



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on December 4, 2012

## Lesbians “Marry” in West Point Chapel’s First Same-Sex Wedding

A pair of aging lesbians, one of them a West Point graduate and homosexual activist, were “married” December 1 at the military academy’s Protestant [Cadet Chapel](#) (pictured), the first homosexual couple allowed to hold such a ceremony in the sacred and historic building. The “wedding” for 53-year-old Brenda Sue Fulton, a former Army officer and a 1980 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, and her 52-year-old “partner” Penelope Gnesin, was performed by Col. J. Wesley Smith, a senior Army chaplain who serves at Dover Air Force Base, where he presides over Christian ceremonies for the bodies of soldiers killed in action overseas when they return to U.S. soil. Smith was chosen because all of the available chaplains at West Point are prohibited by the denominations they represent from performing homosexual “wedding” ceremonies.



Fulton is the executive director of [Knights Out](#), a homosexual activist group composed, according to the group’s website, of “West Point Alumni, Staff and Faculty who are united in supporting the rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender soldiers to openly serve their country.”

The two have been a “couple” for 17 years, and while they had earlier gone through a civil commitment ceremony, they “had long hoped to formally tie the knot,” reported the [Associated Press](#). “The way was cleared last year, when New York legalized same-sex marriage and President Barack Obama lifted the ‘Don’t ask, don’t tell’ policy prohibiting openly gay people from serving in the military.”

While the two women live together in New Jersey, where they said they would have preferred to “marry,” that state recognizes only traditional marriage, and “we just couldn’t wait any longer,” Fulton told the AP. She said, however, that the Cadet Chapel worked out nicely. “It has a tremendous history, and it is beautiful,” she said, apparently unaware of how that beauty and history were marred by her actions.

With no apparent sense of irony, Fulton recalled that the chapel was where she first heard someone recite the famed [Cadet Prayer](#), which includes such requests to the Almighty as: “O God, our Father, Thou Searcher of human hearts, help us to draw near to Thee in sincerity and truth.... Strengthen and increase our admiration for honest dealing and clean thinking.... Encourage us in our endeavor to live above the common level of life. Make us to choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong.... Endow us with courage that is born of loyalty to all that is noble and worthy, that scorns to compromise with vice and injustice and knows no fear when truth and right are in jeopardy. Guard us against



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flippancy and irreverence in the sacred things of life.... Help us to maintain the honor of the Corps untarnished and unsullied and to show forth in our lives the ideals of West Point in doing our duty to Thee and to our Country.”

The ceremony was the second over the past couple of weeks in which lesbians had “married” at West Point. “Last weekend, two of Fulton’s friends, a young lieutenant and her partner, were married in another campus landmark, the small [Old Cadet Chapel](#) in West Point’s cemetery,” reported AP.

In October 2011, barely two weeks after the official end of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, the Pentagon issued a policy update allowing military chaplains to officiate at same-sex “wedding” ceremonies. “A military chaplain may participate in or officiate any private ceremony, whether on or off a military installation, provided that the ceremony is not prohibited by applicable state and local law,” a memo on the [Defense Department’s website](#) explained. The memo added, however that “a chaplain is not required to participate in or officiate a private ceremony if doing so would be in variance with the tenets of his or her religion.”

While West Point officials may have taken that policy as permission to allow same-sex couples access to the academy’s sacred Christian chapels, there is at least one chapel at West Point that remains off limits to homosexual “wedding” ceremonies. As reported by [The New American](#) in October 2011, “Taylor Henry, director of public affairs for the [Catholic Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA](#), confirmed that no homosexual marriage ceremonies will be allowed at the [Catholic Chapel of the Most Holy Trinity](#) at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.”

Henry explained that “Holy Trinity is an actual Catholic parish, unlike the non-denominational chapels that are found on other military installations, and the only services held there are Catholic services. The Catholic Church does not perform the sacrament of matrimony for same-sex couples.”□□

He added that while chaplains from other religious persuasions may have permission to perform same-sex “weddings” at non-denominational chapels at U.S. military facilities, “no Catholic chaplain is authorized to perform a same-sex marriage under any circumstances.”

In addition to the military’s Catholic chaplains, at least 2,000 evangelical, Protestant, and Orthodox chaplains serving in the military have joined a group called [Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty](#), declaring that they will refuse to perform same-sex “wedding” ceremonies. The organization’s director Dr. Ron Crews, a former military chaplain with 28 years of service, said in 2011 that “by dishonestly sanctioning the use of federal facilities for ‘marriage counterfeits’ that federal law and the vast majority of Americans have rejected, the Pentagon has launched a direct assault on the fundamental unit of society — husband and wife.”

As for the most recent compromise at West Point, Crews told *The New American* that like a majority of other military chaplains, he was “disappointed that the West Point Cadet Chapel, such an historic and honored place, has been used for a same-sex ceremony. I find it disturbing that the leadership of West Point, which has had a strong emphasis on ethics, apparently found no conflict with violating the spirit of the Defense of Marriage Act,” the 17-year-old law defining marriage for federal purposes as only between a man and a woman. President Obama has emphasized his commitment to overturn this measure, and replace it with the legalization of homosexual marriage in all spheres of American society.



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