

Celebrating Valentine's with marriage equality

BY JOHN BECKER
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

I met my wife of 22 years, Dianne Rodway, through an advertisement in The Willamette Week. We met on Friday night, went bike riding on Sunday, and have been together ever since. We decided to get married about three weeks later while at a wedding in Southern Oregon. I remember thinking I'd like to marry this woman but she asked the "M" word first. Sometimes you don't have to think about it very long. After just eight weeks, we were married.

Some people thought we were crazy to meet through a newspaper ad. Some people thought we were crazy to get married so quickly. But nobody said we couldn't do it. Rash or not, it was our decision to make, and it was the right decision for us. We knew right away that we were in love and that we wanted to spend the rest of our lives together as a committed, loving, married couple.

For our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters who want to marry in Oregon, the decision is not theirs to make. The decision is made for them. If someone had told me I could not marry Dianne, I would have thought they were nuts. The very thought that someone would object to our marriage for any reason is incomprehensible.

Dianne and I are real estate agents. We are always meeting new people. The only common thread among these people is that they are buying or selling a house. They may be a straight couple with kids. A gay couple with no kids. A lesbian couple with kids. A straight single person. It really doesn't matter to us. But we want to live in a world where everyone has the freedom to be the person they are. Taking the vow of marriage is a powerful way of expressing your love and commitment to another person. It was an important way that I expressed my love and commitment to Dianne.

Over time, we have developed deep and lasting friendships with many of our clients, including gay and lesbian couples. I also have an uncle who is gay. The law, however, makes it illegal for him to marry the person

he loves. When I remember how I felt about Dianne when we met, I remember wanting to spend the rest of my life with her as her lawfully wedded husband. And it pains me to live in a place where my friends and family are excluded from marriage.

As real estate agents, we are no strangers to networking. This Sunday, we are celebrating the Valentine's Day weekend by inviting many of our friends to a house party supporting Oregon United for Marriage. We thought not only would it be fun, but it would also be a natural way for us to support the campaign because we know so many people. What we did not expect was that it would bring us closer to some of those people.

As the RSVPs for the house party began to come in via email and Facebook, Dianne and I learned more about our friends and acquaintances. We learned that one friend's 18-year-old daughter just came out. Another has a lesbian cousin serving in the military. Another friend would be bringing her 13-year-old gay son. Another close friend who is a teacher shared a story about a 2nd grader in her school who is transgendered. So the house party has become not only a way to support the campaign, but also a way to get closer to people we already know.

This Valentine's Day forward, please remember not only the people you love openly, but the people who are not allowed to love and marry.

To get involved and support Oregon United for Marriage, go to the website, www.oregonunitedformarriage.org/



John Becker and
his wife Dianne
Rodway

Flowers

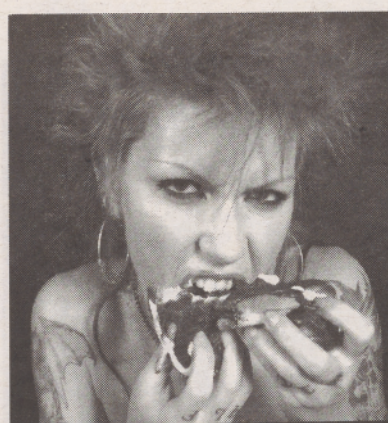
by Abraham Vinzant

They look good and smell great
We give them as gifts
Like friendship, sadness
But the best time is just for LOVE.

To A Valentine

By Candi Wine

Until the Monarch's wings are pitted
and turning to dust
Pressed between the pages
Until clothes I wore
Turn to musk
Until mothballs of winter's attic
Return us to spring,
The thing I remember most
Is your touch.
When your chocolate colored hair
turns to grey
And your soft lips kiss my frail hand,
What remains will be in your eyes
The reflection of our youth.



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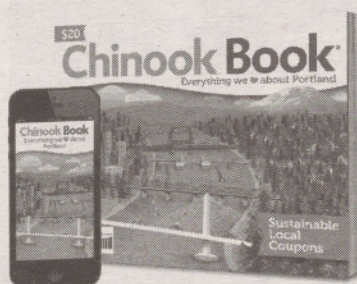
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