

in the news...

Scouts again

TRENTON, N.J. — Another state is turning against the Boy Scouts. A New Jersey appeals court says the Scouts' ban on admitting gays violates that state's laws against discrimination. The court said the Scouts' decision to kick James Dale out of the Boy Scouts because he is gay should be overturned. An attorney for Dale said this is the first time any appeals court has ruled against the Boy Scouts in challenges to their exclusion of homosexuals. A spokesman for the Boy Scouts' national headquarters said the decision will be appealed to the state Supreme Court. Dale was expelled by the Monmouth Council of the Boy Scouts in 1990 after the group learned from a newspaper article that he was gay. He sued and a lower court judge ruled in the Scouts' favor in 1995, calling homosexuality "a serious moral wrong" and agreeing with the Boy Scouts of America that the group is a private organization and has a constitutional right to decide who can belong. The Appellate Division of State Superior Court overruled that decision today, saying the Boy Scouts of America and its local councils are "places of accommodation" that "emphasize open membership" and therefore must adhere to New Jersey's anti-discrimination law.

Gay ambassador

WASHINGTON — What are they afraid of?

A small group of conservative Republicans is blocking a vote on the nomination of gay San Francisco philanthropist James Hormel to become ambassador to Luxembourg. The White House and Sen. Barbara Boxer, a Democrat from California, both describe it as discrimination. But lawmakers leading the effort say they object not to Hormel's sexuality but to his gay rights activism. "There's more at stake here than an ambassadorship to a small country," Sen. Tim Hutchinson, R-Ark., said after recently meeting with Hormel to discuss his objections. "There is symbolism. He is championed as the elder statesman of the gay rights movement."

Hutchinson and Sens. Bob Smith, R-N.H., and James Inhofe, R-Okla., have placed "holds" on Hormel and other lawmakers have done so anonymously, said Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss. As a result, Hormel's name is not expected to reach the floor without a fight, if at all. If confirmed, he would become the United States' first openly gay ambassador.

Applying some pressure, President Clinton made a personal plea for his embattled nominee, telling a San Francisco fund-raising event that Hormel's sexuality should not be a consideration. "I have just one question," Clinton said. "The only question the United States Senate should ask, and there is only one answer, will he or will he not be a good ambassador? ... That is all we should ever ask."

Obit-Gould

NEW YORK — An important researcher who helped create today's climate for gays and lesbians has died. Dr. Robert Gould, who was 73 when he died late last month of cancer, was a psychoanalyst. He urged greater tolerance by society and worked toward ridding homosexuality of the stigma as a mental illness. He championed gays, hippies, convicts and the homeless. "There were others who sought social change in general, but none with Bob Gould's bold nitty-gritty focus on issues and the people involved in them," said Dr. Robert Jay Lifton, professor of psychiatry at John Jay College in New York. "Bob was in the trenches to change the status quo."

Obit-Fraser

SEATTLE — A social activist who lobbied for the rights of women, gays and prisoners, has died. Clara Fraser was 74. She helped found the feminist group Radical women, and the Freedom Socialist Party. She also helped write Washington's first divorce-reform bill and helped organize that state's first abortion-rights rally. In 1975, Ms. Fraser was fired for speaking out against sex and ideology discrimination at Seattle City Light after leading an 11-day wildcat

walkout. She successfully sued the company, saying she was a victim of sexual and political discrimination, and was re-hired seven years later.

We're different

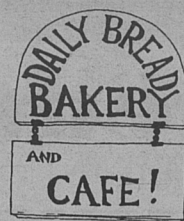
WASHINGTON — Maybe it's all in the ear. Researchers say they've found evidence of a physical difference between lesbians and straight women. They say the inner ears of gay women work more like those of men. The discovery adds new support to the theory that sexual orientation may be pre-disposed before birth.

Previous research has found that two parts of the male brain are different in gay and heterosexual men. Other studies have found that some genes differ between gay and straight men. Now researchers at the University of Texas, Austin, said they found the inner ears of female homosexuals have undergone "masculinization," probably from hormone exposure before birth. "Their auditory centers have been masculinized and the presumption is that so have the sites in the brain that direct sexual preference," said Dennis McFadden, the lead author of the study.

It has yet to be proven, however, that there is a specific site in the brain that directs women to be lesbians, he said.

Ellen's swan song?

LOS ANGELES — Could this be the swan song for Ellen? Actress Ellen DeGeneres says she believes her sitcom "Ellen" is about to be canceled by ABC. "I'm gay, the character's gay," DeGeneres said Monday. "It's just too controversial, nobody wants to deal with it. "It's pretty safe to say this is it for the 'Ellen' show," she told "Entertainment Tonight" in an interview. "I'm getting every indication that they're not picking the show up," she told the syndicated TV show, adding, "It's sad. I'm very sad." ABC denied that the show has been canceled. "We haven't made any decision yet. An announcement about the (1998-99) schedule will be made in May," said network spokeswoman Eileen Kurtz.



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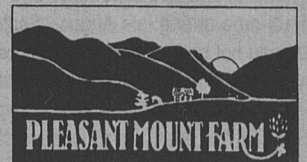
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