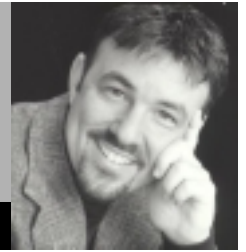


Kort's Korner

Volume 1, Issue 4 - ALL RIGHTS RESERVED



I Was Just Married

Published in *Between the Lines* and *Royal Oak Mirror* December 7, 2000

Joe's practice specializes in sexual addiction, childhood sexual, physical and emotional abuse, depression and anxiety.

He offers workshops for couples and singles. He runs a gay men's group therapy and a men's sexuality group therapy for straight, bi and gay men who are struggling with specific sexual issues.

His therapy services are for gays and lesbians as well as heterosexuals.

My partner and I were married by a rabbi under reformed Judaism in October, 2003. Some people would not validate that fact because as a man I married another man. If you asked most people if their wedding was political they would look at you as if you were crazy. "It is a celebration, a spiritual and social event" they say. Politics is the furthest thing from their minds. While Royal Oak debates whether or not we as Gays and Lesbians qualify for civil rights and others fight against legalizing our marriages, most of us are simply going on with our lives. So having a wedding becomes political simply because it is not legal in Michigan. My partner and I decided we want to deepen our commitment and publicly share our love for one another, as any other couple in love wants to do. We had been together six and one-half years and decided to ask for support from our families and friends to honor our deepening partnership. So we decided to have a formal religious wedding.

As two men we ran into some difficulties as well as benefits that were sometimes humorous and sometimes serious. First, what were we going to call it? Some Gays and Lesbians call it a commitment ceremony, others call it a union. Vermont only went as far as to grant civil unions and is the only state to recognize the legality of our partnerships, but only within that state. For us, the words wedding and marriage fit the most since that is what it was. We are a couple of traditional guys, although some would challenge that just

because our romantic love interest is in another male. Nothing traditional about that some would say. I beg to differ. Other difficulties developed as both of us being male, we knew nothing about planning a wedding. Women tend to be the force behind weddings and talk to their girlfriends, sisters and mothers and they support each other in the planning. Magazines are focused on the bride, language revolves around the bride as do Bridal showers, bridal dances, and bridal party. So we recovered from that by hiring a

party planner. He took care of all the details. Next we had to decide where to have it. Thankfully Reform Judaism recognizes Gay marriage and I am a Reform Jew. Our wonderful rabbi agreed to perform the ceremony.

We considered ourselves engaged and decided to publicly declare it in print as other couples do. So we sent in our picture and announcement to a

publication only to have it all returned with the reply, we are not ready for this right now. This hurt us greatly but Mike and I had a wedding to plan, this didn't stop us.

The next step would be selecting Gay friendly and supportive photographers, videographers, florists, bands, etc. That is where the benefit of our party planner would come in. He would face the homophobia in the search. And sure enough he did. I told the planner to assure them that this was a traditional, conservative wedding and nothing unusual would occur. Many people equate Gay with

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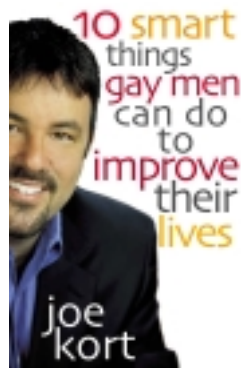
sex and so their minds focus on that aspect only. He said he had the most problems with the bands and that their concerns were about seeing the emotion between two men. We realized this is not a Gay issue so much as a society we live in that does not honor or support affection between men in general. Even with limited choices we found an excellent band.

The next obstacle to overcome was the throwing of the bouquet and garter belt since there would not be any to throw. We decided to throw Bert and Ernie from Sesame Street since they were outed as a gay couple years ago by some organizations, (they take baths together and sleep in same room together, this is modeling homosexuality). We honor Bert and Ernie as a fine Gay couple.

Registering for our gifts and marriage contracts and various things required a few changes to people's forms. We laughed at how when it asked for names of bride and groom, whomever filled it out made the other partner the bride. Hopefully someday there will be choice for groom and groom. Although we had some fun with this it also was sad that there is not a place for us in language with regards to weddings.

Next was the bachelor party. One luxury of being two men is that we could be at each other's parties enjoying each other and our friends. One straight male friend of ours found that after being banned by his wife from bachelor parties in the past due to getting into trouble, that his wife had no problem for him coming to a Gay male bachelor party.

Everything else went smoothly and as planned. Our family and friends were all there and we felt loved and held. We want to be out and open about our love and commitment. We wanted a place at the table and took it ourselves. We will not wait for others to decide what they think we should be. Mike and I will continue to be activists for the right to marry and for civil rights for Gays and Lesbians. Why should we not have the same privilege others enjoy? When people see and witness our romantic love and commitment and stop focusing solely on our sexual behavior, I think then changes will be made.



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