

# Tongue in Cheek: As Seen on TV

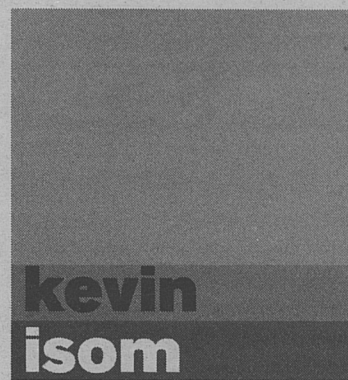
**W**ell, who would have guessed it? John Kerry pulls an increasingly moribund campaign out of the deep-freeze by out-jousting President Bush in the first presidential debate. And the Reverend Jimmy Swaggart threatens to murder any gay man who thinks about going marital on him.

Both cases involve people who really need to take a good, hard look at themselves in a mirror. Specifically, President Bush should definitely review his facial expressions that the TV split screen caught whenever Senator Kerry was speaking. I've seen more appealing expressions on an orangutan. (Remember the TV series "BJ and the Bear" from the 80s?) I could barely listen to the to the men speak, because I was laughing so hard at the President's angry, befuddled, and totally-over-it expressions shown on the split-screen. It seemed to me that the President should have outsourced his facial expressions that night. Sure, Kerry "won" the debate but those Bush poses? Priceless.

And as for Swaggart – please! Has he seen himself in a mirror lately? I can't imagine there are many men lining up at his door, ready to drop to one knee (to propose marriage, of course). Besides, if Swaggart's past history is any indication, any such male suitor would have to catch up to Swaggart in the company of the latest female prostitute he happens to be caught with. Not exactly a recipe for gay marital bliss.

In case you missed it, what I'm talking about are Swaggart's comments on his syndicated television ministry. He said on a September 12 broadcast, "I've never seen a man in my life that I wanted to marry. And I'm going to be blunt and plain: if one ever looks at me like that, I'm going to kill him and tell God he died." The congregation laughed and applauded. Suggesting murder is, after all, classic comedy.

Of course, one wonders



about the basic intelligence (or lack thereof) of a man who could think it would even be a semi-intelligent comment to say that he's never seen a man that he wanted to marry. Could it perhaps be because he's NOT GAY? Hello!?! Paraphrasing an old campaign slogan, "It's the sexual orientation, stupid!"

But the suggestion of killing a gay man wasn't funny. It was troubling, at best. In fact, it troubled a Canadian citizen enough to make a complaint to the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council, while an American gay rights group asked the IRS to review the tax-exempt status of Swaggart's ministry. The American FCC, which fined the CBS television network \$500,000 for Janet Jackson's Booby-gate incident at the Super Bowl, was notably silent. Apparently, it's bad to show an attractive black woman's breast, but it's okay to advocate murder of gay folks.

And that's the problem with the Swaggart comment. When the sort of conduct that Swaggart suggested is remotely acceptable in public speech, it plants the idea in people that, "If he says it on TV, it must be okay," when in fact, it's not okay – and when the likelihood is that young men in the listening audience will take away the message that they should kill a man who looks at them the wrong way. After all, thousands of people listen to what Swaggart has to say. God only knows why, if you'll pardon the expression.

Predictably, Swaggart said he meant it as a "humorous statement." Oh, yeah. As a

humorist, I often suggest murder to get my best laughs. Makes total sense. Swaggart also said, "If it's an insult, I certainly didn't think it was, but if they are offended, then I certainly offer an apology." First question: "IF" it's an insult? Second question: Was that really an apology? I can't tell.

Imagine, for a moment, if he had said instead that he'd never seen a "Black" or "Jew" he wanted to marry, and that he would kill any one that ever looked at him that way. Do you think there would have been more universal condemnation of his comments? Do you think he would even have said it? And I think that's the outrage.

In odd contrast to Swaggart's televised mouth malfunction, we've just seen a Vice Presidential debate where, for the first time ever, gay marriage was discussed. Sure, it was Senator John Edwards who supported partnership rights for gays (though not marriage, which he believed, singing the Kerry chorus, "is between a man and a woman"). And Edwards, not Vice President Cheney, mentioned that Cheney had a gay daughter. (It's easy to be courageous when it's not your own child.)

But more telling, when Cheney was given an opportunity to respond to Edwards' comments and to defend President Bush's support of the federal anti-gay-marriage amendment, he instead thanked Edwards for his kind words about Cheney's family – and then he shut up. He refused to further defend the Bush amendment. I think his silence then was more eloquent than anything else he said that night.

Who would have guessed it? And I saw it on TV.▼

*Kevin Isom is the author of It Only Hurts When I Polka and Tongue in Cheek and Other Places, available at bookstores and online. He may be reached at isomonline@aol.com or KevinIsom.com.*



**WHAT KIND  
OF PERSON  
WOULD GIVE  
SOMEBODY  
HIV?**

**A PERSON WHO DIDN'T  
KNOW THEY HAD IT.**

**GET TESTED.**

FREE, ANONYMOUS, NO NEEDLES,  
NO EXCUSES

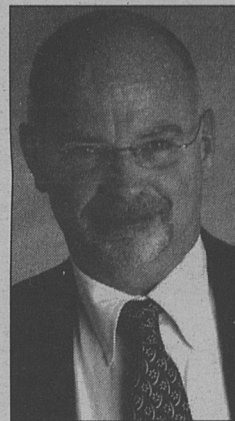
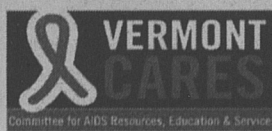
WALK IN HOURS  
NO APPOINTMENT  
NECESSARY

361 Pearl Street  
Burlington  
Mondays 4-7 pm  
802-863-2437

73 Main St. Suite 401  
Montpelier  
Fri. Nov. 5 and 19 2-5 pm  
802-649-2437

1235 Hospital Dr. Suite 1  
St. Johnsbury  
Wednesday 3-6 pm  
802-748-9061

27 South Main Street  
Rutland  
Wednesday 10 am -1 pm  
802-775-5884



*Conley Country*

**FROM THE CONNECTICUT RIVER  
TO THE CANADIAN BORDER  
REAL ESTATE AND INSURANCE**

179 Main Street \* Derby Vermont 05829  
phone (802) 766-2401 \* 800-243-2401  
fax 766-4731 \* e-mail-mick@realestatevermont.com

Log onto

[www.realestatevermont.com](http://www.realestatevermont.com)

to view our current listings.



**BLACKWOOD  
& DANON, PC**  
— attorneys —

90 Main Street  
P.O. Box 875  
Burlington, VT 05402  
802-863-2517  
fax: 802-863-0262  
[info@blackwoodlaw.org](mailto:info@blackwoodlaw.org)

Providing legal services addressing issues important to LGBTIQA individuals and families – adoptions, wills, estate planning, employment and education issues, civil rights, personal injuries, and small business matters.

**Susan McKenzie MS.**

Jungian Psychoanalyst  
Licensed Psychologist – Master

*Specializing in issues of Gay, Lesbian,  
Bi-sexual and Transgendered individuals and couples*

Quechee – White River Junction (802) 295-5533  
Insurance Accepted