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Gay Minister Tired of Spotlight

NEWARK, N.J. — Saying the controversy has put too much strain on his personal life, an openly gay Episcopal priest is stepping down from the pulpit.

"My ministry has not been a typical one," Reverend Barry Stopfel told Newark's *Star-Ledger*. "It has been deeply gratifying but very stressful, and it has taken its toll on me and our marriage."

Stopfel's ordination divided the church in 1990 and led to a heresy trial for the bishop who ordained him. Although the church eventually found that the ordination was not explicitly forbidden by church doctrine, the issue has remained a hotly debated one.

Stopfel preached his last sermon in Maplewood, NJ, on September 26. He said he and his partner are moving to a Pennsylvania farm, where he plans to write a book.

If At First You Don't Convict...

OMAHA, Nebraska — A Methodist minister acquitted last year of violating church doctrine by marrying a gay couple is facing similar charges for performing another ceremony this year.

Nebraska bishop Joel Martinez said September 23 that a committee found "reasonable grounds" to believe that Reverend Jimmy Creech violated church law with the second wedding, the Omaha *World-Herald* reported.

At the time of Creech's first trial, the Methodist ban on same-gender marriage was only a guideline, not a law. The church has since strengthened its stance and made such unions against church law.

After his acquittal, Creech moved to North Carolina, where he performed the second ceremony for a gay couple in April of this year.

No date or location has been set for his trial.

White House Employment Opportunity?

WASHINGTON DC — Richard Socarides has announced that he's giving up his job as President Clinton's liaison to gays and lesbians.

Socarides will leave the position on October 15 to become a communications consultant and senior executive with the firm of Robinson, Lerer & Montgomery in New York.

Socarides was the second person to perform the job in the Clinton administration. Marsha Scott was named the first liaison

after the furor of the don't ask don't tell debate during the president's first term.

No replacement had been announced as of press time.

No Revising 1964 Law, Says DNC

WASHINGTON — Bill Bradley's plan to expand the 1964 Civil Rights Act to include sexual orientation has been rejected by Democratic party leadership.

The Democratic National Committee's executive committee passed a resolution urging that the act "not be reopened for debate or amendments that diminish its existing protections."

A Bradley spokesman says the presidential hopeful doesn't want to diminish existing protections, but expand the law's scope, the Associated Press reported.

But many fear opening up the law would allow the Republican-dominated Congress to alter the protection the 1964 bill now offers.

Texas state Rep. Al Edwards, leader of the DNC's black caucus, called Bradley's suggestion "ill-advised" and said gay and lesbian protections should be dealt with in a separate bill.

Gays Will March in UK Military

STRASBOURG — A court ruling has ended Britain's ban on gays serving in its armed forces.

The European Court of Human Rights ruled September 27 that the ban breached the European Human Rights Convention's guaranteed right to privacy.

While the court does not have the power to force a change of law, it is generally understood that Britain will act in accordance with the ruling.

"This government, like all governments, has to accept the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights," said British Defence Secretary George Robertson.

He immediately announced that pending disciplinary actions against serving homosexuals would be put on hold, and that government and military officials would begin to plan how to implement the decision.

The European decision in Strasbourg came in the case of

four armed services personnel discharged because of their homosexuality. The court reserved ruling on whether they were entitled to compensation for their firings.

Sheriff's Web Site Attacks Gays

FLORIDA — The official Web site for a Florida sheriff's department includes an address attacking a number of organizations and groups, including gays and lesbians.

The Lee County Sheriff's Department homepage includes a link to a message from Sheriff John McDougall entitled "Wake Up America! Before It's Too Late!"

The personal letter calls for school prayer, denounces abortion and labels "gay and lesbian coalitions, rabid feminist groups, United Nations one-world government radicals, and the American Civil Liberties Union... parasitic groups who proselytize and force us under the protection of law to tolerate and accept their despicable conduct and agenda."

According to the Associated Press, Lee County Commissioner John Manning said McDougall is entitled to his views, "but when it comes to taxpayers paying for the Web site, there has to be a question ... of the appropriateness of that activity."

The Florida attorney general's office wouldn't comment whether McDougall could legally use government property to express personal views, the Associated Press reported.

Drug-resistant HIV

Two new studies indicate drug-resistant strains of HIV are increasing and spreading.

The *Journal of the American Medical Association* reported that results of the studies, which focused primarily but not exclusively on gay white males, show that up to 4.5 percent of newly infected patients have strains of the virus that resist drug treatments.

Researchers said groups of people with high propensity for risky behaviors may show similar levels of infection with resistant HIV strains.

Atlanta 1, Insurance Commissioner 0

ATLANTA, GA — A Georgia court has ordered that state's insurance commissioner to stop blocking domestic-partner benefits in Atlanta.

Judge Wendy Shoob told John Oxendine he acted "outside the scope of his statutory authority" by refusing to approve a domestic-partner benefits plan for municipal workers after the city had passed it.

Oxendine's lawyer defended his client's actions by pointing out that "the ordinance accommodates sex. Is there any doubt that these relationships are for intimate relations?" According to the *Advocate*, Judge Shoob replied, "I don't know what they're for, and I'm not sure that it's my business—or your business or the insurance commissioner's business."

Bombing Trial On Hold

LONDON — The trial of a man accused of setting off bombs at a London gay bar and in two city neighborhoods has been postponed.

David Copeland did not enter a plea during his brief September 24 court appearance on charges of murder and causing explosions.

Instead, his defense received a two-week period to prepare a medical report; it follows a six-week postponement for the review of video evidence.

Copeland is charged with setting off the nail bomb that killed three people and injured dozens more at the Admiral Duncan pub

in London last April. Other charges relate to previous incidents in Brixton and Brick Lane that injured more than 40 people.

The next pre-trial hearing is scheduled for October 8.

Wrongful Death Suit in Murder of FTM

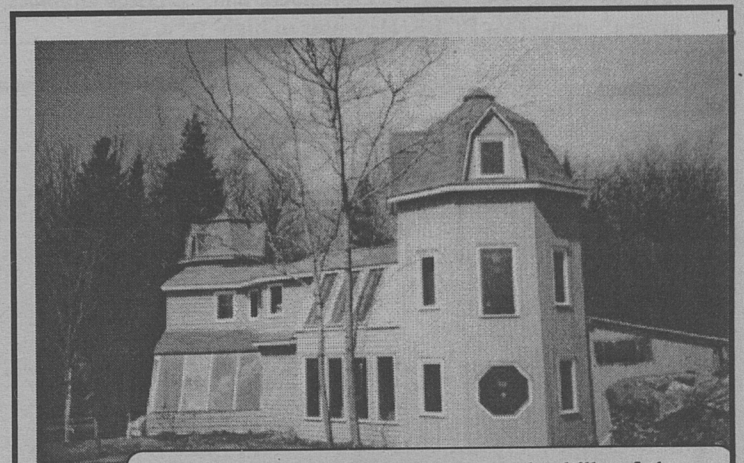
NEBRASKA — The mother of Brandon Teena is suing the former sheriff she says could have kept her transgendered son from being murdered.

JoAnn Brandon maintains that because then-Richardson County Sheriff Charles Laux did not arrest the men who beat and raped Teena on December 25, 1993 — and even warned them about the complaint — the pair was able to murder Teena a week later.

Brandon argues that not only did Laux prevent his chief deputy sheriff from arresting John Lotter and Marvin Nissen on December 28, but told Lotter and Nissen about Teena's complaint.

Lotter and Nissen, said to have been enraged that Teena, a biological female, could pass as male and date a female, have since been convicted of his murder. Lotter was sentenced to death; Nissen received life imprisonment. ▼

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