



the rest of our world.....

■ Sodomy Appeal

HOUSTON — John Geddes Lawrence, 55, and Tyrone Garner, 31, have been fined \$125 apiece for having sex together.

Now they're leading the fight in Texas to overturn that state's anti-sodomy law that applies only to gays.

After they pleaded no contest to breaking the law, their attorneys posted an appeal bond of \$332.50 each, which keeps the case alive and moves it to the next higher courtroom venue — state district court.

From there, the case is expected to make its way to the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, and possibly to the US Supreme Court.

■ Sex in Georgia

ATLANTA — Anyone's free to have sex in Georgia now.

The state Supreme Court ruled that the 156-year-old anti-sodomy law was unconstitutional, even though some politicians talked about trying to reinstate it after the ruling.

It was surprising that the state Supreme Court threw out the law, because in 1986, the US Supreme Court upheld the ban on heterosexual and homosexual anal and oral sex.

In a 6-1 ruling, the court said the law violated the state constitution's provision that citizens are entitled to privacy.

"We cannot think of any other activity that reasonable persons would rank as more private and more deserving of protection from governmental interference than consensual, private, adult sexual activity," Chief Justice Robert Benham wrote.

The ruling came in a pretty sordid case. It overturned the sodomy conviction of Anthony Powell, found guilty of sodomizing his 17-year-old niece in 1996.

■ Remembrance and Celebration

SAN FRANCISCO — A remembrance and celebration of the lives of Harvey Milk and George Moscone was held last month.

The two men were gunned down in San Francisco City Hall 20 years ago. Milk was a city supervisor, the first openly gay politician elected to a major office in the country, and Moscone was the mayor known for reaching out to minorities, gays, and lesbians.

Part of the celebration in San Francisco involved Moscone's son, Jonathan, who was 14 when his father died. He revealed at the memorial service that he is gay.

"People should know he would have loved me more, knowing I had the courage to come out and be honest," Jonathan Moscone said.

■ Lesbian Teacher

SALT LAKE CITY — A federal court says a woman's rights were violated when she was fired as a coach for disclosing her sexual orientation.

Wendy Weaver said Nebo School District officials not only fired her but violated her rights by ordering her not to talk with students or staff about her sexual orientation, even outside of Spanish Fork High School.

US District Judge Bruce Jenkins agreed that her rights of free speech, equal protection and due process were violated. He ordered the school district to offer Weaver the coaching position, lift the gag order and give her \$1,500 in damages.

"Although the Constitution cannot control prejudices, neither this court nor any other court should, directly or indirectly, legitimize them," Jenkins wrote.

Weaver has remained as a teacher at the district since she was fired as the volleyball coach. The firing came after a prospective team member asked her if she were gay and she said yes.

■ Gay Scouts

WASHINGTON — The US Supreme Court has refused to wade into the Boy Scouts' ban on gay leaders, at least for now.

The court let stand a state court ruling that said Charles Merino's suspension as leader of a law enforcement Explorer Post violated no state law.

Merino is an El Cajon police officer who helped organize and lead a Boy Scout Explorer post.

Exploring is the coed young-adult program of the Boy Scouts for ages 14 to 20, and is sponsored by community organizations.

■ Finally, Rights

MIAMI — Finally, gay rights are to be protected in South Florida.

Commissioners voted 7-6 to add sexual orientation to the list of classes against whom discrimination is prohibited.

The vote by the Miami-Dade County commissioners came 21 years after the crusade by former beauty queen Anita Bryant overturned a previous gay rights ordinance.

Before Bryant's crusade, the county was one of the first municipalities to pass legislation protecting gay rights in the country. It also was one of the first counties where such a measure was repealed.

■ Huffington Outed

NEW YORK — Michael Huffington, the former congressman and multi-millionaire US

Senate candidate, has been outed. By himself.

"I know now that my sexuality is part of who I am," Huffington, 51, said in the January issue of *Esquire*. "I've been through a long process of finding out the truth about me."

The oil and banking heir and former congressman disclosed his homosexuality during 20 hours of interviews with the article's author, David Brock, last spring.

Huffington is best known for the vast sums he spent on political campaigns in California.

In a \$5.4 million campaign, Huffington unseated a veteran Republican congressman from California in 1992. Two years later, he spent \$28 million to run and lose a race for the seat held by Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif.

■ Matthew's Tormentors

LARAMIE, Wyo. — A judge has ruled that the two men who are accused of killing gay University of Wyoming college student Matthew Shepard will be tried separately.

Lawyers for Russell Arthur Henderson, 21, and Aaron James McKinney, 21, both of Laramie, wanted the men tried separately on charges of first-degree murder, kidnapping and aggravated robbery and are awaiting trial. Prosecutors said they should face trial together.

Henderson's trial has been set for March 22, McKinney's for Aug. 9.

Chasity Vera Pasley, 20, and Kristen LeAnn Price, 19, both of Laramie are accused of helping to dispose of bloody clothing that police say was worn by Pasley's boyfriend, Henderson. Both women pleaded not guilty originally, but Pasley recently changed her plea to guilty.

■ Oregon Rights

SALEM, Ore. — An appeals court has ordered gay rights in Oregon.

The ruling involved a lawsuit by three lesbian employees at Oregon Health Sciences University who claimed their domestic partners were entitled to benefits. Though the school began offering such benefits last June, the court nailed down the university's obligations.

The "denial of insurance benefits to the unmarried partners of its homosexual employees" violated the equal protection provisions of the Oregon Constitution, said a unanimous three-judge decision.

"This tells Oregonians that discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment, pub-

lic and private, is illegal," said Deputy Attorney General David Schuman.

■ Reparative Rejection

DENVER — The idea of reparative therapy has been rejected by a group that should know what it's talking about: psychiatrists.

The American Psychiatric Association's board voted unanimously to reject therapy aimed solely at turning gays into heterosexuals.

The board says that kind of therapy can cause depression, anxiety, and self-destructive behavior.

"All the evidence would indicate this is the way people are born. We treat disease, not the way people are," said Dr. Nada Stotland, head of the association's joint committee on public affairs.

"The very existence of therapy that is supposed to change people's sexuality, even for people who don't take it, is harmful because it implies that they have a disease," said Stotland, of Rush Medical College in Chicago. "There is evidence that the belief itself can trigger depression and anxiety."

The American Psychological Association made a similar decision last year.

Some fundamentalist Christian religious groups attempt to persuade homosexuals to undergo treatment, sometimes called "reparative therapy," to convert to heterosexuality.

■ Gay Bank

PENSACOLA, Fla. — A Florida businessman is planning a bank primarily for gays and lesbians.

And they'll be able to access it via the Internet.

Steve Dunlap got the idea when his loan applications for a gay and lesbian resort were rejected by traditional banks.

G&L Bank will provide walk-in banking at a Pensacola office and offer services nationwide via the Internet.

G&L Bank — the initials stand for gay and lesbian — is expected to open in the spring pending final approval from federal regulators. Dunlap, who bills his new institution "banking for any lifestyle," envisions gays and lesbians as an entry market — not the bank's sole customer base.

The bank's website is www.glbank.com ▼

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