American Airlines Newsroom

NEWS RELEASE

The long road to Paris

6/15/2020

On a beautiful fall afternoon in Paris, on the Pont des Arts Bridge, Josh Derby's boyfriend of two years, Greg Evans, knelt before him with a lock in his hand and a question on his mind. After accepting his new fiancé's proposal, they shot to the top of the Eiffel Tower to celebrate with a champagne toast.

June is PRIDE month and Josh, a third generation American Airlines team member and Compliance Coordinator at Sacramento International Airport (SMF), is grateful to live in a time where he can marry Greg with the love and support of his family, friends and employer. It's been a long journey for Josh like so many others in the LGBTQ community, but being honest with his parents helped build the relationship into what it is now.

Josh grew up in North Texas in a conservative family. He spent his freshman year of college in Chicago and finished his political science degree at the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) in 2009.

"When I came home for Thanksgiving that first year of college, I had already come out to my friends and was ready to tell my parents," Josh said. "I sat them down and told them I was gay. It was very emotional and difficult for all of us, but I knew I needed to respect my parents' emotions and give them time."

The next few years were challenging for Josh and his family.

"Everyone sorts through things differently, and I imagine, as a parent, you have your own vision for your children. I knew that I needed to be patient for my mom to see that the vision she had wasn't lost, it just looks a little different now."

The final breakthrough in their relationship came after a groundbreaking episode of the daytime TV show, "As the World Turns," in 2007, two years after Josh came out to his family.

“Emotions were high — my grandfather was ill. My mother has always been a huge fan of the show,” he said. “There’s an episode where Cyndi Lauper guest stars and two characters, Luke and Noah, share the first same-sex kiss on daytime national television in the U.S. Seeing this gay couple on TV and realizing how short life is, my mom shifted her perspective, and the episode helped put things in a new light. Now, my mom and I are closer than ever, and it’s a testament to our relationship and the bond we’ve made over time and working through life’s obstacles, together.”

Originally, Josh swore off working in the airline industry, but the jet fuel in his DNA changed his trajectory. His mother worked for another airline for 10 years, his father is a retired Fleet Service Crew Chief and his grandfather worked for American as well.

Josh began his career at American in 2015 as an AAdvantage Customer Service agent and was promoted throughout his time there, eventually becoming a supervisor.

He met Greg in Dallas in early 2018. They fell in love and started plotting a course that would keep Josh at the company he loved and bring him closer to Greg, who lived in Sacramento. Over the following months, Josh looked for opportunities in the area, and, in July of 2018, he transitioned to a Compliance coordinator position at SMF and hasn’t looked back.

In June of 2020, Josh and Greg bought their first house together and are embarking on a new chapter of their lives. “I love Greg with an indescribable joy. Our hope is to get married this fall in San Francisco, marking our one-year engagement — we can’t wait to celebrate surrounded by those closest to us.”

Josh Derby and Greg Evans in Paris the day they got engaged.

Josh and Greg celebrate their engagement over dinner in Paris.