

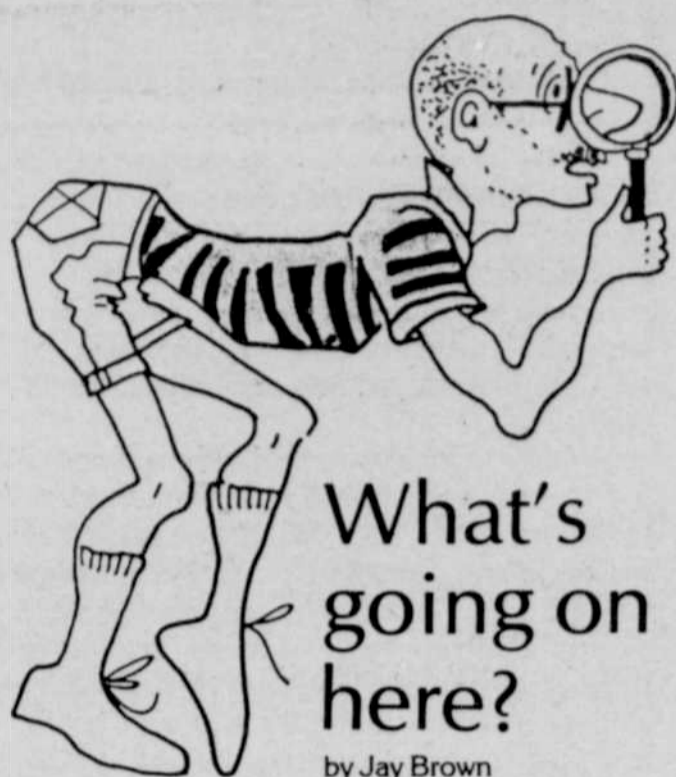
Burning books in Britain

A book about a five-year-old who lives with her father and his lover has become the center of controversy in the London, England school system. *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin* is one of almost 30 books cited by Tory Education Secretary Kenneth Baker as evidence that sex education is taking an approach which lacks moral foundations. The book has even been burned by parents at one school, according to Associated Press.

Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin, first published in Denmark, and published in an



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What's going on here?

by Jay Brown

English edition by Gay Men's Press in London three years ago, was written by Susanne Bosche and illustrated by Andreas Hansen.

After reading *Jenny Lives* . . . , I found it hard to believe that a person who called himself an educator would say the book is immoral. It is a wonderfully perceptive visit with a family group which is a not infrequent phenomenon. In the first section of the book Martin and Jenny (and Jenny's mother who lives down the street) give Eric a surprise birthday party. The remainder of the book continues in the same way.

In the final section they have a run-in (literally) with a homophobic neighbor. Maybe

that's the part Education Secretary Baker found to be immoral. (It must be pretty difficult explaining to a five-year-old why a neighbor would be nasty to her obviously loving father.)

My interest piqued by the controversy, I consulted my favorite bookperson (Sarah Koehl at A Woman's Place Bookstore) who picked out a small number of children's books with similar insights and which address less than orthodox subjects. Two of the books are published by Lollipop Power, a feminist press in North Carolina, and are particularly delightful; *Jesse's Dream Skirt* by Bruce Mack and *Lots of Mommies* by Jane Severance.

Jesse's Dream Skirt is about a little boy who wears a skirt to day care and the reception he gets there; *Lots of Mommies* tells about Emily who lives with her mother and three other women. Both books are light years away from the run of the mill Daddy, Mommy and 1.5 kids. (Neither book is available in the Multnomah County Library System; *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin* isn't, either.)

These books make wonderful gifts for any occasion. And if anyone is into it, your local library could use a couple of copies.

"Straights" worth more, says Delta

If you're "queer" what's your life worth? In money terms, that is? Delta Airlines says it's worth far less than the life of a "straight" person. Delta also says that if you are a survivor of a crash victim and if you have any skeletons in your closet the crash victim's life is worth less.

In what could only be described as a bizarre

set of circumstances surrounding the crash of a Delta Airlines jet at the Dalls/Ft. Worth airport in August, 1985, the airline and its insurer attempted to use information about the sexual orientation of a man killed in the crash to coerce his survivors into accepting less in damages. They also contended, according to the Wall Street Journal, that the possibility of AIDS lessened the value of the man's life. They said that even if there was no evidence of AIDS in the man's background (and they offered none), his sexual orientation "in the present environment of 100% fatal AIDS, becomes a critical, relevant subject."

First, a couple of words about being a survivor with skeletons in the closet. A woman, whose husband died in the crash, and her two children were awarded by a federal jury almost twice the amount offered them after the woman endured trial testimony about her own background. And the same day a page one headline in a Ft. Worth newspaper announced "Crew faulted in Delta crash" a story on page two recounted a Delta lawyer's statement to the jury that the woman had "slept with another man within ten weeks of her husband's death." The actions of Delta and United States Aviation Underwriters Inc., which manages claims and litigation for a group of companies that insure Delta, in this and other cases clearly indicate that the insurance company's interest extends beyond the morals of the victim to those of the survivors.

In the gay man's case, a federal court judge ruled that lawyers for Delta and U.S. Aviation were not allowed to mention the victim's sexual preference nor AIDS in the then-pending trial. Last month a jury awarded the victim's family \$1 million, but Delta has asked for a new trial on the ground that the award is excessive. Delta has offered the family \$400,000.

A lawyer friend of ours, who is gay, agrees with Delta and its insurer. He says that when it comes to money, everything has its value and that insurance companies already practice such tactics: charging smokers higher premiums than non-smokers, for example.

A lawyer for U.S. Aviation said that sifting through victims' lives is "a search for the truth." The strength of marriage, relationships with children and parents, drinking, work habits, even sexual conduct can all have bearing on what a life was worth in dollars.

When is sexism OK?

Seattle-based writer Barbara Wilson made a whirlwind tour of bookstores in Portland late last month. Wilson visited Catbird Seat downtown, Murder By the Book on Hawthorne, and A Woman's Place near Lloyd Center.

None of Wilson's appearances was desig-

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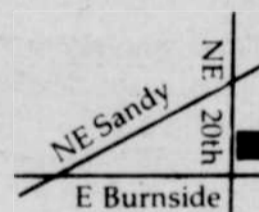
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