

national briefs

CALIFORNIA: Movie director Oliver Stone now says he would like to make a screen version of "The Mayor of Castro Street," Randy Shilts' biography of Harvey Milk. "While he may be one of the few producers in Hollywood with enough clout to get that project realized, he had better come to terms first with his own homophobia," reports the GLAAD Bulletin.

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The Sheriff's Academy of San Diego County is facing a lawsuit stemming from homophobic comments made repeatedly to a lesbian law enforcement officer attending the academy. Laura Shands, a deputy marshal with San Diego County, found the remarks to be so hostile that she considered terminating her 15-year law enforcement career. Instead, she joined with the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund and the local ACLU to use a San Diego antidiscrimination ordinance against the academy. Among other things, the suit seeks to halt homophobia within the academy and among many officers on California streets.

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A group of Christian fundamentalists marched outside a Pasadena church recently to protest the wedding ceremony of two gay men. "It's absolutely the wrong signal with the AIDS epidemic raging out of control," said the Rev. R.L. Humers, pastor of the Baptist Tabernacle of Los Angeles and one of the march's organizers. However, the Rev. George Regas defended his decision to marry Mark Benson and Philip Straw. "We believe the inclusive love of Christ welcomes everybody," he said.

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NBC television lost about \$500,000 in commercial revenue when advertisers became unhappy over the gay theme of a much-publicized "Quantum Leap" episode. Sue Binford, NBC vice president of corporate and media relations, confirmed the loss, but said the show got the highest ratings since premiere week. "Clearly, we are delivering what the audience of this show wants," Binford said. "It's unfortunate that what the advertisers are responding to is special interest groups with specific agendas and not to the viewers."

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Highways, a visual arts gallery in Santa Monica, has been denied a \$5,000 grant which previously had been approved by the National Council on the Arts. The reversal apparently came after the council reviewed slides of past shows at Highways and objected to some of the gay and lesbian themes presented. Highways co-director Tim Miller is one of four performance artists who have also been defunded by the National Endowment for the Arts. Miller is a frequent target of criticism from the religious right.

FLORIDA: In a blatant act of destructive homophobia, the home of two lesbians was severely vandalized on Christmas Eve by intruders who painted "lesbian," "faggot," and "dyke" on mirrors, walls and draperies. "They were not there to steal anything, only to harass us," said one of the women, noting that only \$400 in cash was taken.

ILLINOIS: Cook County state's attorney Jack O'Malley has hired Detroit gay activist Marc Loveless to help gay and lesbian victims and witnesses of crimes. The county is one of the first jurisdictions in the U.S. to create such a position. The move came at the suggestion of O'Malley's Task Force on Lesbian and Gay Issues. Spokespersons said Loveless's presence will lead more gay victims and witnesses to come forward and to testify in court and will cause prosecutors to treat gays more fairly. Loveless previously worked with the Michigan Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project.

MASSACHUSETTS: Twelve AIDS activists, protesting the price of the AIDS-related drug

Foscavir blockaded the entrance to Astra Pharmaceutical Products in Westborough. Astra, a Swedish company, charges \$21,000 for a year's worth of Foscavir, which is a treatment for an opportunistic infection that blinds some people with AIDS. It is one of the most expensive drugs in history.

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Residents of Great Barrington were at first thrilled when folk singer Arlo Guthrie bought a former church that had been home to Alice Brock, one-time owner of the restaurant immortalized in Guthrie's 1967 ballad, "Alice's Restaurant." However, the town of 8,000 threatened to revoke a zoning change which had allowed Guthrie to use the building, after he had announced he would use it for AIDS patients and for programs for abused children. However the issue is decided, Guthrie said he intends to move ahead with plans to establish the house as Guthrie Center.

MINNESOTA: Sharon Kowalski's former court-appointed guardian is appealing a recent state appeals court decision that would grant guardianship of Kowalski to her lover, Karen Thompson. Kowalski was severely disabled in an automobile accident eight years ago, and Thompson has waged a long battle to ensure that her lover receives proper medical care ever since.

NEW HAMPSHIRE: A member of ACT UP/New Hampshire has filed an assault complaint in Manchester against Paul Nagy and Chris Temby, two members of the Pat Buchanan for President campaign. Michael Petrelis said he had been nonviolently protesting Buchanan's bigoted views on AIDS and gays during a press conference when Nagy and Tremby roughed him up and dragged him outside.

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The four leading Democrats for the 1992 presidential nomination have agreed to sign legislation ensuring equal rights for lesbians and gay men. In response to a questionnaire from the Human Rights Campaign Fund delivered during the New Hampshire primary, Ark. Gov. Bill Clinton, former Mass. Sen. Paul Tsongas, and Sens. Bob Kerry of Nebr. and Tom Harkin of Iowa all said they would sign a law protecting gays and lesbians if one were to be passed by Congress.

NEW YORK: Leaders of the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), the group that sponsors New York City's St. Patrick's Day parade, said they would again refuse to allow the Irish Lesbian and Gay Organization (ILGO) to march. Earlier, Mayor David Dinkins took away the march permit from AOH's local chapter and gave it to the state chapter, which had indicated it wanted to include ILGO. But the state group reversed itself and sided with the local chapter to prohibit ILGO from marching.

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Northstar, hero of Marvel Comics' "Alpha Flight" series, comes out of the closet in a recent issue. In the plot, Northstar adopts an orphaned baby who tests HIV positive. In one exchange of dialogue, he says, "Do not presume to lecture me on the hardships homosexuals must bear. No one knows them better than I. For, while I am not inclined to discuss my sexuality with people for whom it is none of their business, I am gay."

TEXAS: A District Court judge in Dallas struck down the police department's use of the sodomy law as justification for not hiring lesbian and gay officers. The decision was heralded by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force as a direct blow against Texas's homosexual-only sodomy law.

VANCOUVER, B.C.: For the third time in three years, Little Sister's bookstore has been bombed. Although no one has been injured in the

explosions, they have done extensive damage to the store's entryway and were responsible for the resignations of most of its employees after the second incident in 1988. Following the latest bombing, about 20 lesbians and gay men rallied in front of the store to protest the violence directed at their community.

VERMONT: In existence since 1985, "Golden Threads" is a worldwide social network of lesbians over 50 and women who are interested in older women—no lesbian is excluded. A contact publication also called *Golden Threads* is published four times a year. It lists many self-descriptions of lesbians, resources, book reviews, all addressing the interests and concerns of the older lesbian. For more information, please contact Christine Burton, *Golden Threads*, PO Box 3177, Burlington, VT 05401-0031.

WASHINGTON, D.C.: Some shocking statistics have been released regarding the health of American women: Every 13 minutes, another American woman is diagnosed with breast cancer; more women die from heart disease than any other ailment, yet they are only half as likely to receive a critical diagnostic test or bypass surgery; 10 million postmenopausal women undergo long-term estrogen therapy to prevent osteoporosis, but clear evidence exists that use of this drug increases the risk of breast cancer 50 to 100 percent.

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D.C. police invoked the city's archaic sodomy law recently when 15 officers raided a gay theater and arrested 11 patrons and staff members for sodomy. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute denounced the use of the law and participated in a protest outside the city's municipal building. Like other sodomy laws, the D.C. statute bans all oral and anal sexual contact and is often used to harass gays and lesbians.

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The nation's 22.3 million Hispanic residents face greater educational, health, and employment problems than the rest of the population, but remain too often untouched by federal programs that are supposed to help, according to a report issued by the National Council of La Raza. "By virtually every measurable standard, Hispanics are a severely disadvantaged population," said Raul Yzaguirre, president of the council.

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Representatives of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force met recently with Robert Mosbacher, head of George Bush's reelection campaign, to discuss gay and lesbian and AIDS issues during the 1992 presidential campaign. The meeting was heralded as a groundbreaking moment between gay activists and Republican political leaders. Mosbacher was stunned to learn that only five states have laws that protect gay men and lesbians from discrimination. Urvashi Vaid, NGLTF executive director, suggested that Bush tour the Dallas AIDS Resource Center, in Bush's home state, which is run by gay Republican and Texas activist John Thomas. Mosbacher's daughter, Dee, is an out lesbian.

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An abused child who kills a parent should be allowed to use battered-child syndrome as a defense in court, the state Court of Appeals for the State of Washington has ruled. "Children are both objectively and subjectively more vulnerable to the effects of violence than are adults," Judge Susan Agid wrote in the court's 3-0 decision.

WISCONSIN: Former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke suffered a setback Tuesday as a selection committee sharply divided along partisan lines voted 6-5 to deny him a spot on Wisconsin's April 7 primary ballot.

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