



# the rest of our world.....

## Soldier killed

FORT CAMPBELL, Ky. — Some gay groups charge that an Army private who was beaten to death was the victim of a hate crime.

Although the Army denies it, the Lesbian and Gay Coalition for Justice and the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network said several people have told them that Pfc. Barry Winchell, 21, of Kansas City, Mo., was killed because he was thought to be gay.

Pvt. Calvin Glover, 18, has been accused of premeditated murder. Spec. Justin Fisher, 25, was charged with encouraging Glover to hit Winchell with an undisclosed weapon, acting as an accessory after the crime, lying to investigators, and obstructing the investigation.

## Baptist feud

NEW YORK — American Baptist Churches USA is having an internal dispute about whether to toss out churches that welcome gays and lesbians.

The denomination's General Board earlier this summer voted to expel four churches in California for their liberal stand on gay issues.

The pastor of one of the congregations, the Rev. Esther Hargis of Berkeley, CA, said she was officially notified that several regional subunits had filed formal protests over the expulsion of her congregation.

The protest freezes the expulsion and sets in motion a process of "adjudication" that has rarely been used in such disputes.

The other targeted congregations are located in Oakland, San Jose and San Leandro.

## Pride disturbance

SAN DIEGO — Another city's gay pride observance was marred this year.

This time a tear gas canister was thrown into the crowd watching San Diego's parade.

About 15 people were treated at the scene for eye and skin irritations. Three others, including a woman with asthma, were taken to a local hospital with minor injuries, fire spokesman Bob Macy said.

The parade was delayed about 15 minutes as police unsuccessfully tried to find the attacker.

## Exodus gathering

WHEATON, Ill. — A Christian group trying to recruit gays and lesbians had a big gathering this year.

Some 1,200 Exodus International enthusiasts attended the annual meeting this year — the biggest turnout since the group began in 1976.

As the group clapped inside the hall, the Rev. Bradley Mickelson of the Metropolitan Community Church of the Incarnation in Oak Park led a quiet protest march of 50 people outside.

Exodus, based in Seattle, represents 131 independent ministries located in 38 states and the District of Columbia. Delegates from related ministries in 15 foreign nations were also in attendance this year.

The organization teaches that "freedom from homosexuality is possible through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ" and says it seeks to provide help for "men and women who desire to overcome their homosexuality."

The group acknowledges that for some homosexuals, changing orientation will prove impossi-

ble; it says they should practice celibacy.

## Presidential attention

WASHINGTON — Bill Clinton has become the first sitting president to convene a gathering of openly gay and lesbian elected officials for a freewheeling discussion of policy.

About a dozen out local and state officials talked with the president at the White House in a closed meeting that lasted more than an hour and a half.

The officials expressed concerns about protections for gay and lesbian young adults in classrooms. They also suggested a need for greater diversity and sensitivity training for teachers.

More broadly, the leaders said they were worried about the epidemic of violence in schools targeted toward those who are perceived in some way as different.

## Airline partners

SAN FRANCISCO — Three major airlines have begun offering domestic partnership benefits to employees, largely in response to a new city law.

United Airlines was the first, offering some benefits to domestic partners just hours after an appeals court refused to grant the company an exemption to a city ordinance mandating the benefits.

The law, which took effect June 1, 1997, requires companies doing business with San Francisco to offer the same benefits to domestic partners as they do to married spouses.

In succeeding days, first American Airlines and then USAirways followed United's lead by offering the benefits to their employees.

Under the federal court ruling,

the airlines must offer bereavement leave, family medical leave, and spousal flight discounts to San Francisco domestic partners.

United said it will begin offering family benefits to non-married families nationwide next May.

## British couples

LONDON — If any good could come of the terrible bombing at a gay pub earlier this year, it's new sensitivity from the government.

The British government is considering recognizing same-sex couples for the first time under a new criminal compensation law, officials said.

The possible change was spurred by the bombing of a gay pub in London on April 30, *The Times* reported.

A gay man whose partner was killed in the blast was denied compensation because the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority does not recognize same-sex couples. If the couple had been heterosexual, the man would have been entitled to as much as \$160,000 in government benefits.

The explosion at the Admiral Duncan pub was the most deadly of three nail-bomb attacks on gay and ethnic minority targets in April. The bombings killed three people and injured 116 more.

## Boy Scouts

TRENTON, N.J. — For the first time, a state's highest court has ruled that the Boy Scouts of America's ban on homosexuals is illegal.

New Jersey's Supreme Court said that because the Boy Scouts are a "place of public accommodation," they fall under the state's anti-discrimination law — even

though it is a private organization.

The ruling could force the issue into the US Supreme Court, which, in a past decision, refused to review another state's ruling that upheld the Boy Scout ban.

Still, the decision was a victory for James Dale, an assistant scoutmaster who was kicked out of the Boy Scouts nine years ago when leaders found out he is gay. He sued seeking reinstatement.

"The Supreme Court of New Jersey is wonderful," Dale said. "This is exactly what scouting has taught me: to believe in the system and that goodness will prevail."

## Alabama slaying

ROCKFORD, Ala. — Two men convicted of killing a gay man and setting fire to his body will not themselves be executed.

The family of Billy Jack Gaither opposes the death penalty.

A jury convicted Charles Butler Jr., 21, of capital murder in the slaying of Gaither, who was beaten to death and then burned atop kerosene-soaked tires in rural central Alabama.

Judge John Rochester sentenced Butler to life in prison without parole, rather than the death sentence, at the request of Gaither's family and the prosecutor.

"We don't believe in the death penalty. The only one who's got a right to take a life is God," said Randy Gaither, the victim's brother.

Steven Mullins, 25, who pleaded guilty to the murder and testified against Butler, also was sentenced to life in prison without parole, at the request of the family. ▼

## Lunden passes

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loss.

A film about Blue's life, "Some Ground to Stand On," was completed last year and has been shown at 30 festivals both here and abroad. The winner of numerous festival prizes plus the National Education Media Apple Award, it tells about Blue's odyssey of coming of age as a butch lesbian in 1950s New Orleans, of multiple arrests, and of eventually being harassed out of town for "wearing clothing of the opposite sex." For the next 20 years she lived in New York City coping as a single parent, becoming sober, and transforming her life through her activism. Blue attended many of the screenings and in each case her purity of heart and her vision as depicted in the film were further evident in her articulate and inspiring talks to the audience. In New

Orleans, the town she was forced to leave, there was a reception in her honor in conjunction with the screening at the New Orleans Film Festival.

Blue was a working class lesbian/feminist who cross-dressed in the 1950s as an act of unconscious resistance before an organized lesbian and gay movement began. She was self-educated and her politics became clarified by her experience, the women she met, and the very extensive reading she did.

She was a woman with a wide range of interests who had the courage to be herself from a young age. She lived consciously and created community wherever she was. She inspired us all to bring about a better world. Her friends, family, and lovers will forever miss her.

Remembrances can be sent to the Sugarloaf Women's Land Trust, 19657 Date Palm Drive, Summerland Key, FL 33042. ▼

## Recruitment for VCLGR/PRIDE

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out a full board for two years, and has seen flagging interest from the community in political organizing.

Keith Goslant, VCLGR liaison, is hoping that the board restructuring combined with the political atmosphere surrounding the issues of same-gender marriage and safe schools for queer youth will help revitalize the organization and build involvement.

"The hope is to have true representation of our communities: geographic, orientation, gender, political advocacy, and community interest," he said.

Simultaneously, volunteers for Pride Vermonts are also recruiting members for its new board from community organizations, hoping to draw on the talents and resources of already active community members.

Although volunteer burnout has been a problem for the small organization, Pride Vermont's reorganization is being counted on for more than simple revitalization. Sarah Harrington, a long-time committee volunteer, said they hope to answer criticism that Pride Vermont simply does not represent the community at large.

"We really want to have a good party for the millennium," said Mike Hayes another Pride Vermont Volunteer, "It's all of ours, not just the Pride Committee's party."

By recruiting a board of people already involved in other community organizations, the organization hopes to draw on both connections and experience to produce an event that appeals to all parts of the community. Establishment of a board will also allow Pride Vermont to seek

non-profit status and improve its fundraising ability.

If Pride Vermont can't meet these goals, said Harrington, "we might just have to go back to basics, abandon the waterfront, and have a smaller celebration."

Harrington says that initial response has been very positive. Pride Vermont organizers will meet again in late September to compare responses and make plans for a meeting with all representatives on October 6.

Tagge Lillja of Outright Vermont says he thinks it is a great idea but he hopes that both Pride Vermont and VCLGR realize that not every organization has the time and employee/volunteer availability to participate even when they might really want to. ▼