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in the news...

**Ellen's mom**

WASHINGTON — Now even Ellen DeGeneres' mom is becoming famous.

Betty DeGeneres has begun starring in 30-second television commercials to urge parents to love and support their gay and lesbian children.

"Hello, my name is Betty DeGeneres and my kid is the greatest. You know her. She's Ellen and she's gay," Mrs. DeGeneres says in the public service announcement as she and a group of children build a huge American flag out of red, white and blue boxes.

"For too long, gay Americans have suffered discrimination," she says. "As long as our sons and daughters are excluded from the basic protection of law, we must share that burden — as a family."

Mrs. DeGeneres, 67, made the commercial as part of her duties as a spokeswoman for the Human Rights Campaign.

**Marauding cop**

WASHINGTON — A former D.C. cop has pleaded guilty to shaking down customers of a gay bar.

Former Lt. Jeffrey S. Stowe, once a roommate of the former police chief, also said he would cooperate in an ongoing investigation of police corruption in Washington.

Stowe and former Chief Larry Soulsby roomed together in a \$3,000-a-month luxury apartment for which they paid just \$650 a month.

Stowe, 42, admitted stealing \$55,000 in police money, including federal money set aside for the witness protection program. He also admitted two counts of extortion in connection with a scheme to shake down men who visited a gay bar.

According to document, Stowe, who headed the department's Special Investigations Section, noted his targets' license plate numbers when they were parked outside the Follies Theater in Southeast Washington.

He then used the numbers to locate the drivers and ordered them to send money to a post office box or risk having photographs revealing their sexuality sent to family and co-workers.

**Gay sailor**

WASHINGTON — This time the Navy went too far.

A federal judge says the Navy should not have secretly and anonymously obtained evidence about a gay sailor from America Online.

U.S. District Judge

Stanley Sporkin ordered that Senior Chief Petty Officer Timothy R. McVeigh, a 17-year veteran, be reinstated to the military.

"In these days of 'big brother,' where through technology and otherwise the privacy interests of individuals from all walks of life are being ignored or marginalized, it is imperative that statutes explicitly protecting these rights be strictly observed," Sporkin wrote.

"This court finds that the Navy has gone too far."

The Navy overstepped the law in pursuing allegations of homosexuality against McVeigh that stemmed from a sexually suggestive on-line message and by linking him to that message by secretly getting his identity from AOL. Because the message was anonymous, Sporkin wrote, the Navy broke the "don't ask, don't tell" policy on gays in the military by trying to identify McVeigh as the author, and the 1986 Electronic Communications Privacy Act by getting information from AOL without a warrant or court order.

**Vaccine volunteers**

CHICAGO - Anyone who volunteers for an AIDS vaccine test group would get free medicine if they end up contracting the virus.

The International Association of Physicians in AIDS Care wants to use a live strain of the virus in humans to determine whether a vaccine can be developed.

But the group has caused controversy because some say it could be endangering the lives of those who volunteer. So the group has lined up three pharmaceutical companies to provide free medicine to volunteers if they need it.

More than 200 people, mostly doctors and other health care workers, have volunteered. "We don't expect people to progress into AIDS, but we're trying to avoid that 'reckless' label that some people have assigned to us in the world," said Joe Zuniga, a former Army soldier who was discharged in 1993 for revealing he is gay.

The group hopes to begin its trial in 2000.

**Gay spies**

LONDON - Britain finally has found some spies with style.

The nation's foreign secret service agency has sent a gay couple on an espionage mission to one of Britain's largest overseas missions.

Sir Gerald Warner, the former deputy head of the MI6 spy agency, accidentally dis-

closed the information, The Sunday Times says.

"MI6 is the human end of the intelligence and operates in a straightforward way. It now has a staff of 1,800 and has just sent the first homosexual couple abroad," Warner said during a talk to a local group about his experiences.

The Daily Telegraph said the gay spies were not seen as a security risk because their relationship was known.

**Pastor dumped**

DES MOINES, Iowa - A pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church has been fired because he lives in an open gay relationship.

A disciplinary committee of the church says the Rev. Steve Sabin does good work. But it said his relationship violated a policy that prevented "practicing" homosexuals from being ordained ministers.

Bishop Philip Hougen said he had "pastoral concern" for Sabin, his partner Karl von Uhl and Sabin's 150-member congregation at the Lord of Life Lutheran Church in Ames.

"It's not a happy day whenever we find it necessary to remove a pastor from the roster, especially a pastor as talented as Pastor Sabin and particularly a pastor who's been doing a good job," said Hougen.

The decision upset some members of Sabin's congregation, which publicly supports him.

"This is discrimination," said longtime Lord of Life member Nancy Lewis. She said clergy should be given the same rights as congregation members.

"It is all right for homosexuals in relationships to be members of our congregations, to hold office in our congregations. It is not fair that our pastors who are homosexual cannot have warm and loving and committed relationships," she said.

**Scout's honor**

CHICAGO - The city of Chicago has ended its relationship with homophobic Boy Scouts of America programs.

The city agreed to end its sponsorship of Scout programs after the American Civil Liberties Union sued, arguing that the Scouts' requirement that boys take a religious oath violated the separation of church and state. The ACLU also argued that the Scouts' anti-gay policies were discriminatory.

The ACLU called the settlement a victory and urged other cities to "take a cue from Chicago's action and end their sponsorship of these discriminatory programs."