

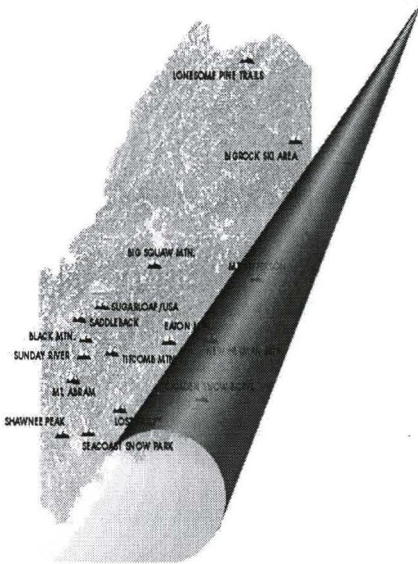
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Pride Store Arsonist Sentenced to 17yrs.

Bangor The man who set fire to a Columbia Street building last winter which housed Bangor's Pride Store was sentenced to 17 years in prison with all but 10 years suspended Tuesday by a State Superior Court judge.

Roger Whitten, 50, of Bangor pleaded guilty Tuesday morning in Penobscot Superior Court to Class A arson for the Jan. 1 fire that damaged the building owned by Coe Management Group.

The was set in Whitten's apartment and most of the fire damage was confined to the one apartment. Other areas of the building had smoke and water damage, according to Deputy District Attorney Michael Roberts. Two of the building's seven other tenants were home when the fire started at about 2:30 p.m., but no one was injured. Whitten confessed to police shortly after they arrived on the scene.

On Tuesday, Justice Nancy Mills accepted the plea agreement written by the Penobscot County District Attorney's Office that called for the 17 years prison term with all but 10 years suspend. Whitten also will serve six

years probation with conditions that he not consume alcohol, that he submit to random drug and alcohol testing, that he attend substance abuse and psychological counseling, that he take all prescribe medications, and that he not posses and incendiary devices.

Whitten's lawyer, Laurie Miller, said her client suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder and functioned well while on his medication. She said that on the day of the fire he was not taking his medication and was drinking alcohol. Just before he was sentenced, Whitten said he was "sorry I did that and I thank God every day that nobody got hurt"

Maine passes anti-bias bill

Augusta The Maine House of Representatives voted April 4 to put a new statewide anti-discrimination bill to referendum in November. The 86-62 vote followed the Maine Senate's April 4 approval of the measure by a 28-7 margin.

Polite debate and little fanfare surrounded the event.

The bill was scheduled to go before Gov. Angus King for approval. With King's signature, the issue will be set to go for a referendum.

In February 1998, a short-lived state anti-discrimination law implemented in 1997 was overturned by a so-called "People Veto" Only 16% percent of Maine's registered voters turned out to vote on that referendum.

But the new bill is different, most notably for it exemption for religious

entities, a result of months of dialogue some legislators were uncomfortable with the exemptions, support for the measure was strong.

SPRING 2000



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The Walk is a local community building event that seeks to bring together persons of diverse sexual orientation, gender identities, religious faiths and political affiliations. You participation will affirm your commitment to helping out communities become a place where all of us feel safe to walk with our loved ones in public without fear of harassment or humiliation.

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Death row lesbian fights for life

Aileen Wuornos, sentenced to die for the 1989 murder of Richard Mallory, is back in court trying to get her death sentence overturned.

Wuornos, a lesbian who is subject of both a documentary and an opera based on her life, has admitted to killing seven men while hitchhiking as a prostitute in Florida

At the 1992 trial, Wuornos testified that she killed Mallory, 61, in self defense after he raped, beat and sodomized her. She also pleaded guilty to murders in three other Florida counties.

Wuornos' lawyer say that she received poor counsel at trial, nothing that her attorneys didn't use the intoxication defense, nor did they try to find witnesses who could have pleaded for her life.

This time around, the judge heard testimony from Wuornos' childhood friends, who painted a bleak life of the women reared in Troy, Michigan. One recalled seeing her pulled into the house by her hair, two others recalled her picking a branch from a tree for her after-school beating. Wuornos was also reportedly sexually abused by her own brother.

Gay pub bombing trial date set

David Copeland, the Hampshire man accused of planting the Soho, Brixton and Brick Lane bombs last spring, will face trial June 5.

The Soho bomb went off on April Bank Holiday weekend in the Admiral Duncan, a busy gay pub in Old Compton Street, killing three people.

No one was killed by the bombs in Brixton or Brick Lane, communities with large West Indian and Bangladeshi populations, respectively.

The prosecution has refused to accept Copeland's plea of guilty to manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility and a full trial will go ahead at the Bailey in London.

Trial date for gay couple's accused killers is delayed.

SACRAMENTO Two brothers accused of murdering a gay couple and setting three synagogues and an abortion clinic building on fire will return to court next month to learn their trial dates.

Benjamin Matthew Williams, 31, and James Tyler Williams, 29, of Palo Cedro, will return to Shasta County Superior Court May 1.

The brothers have been held in the Shasta County Jail since July, when they were arrested for the murders of Winfield Mowder, 40, and Gary Matson, 50, of Happy Valley, Prosecutors are seeking the death penalty.

Last Friday marked the second court hearing for the brothers, who face federal arson charges in the fires at three Sacramento area synagogues

and a building housing an abortion clinic.

Public defenders in Sacramento were granted a six week delay in the arson case so they could review the 5,400

pages of investigation documents into the arson case and 6,00 pages in the murder case.

Federal Judge Garland Burrell Jr. scheduled a hearing May 19 to set a trial date in the arson case.

The Williams brothers are charged with 13 counts of conspiracy, arson, destruction of religious property and the use of fire to commit a felony. The federal charges carry up to 235 years in prison.

The Brothers have pleaded innocent in both cases.

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Vermont Senate approves historic first: same-sex civil union legislation

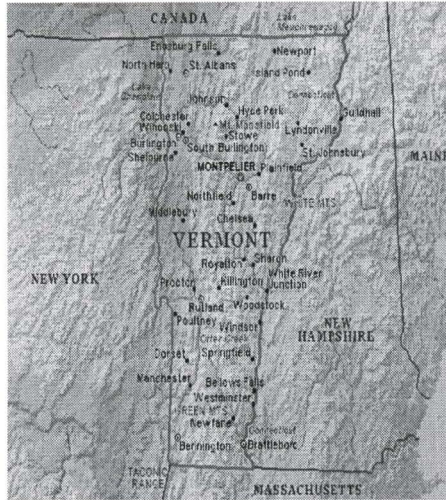
MONTPELIER, Vt. - The Vermont senate April 19 passed civil-union legislation that's almost identical to the version approved in March by the House of Representatives. The vote was 19 to 11 with all 17 Democrats and two Republicans voting in favor.



Vermont Senate leaders confer during an impassioned session in which they approved the nation's first same-sex civil-unions legislation.

The senate version of the legislation moves up the effective date of implementation of civil unions to July 1, from Sept 1, which has been included in the House bill. It also stipulates that insurance and tax benefits accruing from civil unions would not kick in until Jan. 1, 2001, so that the state could make the necessary administration changes to confirm to the law.

The Senate bill won preliminary approval April 18 before a crowd of spectators that overflowed the chamber's small gallery and filled the lobby. Earlier in the day, senators resoundingly defeated two anti-gay proposed constitutional amendments.



The Senate bill will return to the House April 25 where it Judiciary Committee is expected to okay a simple up or down floor vote.

Democratic Gov. Howard Dean is a vocal supporter of the legislation and has promised to sign it. If the House approves, the bill could reach his desk for signature by April 28.

After the final Senate vote, Gary Buseck, executive director of the Boston based Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, praised the decision, but cautioned that any celebration be delayed until the House gives it approval.

It's another important step forward in this historic legislation that has gone further than any state has ever gone in protecting gay and lesbian families, he said. I think we have to say too that the battle's not over. There still a lot of work to do between now and the vote next Tuesday. In the House because the opponents of the bill are still working hard to ultimately keep the bill from passing.

The legislation was initiated to the Vermont Supreme Court's decision in Baker v. Vermont last December. The court found that the state was constitutionally bound to give all the rights, benefits and protection of marriage to committed same-gender couples who sought them

I wasn't around to vote for women's right or the civil-rights laws in the 1960s said Sen. Jean Ankeny-D - St. George, but I feel lucky and honored to be here now to vote for this.

If signed into law, the bill would give gay and lesbian couples hundreds of rights and benefits the state's laws now bestow on married couples. No other state has come so close to granting marriage right to same-gender couples.

Contrary to the statements of many opponents of the bill, civil unions are not marriages. The federal government would not recognize couples who obtain civil unions in Vermont. Social Security, federal taxes, immigration and other benefits department upon national laws would still be unavailable to them. Civil unions, unlike marriage, would not be portable, so they would probably not be recognized by other states.

In contrast to the highly emotional, two day long debate last month in the House, the senate's lasted only a few hours and was subdued.

Opponents of the bill wearing white ribbons and supporters with their bright pink stickers stood shoulder to shoulder in the chambers. Others walked in the hallway for hours hoping to get a seat inside when someone left.

H.847 is just overdue, said Sen. James Leddy-D-South Burlington. There is nothing in the (Baker) decision, this bill or the relationship between two same-sex people that is a threat to my marriage.

We can do something very, very important here, said Sen Richard McCormack, D-Bethel. We can make life a little less hard for gay and lesbian people.

Sen. Ben-Zon Ptashnik, D-Norwich said he was worried about the message conveyed by some people from the pulpit, it leads to fear, hatred, and the Holocaust. He said he

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believes that no one can speak for God. To those who believe their religious views are paramount, I would say that no one has a lock on morality.

Several senators who voted against the bill said they were doing so because their constituents opposed it. Others said they feared the national and international reaction

All of the United States and the world will judge our decision today, warned Republican Sen. Julius Canns of St. Johnsbury. He said that homosexual relationships are only about sex and asked supporters of the bill to stop playing the race card. He said he was of three races -- African American, Indian, and white -- and was offend by comparisons to the struggles for racial equality.

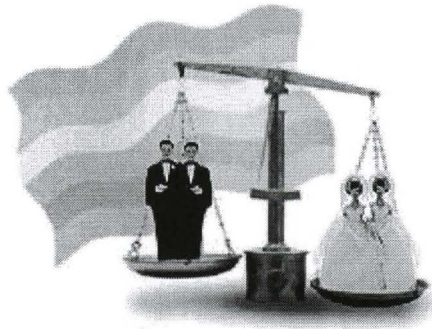
Opponents of the measure had no better success in their attempts to amend the state constitution earlier in the day. The first amendment would have added to the state Constitution the definition of marriage as a union between man and a women. The second would have overturned the Supreme Court ruling in the Baker case. Neither amendment won a simple majority, let alone the two-thirds required for constitutional amendments.

I believe their sexual orientation runs counter to natural law, Sen John Crowley R-West Rutland, said of same-sex couples as he argued for the marriage definition.

We've built walls around ourselves to keep from dealing with issues we don't want to think about, said Sen Mark MacDonald, D-Williamstown. He told fellow lawmakers that their job now was to help heal the divide in the state. Go out and help them get beyond the easy answers. Make them think about it.

If the House concurs with the Senate's changes, the civil-union bill could be on Governor Dean's desk by April 28.

Vermont's governor signs bill creating marriage-like civil unions'



MONTPELIER, Vermont - Governor Howard Dean signed a first-in-the-nation law Wednesday granting gay couples nearly all the benefits of marriage.

I think it is a courageous and powerful statement about who we are in the state of Vermont, the Democrat said. I also believe that this legislation speaks to the heart of this state, and certainly to my heart.

The legislation creating marriage-like "civil unions" reached the governor's desk shortly before lunch time, just a day after the House gave it final approval. And by the time of a 2 p.m. news conference, he had already signed it out of view of TV cameras, photographers and reporters.

Dean said he signed the bill privately because he did not want the ceremony to be a triumphal party by supporters of the law. Instead he said, it was time for the state to begin healing.

In politics, bill-signings are triumphal, he said. They represent overcoming of one side over another. These celebrations, as the subject of the matter of the bill, will be private.

The law will allow gay couples to form civil unions beginning July 1. That will entitle them to all of the hundreds of rights and responsibilities available to married couples under Vermont law in

such areas as taxes, inheritance and medical decision-making.

Other states will probably not recognize Vermont civil unions, and such status will not entitle gay couples to any the benefits available to married couples under federal law in such areas as taxes and immigration.

Nevertheless, no state has gone further than Vermont in giving gay couples something approximating marriage.

The bill came about after the Vermont Supreme Court unanimously ruled in December that gay couples were being unconstitutionally denied the benefits of marriage. The court left it up to the legislature time to decide whether to let gays marry or to create some kind of domestic partnership.

The legislation passed after strong debate in which opponents argued that homosexuality is "against natural law." Opponents have warned that they will make their anger known at the polls in November when members of the Legislature are up for re-election.

Under the law, gay couples will be able to go to their town clerks for licenses and have their unions certified by a judge or member of the clergy. Breakups will be handled in Family Court, just as divorces are, although they will be called dissolutions.

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Hate crimes increase in R.I. gay community by 29 percent

RHODE ISLAND - Hate crimes directed at the Rhode Island gay community increased 29 percent in 1999, according to statistics released April 10 by the state's Alliance for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights. The number of victims in these crimes increased a startling 107 percent.

The Alliance, which has tracked local hate crimes since 1994, recorded 18 reports of anti-gay violence involving 29 victims in 1999, up from 14 incidents involving 14 victims in 1998. Fifteen victims reported to be injuries with 10 requiring medical attention, including two who needed to be hospitalized. Reported incidents of assault and the number of reported perpetrators of gay hate crimes rose 71 percent.

The reported incidents included the physical assault and harassment of a guest at a predominantly lesbian housewarming party, written death threats to Providence Mayor Vincent "Buddy" Cianci, his gay and lesbian community liaison and two victims of hate crimes, and the physical assault of a transgender person in a Providence nightclub.

The reports received...are just tip of the iceberg, said Marc Cohen, chair of the Alliance's Committee Against Hate Crimes, at a press conference to release the findings. "Many more hate crimes aren't reported. Many people don't know how to report a Hate Crime. Cohen added the victims can make a confidential report by calling 401-521-GAYS. He also announced a new 24-hour resource for victims of hate crimes, the Victims of Crime Helpline (800-494-8100), which provides information, crisis support and advocacy to hate crime victims. The Helpline is part of the Network to End Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault and is operated by the Sexual Assault and Trauma

Resource Center of Rhode Island and the Blackstone Shelter.

Hate crimes tear at the very fabric of our society, said Kate Monteriro, Alliance president. They send a message that an entire class of people are under attack, whether they are gay or black or Jewish or Latino. They must be understood and addressed or no group will be safe from violence. No amount of harassment or violence can be tolerated. Everyone has a right to live without fear.



STOP THE HATE

Hate crimes fell slightly but grew more violent during '99, reports say.

SAN FRANCISCO - Across the country, anti-gay hate crimes have declined but have grown more violent, a new study shows.

Statistics compiled by the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs and San Francisco's Community United Against Violence show that the number of anti-gay incidents, such as taunts, discrimination and police indifference's to hate crimes fell in 1999 by 3 percent nationally. They declined 18 percent in the Bay Area.

But findings released last Wednesday also show the number of nationwide homicides increased from 26 to 29 last year. In the Bay area, the number of victims who reported severe injuries in violent assaults rose to 88, a 20 percent increase over 1998

Transgender victims accounted for 18 percent of all the incidents reported, almost twice that of the previous year.

Tina D'Elia, the programs director for CUAV, pointed out that the number of anti-gay homicides in California had tripled to six last year. The highest profile case involved the murders of a gay couple near Redding. Two brothers with ties to white supremacist groups have been charged in that case.

Folks coming out as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender in communities where maybe there isn't the same kind of visibility as San Francisco are seeing a kind of backlash as they come out, D'Elia said.

In a lot of ways, these people are being sought out as targets.

Nationally, the number of anti-gay incidents overall fell from 2,017 to 1,965 in 1999, but much of that decline came from four of 13 reporting regions, including San Francisco. In the other regions, there was a 40 percent increase in the number of incidents.

Anti-violence advocates said last week that they feared the number of incidents would increase next year because of anti-gay sentiments voiced by controversial radio personality Dr. Laura Schlessinger and the divisive battle earlier into the year over Proposition 22, the voter-approved ban of gay marriages in California.

Hate speech completely fosters people's already existing fears and prejudices, D'Elia said. They'll lash out more.

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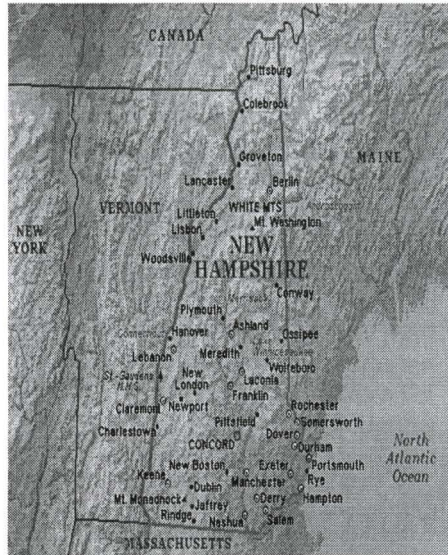
New Lesbian newspaper hopes to fill a niche in Northhampton

If you want something done right, goes the old saying, do it yourself. That's exactly what Northhampton lesbians Hilary Sloin and Ann Podolske are doing by publishing their lesbian newspaper called, fittingly enough, The Amazonian.

The Amazonian will launch its premiere issue during Northhampton's May 6 gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender pride celebration. Publishers and co-editors Soloin and Podolske started the paper because of their collective discontent with the lack of coverage of lesbian issues in the local press - surprising the city once dubbed "Lesbianville, U.S.A. by the National Enquirer. There are an estimated 4,500 lesbians living in the city of 29,000, which also boasts openly lesbian mayor Mary Clarke Higgins.

Despite the obvious presence of lesbians everywhere in Northhampton what Podolske jokingly called "the visual aides." One would never know that the town is a lesbian having by perusing the local newspaper, she said. I see {The Amazonian} as having all the news I've wanted to read but didn't see in the local newspapers, Podolske also confessed she drew on the adage write what you know for inspiration. I have been a lesbian for quite some time and feel I know a little bit about it.

This is not to say that lesbian and other women's issues have been totally underrepresented in the Pioneer Valley, an area comprising 43 communities in western Massachusetts, including



Northhampton. Calling itself a grassroots bulletin board for all of Western New England's lesbian communities, The Lesbian Calendar has been keeping Valley residents apprised of relevant activities and events for the past 15 years. The Women's Times, with a circulation of 32,000, is more mainstream monthly publication that reports on topics of general interest to women in two zoned editions. The Berkshire Region edition has been publishing for the past six and half years, while the Pioneer Valley version has been available for one year.

The Amazonian, however will be a prettier and edgier publication directed specifically at lesbians, Sloin promised. We want to talk about the things lesbians need to be made aware of Soloin said. For example, will author a column called "I Was Just Appalled" where she responds to media representations that are homophobic or egregiously sexist. The subject of her first column is the book "A Natural History of Rape: Biological Bases of Sexual Coercion, by Randy Thornhill and Craig T. Palmer, which posits that the urge for men to rape women is biologically based and a natural selection process for human survival. Other columns include; "The Lavender Menace," offering political commentary by Lois

Ahrens, and Surfin' for Sappho, which Sloin describe as a lesbian's guide to the Web.

We don't want to be fluffy, said Sloin, when asked to compare The Amazonian with national lesbian glosses such as Curve and Girlfriends magazines. Our goal is to get people to think and then get them to write back...to provoke. They don't have to like {the editorial content}."

With The Amazonian, Soloin, who earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in dramatic writing from New York University, and Podolske, who holds degrees in journalism and political science from the University of Wisconsin, hope to set a higher standard for quality writing in lesbian publications. Soloin feels this element is often sacrificed in the lesbian market for the sake of supporting one another. Said Soloin: "We [the lesbian community] print things not because they're good, but because we think we should." The Amazonian will combine Soloin's literary bent with Podolske's journalism background to cover a broad range of lively subjects encompassing politics, humor, history, entertainment and personal essays.

To that end they have tapped acclaimed authors Leslea Newman and Susan Stinson for their sixteen page inaugural issue. Newman, the prolific author of groundbreaking children's book "Heather Has Two Mommies" novels "Martha Moody" and "Fat Girls Dance With Rocks," contributes an autobiographical essay on being a fat woman. Although they actively recruited area writers for the first issue, Soloin emphasized that The Amazonian is "happy to publish anything good from anywhere," and will accept submissions. According to their press release, the publication seeks to discover and print new talent.

Soloin, a seven year Northhampton resident, is at a loss to explain exactly

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cont' Lesbian Newspaper

why, in an area teeming with lesbians, the information gap that The Amazonian intends to fill even exists. She expressed concern that complacency is the reason, a statement echoed by her co-editor.

"My guess is that people are able to live their lives here... Maybe they don't feel the need for it," said Podolske.

Perhaps The Amazonian's series of articles on the long history of lesbian in the Pioneer Valley going way back to the 1950s will shed some light on the issue.

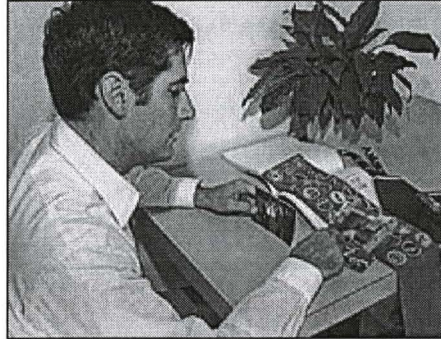
Despite the apparent apathy, the response expressed in the local community has typically been that of "it's about time," and Soloin added, "the advertisers are all over us."

Podolske, who works full-time as a writer and editor of business publication for the Bureau of National Affairs' Institute of Management and Administration, is hopeful that enough excitement will be generated that others will be inspired to join the paper's staff. She is also "hoping to have one thousand real live subscribers."

Spending about thirty hours a week preparing the publication, Podolske acknowledged that the task of starting The Amazonian is "quite an undertaking," as she and Soloin, who works as a graphic designer, are at this point handling all aspects of it production from the spare rooms in their homes. "once we get it going we hope it takes on life of it own," she said.

Supreme Court hears arguments over outster of gay leader from Boy Scouts

WASHINGTON - U.S. Supreme Court Justices on Wednesday engaged in a spirited debate over a case involving a gay member of the Boy Scouts.



On the last day of oral arguments for the term, the justices were asked to consider whether the Boy Scouts of America can prohibit gays from becoming troop leaders. Their decision may address the boarder issue of whether the Boy Scouts can ban gays at all levels.

George A. Davidson, an attorney for the Boy Scouts of America, argued that the Scouts had a constitutional right to oust New Jersey troop leader James Dale after learning he was gay. That information became public after a newspaper article identified Dale as a gay campus activist.

"Mr Dale had created a reputation for himself" by becoming publicly known to be gay, and that would harm his ability to be a role model to Scouts, Davidson said.

But Evans Wolfson, Dale's lawyer, said because the Boy Scouts are not specifically an anti-gay organization, Dale's presence did not burden the group's message.

He added that Dale did not seek to use his position as a Scout leader to advocate.

Justice Antonin Scalia asked Wolfson why the Scouts would be required to

accept as a leader someone who embodies a contradiction of their message.

Justice Stephan G. Breyer wondered out loud how courts should be determined whether the Boy Scouts' opposition to homosexuality is fundamental to their message. The Scouts say being gay violates the oath that require members to be clean morally straight.

Justice Anthony M. Kennedy asked, who is better qualified to determine the expressive purpose of the Boy Scouts. The Boy Scouts or the New Jersey courts?

The court is reviewing a ruling by the New Jersey Supreme Court that Dale, 29, was denied the opportunity to be a troop leader in violation of the state's anti-discrimination law. But the Scouts say the state law violates the organization's rights of free speech and free association under the Constitution's First Amendment.

Dale was 20 and an assistant scoutmaster of a Matawan, New Jersey, troop when in 1990 he was identified in the newspaper as co-president of a campus lesbian and gay student group at Rutgers University.

The Scout's Monmouth Council revoked Dale's registration as an adult leader, telling him the organization does not allow openly gay members.

For 12 years they said, "You're perfect, just what we want, get involved, it's family," Dale said before the case was argued. "Then they found out one small thing about who you are and kicked me out."

The Supreme Court could use this case to decide whether the Boy Scouts can prevent gays from joining the organization. Wednesday was the last day court heard arguments.

A ruling is expected in July.

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Maine Speakout Project

Want to live in a community that values diversity where everyone feels free to be themselves in public without fear of harassment or violence, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other differences?

If the answer is YES, then you should be planning to:

Walk With The One You Love

Sunday, June 18th in:

**Augusta - Bangor - Belfast - Brunswick - Kennebunk - Lewiston-Auburn
Portland - Peak's Island - Rockland - South Portland**

The Question On The Ballot

"Do you favor ratifying the action of the 119th Legislature whereby it passed an Act extending to all citizens regardless of their sexual orientation the same basic rights to protection against discrimination now guaranteed to citizens on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin in the areas of employment, housing, public accommodations and credit and where the Act expressly states that nothing in the Act confers legislative approval of, or special rights to any person or group of persons?"

**Vote YES for Basic Rights on
November 7th, 2000**

The Maine Coalition for Equal Rights is in the process of developing our web site. This web site will allow ALL Maine citizens to access information on this important measure. It will be a resource for the media, as well as a place where individuals will come together to support this ballot measure.

So, please check back with us over the next few weeks as we open our electronic campaign office. We hope each and every one of you will consider what YOU can do to help make sure everyone is treated equally in Maine.

In the meantime, if you would like to receive more information, talk with a real human being, or make a contribution to the campaign, please direct all inquiries to the address below. At this time, there is no phone number - however, phone contact information will soon be set up. For now, please email all inquiries to voteYES@equalmaine.org

Thank you for visiting - and remember.... Vote YES for Basic Rights on November 7th.

Contact Information:

**Maine Coalition for Equal Rights
P.O. Box 8799
Portland, Maine 04104**

Email General Inquiries to: voteYES@equalmaine.org

Paid for and Authorized by: Maine Coalition for Equal Rights, P.O. Box 8799, Portland, ME 04104

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Garbo may have paid to hide lesbianism



A friend of Greta Garbo asked the actress to pay hush money to an ex-lover so she would not go public about their relationship.

Cecil Beaton, a British fashion photographer, allegedly told Garbo to give Mercedes de Acosta money to keep her quiet, according to a report in the London's Sunday Telegraph, which quotes Garbo's friend Sam Green. Green said de Acosta was considering selling love letters between the two women because she need money.

The letter were not publicized until last month when the Rosenbach Museum and Library in Philadelphia announced it had acquired them. The museum plans to open them to the public next week.

Garbo died in 1990, de Acosta died 22 years earlier. Green said that when he knew Garbo, she didn't like to write letter "because of the

unpleasant experience with Mercedes.

Louisiana reconsiders sodomy law

LOUISIANA - One of 13 states with sodomy laws still on the books affecting gay and straight people, will decide soon on the constitutionality of barring anal or oral sex between consulting adults.

The state Supreme Court is due to take up the matter on Tuesday based on a case in which a man was charged with raping and sodomizing a woman. Both he and the woman testified that oral sex took place, and he was convicted of the "crimes against nature law," but acquitted of rape. A state appellate court overturned the conviction on the grounds that the sodomy law violates a constitutional right to privacy.

If current trends are any indication, the 195-year-old law may be history. In recent years, states have been striking down laws that punish private, noncommercial sexual relations between adults, although the laws are still on the books in 17 states. Specific anti-gay sodomy laws remain in effect in four states- Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Kansas.

In Louisiana, the so-called "crime against nature" law is a felony punishable by up to five years in prison. Gays and lesbians have said that the law unfairly targets them, even it applies both heterosexual and homosexual acridity.

With the case, the state Supreme Court will also consider whether the sodomy law applies to commercial sex. Several accused prostitutes say they are punished more severely for soliciting oral sex instead of intercourse, since sodomy carries a five year sentence and soliciting otherwise is a misdemeanor.

decline came from four of 13 reporting regions, including San Francisco. In the other regions, there

Director of Gay military group challenges Secretary of Navy

WASHINGTON - The executive director of the Service members Legal Defense Network sent a letter Thursday, correcting his two false notions about gays in the military.

Secretary of the Navy Richard Danzig said Monday that the military should wait for a consensus from society before the armed forces have to deal with gay rights. He was speaking at the U.S. Navel Academy in Annapolis Md.

First, says C. Dixon Osburn, SLDN's executive director, contrary to what the secretary said, there is a very strong consensus that there should be a policy of non-discrimination in the military. Osburn noted that the majority of people opposed to discrimination against gays has grown consistently in the past 20 years.

Osburn second point is that historically, the military has been the leader on these issues. He says he wants to remind people, like Danzig that in 1948, when Truman integrated the military, it created greater dissent about African Americans at a time when segregation laws were still in effect, and he added the military has been a leader in jobs for women.

Last month, a pentagon, study indicating homophobia is rampant in the military prompted Defense Secretary William Cohen to set up a commission to study the problem and establish anti-bias programs.

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Mississippi Senate unanimously approves gay adoption ban

MISSISSIPPI - The Mississippi Senate gave final unanimous approval on Wednesday to Senate Bill 3074, banning adoptions by same-sex couples. Gov. Ronnie Musgrove is expected to sign it into law in the next week.

This is just an invitation to litigate David Ingebretsen, director of the Mississippi chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, told Associated Press. There was pressure from the religious right, and they caved in to that pressure. Ingebretsen says the ACLU already has a couple trying to adopt who may be interested in serving as the test case.

The president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention cheered the new law. The Rev. Kermitt D. MacGregor told the Jackson's Clarion-Ledger, "We would stand for the traditional values of family, home and Christian values that Mississippi has enjoyed through these years."

Gay right activists were hopeful last month after the bill died in the state house. A coalition of organizations had waged a "phone home" campaign to legislators that encouraged House speaker Tim Ford to let the bill die before it could come to a vote.

In response, the Mississippi Baptist Convention and American Family Association waged a counter-lobbying campaign which led the House to tag an amendment onto unrelated Senate legislation. empowering nurse practitioners to sign adoption papers.

Mississippi follows Utah as the second state to ban gay adoptions this year. Florida also has a ban on same-sex adoptions.

Court gives visitation to lesbian mom's ex.

New Jersey Supreme Court recognizes right of psychological parent'

TRENTON, N.J. - Advocates for gay rights are praising a New Jersey Supreme Court ruling that says lesbian partners who raise children have the same custodial rights as any parent.

The court last Thursday ruled unanimously that a lesbian who helped raise her then lover's twins was a "psychological parent" with legal standing akin to the biological mother. The court granted her visitation now that the couple has split up.

"It is really a groundbreaking decision," said Michael Adams of the American Civil Liberties Union's National Lesbian and Gay Right Project. "The issue here is that once you have a parent-child relationship we are not going to focus on legal technicalities. The moral issue here is what is best for the child."

But Jan LaRue, lawyer with the Family Research Council in Washington, said the court went too far and trampled birth mother's rights. The group opposes law or policy changes that it believes damages the traditional family.

"We've got a Supreme Court in New Jersey that has made law rather than interpreted it. LaRue said. "They have acknowledged that there is no statute that would grant psychological parenthood, yet they went on to create it."

The case involved a woman who became pregnant by artificial insemination and gave birth to twins in 1994. She and her partner, identified on as V.C., raised the twins together for two years.

After their 1996 separation, V.C. was denied joint custody and visitation. An appellate court gave her visitation rights but was denied in its legal reasoning as to why.

In Thursday's ruling, Associate Justice Virginia Long said V.C. has a right to parenting duties, despite the objections of the birth mother, identified on by M.J.B.

"Each appears to be full capable, loving parent committed to the safety and welfare of the twins," Long wrote.

The ruling maintained V.C.'s weekend visitation rights. But Long denied her request for joint legal custody because V.C. hasn't been involved in decisions about the children's upbringing for four years.

Ruth Harlow, an attorney for the New York based Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund, which litigates for the rights of gays, said the ruling was similar to a lesbian parent decision in Wisconsin in 1995. A lower court was ordered to reconsider its decision to turn down a woman's request for visit with her former lover's son.

But the New Jersey Supreme Court employed stronger language about lesbian partners' equal legal rights. Harlow said.

"It is very focused on making sure that no matter what kind of family a child has been raised in, if someone has functioned as a parent, that person can go into court and ask if it is in the child's best interests to continue that relationship," she said.

Last June a Massachusetts high court ruling granted visitation rights to a lesbian who helped raise her ex-partner's son.

By contrast, in California, New York, and Florida state courts have ruled within the past 18 months that lesbian ex-partners are not entitled to visitation rights with children they helped nurture.

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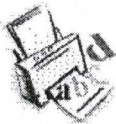
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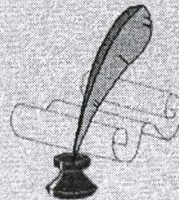
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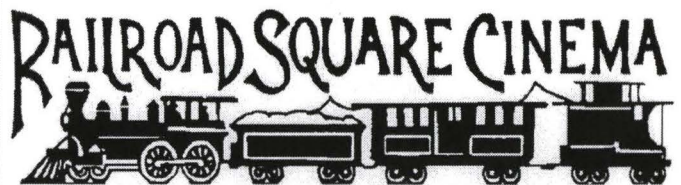
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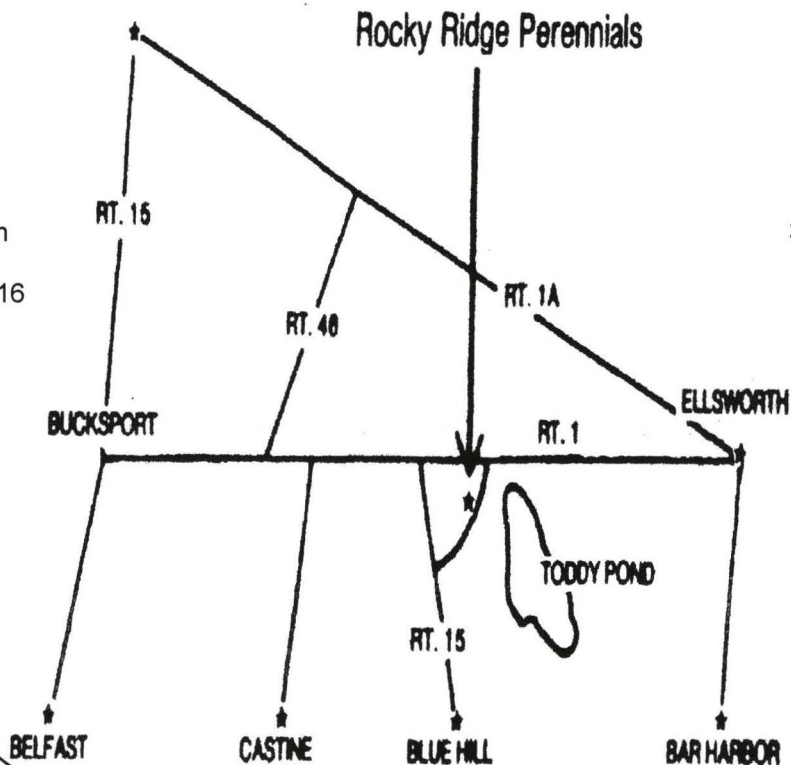


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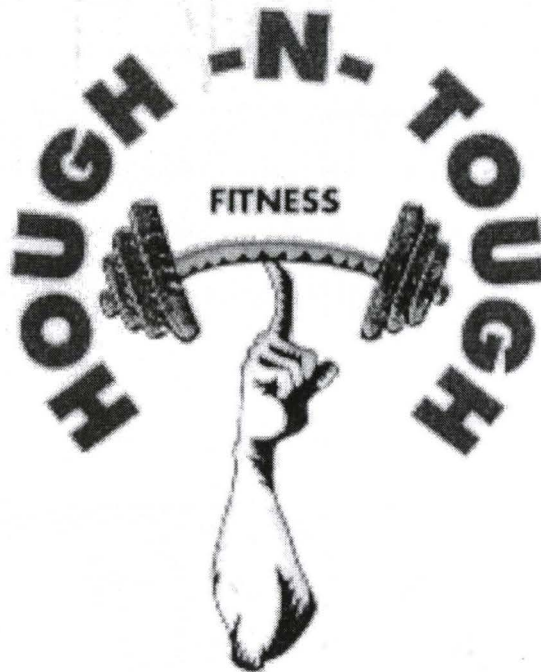
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PREAMBLE & MISSION STATEMENT

A generation ago, neither the Republican nor the Democratic Party opposed homophobia. Today, the platform of the Democratic Party, while not yet ideal, opposes prejudice based on sexual orientation, and explicitly supports the adoption of national policies to outlaw discrimination. In contrast, the Republican platform opposes efforts to end discrimination based on sexual orientation. We believe the Democratic Party should be the home of those devoted to securing fair and equal treatment for people regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

The National Stonewall Democratic Federation is devoted to advancing equal rights for all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. National Stonewall Democrats support the Democratic Party and Democratic candidates who support our mission. It draws its strength from a nationwide network of individuals and clubs composed of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Democrats who are working to realize these goals:

- ▼ To educate the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community, and people who are supportive of it, about the vast differences that exist between the two major parties on the issues of concern to our community;
- ▼ To lead our party to improve its record on issues of importance to our community, and to work for the nomination of Democratic candidates from the local to the national level, including qualified openly, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender candidates, who will be fully supportive of our fight against bigotry and intolerance;
- ▼ To encourage our community to support and vote for Democratic candidates who are committed to defeating homophobia and prejudice; and
- ▼ To work with local gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender Democratic clubs to encourage and foster the creation of new clubs.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ▼ Made substantial contributions to progressive Democratic candidates who support our mission (donated more in 1st year than the Log Cabin Republicans)
- ▼ Endorsed Federal Candidates who support our mission and won over 70% of the races in which we endorsed
- ▼ Met with Congressional leaders to reinforce the legislative issues of importance to NSDF
- ▼ Hosted White House Chief of Staff John Podesta and some ten other, either elected or appointed officials in the Clinton Administration at a dinner in Washington
- ▼ Spoke out in the City of Philadelphia Mayors race standing up for equality for the LGBT community
- ▼ Started affiliates in 7 new cities and presently forming an additional 5 (goal by 2004 to have affiliates in each congressional district)
- ▼ Increased membership in NSDF by 120% and hope to have over 100,000 members by 2001
- ▼ Briefed the Gay Staff Association on the actions and goals of NSDF to begin a dialogue and strengthen our access to Congress
- ▼ Held first annual convention in Atlanta, GA. With speakers Congressman Barney Frank and Congressman John Lewis. With activists from over 22 states attending
- ▼ Presented at the 1999 NGLTF Creating Change Conference, a dialogue about the 2000 Presidential election
- ▼ Opened a permanent office in the Washington, DC
- ▼ Issued numerous press releases pointing out the many shortcomings of the Republican Party and specifically its Presidential candidates on LGBT issues
- ▼ Endorsed and recommended the appointment of Julian Potter to replace Richard Socarides as White house liaison to the gay community
- ▼ Denounced the California "Knight Initiative"
- ▼ Called for national support for the District of Columbia's right to needle exchange and to have their 1998 "medical marijuana" vote to be counted
- ▼ Lobbied for the Hate Crimes bill in Congress
- ▼ Honored the DNC Gay and Lesbian Caucus

THE PRIDE REPORTER®

EDITORIAL

Dear Editor:

I would like to comment on a few things about the Gay Community, in The Bangor area. This is going to be a very critical year for the community and there seems to be no cohesiveness with one another at all. Here it is a month before the Bangor Pride Day and there is nothing planned for a parade or festival at the time of this writing, April 2000. It takes months of planning and money to get ready for this event, not to mention volunteers to help bring all this together. It can't all be completed in a month or less on important matters.

Now is the time to pull together and become very visible in the community and show that we do blend in with the general community and share the same thoughts, concerns and feelings as anyone else and we should be treated as equals, not third class citizens. Show that we can work together in a common cause and not be split apart as it has been in the past. We can do this by volunteering for many causes and create new ones. We can build parks for children and adults to play and enjoy nice days with family and friends. We can repair a rundown house for a homeless person or persons. We can do a lot of good things if we want to but do we really want to?

It's time now to stop being stagnant and show some spunk! Get involved with local government and community building activities and make a difference. Sitting in the bars or staying invisible is not getting the work done nor is it helping anyone. Remember SILENCE KILLS!!! We need to start taking PRIDE in who we are and dare other to tell us we can't.. I know I have had enough and I am getting involved. I visited a church and stayed. It's been almost two years now, when I attended the congregation knew that I was gay and some didn't like it but it didn't stop me from going back. I now have a three year position on one of their committees and have been asked to be on a state committee to represent the church. Not bad for a gay man walking into a new church after nearly 30 years of being away from the religious setting. I am making a difference in that church and that is what is important. I had enough and I had to start someplace and why not start where most of the trouble is coming from—church.

So, Think about it and don't let someone else do it for you. They do not know your feelings and thoughts on issues, only you do. Come forward and be counted. You are not alone in this battle nor will you be the last person to join the fight. There is safety in numbers and the more numbers the better. Bullies back down when they are out numbered and it's time to back them in their corner.

Thank you for letting me get this off my mind. I know we can come together and prove to the community that we are kind, loving, compassionate people and not what they perceive us to be.

Respectfully Submitted
Dan Williams, Bangor.

DISCLAIMER

Although we may share some of the views of our readers, these are there opinions, not the opinions of "The Pride Reporter" we welcome all and any of your thoughts and opinions to be printed in this paper not matter what your view is.

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From the Pride Reporter

Welcome readers to "The Pride Reporter", this is the third issue with hopefully many issue to follow. We are excited in bring you this paper to keep you informed of what is happening throughout your community. We are looking forward to making this paper something that everyone can be proud of. Any and all suggestions are welcome. Over the next few months you will see many positive changes for the better so please bare with us while we work things out with the paper. Thank you for your patients and support.

The Pride Reporter

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