

## Gays' struggle to wed echoes interracial unions



**BARB GUY**

On June 12, 1959, my parents, Richard and Mildred, got married. Another Richard and Mildred, this pair in Virginia, were married the year before.

On June 12, 1967, my Richard and Mildred were celebrating their eighth wedding anniversary and the recent seventh birthday of their daughter when the Richard and Mildred in Virginia finally were recognized as married.

The difference is that my parents were of the same race, while Richard and Mildred Loving were an interracial couple, he white and she black.

The Lovings were legally married in Washington, D.C., in 1958, but when they traveled back to set up house in their hometown in Virginia, things took an ugly turn. The Lovings awoke in the night to find the sheriff and five

deputies standing around their bed shining flashlights on them.

Richard raced to the couple's dresser and showed their marriage certificate to the officers. Still, the newlyweds were arrested and later convicted of violating Virginia's law against the mixing of the races. To avoid jail they agreed to leave Virginia - they were officially banished for 25 years - and it was not until the U.S. Supreme Court's decision on June 12, 1967, that the Lovings and other interracial couples were guaranteed the right to have their marriages recognized in all states, something available to my parents the second they said "I do."

My friend Rafe knows that story. He's a twenty-something law student and he got married yesterday. Oddly enough, he and his beautiful new bride, Samantha, asked me to marry them. It was something I was in no way prepared to do, had never imagined doing, but was honored to figure out how to do because I love them.

Chris and I had a friend marry us when we tied the knot, too, which may not have been exactly, totally legal. It's one thing for a couple to not worry too much about whether they're marrying in a technically legal way; it's quite another to not be allowed to lawfully marry in the first

place, no matter how much you want to.

I hope we've passed the time when anyone would feel comfortable advancing the opinion in polite company that an interracial couple should not be permitted to marry. But change it to a gay or lesbian couple and plenty of people freely advocate prohibition.

Often they say it's God's idea. That's what racists said back in the day before the Loving decision, too. In fact, the Virginia judge who said Richard and Mildred Loving's marriage wasn't legal said, "Almighty God . . . did not intend the races to mix." Most of us now find that an absurdity, an act of hubris by a bigot looking to add strength to his own hateful opinion.

Just over a week ago the wedding booth was a popular attraction at our Gay Pride festivities in Salt Lake. It was just for fun, of course. But we will get to the day where gay and lesbian couples can marry legally and where those marriages will be recognized by each of the United States.

Someday when Rafe is a longtime lawyer or a respected judge, he'll be asked to marry a same-sex couple, or maybe Sam will, and it will be special only for the people involved. Marriage for gays and lesbians will be

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considered fair and just and it will sound ridiculous if someone says God disapproves. It will take us a while to get there, especially since we'll probably need the Supreme Court. But when we do get there, it will be a loving decision.

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