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### Last trip to the Deli Delight: bias crime in America

The two thirtysomething men had a reputation as troublemakers in their little community on Long Island. Heavy beer drinkers and fistfighters, their favorite target was emotionally disturbed James Zappalorti, residents say, because the two men thought that he was gay.

They called him a faggot and a queer, remembers convenience store clerk Kelly Ann Tawil. The 44-year-old Zappalorti lived in a makeshift hut two blocks away.

#### ... Between the Lines ...

B Y J A C K R I L E Y

One night several weeks ago, the two troublemakers, Michael Taylor and Phillip Sarlo, followed him down the dead-end street to his hut, taunting him all the way. Within the next hour, police say, the two men slashed Zappalorti's throat and stabbed him repeatedly in the chest with a five-inch folding knife in what police characterize as a bias murder.

This killing of Zappalorti stunned his neighbors, who described him as eccentric and simple. Nobody expected the bullies' hatred to end in a bloodbath.

How many bias crimes occur in America? Shockingly, the federal government hasn't got a clue. With legislation passed recently by the Senate, we may for the first time get an accurate accounting of the rising tide of hate crimes in this country.

"Let's find out how much of this poison we have in this society," said Sen. Paul Simon, D-Ill., as the Senate voted 92-4 to approve information-gathering legislation.

Under the measure, the attorney general is ordered to keep statistics on all crimes motivated by race, religion, ethnicity and sexual orientation. That data will then become part of the uniform crime reports compiled from information submitted by law enforcement agencies nationwide.

The bill came to the Senate floor with 60 co-sponsors and support from the Bush administration. Urvashi Vaid, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, said the "Senate today sent a strong signal to the bigots and the bashers that violence against lesbians and gay men is intolerable."

The bill was not without its opponents; among them Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., who unsuccessfully argued that government "should not provide discrimination protections

on the basis of sexual orientation."  
Thanks again, Jesse.

### Hairdressers, restaurant and entertainment workers blacklisted by health insurers

Insurance carriers across the nation are quietly blacklisting dozens of types of small businesses and professions in a stepped-up effort to avoid losses and increase profits.

While some health insurers have been accused of denying coverage to people in specific ZIP codes and occupations where they contend the AIDS virus is most prevalent, the exclusions are beginning to encroach into other areas as well.

Just a sample of the categories where insurers fear to venture: bowling alleys, golf clubs, service stations and convenience stores, farms, lumberyards and ski resorts.

And perhaps not surprisingly, insurers are shying away from dentists, doctors and chiropractors (medical workers are racking up higher claim rates than the general population).

These denials of coverage are heating up the growing controversy over improving access to health care for all Americans. The insurance industry is getting a terrible reputation as a result, and as the debate continues 31 million Americans remain uninsured, half of them working people and their families.

A number of Democrats in Congress are working on bills that would require all employers to offer health coverage, and insurance critics are calling for the federal government to step in and mandate federal standards.

### Ronald Douglas Costner, aka Tree, 1949-1990

His maniacal laugh spilled out of Lulu's on Northwest 21st Avenue with a pitch that could make passing women pregnant. He could glare at a liquor inspector as if the man were the lowest form of life on Burnside. And more often than not he was having as much fun as the patrons of the many gay bars he managed in Portland.

Tree, who made friends and enemies alike over decades behind, in front of, and sometimes even on top of the plank, died of AIDS in a southern California hospice on Monday, February 5.

Those many of us who shared his times at Lulu's, The Family Zoo, the Bear Hall Saloon, Flossies on Upper Burnside and Flossies on Stark Street won't soon forget Tree and his ever-present Hawaiian shirts and shorts.

Reminiscing the other day, his longtime business comrade Flossie remembered that "the bar was his living room and Tree was throwing a party." And I vividly remember some of those "parties," especially during the holidays when Tree and Flossie honored patronage by serving up a substantial free

banquet at Thanksgiving and Christmas — traditions that Flo continues to this day.

Tree was a little hard to get to know personally, but as Flo puts it, "If you knew him, you liked him." And I recall one afternoon about five years ago (shortly after Tree was diagnosed with ARC) when there were only four of us at the bar: the bartender, Tree, myself and Jack Daniels. "Well, looks like at least three of us are going to have a party," Tree said.

I would have thought that whiskey river would have swept us all away long ago, and the thought of typing his obituary leaves me a little hollow.

Tree's ashes are coming home and Flossie says "I think they will end up on Stark Street some place." Tree would like that.

### ZZZZAP!! you are no longer homosexual

Chinese doctors are treating homosexuality as a mental illness that can be cured with painful electrical shocks to discourage erotic thoughts. Now that's something that could be exploited by Shick-Shadel Hospital.

According to a recent article in the New York Times, some doctors in China are also using herbal medicines to induce vomiting. In either case, the idea is to stimulate an extremely unpleasant reaction and thus reduce the patients' ardor.

Both approaches are being hailed by Chinese doctors as remarkably successful in "curing" homosexuality.

Gao Caiqin, a female pioneer in sex studies in China, says "some of these homosexuals were ready to commit suicide. After being cured they are very, very grateful, and they are in tears as they hug us in gratitude."

Homosexuality is rarely discussed in China. It is common for Chinese of the same sex to hold hands in public as a sign of friendship, but there are few studies about the incidence of homosexuality in China. Homosexuals are occasionally arrested and sentenced to brief jail terms, usually on the vague charge of "hooliganism."

### Bias against doctors with AIDS?

We've reported here on several occasions of bias medical students, doctors and dentists have against patients with AIDS, but now research shows that bias can go both ways.

In Health magazine reports in its first issue of the year that 45 percent of the adults queried in a recent nationwide telephone survey said they believe that physicians infected with the AIDS virus should no longer be allowed to practice medicine. Fifty-six percent said they would switch to another doctors if theirs had the virus.

But University of California at San Francisco researchers who conducted the survey say fears of doctor-to-patient transmission are overblown; none of the 109,000 AIDS cases in American has been traced from a health care worker to a patient. ▼

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