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F&D



Deputy Santa Clara County Recorder Vee Reed ties the knot between Nan and Beth at the express marriage window in the County Building.

I Do

The wedding was not going to be a big deal, just filling out a sheaf of forms like they were buying a car, a quick "I do," and then we'd be in a world of joint tax returns for all.

"Our anniversary will always be Dec. 8, 1996," Beth said.

That's when she was a man living in her car during the transition period prior to sex-change surgery in Belgium. That's when she was living in exile from family and home town.

Nan took her in.

They have a long list of significant anniversaries in their 17 marriageless years together.

Marriage was not part of the original plan for their trip, nor was the date. Beth and Nan had originally planned to visit us two years ago, but a couple of weeks before their departure, Beth discovered she had lung cancer.

There was surgery, a month in the hospital and a steady stream of positive lab reports since then. But we all wondered if the trip would ever come off.

Even the Supreme Court's twin decisions last spring striking down California's anti-gay marriage law and the federal Defense of Marriage Act didn't prompt an immediate decision to add a wedding to our itinerary.

But as the realization of what marriage meant for them in legal terms became clearer, Nan asked me for web links to the Santa Clara County Recorder's office. They



Beth and Nan pose outside the County Building following their wedding.

would use the express marriage service. Wednesday morning was empty on the trip itinerary, and we were in San Jose. Good enough.

"Just you and Emily to witness," they said. "Just the legalities."

And then it was OK to meet my co-workers afterward.

So there we were at the check-in kiosk in the

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I Do



The office wedding party (L-R): Janice, Louise, Stacey, Lili, Bob, Nashely, Esha, Beth, Nan (holding Mia), Emily, Colin, Son, Dennis and Jo.

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County Building, which gave Beth and Nan a number to wait to be called. Nan took a seat at one of the computers where she filled out the license with names for "Party A" and "Party B."

In less than five minutes they were called to Window 13, where Vee Reed waited behind the bullet-proof glass and asked for their drivers' licenses.

"You came all the way from North Carolina?" Vee asked. "Just to get married?"

The woman over at Window 11 transacting some kind of routine tax business with the county perked up.

Vee slid some more forms through the window slot for Beth and Nan to fill out by hand. They started to cry.

"You've got to hold up better than this," Vee said. "I haven't even gotten to the vows yet."



Party table at the office.

The woman over at Window 11 stood in rapt silence.

Vee looked at her computer screen and then at all the empty service windows. The business at Window 11 was on temporary hold; nothing was happening in the whole office.

"I've got time," Vee said. "I'm not gonna do my express vows. I'm gonna do the ones I use downstairs in the wedding room."

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I Do

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So began a litany about commitment and love, holding hands and exchanging rings.

Beth and Nan held hands.

“I do.”

“I do.”

Vee slid the pair of rings beneath the glass shield and they were taken in trembling hands.

The woman at Window 11 applauded.

There was a cake that Nashely made and greetings from new friends at the office. A special gift from Jo and Gloria from their wedding.



Filling out computer forms.

Sept. 25 has been added to Beth and Nan’s list of special dates.

Emily and I are chaperoning our first honeymoon.



The honeymoon begins in Carmel.