; others applaud the decision

By Jared Paben
Senior News Reporter

Same-sex couples wed for the first time in Oregon's history Wednesday after the Multnomah

County Board of Commissioners' office began issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples, making it only the fourth local government in the nation to do so.

Protesters, police and hundreds of same-sex couples looking for licenses converged on the county headquarters in Southeast Portland Wednesday morning, the day after the Board of Commissioners

first announced it would begin issuing licenses to same-sex couples.

University students who learned about Wednesday's developments had different reactions to the news.

Sophomore Lizzi Esterberg, who is majoring in

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