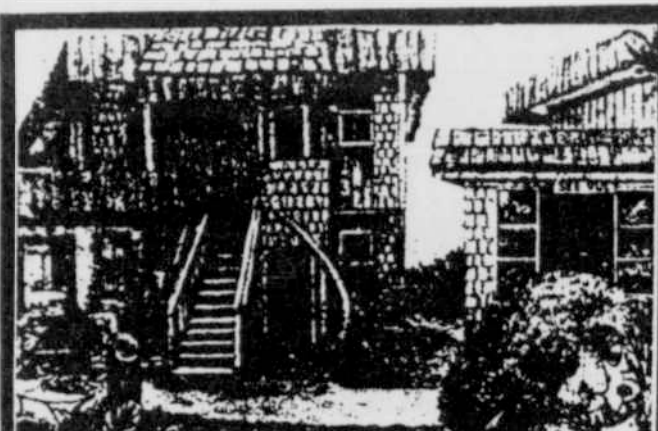


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# national news

### Lesbian mom loses in court

A Florida court upheld last month a lower court ruling granting custody of a 12-year-old girl to her father, a convicted murderer, rather than her lesbian mother. The action by the Florida First District Court of Appeals kept in place a 1995 ruling by a trial court that removed Cassie Ward from the home of her mother, Mary Ward, and her lesbian partner, and placed Cassie with her father, John Ward, and his fourth wife. John Ward was convicted 22 years ago of murdering his first wife.

In appealing the original ruling, Mary Ward claimed that Pensacola trial judge Joseph Tarbuck gave custody to John Ward solely because of Mary Ward's lesbian relationship. The appeals court said Tarbuck had weighed all the evidence, not just Mary Ward's lesbianism.

Mary Ward plans to appeal to the Florida Supreme Court.

### Religious right activist sues Louisville gay groups

The family of a woman active in conservative religious politics in Kentucky filed suit Aug. 28 against a number of gay bars, organizations and newspapers. David and Donna Shedd's complaint alleges intentional infliction of emotional distress, criminal harassment, defamation of character, invasion of privacy, interference with contractual relations and conspiracy, reports Kentucky's *The Letter*.

The lawsuit stems from a boycott started in August 1995 by bar owners and activists against River City Distributing, of which David Shedd was co-owner and president. The boycott was launched in response to the political activities of Donna Shedd, who is vice-president of the Kentucky Eagle Forum chapter. Eagle Forum is a national conservative group opposed to gay and lesbian rights, a woman's right to choose, and equal rights for women. A leader in the state and local Republican Party, Ms. Shedd voted in favor of a 1994 Kentucky Republican Convention resolution to recriminalize same-sex sexual activity.

The boycott sought to dissuade consumers from purchasing Miller Beer and other products distributed by River City.

Although a number of gay and lesbian groups, bars, restaurants and businesses are named as defendants in the suit, the Shedds did not name as defendants any of the nongay bars and groups that supported the boycott.

### Scondras bashed in Boston

Former Boston city councilor David Scondras was severely beaten last month by a teenage boy who accused Scondras of making sexual advances toward him. Scondras was hospitalized with stomach bleeding, a broken jaw, a cracked nose, a cracked bone near his eye and a swollen kidney.



David Scondras (right)

Boston police and the 16-year-old boy filed an application for a criminal complaint against Scondras, accusing Scondras of indecent assault and battery, reports *The Boston Globe*. A source for the *Globe* said the teenager claimed he was approached by a man in the lobby of the Sheraton Boston, where the boy and his family were staying. According to the source, the boy said the man

offered to get him into a movie for free. He said that while in the movie, according to the boy, Scondras put his hand on the boy's leg and began moving it toward his groin, and that the teenager then punched Scondras in the face. The source reported that Scondras and the boy continued to scuffle in the theater lobby.

According to a spokesman for Scondras, Scondras "denies any wrongdoing." The spokesman said the teenager began attacking Scondras when Scondras told the boy he was gay.

### Washington man convicted in gay-bashing murder

A 19-year-old man was convicted last month in the January stabbing death of a gay man. Daniel Christopher Bean faces a possible sentence of up to life in prison for the murder of Frederick Mangione, 46.

Bean and another Washington man, Ronald Henry Gauthier, 21, met Mangione at a bar in Katy, Texas, just west of Houston. They stabbed Mangione 35 times with a knife, then fled the scene on foot. They were stopped by a Harris County deputy who thought they were curfew violators.

According to police Bean and Gauthier are members of a neo-Nazi group called the German Peace Corps.

Gauthier is still awaiting trial.

### Ad sales in gay press soar

A national study of 138 gay-oriented newspapers and magazines in the United States reports that advertising spending in gay publications topped \$73.7 million this year, a 19.6 percent increase over last year.

The third annual Mulryan/Nash Gay Press Report attributes the increase to the influx of advertising by mainstream companies. Mulryan/Nash is a New York-based agency specializing in reaching gay and lesbian consumers.

The two largest overall ad-spending categories remain bars and clubs at 14 percent and 800/900 phone services at 13.3 percent.

### Oral sex carries risk of HIV infection

Contrary to popular belief, unprotected oral sex is not safe sex. A study that appears in *Annals of Internal Medicine* reports that people with relatively few sexual partners whose riskiest sexual behavior was oral sex are becoming infected with HIV.

The study was conducted by Timothy Schacker and colleagues from the University of Washington's department of medicine.

"Oral sex was the most common form of sex" among the 46 participants in the study, Schacker told United Press International, "and a small set of patients had only had oral sex."

"Unprotected oral sex is a definite risk factor for AIDS," Schacker said.

### N.Y. domestic violence law covers "companions"

A toughened domestic violence law signed on Aug. 8 by New York Gov. George Pataki uses the word "companions" in its language. The measure is part of Pataki's efforts to fight violence against women, but Paula Ettelbrick, legislative counsel for the Empire State Pride Agenda in New York, told *The Washington Blade* that the term extends coverage to lesbians and gay men for the first time.

"I would say that that very clearly applies to lesbian and gay partners," Ettelbrick said. "[T]hat's been a big gap in the domestic violence law here in New York."

Compiled by Kristine Chatwood

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