



# the rest of our world.....

## Two for one in Wyoming

LARAMIE, Wyo. — One of the two men accused in the beating death of University of Wyoming student Matthew Shepard is going to prison for two life terms.

Russell Henderson, 21, a high school dropout and roofer, pleaded guilty to felony murder and kidnapping. That ended a trial just before it was to begin and eliminated the possibility of the death penalty.

Authorities said Henderson and Aaron McKinney, 21, posed as gay men and lured the 5-foot-2, 105-pound Shepard out of a bar last October, kidnapped and pistol-whipped him and left him tied to a fence in the cold.

The 21-year-old Shepard died five days later at a hospital.

Henderson said he drove the truck and helped tie Shepard to the fence, but blamed McKinney for the beating. He said he tried to stop the beating, but McKinney struck him when he spoke up.

McKinney is due to go to trial this summer.

## Free Rubber Duckie!

SAN FRANCISCO — Some gay men are lobbying to overturn regulations against bathhouses that were adopted 15 years ago in response to the AIDS crisis.

They argue that it's time to reverse some of the policies that were designed to stop the spread of the disease.

"At this stage in the epidemic people know how to protect themselves," said Act-Up spokesman Michael Bellefontaine.

San Francisco logged an estimated 8,000 new HIV infections annually in the early 1980s, prompting the then-health director to order the bathhouses closed. A federal judge refused to close the bathhouses, but ordered strict regulations.

The number of HIV infections has plummeted since then, with about 500 new cases annually in the city. Still, unprotected sex among gay men is on the rise, said Dr. Mitchell Katz, director of San Francisco's Department of

Public Health, and no changes in the rules are planned.

## Alabama stakes rise

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — Two men accused in yet another brutal murder of a gay man now face the death penalty.

Steven Eric Mullins and Charles Butler Jr. had been charged with murder for the Feb. 19 killing of Billy Jack Gaither of Sylacauga. That charge carries a maximum sentence of life in prison and allows for parole.

The charges have been upgraded to capital murder, which is punishable by execution.

Gaither was beaten to death on a dirt road beside a creek, where a passer-by found his charred remains atop a pyre of two old tires.

## Unconscientious objection

WASHINGTON — Gay rights groups are involved in a US Supreme Court case about whether public universities can use mandatory student activity fees to subsidize campus groups that pursue political goals.

Gay advocates say limiting subsidies would hurt "disfavored groups" nationwide, including those for gay and lesbian students.

A federal trial judge and an appeals court ruled that the subsidies unlawfully force some students to subsidize views they find objectionable and thereby violate free-speech rights. The lower courts barred the University of Wisconsin from using fees collected from objecting students.

Several law students with conservative political views challenged the funneling of student-activity money to 18 organizations on the Madison campus.

Among groups objected to in the 1996 lawsuit against the university were Students of National Organization for Women, International Socialist Organization, Campus Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Center and an AIDS support network.

"We look to the Supreme Court to stop this narrow-minded assault on a neutral system for supporting campus dialogue," said Patricia Logue of the Lambda Legal Defense and Educational Fund, a gay-rights group.

## Perpetual conflict

SAN FRANCISCO — The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence continue to cause a ruckus.

The drag queens who dress as nuns down in the Castro created controversy when the city granted them a permit for a block party on Easter Sunday.

Thousands turned out for the Sisters' celebration of their 20th anniversary.

Catholic leaders in the city unsuccessfully asked the Sisters to hold their party on a day other than Easter and then unsuccessfully asked the city to rescind the permit.

When the block party took place as planned, the Catholic League called for a boycott of San Francisco.

In a half-page ad Monday in the San Francisco Chronicle, the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights called on Catholic organizations to hold conventions elsewhere.

## Clinton backs hate crimes bill

WASHINGTON — President Clinton is hoping to use the latest spate of ugly crimes to push an expanded federal hate crimes bill through Congress.

The United States is as vulnerable as Kosovo to "old, even primitive hatreds," Clinton said.

"It's very humbling. We should remember that each of us almost wakes up every day with the scales of light and darkness in our own hearts, and we've got to keep them in proper balance. And we have to be, in the United States, absolutely resolute about this."

The president also ordered the Education Department to begin collecting data on hate crimes on college campuses.

Overall, more than 8,000 hate crime incidents were reported in

the United States in 1997. For 1998, the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs reported a 108-percent increase in gay-bashing violence that left victims hospitalized. Assaults and attempted assaults with firearms against gays and lesbians rose 71 percent, the report found.

Current hate crimes law bans only race-, ethnicity- and religion-based crimes. The Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 1999, which Clinton endorsed, would add three protected categories — sexual orientation, gender and disability — and make the prosecution of hate crimes easier.

## No more sweet relief

SAN FRANCISCO — "Brownie Mary" Rathbun, the grandmotherly activist whose arrests for distributing pot brownies to AIDS patients built momentum for the medicinal marijuana movement, has died at 77.

Mary Jane Rathbun died at a hospital of undisclosed causes. She had been hospitalized and in considerable pain ever since she injured her spine in a fall last August, said her friend Larry Bittner.

Ms. Rathbun became a fixture at San Francisco General Hospital in the early days of the AIDS epidemic, preparing and delivering marijuana-laced baked goods to sick people to relieve their nausea and pain.

"I think she made 134 dozen a month during the heyday, 1984 to 1990. All in her little old kitchen in her subsidized apartment. And you could smell it all through her building. The old ladies there were all cool about it. Hey, it's San Francisco," said Dennis Peron, who with Ms. Rathbun founded the now-defunct San Francisco Cannabis Buyers Club.

Ms. Rathbun was arrested three times and twice agreed to perform hundreds of hours of community service, spending the time with AIDS patients, Peron said.

## Denying consent

LONDON — The Lords don't want to give equality to gays and

lesbians.

The unelected House of Lords has, for the second time, blocked legislation that would have lowered the age of consent in Britain for gays and lesbians to 16.

Under current law, straight kids can legally have sex at 16, but the gays have to wait until they're 18.

Lady Janet Young, who led the opposition, said lowering the age of consent to 16 would lead to further reductions in coming years.

"This bill is just one more nail in the coffin of family life," she said.

Lord Gareth Williams of Mostyn, a government minister, said Britain's Labor government would probably invoke the little-used Parliament Act — created to ensure that the will of the country's elected lawmakers prevails — to enact the measure.

The elected House of Commons overwhelmingly endorsed the bill.

## Starving students

PITTSBURGH — Nearly two dozen students at the University of Pittsburgh have been on a hunger strike because the university does not provide domestic partner benefits to its employees.

The protesters, members of an organization calling itself the Equal Rights Alliance, said they would maintain a hunger strike until Pitt's Board of Trustees agrees to meet with them.

The group says the university is violating a 1990 City of Pittsburgh ordinance that bars employment discrimination based on sexual orientation.

University officials denied violating the ordinance. They maintained that Pennsylvania law did not require the university to provide such benefits, and that other state institutions did not cover same-sex partners in their health plans either.

Ken Service, a spokesman for Pitt, said that the university had taken the students' concerns into consideration, but that they should take their message to state legislators, who have the power to change the law. ▼

open meetings to discuss the findings, the president has requested written reactions from the staff and faculty councils, and the Student Government Association is also preparing a response.

Kathy Ebner, Dean of the Commons, urged the school's community to continue to be actively involved. "Our intention is sincere to be better in serving our students. We need help. We are not magical in our sensitivities to people."

The acknowledged challenge to the Middlebury College community is to hold itself and its administration accountable for creating a campus that supports

the diversity of its members — including GLBT students, faculty and staff — in the community and classroom.

Some progress is being made even without the benefit of HRC recommendations. Moss will teach "Introduction to Gay and Lesbian Studies" next spring under the Women's and Gender Studies Program and "Gender & Sexuality in Russian Culture" in his home department.

The HRC Report is available in Adobe Acrobat format at [www.middlebury.edu/~hrc](http://www.middlebury.edu/~hrc) or at various locations on campus.

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