

the rest of our world

Queer Philatelists

Dallas, TX – According to a press release, there is now an expanded and up-to-date 2004 revision of the Handbook of the Gay and Lesbian History on Stamps Club (GLHSC). Who knew that gay and lesbian history could be found on postage stamps? Two club cofounders took over a year to complete the book, the second revision. The authors of the Handbook are Paul Henefeld and his life partner, Blair O'Dell.

The 116-page Handbook contains an alphabetical listing by person, many with brief biographies, as well as a separate listing in 'country' sequence. Nearly 400 gays, lesbians and bisexuals are represented in the Handbook.

For more info, email the club at glhsc@aol.com.

We Had to Ask?

Washington, DC – In mid-May, leaders of the Democratic minority in the U.S. Senate pledged they would block any proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would prohibit the recognition of same-sex marriage. The commitment was made at a meeting in the Capitol between the Senate Leadership Council and leaders of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community.

"We are gratified that our allies in the Democratic minority have committed to killing any attempt to enshrine anti-gay discrimination into our nation's most sacred document," said Matt Foreman, Executive Director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

Three senators –Schumer (NY), Boxer (CA), and Stabenow (MI) – reaffirmed the solidity of their support against an amendment, regardless of any changes in language.

Anti-marriage state constitutional amendments will be on the November ballot in at least five states (Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, and Utah). Other imperiled states include the key 2004 battleground states of Michigan, Ohio and Oregon.

Keeping Queers Out of the Army

Washington, D.C. – The House and Senate Armed Services Committees added language to the FY2005 Defense Authorization Bill, allowing the military to avoid compliance with universities' non-discrimination policies.

The legislation requires colleges and universities to grant military recruiters access to campus in "a manner that is at least equal in quality and

scope" to that provided any other employer.

Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN) opposes the legislation. "This isn't about recruiting," Sharra E. Greer, SLDN's Director of Law & Policy, said. "The Pentagon is simply trying to maintain its federally sanctioned discrimination on our nation's campuses."

Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) included an amendment that exempts student aid from the federal funding which may be withheld from institutions that continue to bar recruiters.

David Reimer Dies

Winnipeg, Canada – A man who was born a boy but raised as a girl in a famous nurture-versus-nature experiment has died at the age of 38. David Reimer, who shared his story in the pages of a book and on *Oprah*, took his own life last month, according to a news report.

After a botched circumcision as a toddler, David became the subject of an experiment dubbed the John/Joan case in the '60s and '70s.

The gender transformation was widely reported as a success and proof that children are not by nature feminine or masculine. David's identical twin brother, Brian, offered researchers a matched control subject.

When David discovered the truth about his past during his teenage years, he resumed his male identity, eventually marrying and becoming a stepfather. At the time of his death, David had lost his job and was divorced from his wife.

David's twin brother had died two years before, possibly of an overdose.

Censorship in Utah

Salt Lake City – The American Civil Liberties Union came to the defense of a group of Utah high school students who were punished for wearing "Queers Kick Ash" t-shirts to school. School officials also threatened to ban the school's gay-straight alliance.

Assistant Principal David Breen told students that the shirts were inappropriate and that he disapproved of the word "queer." Two gay male students had to take the shirts off, turn them inside out, or be suspended. One turned his shirt inside out and stayed at school; the other refused and was suspended. A heterosexual girl who wore the same shirt was sent home without suspension.

When more students wore the shirts to school and were punished, Breen threatened to bring the school's gay-straight alliance – uninvolved in

distributing the t-shirts – to "a screeching halt."

The ACLU of Utah demanded that officials remove suspensions from the students' records, allow the students to wear the shirts, and drop its threats against the school's GSA.

"Not only are the school's reasons for censoring these students unlawful, but the assistant principal's treating a straight student differently from the gay students and his threats to ban the school's gay-straight alliance are completely unjustifiable," said Margaret Plane, a staff attorney with the ACLU of Utah.

No More Butterflies

West Palm Beach, FL – The butterfly ballot will spread and close its wings for the last time at the third annual Stonewall Ball on Saturday, June 26. The Compass Gay and Lesbian Community Center and Equality Florida are holding the black-tie benefit with the theme Madame Butterfly Ballot.

"Much has changed over three years; we have transitioned from dimpled chads to computer pads," said Tony Plakas, president and CEO of Compass, Inc.

"This event is about restoring voter confidence in our democracy," said Nadine Smith, executive director of Equality Florida. "There is no place where the importance of voting is more vivid than Palm Beach County and the state of Florida."

Among the items to be auctioned are Palm Beach County butterfly ballots.

A Win in Kansas

Washington, DC – When the Kansas Legislature adjourned May 8, it effectively killed a proposed anti-gay amendment to the state Constitution that would have denied marriage to same-sex couples in the state. The measure, which failed in Senate and House votes, would have also denied the legal protections of marriage to same-sex couples in civil unions or domestic partnerships.

"Legislators recognized that resurrecting an anti-gay amendment to the Kansas Constitution was a bad idea and waste of time," said HRC President Cheryl Jacques. "It's heartening to see fairness won out."

No CU Divorce

Des Moines, Iowa – Lambda Legal and local organizations are asking the Iowa State Supreme Court to reject an attempt by antigay groups to intervene in a case in which an Iowa district court granted two Sioux City women's request to terminate their civil union.

Camilla Taylor, staff attorney in Lambda Legal's Midwest Regional Office, said, "Iowa courts consistently resolve matters between couples living together, regardless of the status of their relationship, whether married or not. A handful of legislators and others have tried to insinuate themselves into this particular case because this time it involves two lesbians. It's clear these groups don't like gay people, but that doesn't give them the right to interfere in other people's personal lives."

Wanna Dance?

Lago Vista, TX – In response to a demand letter from attorneys representing Lago Vista High School student Sherrell Ingram, the Texas school "suspended" its policy prohibiting same-sex prom dates in time for Sherrell, who is straight, to bring her best friend, another female, as her guest to the Lago Vista High School Prom.

In seeking relief from the school's discriminatory policy, Sherrell and her mother, Ginger White, were represented by attorneys from People For the American Way Foundation (PFAWF), a national civil liberties group.

"I'm delighted with this result," said White. "Now Sherrell can concentrate on other pressing issues, like finding a pair of shoes to match her prom dress."

Anti-Gay Violence Grows

New York – After an 8 percent increase in anti-LGBT violence for 2003, and a 26 percent increase in such incidents during the last six months of the year, anti-violence advocates from across the country convened for a meeting in Denver, Colorado to plan, strategize and organize their responses.

The annual gathering of members of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) this year has special significance as LGBT people find themselves increasingly under attack politically, culturally and physically in the wake of the US Supreme Court's June 2003 decision in *Lawrence v. Texas* and the decision of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court legalizing same-sex marriage in that state.

KKK Goes to Dollywood

Nashville, TN – A group of Ku Klux Klan members protested outside the Dollywood theme park in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, on May 22 when a group of gay men and lesbians are expected for a second annual "Gay Day" event.

A small group of about 20 KKK protesters demonstrated against the group's attendance, Klansman Randy Gray told The Tennessean. Gray said his group organized the protest because Gay Day is "totally opposite of what theme parks are for."

"Theme parks have always been for families. They're going there, I believe, to rub it in our faces, to be like 'ha, ha, we're finally getting our way,'" he said.

Last year the Gay Day event drew about 1,300 people but no protests, said Ryan Salyer, executive director of the Knoxville-based gay, lesbian and transgender group Tri-Cities Pride, which organized the event.

This year, Salyer said he expects around 5,000 attendees from as far away as New York and Philadelphia who plan to attend the gathering.

Oklahoma Rejects Gay Adoption

Washington, DC – According to a press release from the Human Rights Campaign, Oklahoma has passed a law that denies recognition to adoptions by same-sex couples from out of state.

The law, signed by the governor last month, requires the state, its agencies and the courts of Oklahoma to not recognize adoptions from other jurisdictions by same-sex couples. The effects of this bill are potentially harmful to same-sex couples who are both legal parents of their children and move to or travel through Oklahoma. The non-biological parent(s) may be denied access to their children in the hospital or barred from making medical decisions for them.

Maine Gets Domesticated

Augusta, ME – The Maine Legislature passed a domestic partnership registry bill providing inheritance rights, next-of-kin status, victim's compensation, and guardian and conservator rights to domestic partners. Gov. John Baldacci signed the measure – which applies to unmarried couples of any gender – into law.

Maine became the fifth state to pass statewide laws that provide rights to unmarried couples. ▼

Compiled this month by Euan Bear.