

the rest of



our world.

Child returned

CATHEDRAL CITY, Calif.—A gay couple has regained custody of a 10-year-old boy whose grandfather had abducted him.

Miguel Washington was surrendered to authorities by relatives in Pennsylvania and returned to the home of his uncle, Paul Washington, Jr., and Timothy Forrester.

"Right now he's really happy to be home," Washington Jr. said. "We're absolutely elated. Our family is united again."

An attorney for Paul Washington Sr. and Sandra Washington, Miguel's grandparents and Washington Jr.'s parents, said his clients intend to pursue custody.

"My clients don't feel that's the best home for him," said attorney Bill Hence, Jr. "I'm very disappointed in the agencies that were supposed to be protecting the rights of the child."

Miguel was born to Angelena Washington, the younger Washington's mentally disabled sister, who was impregnated while living in an assisted-care facility, family members said. At the time, family members informally agreed to have him raised by Washington, Jr., a hardware store salesman, and Forrester, a teacher.

Advertising wars

OMAHA, Neb.—Opponents of a constitutional ban on gay marriages or civil unions tried to use some emotional symbolism in their campaign.

But Nebraska television stations wouldn't let them.

Their television ads were rejected by three stations because the message used a swastika.

Advertising time was purchased on three ABC affiliates for airing during a Nebraska-Oklahoma football game.

The ad opened with the state motto, "Equality Before the Law" in big letters on the screen. The slogan then changed to "Equality for some Before the Law" as a swirling swastika slowly became visible in the background. The advertisement ended with a voiceover saying, "Things like 416 have happened before. Let's make sure they don't happen in Nebraska."

Opponents of Initiative 416, the so-called Defense of Marriage Act, said they were being censored.

"While controversial we do not believe it is offensive," Michael Jones, treasurer of the

Vote No on DOMA Committee said.

He said gays as well as Jews were persecuted in Nazi Germany and laws are now being enacted against gays as they were in pre-World War II Germany.

Time for the advertisement was bought on stations KETV in Omaha, KHGI in Kearney, and KLKN in Lincoln. After seeing the advertisement, station officials all said it was inappropriate and would not be aired.

The proposal passed in November.

Journalists' benefits

COLUMBUS, Ohio—A professional group for journalists is urging the news industry to offer domestic partnership benefits to its gay and lesbian employees.

The Society of Professional Journalists approved a resolution at its annual meeting calling for such benefits.

The measure, approved 85 to 36, was opposed by some members who said the professional organization should not be involved in employment matters such as benefits.

"It's not about employment from our perspective," said SPJ diversity chairwoman Sally Lehrman. "It's about fairness and accuracy in content, which emerges in part from fairness in the newsroom."

Gay initiatives

Four states had initiatives on their ballots last month affecting the rights of gay and lesbian citizens.

Voters in Maine, Oregon, Nebraska and Nevada all had initiatives before them.

In Maine, voters narrowly refused to adopt a gay rights measure that has been a political football in that state for years.

Oregon defeated a proposal that would have barred classroom instruction "encouraging, promoting, sanctioning" homosexuality or bisexuality, and would have applied to public schools from kindergarten to community colleges.

"This is an incredible victory for gay youth; Oregon voters have sent a message that you can't choose which students are legitimate and which students are not," said Jim Anderson, a spokesman for the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network.

Also on Election Day, Nebraska and Nevada adopted

proposals to amend their constitutions to say only marriage between a man and woman is valid.

Since 1995, 34 states have enacted a ban on recognizing same-sex marriages, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Clinton-gay vote

WASHINGTON—President Clinton found a warm reception among gay audiences, and it's one of the Democratic constituencies that he continued to court for Vice President Al Gore in the closing days of the campaign.

The Gore campaign tried to distance itself from the president in many battleground states.

But Clinton was a headliner at a gay and lesbian event where he said Gore as president would continue many of the gay-friendly policies he had implemented.

"The vice president supported everything I did for this community," Clinton told about 50 gay and lesbian leaders. "I hope, for what it's worth, 100 percent of your community will know that on Election Day."

Speaking at a fund-raiser organized by the Democratic National Committee and the Gay and Lesbian Leadership Council, Clinton said a Gore administration would be much better for homosexuals than one headed by Texas Gov. George W. Bush, the Republican presidential nominee.

About 50 gay and lesbian leaders were at the \$10,000-minimum fund-raiser, which administration spokesmen said took in more than \$1 million for the DNC.

Nun disciplined

BOSTON—A Roman Catholic nun has been disciplined for helping to perform baptism rites on the adoptive babies of two gay couples.

Sister Jeannette Normandin was fired from Boston's Jesuit Urban Center, and presentation of an award she was to receive, the annual Imago Deo "in the image of God" award, was postponed.

Her punishment sparked a furor in the community. That prompted the center to postpone the dinner until next spring.

"It's simply to have the event in a peaceful time," the

Rev. Thomas Carroll, director of the center, said.

Carroll wouldn't comment on the baptism.

"We reflect on many things in weekly staff meetings," he said. "I'm sure we will talk about these things."

Church officials believe Normandin was making a political statement when she helped baptize the adoptive sons of two gay couples Oct. 22. Under church law, baptisms can only be performed by ordained ministers, except in an emergency. Normandin has said women should be ordained as priests.

Normandin and the Rev. George Winchester, who watched as she performed the baptisms, were both fired and were ordered to move out of the Jesuit center.

Korean coming out

SEOUL, South Korea—Coming out in Korea can be a difficult thing.

Just ask Hong Suk-chon, a 29-year-old actor who became the first Korean celebrity to reveal that he is gay.

Hong's coming out is a sensation in South Korea, a deeply Confucian society with a strong Catholic church. Here, homosexuality has been treated as if it's a disease and exists only in the West.

At a loss for an indigenous term to describe Hong's deed, local media resorted to borrowing the English term "coming out."

"I at least have gotten people talking about homosexuality. I dream of a day when parents tell their kids that homosexuals are no freaks," said Hong, who rose to celebrity playing an effeminate male designer in a television sitcom.

He also was a regular latenight talk show guest and appeared on South Korea's leading children's program.

His coming out was costly. MBC TV banished Hong from the children's program. A radio station canceled his sitcom contract. His distraught parents, who are 65 and live in a conservative rural town, begged him to tell the media that he was mistaken when he said he was gay.

Hong, best known for his shaved head and often hyperactive and flamboyant TV roles, said he lost 90 percent of his jobs virtually overnight.

Gay family

SACRAMENTO, Calif.—A new tax ruling in California recognizes that one partner in a same-sex partnership can be recognized as the head of the household.

Such a designation is significant for tax purposes.

The state Board of Equalization on Wednesday upheld an earlier ruling that Helmi Hisserich could file as head of household, a tax classification mainly used by unmarried taxpayers supporting family members.

Hisserich, a 37-year-old economic development consultant from Los Angeles, pursued the issue for three years after she was denied the filing status by the Franchise Tax Board.

She and her partner, Tori Patterson, have been together 14 years. Patterson gave birth to a daughter, conceived by artificial insemination, in 1997 and has stayed home to raise the child since then.

The ruling will save Hisserich about \$1,000 a year in state taxes.

"This sounds corny, but I'm really a good citizen who contributes to society, and I felt I was really being wronged by the tax system," Hisserich said.

The board said it could not estimate how many couples might benefit from the new ruling.

French novelist dies

PARIS—A French novelist who authored a classic among gay literature has died.

Roger Peyrefitte, a prolific writer whose novel about male friendship in a religious school won France's prestigious Renaudot prize in 1945, died at the age of 93.

Peyrefitte, who died in Paris, made his reputation with *Amities Particulieres*, or *Special Friendships*, which dealt with bonds among young teen-age boys in a strict Roman Catholic boarding school.

The book, which has been hailed as a classic of gay literature, was followed by several other novels, as well as plays and essays on Voltaire, Alexander the Great, and Charles de Gaulle.