

R2D2 during the Equal-Marriage Case

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This dialogue took place in 2002, between Robin Roberts (R2), 55, and Diana Denny (D2), 59, of Victoria, B.C., during Canada's successful equal-marriage case. At that point, they had lived together 19 years, and raised 4 children: Josh, 23, Clio, 24, Angus, 32 and Alex, 35.

Couple Background:

How did you meet?

R2D2: We met because of boats.

R2: My ex-husband is a yacht designer, and we lived and cruised aboard a square-rigged ketch,

D2: while my ex-husband and I were seeking a design at the time,

R2: so we made initial contact over business in 1972.

D2: Although my ex and I chose another architect's design, and spent 8 years building a 32' Pilothouse Sloop, Robin and I were always aware of each other. She and her ex had a high profile in the boating magazines, had written books and had boatshow displays,

R2: and there was a buzz in the yachting community about what a friendly, knowledgeable sailing family the Dennys were, and how delightful it was to cruise to their little island on the outskirts of Victoria, which had also been written up in various boating magazines.

D2: In fact, we kept receiving separate messages from various mutual friends in the yachting community about how we really ought to meet because we would no doubt really enjoy each other.

R2: So one day, we sailed with two other liveaboard families from San Juan Island to Victoria's Inner Harbour. We rented a used car, piled all 3 families into it to go swimming at the Oak Bay Recreation Centre, something we couldn't do on our relatively small island where there was no public pool. We then phoned the Dennys and asked if we could come and see their boat under construction - a favourite pastime of yacht designers and other boat aficionados.

D2: So I quickly baked some muffins and brewed some coffee, assuming they were all quintessentially American.

R2: She didn't know I was Canadian and

preferred tea - but soon found out, and I soon discovered how great Diana was at baking things from scratch in a hurry! They enticed us not only with their finely-detailed boat which was a year away from launching, but also with their practical wooden play equipment which they built for a living and had on display in their back garden. When the kids were happily settled, romping around together up and down the wooden jungle gym and slide, in and out of tunnel boxes, forts and a plywood tug, I poked my head in the sliding door to the kitchen, inhaling the orangey wafts of fruity date muffins. Oh, I had no clue what fruit that really signified!

D2: Then I looked at her standing there so gorgeous and I happened to look all the way down to her Rockport leather shoes and said, "You're wearing my only other pair of shoes", R2: to which I responded by looking down at Diana's Birkenstock sandals and replied, "And you're wearing *my* only other pair of shoes!" Then I couldn't help but admire the design of their house, with its flat roof, floor-to-ceiling windows, its garden which just seemed almost to float right into the house, especially where the brown quarry tile ran under the living room window out on to the patio. It was so much like the main house I grew up in, which my mum had designed in Vancouver in the 1950's. Our living room had red Arizona slate which ran under the floor-to-ceiling window out onto a terrace surrounding a rectangular goldfish pool. It also was flat-roofed, post and beam. So I told Diana, D2: and I was totally nonplussed, because I thought nobody could possibly have had a house like ours, which we'd had an architect design in 1966.

R2: That was the beginning of a whole series of apparent coincidences and connections that wove throughout our lives. Although we didn't dream

of getting together as lesbians at that point, we did dream a somewhat more socially-heterosexually-acceptable daydream about how we two families could get together and share our lives aboard a big barge. We'd tie our respective sailboats alongside and put a yacht design office and boatbuilding shed aboard the barge. We never got around to that, though.

D2: Although I had worked on my homophobia, and I had talked and counselled a lot about how bored I was in my marriage, I was far too homophobic to think of myself as a lesbian. I couldn't even stand the word, and hated the thought of being categorized in *any* way, never mind in *that* way.

R2: After more than twelve years, I had already separated once from my husband, and was tentatively trying it again. I didn't feel homophobic in that I had a few lesbian and gay friends whom I spent quite a bit of time with, but I was riddled with internalized homophobia. I, too, really didn't like the "L" word, and never thought of applying it to myself; it felt far too much like being branded with a scarlet "L".

D2: Even when we eventually started living together, it took about a year before we could apply the word to ourselves and start owning it.

R2: It's amazing how thoroughly we can live in a state of denial about who we are, how long it takes to untangle misperceptions, before finally starting to feel comfortable with other nametags. Perhaps it has something to do with both of us being creative persons, not wanting to be put in a box with a tight lid on it - never mind trying to avoid being placed in a targeted position in society, when we had been so well thought of before.

D2: Well, anyway, we met as families or as heterosexual couples quite a few times - at boatshows, and while cruising in our sailboats to different harbours and islands.

R2: Eventually, I made my final separation from my ex and brought my 4-year-old son, Josh, home to Canada. It didn't take long before Diana and I realized that we meant a whole lot to each other.

D2: When we finally plunged into a committed relationship, we swam into a whole cesspool of our own and others' homophobia.

R2: I had grown up in a family who welcomed

homosexual friends into our home, but I had so many lessons to learn about my own internalized homophobia. Sure it was fine for my friends, but how fine was it for me to be a lesbian? At age 36, I was gradually realizing that I hadn't ever really known who I was inside, that I had lived frozen from my deepest emotions.

D2: And I had grown up in a family where I'd never even heard the word 'homosexual', but had later met a few who outed themselves in a counselling class, and I just cowered into a corner, amazed that they could admit it, amazed that I was seeing real live lesbians. So at age 40, a few years later, when I realized how I felt about Robin, I found myself driving my car towards a cliff as I came home one day. I had to consciously steer back to safety as I wondered how I was going to face being a lesbian in the social circles where I had spent the last 18 years of my married life.

How would you describe your relationship?

R2: Looking back on our 19 years together, I would describe it as made in heaven. Our love flows continually. I think we've gained a lot of confidence from our mutual support, especially having worked through the pain of the first coming out period, of helping our teenage kids work through homophobic remarks from their friends, of answering innocent questions from our two younger ones. We've all just come out much stronger because of having to work through all that pain.

D2: We continually affirm each other, comment often on our ease of communication, tell each other in so many different ways, every day, how we love one another...

R2: ...not because we feel any sense of duty, but just because the feelings well up and we want to share them. It's great knowing that we can always count on each other. I remember my first experiences witnessing Diana express anger, an emotion that had been totally forbidden and put down as "uncivilized" in my childhood, and therefore one that I completely avoided. I was amazed to see her be angry at something one moment, express it, and then be normal and loving the next. She encouraged me to express my anger, too. I quickly learned that I could easily listen to her anger, remain in complete

safety as it vented, and that we could always come through shining on the other side. So stuff just doesn't build up between us. We don't hide it, because we know how to express it safely and with loving support, whether it's through angry venting, crying, laughing, yawning or whatever. We're each there, ready with an ear and a hug, for the other.

D2: That's right. Sharing our excitements and nurturing each other in our down moments, we feel safe with each other.

R2: So we express our passions, desires and needs openly and honestly.

D2: We also enjoy being creative together, whether it's our mutual love of gardening, cooking and photography,

R2: or whether it's pursuing independent creativity side by side, such as Diana's love of weaving and sewing while I write.

D2: Another aspect of our relationship we should mention is how we co-parented. We love how well our two quite different personalities balanced each other as we raised our four kids. They were 4, 5, 13 and 16 when we began living together, and we had prime custody of them.

R2: Looking back, we can see how much everyone grew because of how constantly we had to deal with all the buttons that six people can so easily push in each other. I'm so grateful to Diana for introducing me to co-counselling right away. You can find out more about it on the web – <http://www.co-counselling.org.uk/> -- but it's the understanding of its practical theory, then applying its very loving skills around releasing feelings safely that has helped make our relationship work so beautifully.

D2: In the first 5 or 6 years of our relationship, we went to lots of co-counselling classes and workshops, which were so supportive of us in our parenting skills, relationship skills, wide-world skills. We learned how to deal with homophobic remarks, identified how oppression really works to separate people from our loving, human qualities, and helped our children as each dealt uniquely with homophobia from friends and teachers.

R2: After that, although we didn't attend classes, we continued to apply the principles of empathic listening, supporting each other to shed tears and release emotions around distress patterns, re-

evaluate the sources of distress, and move on with love and clarity in our daily lives. We've been sad, though, to learn that the original re-evaluation co-counselling has had some splintering and apparent hierarchy happen, and that homophobia has crept back into its ranks.

D2: As we look at our grown children, we realize that the open, loving, close communication we currently enjoy with all four, well-adjusted adults speaks well for our relationship skills.

Have you celebrated a commitment ceremony? Why or why not?

R2: We've only informally celebrated our commitment. 'Knowing' we couldn't get married, and cynically questioning the value of legal or religious marriage after our own divorces, I think we rationalized that we were married in our souls much more deeply than any piece of paper could show.

D2: However, this didn't stop us from dreaming about symbols of marriage to indicate our love for each other. We chose our first affordable pair of rings, then a slightly more expensive set, and finally one day during Easter on Patmos Island in Greece, when we were traveling for a year with Josh and Clio, we bought some really lovely ones.

R2: Each of our rings was designed to be complementary parts of a set, with a bar of gold set on top of silver rings, but mine is smaller and the gold runs across my finger, while Diana's is larger and wider, and the gold runs along the length of her finger. My hands are smaller than Diana's, and although I'm taller, I'm finer-boned, so the smaller ring suits me better.

D2: When we were actually in the shop buying the rings, a German friend happened by. She peered over our shoulders, then burst out in gleeful laughing. She couldn't stop saying "Those rings are absolutely perfect for you! They symbolize your personalities just the way you two are: opposite yet balanced."

R2: We wear them on our right ring fingers, like they do in many European countries. I think it symbolizes our soul marriage is more deeply right than our old left-ring marriages were.

D2: Even though we can't yet get married

legally, we still celebrate our anniversary.

R2: Actually, we have several anniversary dates each year: the date we realized, with hindsight, that we first had an inkling how special we were to each other, the date I moved back to Canada with Josh, the date we moved in together. For each celebration, I usually write a poem and we have a special dinner date.

D2: Finally, for our fifteenth anniversary, we decided to have a party with close friends and family who had been supportive of our togetherness. Robin wrote a song which she sang with several lesbian friends to surprise me and the group, and read several of the anniversary poems. Two lesbian friends presented us each with a tall silk flower which they had chosen as representative of each of our different personalities, then wrapped our hands together in a long rainbow ribbon and read a short list of adjectives showing how they perceived and honoured each of us.

R2: It was still not a ceremony, but it was becoming clear that the only way a ceremony would be part of our lives would be if it could be legal. Less than full, public, legal recognition felt like a half-way house at best, a farce at worst, so it seemed better to honour each other as we always had: at the fully soul-filled level of commitment.

Why do you want to get married?

D2: I was at work when Robin read EGALE's request, looking for volunteers who were in committed relationships to volunteer as plaintiffs in the BC Marriage case. When I got home, she showed it to me.

R2: Because we were so committed, and had been together for 17 years by that time, we realized that this was something we could readily do to help younger generations. It seemed like relatively small thanks for all the brave actions of homosexuals before us who fought for the level of equality we are enjoying so far.

D2: Like most average citizens, we knew very little about the law or about equal rights, let alone about marriage laws. We grew to understand that we had been ignorant of the benefits of legal marriage, benefits which most straight couples in marriages or common-law partnerships have chosen to either remain

ignorant about or simply discard.

R2: Gradually we also learned that our own almost-flippant attitude towards legal marriage had indeed been just a sour-grapes rationalization helping us to cope with the homophobia with which a large segment of society had been assailing us. You know, if you think you'll never be able to have something, you just set it aside. I finally faced the fact that if, back in 1983, I'd been able to live with a man again, I'd almost certainly have gotten married, especially for our children's sake, if not my own. However, Diana is the only person I want to share my life with, so it just seemed impossible to even dream of marriage.

D2: Reading the touching stories of other couples in the equal marriage cases in B.C., Ontario and Quebec helped us realize further just how important equal access to a basic Canadian right is. The lack of state sanction seemed to magnify the homophobia of families whose kids wanted to live together, and separate children from parents, as well. Right in my own family, homophobia was so strong that my oldest brother refused to speak to me for 8 years one time, and 2 years another. This is a brother whom I dearly loved all the time I was growing up. At least he's speaking to me now, even if he doesn't like the fact that I have chosen to love a woman. I can't help but think that if the government said our love was worthy of marriage completely as much and as equal and the same as heterosexual marriage, and if we'd grown up in a future generation after this had been approved, my brother and I would never have had this painful separation. I would like to do whatever I can to make sure that others don't go through that kind of agony in future.

R2: During a local TV interview one evening recently, I was addressing a question about whether homosexual love is different from heterosexual love, when another light suddenly went on for me. I realized, and replied, that based on my experience of thirteen years married heterosexually versus nineteen years together homosexually, that *for me*, homosexual love has been much, much better. This is not to disparage heterosexual relationships at all, but just to point out that it's very possible for gay marriages to be even better than straight ones, if not at least as

good as each other's. So it makes sense for our government to help us celebrate our relationships by being completely inclusive, and encouraging marriage for the long-term benefit and good health of everyone, straight or gay.

Tell us your most romantic moment.

R2: It seems like we've had a million, not a single romantic moment. Waking up every morning, thrilled to be opening our eyes and seeing each other's sweet faces is delightfully romantic. Eating by candlelight together every night, as we do by ourselves and have done with our children and friends for years, is romantically affirming of the light consistently glowing in our lives.

D2: Sharing the dance of hummingbirds overhead at the top of a rocky knoll where we do our Tai Chi overlooking the inland waters of the Pacific and the ring of coastal snow-capped mountains in our favourite local rainforest park is truly romantic. Standing together and watching butterflies landing on our roses and swooping over our herb garden is magical in our romance.

R2: Gardening together, and looking up at each other with joy at a new bud or berry is affirmingly romantic. Cooking in our kitchen together, popping a sample of a newly-concocted recipe into each other's mouths is joyously, sensuously romantic.

D2: Gaining sight of each new land in our travels around the world gives us that shiver of excitement that compels us to hold each other's hands in love. Travelling by ferry from Brindisi, Italy to Patras, Greece, with the children one long night, we all basked in the romance of a full, golden yellow moon shining its regal path over a calm Adriatic sea right to our feet.

R2: Our lives are full of romance, and we look forward to every romantic moment without judging which one could possibly be best. Maybe it would be too sad to think that there was a 'most romantic moment', for then it would be in the past, and our relationship with romance would be on the decline.

What are your favourite fruits?

R2: Mine of the moment are blackberries, raspberries, blueberries and apples.

D2: Hmmmm...assuming you mean besides Robin, who is my peach: pears, cherries and papayas.

Who wears the pants in the family?

R2: Good grief, that phrase "wearing the pants" always irritates me. I hate the underlying assumption, and I always hated it when I was heterosexually married, too. It is *so* disrespectful of women. When we were in Greece, we came across a calendar in the Minoan Lines Ferry office in Mitilini, Lesbos Island. The artist, in illustrated ancient Minoan society doing their seasonal activities each month, chose warm colours to show the equality co-existing between men and women in all their work, from growing to harvesting, collecting to processing. Neither gender was sitting, standing or working higher than the other. But if you insist we answer this awful question, we *share* the pants in the family. What a relief!

D2: Yes, that was one of the great things we learned right at the beginning of living together: there were no assumed roles as to who does what. We always check in with each other.

R2: Eventually, we decided that if one of us had more talent and inclination to do a skill than the other, we'd take that on as our job most of the time. For example, Diana loves sewing and ironing, while I find it frustrating. I can never sew a straight line and always crease things irretrievably.

D2: Robin loves playing with numbers, and I've always hated basic math. So we've agreed that I'll do the sewing and ironing in trade for Robin doing the bookkeeping,

R2: although I insist on showing Diana how I derive the balances, so if she ever had to, she could manage it, and we consult on any major items.

D2: Because Robin grew up driving in the big city (Vancouver), while I got my licence in the little town of Oliver,

R2: and maybe because Diana gets more riled up when driving, and I stay a little calmer,

D2: Robin usually drives most of the time, and almost always while in the larger cities.

R2: But often, we check in with each other to see if the other has enough energy and feels like doing the driving. So we don't always assume a

role. In areas where neither of us are skilled, but both of us want to learn, or if we both like doing it, we take turns.

D2: Remember that time early on when we laughed and laughed as we each hammered alternate nails into those support posts for the raspberry vines?

R2: Ya, it was so fun just to acknowledge sharing such a simple, seemingly-male-oriented task. Now those old wooden posts have rotted, the newly transplanted blackberries are crowding out the raspberries and we got our sons to dig the holes and our brother-in-law to put recycled plastic posts in their place. D2: Guess we got enough practice in that area and are happy to hand it over!

If your partner were a tree, what kind of tree would she be?

R2: I think that if Diana were a tree, she'd be a colourful red cedar tree with great long branches wrapping me firmly yet flexibly and gently in her arms. I grew up with red cedars all around me, acres of woods of them, and I've always loved them. Then I arrive at Diana's house to find red cedars that she's planted all around the perimeter of her lot!

D2: If Robin were a tree, she'd be a tall, strong, green Douglas fir tree.

The Court Case:

How did you become involved in the case?

R2: As mentioned above, we became involved in the case when we read about a request from EGALE for couples in long term committed relationships to volunteer, in a local electronic lesbian and gay newsletter. We wrote some answers to some questions about it.

D2: Then John Fisher, of EGALE in Ottawa, and Cynthia Calahan on the board of directors, and one of the earlier people to apply for a marriage licence with her same sex partner here in B.C., interviewed Robin and me, as well as two of our children, Angus and Clio, who happened still to be living nearby at the time. Apparently, they interviewed about 17 couples around B.C., looking for a variety of different people, (such things as different lengths of relationship, different experiences with religion, couples with

and without children, gays, lesbians, differing ages, to represent a broad spectrum) and chose 5.

Tell us about your affidavit. What did you think was important to include?

R2: Well, we floundered a bit, wondering what to include and in how much detail, following general questions that John and Cynthia had asked us to cover.

D2: Most of all, we wanted the public and the courts to know that our relationship is at the very least, equal in its love to heterosexual relationships, and therefore equally as deserving of full legal rights to accessing marriage.

Without hurting any of my family, but knowing it would probably distress them anyway, I wanted to bring the issue out in the open, help them and help many other families in the same homophobic status, be forced to face it and work through it. So far my family, with the exception of one supportive nephew, has refused to even bring it up, let alone discuss it with me.

R2: I wanted people to know how homophobia exists in all of us, consuming an unreasonable amount of energy. I wanted the court to know that even though they may think that we have a lot of equal rights, homophobia is still happening in the work place to the extent that Canadian workers are having to stay in the closet to varying degrees in their jobs, even though they're supposed to be treated equally. It's still happening to the extent that it stops us from freely holding hands as we walk down the street or through the woods. The court could do everyone a big favour by honouring love instead of spending millions of dollars fighting it. We're so lucky that at least my family, and our children of course, are completely supportive.

How did it feel as time was drawing nearer to the court case? Were you in court?

D2: Hectic, unreal. We had bought tickets to fly to England to see Josh, before we knew the exact date of the case. I had to work right up to the day before we left, including the first week of the court case.

R2: So we felt almost totally left out. We couldn't go to the court for any of it, because Victoria is an hour and a half ferry ride plus half an hour driving on our side and 45 minutes on

the other side, plus long delays in the parking lots for overloaded summer ferries, to say nothing of the \$100 round trip cost for our car and the two of us in it. Plus we were in England for the second half of the case. Thank heavens for email; John Fisher was great at keeping us up to date daily.

How was dealing with the press?

D2: I had to leave a lot of it to Robin, because she was working at home and I was nursing at the geriatric home, so I wasn't as accessible.

R2: We, or I should say I especially, had a bit of a learning curve. I seemed to be okay talking on the radio from my own living room, but the first time we were invited to an early morning radio show at the station, I froze mid-sentence part way through. I tapped Diana's arm several times, pleading for help,

D2: and I was daydreaming, so I didn't really know what she'd been talking about. We laughed on air, and somehow I managed to figure it all out and come up with something.

R2: Gradually, I learned not to wear anything too patterned or crazy for either TV or newspapers.

D2: We learned that photos taken from the ground up towards us are hideous, too.

R2: And we learned not to joke too much, because things can get taken out of context so easily.

The BC gay newspaper Xtra West was unflinching in its opposition; did this affect you? How?

R2: At first, I got mad. Then when I saw how utterly biased and one-sided their reporting was, and how they didn't want to hear, let alone publish, any different points of view, I thought how boring it all was. I mean, where's their credibility? Where's their dedication to growth and open-mindedness?

D2: I couldn't understand how they thought it was fair to impose their desire not to get married on others who *do* want to have that choice. It's like their whole newspaper is one big ad of their dictatorial preferences. I suppose that's not too different from some newspapers that fundamentalist churches might put out, but I just didn't expect it from them. It's not published in Victoria, so we usually just get it during the few

times we go to Vancouver, and lately we can't be bothered.

Were you in court?

R2D2: No, for reasons explained above - work (outside the city of Vancouver, where the case was heard) and overseas travel commitments made ahead of time.

Whether or not you were, what was your experience having the case in court?

R2: I was sad to be missing it, felt isolated from our fellow petitioners at a time when I wanted to be holding hands with them, even though we'd be in touch by phone and email. I also felt nervous, yet excited.

D2: I was all of those things, plus really curious. I wanted to see the opposition in person, see the judge, experience the set-up in court.

R2: Oh, I have to admit that part of me was glad not to be in court. I'd experienced the frustrations of hearing mocking opposition statements when my ex had to go through a long and very stupid case in the U.S. courts around a yacht design that a client said would never float, even though a sister ship of the same design was afloat beautifully. (Of course, we won, but it was all a huge waste of time and terrible expense.) I was hopeful that the Canadian courts would be much saner, but I knew how nasty, how full of put-downs the opposition can be, to colour their side rosy and our side filthy.

D2: We felt so far away, especially as the second half of the case progressed, and felt anxious about everything everyone was going through. There we were, in Josh's house in Southampton, England, bringing up the latest news from John's and Barb's reports on our laptop, feeling otherwise so separate and out of touch. It was hard.

Did you worry about or experience any negative reactions or violence?

R2: When Judge Pitfield's announcement came down, and we were interviewed publicly, almost everyone was totally supportive. I think we're lucky to live in the southern part of B.C. where tolerance seems a little higher than in the interior or the north.

D2: We did receive one piece of hate mail which

was creepy, but we made a quick little ceremony out of burning it. Later, the police advised us we should have turned it over to them, and EGALE, kind and extremely supportive of us, said they wished they could have had a copy of it to prove to Ottawa that such discrimination and hate is still out there.

R2: Our fellow plaintiffs also rallied around. There's nothing like support from those who have been through the same.

D2: After our community newspaper came out with an article and photos of us, one of our neighbours who had always been friendly, seemed to make a point of stopping speaking to us. Robin thought it was just coincidence, and maybe something to do with the husband's health problems, but I think it was too blatant. It took us months, but after we persisted in acting our normal selves, they finally had to talk to us or appear too rude for words.

How did your family react?

R2: My brother, sister and cousins have always been supportive, open-minded and appreciative of us, so they were just cheering us along.

D2: My two brothers, mother and sister have never discussed it with me or us, even though I know they know about it. They like Robin, but they won't talk about homosexuality, and I'm sure from their silence and their occasional bursts of hateful, homophobic comments, that they don't like, or care to learn to understand, what we're doing. My nephew and his family have been the only ones on my side of the family who were comfortable enough to bring it up and want to have their questions answered. They can't figure out why the government would bother standing in our way.

R2: Our four kids have been great, of course. The oldest one had lots of questions about common-law versus legal marriage, because he's been in a common-law relationship with his female partner for over a decade without realizing the differences. When he was suddenly surprised by reaction from people on his island who'd read the first newspaper accounts with us in it, before he did, he was caught off guard and didn't know how to answer some of the questions people asked.

The Aftermath

How did you feel when the case wound down?

R2: Well, we were so far away when it wound down, that I felt a little let down, out of it.

D2: I'd gotten used to getting installments of what was happening, and I wanted more, to keep staying in touch. At the same time, I felt anxious to know the verdict.

R2: It was hard to be patient, knowing we'd have to wait, even though Judge Pitfield was unusually quick.

D2: But then, when things got quiet and we were just waiting, it was nice to have that break to really just concentrate on fully enjoying our journey in southern England.

R2: Actually, it felt good to talk about something else, to acknowledge the importance of many other things in our lives. It's easy to get hooked on political activism, because it can be very exciting. So we needed that break, if for nothing else than for a reality check about the rest of the world just ticking along.

What about when the verdict came down?

R2: I was really amazed at myself.

Intellectually, I acknowledged what John Fisher had told us from the beginning: that it would take 5 to 7 years. But my feelings about it were something else. When I actually heard what Judge Pitfield had to say, how he based his decision on an archaic law (of 1867), making it seem like that 125-year-old judgment was all about the definition of marriage being between a man and a woman when in fact that original case was about polygamy,

D2: when he actually acknowledged that it was discriminatory,

R2: and then he tripped all over himself saying that he could justify his discrimination, well I was really upset. I felt really let down. It seems so obvious, so fair, so just, to honour our love completely. How could he, a judge, say that *any* discrimination is justifiable?

D2: I was angry. Where does someone, especially an expert in the law, get the right to go against the Charter of Rights? It seemed pretty flimsy to fall back on that old judgment that had nothing whatsoever to do with this case.

R2: If he were truly relying on that law, he'd

have to repeal all rights to divorce, he'd have to agree that it's okay for husbands to beat their wives, and for women not to have the right to either property or the vote. It's outrageous!

D2: Then we got to feeling sorry for Judge Pittfield. I guess it became our way to cope with it. We decided that he didn't want to have the weight for the decision on his shoulders, to be the first one in Canada to bear the full weight of the conservative homophobia.

R2: So he took the easy ("cheap"?) way out.

D2: Hardly cheap - it's costing more in our legal defense, our energy, as well as taxpayers' money, to fight it.

R2: Well I guess I meant the old slang definition of 'cheap': cowardly, certainly not inexpensive. It's especially galling knowing that they're going to be using our very own tax dollars to continue the fight against us, too.

D2: And there's a feeling of what a huge waste of money this all is, when it's clearly admitted by the courts to be discrimination. At the same time, there's the frustration of waiting, waiting, waiting for justice. Why don't they just get on with clearing away all the discrimination instead of fighting it?

What was it like for you when the MCCT "marriages" occurred in Ontario (and created a media free-for-all)?

R2: I felt excited and curious.

D2: I admired Kevin & Joe, Elaine and Anne, for putting themselves so out there.

R2: At first, I felt really hopeful that it was indeed a legal loophole to read the bans and then be able to get married, and then I felt it was such a slap in the face that the Ontario government wouldn't register the marriages.

Again, it was a government clearly acting against the law, in essence the government putting those quotation marks around their marriage,

D2: but I don't think either of us realized how much press they'd get - I think the MCCT parties were surprised, too.

R2: Seeing Kevin, Joe, Elaine & Anne all in the media spotlight for so long and so thoroughly felt really affirming of just who we are. I think the more visibility, the more people can see we are just fine, ordinary and/or upstanding citizens. Nothing scary or weird about us!

D2: All that press got more and more people talking about it. Ordinary people, too, and the more opportunity there is to answer people's questions, the more chances we have to calm their fears and phobias.

How was it when the Ontario and Quebec cases were going on?

R2: It was exciting and fascinating being in close contact by email with all the couples, hearing what was happening to them in court, with reports from John Fisher and especially from Joe & Kevin, Michael and Rene coming in daily.

D2: They all wrote so passionately and descriptively, every day. Sometimes it was really late at night for them when they sent out their emails, and we wondered how they (or if they) got any sleep at all. If I was at work on evening shift, Robin would print out their news and we'd read it together when I got home around midnight, and then discuss it.

R2: It all felt really hopeful, but then there was the long waiting game afterwards,

D2: waiting for the verdict, yes, I felt really impatient and let down.

R2: However, we had a lot of other projects we were immersed in, so time passed fairly quickly.

What about the Ontario verdict?

D2: Euphoria on July 12th!

R2: *Three* justices agreeing on the only sensible verdict: that was great! That was the beginning of a lot of media work for us, again.

D2: When so much is happening, it's easy to feel consumed by it all. I mean, we're working, we have stuff at home to do, too, and there's not much breathing room to do all the communicating, the emailing, the radio, TV, newspaper interviews, the keeping up with what's going on, minute by minute.

R2: I was sick with some sort of flu bug, first time in years, hadn't had much sleep, and *The Globe & Mail* is the first one to give me the news. A few minutes later, our closest gay friend called me to announce that, after hearing the CBC radio news at 6:30 a.m., his partner proposed to him over breakfast. They've been together for 10 years. He had thought that marriage wasn't all that big a deal. We'd had some talks about it. It was when he realized that

marriage suddenly was entering the realm of possibility that he began to realize it *does* make a difference to have that choice.

D2: So of course, he said “YES!”

R2: I was really touched by their news, and I was also really tired, trying to get some sleep on a day when I felt unusually crummy.

D2: I called Robin from work about 10:00, and she gave me the news, too. I was elated, and really touched by our gay friends’ sharing their engagement news right away. When she explained that one of the TV stations wanted to taxi her down to the geriatric home where I work and interview us in the garden before their deadline, I said “You’re crazy! NO!”

R2: I needed Diana to give me some boundaries and guidelines. I was too sick to think clearly, just trying to be accommodating.

D2: Which is what Robin does too much of. She’s very generous with her time. I knew there was no way I could slip out of my hectic nursing schedule and grant an interview, which would take longer than the TV reporters say anyway, never mind the inappropriateness of the location and of the situation with Robin sick. She needed to stay in bed.

R2: So I did, at least for a few more hours. Then as a compromise, I agreed to be interviewed in our own back garden, with zoom-in shots of framed photos of Diana and me that we had here in the buffet. Also with Clio, Diana’s daughter home for the summer and able to help me out, we were filmed preparing dinner. She was also furious, saying that the media takes advantage of people as long as we allow them to exploit us. I was simply confused and trying to do my best to honour the commitment we’d made to be as available as possible to further the cause of helping people understand that our love is just as ordinary as everyone else’s.

D2: Ya. Of course the crazy thing was that for the 45 minutes or hour that they spent there, they only showed a minute or so of it on the news that night.

R2: That wasn’t the end of it, either. We had several interviews with the local newspapers, and CHUM TV did another debate-style hour-long programme on “Why same-sex marriage?” just before the Vancouver Pride Parade. It’s so hard to balance putting in the time for the cause

versus family and work commitments.

D2: That night, my nephew and his family were here from Calgary, I was working evening shift, and Robin had been preparing supper for them when she got a 2-hour advance notice by email about the show wanting people in the audience and having very few available. So she miraculously organized everything and managed to get there, as well as speak really well about the debated issues.

What about the Quebec verdict?

R2: We were overjoyed. The judgment not only reiterated and thereby supported Ontario’s, but also included the crucial, logical points that civil unions (or Registered Domestic Partnerships) are in no way equal to marriage,

D2: and that religious rights do *not* supercede human rights.

Where do you see these cases headed?

R2: Certainly to the Supreme Court of Canada, as long as Ottawa persists in fighting it, even though the two biggest-population provinces aren’t appealing it.

D2: It seems that the federal government, which is appealing on the grounds that marriage is for procreation, must be wanting the courts to decide it unequivocally for them.

R2: That way they can say they tried their best, but they can’t supercede the highest court in the land.

D2: Of course, appealing on the grounds that marriage is for procreation is sure to lose: otherwise, they’d have to annul all new marriages involving menopausal woman, refuse marriages involving women who’ve had hysterectomies, refuse marriages between people unless they promise to have children and produce them within a certain period of time, refuse them if either partner is infertile,

R2: which I guess would mean fertility tests would be mandatory and produce positive results before couples could apply for their marriage licences, or else promise to adopt or have artificial insemination,

D2: and oh yes, contraception would be illegal until after a child is produced.

R2: It’s absolutely ridiculous.

Is queer marriage inevitable?

R2D2: Definitely!

Reaction & Action

Do you think the BC public understands why you're doing this?

R2: Some do, many don't.

D2: I think most of them think we're doing it solely because we want to get married,

R2: or maybe even because we want to raise a ruckus, which they associate with their interpretation of Gay Pride Parades.

D2: They don't seem to understand that Pride Parades, and this equal marriage case, is about *inclusion*. I know I sometimes have trouble swallowing the fact that the Pride Parades have a few women with chains through their bared nipples, or men sauntering almost completely naked.

R2: It's too bad that the media portrays these as almost the only people in the parade, while the bulk of the people are actually ordinary-looking citizens walking for the cause. The TVs zoom in on the unusual folks and give them all that extra air time, disproportionately, *as though they represent all of us*. The fact is that the majority of gays and lesbians are probably too boring to bother filming for very long. If the scandalized straight population stopped to think about it, they'd realize that there are heterosexuals who are involved in all those far-out ends of sexual expressionism, too.

D2: Sadly, by portraying these more shocking aspects of bared and harshly-decorated bodies, the media continues to play into a more conservative person's homophobia, reinforcing their mistaken impressions about us.

R2: As to the essence of why we're doing this, it's all about *equal rights*.

D2: Some people think that we're asking for extra rights,

R2: as if our getting married is more than they're asking for. Of course it isn't! They just expect to have the right to get married, without even thinking about it.

D2: When we have full equal rights, we'll have the right to be married, just the same as anybody else.

Do you worry you'll be identified, then, as one of the "good" or "normal" queers, while others will be pushed even further into marginality?

R2: No, I don't worry about it, even though I grew up with a bit too much concern about being a "good little girl", and have had to learn the balance around being a woman who is supposed to be every bit as equal as a man.

D2: I'm not doing this to push anyone into marginality. I respect the rights of people to make choices. As long as they are free to make the same choices I am free to make, then that's all I'm asking. So if they want to act in a way that some people see as abnormal, then that's okay.

R2: There will always be people who see other segments of the population as abnormal, or marginal. It depends on where you're looking from, what sort of tinted cultural, religious or whatever background you come from. The more we can show people the human side of every single person, no matter his/her culture, language, colour, sexual activity or lack of it, then the more connected we will be.

D2: So I think that the margins will grow smaller and smaller with the passage of this marriage act law, until we see no margins. Just inclusion and respect for differences.

What will it mean to you and your family members when you get married?

R2: A huge celebration,

D2: an honouring of our past, present and future commitment to each other

R2: and to the world of equality and fairness.

D2: As for my family members, I can't speak for my mother or siblings, so I'll just have to wait and see. History has shown they usually catch up to me. I know they love me deep down, but their fears are riding them instead of their love, in this situation. Maybe by the time we *can* get married, they'll want to come to our wedding and celebrate their - and the country's - growth. If so, I welcome them with open arms!

Will it really change anything?

R2: In terms of how we love each other, no.

D2: In terms of freeing our energy up for other, creative things we want to do, it sure will!

R2: In terms of how the world sees Canada's

commitment to equal rights and freedom from homophobia, I think it will be really different.

D2: A lot of changes in attitude by other countries, perhaps more disputes within other countries about it,

R2: until they, too, see that equality is equality and that includes every, loving human being.

D2: And that could change a lot, for the better worldwide.

So...what's next?

R2: Patting the cat.

D2: In other words, having time just to be who we are,

R2: while we wait

D2: and wait

R2: while our tax dollars dwindle away

D2: until equality comes.