

## Pioneer journalist dies

Donald R. Slater, journalist and homosexual rights activist, died Feb. 14 at the age of 78 in Westwood, Calif. He was the editor of the magazine *One* from 1954 until it ceased publication in 1970; the Homosexual Information Center that he founded in 1968 continues to serve the sexual minority community in the Los Angeles area. He is survived by his longtime companion, Tony Reyes.

Slater frequently contributed articles to the *Los Angeles Times* and other mainstream publications. He preferred the term "homosexual" to "gay" or "lesbian" and argued that elements of the "gay pride" movement subvert the needs of individuals to the interests of the community.

In the 1950s, suing on behalf of *One*, Slater and his associates won an important U.S. Supreme Court decision permitting information about homosexuals to be published and distributed through the mails.

"Homosexuals can make strides in the courts, but only as human beings, not as 'gays,'" he wrote for the *Times* in 1976. "It was as individual citizens that homosexuals won the right of association in the 1950s, the right to send information through the mails and the right to teach in public schools."

## Catholic bishop preaches acceptance

On Feb. 13 at Ohio's University of Dayton, Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton of Detroit told a crowd of about 700 students, faculty and others that the Catholic church should welcome, understand and accept homosexuals for who they are "in the eyes of God," reports the *Dayton Daily News*. Gumbleton, the assistant bishop for the archdiocese of Detroit, was in 1994 the first high-ranking Catholic clergyman to publicly contradict the Vatican's position that gay men and lesbians are "intrinsically disordered."

"A reason why we've failed in the church to accept gay and lesbian people is we have not listened to their experience," Gumbleton told listeners on Feb. 13.

He explained how he arrived at his beliefs through the process of coming to terms with his brother's homosexuality and in reading moving letters from the parents and siblings of lesbians and gay men, including the suicide note of a 26-year-old Christian man unable to reconcile his religion and orientation.

Gumbleton also made reference to a pastoral letter, drafted by a committee of U.S. bishops and addressing the issue of sexual orientation and sin, which concluded that it is ultimately a matter between god and the conscience of the individual. The letter, which will be published later this year, does not broach the subject of same-gender marriage.

## Queer Republicans' to-do list

The nation's largest gay and lesbian Republican organization, the Log Cabin Republicans, released on Feb. 14 its list of top priorities for 1997. Items on the agenda include pushing for a more streamlined Food and Drug Administration

approval process, advocating for voluntary employment nondiscrimination policies in political offices and campaigns, and working for the re-election of gay-friendly Republicans.

Log Cabin's plans for the coming year focus not only on FDA reform, but also on improving the availability of life-saving and life-extending treatments in all federal and state health care policy, specifically, increased funding of state-administered AIDS drug assistance programs and expansion of these programs to include all FDA-approved treatments. The group will also advocate for more research on HIV and AIDS in the female population and on breast cancer among lesbians.

On the electoral front, Log Cabin will aid the re-election campaigns of Gov. Christine Todd Whitman of New Jersey, Mayor Richard Riordan of Los Angeles, and Mayor Rudolph Giuliani of New York, in addition to supporting openly gay and lesbian Republicans and offering outreach to the leadership of the Republican National Committee. Part of this effort will be a grass-roots drive through Log Cabin's more than 50 chapters nationwide to promote fair employment practices in the offices of Republican politicians and to push the party itself in that direction.

## Getting the lead out

At long last ABC and Disney have approved the script for Ellen's coming out episode, which will air April 30—the first day of the May ratings sweeps.

So far this season, *Ellen* the show, starring perpetual closet-case Ellen DeGeneres, has made a respectable showing but isn't quite a blockbuster: It is ranked 47 out of 118 prime-time



Ellen DeGeneres

series. But the show's popularity had nothing to do with the length of the decision-making process, nor did the company's image, say network and studio insiders. Actually, Disney has a very good track record in dealing with controversial material—its Miramax division released the films *Priest* and *Kids*—and provides same-sex domestic

partner benefits. The show's producers say when the possibility of the Ellen character coming out as a lesbian became news in September, it was simply much too soon for them to make a decision; they held back not to be coy, but to see how the issue would be handled and where the show would take it.

The seven-month delay in Ellen's coming out has made some members of the lesbian and gay community less than enthusiastic about it, and even drew public criticism from the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation. Scott Thompson, a gay actor who plays a gay character on *The Larry Sanders Show*, said in October, "At this point, there's no bravery in the act at all. She's ruined it."

Ellen's coming out isn't expected to seriously affect the show's ratings or cause any great tremors in its advertising lineup, and with regular or semi-regular gay or lesbian characters on about two dozen prime-time series, it's not a huge step forward for queer kind either.

At a Museum of Television and Radio event last fall, DeGeneres said she hoped to develop her character in a way that would "make a lot of people proud." On March 1, she presented an award to k.d. lang at an event sponsored by the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center.

Compiled by Christopher D. Cuttone



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