

Beat: Local

Marriage Equality Comes To Shelbyville

Equal Protection for all

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USPA NEWS - Equality is now the law of the land, the sky has not fallen, no plagues have been released on America, but my husband and I now are free to enjoy the protections guaranteed by the United States Constitution, just as every other American has in the past, and it is about time too.

I have not written a true "opinion" piece on any of the recent "hotbed" issues that have saturated the media over the past few weeks, so I think that I will take up these issue and clear my head now. I do hope that you do not mind. If you do mind, then my apologies and you should probably be reading the "Traditional" news outlet here in Shelbyville, not ours.

Let's start with Same-Sex Marriage, or more correctly Marriage as we now call it. The Supreme Court of the United States ruled, as many, many people assumed that they would, that Marriage is a fundamental right of all American Citizens and that no State or Government Agency can deny this right of recognition to anyone regardless of gender. We knew this ruling would come out this way since 46 other states had already overturned, or the courts had overturned their unconstitutional laws banning marriage between two people of the same gender.

Now, we have had people boast and claim that this ruling was a violation of "States Rights" however these same people, even many here in Shelbyville, have never breathed a word about how these previous bans were a violation of individuals rights. Rights that the United States Constitution grant every American citizen.

We have heard that this is a "War on Christianity", again totally bogus, there is no war on Christianity, there never has been, in this country. The "war" they speak of is self-created against others and with that is un-Christian as you can get.

If I hear one more tattoo covered, twice divorced, Barbecue eating, man with jeans and a polyester shirt throw Old Testament Laws from Leviticus at me, or anyone else for that matter, I just have to chuckle. Christ nullified the old laws and issued just two commandments, "Love your God with all your heart" and "Treat your neighbors as yourself"...that is it, nothing more, Love God and Love your Neighbor. The preoccupation that some have had with regards to this matter, is to say it slightly a little suspicious, why should Franklin Graham, and almost every single Republican Candidate for President care who I choose to spend the rest of my life with, or worse what occurs in our bedroom?

They shouldn't and neither should you, it is nobody's business, just as it is none of our business what occurs in their bedrooms. We don't care, never have, we just wanted the same rights that everyone else in this country has, and now we have them, we can move on.

My husband and I were ecstatic and in tears when the Supreme Court ruled that finally, we were entitled to the same rights as everyone else in this country, the right to marry.

So on the afternoon of Friday, June 26th I picked him up at the house and we drove to the U.S. Bank Building to the Bedford County Clerk's Office. We were greeted by a Deputy Clerk who had previously issued us our car tags, and when we told her we wanted our Marriage License, she smiled and said "I knew you two would be the first, and you are my first", she was so sweet. She asked for our patience because their computer systems were being updated by the minute since the official ruling came down, and we explained that we had waited this long, a few more minutes would not kill us. She was so accommodating, even when she had to ask for assistance with the new options. The County Clerk even stepped out and said hello and Congratulations, which meant a lot to us. We were issued our license and forms, and set off to find an official who would officiate the actual ceremony. (Let me note here that the Bedford County Clerk's Office has stopped performing all Marriages quite a while back due to time and budget constraints).

We finally were able to reach our good friend, and Tennessee 17th District Circuit Court Judge, the Honorable F. Lee Russell, who said that he would be more than happy to marry us, which he did on Sunday, June 29th at 3pm in the Front Room of our Historic Home which had served as a venue for many a wedding during its tenure as the Parsonage for the First United Methodist Church of Shelbyville. The Private ceremony was attended by the two women who mean more to us than everyone else, for they gave us life, our mothers. Once the ceremony was over, the next morning we trotted back Uptown to turn in the License and receive our Marriage Certificate. We were served by the same Deputy Clerk and in a few minutes it was done.

Our marriage has harmed no one, no wrath of God has rained down on Shelbyville (And no this heat wave does not count, that is climate change, but don't let me get started on that), or anything else has happened because we were married to anyone else in this community. What has happened, is that now we are protected under the law as a married couple. My Tennessee Driver's License now has my married name. Should I ever experience another health crisis like one a few years back when my then "Partner" was told by a Cardiologist at Heritage Medical Center that "he (my partner) has no say as to which hospital I am transferred to"

after my heart attack, only to be handed a Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare and being told the he does in fact have the say into my health and wellbeing, to which this Cardiologist huffed away in a bigoted fit. We won't ever have to worry about dragging around these documents because now as my spouse, he has a right that supersedes even that of my mother. As my legal spouse, he is protected as I am protected from these indignities again. And this again boils down to what we have been fighting for all these years, equality, plain and simple.

Our marriage in no way affected anyone else in Bedford County, it affected no ministers, and it affected no churches or organized denominations, it affected absolutely no one, but us. It proved to us that we were no longer second class citizens. It entitled us to benefits that we had been denied for our entire lives. It has protected us in the case of sudden illness, or God forbid death.

The announcement of our marriage also appeared in the Traditional Printed Shelbyville newspaper, including the misprint of my husband's name. A few days later, we received a card in the mail from a couple whom we had never met. They sent a simple card to express their congratulations to us on our marriage and to remind us that there are people in this community who are supportive of our relationship though there are still many who are not, but to keep our heads held high, as we deserve this moment of happiness after decades of oppression. This simple act meant the world to us both, and if you are reading this, you will never know how much your action gave us hope for a better tomorrow.

So Equality is here to stay, the sky did not fall, there was no wrath of God or anyone else for that matter, the County Clerk's Office adapted to the new state forms, and various ministers and public officials are officiating these marriages now, yes right here in Bedford County, Tennessee. And that is how it works, the long hard fight was fought, the victors were awarded their rights, and life goes on.....finally.

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

United Press Association, Inc.
3651 Lindell Road, Suite D168
Las Vegas, NV 89103, USA
(702) 943.0321 Local
(702) 943.0233 Facsimile
info@unitedpressassociation.org
info@gna24.com
www.gna24.com