

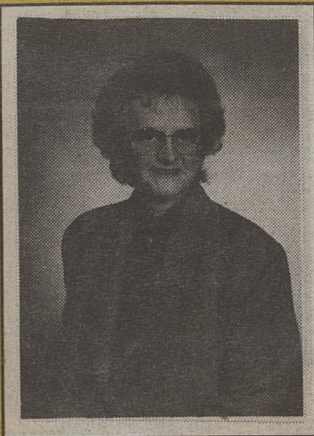
# OUT IN THE MOUNTAINS

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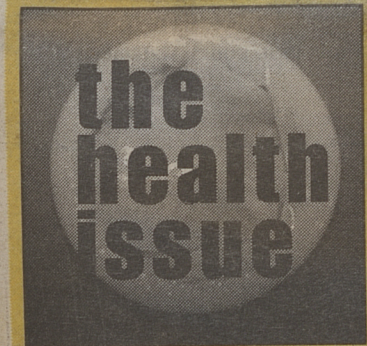
FRI Volume XVI, Number 4 May 2002 www.mountainpridemedia.org

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## Federal Hate Crime Indictment Handed Down For 1996 Shenandoah Murders

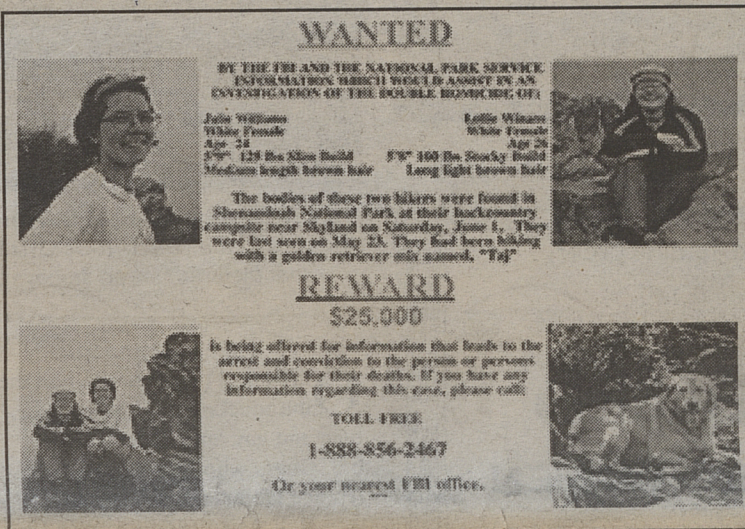
### Alleged killer could face death penalty for slaying of couple on route to Huntington.

COMPILED FROM NEWS REPORTS BY  
**MARGARET PORTER**

U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft invoked the Hate Crimes Sentencing Enhancement Act in the indictment of Darrell David Rice for the 1996 slaying of two female hikers in Shenandoah National Park, Virginia. The indictment marks the first time ever that the Hate Crimes Sentencing Enhancement Act was invoked to charge someone with a hate crime based on sexual orientation or gender. Ashcroft said that Julianna Williams, 24, of Burlington, Vermont, and Lollie Winans, 26, of Unity, Maine, were specifically selected as victims because they were women and lesbians. Their bodies were found June 1, 1996 at a secluded campsite with their wrists bound and throats slashed.

Rice was indicted by a grand jury in Charlottesville, Va., charged with four counts of capital murder, two as a result of the hate crime designation. If convicted on any of the four charges in the indictment, Rice could be subject to the death penalty.

Prosecutors quoted Rice as saying he "hates gays" and that the victims "deserved to die because they were lesbian whores." Rice is already in prison after pleading guilty to a 1997 attempted abduction of a female bicyclist in the same park. No physical evidence specifically linking Rice to the murders was discussed at the press conference. Because the murders



A flyer distributed at the time of the killings.

**Hate crimes based on sexual orientation have more than tripled since the FBI began collecting statistics in 1991.**

occurred on federal land, the 1994 Hate Crimes Sentencing Enhancement Act, which applies only to federal crimes, could be applied. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act, currently pending in Congress, would make violent hate crimes federal offenses. Currently only 27 states and the District of Columbia have hate crimes laws that include sexual orientation.

"After more than five years, we're relieved that progress has been made in the case. However it serves as a sad reminder about the pervasiveness of hate violence against gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people," said Lorri L. Jean, executive director of the National Gay

and Lesbian Task Force. FBI Special Agent Jane L. Collins and National Park Service Special Agent Timothy W. Alley investigated the case. Criminal Chief Thomas J. Bondurant, Jr., and Assistant U.S. Attorney Anthony P. Giorno are scheduled to prosecute.

Rice's father and sister insist that the Darrell David Rice they know could not have committed these murders. He was doing well, they said, and showed no sign of misogyny or anti-female beliefs or behaviors. "He's never expressed any kind of hatred against gays or women in his life," his older sister, Dawn Metcalf, was quoted as saying by the *Washington Post*.

Family members and friends characterized Rice as a "hippy-ish Grateful Dead fan" who was "fiercely loyal to his friends." Rice had problems with drugs and depression, but was at a high point in his life at the time of the murders, they said.

A year after the murders, Rice was fired from his job at a computer firm for punching a hole in a men's room door. According to the *Post's* report, he told investigators that his coworkers were watching his house and that he had been dealing marijuana. A week after being fired he was arrested in an attempted abduction of a female cyclist.

Winans and Williams, who met in 1995 in Minneapolis, had become romantically involved and planned to share a home in Huntington, Vermont, soon after their Shenandoah camping trip.

Both women were experienced in hiking and camping in wilderness areas. According to a report in the *Washington Blade* a year after the murders, Park Service officials said the two had registered and obtained permits for camping in several locations in the 105-mile long park, which stretches like a ribbon in a north-south direction from Front Royal to Waynesboro, which is located about 25 miles west of Charlottesville.

They were last seen alive May 24 by a Park Service employee who drove them to the

> continued on page 6

## Bullying Trial Findings: School Acted Appropriately

BY EUAN BEAR

A jury in Caledonia Superior Court found that school officials at the St. Johnsbury middle school acted appropriately in response to reports of sexual harassment of a male student. The jury reached its finding after about two hours of deliberation following a 5-day trial.

The lawsuit against the

school was filed by Linda Berthiaume, who had charged that the school had failed to protect her son, Nicholas Spaziani, from harassment on the bus and in his home room by classmates who assumed he was gay. Berthiaume was reported to have sought \$1 million in damages.

In a brief statement, plaintiff's lawyer Eileen Blackwood, of Burlington, said

that the jury found that the boy had been harassed, but that the school had responded appropriately to acts she had earlier characterized as more than "just harmless teasing." In her opening statement, Blackwood had outlined the effects of the harassment on Spaziani as severe enough that the boy threatened to kill himself.

Defendants' lawyer

Pietro Lyn, representing the school district and three officials being sued, maintained successfully that the school responded "every single time a complaint was made." Administrators spoke to the harassers and sent letters home to their parents. Eventually, the four worst offenders were suspended when Spaziani was in his last year of middle school. ▼