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just news

New York Post, Daily News join tabloid outing orgy

Mainstream American journalism saw an unanticipated rewrite of the rulebook in early May when The New York Post and The New York Daily News identified five celebrities who are rumored to have had gay sex.

The Post initiated the revision with a May 2 article entitled, "Outing" articles pick up steam.

"Outing" means dragging closeted celebrities or closeted anti-gay politicians out of the closet.

The Post did it to actors John Travolta, Kristy McNichol and Richard Chamberlain.

Two days later, the Daily News ran a front-page story quoting David Bowie's ex-wife, Angela, as saying that she caught Bowie and Mick Jagger in bed once, and that it was only one of Bowie's many gay affairs.

Angela broke the news on the May 4 edition of Joan Rivers' TV talk show.

"Outing" articles have been the rage in the US press for weeks, but the media has been uniformly unwilling to reveal who is being outed.

Malcolm Forbes has been referred to only as a publishing tycoon who recently died, Chastity Bono only as the daughter of a famous singer actress. The *Geraldo* show recently bleeped about 15 references to Kristy McNichol.

The article in the Post explored the fact that supermarket tabloid newspapers "are storming the closets of allegedly gay celebrities for the sake of truth, justice and improved newsstand sales."

"Take this week's cover story in the *Enquirer*," the Post reported, "in which a porno actor named Paul Barresi claims he had an affair with John Travolta."

"Barresi alleges that Travolta was so smitten with him that he followed Barresi into a shower to arrange a date. He also claims he and Travolta had sex 'dozens of times' during a two-year span, while the 'Saturday Night Fever' star was seeing Debra Winger [and] Olivia Newton-John."

Such reporting about allegedly closeted gays or lesbians is unknown in mainstream American journalism, with the tabloids only have made the transition in the past few months.

"It's a very complex issue," said Post Page Six editor Richard Johnson. "It's a thin line deciding what's fair and what isn't fair.... I think the [May 2 article] was a legitimate story."

Johnson said Post editors were not aware they were breaking any new ground when they decided to the story.

Jim Willse, editor of the Daily News, said his publication also didn't see itself as taking any bold new steps. "The David Bowie/Mick Jagger story was just a story to us that presented itself off a TV show and we just reported what transpired on a TV show and obviously tried to get the principals to talk about it," he explained.

Willse said the Daily News has no policy on when to mention sexual orientation in a news story. "We would mention sexual orientation if it were relevant," he said.

— Rex Wockner

Spokesman invites smoking gun to come forward

ACT UP/Portland, Oregon turned up the heat several notches April 25 in its year-and-a-half campaign to expose U.S. Sen. Mark Hatfield (D-Ore.) as a closeted homosexual who votes against the gay and lesbian community in Congress.

Previously, the group had limited itself to distributing flyers outside Hatfield events, saying that the senator is gay and charging him with "blatant hypocrisy" and "collaboration in the AIDS genocide."

But early the morning of April 25, activists carefully altered a Hatfield re-election billboard on one of Portland's main thoroughfares so that the sign read: "Hatfield. Closeted Gay. Living a Lie — Voting to Oppress." The group also affixed a large "Silence = Death" logo to the display.

According to ACT UP, the doctored billboard "was viewed by thousands in the morning commute and by hundreds of thousands when KATU-TV ran the story on the evening news."

"Hatfield was on notice that ACT UP would act if he continued to gay bash with his votes in the Senate," said ACT UP spokesman Tom Schloeder. "He didn't listen."

According to ACT UP, "it is commonly believed in Oregon's gay and lesbian community that the... extremely popular senator is a closeted gay man who married to provide the necessary cover to survive in American politics in the 1950s."

"Any doubt of the truth about Hatfield's sexual orientation can be resolved in a court of law, if necessary," said Portland attorney and ACT UP member Wayne Harris.

Hatfield's Congressional record includes votes to prohibit the use of federal funds for AIDS materials "that promote or encourage, directly or indirectly, homosexual sexual activities" or "use words stating that homosexuality is normal, natural or healthy." "Oregon voters have a right to know that Mark Hatfield is a hypocrite," said ACT UP's Lori Kohler. "He's a closeted gay public official who... supports enemies of the gay and lesbian community like [Sen. Jesse] Helms [R-NC], [Rep. William] Dannemeyer [R-Calif.] and [Rep. William] Armstrong [R-Colo.]."

ACT UP said it took on the billboard project after Hatfield voted with Armstrong in March of this year to change the District of Columbia Human Rights Ordinance to allow the local Big Brothers organization to bar gay men from participating in any program that "educates, coaches or trains any minor" or "holds out [a gay man] as a role model, mentor or companion to any minor."

Human Rights Campaign Fund spokesman Greg King has called the Armstrong amendment "a legislative hate crime."

"It's contemptible for a closeted gay man as powerful as Mark Hatfield to perpetuate the lie that all gay men are child molesters who prey on innocent youth," said Schloeder. "We don't object to Hatfield being in the closet, but we won't remain silent and let him gay bash."

Asked about ACT UP's charges, Hatfield's Washington press spokesman, Bill Calder, said: "If they have some evidence, let's see it. I mean, I want to know. The senator has said publicly and to others within our office that

this is absolutely false. If somebody can convince me otherwise, bring it on. Let me see it. I'll take it to the senator and say, 'I think you're lying.'"

— Rex Wockner

FBI nabs Aryan bar bombers

FBI agents May 12 arrested two white supremacists en route to blow up a Seattle gay bar.

According to an affidavit filed in United States District Court by Tacoma-based FBI special agent Thomas Trier, the Bureau had tracked the two men, Robert Winslow, 29, and Stephen Nelson, 35, for three months.

Information was gathered primarily by phone taps at the Aryan Nations compound in Hayden Lake, Idaho, where Winslow and Nelson planned their operations.

The two men first discussed blowing up Neighbors Disco in Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood during an April 8 phone conversation.

FBI agents then trailed Winslow to a mountainous area outside Hayden Lake where he detonated a test pipe bomb.

In an April 20 phone conversation, Winslow detailed the plans against the gay club.

"He and Nelson were going to place explosive charges inside the bar," Trier testified. "They would then telephone the bar, warn them that a bomb would go off in three minutes, and then detonate the charges as the patrons attempted to flee. According to Winslow, the patrons would enter the 'kill zone' at the time of detonation." (Emphasis: Just Out)

From further phone calls, the FBI determined that the Aryans planned to blow up Neighbors May 12. Agents followed Winslow and Nelson from the Hayden Lake compound to Seattle, where the supremacists bought a six-inch section of galvanized steel pipe with two end caps, and one pound of smokeless gun powder.

"Because these components were identical to the [test] bomb that was exploded in Idaho, Federal Agents moved in and placed Winslow and Nelson under arrest," Trier testified.

During the phone taps, the FBI also learned that the supremacists planned to blow up black bars, a Jewish synagogue and several Korean businesses.

Winslow and Nelson were charged with multiple counts of conspiracy, illegal possession of firearms and the possession of an explosive device.

The 20 acre Aryan Nations Hayden Lake compound, 40 miles northeast of Spokane, is a center for neo-Nazi skinhead and Ku Klux Klan related conferences, according to the Seattle Post-Intelligencer.

The newspaper said a national conference of neo-Nazi skinheads was held there in April, in conjunction with Adolph Hitler's birthday.

The Post-Intelligencer identified 72-year-old Richard Butler as the founder and pastor of the Aryan Nations Church in Hayden Lake and said he has been at the center of an effort to establish a whites only nation in the Northwest.

— Rex Wockner