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# national news

## The Church's blessing

"My constituents don't know how to read, but they can't help but seeing them damned pictures," said New Yorker "Boss" Tweed in Thomas Nast's cartoons, more than a hundred years ago.

Perhaps that helps to explain the response of religious conservatives when Garry Trudeau raised the issue of same-sex marriages in his syndicated comic strip, "Doonesbury." Wire service reports noted that at least two newspapers refused to run the comic, saying it was not fit for a family newspaper.

The series ran the first full week in June and mentioned the book *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe* by John Boswell, which was just hitting the bookstores.

In the book, Boswell argues that what he calls "same-sex unions" were blessed by the Christian Church from the eighth to the 16th centuries. He cites 80 documents—rites, ceremonies, etc.—that he uncovered through exhaustive research across Europe and the Mediterranean.

He maintains these ceremonies celebrate marriage, not just friendship, because monks were barred due to their vows of celibacy.

The volume almost didn't make it to press. "We believe somebody tried to sabotage the book: A spurious manuscript that neither Boswell nor I had even seen was, at one point, substituted for the real one. We never figured out how," wrote editor Doug Stumpf in *New York* magazine.

Bob Roehr

## October is Lesbian and Gay History Month

October has been declared National Lesbian and Gay History Month by several national lesbian, gay and bisexual organizations, educational associations, and historians. The celebration is designed to promote the inclusion of lesbian, gay and bisexual history in secondary and post-secondary education.

October was selected as Lesbian and Gay History Month over June because of school schedules. Very few secondary schools and no colleges or universities are in session throughout June. Almost all academic institutions are in session during October. October also holds important anniversaries for the lesbian and gay community, including the first and second marches on Washington for gay and lesbian rights (in 1979 and 1987), as well as National Coming Out Day (Oct. 11).

A National Coordinating Council has been formed to raise awareness and assist in the development of grass-roots activities. Resource materials are available from the council for individuals and organizations interested in celebrating Lesbian and Gay History Month. To obtain materials, send a SASE, with 52 cents postage, to LGHM, c/o Gerber/Hart Library & Archives, 3352 N Paulina, Chicago, IL 60657, or call (312) 883-3003.

Jann Gilbert

## Zoo returns money

The world-famous San Diego Zoo refunded admission or gave out free passes July 17 to about 80 zoo-goers who said they were offended by some of the 2,000 queers who were attending a lesbian and gay night at the zoo that was part of weekend pride activities.

The queers were reportedly holding hands and kissing. Some 5,900 zoo-goers did not complain.

The zoo's action was denounced by the acting executive director of the city's Human Relations Commission.

"Even though they say they don't discriminate...I wonder if someone was offended by seeing two African Americans kiss, or people

of different races, if they would accommodate their prejudice by giving them their money back?" HRC's Ashley Walker asked. "Will they refund everyone's money who sees something that makes them uncomfortable? Will we all get our money back? I don't think the zoo has answered the question, and I think this will revisit them."

Zoo spokesman Jeff Jouett hemmed and hawed when he read Walker's comments. He finally said, "In hindsight, we can reflect on what we did wrong and hopefully raise the consciousness of the folks that are making the decisions here."

"We'll make our apology when it's called for, I guess," Jouett continued. "The refunds and return tickets were by no means an agreement with our visitors who said they were offended. It was a judgment made at the moment as the best way to get the complainers out of our hair.... People were literally screaming, cursing, endlessly protesting to the operations managers, and the best way at the time to free us to go about our normal duties was to offer a refund or a return ticket."

Rex Wockner

## Lavender ambassador

The Clinton administration is looking to deliver another symbol to the gay and lesbian community—nomination of the first openly gay ambassador. James C. Hormel, San Francisco community leader and philanthropist, is slated for the honor.

There is "some concern inside the administration about exactly where to place Hormel so as not to turn this into a big deal," *The Washington Post* reported July 20.

Liberal Scandinavia looked like a safe bet, they reasoned, but there was no room at the inn—all of those slots are filled. Costa Rica sounded good to the personnel types, until the State Department vetoed that. So it looks like it will be Fiji.

Nominations for ambassador must be approved by the Senate. The ranking Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is one Jesse Helms (R-N.C.).

Helms has a record of obstructing the ambassadorial nominations of presidents of both parties. One can only speculate as to how the senator, who reacted to the nomination of Roberta Achtenberg by calling her "a damn lesbian," will react to Hormel.

Bob Roehr

## Serial killer loose on East Coast

Gary Ray Bowles, 32, is being sought in connection with two murders of gay men, one in Savannah, Ga., and the other in Nassau County, Fla., according to *The Washington Blade*. Warrants for his arrest have been issued in both areas. Police in Daytona Beach, Fla., also want to question Bowles in relation to another murder.

In all three cases, the victims were older, white men and each showed signs of "overkill"—the assailant in each case wounded the victim more times than necessary to kill him. In each of the cases, a man fitting Bowles' description was seen with the victim prior to the murder.

FBI Special Agent Dennis Regan in Savannah told *The Washington Blade* that there may be a "serial killer" responsible for all three murders in his area, and another in the Atlanta area. After receiving information from the *Blade's* coverage of the murders in the Washington, D.C., area, the bureau began looking into the possibility of a connection to those murders as well. Bowles has ties to northern Virginia and may be responsible for many more murders.

"It's possible cases exist all over the East Coast," said Susan McClure of the FBI's National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime.

Jann Gilbert