

Navy denies lenience for hate crime

A press release from the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network states that the Naval Clemency and Parole Board voted unanimously on Sept. 18 to deny clemency in the case of Terry Helvey, who was convicted of the 1992 murder of fellow seaman Allen Schindler. Helvey is currently serving a life sentence for the crime, which was motivated by anti-gay bias. According to SLDN, the board also denied Helvey's request for advancement of the date of his parole eligibility. He will be eligible for parole in 2002.

Because Naval regulations mandate annual review of life sentences, SLDN staff attorney Kirk Childress urges those concerned about anti-gay violence to continue to monitor Helvey's attempts to win early release. SLDN is assisting in the distribution of a petition by Schindler's mother to demand that Helvey be required to serve his entire sentence. Copies of the petition may be obtained by calling (202) 328-3244 or by e-mailing sldn@sldn.org.

S.F. may pay for city employees' sex changes

The San Francisco Human Rights Commission is pressuring the city to provide health insurance benefits to cover the cost of treatment and surgery for its transsexual employees, according to a United Press International story. Commission president Martha Knutzen says she sent a letter to the city's Health Service Advisory Board and later met with city Supervisor Tom Ammiano to discuss the issue on the recommendation of the commission's Transgendered Advisory Committee.

Ammiano has said he is considering pushing for the benefits, adding that as there are few transsexual city workers the costs will be minor.

Employees of the City of San Francisco may choose from among several health care plans, including the city-managed self-insurance plan, which is being targeted to begin allowing sex-change claims. Private insurance companies contracting with the city will also be asked to cover the treatment and surgery, but it is unlikely they will alter their policies.

Former lesbian lover may seek shared custody

A Pennsylvania state Superior Court ruling has opened the door for a woman to seek shared custody of a child born to her former lesbian lover, reports the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. The decision is expected to have wide application in similar cases of nontraditional families involved in custody disputes.



Judge Phyllis W. Beck, in the 16-page decision handed down by a three-judge Superior Court panel, wrote: "In today's society, where increased mobility, changes in social mores and increased individual freedom have created a wide spectrum of arrangements filling the role of the traditional nuclear family, flexibility in the application of standing principles is required."

The former partners, named in court papers only as J.A.L. and E.P.H., cohabited for several

years before jointly choosing a sperm donor and signing an agreement that explained their plans to raise the child together and made J.A.L. the unborn child's guardian.

The Superior Court judges concluded that the two women had intended for J.A.L. to act as a parent: "We have no difficulty in concluding that these facts sufficiently establish a parent-like relationship between J.A.L. and the child."

Campaign contribution hoax revealed

Michael Moore—known for his satirical documentary about General Motors, *Roger and Me*, and the renegade television show *TV Nation*—wondered, "Is there anyone a politician won't take money from?" So, according to an Associated Press report, he mailed out a few bogus checks. One hundred dollars each was sent to President Clinton from "Hemp Growers of America" and to Pat Buchanan from "Abortionists for Buchanan." Another \$75 was sent to Buchanan from "The John Wayne Gacey Fan Club." (Moore's attorney reportedly advised misspelling the name of Gacy, a serial killer.)

Each of the checks was cashed, and Moore even received two thank-you notes from the Clinton campaign. When told of the joke, however, Clinton campaign officials said the check would be returned.

Connie Mackey, spokeswoman for Buchanan, told The Associated Press, "If it said \$100, we just saw the dollar signs."

Republican nominee Bob Dole's campaign refused two checks from "Satan Worshipers for Dole"; Reform Party candidate Ross Perot's camp returned \$100 from "Pedophiles for Free Trade," but Perot was not yet accepting contributions at that time and all checks were returned automatically.

Inspired by Dole's decision last year not to accept a donation from Log Cabin Republicans, Moore staged his stunt to expose politicians' addiction to money, and to publicize his new book, *Downsize This!*

Affects of hate crimes linger, study finds

A landmark study of hate crimes conducted at the University of California at Davis provides a rare look at the everyday lives of bisexuals, lesbians and gay men living outside of major urban centers, according to a report in the *Sacramento Bee*.

Researchers surveyed 2,300 bisexuals, lesbians and gay men in the Sacramento area during a four-year period in an effort to determine some of the psychological effects of anti-gay crimes. They say this is the first large-scale study in the United States on the personal impact of hate crimes based on sexual orientation.

Among the findings are statistics indicating that more than one-fourth of men and almost one-fifth of women surveyed felt they had been the victims of crimes or attempted crimes because of their sexual orientation, but only one-third of the alleged crimes were reported to police. Not all of the incidents meet legal definitions of bias crimes and therefore are not reflected in official law enforcement statistics.

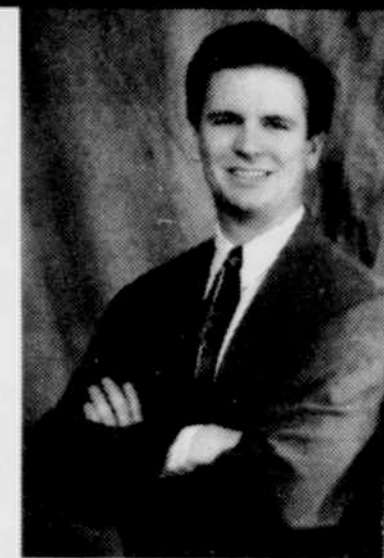
Researchers found that, compared to other crimes, the victims' stress, anger and depression resulting from anti-gay crimes may linger much longer, perhaps "because sexual orientation is such an important part of their self-identity," says Gregory M. Herek, a psychologist who worked on the study. Herek also said the findings point to a need for mental health services that will help gay men, lesbians and bisexuals cope with the long-term impact of hate crimes perpetrated against them.

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