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NATIONAL news

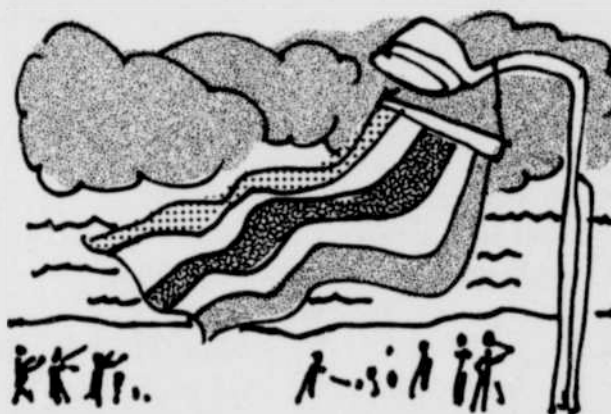
DECISION HAS DEEP IMPACT ON PAT ROBERTSON

The Orlando City Council made a final decision June 1 allowing roughly 720 rainbow flags to fly from city light posts during June to honor queer pride month, reports the *Orlando Sentinel*.

The decision caused controversy not only in Florida—where 300 people crowded into Orlando City Hall to hear the flag ruling—but managed to prick some ears as far away as Virginia Beach, Va., home of Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network.

According to a June 11 press release from the Human Rights Campaign, during the June 8 broadcast of his show, *The 700 Club*, Robertson said: "I would warn Orlando that you're right in the way of some serious hurricanes and I don't think I'd be waving those flags in God's face if I were you. This is not a message of hate; this is a message of redemption. But a condition like this will bring about the destruction of your nation. It'll bring about terrorist bombs; it'll bring earthquakes, tornadoes and possibly a meteor."

Robertson's remarks, which also lambasted the June 6 Gay Day at Walt Disney World just outside Orlando, have the potential to incite violence, warns HRC.



"Pat Robertson has exposed himself and the Christian Broadcasting Network to significant legal action should such a terrorist attack take place," says Tony Varona, chief counsel for HRC. "These remarks clearly indicate a reckless disregard for the safety and well-being of the people of Orlando."

Nevertheless, Robertson's comments were apparently not universally perceived as reckless. He reportedly met three days later with top congressional Republicans, including U.S. House Majority Leader Dick Army, to discuss issues of concern to the Christian Coalition.

GINGRICH BOLSTERS NGLTF

Usually, an autographed Newt Gingrich calendar is about as valuable as a White House shot glass or a bag of peanuts from Air Force Two. But, when such a calendar is mistakenly donated to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force for the group's second annual Capital Pride Auction, then followed by a statement from Gingrich's office denouncing the organization and insisting the calendar was offered without his consent, its value rises markedly.

"We were originally dubious of the worth of such a liberally distributed item," admits Kerry Lobel, NGLTF's executive director, "but the speaker has just significantly increased its value."

Pulling in a \$1,900 bid, the calendar package, which included the correspondence from Gingrich's office, earned more for the NGLTF than any other item on the block at the June 6 auction.

Another Georgian, Garrith Xavier-Carey of Atlanta, who made the winning bid states, "Contrary to the reputation Newt Gingrich gives Georgia, our state is at the forefront of pro-gay and pro-lesbian issues. I thought it fitting to bring the calendar home to Newt since he was so generous to give it to us."

BEVERLY HILLS WARNS CRUISERS

Beverly Hills authorities, worried their parks will get a bad rap following George Michael's arrest for committing a lewd act in a public restroom in the city's Will Rogers Memorial Park, are stepping up security.

Stephen Miller, director of the Beverly Hills Recreation and Parks Department, knows some of his parks' restrooms are listed on Internet sites that catalog sex cruising spots and is aggressively tackling damage control, the *Los Angeles Times* reports.

"Somebody who wants to come here based on what they see on the Internet can be assured that they're going to spend a little more time than they planned in Beverly Hills—a lengthy police stay, so to speak," Miller warns.

Jon Davidson, a supervising attorney at the Lambda Legal Defense Fund, however, is crying foul. He cites a double standard when it comes to heterosexual indecency, pointing to straight couples who park along Mulholland Drive for intimate interludes.

Whereas mainstream culture might hold nostalgia for Lover's Lane, Davidson sees simple discrimination: "When was the last time that police staked out Mulholland?," he asks. "We believe police are applying a double standard and are targeting gay men for arrest for conduct for which heterosexual men are not arrested."



NGLTF APPOINTS TRANS EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER

L.J. Irving, an openly transgendered activist, has joined the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's board of directors. She is the first openly trans person to serve on the board of a national sexual minorities civil rights organization, reports the *Bay Area Reporter*.

Irving, of Oakland, Calif., was a founding member of Lesbians and Gays of African Descent for Democratic Action and has been involved with both the Harvey Milk Democratic Club and the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center.

Irving told the *Reporter* that in her new position she plans to advocate for people of color, young people and lower-income populations.

"I'm really looking forward to increasing the visibility of people of color and to reaching out to those who can't afford the high ticket events," Irving said. "We need to reach out, instead of expecting them to come to us."

Irving described her working style as less maverick than enabler: "I'm not a leader, just a worker. I'm more like a doorman, holding the door open so that others can come in."

NAVY AND AOL SETTLE WITH McVEIGH

The U.S. Navy and America Online have reached settlements with a decorated sailor who was investigated by the Navy after he posted a member profile in which he described himself as "gay."

According to a June 12 New York Times News Service report, under the Navy agreement Master Chief Petty Officer Timothy R. McVeigh, 36, will retire from the military with full benefits and with tens of thousands of dollars to pay his legal fees.

The Navy had originally sought to discharge McVeigh without benefits, despite 18 years of