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The Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund, the Human Rights Campaign and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force are hosting an inaugural ball Jan. 20 to celebrate the re-election of President Clinton, who has of course been invited to attend, along with Hillary Clinton and Al and Tipper Gore. Press materials for the event state that Clinton "did more for gay and lesbian Americans in his first term than any president in history," and cite high levels of support for Clinton among sexual minority communities.

Tickets for the event, to be held at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington, D.C., are \$150 and must be purchased in advance (call Box Office Tickets Inc., 1-800-494-8497).

FLORIDA

Simeon Gardner, 70, a Tampa Bay area priest, was arrested after turning himself in for stealing more than \$250,000 of church funds to silence his gay lover, according to United Press International. Gardner was not formally charged and was released on his own recognizance.

Acting on suspicions, in August the St. Petersburg Diocese audited St. Mary's church in Lutz, Fla., where Gardner was stationed. He immediately resigned.

The investigation into the unidentified recipient of the stolen money continues and more charges may be brought.

KANSAS

The Rev. Fred Phelps and 20 supporters picketed a Catholic Dominican convent in Great Bend because they said the convent is listed as an "endorser" of New Way Ministry's fourth national symposium, reports the *Hutchinson (Kansas) News*. New Way Ministry is a Catholic organization created to promote dialogue in the church about sexual minority issues. The symposium is scheduled to be held March 7-9 in Pittsburgh, Pa.

Phelps, who also plans to picket the symposium, called the sisters "lesbian nuns," and said, "They somehow support [this organization] that openly and blatantly promotes [homosexuality] as an innocent alternate lifestyle, rather than an abominable sin."



Prioress Betty Werner, OP, told reporters the organization's message is "directed to church leaders and ministers who work with the gay and lesbian community, to help us be more effective ministers. What we want is to treat people in a compassionate way, the way Jesus would have."

She said the convent has given financial support to New Way over the past 20 years and has sent sisters to the three previous symposiums.

KENTUCKY

Former Barbourville mayor, Boy Scout volunteer and minister Phillip Connley was sentenced to five years in prison after confessing that he violated "the law of the land, the laws of nature and the law of God" by having a homosexual relationship with a teenage boy. According to the *Lexington Herald-Leader*, Connley twice attempted suicide

in the past year because he felt guilty about the relationship, which he said began when the boy was "approximately 13 or 14 years old" and continued until one and a half years ago. The boy, who was not identified, told police that the abuse began when he was 11 and continued for five years.

Connley admitted to performing oral sex on the boy and pleaded guilty to one count each of second- and third-degree sodomy, two of the seven charges returned by a grand jury in February 1996.

The boy was present during the sentencing, but declined to comment.

MICHIGAN

Detroit area resident Allan Gilmour, a former Ford Motor Co. vice chairman who now sits on several corporate boards, came out in a recent edition of *Between the Lines*, a local gay and lesbian newspaper, reports United Press International. Gilmour, who was once a contender for the CEO position at Ford, hid his sexual orientation during a 34-year career with the automaker, but now hopes that his coming out will promote philanthropic support for the gay and lesbian community.



Gilmour, 62, currently serves on the board of directors for Prudential Insurance Co., Whirlpool Corp., Detroit Edison and Dow Chemical Co., and is building a house in an area suburb, where he will live with his partner, a 33-year-old interior designer.

NEW MEXICO

The Albuquerque City Council passed a hate crime ordinance Dec. 16 by a 7-2 margin, according to the *New Mexico Rainbow*. The bill, which was simultaneously and independently proposed in October by Mayor Martin Chavez and Councilmember Sam Bregman, creates new penalties for misdemeanors (felonies are the state's jurisdiction) committed out of animus based on race, religion, color, national origin, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation or disability.

An amendment meant to specify that homosexuals would not receive "protected status or substantive rights" was suggested by Councilmember Vicki Parea, an Evangelical Christian who had tried to stall the bill in committee; the amendment failed 3-6.

The state Legislature passed a hate crimes bill in 1995 by a 75 percent margin in both houses, but it was vetoed by Gov. Gary E. Johnson and missed a veto override in 1996 by two votes.

WISCONSIN

Construction of the state's first residence dedicated for families living with HIV and AIDS began Nov. 15 in northwest Milwaukee under the auspices of the Milwaukee AIDS Housing Corp., an affiliate of the AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin, reports the *Wisconsin Light*. When completed in the spring, the facility will house and provide ongoing assistance to six families. The project is funded by the Northwest Side Community Development Corp. and a \$1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The AIDS Resource Center provides housing assistance to some 800 people annually.

Compiled by Christopher D. Cuttone



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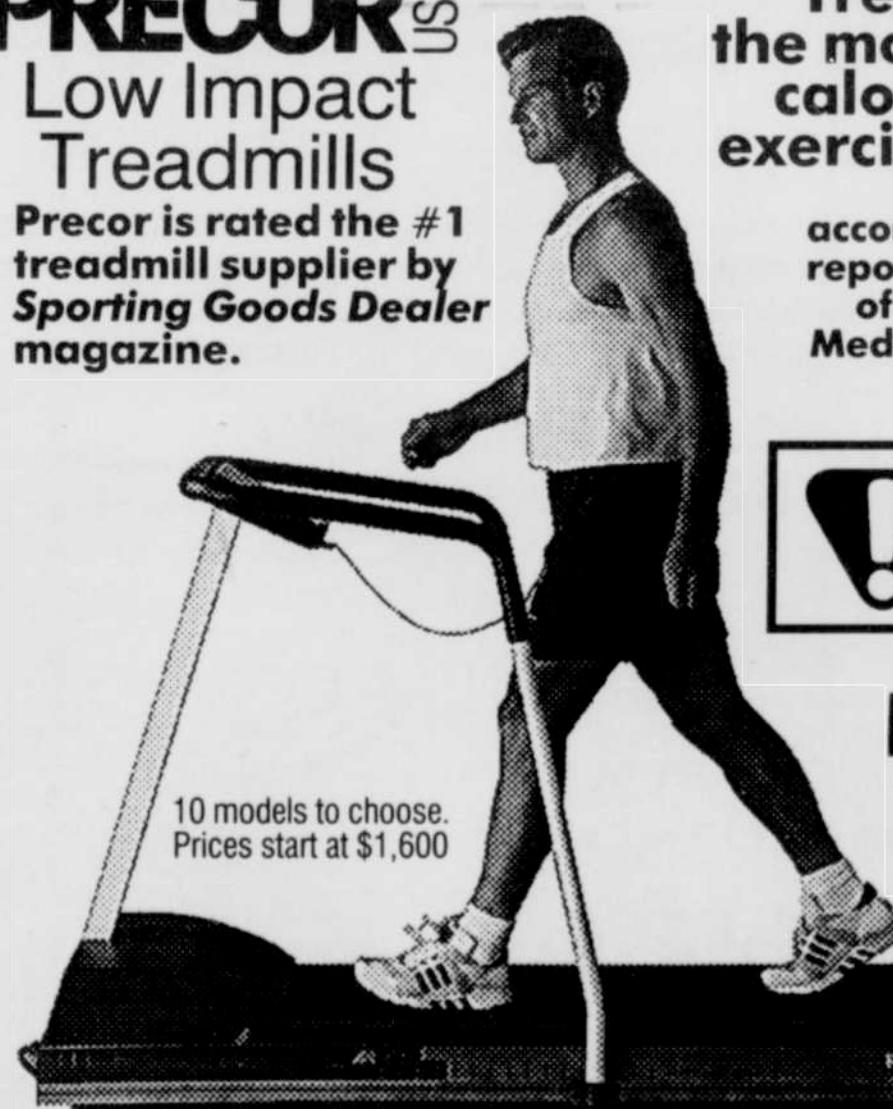
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