

The Straight Stuff

The underwear trail in Washington; Phyllis Schlafly jerks her chain; the siege of Queersville; is "gay actor" redundant? And more.

B Y W. C. M c R A E

LA slap echoes in Portland

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has cited Pacifica Foundation, owners of KPFK-FM radio in Los Angeles, for potential criminal prosecution due to airing gay-oriented material that the FCC deemed obscene. In August 1986, KPFK's lesbian and gay radio show "IMRU" aired segments of "Jerker," Robert Chesley's play about phone sex. "IMRU" is broadcast at 10 p.m. Sunday evenings (like KBOO's "Queersville"), and a warning was issued about the play's sexual content. KPFK is the only radio station cited by the FCC for potential prosecution under an expanded obscenity ruling, and "IMRU" was cited specifically. Pacifica Foundation subsequently filed suit against the FCC, claiming that the FCC decision was "political harassment."

"Queersville" anchor Howie Bagdadonutz says that the FCC's action "is meant to instill fear."

"Queersville," KBOO's lesbian and gay radio show, airs material that is frequently, well, robust, and has been the target of angry phone calls. "Now everyone threatens to call the FCC. We definitely feel we're being monitored." Bagdadonutz said that KBOO has told its broadcasters to be "self-censoring."

"Queersville" will air portions of Portland's Spread Eagle Production of *Jerker*.

Bagdadonutz says that the increased pressure from the FCC has aided his decision to curtail production of "Queersville." He says the radio show will end some time this summer.

AIDS, syphilis, sexuality

Under a headline reading "Safe Sex warning ignored," The *Oregonian* reported statistics which indicate that gay men in Oregon are practicing safer sex. Figures from the State Health Division regarding an "epidemic" of syphilis shows that the number of cases of syphilis in Oregon have more than doubled compared to figures from the same period last year. However, the number of cases of syphilis in gay men has decreased this year

by about half, compared to figures from last year at this time. Dr. Larry Foster, State Epidemiologist, claims that the figures indicate that gay men are practicing safer sex, and heterosexuals are not. The Health Division is concerned about the implications of the figures for heterosexual transmission of AIDS. "What's happening this year with syphilis we'll be seeing in four to five years with AIDS."

A causal link between AIDS and syphilis is being explored by a West German scientist. The *New York Native*, a gay newspaper which championed theories that AIDS derives from African Swine Fever Virus, reports that AIDS may be a form of tertiary syphilis, and can be treated with massive doses of penicillin. Apparently, symptoms of tertiary syphilis resemble AIDS symptoms, but cases of tertiary syphilis were thought to be so rare that doctors surveyed by the *Native* admitted that they would not recognize it. The West German physician, Dr. Stephen Caiazza, tested twenty patients with AIDS and found syphilis infections in all twenty. Three quarters of these were not being treated for syphilis. Caiazza reports that penicillin has been an effective treatment of so-called AIDS infections.

Indignities, etc.

Dignity, an organization for gay Catholics, ran a full-page advertisement in the April 27 *Newsweek*. The ad, which cost between \$20,000 and \$30,000, begins, "What Jesus said about homosexuality: 'What the Vatican has to say: 'Intrinsic moral evil . . . an objective disorder . . . behavior to which no one has any conceivable right'." The text of the ad goes on to discuss the purpose of Dignity.

Dignity attempted to place the ad in *Time* magazine, but the ad was rejected. A spokesman for *Time* said that the magazine gives no reasons for rejecting or accepting advertising.

The *Oregonian* apparently subscribes to the same lofty ideals as *Time*. Diane Gunderson has begun "The Gay/Lesbian Dating Line," a phone dating service for gays and lesbians. When she contacted the *Oregonian* and attempted to place an ad under the name, "The Gay Dating Line,"

she was told that the paper wouldn't accept an ad with the word "gay" in it. When she asked how she might alter the wording to accommodate the paper's scruples [Intrinsic Moral Evil Dating Line, perhaps?], she was told that the paper would not accept any ad for a gay dating service. "We're a private newspaper and can print what we like," she was told.

Fresher perspectives and less bigoted heads are prevailing in the obituary department of the *Oregonian*, however. The *Oregonian* (and now, the *New York Times*) will acknowledge lovers of the same sex as survivors, along with family members. Bob Caldwell, of the *Oregonian* staff, says that the paper is "Changing policy to acknowledge reality."

Reality, unfortunately, is frequently homophobic at the *Oregonian*, and we're left to puzzle that a dead queer is somehow less objectionable than a queer who's dating.

Under Whose? Under where?

One of the enduring sideshows of the Iranamuck circus is the lack of news coverage regarding Spitz Channel's side payments to his male lover, from money patriotically fleeced from elderly warmongers. After National Public Radio's Frank Browning broke the story in April, the mainstream press has gingerly ignored the fact that a principle fundraiser for the Contra war is openly gay (*Time*, which we know is sensitive about these matters, identified Channel's long-time lover as his "roommate" [Roommate Dating Line?]). In *These Times*, a news-weekly associated with the Democratic Socialists of America, noted the lack of coverage of the story, and queried: If an Administration insider had handed an opposite sex lover healthy slices of Joseph Coors' money, would the media have thought it was news? In the light of Fawn Hall, Donna Rice and Jessica Hahn, it seems unlikely that the media could be deterred from parading more bedroom pranks. In *These Times* sardonically assumes that dalliance and pilfering are news only when straight people do it.

However, self-righteousness cuts both ways. Accompanying the story in *In These Times* is a pie graph displaying how Channel's money was spent. A tiny slice of the pie is identified as the Contra's share, while larger segments are identified as "Men's silk undies" and "Nitrous oxide." Such lurid stereotypes seem unjustified, even if directed at Republicans. Silk underwear seems a commendable use of money originally extracted to arm mercenaries.

Washington has been hearing a lot about underwear recently. Channel's buddy, Oliver North, whom the *Washingtonian* identifies as "the latest unofficial sex symbol of the DC gay community" re-

portedly used some of the \$90,000 in traveler's checks solicited from Contra leader Adolfo Colero to buy lingerie.

What did he buy, and when did he wear it?

Use that whip, Phyllis!

Right-wing activist Phyllis Schlafly sent letters to sponsors of a dinner to honor Surgeon General Dr. C. Everett Koop, and succeeded in forcing the withdrawal of support of several sponsors, three of whom are Republican presidential hopefuls. In her letter, Schlafly attacked Koop's views on AIDS education, which she characterized as the advocacy of "safe sodomy," and urged the sponsors not to attend the dinner. As a consequence of the letter, Senator Robert Dole, former Delaware Governor Pierre DuPont, and Rep. Jack Kemp — all of whom have been jostling ever right-ward — cancelled their appearances.

Kemp's campaign, by the way, has been dogged by allegations, a la Gary Hart, of Kemp's gay carryings on. In God's right-wing mansion, apparently, there are many closets. It is not known how many of them contain men's silk undies.

I was a queen for eight weeks

Movies with gay themes are enjoying a vogue this summer, with *Prick Up Your Ears* now showing and *Maurice* due to arrive. A side industry has sprung up around these films in some of the better glossy magazines: the candid interviews of self-professed straight actors who play gay roles. May's *Vogue* contains interviews with the effete actors of *Maurice*, and *Vanity Fair* printed a long profile of actor Gary Oldman from *Prick Up Your Ears*. Playing a gay character is clearly a challenge of a magnitude to command many column inches, and is obviously NEWS. The actors devote much of the interviews to talking about their girlfriends, and the preparations necessary for a straight actor to play a gay character. Quoth Oldman: "To play Joe Orton, you just think about cock a lot. I went off sex; Lesley and I didn't make love, and Fred [Molina] went through the same thing with his wife, and we both became very camp. It's fun for eight weeks to be a gay man; we were like these two screaming queens by the end."

Quote of the month

"Studies at the Army laboratories have shown that the AIDS virus would be an extremely poor biological warfare agent." Col. David L. Huxsoll, chief of the US Army Research Institute, as reported by the *Gay Community News*.

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