

national briefs

CALIFORNIA

The city of Los Angeles has agreed to pay almost \$90,000 to Peter J. Mackler to settle a police brutality lawsuit, according to a United Press International report.

Mackler, a gay man, said he suffered a severe eye injury, headaches and dizziness as a result of a beating by Officer David Peck at a civil rights protest in 1991. Mackler was never arrested or charged with any crime after the incident, which was captured on videotape.

A lawyer involved with the case said the amount of the settlement, which also requires police department reforms, is a record in the city and one of the highest in such a case anywhere in the country.



Prize-winning kick boxer Paul Cain, 24, stands accused of the December 1995 robbery and murder of 73-year-old Stanley Keith Runcorn, a noted geophysicist. Testifying in his own defense Feb. 14 in San Diego, Cain claimed he was defending himself against aggressive sexual advances by Runcorn.

Cain said he suspected Runcorn might be gay shortly after they met, and he said it occurred to him that Runcorn might proposition him. However, he went to Runcorn's hotel room, where he says Runcorn pushed him onto a bed. Cain said he kicked and punched Runcorn for about 35 seconds. Runcorn was also strangled, but Cain could not explain how that happened. He subsequently fled to Mexico and was arrested when he tried to re-enter the United States. If convicted, Cain could spend 25 years to life in prison.



Assemblyman Antonio Villaraigosa (D-Los Angeles) announced Feb. 12 a proposal to add protection of homosexuals to California's Fair Employment and Housing Act, according to a United Press International story. Sexual orientation is not presently included in the law, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, marital status, national origin, ancestry, family status or disability.

A similar bill passed the state Legislature last year, only to be vetoed by the governor. Villaraigosa's bill will encounter its first test in the Assembly Judiciary Committee in mid-March.

COLORADO

A bill sponsored by Sen. Pat Pascoe (D-Denver) that would have given gay men, lesbians and unmarried heterosexual couples legal rights pertaining to illness, death and dissolution of the relationship was defeated by a 5-3 vote of the Colorado Legislature's Senate Judiciary Committee on Feb. 5. If the bill had passed, the state would have instituted legal domestic partnerships as a requirement for access to such so-called spousal rights.

CYBERSPACE

On Feb. 13 the San Francisco-based AIDS charity Under One Roof unveiled its new virtual storefront, an electronic catalog of merchandise where customers can browse and order, on the World Wide Web.

The site joins Under One Roof's other fund-raising activities, such as its San Francisco "actual" storefront and national holiday catalog, which have already raised \$3.8 million for AIDS services. Shop for a cause at <http://www.underoneroof.org>



The national Gay and Lesbian Task Force recently released a state-by-state review of sexuality-related legislation in the United States, and

on Feb. 14 that information became available at the group's Web site Task Force Online. The report, entitled "Capital Gains and Losses," covers the 1996 legislative sessions and offers additional information—complete with a searchable database and downloadable maps and charts—on the general political climate encountered by sexual minority issues at the state level.

Visit the NGLTF Web site at <http://www.nglft.org>

HAWAII

A grass-roots protest-celebration called "Family Rights Weekend" is scheduled for April 18-19 in Honolulu. On Friday, April 18, activists, friends and families will lobby Hawaii lawmakers and possibly the governor. A rally and picnic is set for the following day at Ala Moana Park.

The event, focusing on same-gender marriage issues, has been designed as a response to a large Jan. 24 gathering in the city of those opposed such marriages. It is cosponsored by a growing list of organizations that includes PFLAG Oahu and the Marriage Project-Hawaii (formerly the Hawaii Equal Rights Marriage Project). For more information, call (801) 288-9294 or send e-mail to KathyWUT@aol.com or GO CAROLYN@aol.com

NEW YORK

For years the state of New York has conducted anonymous testing of newborns for HIV, and for the past 10 months it has disclosed the results only after obtaining the mother's consent. According to a *New York Times* story, however, under the aegis of a state law passed last summer, on Feb. 1 New York hospitals became the first in the nation to begin mandatory disclosure of HIV test results of infants.



The law has angered civil libertarians, who say it violates the medical requirement of informed consent because the infant's results reveal the mother's status as well.

According to the discontinued anonymous testing program, approximately 1,100 HIV-positive women have given birth in New York state in the past 10 months. About one quarter of babies exposed to HIV in utero become infected.

NORTH DAKOTA

Keith Elston, head of the American Civil Liberties Union in the Dakotas, had threatened to expose gay and lesbian lawmakers there if they voted to ban same-sex marriages. When the story reached ACLU national headquarters, however, Elston was made to withdraw the threat, and the organization's director, Ira Glasser, faxed a quick apology.

According to The Associated Press, Elston claimed he had the full support of the ACLU when he first said he would out legislators he believed were homosexual in a Grand Forks weekly arts and entertainment publication. In a statement released Feb. 18, he said, "I made a mistake, and it will not happen again. The ACLU does not 'out' people, nor threaten to out people."

TENNESSEE

Gay activist and California Reform Party leader Jim Mangia was elected Secretary of the National Reform Party by a unanimous vote at the group's founding meeting, held in late January in Nashville. Mangia is the first openly gay man in U.S. history to hold a top leadership position in a major national political party.

Compiled by Christopher D. Cuttone

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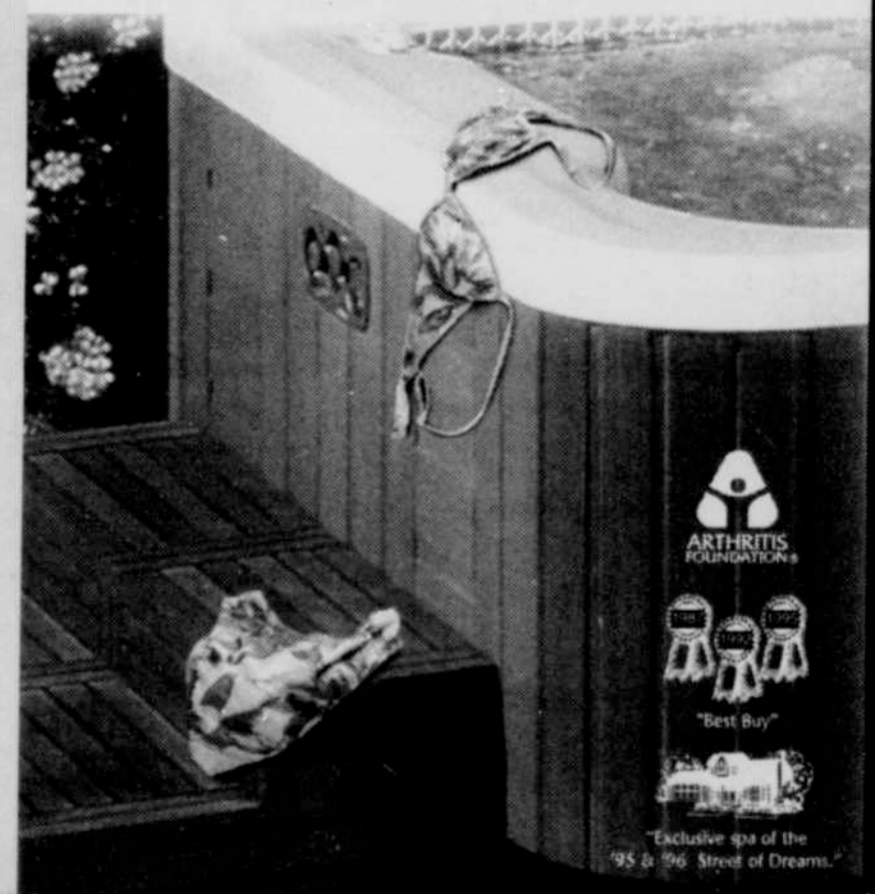
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