

National News

Murderer Admits He Was Motivated by Hate

MEDFORD OR -- The man charged with the killing of Roxanne Ellis and Michelle Abdill of Medford, Oregon, said in August that he killed them because he hates homosexuals and bisexuals. These statements by the alleged killer, Robert Acremant, have refocused attention on the case and reopened wounds in the Medford community.

Ellis and Abdill, an openly lesbian couple and local activists, were murdered "execution-style" last December in Medford. Soon after his arrest, Acremant made a variety of statements regarding the killings, including at first that it was botched robbery. Later, he said that he knew the women were lesbians and that it made it "easier" for him to kill them.

In response to the news, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force issued a statement saying, "The evidence in this case and the larger social and political climate for gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender people speaks to the constant threat of hate-motivated violence perpetrated against all of us."

NGLTF also made reference to the recent murders of Lollie Winans and Julianne Williams in Virginia's Shenandoah Park. Winans had been living in Burlington prior to her death.

"Although the Medford case and the Virginia case are not connected," said NGLTF, "Activists fear homophobia as a

motivation for both tragedies." Both the police and the FBI are still working on the Winans/Williams murder, and now suspect that two or more people were involved in the incident. They have not confirmed or denied that homophobia was a motivating factor in the killing.

"We call on people of conscience, community leaders, and the media to affirm a community in which acts of intolerance, big or small, will be condemned," said the NGLTF.

Rock Singer Etheridge and Partner Cypher Expecting a Child

ON TOUR -- Lesbian rock singer Melissa Etheridge and her partner, Julie Cypher, expect to become co-parents in 1997. Cypher will be the biological mother of the child. "Both Julie and I have been planning this for a long time," said Etheridge, "and we couldn't be happier."

The two women have declined to offer further details about the pregnancy. Even so, news of the imminent birth has already reached Etheridge's fans. In her recent concert at the Essex Fairgrounds, several women waved signs toward the stage offering their services as midwives and nannies. (see review to right).

Sales of Etheridge's latest album, "Your Little Secret," remain strong, confirming that her publicly acknowledged relationship to Cypher hasn't hurt her popularity in the least. ▼

Etheridge Shares Her "Secret" in Essex

by Moira

ESSEX JUNCTION -- Melissa came screaming into Essex Fairgrounds this past August during her "My Little Secret" tour, opening the show with "I Really Like You."

My partner, daughter and I became part of the thousands who stood, clapped and sang along with our favorite lesbian icon for two and half hours as Melissa led us through her most recent album as well as many old favorite tunes.

My partner and I were fortunate enough to see Melissa perform in Stowe during her last tour. There the band jammed on song after song while Melissa belted out each tune with no regard for vocal cords.

The Essex show had less of that intensity. Even so, under the sliver of moon hanging in the clear night sky, Melissa and her band worked perfectly to create the intense, hard rhythm for which she is renowned. A noted addition to this show were sophisticated video cameras, which pieced together images of the band and projected them onto two large screens on either side of the stage. This enabled us to see every nuance of this animated musician.

Overcome by the sway of devotion I witnessed all around, I wondered, "How does she do this — bring us to such a wondrous place with ease and grace?" First, just looking at the diversity in the crowd, one sees Melissa as the all-American girl. There were grandparents bringing their grandchildren, young couples on their first high school dates, gay couples decked out in their pink triangles, old fans sporting T-shirts from earlier tours, and the whole place rocking.

Somehow Melissa manages to invite all into her music, male and female, young and old alike. Her poetry asks us to look around and see each other—very clearly she sings, "You could have been me, I could have been you..." With pointed finger, she reminds us to accept the diversity present in our world today. Looking into my partner's eyes, I refound my lover; listening to my daughter screaming out the chorus, I rejoiced with a sister; and as I looked all around, I recognized friends.

There is nothing preachy about a Melissa concert. She once mentioned registering to vote, and then quickly added that this is as political as she gets. Well, listening to her lyrics, I'm not sure if I'd agree with that, but in that crowd, and on that starry night, we didn't argue.

Halfway through the concert, Melissa held her audience spellbound as she lay on the stage writhing and riding her guitar. Before we could recover from that, she was escorted away by several body guards, and, in a flash, reappeared on another stage directly in front of the grandstand.

For me, her move to the second stage symbolized her generous and giving nature as a performer. Once Melissa was there, the whole place, caught in a frenzy, moved on their feet and waved open arms while the band performed several cherished songs such as "Brave and Crazy" and "Like the Way I Do." The finale included a dramatic rendition of "This War Is Over."

Always our favorite nasty girl! It seems that just about *everyone* agrees...Melissa is a real treat. ▼

Voices on Coming Out: Singled Out

by Kate Gieges

Twenty-five years old. Long hair. Thin. Wears dresses and necklaces. In search of... No, no, no—this is *not* a personal ad. I'm a Lesbian, but I don't "look" like one. Many straight people don't think of me as a dyke, and I don't seem to register on gaydar. I work at a place that is accepting of diversity—thanks to the work of an openly gay man there—but when I started there, most of my co-workers assumed I was straight, or else made no assumptions at all. A similar situation exists among my not-so-close friends.

I want to be out. I believe in being out. I remember the importance of seeing gays and Lesbians when I was a teenager. But I hate coming out. Sometimes I wish I were more easily identifiable by others.

I think one of the reasons people don't identify me as Lesbian is that I am single. The cues regarding my sexuality don't come out in general conversation. I have found that to identify, or not identify, the gender of one's partner is the clue most often used.

I have no pronouns. I am single. I am not dating. I remain...un-outed.

Recently, however, I have made more of an effort to identify myself as a Lesbian to co-workers. I still get trapped in the homophobic thought process of: if I make a point to clarify my sexual identity, I will be making too much of an issue out of it. The pink triangle on my truck isn't enough indication for people to bring up queer issues with me, and I have depended too much on others to open the discussion. Once I make an effort to mention queer culture—but without making the conversation turn to sexuality—I find people are receptive and comfortable with it, and even bring me pieces of queer news and stories.

Now when someone jokes about finding a date for me, I know she's considering a woman. That feels great. Every time I mention that I'm Lesbian and the listener no more acknowledges it than by changing pronouns, I feel stronger internally.

The more I'm out, the easier it gets to come out again, and the more I want to be out to everyone. I run scenarios through my mind: *What would he think if he knew I was gay? What will she tell her friends about me now?* And I'm learning that someone may not think much one way or the other. I attempt to bring awareness of diversity into a conversation whenever it's possible. But I also prepare myself for confronting people who won't be so receptive to my news. I try to save some of that strength to use as protection against the anger and fear I am sure I will encounter.

Now I make more of a point to come out to friends who merely know me as single, and who know I have dated men in the past. I have often found it hard to explain my involvement with men (even to myself), but with my new-found strength, I realize I don't have to. I say the truth when I tell them I'm a Lesbian, and that I've known since at least seventh grade. I tell them the men were "just a phase." And we go on with our conversation.

As I become comfortable discussing queer issues, I find my Lesbianism less associated with sexuality (read: actively sexual) than with civil rights, feminism, gender equity, and politics. It is now only one part of a larger conversation being held with a growing number of people, a conversation that brings me both hope and pride. ▼

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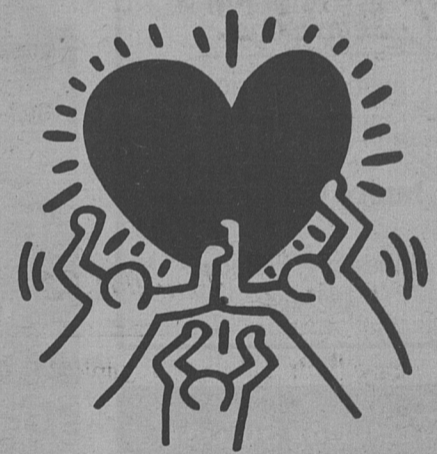
(The New York Times)

"A stunning piece of theatre that simply should not be missed."

(Associated Press)

"A treasure: brave and hilarious, charming and disarming."

(Newsday)



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