

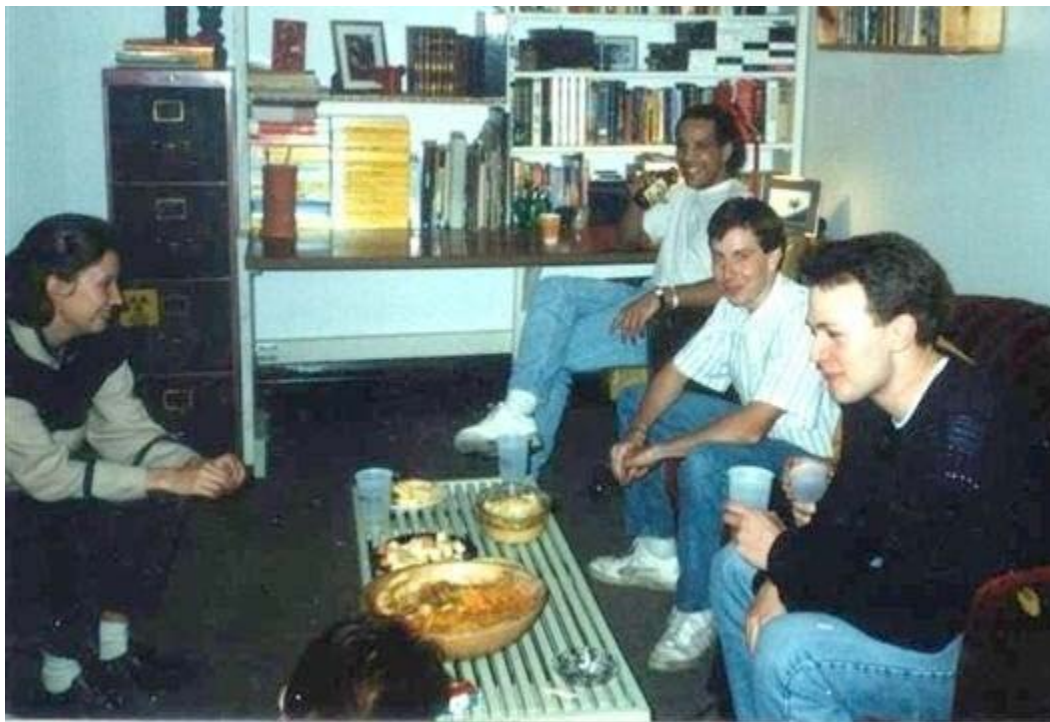
We are Mark and Frederic

After 20 years, four children, and three houses, Frederic and I are still unsure of our future together.



Fred and I met in April of 1990 at a birthday party for a mutual friend. Neither one of us wanted to attend but somehow, we both were talked into it. I arrived with my friend Rebecca at the same time that Fred arrived with his friend, Steve. As we approached the entrance, Fred said hello to me in his French accent. I often joke saying that “he had me at allo”. He held the door open for me.

The following picture was taken within an hour of our arrival. It’s an awful picture but it’s one of my favorite because it is of the day that we met. Fred is in the middle and I’m in the back.



After that, we spent most of the rest of the evening on the floor in the hallway simply talking about our lives. I found out that he had been in the country for the past year teaching at a University a couple hours away. By Midnight, his crew was heading out. As we were saying goodbye, I leaned in and gently kissed him. I don’t know what

possessed me. He looked shocked. After he left, I asked the Host if Frederic was even Gay. The party was 90% straight and Frederic never talked about his sexuality so I wasn't sure. The Host said yes but that Frederic was going into the Priesthood. That didn't stop me from reaching out to him. I tracked him down at his University and sent a card to him. We were able to meet again a few times before he went back to France two months later. And so began seven years of back and forth flying whenever we could.

In 1997, Frederic was hired at a local high school to teach French. We were finally together. However, in 1998, he had to return to France to finish his studies. He returned one year later. In 1999, we stumbled across a house in the City that was condemned and boarded up. I fell in love with it. I had to convince Fred to buy it. We paid \$1.00 for it and spent the next several months bringing it back to life.



Also during that time, we started our paperwork to become adoptive parents. In April of 2000, we submitted our final application to the adoption agency. They called us six days later to let us know that a boy was just born and would we be interested. Nervously, we said yes. Our son, John, was born on April 20th, 2000.



A few years later, in 2003, we were blessed again by the birth of our daughter, Claire, born on July 11, 2003.



Fred's work Visa was due to expire in 2004 after six working years. Knowing nothing of Immigration at that time, he and his employer were too late to request additional years. So thinking that we were moving to France, we advertised the house for sale. We had a buyer within a couple of days. With only a few months to go, Fred was able to obtain

a student visa to attend our local college. But it was too late to save the house. We moved into a rental. During that time, we were filmed and were featured in the Documentary, Through Thick and Thin, with other Bi-National Couples. Also during that time, we found another condemned house and started renovations on that. We completed the renovations and moved into that in 2005.



By 2007, two kids in private school and Fred not working but having to pay student fees, the money was running low. We decided that we would have to, once again, sell a house in which we literally poured blood, sweat and tears into. We sold the house quickly and decided to buy a smaller house in a less expensive area so as to easily afford it and to keep going for as long as we could on one salary.



In 2008, we were contacted by a French Film Crew who was shooting a film on gay life in America.

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x7bgxn_docu-gay-this-is-family-de-jean-bap_shortfilms



One point that they wanted to get across was the struggle with Immigration. The crew followed us to New York where they filmed us meeting with staff at Immigration Equality and then also followed us to San Francisco and filmed us getting married, legally.

On April 7th of 2009, our 19th Anniversary, we met our youngest sons, Jacob and Joshua who were four at that time.



They easily blended into our family and overnight, we went from two children to four.



Fred's student visa expired in May of 2011. We are, once again, considering moving to France. We are basically unwanted by both countries. Although the U.S. approved our adoptions and made us both legal parents, they do not recognize our relationship and therefore could deport Fred if they chose to do so. And while France recognizes our relationship and may allow me to immigrate there, they do not recognize same sex parents. Therefore, one of us would have to give up his legal rights to the children prior to moving there. So what to do? We don't know. But we are preparing ourselves, mentally, to fight until we are forced out physically.

Over the past years, we have built our lives in the States. All of our family and friends are here. John and Claire can understand French but the other two would be totally lost for some time. And although John can understand French, he has learning and emotional problems for

which he is being treated. Fred is also considering Home-schooling him. This would not be allowed to happen in France.

While I bring in the income, Fred is responsible for the daily chores associated with child rearing. Without Fred, I would have to hire help to assist with the children and I would quickly go broke.

We have spent years lobbying congress with Immigration Equality and are at this point, exhausted. We are so tired of fighting and worrying that it's starting to show itself to the children. We have no idea what the next several months will bring.

Mark, Frederic, John, Claire, Jacob and Joshua

