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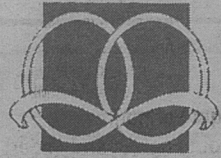
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News Briefs.

Crime

With the July 15 slaying of Gianni Versace, one of the nation's highest profile gay serial murder cases began drawing to a close.

Authorities quickly identified Andrew Cunanan as their most likely suspect and a massive nationwide manhunt followed.

That ended on July 23 when police surrounded a Miami Beach house boat and eventually found Cunanan inside. He was dead from a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

The FBI linked Cunanan, 27, with the murders of Versace, Jeffrey Trail and David Madson in Minnesota; developer Lee Miglin in Chicago; and cemetery caretaker William Reese in New Jersey.

Comics

Queer content on the comics pages is causing controversy again.

Universal Press Syndicate notified its 1,700 newspapers that the "For Better or For Worse" would devote a four-day sequence to a gay relationship and several editors immediately said they would not run the strips.

Comic strip creator Lynn Johnston created a controversy in 1993 when a 17-year-old character, Lawrence, revealed he was gay.

From Aug. 20-23, the comic strip focused on Lawrence and his boyfriend,

Ben, who is considering moving to Paris to study piano.

Universal Press said at least 20 daily newspapers told it they would not run those strips and would use syndicate-supplied reruns from 1995, instead.

"It is a decision that took a lot of thought on our part," said John Goossen, publisher of The Topeka (Kan.) Capital-Journal. "We kind of looked at what we feel the standards of the community are."

Officer dismissed

A lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army was dismissed one week before he would have retired because he was gay. The Army concluded that Steve Loomis, 50, of Killeen, Texas, had engaged in conduct unbecoming an officer.

Loomis received and "other than honorable discharge" after an Army board of inquiry concluded that the 20-year veteran engaged in gay sex and use of "force, coercion or intimidation."

Loomis said he was targeted simply because he was gay.

"In my case, it was private relations with another soldier, off-post, off-duty, not in my chain of command and they say conduct unbecoming - read that 'sodomy,'" Loomis said. "But how many single soldiers or ... married soldiers do exactly the same thing? And how many of them have it held against them?"

Pastor convicted

A Baptist pastor who gained notoriety going after the Walt Disney Co. for its gay-friendly policies got into trouble with the law himself.

A jury in Fullerton, Calif., convicted the Rev. Wiley Drake for breaking zoning laws by housing the homeless at his church.

Drake, 53, faces a maximum sentence of six months in jail and a \$1,000 fine for each of the convictions. The prosecutor said he would seek probation.

About 30 people stay on the property of the First Southern Baptist Church in Buena Park, CA, which is in a commercially zoned area. Hundreds of other poor come each month for food, clothes, counseling and help in finding jobs.

Drake led a boycott against Disney for its gay policies.

Don't ask

The Pentagon says it's reviewing enforcement of its "don't ask, don't tell" policy.

The regulation has been criticized by gays who say they continue to be targeted for punishment and dismissal.

The Pentagon began the review in May because military discharges for homosexuality reached a five-year high of 850 in 1996. The military is looking into how the policy was applied in those cases.

"We're reviewing the enforcement of the policy, not the policy itself," said Defense Department spokeswoman Monica Aloisio. "We think the policy works fine. We have no intention of changing it."

Vermont Lesbians Win Twice Over

BY JOY D. GRIFFITH

Every June, Golden Threads and their women friends converge in Provincetown, MA, where they celebrate what they are and their ages. GOLDEN THREADS is a worldwide friendship network for lesbians over 50, and younger lesbians - no woman is excluded because of age - lesbians through their eighties and beyond enjoy the celebration.

The Eleventh annual GOLDEN THREADS Celebration took place at the Provincetown Inn on June 27-29, 1997. Provincetown, affectionately called "P-town" by the many lesbians and who live and visit there, is known for its charm and its history. It is a town where we can openly be ourselves. The streets are ours, the town is ours - free to be who we are.

The Golden Threads Celebration included a Thursday night party in the P-town Inn, Fore and Aft Room. This is where Vermont lesbians began to take charge. We planned a

singles activity "get acquainted" session, under the expert guidance of Vermont's Maryann Parrott, psychotherapist/counselor, for Friday and on Saturday. Those "singles" really got into the fun and games of meeting each other r-r-right away!

On Saturday morning, 45 lesbians came running into The Porch Café Room carrying their pillows to follow directions from Vermont's very own Susan Hollister (anatomy massage expert) and Anne Sheehan (muscular therapist supreme). Susan and Anne showed (that's right...HANDS ON!) all those lusty wimmin how to reduce their muscular tension in their necks, backs, and shoulders. The wimmin spent the next two hours practicing new massaging techniques to use with partners, friends, and family. We learned how to help our loved ones RELAX!

Not to be outdone by this warm-up, a Vermont lesbian internet whiz swayed her par-

ticipants into why the internet is the way to go. Yep, you guessed it - it was Kathy Sawyer and her helpful partner Charlotte who whiz-wisened the audience into computer fun procedure, lore, and gave a listing of the best lesbian urls in the country. But the workshops were not the only way in which Vermonters took the lead.

Between the Saturday night banquet dinner and dance, the membership totals from the celebrants states (and countries) were read over the microphone. The highest numbers from the 170 lesbians in attendance were: 26 lesbians from Vermont's population of 550,000, 35 lesbians from Massachusetts' 7,000,000 population, and 36 lesbians from New York's 18,000,000 population. The ratio per capita showed Vermont Lesbians as the winning group for the 11th Annual GOLDEN THREADS Celebration!

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