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Gore-Hollywood

BEVERLY HILLS, CA - During an appearance before the Hollywood Radio and Television Society, Gore praised the television industry for producing "Ellen," featuring a lesbian as the lead character.

Many shows have contributed to society, he said, citing "Oscar and the Grouch" for teaching children valuable lessons and "Archie Bunker" for forcing Americans to confront racial and ethnic prejudices.

"And, when the character Ellen came out, millions of Americans were forced to look at sexual orientation in a more open light," Gore said.

Washington rights

SEATTLE, WA - Voters in Washington state are getting the chance this fall to add their state to the list of those that protect gay rights.

An initiative is on Washington's ballot this year asking voters whether discrimination based on sexual orientation should be outlawed.

Backers of the proposal were careful in drafting the ballot language this year to fend off past criticism that the measure would give special rights to gays and lesbians.

So, unlike previous initiatives, the Washington proposal would ban workplace discrimination, but would not require any kind of preferential treatment, quotas or partner benefits. The measure would not prohibit any of those things, but it does not specifically require them, either.

Vermont is one of 11 states that currently protect gay rights. The others are California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Maine, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Wisconsin, New Hampshire and the District of Columbia.

Gay ambassador

WASHINGTON - President Clinton has tapped a wealthy Democratic contributor from San Francisco to be ambassador to Luxembourg. James Hormel would be the first openly gay U.S. ambassador if he is confirmed by the Senate.

Hormel has previously won confirmation from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, chaired by conservative Republican Sen. Jesse Helms of North Carolina. He was approved as an alternate delegate to the United Nations. Hormel also sits on the board of the Human Rights Campaign, which is praising his nomination.

"We don't see this as an effort to bring gays into high levels of the administration, but as an effort by the president to bring highly talented individuals into the administration," said David Smith, campaign spokesman. "The fact that Mr. Hormel is gay is not relevant to whether he can perform the duties of ambassador or not."

Hormel is an heir to the Hormel Meat Co. fortune

Lesbian reporter

WASHINGTON - A newspaper in Washington state can prevent its reporters from political activism, including working for gay rights.

The U.S. Supreme Court allowed a Washington Supreme Court

ruling stand. That ruling said The News Tribune in Tacoma was not violating any laws when it reassigned Sandra Nelson from her job as an education reporter to an editing position.

The state court said that newspapers enjoy a free-press exemption from a state employment discrimination law that says employers may not punish a worker for his or her off-duty political activities.

The newspaper argued that such activities by its editorial staff threatened its credibility as an objective source of news.

Nelson's work included gay and lesbian civil rights, abortion rights and the Freedom Socialist Party.

Catholics and gays

NEW YORK - Family love should come before church doctrine. That's the pronouncement of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

American bishops are counseling parents of gay children to put love and support for their sons and daughters ahead of church teaching that condemns homosexual activity.

The bishops have concluded that sexual orientation is not freely chosen and parents must not reject their children in a society already full of rejection and discrimination.

"All in all, it is essential to recall one basic truth. God loves every person as a unique individual," the pastoral letter says. "Sexual identity helps to define the unique person we are. God does not love someone any less simply because he or she is homosexual."

The bishops did not back off on their condemnation of homosexual sex, however. They said gays and lesbians could be accepted in the church and could hold leadership positions only if they were chaste.

Outing Goethe

BERLIN - It looks like yet another literary giant may have been gay.

A new book, described as an "erotic Goethe biography," concludes that Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, one of the giants of world literature, was secretly gay.

German historian and journalist Karl Hugo Pruys has written a new biography of the author most famous for his "Faust" drama. In "The Tiger's Carresses," which appeared in Europe last month and will debut in English next year, Pruys says he has found documentation that led him to the conclusion that Goethe was far from the ladies' man that he was generally thought to be.

Pruys studied 2,500 letters to, from and about Goethe, a poet, novelist and playwright. Goethe married late in life, fathered one child and died at age 82 in 1832.

For example, a letter written by Dr. Johann Georg Zimmerman, in which he describes his young friend: "To me, Goethe's caresses are like the caresses of a tiger. One always feels under his hugs the dagger in the pocket."

AIDS Volunteers

CHICAGO - Volunteers are organizing to take bold steps in research toward an AIDS vaccine. They say they are willing to risk their lives by being injected with a vaccine carrying a live, weakened strain of HIV.

The International Association of Physicians in AIDS Care says it has 50 volunteers waiting to take part in the project. And dozens more have called offering to participate.

The volunteers are doctors, nurses or health policy activists from around the world. Human injections are not expected for at least two years, but participants say they will go ahead with their work regardless of whether they get government approval.

Researchers say AIDS vaccine work has been slow because it requires safety measures and rigorous animal testing before humans can be injected. There has been promising research with primates, but some scientists are still skeptical about the wisdom of injecting humans.

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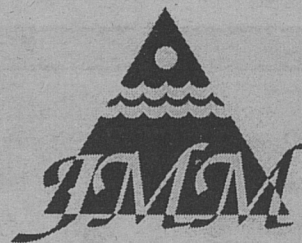
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