

Salem authors pen 'Courting Equality'



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Salem -
"Hitch your wagon to a star." — Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Society and Solitude"

It's the faces which impact you most directly.

The book's text is by turns informative, thought-provoking and challenging. The narrative is well-crafted. The political machinations and the constitutional arguments engage your intellect and the human interest stories kindle that little hearth in your heart. The book itself is pure aesthetic pleasure — handsomely produced, cleanly designed, glossy and oversized, lavishly illustrated. It even smells good.

But as you leaf through, you look at the photos, at the beaming faces of the newly-married couples, and marvel at their diversity: old, young, middle-aged. You gaze at their children — that tiny girl dressed in frothy lace nervously ready for the wedding march; a laughing child dancing up a storm at the wedding reception; the two shyly-smiling boys draped over parental shoulders. Children, of every description, framed in flowers, encircled by a hug.

"I'm glowing from the inside. Happy is an understatement," says one bride, married to her partner of 18 years in an early-morning May ceremony.

Many readers will realize, with a start, that as they read they are smiling too, are actually beaming ear-to-ear, echoing the absolute undiluted joy radiating from those wedding-day faces. That the reader is gazing at pictures of women coupled with women and men hand-in-hand with men may not cross his or her mind until later.

Perhaps that's where "Courting Equality: A Documentary History of America's First Legal Same-Sex Marriages" a new book about the historical and history-making journey to secure the rights of marriage and equal treatment under the law for same-sex couples, most achieves its goal.

According to its authors, their purpose in writing the book can be described in its most basic sense as underscoring the democratic birthrights of all citizens and urging the necessity of advocacy and action to secure those rights.

"I'm passionate about democracy," Patricia Gozemba tells the *Gazette* as she and co-author Karen Kahn sit chatting recently in a sunny, breezy corner of the Front Street Coffeehouse, "as a strategy for bringing equity to all people."

"Democracy" is a word used frequently in conversation with the couple, who live in Salem, and never is it uttered casually.

"Courting Equality" also features the work of the couple's longtime friend and colleague, photographer Marilyn Humphries; the book is lavishly illustrated with photos which place the viewer right smack dab in the "action" of the story.

Her photos serve to highlight the diverse personalities, ages and situations of the many people, both gay and straight, who participated in the struggle to achieve what advocates see as an affirmation of basic, constitutionally-provided civil rights.

Kahn and Gozemba met in 1987, through Humphries, when Marilyn was Pat's roommate and worked as a photographer for "Sojourner: The Women's Forum" (at the time a widely-read activist, feminist newspaper). Kahn edited the paper at the time, and for the following 10 years.

A casual friendship developed between the two women; but, they say, they really "got together" at a 1990 Women's Studies Conference in Ohio — "on Independence Day," they laugh. They have been together for

17 years and married in 2005.

Through their eyes

Both Gozemba, who is a retired Salem State College English and women's studies professor, and Kahn, who is now the communications director for the Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute (www.paraprofessional.org) have long histories separately and together of involvement in social and political causes.

They recounted childhood memories of making speeches "standing for democracy," holding neighborhood carnivals to raise money for people with multiple sclerosis, and keen awareness of social justice issues and civil rights issues from early ages. Their advocacy work currently includes environmental issues; health care policy, research, and analysis; and, of course, the rights of gays and lesbians in civic life.

"I'm very much influenced by Emerson and Thoreau," says Gozemba, "I always felt that what I was doing [as a teacher] was to empower students to ask questions ... question authority." She sees her current work as a natural outgrowth of her lifelong calling as an innovative teacher, and continues to be a driving force in educational efforts such as The History Project, a documentary effort built around the history of Boston's gay and lesbian community (www.historyproject.org).

The well-constructed text of "Courting Equality" includes engaging anecdotes about individual plaintiffs and participants in the fight to obtain rights for same-sex couples; you come to understand the emotional impact of the struggle through their eyes.

Yet the book is also intellectually engaging, and provides much documentary and historical detail, albeit presented in an accessible fashion. One chapter provides a succinct historical account of the legal and societal journey gay and lesbian activists have been on since the early 1970s. Other chapters put the reader "inside" the legislative discussions, argument, and strategies as the fight to ensure marriage equality wound its way through successive Massachusetts constitutional conventions.

And the goal was reached when, in light of affirmation that "the Massachusetts Constitution affirms the dignity and equality of all individuals. It forbids the creation of second-class citizens," on May 17, 2004, the state began to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

Coincidentally, May 17, 2004 was also the 50th anniversary of the Brown vs. Board of Education decision, another landmark date in civil rights history.

Social responsibility

Although the culminating result of these struggles has been positive for the marriage equality cause, with Massachusetts's highest court affirming the constitutional right for same-sex couples to marry — fueling the momentum towards the same result in at least 10 other states of the union — worries remain for these couples.

A proposed constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriages, and a push to put such an amendment on the 2008 ballot as a strategy to reopen the fight, is creating feverish lobbying efforts on both sides of the issue. In early May, a Constitutional Convention was held by the House and Senate, but they avoided taking a vote on the amendment.

The next session is slated for June 14, and Senate President Therese Murray has said the plan is to put the measure before the Legislature for an up-or-down vote.

"When we leave this church, there are forces of anger, ignorance, and hate that seek to tear asunder the bonds of this marriage," state Rep. Mike Festa is quoted saying at the wedding of state Sen. Jarrett Barrios and Doug Hattaway. "But ... the inexorable march toward full equality cannot be stopped."

"They [the right wing] want Massachusetts to become the center of the battle," says Kahn. "But the reality is that we have this enormous positive momentum."

Gozemba adds, "We have in New England a visionary culture ... and a social responsibility." She feels the most important message of their work is to bring home the message that active, ordinary citizens are the indispensable components of a working democracy.

"Our book crystallizes a lot of the actions, small and large, that people took, the strategies ... We are

showing what people can do if they flex their muscles in the democratic system” the educator says.

The May-morning sunlight streams over both of them, as they sit at a little round cafe table amid the bustle of a now late-morning coffeehouse crowd — many of whom greet Gozemba and Kahn as they pass.

Two faces alight with passion, determination, and yes — with devotion — to each other, and to their many causes. Causes which could all, perhaps, be summed up as *one* cause ... hitching the practical wagons of democracy to the stars of idealism and living as full citizens of a cherished democracy.

Authors Pat Gozemba and Karen Kahn will be at Cornerstone Books Thursday, June 7, from 7-8:30 p.m., at 45 Lafayette St. in Salem. They will show photos from the book with a brief presentation. Bob Murch and Gary Halteman, the first same-sex couple married in Salem, will join a discussion of the issues of marriage equality in Massachusetts.

Jim and Maggi Dalton

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ABOUT JIM & MAGGI

Jim and Maggi Dalton perform music of popular/vernacular, folk and cultivated traditions, covering time periods from the Middle Ages to the present, focusing largely on American, Celtic and British Isles repertoire. They specialize in music of the 19th and 20th centuries. Instrumentation: mostly plucked strings and voices.

Concerts and programs contain commentary designed to place the music performed in historical context for the audience. Programs reflect the continual and ongoing research in which the two delight. They also perform original songs and compositions.

Jim and Maggi have released two recordings to date, and have designed a full spectrum of programs which they present nationwide. They have been featured often on radio and television. (PBS, ABC, NBC, CBS affiliates, Cable Networks; NPR stations, NewsRadio, interview programs across the USA; feature stories in newspapers and magazines, i.e., *The Philadelphia Inquirer & Courier-Post*) They have performed at nationally-known venues (i.e., Colonial Williamsburg, Seneca Falls, the Harriet Beecher Stowe House) and countless local and regional venues nationwide.

They have served as artists-in-residence at various colleges, public history sites, community and educational centers, presenting series addressing American history and other topics in the humanities, using music as the core of each session.

Previous audiences and sponsors have said:

"engaging, scholarly, delightful, warm, intelligent, flexible, humorous, talented, versatile, enthusiastic, personable, joyful ..."



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and concerts ~

Multi-instrumentalist *Jim Dalton* is an educator, conductor and award-winning composer and arranger.

As a performer, he specializes in historical and ethnic playing styles on a variety of plucked string instruments including guitar, mandolin, banjo, mandocello, Renaissance lute, bouzouki etc.

He also plays piano, organ, recorder and tin whistle.

In addition to duo performances with his wife, soprano and guitarist Maggi Smith-Dalton he maintains an active career as a freelance musician -- playing in chamber music ensembles, jazz and world music groups and in opera/theater and symphony orchestras.

He is a member of the New England Mandolin Ensemble.

His compositions have been performed across the U.S. and Canada and in Europe.

His choral composition, "The Rocky Road to Dublin," won first prize in the 1997 Toronto Camerata Competition. Two of his pieces for carillon have been published in anthologies by Fenwick Parva and the Friends of the Albany Carillon.

His composition for solo mandolin, "Gifts of the Bard," is published by Wolfhead Music.

His works are available through these publishers and Singing String Music Publications.

Jim is on the faculty of The Boston Conservatory, teaching music theory, ear training and world music courses for both the Music Theory and Music Education Departments. He has written articles for Blues Revue Magazine and is the author of *Mandolin for Beginners*, published by Workshop Arts, Inc./Alfred Publishing.

He is a frequent guest lecturer on topics such as composition, choral arranging and Irish traditional music. In the 2004-2005 year Jim received a MACRO research grant (Univ. of Wisconsin) to study and analyze palindromic compositions in concert music repertoire and presented this work at the 2005 Macro Musician's Workshop in Madison, WI.

Singer and musician, independent scholar, author and educator, *Maggi Smith-Dalton* has sung as a soloist with choirs and choruses both here and abroad, acted and sung in professional theater productions and produced/participated/performed in radio and television projects and programs.

She is a frequent guest lecturer -- on the integration of humanities and the arts, on folklore, and on American music and history, to name a few topics.

She has given lecture/demonstration programs at the college level (i.e., The New England Conservatory, The Boston Conservatory) and in numerous professional-development courses for educators and teachers at all grade levels.

Maggi enjoys an active performing career, which, after eleven years of work in cabaret, musical theater, and nightclub singing, has included more than two decades of concert performance nationwide and abroad, in partnership with her husband and as a soloist with choirs and in concert.

In addition, she authored a prize-winning short story and writes often for newspapers and magazines (including history and cultural/arts/educational feature articles, and a regular history column for the *Salem Gazette*).

Maggi's work in mainstream media included producing a cable TV series and programming and hosting musical theater, arts interview, and classical music shows for NPR public radio, commercial, and community stations.

A former Chairperson of the Haverhill Cultural Council, Maggi served as Musical Theater Director at Hill House (a community Arts Center) in Boston's Beacon Hill; as Director of "Adventures in Art," a summer arts program; and as a director of children's choirs.

With a background in teaching multiply-handicapped children, Maggi continues interest in and study of music therapy. She is working on a children's book; and is always working on a variety of writing projects.