

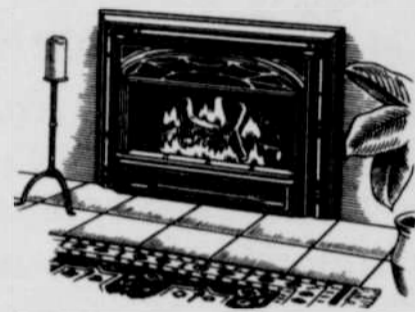
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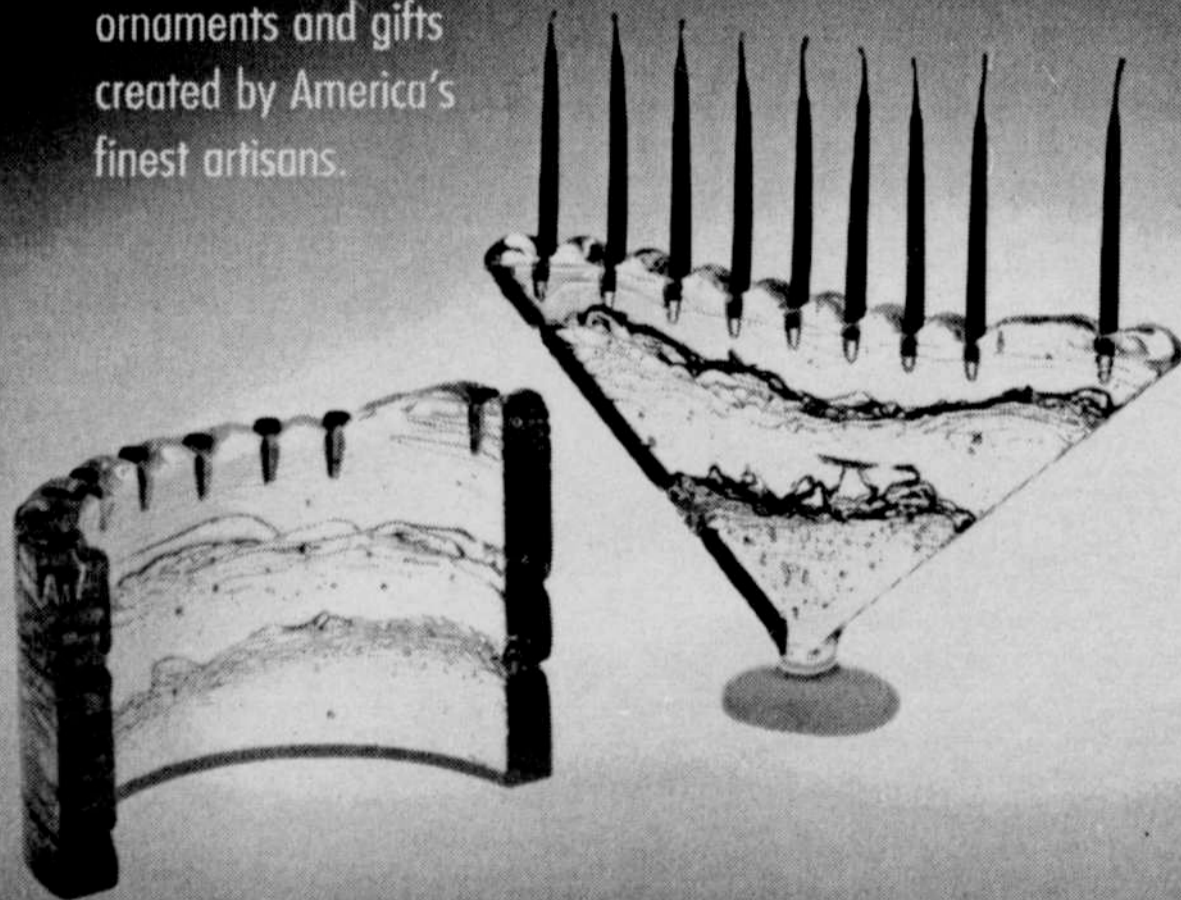
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NATIONAL news

PROTEST PLANS BACKFIRE

The Rev. Fred Phelps, the Kansas minister and gay-baiter, decided to take his message to Chicago. He and six members of his family made the trip to protest against a local minister who had performed a same-sex marriage ceremony at the Broadway United Methodist Church, according to a Nov. 23 *Chicago Tribune* report.

When Phelps and company arrived at the church on Nov. 22, they were surrounded by more than 1,500 people who, in the words of a local minister, had come to protect the neighborhood from "the power of evil" as manifested in the form of Phelps and his family.

The Phelps family huddled behind a police barricade for about 90 minutes before making an escape.

Counterdemonstrators included clergy, community groups and politicians from throughout the Chicago area.

"The presence of the many congregations, faiths and understandings this morning...says something about where the spirit of our city and society is, in contrast to where the purveyors of intolerance say it is," said the Rev. Gregory Dell, pastor of Broadway United Methodist Church.

In October, Phelps organized a demonstration at the funeral of Matthew Shepard,

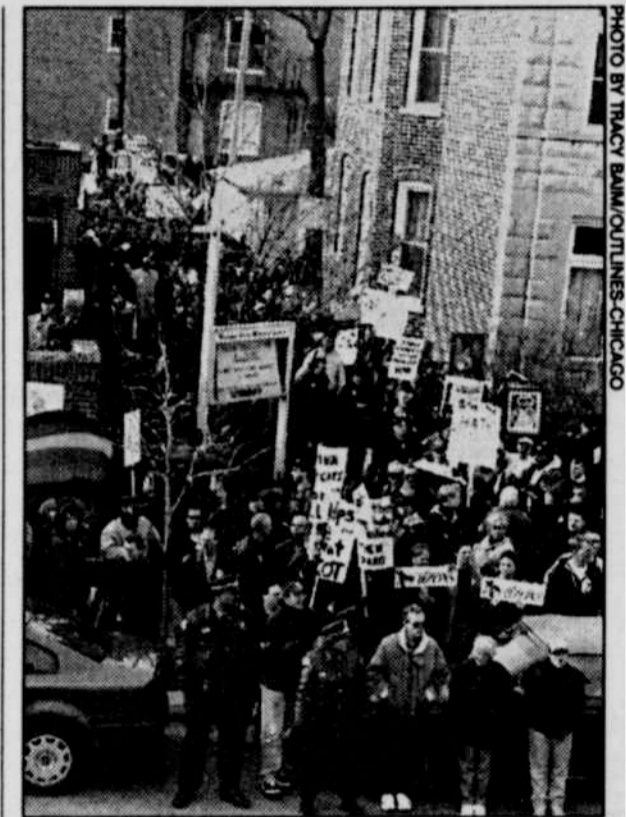


PHOTO BY TRACY BARNHART/OUTLINE CHICAGO

Counterdemonstrators foiled the plans of the Rev. Fred Phelps to protest outside Chicago's Broadway United Methodist Church

a gay University of Wyoming student who was killed in what many are calling a bias-motivated crime.

CALIFORNIA

As if worrying about the potential Y2K computer disaster is not trouble enough, the new millennium will see a heterosexual-marriages-only measure on the year 2000 California ballot, *The Associated Press* reported Nov. 18.

Measure backers hope voters will see fit to refuse to recognize same-sex marriages no matter which, if any, state sanctions such unions.

Surprise, surprise: The very gay-friendly San Francisco Board of Supervisors has raised the ire of the very anti-gay Family Research Council.

A Nov. 24 FRC press release quotes the organization's president, Gary Bauer, who accuses the board of "reckless rhetoric and reckless regard for the truth." Bauer also demands an apology from board supervisors.

The cause of all this brouhaha? In an Oct. 19 letter, the board said there is a direct correlation between "horrible crimes committed against gays and lesbians" and the FRC's "Truth in Love" ad campaign, which purports to offer hope and healing to those struggling with homosexuality. The missive cites the killing of Matthew Shepard as an example of the horrible crimes.

The board sent the piece to FRC, the Christian Coalition, American Family Association, Coral Ridge Ministries, U.S. Sens. Trent Lott and Jesse Helms, and U.S. Rep. Newt Gingrich.

In his response, Bauer said: "This is a scurrilous and utterly unfounded charge. There is no evidence that the thugs in Wyoming ever saw our ads, or were influenced by them in any way. If they had, they would have seen such statements as, 'We believe every human being is precious to God and is entitled to respect,' and 'The truth that God loves them could just be the truth that sets them free.'"

The FRC is seeking a meeting with the board.

CONNECTICUT

Five West Hartford families—including same-sex couples, an unmarried heterosexual couple, and their children—claim the city discriminates against them by refusing to grant them the same privileges accorded to married couples and their children, according to a Nov. 13 *Associated Press* story.



At issue is the cost of memberships at the Cornerstone Aquatic Center. The complainants pay \$200 to \$300 more per membership to swim at the Cornerstone pool than do married couples and families.

The five families plan to file complaints with the state Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities. The West Hartford town council has already refused to grant them family memberships.

GEORGIA

Just in case anyone was under the illusion that Southern Baptists in Georgia were clamoring for the opportunity to perform same-sex marriages in their churches, several media outlets have reported that the Southern Baptists of Georgia voted last month to exclude congregations that "endorse" homosexuality.

The vote took place at the state convention of Southern Baptists. Delegates to the convention warned churches that "they should not knowingly take any action to affirm, approve or endorse homosexual behavior if they want to remain in the convention."