

Redneck Notary Public

By Bob Deakin

There's fun and there's sick, and this party is sick.

Stacey Gillen received her notary public certification from the state of Florida today and it is party time tonight at the Hard Times Tavern in her hometown of Burnham, Connecticut.



Stacey put a *good* couple days into becoming a notary, especially since her boss requested that she become one to save the company more than \$200 a year.

She came. She did. She is a notary, and no one can take that away from her except for the state if she doesn't pay her \$39 bonding fee.

This is no small task in Stacey's life. After a grueling hour-long application and several days of emails and writing samples requiring that she type full words and sentences, she did it. It's not the first test she's taken since high school but the first she's completed.

Stacey is a notary; stamp and all. She's aware of the badass reputation notaries have for their reckless lifestyles but it will not define her. She is so much more than a name on paper, although at \$10 per, hers is one of the most expensive signatures in town.

As a Florida notary, she may charge up to \$10 for any 'notarial act' and up to \$30 as a 'wedding officiant.' It is a fact not lost on her or the \$25 bottle of whiskey she drinks from this evening, raising a toast to her friends.

"This is for everybody that thought I could never do nothin'," Stacey barked to the crowd of 20 friends, all visibly intoxicated upon arrival at Hard Times. "Cheers crackheads!"

I eventually make my way through the smoke and crowd to congratulate her and take a photo in case my editor is interested in running a story about a small-town girl's accomplishment. She tries to explain what a notary does but is too hammered, so I look it up on my phone.

A notary must be bonded (\$7,500 in Florida) in the state which they are licensed. There are Basic and Standard Notary agents in addition to Complete Notary agents, which require a higher level of training and more expensive exam. Stacey's good with being a Basic for now though she vows to go for the top level as soon as she saves up the \$260 for the exam.

"I ain't foolin' around with this," she says to me after a long pull off her Jack Daniels bottle. "Once I get that I'm looking at running for public office."

There was no mention of which office, only that she wants to make a difference in some way for something, somewhere, for some reason.

Requirements for a notary in Florida stipulate that you are at least 18 years-old, a legal resident of the state, can understand, read and write English and that you have not been convicted of a felony. Stacey just squeaks in on the latter two. She tried to become a notary in Connecticut, but the application process proved too rigorous and requirements too stringent.

According to *National Notary Monthly* - a notorious page turner for those in the industry - new notaries receive an official notary seal stamp, a softcover notary journal with tamper-proof, Smyth-sewn binding and a Notary Public sign, which is as effective as a home security sign except it warns intruders that the crime will be officially documented.

Her friends spray her with champagne before I light her cigarette as she bathes in the adoration. She proudly brags she can now officially declare somebody an asshole.

“Any y’all burnouts wanna mess with me now goin’ get written up with the state,” she shouts while blowing out smoke and wiping her nose. “I’ll go notary on your ass!”

She doesn’t yet realize that her notary license is not valid in Connecticut, but she spends every spring in the Sunshine State and feels she identifies with the lifestyles of many Floridians. In the meantime, she has plenty of friends up north who have nice things to say about her on this special occasion.

“She always had a lovely signature,” attests her Aunt Peggy, taking the edge off with a triple bourbon and coke as she grooves to a Lynyrd Skynyrd song on the dance floor.

“When she wanna do somethin’ ain’t nobody goin’ stop her,” assured a glassy-eyed Daryl Dooley, who claims he dated Stacey when she was 15. “You goin’ be readin’ about her someday.”