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Del Martin, lesbian pioneer, bride, dead at 87

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— Katharine Mieszkowski

Of all the joyful hoopla of the same-sex marriage revolution in California this June, there was no sight more tear-jerking than brides Del Martin, 87, and Phyllis Lyon, 83, celebrating their nuptials in San Francisco's City Hall.

Today comes the sad news that Martin and Lyon, who had been together for 55 years, got to be newlyweds for only a few scant months. Martin died this morning at UCSF Hospice, with Lyon by her side, according to the San Francisco Chronicle. Lyon, who had been in declining health for years, suffered a broken arm two weeks ago.

On June 16, the two octogenarian lesbian activists became the first same-sex couple to legally marry in San Francisco. They'd been among the plaintiffs in the California Supreme Court case that won same-sex couples the right to marry in California.

The brides had been activists together for decades, including helping found the United States' first lesbian rights organization, Daughters of Bilitis, in 1953. **"They spoke the unspeakable, wrote the unthinkable, and lived their lives as few before them ever had: open and proud lesbians in 1950s America,"** said Rea Carey, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in a statement.

The newly widowed Lyon said in a statement: "Ever since I met Del 55 years ago, I could never imagine a day would come when she wouldn't be by my side. I am so lucky to have known her, loved her and been her partner in all things.

"I also never imagined there would be a day that we would actually be able to get married," Lyon said. "I am devastated, but I take some solace in knowing we were able to enjoy the ultimate rite of love and commitment before she passed."

Here's hoping California voters will hear Lyon and be moved by her elegiac words to vote "No" this November on Proposition 8, which would attempt to ban same-sex marriage in the state once again.