

National & International News

Gay Ex-Shell Employee Awarded \$5.3 Million in Damages

San Francisco - On June 14, Judge Jaqueline Taber awarded a San Francisco man \$5.3 million in damages, upholding his claim that he had been fired "for private homosexual conduct occurring away from his employment" and not for reasons related to his job performance. Jeffery Collins used an office computer to print invitations to a safe sex party and accidentally left a copy of the invitation in the company duplicating room where it was found by his secretary the next day. She gave it to the personnel director who sent it to Shell headquarters in Houston. Several days later, Collins' supervisor fired him, saying that no one would follow his leadership after learning of his off-the-job activities.

Collins' attorney said that the verdict is the largest ever in a wrongful termination case involving sexual orientation and that it sends employers a message that they cannot fire workers because they are gay or lesbian. (*Burlington Free Press*)

Boston Pride March Bigger Than Ever

Boston - The 21st Boston Pride March on June 8th was the biggest ever, estimated at 90,000 by Boston police. In 1970, one year after Stonewall, 84 people participated in Boston's first Pride rally. This year it took marchers two hours to reach the Common from City Hall. The Boston Globe covered the march on the front page on the Sunday Metro section with a color photo and the headline "Proud to March". (*Boston Globe*)

Episcopal Church Ordains Lesbian

Washington, D.C. - On June 5th, the Episcopal Diocese of Washington ordained Elizabeth Carl. While Carl is not the first openly gay person to be ordained by the church, she is the first in the Washington Diocese, and her ordination comes at a time when there is much controversy within the Episcopal Church and other denominations on the role of gays and lesbians. Though the church tried to discourage him from going forward with the ordination, Bishop Ronald Haines said that it would remove "an overlay of deception that was painful and causing problems. Before, there was a tacit approach. There was an understanding that a [minister] was gay, but it just wasn't said. Now we would rather be truthful from the beginning".

Haines noted that Carl had lived "for a number of years in a loving and intimate relationship with another woman".

The ordination comes one month before the Episcopal Church General Convention, where a proposal to prohibit priests from having sexual relations outside marriage, thus requiring celibacy of gay and lesbian priests, is expected to be voted on. There is a movement to put forth a counterproposal, leaving the fitness of candidates for ordination up to local bishops. (*Washington Post*)

\$4,500 Awarded Two Gay Dancers

Chicago, IL - Two men agreed to an out of court settlement payment of \$4,500 in their sexual discrimination case against a Chicago area nightclub. The two men were kicked out of the club for dancing together. The club denied it "violated anybody's rights," but after the Chicago Commission on Human Rights ruled there was enough evidence to proceed with the complaint the club agreed to the settlement. (*Outlines*)

University of Alabama Supports Gay Student Group

Huntsville, AL - University of Alabama officials are prepared to order the Student Government Association (SGA) to allocate funds to Gays & Friends, a gay student group officially recognized by the University in May. The SGA refused to allocate money the group requested for brochures, flyers, and office supplies, but has been overruled by the University administration. (*Washington Blade*)

Advances in Florida

West Palm Beach, FL - The West Palm Beach city commission added sexual orientation to the city's affirmative action plan and equal opportunity policy. This makes West Palm Beach the first Florida city and second public employer in the state with such a policy. The city also changed its policies to extend bereavement leave to include "domestic partner" or "person with whom employee shares a residence within the context of a committed relationship". (*Washington Blade*)

Tallahassee, FL - Florida became the fourteenth state to have enacted hate crimes legislation which includes sexual orientation. The bill, which Governor Chiles has promised to sign, is one of the strongest in the nation, providing for "enhanced" criminal penalties for persons convicted of hate crimes.

Canadian Broadcast Regulations Under Discussion

Toronto - Federal broadcast regulations that might ban negative comments about lesbians and gays are undergoing review. A large number of complaints in the past year lead to the development of a proposal to prohibit "abusive comment or abusive pictorial representation" on the basis of sexual orientation. The Canadian Radio-Television Commission set June 28 as the deadline for public comment but hasn't yet set a date for a final vote. (*Advocate*)

Same Job Less Pay

Exeter, England - In a new twist on the equal pay for equal work issue, a disc jockey who underwent a sex change was fired from his job and offered it back at less pay when he had become a woman. Glenn Richards, who underwent surgery to become Carolyne Monroe said a new program director at the radio station "offered me a carrot saying that I could come back as Carolyne but on less money. This is not only an insult to me but to a all women. Offering Carolyne a job for a cut in wages is pure sex discrimination." (*London Independent - San Francisco Examiner*)

Customs Service Seizes Lesbian Book

Boston - Over 1,000 copies of Della Grace's new book, *Love Bites*, were seized by U.S. Customs at the Boston port of entry. Customs declared the book, which was well-received at the American Booksellers Convention in New York, "obscene" in letter to the American distributor, Alyson Publications. Sasha Alyson has filed a complaint in federal district court, with a hearing sometime in mid to late July. (*Washington Blade/Gay Community News*)

IGLA Fund-Raiser Attacked by Skinheads

Over 30 nazi skinheads attacked partygoers at a fund-raiser for the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) in former East Berlin May 25. Two people were injured in the attack which also destroyed several cars. The incident is the latest in a wave of anti-gay violence throughout eastern and western Germany in the past year. German authorities estimate there are over 15,000 nazi skinheads in the five states that comprise what was East Germany. (*Frontiers*) ▼