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Sheriff's deputies say would-be Parkland party-goer fired shots when uninvited

Sex offender wedding at Special Commitment Center will be a first

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By STACIA GLENN — Staff writer

Editors note: An earlier version of this story mistakenly referred to the transgender member of this couple as a man.

The bride will don a traditional white veil. The groom will wear a Grim Reaper cloak.

They will step into a Wiccan circle to exchange vows and rings before being ushered back to their respective units at the Special Commitment Center, the state's institution for sex offenders on McNeil Island.

Their relationship is unlike most.

When Hank Pollock and his transgender bride Rebecca Elmore - who changed her name from Keith in 2002 - tie the knot Thursday, they will become the first two residents to marry each other.

"Just because you're in there, you don't lose your civil rights," said Chris Case, a spokeswoman for the Department of Social and Health Services, which operates the SCC. "Washington law says they can get married so they can get married.

"Basically this will not change their lives in any way except they will be legally married."

The ceremony will cost the state nothing but will be rewarding for the couple.

It will be the first time they are allowed to kiss or hold hands. It also could be the last. Strict rules govern the sex offenders at the SCC and, from there forward, physical contact will be prohibited. A honeymoon is out of the question. They will not be allowed to live in the same unit, let alone the same room. Sexual contact, prohibited for sex offenders receiving mental health treatment, results in punishment.

Pollock, 47, and Elmore, 57, say their day-to-day lives might not change much but they hope their marriage will pave the way for others, including fellow sex offenders who are civilly committed at 20 or so institutions nationwide.

That, however, is secondary to wanting to commit their lives to each other.

"There's a lot of excitement around it, the fact we'll be making history," Elmore said. "There's some nervousness, too. We're breaking a lot of groundwork, but the main thing is us getting married."

HOW IT STARTED

The friendship between Pollock and Elmore reaches back a decade to when Pollock moved to the SCC.

Elmore was already there after pleading guilty in 1995 in Clark County to second-degree kidnapping and second-degree assault with sexual motivation. When Elmore petitioned to be released in 1999, the state Attorney General's Office persuaded the judge to deny it based on Elmore's "sexually-motivated cannibalistic fantasies."

Pollock, who changed his name from Andrew Drescher in 2002, was convicted of five counts of sex crimes against children in Kitsap and Thurston counties from 1987 to 1993. He was committed to the SCC for being a repeat sex offender.

When a mutual friend at the center died in 2003, Pollock helped Elmore with her grief. The bond thickened the next year when Pollock tore his knee and Elmore tended to him, fetching food and pushing him around in his wheelchair.

Pollock, who was married to his third wife at the time, realized his growing feelings for Elmore around that time.

"I started falling in love with this person and I was all confused," Pollock said, adding that this is his first gay relationship.

When Pollock's divorce was finalized last year, he and Elmore began talking about getting more serious. Then one night, Pollock handed Elmore a note and asked her not to read it until they returned to their respective units.

Inside he'd written: "Roses are red, violets are blue, I hope you're sitting down because I want to marry you, too."

Elmore immediately called Pollock and yelled, "I do!" several times before hanging up.

WICCAN WEDDING

Their first order of business was filling out a six-page application for marriage. Elmore combed the document and changed the necessary language to suit a same-sex marriage. They submitted the paperwork to the SCC on June 14 and waited for approval.

Once it came, the planning began.

An SCC staff member supervised them while they searched online for rings, eventually selecting matching sterling silver bands.

Pollock sewed Elmore a white wedding blouse, a veil and a 12-by-15-foot train. He made himself a Grim Reaper cloak to wear over a white shirt, white tie and brown pants.

To find a pastor to conduct the ceremony, they wrote the nonprofit organization Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays. A Seattle Christian pastor agreed to officiate at their wedding free of charge.

They chose Oct. 31 to be wed, because it is Samhain, the start of the Wiccan New Year. Not only is it an important date for their religion, they said, but it also symbolizes a new start for the couple. The ceremony will take place in the visiting room at SCC and be limited to two hours. Seven residents will be allowed to attend, not including the pastor and his partner.

The wedding will include a Wiccan hand-fasting tradition in which their hands are bound together with twine to symbolize their union.

Few wedding traditions will be honored at Pollock and Elmore's wedding. The bride will not walk down the aisle or toss a bouquet of flowers. They did not register for gifts and do not get a best man or a maid of honor.

They say it's more important to express themselves in other details. Two ring bearers will hold pillows with

pentagrams on them, and the oldest guest will escort Elmore to the outside of the circle, where she will be joined with Pollock. They will recite vows they wrote and Elmore will take Pollock's last name. Afterward they will share cake with their guests.

"This is marrying my best friend," Pollock said. "We're ready to stand up and start working on our rights as a married couple."

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