This is the fourth year the fliers have been distributed. Criticism, according to Martinez, has been minimal.

FLORIDA

Last July, Ocala resident George Stephens Finley, 58, struck his former wife's dog with a plastic vacuum cleaner wand hard enough to fracture the dog's skull. He then threw the dog against a tree. He did all this because he thought the dog, named General Lee, was gay.

The comatose dog was euthanized after being taken to a veterinarian.

According to The Associated Press, Finley was convicted June 22 of felony animal cruelty and sentenced to six months in jail and 100 hours of community service. He was also ordered to pay a $500 fine and take an anger management course.

During the trial, the prosecutor said that Finley was furious because General Lee, a neutered male, attempted to engage in sexual activity with a younger male dog.

Finley's attorney said he struck the animal accidentally.

Before he was sentenced Finley said, "I'm truly sorry for all of this. It's a stupid thing I did, and I'm very, very sorry for it."

ILLINOIS

The Illinois Republican Party rejected an attempt by right-wing members to adopt anti-gay planks in the party's platform.

"We commend the Illinois Republican Party for resisting the right-wing attempt to promote bigotry in the party's platform," said Rick Garcia, director of Equality Illinois. "Clearly, gay bashing is not acceptable to Illinois Republicans. Fairness and decency have triumphed over bigotry and prejudice."

All of Illinois' Republican constitutional officials support legislation banning discrimination based on sexual orientation. The party has welcomed the participation of gay men and lesbians.

The Illinois platform committee rejected a plank that called for opposition to gay-inclusive anti-discrimination laws. The committee also rejected a plank that defined marriage as between a man and a woman.

Republicans in some other states have adopted anti-gay platforms. In mid-June, the Texas Republican Party adopted a platform that states "homosexual behavior is contrary to the fundamental unchanging truths that have been ordained by God."

NATIONAL

The United States' traditional Big Three automakers announced in June that they will offer health care coverage to same-sex partners of all their U.S. employees.

This action by General Motors, Ford Motor Company and DaimlerChrysler will cover approximately 466,300 hourly and salaried employees.

Reuters reports that coverage of medical, dental and prescription drug costs is set to begin August 1. Plans will vary from automaker to automaker.

Employee eligibility requirements include being of the same sex and having shared a "committed relationship" for at least six months. Opposite-sex domestic partners are not included in the plan.

The automakers expect the cost of extending coverage to be minimal.

According to David Murphy, Ford's vice president of human resources, the extra benefits will cost less than $5 million a year. Ford currently spends $2.4 billion a year on health care.

The United Auto Workers union provided the push for the new coverage. During last fall's contract talks, the union extracted pledges from the companies to study the issue.

NEW MEXICO

David Tully, 71, allegedly drove a van toward people at a June 10 gay pride parade, struck one person with the vehicle and called people "[expletive] faggots." He now faces four charges of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon and one count of aggravated battery with a deadly weapon.

No one was hurt in the incident, and Tully was released from jail after posting a $22,500 bond.

In an interview with the *Albuquerque Journal*, Tully said he wasn't trying to run anybody over and didn't yell any insults.

Police Sgt. Paul Heh saw a white van "going after the people in the parade at Central and Monroe," according to a complaint filed in Metropolitan Court.

"Sergeant Heh stated he sounded his siren, but the driver did not stop," the complaint says. "Sergeant Heh stated he saw the van [back up] and then go towards the people on the sidewalk."

Heh yelled at Tully to stop and "had to reach into the van and put it in park to stop the van," the complaint alleges.

Said Tully: "I was the one who got shouted and screamed at. I was minding my own business, crossing the road."

TEXAS

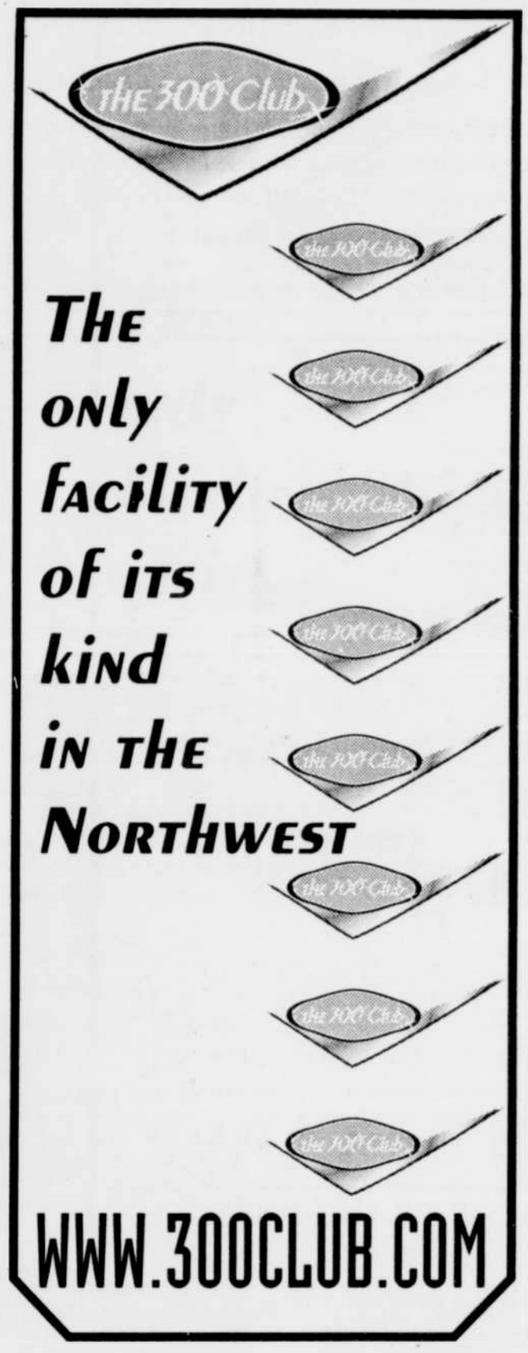
A state appeals court ruled June 8 that the state's sodomy law was unconstitutional. It threw out the case against two Houston men who were arrested in 1998 while having sex inside a home. The court's vote was 2-1.

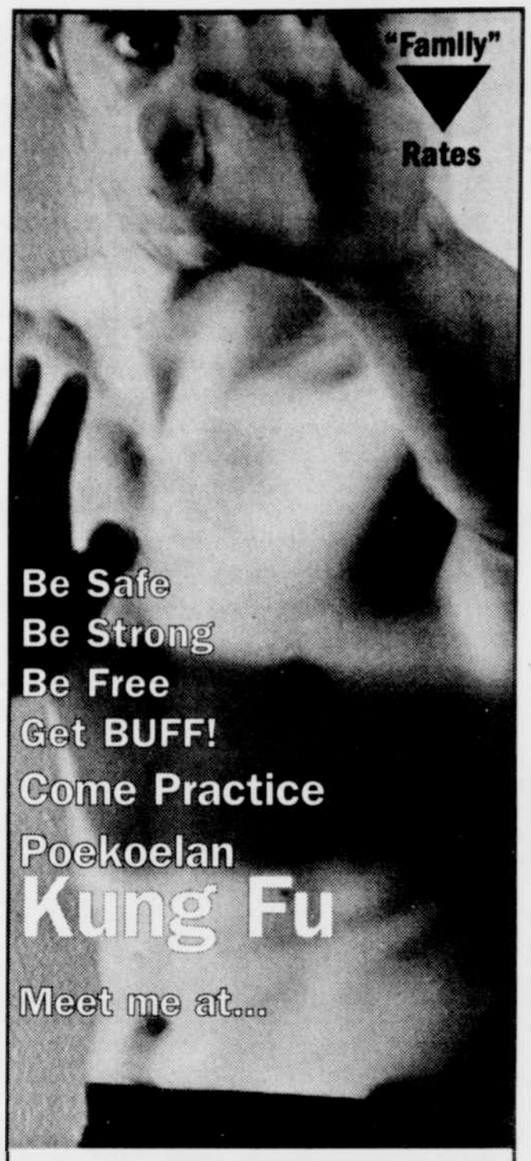
According to The Associated Press, the 14th Court of Appeals said the law violated the Texas Constitution by making it illegal for same-sex partners to engage in an activity that is legal for opposite-sex partners.

"The simple fact is, the same behavior is criminal for some but not for others, based solely on the sex of the individuals who engage in the behavior," wrote Justice John S. Anderson.

Texas has had a sodomy law since 1860; criminal penalties for opposite-sex partners were eliminated in 1974.

■ *Compiled by* KRISTINE CHATWOOD, *a Portland-based free-lance writer and longtime* Just Out *contributor.*





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