AIDS Marker Project Commemorates Deaths
This year marks the seventh annual World AIDS Day Marker Project sponsored by Friends For Life in collaboration with two local churches.

The Marker Project began in 2001 when Friends For Life approached First Baptist Church leaders regarding the idea of potentially placing markers with red ribbons on the median in front of their church. The church leaders had a better idea and invited Friends For Life to place the markers on the front lawn of their church.

Several years later, the project added a new member to the project; Greater Lewis Missionary Baptist Church. This year’s World AIDS Day theme, “The Power of Partnership” was taken to a new level when Friends For Life Corporation joined with First Baptist Church, Greater Lewis Missionary Baptist Church, Volunteer Memphis, University of Memphis architectural fraternity Alpha Rho Chi, and Gilead Science. The partnership is one that draws attention to the impact that AIDS is making in the community at one of the city’s busiest intersections: Poplar Avenue and North Parkway.

The two congregations’ front lawns are filled with 2,693 white stakes with red ribbons commemorating this number of deaths associated with AIDS in Shelby County. Friends For Life Executive Director Dr. Ricci Hellman states, “While there will be 2,693 red ribbons visible, this is not including the countless number of persons who are affected by HIV and AIDS in our community today. This type of partnership is exciting to see with such a diverse group working together to raise awareness about AIDS.”

According to the CDC, one American becomes infected with HIV/AIDS every 15 minutes, about 1.2 million people in the U.S. are living with HIV/AIDS and over 300,000 people in the U.S. infected with HIV don’t know they are infected.

Cross-Dressers Won’t Be Ignored at McDonald’s
Three men who were dressed as women took exception to being ignored at a Memphis McDonald’s and attacked a Memphis McDonald’s worker who had been charged with assault.

Dacorian Greer, 23, Danny Mitchell, 26, and Lynn Gillespie, 27, were charged with assault and damage of property over $500 by the Memphis Police Department.

The incident occurred on Sun., Nov. 25, after the three started a fight with Martez Brisco at the Memphis McDonald’s on South Mendenhall. The three were captured and charged a day later.

According to the police report, Brisco said an argument started at the drive-up window and he decided to ignore the three.

“They come to the window, tap, tap, I’m still ignoring them. I guess that just pissed them off worse,” Brisco said.

The three men, dressed as women, jumped out of the car, ran into the restaurant armed with a tire iron, and started swinging at employees, but not before they kicked off their stiletto boots, took off their hoop earrings and jackets.

“They just decided they wanted to start a fight with the crew at McDonald’s here. They began to get ready to fight taking clothing off to fight,” said Lt. Trevor Tisby with Memphis Police Department.

Surveillance video from the store has been turned over to the Shelby County District Attorney’s office, but was not available to local TV stations who covered the story for two days.

Albert Bolton had band aids covering scratches where one of the drag queens mauled him with his fingernails.

“I was fighting with em, trying to get ready to fight taking clothing off to fight,” Brisco said.

I’d Wouldn’t Worship an Anti-gay God’ — Tutu
Desmond Tutu has accused the church of being “obsessed” with homosexuality.

In a BBC radio program broadcast on Nov. 19, the Anglican archbishop emeritus said he felt ashamed of his own church for its attitude towards gay people.

The Nobel Peace Prize winner also criticized Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the leader of the world’s Anglicans, for not demonstrating the attributes of a welcoming God.

“Our world is facing problems — poverty, HIV and AIDS — a devastating pandemic, and conflict. God must be weeping looking at some of the atrocities that we commit against one another,” he said.

He said the church had appeared “extraordinarily homophobic” during the time when openly gay priest Gene Robinson became the bishop of New Hampshire.

Asked if he still felt ashamed of the church’s reluctance, he replied: “If we are going to not welcome or invite people because of sexual orientation, yes. If God, as they say, is homophobic, I wouldn’t worship that God.”

“If I am a person who chooses to be homosexual, I am not.”

Guest was the first openly gay man to be confirmed as his swearing-in ceremony.

Appointed by President Bush in 2001 to be Ambassador to Romania, Michael Guest was the first publicly gay man to be confirmed by the U.S. Senate to serve as a U.S. Ambassador.

Then-Secretary of State Colin Powell explicitly noted the presence of and specifically recognized Guest’s same-sex partner, Alex Nevarez, during the swearing-in ceremony.

The Human Rights Campaign called Powell’s acknowledgement of Nevarez a “small gesture that spoke volumes.”

But serving as an openly-gay ambassador under the Bush administration proved not to be as pleasant as his swearing-in. Guest retired recently, and at his retirement ceremony, “he did what few people displayed uncommon courage and threw a rhetorical hand grenade into his own party.”

The New York Times reported, “Guest took Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice (who was not present) to task for failing to treat the partners of gay and lesbian foreign service workers the same as the spouses of heterosexual officers.”

Guest said that was the reason for his departure: “Most departing ambassadors use these events to talk about their successes... But I want to talk about my signal failure, the failure that in fact is causing me to leave the career that I love,” said Guest, 50, whose most recent assignment was dean of the leadership and management school at the Foreign Service Institute, the government’s school for diplomats.

“The past three years, I’ve urged the secretary and her senior management team to redress poli...”
Iran Carries Out Execution for Juvenile Crimes

Makvan Mouloodzadeh was executed in Kermanshah Central Prison at 5 a.m. on the morning of Dec. 5, Iranian time.

Neither Mouloodzadeh's family nor his lawyer were told about the order by the Iranian Chief Justice until after it occurred.

The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) reports that despite an order by the Iranian Chief Justice to nullify his death sentence, he was put to death.

This is a shameful and outrageous travesty of justice and international human rights law," said Paula Ettelbrick, IGLHRC's executive director.

"How many more young Iranians have to die before the international community takes action?" Mouloodzadeh was a 21-year-old Iranian citizen who was accused of committing rape and murder.

However, at Mouloodzadeh's trial, all the witnesses retracted their pre-trial testimonies, claiming to have lied to the authorities under duress. Makvan also told the court that his confession was made under duress.

On June 7, the Seventh District Court of Kermanshah in Western Iran found him guilty and sentenced him to death.

Despite his lawyer's appeal, the Supreme Court upheld his death sentence on Aug. 1.

The case caused an international uproar, and prompted a letter writing campaign by IGLHRC and similar actions by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Outright, and Everyone Group.

Mouloodzadeh's execution came days after a panel at the UN General Assembly passed a resolution calling for a moratorium on the death penalty.

Siblings Blocked from 'Dis-inheriting' Domestic Partner of Their Gay Brother

In a potentially landmark case, San Francisco Attorney Drexel A. Bradshaw has won a case on behalf of a Gay man whose rights to inherit under California's Domestic Partner Law had been challenged by the family of his deceased domestic partner.

The deceased man's siblings had forced their brother to execute a new trust — cutting out his partner of 14 years — while the man was schizophrenic, on narcotics, and in the final stages of battling cancer. Bradshaw's successful litigation charged that the family had attempted to unlawfully overturn the man's will while he was in not a mental state to do so.

"This case should be a warning to certain 'blood family members' that they cannot swoop in and take away what rightfully belongs to a Domestic Partner," said Bradshaw. "Our client had been together with this man for over 14 years and had cared for and accompanied the deceased to numerous surgeries and been by his side throughout his fight with cancer."

According to Bradshaw, California's landmark Domestic Partner legislation states that upon the death of a married person, one-half of the community property belongs to the surviving spouse and the other half belongs to the deceased. Bradshaw successfully argued that registered domestic partners have the same obligations and rights under law as are granted to and imposed upon spouses and that property acquired during a marriage is the community property of both spouses.

"The family of our client's dying partner used his compromised condition to try and overturn a lawfully executed will," Bradshaw continued, having argued that the man's psychiatric disorder, weakened state, and high doses of morphine show that the decedent was of unsound mind and susceptible to undue influence at the time his siblings attempted to execute a new trust which, in effect, would have dis-inherited the man's domestic partner.

"During his battle with cancer, the decedent's delusions caused him to believe that he had ended his relationship with our client, which was not true, and leave the entirety of his estate to his siblings."

Friendly Skies, Friendly Fares: Anti-Gay Conservatives Miffed at 'Special Gay Deal'

A marketing promotion aimed at the GLBT market has been seized upon by anti-gay social and religious conservatives as constituting a "surcharge" imposed on the "sexually normal."

According to the Idaho Values Alliance, employees of Alaska airlines and of Horizon Air were informed last September about a "mico-website" targeted at, as the IVA put it, "people who practice non-normative sexual behaviors" in order to provide incentives for use of their services. IVA says, "are unavailable to those who are sexually normal."

While this is not appreciably different from many other promotional packages designed to appeal to specific demographics within a market, the IVA hastened to characterize the offer of a discount to GLBT travelers as "in essence, a 10 percent penalty for the same trip for being, well, sexually normal."

However, the IVA also added, "But it's not too late: Switch your sexual orientation from heterosexual to anything else, and you can immediately qualify for a special 10 percent discount for your holiday travel to New York City."

The IVA also notes that "the attention from social and religious conservatives to the special deal they feel homosexuals are receiving has garnered attention, and resentment, in the blogosphere."

At freerepublic.com (www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-chat/1932407/posts), a headline has been posted by a user called GOPmember that reads, "Save 10 percent on Alaska Air flights to NYC... if you're gay."

GOPmember then comments, "I wouldn't lose any sleep waiting for special 'straight rates', though."

Later on, GOPmember comments, "You know, I might consider going for the discounted rates."

"But," GOPmember continues, "I'm worried about the verification process at the ticket counter."

A user called "Question Liberal Authority" follows up on that thought, asking, "Do you have to prove you're gay, or can you just say that you're gay to get the discount? If you're bisexual, do you get double the discount, or half?"

Feast for Friends

Mon., Dec. 17
Mon., Jan. 7
6 p.m., Dinner at 6:30 p.m.
St. John's United Methodist Church (Peabody & Bellevue)
The threats were allegedly made in 1983 in phone calls to Liberty Baptist College in Lynchburg, Va., the college founded by Falwell.

One caller, according to the FBI reports, said: “I know this is true, because my brother is one of them.” Another caller quoted in the reports obtained by the Post said: “I intend to be the one to collect that money.”

A letter sent in the same year to Falwell’s television ministry said: “Hoping you will die soon.”

The package containing the letter also had a small plastic box containing a live scorpion. The FBI papers said.

The files show the FBI scrambled to find out more about Cincinnati’s gay community.

The Post reported that the bureau sent “a confidential informant” with knowledge of gay communities in the Midwest to learn more about the city.

“Source furnished a current copy of the Yellow Page, June, 1983, which is Cincinnati’s gay newspaper. Circulation in the Cincinnati area is shown to be 2000 copies which is not believed exaggerated,” one document detailing the informant’s debriefing by federal agents said.

“Source stated that the Downtown vicinity of Cincinnati supports eight (8) gay bars and one lesbian bar. Source restated the general dislike for Jerry Falwell within the Cincinnati area.”

The Post also reports that the documents show the FBI probed the history of the Stonewall riots in New York City that led to the birth of the LGBT civil rights movement.

The newspaper said that the documents do not show that there was ever any credible assassination plot against Falwell, the founder of the Moral Majority and a frequent critic of gays.

Falwell died in May at the age of 73.

He regularly used his television ministry to attack “homosexual activists,” but one of his strangest pronouncements came shortly after the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington in 2001 during an appearance on the 700 Club.

“The abortionists have got to bear some burden for this because God will not be mocked. And when we destroy 40 million little innocent babies, we make God mad. I really believe that the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People For the American Way, all of them who have tried to secularize America, I point the finger in their face and say ‘you helped this happen.’”

In 2003 Falwell announced that he was putting aside everything for the next few years to the passage of an amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which would protect the traditional family from its enemies who wish to legalize same-sex marriage and other diverse “family” forms, Falwell said.

In the 2004 election campaign he worked with Republicans to use same-sex marriage as a wedge issue.

A week after the November election he announced he was organizing battle plans for what he called an “evangelical revolution.” Falwell said that the election showed that Americans want to return to “traditional values”.

He promised to roll back gay rights laws in communities across the country.

He also denounced the Teleutabhes TV show, calling one of the characters gay.

Ironically his funeral was picketed by members of Westboro Baptist Church, led by the Rev. Fred Phelps.

Phelps, on the Westboro website, called Falwell, a “corrupt false prophet” and said he “spent his entire life prophesying lies and false doctrines like ‘God loves everyone.’”

In attacking Falwell, the Westboro church says he “warmly praised Christ-rejecting Jews, pedophile-condoning Catholics, money-grubbing compromisers, practicing fags like Mel White (of Soulforce), and backsliders like Billy Graham and Robert Schuler, etc.”

Pre-Eminent Lesbian Writer
Jane Rule Dead at 76

Jane Rule, groundbreaking lesbian writer, died of complications of liver cancer. She was 76.

According to Wikipedia.com, Rule, who was born in New Jersey on March 28, 1931, discovered her own lesbianism upon reading the novel The Well of Loneliness, an early exploration of what, at the time, was regarded as an “inverted” sexuality.

Both Wikipedia and 365.com report that Rule, author of a dozen books over her lifetime, graduated in 1952 from Mills College in California which was, at the time, an all-female school. In 1956, Rule relocated to Canada, where she taught at a university. She wrote both fiction and non-fiction, and became a pre-eminent lesbian writer starting in 1964 with the publication of her novel, Desert of the Heart, which garnered 22 rejections before seeing print.

Giving a taste of the times, the 365Gay.com article cited a reviewer of that early work as writing, “But all the time you keep turning to the photograph of the author on the jacket and wondering how such a nice looking woman could ever have chosen so distasteful a subject.”

Rule’s status as an out lesbian writer, and the frank themes of her writings, helped establish her as a distinctive voice in the world of letters in Canada and then in 1975, globally, with the publication of the bluntly-titled book Lesbian Matters, a non-fiction examination of same-sex attraction between women, including Rule’s own lesbianism.

Canada honored Rule, inducing her into the Order of British Columbia in 1998 and, in 2007, into the Order of Canada.

Rule served in an executive capacity with the Writers’ Union of Canada, and became a role model and a mentor for lesbian writers worldwide, according to the 365Gay.com article.

Rule’s life partner, Helen Sontoff, died in 2000.

“Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead, where there is no path and leave a trail.” — Ralph Waldo Emerson

Ambassador

Continued from page 1...
Civil Unions on the Decline in Connecticut

Connecticut state figures show there has been a significant drop in the number of same-sex couples entering into civil unions in the past year.

After civil unions for gay couples became legal in Connecticut on Oct. 1, 2005, there were 649 civil unions during the last three months of that year.

The state Department of Public Health said that in 2006 there were 729 civil unions. However, as of the end of October this year, just 372 civil unions were recorded in Connecticut.

One state lawmaker said many same-sex couples may be holding off for marriage while the state Supreme Court considers claims that denying same-sex couples the ability to marry is unconstitutional.

The co-chairman of the legislature's Judiciary Committee, state Rep. Michael P. Lawlor, D-East Haven, said the drop-off in the number of civil unions in Connecticut doesn't surprise him.

"There was obviously a pent-up demand," Lawlor, strong advocate of gay marriage, said.

Lawlor added that there was bound to be a decline in the number of civil unions after many gay couples took advantage of the new law.

But Lawlor said he also believes "a certain number of people are holding off for marriage." He said if gay marriage were declared constitutional by the state Supreme Court or the legislature acts to legalize it, he would expect to see another surge of same-sex couples seeking to be united.

Peter Wolfgang, a spokesman for the anti-gay marriage group, Family Institute of Connecticut, said, "In part, the novelty has worn off."

Wolfgang said, "Same-sex couples in Connecticut already have most of the rights they claim they were being denied (by being unable to marry)."

Is Queen Latifah Coming Out?

Queen Latifah's latest film is called Perfect Holiday, and this Christmas season, she may be making us all a little more merry. Speculations have been made that the 37-year-old Queen is not only planning on coming out of the closet, but is also expected to announce her engagement to longtime girlfriend Jeanette Jenkins.

Born in Newark, New Jersey, Dana Elaine Owens (a.k.a Queen Latifah) was a gifted performer even at an early age. In the late '80s and early '90s she rose to fame as one of the most recognizable female rappers of the time and became a mainstay on the hip-hop circuit.

In 1993, she joined the cast of the Fox sitcom Living Single and transferred her celebrity momentum into a successful acting career. It was a role in the 1996 critically acclaimed film Set It Off, in which Latifah played a lesbian, that sparked speculations she might be gay.

Earlier this month, the New York Post made reference to a successful actress that was planning on coming out of the closet. Although Latifah was not specifically mentioned in the article, a report on MediaTakeout.com announced it had exclusively learned that Latifah planned on announcing her engagement to her former personal trainer and girlfriend of four years after the promotional tour of her new film.

As for now, no official confirmation has been made as to when or if the Cover Girl spokeswoman will officially come out. The couple is supposedly planning a public wedding. MediaTakeout.com states they "can't reveal our source to this story, but we can tell you that we're 100 percent sure on this one."

While speaking recently with Bill Zwecker of the Chicago Sun-Times about her upcoming Christmas flick, The Perfect Holiday, the Latifah quipped, "When you're famous these days, it's just part of the deal-unfortunately. People will make up all sorts of things that are not true... There ain't gonna be no wedding."

In the-know" blogger as saying that during her years as provost of Stanford University in California, Rice was "completely out as a lesbian and it was not a scandal, just a reality." The paper referred to reports that in 1998 Rice bought a house with a "special friend," another unmarried woman, a film-maker named Randy Bean.

It was far from the first time that she had been linked to lesbian rumors. In a recent biography of Rice, Glenn Kessler, the Washington Post's diplomatic correspondent, noted that Bean, described as a "liberal progressive," was her "closest female friend." It was Kessler who discovered from a search of property records that Rice and Bean owned a house together.

Rice does not comment on her private life, and she is not an elected official, so her sexuality has never been a campaign issue. But the gay community has long been troubled by her association with conservative Republicans opposed to gay marriage, and with evangelical Christians who regard homosexuality as a sin.

At one point last year Rice was regarded as a possible Republican candidate in the 2008 White House race. Yet most commentators agreed that she was reluctant to run, and a Washington Post columnist concluded that she was "the long-shot, as it indeed turned out."

The columnists Chris Cillizza made no mention of Rice's sexuality, and it took an internet reader named Anne Roifes to remind the Post that high journalistic standards sometimes miss the point.

"It is widely believed in gay circles that Condi is a lesbian," Roifes commented. "That could be one reason she will not run."
Naked Ape Author Claims Being Gay is a State of Play

Desmond Morris, who became a bestselling author by applying zoology to explain human behaviour, has now used the technique to put forward an explanation for homosexuality.

In his latest book, The Naked Man, he concludes that men are "made gay" because they retain infantile or juvenile characteristics into adulthood, a phenomenon known as neoteny.

According to this theory, gay men tend to be more inventive and creative than heterosexuals because they are more likely to retain the mental agility and playfulness of childhood.

"Gays have in general made a disproportionately greater contribution to life than non-gays," said Morris, a noted artist as well as a writer, first made famous by his book The Naked Ape.

"The creative gay has very much advanced Planet Earth. The playfulness of childhood is continued with certain people into adulthood. This is very much a positive."

"Adult playfulness means that certain people, often a fairly large proportion of them gay, are more inventive and curious than heterosexuals."

However, Morris's theory was attacked by Steve Jones, professor of genetics at University College London.

"It's arts faculty science to say that gays are neotenous," he said. "It's a stupid idea. Where is the real evidence?"

Morris points to work done by Clive Bromhall, who produced some of his television programs.

"Gays do infantile behaviour in the extreme," said Bromhall, who after gaining a PhD in zoology from Oxford, left academia to form a company making educational films.

Morris, who is 80 in January, has long thought that absent fathers led to boys and young male adults becoming gay. It is "the dominant and ever-present mother theory," he said.

"But now I'm convinced that is wrong, and that it is neoteny which makes people gay."

"Gays are using what is reproductive or creatively constructive to non-reproductive ends. This is very much a positive."
How Bathroom Stings Entrap Gay Men

“Entrapment,” “unconstitutional” and “total racket” were just some of the words used repeatedly by Triangle Foundation public policy director Sean Kosofsky to describe recent efforts of the Clayton Township, Michigan police department to troll public restrooms for illicit gay activity.

The Michigan-based gay advocacy group is conducting an investigation into a series of recent arrests, which will culminate in a lawsuit if necessary.

Kosofsky said his organization has been investigating police stings of this nature for years, but that they have increased significantly in the wake of the Larry Craig bathroom sex scandal.

“These situations have always been bad,” he said, “but the fact that we just saw a wave of them all happen at once in jurisdictions where we weren’t hearing about them before makes us concerned that this is a response to Craig.”

Indeed, after the Idaho Republican senator was arrested for allegedly trying to solicit sex from an undercover police officer in a Minneapolis airport restroom, the American public, as well as law enforcement, began to learn more about the underground subculture of gay bathroom sex than ever. Details of the police report that flooded the media revealed a veritable secret language of oblique signals used among participants—an arcana of foot-tapping, hand-grazing and other gestures as established as any mating ritual in the wild.

“All of the gestures that have been chronicled in the police report have all reportedly been used to signal public sex between men for decades,” said American University anthropology professor William Leap, who has researched male public sex for over 10 years. “It’s not only the gestures that match, but the exact sequence.”

But instead of lying in wait for the proper signs, Kosofsky said, plainclothes policemen conducting sting operations will often bait men by smiling at them, looking them up and down and engaging in sexually explicit dialogue.

“It’s entrapment,” he said. “They’re encouraging men to break the law and then charging them with crimes they didn’t commit.”

He also claimed that such tactics are often employed to either fill a quota or increase police department funds.

“Having conversations about sex in public are legal,” he said. “As long as it doesn’t involve a minor or money, you can do it. And none of these men are involved in paying for anything or involved with cruising minors, yet they’re all being charged with crimes. Because they’re so humiliated, they’ll plead down to anything or pay any fine to make it go away.”

The local police have maintained the ethics of their operations and insisted they weren’t unduly targeting anyone.

“All of the cases are being handled with the utmost professionalism,” Kosofsky said.

“We’ve only done about two sting operations a year,” said Clayton Township police chief Chuck Melki, “but I’m thinking of doing more considering I’m getting so much flack over it.”

The comment was reflective of his overall attitude, as he was generally hostile and unresponsive to the line of questioning by the San Francisco Edge. Before prematurely terminating the interview, however, he insisted he was only responding to public complaints.

“We’ve had several 911 calls that people were having sex in public,” he said. “We have to arrest them whether they happen to be heterosexual or homosexual. In fact, the last few arrests we made were heterosexuals. If we go there and they happen to be men on women or men on men, we have to arrest them. And we’ve done sting operations occasionally to curb that.”

But Kosofsky said he had issued a Freedom of Information Act request for a record of the department’s public complaints, which, like every jurisdiction he had previously dealt with, they were unable to produce.

“We’ve always had complaints,” Kosofsky said. “If he has public complaints, why didn’t he have anything to show for it?” he asked. “I think he’s just not being honest, not admitting that they have no formal complaints at all, and that these operations are homophobic.”

The Triangle Foundation has managed to overturn many past convictions in court by explicating the lack of any detailed offenses in formal police reports. In 2002, the organization won a suit against the Detroit Police Department for an unprecedented wave of sex sting operations conducted in a small area of a local park. The city of Detroit settled for $175,000 after a memo was leaked to show that the police department had boasted a $2.4 million increase in the wake of the 770 arrests, and rubber-stamped 770 identical police reports in order to justify it. The statute they had used to conduct the arrests, called Annoying Persons, was ruled unconstitutional and overturned.

“We were vindicated,” Kosofsky said, “and a single arrest hasn’t been made since.

Help raise money for Friends For Life while doing your Holiday shopping!

Access ‘Amazon.com’ or ‘iGive.com’ on the FFL web site each time you shop and 6% and more of your purchase price goes to FFL at no cost to you!

Some (In)Famous Sex Stings

Long before George Michael, Larry Craig and Florida State Sen. Bob Allen were caught with their flies open in public men’s rooms, there have been many schemes to entice men into attempting to solicit an undercover cop. Here are some of them:

• Five teachers and a high school football coach in Fresno, Cal., lost their jobs in a public restroom sting.

• More than 800 men, including two Canadian heterosexuals who were beaten after they were mistaken as gay lovers, were arrested by San Antonio park rangers over just two years.

• A respected official in a Connecticut town committed suicide after a Providence, R.I., newspaper published his name along with several others nabbed in a video-store raid.

• Another man, in rural Arkansas, also committed suicide after a Little Rock newspaper refused pleas from gay organizations not to publish names of men arrested in a similar raid.

• After a Harrisburg, Penn., newspaper reported a man for “publicly masturbating while other men watched,” he lost his wife and his home.

• New Jersey State Police have been arresting men in rest areas and in the woods along the Palisades Parkway, a scenic route that parallels New York City on the western side of the Hudson River. In some cases, the police reportedly didn’t even bother to wait for the money to enter the public coffers but simply extort cash on the spot in lieu of arrests.

“It always seemed to me a bit pointless to disapprove of homosexuality. It’s like disapproving of rain.” —Francis Maude
California Episcopal Diocese Votes to Scede

An Episcopal diocese in central California voted Dec. 8 to split with the national denomination over disagreements about the role of gay men and lesbians in the church.

Clergy and lay members of the Episcopal Diocese of San Joaquin voted 173 to 22 at their annual convention to remove all references to the U.S. church from the diocese’s constitution, said the Rev. Van McCalister, a diocesan spokesman.

The diocese, in a later vote, accepted an invitation to join the Anglican Church of the Southern Cone, a conservative South American congregation of the worldwide Anglican Communion. The Episcopal Church is the U.S. member of the global Anglican Communion.

The Episcopal Church’s presiding bishop, Katharine Jefferts Schori, said she was saddened by the action.

“We deeply regret their unwillingness or inability to live within the historical Anglican understanding of comprehensive inclusiveness,” she said in a statement. “We wish them to know of our prayers for them and their journey. The Episcopal Church will continue in the Diocese of San Joaquin, albeit with new leadership.”

The Fresno-based congregation is the first full diocese to secede because of a conservative-liberal rift that began decades ago and is now focused on whether the Bible permits gay relationships.

“We have leadership in the Episcopal Church that has drastically and radically changed directions,” McCalister said. “They have pulled us out from under us. They’ve started teaching something very different, something very new and novel, and it’s impossible for us to follow a leadership that has so drastically reinvented itself.

The decision is almost certain to spark a court fight over control of the diocese’s multimillion-dollar real estate holdings and other assets.

The Fresno diocese had explored breaking ties with the U.S. church since 2003, when Episcopalians consecrated the church’s first openly gay bishop, V. Gene Robinson of New Hampshire. The resulting uproar throughout the world Anglican fellowship has split the 77 million-member communion.

Christian advocates for accepting gay relationships, including Jefferts Schori, say they are guided by biblical teachings on social justice and tolerance. But Bishop John-David Schofield and other conservatives believe Scripture bars same-sex relationships.

San Joaquin is one of three Episcopal provinces that will not ordain women. Last year the Episcopal Church elected Jefferts Schori as its first woman primate.

About 55 conservative Episcopal parishes have split from the church in the last few years and some have affiliated directly with Anglican provinces overseas, according to national church statistics.

Grenada Relents on Gay Cruises

Cruise ships carrying gay passengers will be permitted to dock in Grenada this winter, the Caribbean island’s tourism minister says.

Several hotels received visitor cancellations after the Toronto Star reported that the country was questioning whether to allow entry to gay cruise ships, tourism minister Clarette Modeste-Curwen said in a statement Dec. 7.

Some protesters also wrote the Canadian government asking that aid be cut to Grenada’s Port of St. Georges where cruise ships dock, she added.

She said, “We will continue to welcome all visitors and will work, along with our population, to ensure that their time and ours will be enjoyable. Grenada respects the rights of all persons of all persuasions and lifestyles.”

Left unmentioned was that homosexual relations remain illegal in Grenada.

The government’s position was

GLBTF Employees at Nike Sponsor New Flag

The Nike Tennessee Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual, Transgender and Friends Network has approved a $1,000 contribution towards the new Mid-South Pride 100-foot rainbow flag. The donation makes the Nike Tennessee GLBTF Network a Grand Sponsor.

The Nike employee network could provide all the funds necessary for the construction of the new flag. If any other donors wish to be included, those funds will be set aside for maintenance of the new flag and perhaps to help it travel to other Pride events which request it. The flag traveled to Little Rock and St. Louis before its retirement. These sponsors will have

Documentary Explores Life and Work of Broadway Composer/Lyricist Jerry Herman

“Jerry died in line twice,” Broadway composer Carol Channing says of composer and lyricist Jerry Herman in an interview with The Gazette.

Herman wrote the words and music for some of the greatest Broadway musicals ever mounted, including Hello, Dolly!, Mame and La Cage aux Folles. Words and Music by Jerry Herman airs Tues., Jan. 1, 2008, on WKOQ.

La Cage aux Folles (1983) wasn’t only a critical and commercial smash, but a political and social turning point. Never before had two men held hands romantically in a musical, or sung a love ballad to one another.

Memphian George Hearns’s star turned as Za Za, belting out the dramatic act one closer, “I Am What I Am,” still brings Phelps and family members to their feet with its forceful call for tolerance and dignity—a surpassingly powerful statement from a composer/lyricist who declared all along that he wanted only to entertain people.

It was, Hearns recalls, in Words And Music, truly “the best of times”—until shortly after the show opened and cast members began dying of a mysterious illness eventually identified as AIDS. Half of the original La Cage chorus didn’t live to finish the run. Herman himself was diagnosed HIV-positive in 1985; he is one of the fortunate ones who survived to see experimental drug therapies take hold and is still, as one of his lyrics proclaims, “alive and well and thriv[ing].”

Showtime on Trail of Gay-Hating Phelps

Until a couple of weeks ago, few people besides members of the GLBT community had heard of the Rev. Fred Phelps and his Topeka, Kan.-based Westboro Baptist Church. Like other fundamentalists, Phelps preaches that gay people are sinful.

But Phelps and his church—nearly all of them his family members—don’t stop there.

Phelps believes America is doomed for tolerating homosexuals and that everything bad that happens, from hurricanes to soldier deaths in Iraq, is God’s punishment. And he doesn’t stop there.

Phelps preaches that church members travel the country picketing the funerals of soldiers killed in Iraq. Just before Thanksgiving Day, a Maryland jury convicted the group of inflicting emotional distress in such an instance and awarded damages of nearly $1 million. Fall From Grace, an extremely restrained and wonderfully comprehensive look at some of the oddest people in the Midwest, began as a film-studies assignment for University of Kansas student K. Ryan Jones.

He interviewed Phelps and family members, including a son and daughter who moved far away. Jones interviewed other ministers and civic leaders and, with no fanfare whatsoever, showed how Phelps’ comments were nearly identical to those made by former Alabama priest David Trosch, Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell.

At 70 minutes, the documentary is about 10 minutes too long. After a while, interviews with Phelps and his lawyer son, also a true believer, become a little repetitive. Or maybe it’s just that there’s so much any normal viewer can take. Fall From Grace began showing on Showtime on Dec. 10.

Three sentences in Death of NYC Gay Man

Three men convicted of beating a gay man and then chasing him onto a highway where he was struck by a car and killed were sentenced to prison in New York, prosecutors said.

All three had been part of what prosecutors called a hate-inspired robbery scheme.

On Oct. 8, 2006, they found Michael Sandy in an Internet chat room Mid-South Pride in November about a significant donation in memory of the late Gary Wilkerson, founding president of Mid-South Pride. The leadership voted shortly thereafter, and Mid-South Pride should receive the funds in the coming weeks.

The Nike employment network sponsorship, in addition to major sponsorship from Tennessee Equality Project and Izzy and Dutz should provide all the funds necessary for the construction of the new flag. If any other donors wish to be included, those funds will be set aside for maintenance of the new flag and perhaps to help it travel to other Pride events which request it. The flag traveled to Little Rock and St. Louis before its retirement. These sponsors will have

their names placed on a banner carried in front of the flag.

Mike Morgan, of Mr. Hyde Fashions, is working out the logistics of replicating the huge symbol and it is planned to have the flag finished for the Prides of the Southeast Conference to be held in Memphis in February. When the fabric is ready, there will be a Rainbow Sewing Bee to assemble the huge new banner.
Brolin, Hirsch, Franco Got “Milk” Roles
Josh Brolin, Emile Hirsch and James Franco are in final negotiations to join Sean Penn in a movie about Harvey Milk, the country’s first openly gay elected official.

Milk, from director Gus Van Sant, stars Penn in the title role as a San Francisco city supervisor who was assassinated in 1978 by a political rival.

Brolin will play the rival, Dan White, who shot both Milk and San Francisco Mayor George Moscone to death at City Hall. Hirsch has been cast as Milk’s political ally Cleve Jones, a gay-rights activist who went on to found the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt. Franco will play Scott Smith, Milk’s lover and campaign manager.

Principal photography is set to begin in January in San Francisco. Focus Features will distribute worldwide.

Brolin is in theaters with both No Country For Old Men and American Gangster and Hirsch with the Penn-directed Into the Wild. Franco co-starred in Spider-Man 3 and In the Valley of Elah.

Toyota Threatens Legal Action Over Gay Porn Star Named Lexus
What does Toyota have to do with gay porn? A lot, apparently.

The U.S. branch of the Japanese automaker recently sent a communiqué to Daniel Grangier, president and CEO of Switzerland-based EBOYS Studios, regarding one of his stars, who goes by the screen name Lexus.

(Lexus has appeared in such fine films as CumEater and SpunkLand.)

According to a release sent to JRLChartsOnline.net, the automaker claimed in its letter to Grangier that the name Lexus is a trademark of Toyota Motors Sales USA, Inc., and by using Lexus in connection with adult films, Eboys Studio is in violation of § 43(c) of the Federal Trademark Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1125(c) and tarnishes Toyota’s business reputation.

Toyota is demanding that Eboys Studio (1) immediately and permanently cease all use of the name Lexus in connection with adult films (2) immediately de-list the two DVDs from the company’s official website EboysStudio.com and its affiliates (3) immediately remove all DVD packaging displaying the name of Lexus (4) Eboys Studio should ensure these films are no longer advertised and sold by Eboys Studio’s customers.

Added M. Eric T. Fingerhut, the Washington, D.C., attorney representing Toyota: If Eboys Studio does not comply, “Toyota may have no choice but to take legal action in order to protect its trademark rights.”

Grangier, who says his stage name in reference to the Greek god Lex us and not the Toyota-produced luxury vehicle, told JRLChartsOnline.net, “Our attorney, Marcus Batista, is now in negotiation with Toyota’s legal team regarding this issue. In a letter sent to Eric Fingerhut on Nov. 21, we have informed them that Eboys Studio expects to comply with some of Toyota’s demands, but we will not ask for a worldwide recall of SpunkLand and CumEaters.

“If Eboys Studio and Toyota Motors cannot reach an agreement,” he added, “Eboys Studio will have no other choice but to go to legal action. We will defend our case and our rights. A judge would have to decide if such a trademark can prohibit us [from using] the name of a Greek god in our movies.”

McDonald’s Melee
Continued from page 1

to protect him (Brisco), and he scratched me,” Bolton said.

As the fight progressed, the manager grabbed a pot of hot french fry grease and threw it at the men. One of the men retaliated, hitting the manager in the head with a wet floor sign severe enough to warrant an ambulance.

Before they drove off, the cross dressers allegedly smashed in the drive-thru window with the tire iron.

The incident also prompted a lesson from equality leaders to remind local media about proper reporting on potential GLBT issues.

“The incident is troubling,” said Christopher Sanders, president of the Tennessee Equality Project. “The reporting of it is even more troubling. Much of the reporting that we’ve monitored has been laced with stereotypes. The stories have been of concern to TEP.”

Sanders said it would have been more appropriate to describe the three individuals as “cross dressers” instead of the description “transvestite.”

While it seems clear that the incident was not unprovoked, the three involved have been in trouble before.

Danny Mitchell has been arrested for driving violations, soliciting rides and prostitution. Dacorian Greer has taken a different look when arrested for vandalism, soliciting rides and prostitution near a church or school.

Lynn Gillespie has been arrested for driving offenses, theft of property, prostitution and having a controlled substance.

The three were due back in court Dec. 11. Gaze was unable to determine the disposition of the case in time for our deadline.
Two Grants Go to FFL

Two grants totaling $9,000 will help fund a financial empowerment program and FFL’s Wellness University.

Friends For Life recently received a $4,000 grant from the Women’s Foundation for a Greater Memphis to develop and implement a Women’s Financial Empowerment Program. In this new component to be added to the agency’s Wellness University, 25 low-income women living with HIV/AIDS will receive training to help them learn skills to avoid credit card debt, develop a budget and establish a plan of action to assist them in getting out of debt.

Friends For Life also has received a grant in the amount of $5,000 from Until There’s A Cure to support the Wellness University. Until There’s A Cure is a national organization dedicated to eradicating HIV/AIDS by raising awareness and funds to combat this pandemic.

The goal of Until There’s A Cure is to fund prevention education, care services and vaccine development using The Bracelet as the tool. The Bracelet will serve not only as a bridge to unite people to fight HIV/AIDS, but to help people to recognize that anyone—man, woman, or child—can be infected and that everyone should be compassionate, understanding, and responsible.

Visit the Until There’s A Cure web site at www.until.org to learn more about the organization, view its public service announcement and order The Bracelet.

Culture Club’s Boy George Ordered to Stand Trial

A British judge has ruled there is sufficient evidence against openly gay performer Boy George for a trial on charges of falsely imprisoning a 28-year-old man.

The trial against the 47-year-old singer and DJ, whose real name is George O’Dowd, will begin Feb. 25.

The charge stems from an incident last April where a male escort claimed to have been chained to a wall in George’s London apartment.

Auden Carlsen, 28, claims to have met the singer on a popular British gay dating site. He said that he agreed to go to George’s apartment to pose for photographs for a fee of about $750 and on the stipulation there would be no sex. But after he arrived at the apartment, Carlsen claims to have been attacked by George and another man.

“I was convinced I was going to die,” he told the tabloid The Mirror in April.

“George handcuffed me to a hook by the bed as they held me down.”

Carlsen said he managed to get the hook out of the wall and escape in only his underwear. He called police from a local news vendor’s stand.

Police have not named the other man and have declined say whether charges against him are pending. The case is the latest in a recent string of legal problems for the former Culture Club singer.

Last month a process server posing as a fan seeking an autograph got an unsuspecting George to sign a court order for $75,000 owed to Club GAY USA promoter Kasia Saleh.

George had been booked to play at the club but canceled after being busted for cocaine in New York in 2005. A court ruled that by failing to show up at the club he contributed to its failure.

Last year a judge in New York City sentenced George to five days of community service after being convicted of filling a false police report in connection with the cocaine bust.

The singer had called police with a bogus report of a burglary by a male prostitute at his lower Manhattan apartment. When police went to investigate, they found cocaine inside.

He was originally charged with drug offenses, but under an agreement with prosecutors he pleaded guilty to the lesser charges and worked off his sentence picking garbage.
Pride in the Party Program to
Train Future Democratic Leaders

On Dec. 4, National Stonewall Democrats announced the launch of Pride in the Party. This national program will expand the participation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Democrats within state and local Democratic parties and will specifically increase the participation of LGBT Democrats at the 2008 Democratic National Convention.

Pride in the Party was created with a strong focus on developing the participation of LGBT communities of color, union members, youth and veterans.

"Many of our brightest elected officials, chapter leaders and party officers began their participation in Democratic politics as delegates to past conventions," said Jon Hoadley, executive director. "Pride in the Party is an organized effort to help LGBT Democrats navigate their state's particular requirements and to run successful campaigns to win delegate positions.

Prior to the launch of Pride in the Party, National Stonewall Democrats undertook efforts to require each state Democratic Party to work toward the increased participation of LGBT Democrats within their 2008 delegations. As a result, the Rules and Bylaws of the Democratic National Committee were amended to require each state Democratic party to ensure that LGBT Democrats are reflected in each state delegation. Pride in the Party will assist in training and advising interested individuals and in the development of delegate campaigns.

What Community Leaders are Saying About Pride in the Party

"Pride in the Party is a hands-on opportunity to educate policy-makers, regardless of their political affiliation, on the priorities of our community. This program enables advocates to actively inform the political process on issues of gender identity and expression." — Mara Keating, Executive Director, National Center for Transgender Equality

"The more openly LGBT people serving in powerful party positions, the more likely we are to see inclusive party platforms and inclusive campaigns. National Stonewall Democrats is doing our community a great service in prioritizing this program."

— Dave Noble, Director of Public Policy and Government Affairs, The National Gay & Lesbian Task Force

"The upcoming elections will set the tone for progressive movement for decades to come. It is paramount that LGBT people play a positive and visible role. Stonewall is leading the way."

— H. Alexander Robinson, Executive Director, National Black Justice Coalition

"For LGBT workers, political action is a vital element of any strategy to win protection from job discrimination, as well as to gain improved wages, better working conditions and increased job security.

In 30 of the 50 states, it remains legal to discriminate against gay, lesbian and bisexual workers; in 39 states, it is legal to discriminate against transgender workers. Registering to vote and participating in the political process are essential steps for LGBT workers to break down these barriers to full inclusion in the American Dream." — Donna Cartwright, Communications Director, Pride at Work, AFL-CIO

National Stonewall Democrats has launched www.PrideInTheParty.org as a stand-alone website where LGBT Democrats can sign up to participate in the delegate selection process and access state-by-state information.

Overall program goals include:

• At a minimum, the election of 321 LGBT delegates, a 14 percent increase in the number of LGBT Democrats elected to the 2008 Democratic National Convention over 2004 numbers (282 LGBT Democrats were elected as delegates in 2004).

• The participation of LGBT Democrats in the delegations of all 50 states (42 states sent LGBT delegates in 2004).

• Increase in the participation of LGBT Democrats of color.

• Increase in the participation of LGBT youth, veterans and union members. Most delegates to the 2008 Democratic National Convention will be elected by Democratic voters within their congressional district and approved by the presidential campaigns which they seek to represent.

Often complex, the procedures for becoming a delegate vary greatly from state to state. Pride in the Party is an organized effort to help LGBT Democrats navigate their state's particular requirements and to run successful campaigns to win delegate positions.

Because of you,
more than 600 toys were donated to
Friends for Life
to distribute to children living with or affected by HIV/AIDS

"If homosexuality is a disease, then let's all call in queer to work: "Hello. Can't work today, still queer."

— Robin Tyler
California Episcopal Diocese Votes to Secede

An Episcopal diocese in central California voted Dec. 8 to split with the national denomination over disagreements about the role of gay men and lesbians in the church.

Clergy and lay members of the Episcopal Diocese of San Joaquin voted 173 to 22 at their annual convention to remove all references to the U.S. church from the diocese’s constitution, said the Rev. Van McCalister, a diocesan spokesman.

The diocese, in a later vote, accepted an invitation to join the Anglican Church of the Southern Cone, a conservative South American congregation of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

The Episcopal Church’s presiding bishop, Katharine Jefferts Schori, said she was saddened by the action.

“We deeply regret their unwillingness or inability to live within the historical Anglican understanding of comprehensiveness,” she said in a statement. “We wish them to know of our prayers for them and their journey. The Episcopal Church will continue in the Diocese of San Joaquin, albeit with new leadership.”

The Fresno-based congregation is the first full diocese to secede from the national church since 2003, when Episcopalians consecrated the church’s first openly gay bishop, V. Gene Robinson of New Hampshire. The resulting uproar throughout the world Anglican fellowship has split the 77 million-member communion.

Christian advocates for accepting gay relationships, including Jefferts Schori, say they are guided by biblical teachings on social justice and tolerance. But Bishop John-David Schofield and other conservatives believe Scripture bars same-sex relationships.

San Joaquin is one of three Episcopal dioceses that will not ordain women. Last year the Episcopal Church elected Jefferts Schori as its first woman primate.

About 55 conservative Episcopal parishes have split from the church in the last few years and some have affiliated directly with Anglican provinces overseas, according to national church statistics.

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Kirk Pamper, Noted Floral Designer Dead at 50

Kirk Pamper, 50, former owner of Botanica floral shop died Nov. 19 after a long bout with cancer.

Pamper was not only well known for his exotic designs, he was known also for his general knowledge of horticulture and his ability to share his knowledge with coworkers and aficionados.

Pamper’s particular interest in a plant called mother-in-law’s tongue (Sansevieria trifasciata) eventually led him to collect over 200 varieties of the plant from across the world.

“When he was a teen, he was given his first Sansevieria plant, I want to say from our grandmother. I guess that just got him interested in knowing more about that plant, “said his sister, Kristyn Greshem in an interview with Jody Callahan for The Commercial Appeal. “Before long, he was going on collecting expeditions to Ecuador and Africa.”

In 2005, Pamper was presented with the Award of Distinguished Service to the Floral Industry, and in 2006 was honored with the Tommy Bright Award for Lifetime achievement in floral presentation.

Pamper supported the Memphis gay community in many ways. He offered floral arrangements for many awards ceremonies and charity auctions as well as being one of the first floral shops to advertise in local gay newspapers. He served as one of four volunteer coordinators for the first production of Heart Strings staged in 1989.

Pamper’s collections of rare plants are expected to be housed at the Memphis Botanical Garden where friends plan to stage a memorial service in the spring.


Bob Kohler, gay activist, former owner of The Loft on Christopher Street, Stonewall veteran, co-founder of the Gay Liberation Front, ACT UP member, and longtime fixture of Charles Street, died on Dec. 6 at the age of 81. The cause of death was cancer, according to friends.

Kohler was remembered as a tireless fighter for gay rights, transsexual rights, queer youth and people with HIV/AIDS who never gave up the struggle even as he battled illness and advancing years.

To his younger friends, Kohler recounted stories of a queer world in another era how he and his boyfriend Ed bought a fixer-upper in Amagansett in what became a gay enclave; of the show-biz lesbians who settled in nearby Bridgehampton, about the eventual move to Cherry Grove and the Pines on Fire Island and the class wars that defined relations between the two gay settlements.

On the second night of the Stonewall riots in 1969, Kohler and other West Village community members called the first meeting of the Gay Liberation Front, which Kohler (and historians) credit with “establishing radicalism in the New York gay community.” He went on to work with direct action and advocacy groups including ACT UP, Sex Panic!, The Neutral Zone, Fed Up Queers, the NYC AIDS Housing Network, Irish Queers, animal rights groups, and others.

Throughout his work, Kohler was a father figure to activists and street kids, including Sylvia Rivera, who himself grew up to be a parent and mentor to queer youth.

Thank You!

Friends For Life expresses heartfelt gratitude to everyone who made this year’s APATT a huge success. To all the many volunteers who planned the event, everyone who hosted parties, attended parties as well as the finale costume party and made generous donations... FF and the 2,000 persons affected by HIV/AIDS we serve say...

Thank You!

www.friendsforlifecorp.org
Congress dropped the Matthew Shepard hate crime bill from a defense appropriation bill because there were not enough votes to pass it. The legislation, which passed the House and the Senate, was attached to the defense bill by the Senate to make it more difficult for Bush to veto it. However, many liberal Democrats in the House did not want to have to vote to support more funding for the Iraq occupation to support the hate crime bill, so the Democratic leadership, including Rep. Barney Frank, decided to drop the hate crime legislation from the defense appropriation bill.

Once again the Democratic Congress has caved in to Bush and the Republicans. Not only did the Democrats drop the hate crime bill from the defense appropriation, they also dropped any timetable for troop withdrawal from Iraq, gave $50 billion more for the illegal occupation, and cut more domestic spending. Bush still says he will veto the bill because it has too much domestic spending and not enough military spending!

I know the Democrats have a slim majority in the Senate and cannot override a GOP filibuster or a presidential veto. But, instead of caving in to Bush and the GOP, why don’t the Democrats make the GOP filibuster and Bush veto bills, and let them take the heat for blocking more funding for the troops?

Sometimes it seems like the Democratic Party is just tempting me to join the Green Party or the Socialist Party, until I look at those neo-fascist Republicans! In the last Republican debate, it looked like a contest to see which candidate could be the most Christo-fascist. The candidates were asked important questions, like do they believe every word in the Bible? Only Giuliani and Romney had a hard time answering affirmatively.

Retired Brigadier General Keith Kerr asked the Republican candidates why they thought America’s women and men in uniform are not professional enough to serve with gays and lesbians. All of the GOP candidates affirmed their support of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” military policy with the same worn excuses. The Republican audience showed their lack of respect for General Kerr by booing him! Conservative talking heads dismissed Kerr as a “phony soldier” (like they do all veterans opposed to Bush’s illegal war) because he is part of Hillary Clinton’s LGBT steering committee.

Meanwhile, on the 14th anniversary of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” military policy, 28 retired generals and admirals sent a letter to Congress urging that they scrap the failed policy. In response to the Human Rights Campaign, all of the Democratic candidates have issued statements on what they would do to end the anti-gay DADT policy.

Gay Republicans continue to blame Bill Clinton for DADT, even though Republicans fought against Clinton’s attempt to lift the ban on gays in the military. Remember, back in 1992, most Americans still supported the ban on gays in the military, and the Existing military policy prohibited gays from serving at all. Clinton was forced to compromise with conservatives to allow gays to serve as long as they were not public about being gay. At the time, DADT was a step forward. While all of the Republican candidates still support DADT, all of the Democratic candidates are now opposed to it. See the difference?

By the way, according to a Los Angeles Times/Bloomberg poll, 6 out of 10 military families disapprove of President Bush’s job performance and 60 percent of those families with sailors and marines in Iraq or Afghanistan say that the invasion and occupation of Iraq was not worth the cost. So much for “supporting the troops”!

Appropriately the Log Cabin Republicans have decided not to endorse the most “pro-gay” GOP candidate, Rudy Giuliani, but they are attacking Mitt Romney in ads on “Mitt-flows,” accusing him of raising taxes as governor of Massachusetts. They could also point out that “Multiple-Mitt” also flip-flopped on gay rights.

When he ran for the U.S. Senate in 1994 against Edward Kennedy, Romney sent a letter to the Log Cabin Republicans asking for their support. He wrote, “I am more convinced than ever before that as we seek to establish full equality for America’s gay and lesbian citizens, I will provide more effective leadership than my opponent.” He also wrote that how thought Clinton’s DADT policy was a “step in the right direction” and that it was “the first of a number of steps that will ultimately lead to gays and lesbians being able to serve openly and honestly in our nation’s military.” That goal will only be reached when preventing discrimination against gays and lesbians is a mainstream concern, which is a goal we share.

The new Mitt Romney is now claiming to be the most anti-gay Republican candidate for president! He supports a constitutional amendment to prohibit equal marriage rights for gays and lesbians. He is for the new GOP candidates he opposves equal rights for gays in the military and opposes the Employment Non-Discrimination Act to prohibit discrimination against gays and lesbians in employment.

Despite all of this, Romney still has a problem with the Christian Right—he is a Mormon, which most conservative Christians consider an anti-Christian cult. Hoping to imitate JFK, Romney gave a speech on religion to try to address those concerns and promised that he would not govern as a Mormon or answer to the Mormon Church as president. However, in an olive branch to the Christian Right, he solicited secular leaders who insist, as Thomas Jefferson did, on a strict “wall of separation” between church and state. Pandering to the Christian Right, Romney argued that freedom requires religion!

Going further, Romney called for more tolerance of Judeo-Christian religious beliefs and intolerance of non-believers and secularists! So we should accept Mormons, but not atheists?

Rudy Giuliani’s campaign has been hit with several scandals. In an admission to his close business ties to convicted or indicted crooks, like his former police commissioner Bernard Kerik, apparently Giuliani used the NYPD and public funds to shuttle around with his mistress. There are lots of skeletons in Giuliani’s closet and Republicans are getting nervous about their front-runner.

While Giuliani’s campaign has been sinking, former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee, a Baptist minister, has surged in recent national polls and is now second nationally and is running 20 points ahead of Romney in Iowa! Talk about a nut case! Back in 1992 when he ran for Senate, Huckabee called for a quarantine of people with AIDS, opposed increasing federal funding for AIDS, did not think AIDS should be treated like a civil rights issue, and argued that homosexuality could “pose a dangerous public health risk.” He blames abortion for illegal immigration, supports a constitutional amendment prohibiting abortion, and believes that God wants him to be president.

Now Mike Huckabee has a scandal to deal with. As governor of Arkansas, his administration gave the release of a convicted rapist, Wayne Dumond, who went on to rape and murder at least one other woman. Huckabee has lied about his role in getting Dumond released. Confidential files obtained by the Huffington Post demonstrate that Huckabee was very involved in pushing for Dumond’s release and commuting his sentence, and show that Huckabee was part of an anti-Gay campaign led by conservative preachers who believed that Dumond was wrongly sentenced for raping Clinton’s cousin.

Huckabee went along with this conspiracy theory and thought that Dumond may have been wrongly accused. He also claims he had no reason to believe Dumond would commit more rapes, even though other rape victims wrote to Huckabee detailing how Dumond See Queer Notes on p. 13
Court: Gay Couple Can't Divorce in Rhode Island

A lesbian couple that married in Massachusetts cannot get divorced in their home state of Rhode Island, the Rhode Island Supreme Court ruled Nov. 7.

The court, in a 3-2 decision, said the state’s family court lacks the authority to grant the divorce of a same-sex couple because Rhode Island lawmakers have not defined marriage as anything other than a union between a man and a woman.

“The role of the judicial branch is not to make policy, but simply to determine the legislative intent,” the court wrote.

Cassandra Ormiston and Margaret Chambers wed in Massachusetts in 2004 and filed for divorce last year in Rhode Island, where they both live. But opponents of same-sex marriage said the court correctly avoided taking a step toward recognizing such unions.

Massachusetts, the only state where gay marriage is legal, restricts the unions to residents of states where the marriage would be recognized, and a Massachusetts judge decided last year that Rhode Island is one of those states.

No law specifically bans same-sex marriages in Rhode Island, but the state has taken no action to recognize them. The justices said Rhode Island laws contain numerous references to marriage as between a woman and a man.

“My civil rights, my human rights have been denied,” Ormiston said in a phone interview after the ruling. “It’s no small matter.”

Nancy Palmsciano, Ormiston’s lawyer, said couples married in other states and other countries are routinely granted divorces in Rhode Island, and the same freedom should apply to this couple.

Now Ormiston is stuck in a marriage she doesn’t want to be in, Palmsciano said. The women’s lawyers have said at least one would have to move to Massachusetts to get a divorce, but Palmsciano said that was not a viable option for her client.

“I’m disappointed for anyone who’s involved in one of these marriages who’s a resident of the state of Rhode Island,” she said. “I think these people are being confined to a legal limbo.”

Lou Puliner, a lawyer for Chambers, said he was surprised by the decision.

I feel that it’s unfortunate that two people who are legally married cannot get closure here in the state of Rhode Island,” Puliner said.

Lawyers for the women had argued that the court should consider only whether Rhode Island could recognize a valid marriage from another state for the sole purpose of granting a divorce petition.

Opponents of same-sex marriage praised Rhode Island’s top court for rejecting even a limited recognition of same-sex marriage.

“The meaning of marriage in Rhode Island is the union of a man and a woman,” said Monte Stewart, president of the Marriage Law Foundation, which filed a brief in the case. “You have to have a marriage before you can have a divorce.”

Karen Loewy, a staff attorney for Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, said she viewed the court’s decision as a narrow ruling, but feared that same-sex marriage opponents would use it to argue against broader legal recognition for same-sex couples in Rhode Island.

“But you’re essentially asking these women to move to access justice,” Loewy said. “The door of the courthouse has been barred for them.”

The couple’s divorce petition drew a broad range of supporters, including Attorney General Patrick Lynch, who earlier this year released a nonbinding advisory opinion saying Rhode Island should recognize same-sex marriages performed in Massachusetts.

In earlier court filings, Gov. Don Carcieri, an opponent of same-sex marriage, had also argued in favor of granting the divorce. He said under Rhode Island law, the Family Court didn’t have to address whether the marriage was valid at all, avoiding a larger debate about same-sex unions.

But he rallied the Dec. 7 court decision, saying in a written statement that, “It has always been clear to me that Rhode Island law was designed to permit marriage — and therefore divorce — only between a man and a woman.”

Gay Rights Groups React to Congress’ Decision to Drop Hate Crimes Bill

Congressional aides are reporting that a House-Senate conference committee has dropped the hate-crimes legislation co-sponsored by Sen. Gordon Smith, R-Ore., and Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., from a defense authorization bill because it did not have sufficient support in the House.

The legislation, formally known as the “Matthew Shepard Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act” (S. 1105), would have expanded federal law to include crimes committed against people because of their gender, sexual orientation or disability.

Gay rights groups and supporters reacted strongly to the decision, with Wade Henderson, president of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, telling the Associated Press that the legislation is “the last clear chance this year for Congress to make a meaningful effort to stop hate crime violence.”

Added Humane Rights Campaign President Joe Solmonese: “Today’s decision is deeply disappointing, especially given the historic passage of hate crimes legislation through both Houses of Congress this year. After more than ten years and several successful bipartisan votes, it is heartbreaking to fail short this close to the finish line. However, we are not giving up on efforts to find another legislative vehicle, in the second half of this Congress, to move the Matthew Shepard Act.”

Matthew Shepard’s parents, Judy and Dennis, released a statement on Dec. 6 in which they said, “We are truly dismayed to find that Congress now will put aside its leadership on passage of federal hate crimes legislation that includes sexual orientation and gender identity.

“At this time of year that fills us all with hope for humankind, we are sad to find that a Congressional majority of each House who have already adopted the Matthew Shepard Act cannot yet come together,” they added. “If not here, where? If not now, when?”

The Shepards said they are “dedicated to redoubling our efforts next year to achieve our vision of a hate-free America that truly includes everyone. This has never simply been about Matthew Shepard and our family, this legislation is a gift delayed but never forgotten for all America’s families.”

Queer Notes

Continued from page 12

raped them and emphasized the danger he posed to others, Huckabee has claimed that he did not pressure the parole board to release Dumond, but four parole board members claim he personally lobbied them to free Dumond.

It looks like Huckabee is a liar.

Senate Minority Whip, the disgraced former GOP Senate Majority Leader (and homophobic racist) Trent Lott (R-MS), announced he is resigning from Congress just in time to avoid new ethics rules prohibiting him from working as a lobbyist after he leaves office. Or, could it be because he has a relationship with a gay male escort? According to one blogger, Bighead DC, Lott was a client of gay male escort Benjamin Nicholas. Nicholas denies it, and has chastised other male escorts, like Mike Jones, for disclosing their business with men like Ted Haggard. Most likely, Lott resigned for a lucrative lobbying job, or because his brother-in-law and nephew have been indicted for bribery.

Good Lord, give me Hillary! Hillary Clinton is not my favorite Democratic candidate, but at least she is sane! According to a Hunter College poll, 63 percent of gay and lesbian voters support Hillary Clinton, while 27 percent support Obama and 7 percent of Congress go with Edwards. While HRC leads most polls among Democrats, she may be the easiest candidate for the Republicans to beat in the 2008 election.

A recent Zogby poll shows Clinton losing to all the major GOP candidates, while Obama beats them. Other polls show Clinton winning, but by narrow margins. So LGBT voters, and Democrats, have to choose between the candidate who is the most progressive (Kucinich) or one who can beat the Republicans in 2008. It will not be an easy choice, but at least we don’t have to choose between Huckabee, Giuliani and Romney! (The Tennessee presidential primary is Feb. 5, so let’s think on this.)

More Bush lies! Bush and Cheney have been using the same lies and fear tactics they used to get us into the illegal invasion and occupation of Iraq to do the same to Iran. They have warned that Iran is developing nuclear weapons and if we don’t attack them now we will have “World War III”. But, according to a new National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), they have been lying. The report, a consensus of all intelligence agencies, says Iran abandoned its nuclear weapons program in 2003. It doesn’t have a nuclear weapons program, Bush claims he didn’t know about this report until a few days prior to its release, but Cheney has been trying to block the report for longer than a year. Once again, the Bush administration has been trying to manipulate intelligence information to start an illegal war! Will Congress impeach these criminals?

(For more Queer Notes, visit queernotes.blogspot.com and share your opinion.)

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**Support for Advancing Equality Day Urged**

Thanksgiving is a time to count the many blessings in our lives. As Americans we are fortunate to live in a country that values individual liberty and equality under the law. However, there’s a battle brewing on the horizon that challenges the very freedoms that we hold dear.

First, there is good news. Recently, the Tennessee state attorney general issued an opinion that “there is no prohibition in Tennessee adoption statutes against adoption by a same-sex couple.”

Now the bad news. In response to the attorney general’s opinion, David Fowler, president of the Family Action Council of Tennessee (http://www.factn.org), stated the following in his newsletter: “Without legislative action, Tennessee will see unmarried heterosexuals, homosexuals, bisexuals, transvestites and other cohabitating couples seeking to adopt where the child does not have the benefit of a stable home environment and the protection of the law.”

I’m writing to make you aware that this legislative threat is looming in the upcoming Tennessee General Assembly (beginning January 2008). Tennessee’s anti-gay industry was emboldened by the passage of the 2006 marriage amendment in Tennessee. Now, they are out to strip us of the right to adopt! As someone with a background in child welfare, I know that such legislation would limit options for children who deserve a loving home.

I urge you to get involved in this upcoming struggle. Tennessee Equality Project (TEP) will host Advancing Equality Day in Nashville on Feb. 19, 2008 (the day after President’s Day) – an opportunity for all progressive citizens to tell their legislators that this hateful kind of legislation has no place in the law books of Tennessee. See http://旌eged.org/tenn/notice-descriptionacle/newsletter_id=16926745.

The Shelby County Committee of TEP and other organizations are planning to offer Lobbying 101 training in Memphis on Jan. 26, 2008 to help prepare our voices for Advancing Equality Day. If you know you cannot be in Nashville in February, consider making a contribution to TEP to help ensure that a progressive voice is heard by General Assembly (http://tep.org/html/donate.html).

Please mark these dates on your calendar today and let your employer know that you won’t be at work on Feb. 19. More details on these events are on the way.

Peace be with you.

Jonathan Cole
Memphis

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**Male Prostitution Sting at Overton Park**

Eric Martin and Eddie McGhee were busted in a prostitution sting in Overton Park.

Memphis Police arrested several men on prostitution and indecent exposure charges at Overton Park, Thurs., Nov. 29.

Investigators say they received several complaints from citizens about male prostitutes in the park. They say the complaints ranged from sexual favors being solicited to public indecency.

Investigators say plainclothes detectives staked out the area and arrested eight men during a two-day sting, which began earlier that week.

Eric Martin, 39, was charged with prostitution and indecent exposure and Eddie McGhee, 38, was charged with prostitution.

Police say five other men were issued misdemeanor citations for indecent exposure.

"Stings" like this one are a relatively common occurrence in Overton Park although they are usually seen in election years, according to many observers in the gay community.

Park-goers have complained for years about the northeast corner of the park where hustlers gather and sit on the hoods of their parked cars. That area of the park is a heavily wooded "old forest" area which offered cover for sexual trysts. Several years ago the Park Commission closed a park entrance at that corner and severely limited vehicular traffic through that part of the park.

(See related article on page 6.)
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