

Skyfire & Shekinah's Sacred Wedding Ceremony

Music

Drummers – Drumming welcomes guests as they enter and builds the sacred energy.

Sal – Sound Tibetan Bowl (1 time) to signal the start for everyone to be seated. *Tracy* – Walk to ceremony site when signaled. Stop in North to be smudged.

Smudgers – Smudge Tracy Bell (in North) before she walks down the isle to begin ceremony.

Drummers – While Tracy is being smudged (in the North), build beat and end when Tracy reaches the South to address the guests. Stay seated at drum.

Smudging

T – WELCOME Beloved Family and Friends to this Exciting Celebration.

In many earth-based ceremonies, sacred space is created through purifying. We purify this space today through Smudging, the use of the smoke from sacred herbs, sage, sweet grass and cedar. We use the smoke of Sage to cleanse our body, Sweet Grass to cleanse our heart and Cedar to cleanse our minds, so that we may welcome John and Sharon into our sacred circle. May we have the helpers smudge our circle and the drummers.

Blis – Start CD – Song 1 (on repeat) / Fade/end when smudgers have walked up isle And reached the back of circle (to wait for Sharon and John)

Smudgers – Begin in the North, one move to East--South the other West--South. Meet in the South and smudge the alter. Walk up the isle together (back toward the North) and smudge drummers along the way. Wait for John and Sharon.

Procession

T – Sound Tibetan Bowl to signal start of procession.

Will you all please stand with me as we welcome into our circle, our celebrants, John & Sharon.

Blis & Sal – Join the Reverend Tracy (in position) at the front of the circle.

Drummers – Start drumming after the 3rd bowl sound. Begin ending the beat as Sharon and John are being smudged. Move chairs to available spot at the end of the isle.

Smudgers – Smudge John & Sharon (in North) before they enter circle. Be seated when done.

Blis – Sound Tibetan Bowl 3 times while Sharon & John walk down the isle.

Convocation

T – You all may be seated.

This evening we gather in community, during the setting sun's magical hour, to honor and consecrate the tender bond of love and commitment between John and Sharon. Together we witness a most sacred relation that brings together lover and friend, a marriage in the partnership of love that Skyfire and Shekinah embrace as husband and wife.

You are invited to witness their sacred ceremony and asked to be open and embrace it's uniqueness with an open heart. This is a co-created ceremony where we ask all of you to be active participants. John and Sharon's Ceremony has been designed to honor their truth and heart that is unique to them so welcome and enjoy!

Invocation

T – Friends we enter into a moment of prayer

We call upon the energies of the four directions to bless and balance us and join our beautiful celebration of love and commitment between John and Sharon

- We light the flame of the East – Home of the Eagle, the golden door of sacred illumination, the seed where all love arises

Helpers - light tiki lamps placed in E

- We light the flame of the South – Home of Coyote, the flowering of trust and joy, the heart in which love’s playfulness abides

Helpers - light tiki lamps placed in S

- We light the flame of the West – Home of Bear, the fruits of love’s inner knowing, the vessel in which love nurtures

Helpers - light tiki lamps placed in W

- We light the flame of the North – Home of White Buffalo, the abundant wisdom of love’s eternal connection, the quiet in which love guides.

Helpers - light tiki lamps placed in N

Skyfire & Shekinah - CHEROKEE PRAYER

- J:** "God in heaven above please protect the ones we love.
We honour all you created as we pledge our hearts and lives together.
S: We honour mother earth - and ask for our marriage to be abundant and grow stronger through the seasons;
J: We honour fire- and ask that our union be warm and glowing with love in our hearts;
S: We honour water - to clean and sooth our relationship - that it may never thirst for love;
J: We honour wind - and ask we sail through life safe and calm as in our father's arms;
S: With all the forces of the universe you created, we pray for harmony and true happiness as we forever grow young together. Amen."

Prayer

T – (Ask guests to enter into prayer)

Great Spirit, God, Goddess, All-That-Is: We celebrate and honor Skyfire and Shekinah as they call upon their sacred love that resides deep within to make known their desire and action to commit themselves to loves enduring possibilities; bound together by their love, care and appreciation for one another. And we as their witness stand ready to support them in doing so.

Bound by the natural laws unique to their own hearts we call upon the Spirit Of Life, The Great Mystery to bless John and Sharon’s union with the infinite presence of divine love. May this love forever strengthen, protect and guide them from this day forward so that their life together may nourish the blossoms that will one day fill the air with sweetness, beauty and remembrance of this hour. Amen.

Honor Family

T– We would like to honor the people who have contributed to making this moment possible. Sandy and Dale Bode and Cornelia Cimbalo, with great love and respect we thank you for creating these beautiful and amazing people we are celebrating today. May the blessing you have bestowed upon us return many fold.

(Honor each parent with a flower or some other token of respect)

We would also like to honor Salvatore Cimbalo, loving father who has made his transition.

(Honor John’s dad by placing a flower on the ancestor’s altar in the north)

The Address

T – John and Sharon, it is with great love and great respect that I stand before you this evening to offer you this blessing of marriage. Your marriage is more than a public affirmation of your loving commitment to one another, it is a celebratory fingerprint, a unique expression nowhere else performed.

A marriage ceremony such as this, is unique because YOU chose to forego the “Traditional” route and brave the exposure of the deep truth in who you are, as two people ready to commit more fully to one another. And in that courageous act, you honor the very force that has brought you together.

We as your witnessing community, honor you both for your willingness to own and celebrate who you are. Thank you, this opportunity to witness and to serve you.

Friends, I remember the first day, hearing that Skyfire and Shekinah decided to marry. Listening to message number 3 on my answering machine was quite a momentous experience. Shekinah relayed their decision and asked if I would officiate. After the thrill and surprise wore off tears of joy flowed. However, I must admit my excitement was not only for them, to have reached such a point in their relationship, I was thrilled, of course, because I knew that I would get the real “skinny” on how their "coupledom" came to be. And with me as their officiant, their story would bring to life this ceremony.

Being witness to one another’s story, and we all have one or two to tell, is part of humanity’s great celebration. But part of celebrating our stories is having the ability to listen. My friends, I ask, can we, at the same time, listen to the life stories being told without quietly inserting our preconceived opinions? Can we be willing to sit presently, to the moment, as the sweet words of another’s experience is spoken? Can we allow the opportunity for these words to inspire and teach our listening ears? Yes, my friends with open hearts, I believe we can. And I invite you, now, to be a part of this celebration of our humanity as we honor the story of our beloved John and Sharon.

I have known John for several years, through the Circle Community and I first encountered their story already underway, when at a birthday party I noticed something peculiar and asked, “Where’s John?” to which someone replied, “John, oh he went to Pennsylvania to meet a woman he met on-line.” Then at another gathering later on, I again asked, “Where’s John?” to which some again replied, "His new woman friend is in town.” Hmm... I thought, “Boy, things must be going quite well,” and then another person mentioned that he was helping his woman friend move to New York. Yes, I thought, Things ARE going VERY well indeed.

Shortly there after, I went to a drumming circle at the Yurt in Fishers, anticipating meeting my friend’s new love, this mysterious Pennsylvania woman. I am quite sure that I was not alone in this anticipation.

Upon entering the Yurt, John promptly introduced us and immediately I admired Shekinah. I thought to myself, “How brave it was to sit amongst most of John’s friends all at once.” Now, for

anybody who knows this howling and cackling loving crusade you know what I mean!! For those of you who don't, just stick around for the reception.

So, from that first meeting until now, both during a summer evening, I have found out how brave both John and Sharon really are. As they have shared their story and I have come to know how their partnership has evolved, my heart overflows with tender admiration. I am certain that we all share a great love and respect for them.

From the moment John, Sharon and I began to discuss the process of awakening this ceremony, I encountered a deep and enduring wisdom. The wisdom from their story teaches and inspires a profound appreciation for the process and the "living" experience of marriage. Marriage is not an event but rather a loving process of living fully in the presence of a beloved. A marriage is a tapestry woven by the life stories of two people. But John and Sharon believe it is not just their story, it is a story co-created by all of us here this evening. We all have contributed our threads into their tapestry that we are privileged to celebrate in this hour.

When asked what they want this marriage ceremony to say about their relationship, Skyfire and Shekinah replied that this ceremony is about connection, that is, the formation of new family and friends, a new partnership, a new community, and a new form of love. In the formation of these new connections is the opportunity to grow and to remember how precious each moment of this growth and connection is.

John and Sharon also conveyed a little story to me that I would like to share with you all this evening. On JOHN'S only VISIT to Pennsylvania,

he gifted Sharon with a little wooden box. It was a symbol of remembering the precious moments that they would share on their journey together. The wooden box is a treasure trove that houses tiny mementos from big experiences. But the most interesting piece, I thought, was that when a memento is added, John and Sharon revisit all of their treasured moments. I found this moving because often times I will hear people, myself included, spending much time sharing judgments and complaints of the day or experiences, while sometimes neglecting to remember what was tender and precious of which then slips by unspoken. If we could all open our own inner treasure troves, as exemplified by John and Sharon, what a beautiful world this would be.

However, Judgment is an interesting thing. And when we talk about love and the honoring each other's personal truth we celebrate each other's uniqueness. So, how then does judgment exist in relationships? When we fear the perceived differences between us, we experience judgment because "IT" (our relationship) doesn't look the way, we perhaps think it should.

A very wise teacher once shared with me this interesting formula: judgment creates separation, separation creates anxiety, and anxiety creates fear and to heal the judgment one must have compassion. Interestingly, according to one of John and Sharon's teachers, the purpose of LTR is to learn compassion. They shared this recipe of compassion in relationships: 1/3 love, 1/3 pain, and 1/3 neutral.. I believe that these recipes per se show us how learning to grow in love is vital. Yet, like most things in life we must allow ourselves a learning curve to which judgment toward ourselves and others must, at times, be laid to rest. (At least for a little while).

To learn compassion, or anything else for that matter, there is one essential ingredient: openness, especially in the face of preconception and perceived limitations. For openness to occur, we must learn to surrender. For Skyfire and Shekinah, before meeting and after much energy and pursuit, they had both surrendered to never finding a mate. Their hands were no longer held in this pursuit and God, FINALLY had the opportunity to take both of them by the hand and lead them on.

Although one might think of divine intervention as the opening of the sky's or a miraculous return of health, divine grace also has other technologically savvy interventions, ASTRAL-HEARTS.COM. One could say that Divine grace knew this website allowed people like John and Sharon to put out to the universe who they really are and what was really important to them. Although initially resistant, Sharon recalls a definitive celestial nudge to place a profile after reading John's. I imagine it was that moment where God could recall, "Whew... NOW we can FINALLY get down to business" and promptly sent the match.

So it is, my friends, that through surrender we become open to receive the grace for which we have prayed. But as I learned from John and Sharon surrender is not a once in a life-time deal.

Sometimes we have to surrender to the preconceived notions of how we "think" something should be and be mindful of and open to our own inner guidance. "Are you willing to learn with me?" was a question John posed when discussing marriage with Sharon. When marriage is expressed in the light of an ongoing process, it is easier to let go of what it should look like or how it should be. When taken in the present moment regardless of ridicule or preconceptions there is no definite answer to what marriage should or should not be. It is a living experience of a loving process, which in each moment, simply just is.

A friend once shared with me that he believed each relationship is like a fingerprint and cannot be replicated. John's question "Are you willing to learn with me..." is a question that says, "I don't have the answer but lets find out together what it means for us." So when two unique people come together there is no rule book per se. The adventure in remaining willing to learn is exciting for the unrestrained but daunting for those always in need of a road map. I believe that both free spiritedness and convention weigh equally important. However, when it comes to relationships, there is a delicate balance between restraint and leaps of faith. A living experience of a loving process requires both.

The question "Do I take the Leap" is one we all have experienced at one time or another. For Sharon, during God's AstralHearts.com intervention, the balance of restraint and faith came. All that she had ever wanted was right in front of her yet she questioned, "Do I take the leap?" There is a great quandary when our prayers are answered, ironic but true. It is a call to trust one's instinct or inner guidance when presented with the opportunity to manifest our prayers. Great courage is required, especially when it comes to matters of the heart, the turning point occurs when we decide to choose the new instead of playing it safe, remaining where it is familiar.

Someone once said, Only those who risk going too far, can possibly find out how far one can go. A question from a courageous person teetering on the edge between the territory of the known and unknown in love relationships sounds like this:

“Could I have the courage to accept and walk through that open door?”

I would have to say that Metaphoric doors don't present themselves for nothing! There is usually something significant on the other side waiting for that person.

Another question is:

“All of life lined up at this moment, are you going to take it or not?”

When the insight of recognizing that moment, when life's impeccable timing occurs, it comes down to CHOICE, one must choose to seize the opportunity or let it go. The assurance of a right decision is the knowledge that There are no wrong decisions, there are no mistakes – only golden opportunities to learn about one's own humanity in relationship with another person.

However, discovering the unknown is also a process in and of itself. It is one thing to leap and realize that on the other side of the unknown is a warm, open and welcoming heart, as Sharon discovered with John. But after the sigh of relief comes the next leap – living in the moment with the object of one's affection. This type of living requires another delicate balance, the balance between “I, you and we”.

“I, you, and we” is a concept that John and Sharon expressed when asked about their relationship and is concept that we all continue to learn about in our own lives. It is interesting to me that when the three of us were discussing this, I realized how often love, in our society, is related to an event. Hollywood is a great example for spending hours building the tension between two wanna-be-in-love-but-not-quite-there-yet people, Only do they fall in love and ride off into the sunset to live happily ever after, at the END of the script. I have yet to see a film that updates you on how well they are living in their happily ever after. Yet, from the discussions with John and Sharon, it is clear to see how love is the essence of who we are and is a continuous and unfolding process of discovery with each other.

Growing in love, one must learn to grow and learn compassion. As John and Sharon put it, their relationship is about learning how to grow in love each other in a deeper way, taking the risk to speak their truth and to take responsibility to go first. Instead of keeping a tit-for-tat track record of who went first last time, the idea is not about counting but being without the barriers of deciding who is right or wrong. Instead, the risk is the responsibility for speaking down to the bone and is about creating a state of mind to allow acceptance of the I, you, we to simply be just what it is in that moment. If “I” listen to inner guidance and “you” listens to inner guidance and “we” accepts what each other in each moment then the delicate balance is honored.

John and Sharon's inner guidance has brought their partnership and this ceremony to life. And We, along with Skyfire and Shekinah, get to celebrate close to mother earth, with prayer, with the elements and with each other, as the story of this wedding's tapestry is woven. In the magical hour of dusk we are fortunate to witness this sacred relation nowhere else performed. All of life has lined up at this moment and we welcome the glory of Divine grace to shine upon us as we

remember the essence and treasure troves of love's presence in our lives as we celebrate the life that John and Sharon have come here to share. Count your blessings my friends, for you are witness to auspicious leaps of faith. May we all one day have the opportunity to be so brave and experience the loving process of living fully in the presence of our beloved. May it be so, Aho!

The Consecration

T – Friends I would like to read a quote from an article in the *Oprah Magazine*, Another one of God's vehicles for intervention

Friends, we stand together between the veils of the sacred and profound, between the holy rite of today and those of our ancestors, making sacred a marriage that inspires us all to possess the courage to risk looking in the face of love.

The Vows

T – John and Sharon have written their own vows to share with each other.

Shekinah's Vows to Skyfire

I, Sharon / Shekinah, choose you Sky / John,
to be the companion of my heart,
secure in the knowledge that you are
my constant friend and spiritual partner.
In this sacred moment, I affirm to you
my commitment walk the path of life together with you
as your wife and partner,
to embrace your love and your pain.
to laugh with you in times of joy,
and be compassionate in times of sorrow.
I promise to do my best to be present with you,
to share my truth as honestly as I can
to take responsibility and ask for what I need
and listen to you, respect you and support your dreams.
With an open heart, I welcome the opportunities
to grow with you in mind, body and spirit.
I will to continue learn ways to love you so you feel loved.
I am grateful to God for leading me to this moment.
My heart is happy knowing I am sharing this journey with you.

Skyfire's Vows to Shekinah

I, John, take you, Sharon,
to be my wedded wife,
knowing in my heart that you will be
my constant friend,
my faithful partner in life.
I promise to learn to love you more with each new sunrise.
On this special day,
I affirm to you

in the presence of God and all these witnesses
my sacred promise to stay by your side as your husband
in sickness and in health,
in joy and in sorrow, as well as
through the good times and the bad.
I further promise to love you without reservation,
honor and respect you,
provide for your needs as best I can,
protect you from harm,
comfort you in times of distress,
grow with you in mind and spirit,
always be open and honest with you,
and cherish you for as long as we both shall live.

The Blessing and Exchanging of the Rings

T: May we have the rings please. Pick up tray reach to Sal & Bliss

With your hands and hearts joined, may the nudge of love's sweet surrender cast the blessing of enchantment, courage, and vision of greater depths of love, presence, respect and acceptance not only for each other but for all of life. May the Spirit and the roots and wings of love, forever bless these rings as a symbol of the essence of ephemeral and illusive happiness.

John take this ring and repeat after me

J: You are my beloved and my friend.
This ring is a symbol of our union,
a token of my faith and love.
I give it and myself to you
with all of my heart. ~ *place ring on ring finger*

Sharon take this ring and repeat after me:

S: You are my beloved and my friend.
This ring is a symbol of our union,
a token of my faith and love.
I give it and myself to you
with all of my heart. ~ *place ring on ring finger*

Prayer Ties

T – We have been witness to a blessed moment of vows shared. Now it is your turn to offer your prayers and good wishes for John and Sharon through the ritual of Prayer Ties. Prayer Ties are used to hold the intention of your prayers and wishes for our Celebrants. Tobacco is a very sacred herb among earth-based traditions and is used to send prayers to Great Spirit who shines through all things in the visible and invisible worlds.

Helpers - Will Sarah, Morgan and Alec please pass out the prayer ties. Honored guests, once you have received a prayer tie, please begin to form a large circle.

T – Sound the Tibetan Bowl

John & Sharon will you Go into the center of the circle to receive the community's love.

Once every one is standing with their prayer tie

T – John and Sharon would like to take a moment of silence for each of you to RECEIVE their blessing and gratitude for your presence here today. *(Silence)* And now I invite you to go within your own hearts to make your prayers for John and Sharon and imagine these prayers along with your love and good wishes being going into your prayer tie. *(Silence)*.

T – When we are joined in CIRCLE, it is customary to go around the circle and speak ONE WORD that carries the essence of your prayer (relating to love, relationship, partnership). We will begin to my Right and we will end with John and Sharon

Remain inside circle until end of ceremony.

The Pronouncement of Marriage

T – Step in to meet J&S...

John and Sharon, it is my honor, in the presence of God, your family and friends...and by the power vested in me through the State of New York, to pronounce you Husband and Wife!

The Kiss

Tracy - John you may kiss your bride!

Music

Carmen - sing John Lennon's GROW OLD WITH ME

The Benediction

Tracy - Friends, There is a saying among native traditions that 'the ceremony continues long after the council fires have been extinguished.' This wedding ceremony will have a lasting effect on us all who witness and from it, may we realize our own courage to look into the face of love in our own lives as we celebrate John and Sharon's.

Sacred partnerships begin long before a marriage takes place and continues throughout life. This speaks to the presence of the sacred in our lives as we expressly desire and enact communion with it.

May the image of John and Sharon inspire the thoughts in our minds that allow us to be brave and have the intuition to grab back when love wraps its sweet ephemeral arms around us so that we may then create greater love in our world.

Beloved family and friends, it is with great honor to welcome John and Sharon.