

Preacher's Lament - Written on the occasion of Doug and Valorie's wedding in
Brookfield, Vermont - September 2001

Old friends were getting married,
So they asked if I would help.
"T'would be my pleasure," I replied;
You can't do that yourself.

"Come home to Vermont," they told me;
"We're getting married there."
So I loaded up my suitcase
And slickered down my hair.

But before I left, they e-mailed me
And said I'd better watch out.
For probate court was after me,
Because they had some doubt.

It seems that unlike other states,
Vermont just doesn't accept The word or even credentials
Of the minister who's elect.

So I sent off to the probate court
My twenty-five dollar fee,
And they sent back a certificate,
Gold-stamped and signed for me.

But before they honored me with such,
They wrote my assistant first,
And asked her to tell them more about
The one who led her church.

Was he in fact a preacher man?
Was he ordained of God?
Lord knows that his word held no stock
With policies so odd.
She wrote them back and swore an oath,
Or seemed to anyway,
That he was quite a decent sort
And qualified, she'd lay.

So in due time I got my form,
All authorized and signed,
And went off to Vermont to preach
A marriage for the blind.

I tied the knot; they grinned and kissed.
We signed the license; naught was missed.

The license dutifully was placed
Right in the town clerk's box.

And I, I traveled back out West
(By jet, and not by ox.)

But, just as fate would have it,
My work was not yet done.
For mighty soon thereafter
A letter arrived at home.
"Dear Reverend Farley," it began,
"I'm writing you to say,
That the job you thought was finished
Can't wait another day."
"You must mail back that fancy form
The probate court sent you,
For if you don't those birds aren't wed;
Your future's doubtful too."

Well, I pondered that one for a while,
And looked through all my drawers,
And just when I had given up hope,
I found that wretched form.

I folded it and licked a stamp
And dropped it in the mail
, And prayed that it would get there safe -
The postman wouldn't fail.

So now I think I've finished
All the things required of me.
I've done the job; I've mailed the forms;
I've paid the process fee.

But truth be told, it won't surprise
If the constable soon comes knocking,
And tells me that I ain't through yet -
My crime's just short of shocking.

So let this be a lesson
If Vermont paths you should wend;
Be sure your paperwork's all done;
Without it, there's no end.