

OITM Roundup: State, National and World News Briefs

compiled by Kip M. Roberson

Vermont CARES celebrates return

BURLINGTON -- Blue skies and colorful balloons welcomed about 150 people to Vermont CARES' renovated Elmwood Avenue home nearly eight months after arson destroyed the building. The AIDS services organization and the Unitarian Universalist Church hosted a homecoming reception and open house on Sunday, February 19, 1995. Vermont CARES moved back into 30 Elmwood Avenue in January after a \$150,000 renovation.

"There's a part of it that feels really familiar, and there's a part of it that feels really new," said Keith Goslant, one of the organization's founders. "... It's really nice to see that this organization has made a commitment to survive."

Vermont CARES Executive Director Kate Hill said it was good to be back. "I think what today does is give us a sense of closure," she said.

Gilles Yves Bonnaeu, a long-time Vermont CARES volunteer, said he's glad the organization moved back, close to downtown. "It's nicer for them to be central, for a lot of walk-ins and a lot of services," he said. (*Burlington Free Press*)

Pataki keeps benefits for domestic partners

ALBANY, NY -- Gov. George Pataki said that he would not attempt to renegotiate state labor contracts that allow unmarried employees to apply for health insurance for their domestic partners. The governor also plans to extend benefits to gubernatorial appointees who do not automatically qualify for them because they are not members of public employee unions, said his spokeswoman, Zenia Mucha.

Pataki, who expressed concerns during last year's campaign about both the cost and the symbolism of domestic partnership benefits, made his comments in reaction to the decision of the Senate majority leader, Joseph Bruno, to deny the benefits to Senate employees.

Bruno's decision and his characterization of homosexuality as "abnormal lifestyle" were criticized by Democratic legislators and gay rights advocates. (*Lavender Voice*)

Court agrees to rule on Colorado gay-rights case

WASHINGTON, DC -- The Supreme Court set the stage for its most significant gay-rights ruling in a decade, agreeing to decide whether states can forbid laws designed to protect homosexuals from discrimination. The court said it would review a Colorado constitutional amendment that would cancel local laws protecting gays from bias in employment, housing and public accommodations. The amendment, approved by Colorado voters in 1992, was struck down by state courts for denying homosexuals an equal voice in government.

State officials say voters have the right to prevent homosexuals from being given "preferred legal status." Gay rights advocates say local anti-discrimination ordinances extend civil rights protection to homosexuals but grant them no special privileges. "The rights of any minority should not be swept away by popular vote," said Kevin Cathcart of the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund.

Will Perkins, whose Colorado for Family Values wrote and campaigned for the amendment, said homosexuals are not entitled to the same civil rights protection as ethnic minorities or the disabled.

Voters in Oregon and Idaho defeated anti-gay rights amendments in November. Eight states provide some sort of civil rights protection for homosexuals: California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, Vermont and Wisconsin. (*Burlington Free Press*)

Author Paul Monette dies

WEST HOLLYWOOD -- Paul Monette, author of the National Book Award-winning memoir *Becoming a Man: Half a Life Story*, died at his West Hollywood, California, home on Friday, February 10. He was 49 years old. The cause of death, according to wire service reports, was complications associated with AIDS.

David Groff, a former Crown Books editor who published two of Monette's novels, said Monette's much-praised autobiography took the coming out story to "a deeper, more profound level. He had a way of breaking down barriers so that people identified with him."

Groff remembered being amazed, during a publicity tour, at the way "people almost wanted to come up and touch the hem of his garment -- to say, 'I was the kid in *Becoming a Man*.'"

With his earlier book, *Borrowed Time: An AIDS Memoir*, Monette had become one of the foremost chroniclers of the epidemic that claimed the lives of two of his lovers before taking his. Two of his most successful novels took AIDS and its effect on gay men as their subjects. *Afterlife*, published in 1990, tracks three AIDS widowers through the first year of their bereavement; *Halfway Home*, a 1991 novel that centers on an AIDS-stricken performance artist with the distinctly confrontational stage name Miss Jesus, who retires to a solitary life on the California coast only to be intruded upon by his estranged brother, who suddenly needs his help. The latter is now being adapted for film by Steven Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment.

Monette, said Groff, was "able to communicate a really constructive anger in his work, even as he told a story." (*The Washington Blade*)

GOP head "welcomes" gays

WASHINGTON, DC -- Appearing on "Meet the Press", Republican National Committee Chair Haley Barbour said gays are welcome in the GOP. Journalist David Broder mentioned on the program that former RNC co-chair Jeanie Austin recently wrote to Republican members of Congress urging them to meet with Rich Tafel, head of the Log Cabin Federation. Broder asked Barbour whether gays are "now welcome in the Republican Party, or is their lifestyle offensive to a party of traditional values?"

Barbour replied that, "Everybody's welcome in our party ... regardless of anything." But he added, "Our party is very strongly against the government advocating or in any way promoting a homosexual lifestyle. We're very strongly against that. We're strongly against it being taught in schools as an acceptable alternative lifestyle." The RNC chair said that "there are, I am sure, scads of homosexual and lesbian Republicans and certainly they're welcome in our party."

Barbour's statement was not totally new. In August 1993, Barbour said in a letter to Tafel that the GOP is "a party of inclusion. I appreciate your input as the process moves along and look forward to your participation with thousands of other Americans ..." (*The Washington Blade*)

Gays and lesbians to make freedom ride to Ovett

LOS ANGELES -- The Rev. Troy Perry, founder and leader of the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), and entertainer Robin Tyler have announced that they will try to get 1,000 lesbians and gay men to take a cross-country "freedom ride" by bus on Memorial Day weekend. Their destination is Ovett, Mississippi.

The two leaders compared the project to the Freedom Riders in the South during the early struggle for civil rights for African-Americans. They said they are disgusted with the lack of official efforts to provide safety for Brenda and Wanda Henson, founders of Camp Sister Spirit, a feminine retreat that has been the target of harassment and threats.

For more information about the freedom ride, call (213) 464-5100. (*PGN Philadelphia Gay News*)

Well, everyone knows that already

TORONTO -- According to a report in *XTRA*, Toronto's gay and lesbian newspaper, a scientific study done last year concluded that gay men are more attractive than straight men.

In a study published in the February 1993 edition of the journal *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, photographs of boys with "gender identity disorder" were compared to pictures of boys who didn't have the disorder (and were presumably heterosexual). Students at the University of Toronto judged their appearances based on whether the subjects were attractive, beautiful, cute, pretty, and handsome. The boys with gender identity disorders rated higher in all categories than did the other boys. Gender identity disorder refers to boys who adopt traits considered feminine and to girls who are masculine. (*Update*)

WHO: 1 million 'official' cases of AIDS globally

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND -- The World Health Organization said the official number of AIDS cases globally has now surpassed one million.

WHO announced that as of December 31, 1994, governments around the world had reported 1,025,073 AIDS cases since they started keeping records of the epidemic in 1980. However WHO officials said that the actual numbers worldwide was closer to 4.5 million because of under-reporting in developing countries.


According to WHO, more than 70% of all the global AIDS cases are in Africa; some 9% are in the US; another 9% in the rest of the Americas; 6% in Asia; and some 4% in Europe. (*News-Telegraph*)

Canadians support gay co-workers

OTTAWA, ON -- Half of Canadians told pollsters they would speak out in support of a co-worker if the employee faced discrimination based on sexual orientation, reported Ottawa's *Capital Xtra!* And 81 percent said an out gay or lesbian would face discrimination at work, according to the poll conducted by the Angus Reid company. The survey also found

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