

AOL chief donates \$8 million to church that funds ex-gay ministry," read the headline for an Oct. 18 story by the online service Gay.com.

Within days, TheAdvocate.com, the Human Rights Campaign, columnist Michelangelo Signorile and other were piling on. The one thing none of these players disclosed was their own vested interests in stoking the controversy.

The thread of this story began with an Oct. 18 article in the Fort Lauderdale, Fla., *Sun-Sentinel* announcing a gift of \$8.35 million from Jean Case, wife of America Online chairman Steve Case, to Westminster Academy. She graduated from the private high school in 1978. The bulk of the money was earmarked to build a new high school campus, the remainder to fund a scholarship program.

The abbreviated Gay.com article emphasized that Westminster was founded by the Rev. D. James Kennedy and is affiliated with his Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church. He is a leading anti-gay television preacher whose matrix of organizations supports "ex-gay" ministries and the controversial but ineffective "Truth in Love" advertising campaign claiming that gays can change their sexual orientation through Jesus. The article insinuated that some of the money would be used to promote these activities.

The next day, HRC send a letter to AOL asking them to reconsider the donation. "We find it unfathomable how your family could reward a school inexorably linked to teachings that say gay and lesbian Americans are not worthy of dignity, respect and full citizenship," executive director Elizabeth Birch wrote.

Later that afternoon, Jean Case responded with a statement saying the gift was "specifically

WEB OF CONTROVERSY

America Online chairman donates millions to anti-gay organizations

by Bob Roehr

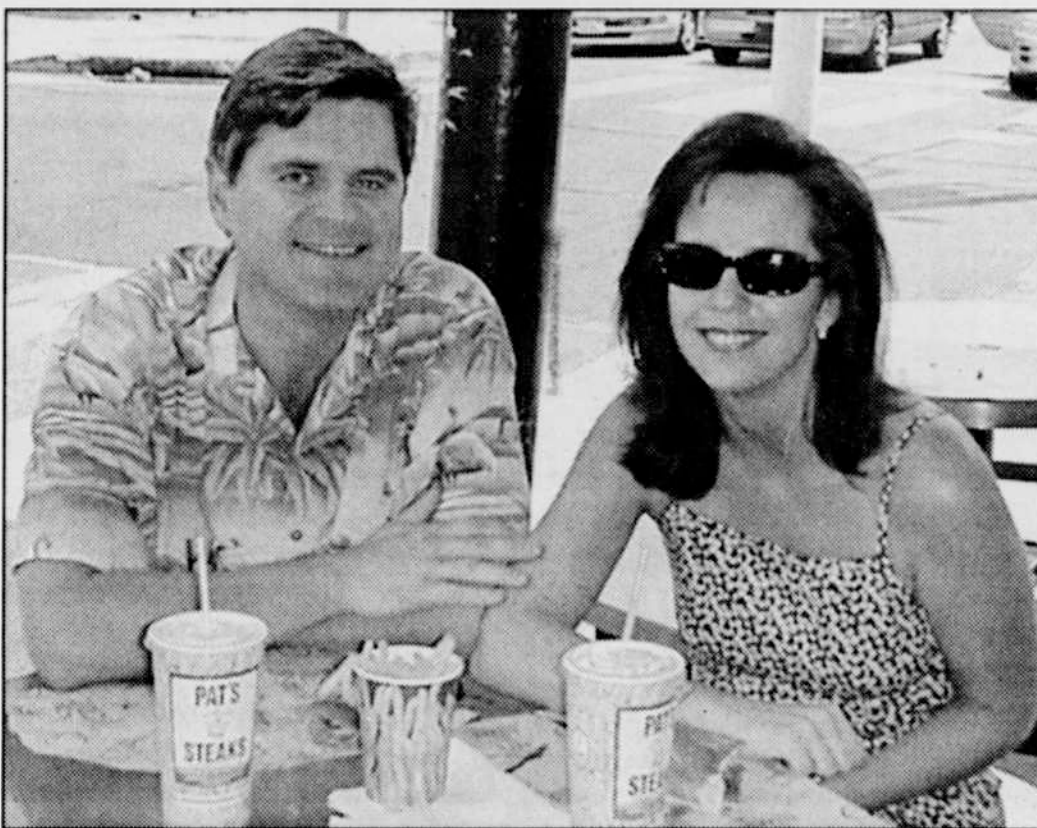
directed to benefit children," a cause the couple regularly support. Steve Case earlier had given \$10 million to the private high school he attended while growing up in Hawaii.

"The gift was not given to benefit Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church or its programs," Jean Case insisted. "In no way was it intended to send a message of intolerance. Steve and I strongly oppose discrimination in any form."

But HRC would have none of it. Spokesman Wayne Besen said, "It is not a gift toward education but one toward indoctrination." He said the Cases were "funding an assembly line of bigots."

Signorile chimed in with his Gay.com column Oct. 23. He lambasted the Cases for donations their foundation made to a fundamentalist church in McLean, Va., and all but threatened a boycott.

"Deacon" Maccubbin is founder and co-owner of Lambda Rising, what many consider the premier gay bookstore in the world. He



Steve and Jean Case say they strongly oppose discrimination in any form

also was midwife to the huge gay and lesbian community on AOL.

Maccubbin called the Cases' donation "a damned foolish move to make, because it sends a very inaccurate message. There is no way to interpret it as other than something that is harmful to the gay and lesbian community. It tarnishes their good name."

But "I never detected a homophobic bone

in his body," Maccubbin said of Steve Case. Their extensive series of contacts dates back to the late 1980s.

Maccubbin said whenever the gay community was upset with AOL, he would drive out and have lunch with Case. "Steve's reaction was always, 'Tell me about it.' ...His response generally was, 'You know, that makes sense.' And within a week or two, it was changed."

An online industry analyst, who wished to remain anonymous, said Gay.com really has a financial incentive to trash AOL. The site is struggling to attract users to reach a critical mass and lure advertisers. Controversy alone will help generate that traffic, which further would grow if some of AOL's gay and lesbian subscribers became disenchanted and left the service.

In addition, the collapse of dot.com initial public offerings on Wall Street has closed that method of financing the red ink that most online operations continue to hemorrhage. The Darwinian struggle to survive is becoming more intense.

HRC surely believes its criticism of Case. But it also launched its own "HRC FamilyNet" earlier last month.

A boycott of AOL might help drive more Web surfers to its new site.

Plus, both Gay.com and PlanetOut are corporate sponsors of HRC. Could the political group be trying to line its own coffers by guilting AOL into joining that list? **J**

BOB ROEHR is a free-lance reporter based in Washington, D.C.



**CITY OF PORTLAND, OREGON
OFFICE OF THE CITY AUDITOR
RFP #00-AO1
Electronic Records Management System
Proposals due 1:00 pm, PST November 13
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

The City of Portland Office of the City Auditor is soliciting proposals from qualified vendors of records management software to provide an enterprise-wide Electronic Records Management System (ERMS) for the management of electronic and physical records. This purchase will include the procurement of professional services from the selected software vendor to provide configuration, implementation, data conversion and training for the City of Portland. The Request for Proposal (RFP) outlines the software and services requirements, criteria for qualifications, anticipated scope of services, selection process and required documentation that must be submitted in response to this RFP.

A complete description of the project is included in the RFP and may be obtained by picking up a packet at the Office of the City Auditor, 1221 SW 4th, Room 140, Portland or by phoning and requesting a packet from Jessica Hurley at 503-823-4565 or jhurley@ci.portland.or.us. Proposals are due by 1:00 PM., PST, November 13th, 2000. For other information about this Request contact Diane Betcher at 503-823-4567 or dbetcher@ci.portland.or.us.

The City of Portland is committed to increasing contracting and employment opportunities for minority and women owned businesses. Firms responding to the RFP are encouraged to investigate all sources of MBE and WBE participation that could be incorporated into the contract services. Firms submitting proposals should note that Equal Employment opportunity certification with the City of Portland is necessary for submission of a proposal as outlined in Chapter 3.100 of the City Code. Details of the certification requirements are available from the Bureau of Purchases and Stores, 1120 SW 5th Avenue, Portland, Oregon, 503-823-6855.

This notice is not an offer, but is an announcement of the Office of the City Auditor's intent to procure an Electronic Records Management System (ERMS).

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James Ridout, IV
Plantation Secrets

Nov 10th 7:30PM Lawrence (an escort from Unzipped Magazine) brings his latest book *The Male Escort's Handbook* and Ridout reading from his debut fiction novel *Plantation Secrets*. Gay authors Lawrence and Ridout will read from their latest works at:

Gai-Pied

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