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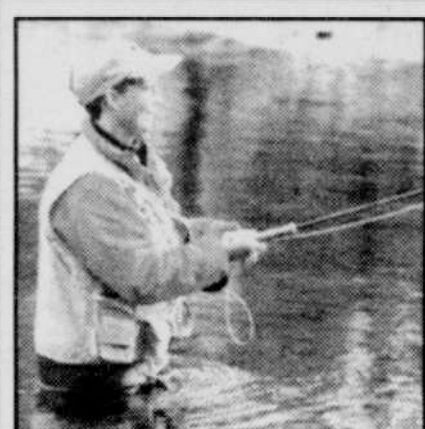
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WORLD news

FRANCE

Paris elected an openly gay mayor
March 18.

Socialist Bertrand Delanoe campaigned on the slogan "Let's Change Eras." He promised reduced smog, more parks, fewer cars, protected pedestrian zones along the Seine River, less dog poop on the streets, more day care centers and renewed cultural vitality.

"Today, Parisians freely chose change in the capital," Delanoe said after his victory. "Tonight, hearts are moved among all those who for so long dreamed of putting Paris back on the road of the future, the road of imagination and of hope."

Delanoe, 50, came out in a 1998 television interview.

"Yes, I'm a homosexual," he said. "Perhaps I'm underestimating the consequences of the discussion we are having today, but I'm 48 years old.... I must live with my convictions...and my career has never been the most important thing to me."

Delanoe works out, enjoys soccer, smokes cigars and likes to stroll in the city.

"With an openly gay mayor [and] gays and lesbians dancing to 'I Will Survive' under a rainbow flag in front of City Hall...some are having a hard time believing their eyes and ears," Gay.com France editor Olivier Monnot wrote. "Sunday night was a taste of something never seen before."

In addition, Paris elected a transgendered woman to the City Council. Camille Cabral won the seat for the 17th arrondissement. She is the first known transgendered person elected to public office in France.

"This is historic for the transgender community," Cabral told Gay.com France. "But I don't put my sexual identity first. Above all, I am a citizen."

UNITED KINGDOM

A former speaker of Britain's House of Commons, the late George Thomas, was secretly gay, former Labour MP Leo Abse says in a new book titled *Tony Blair: The Man Behind the Smile*.

A very popular British political figure, Thomas was speaker from 1976 to 1983. He died in 1997 at age 88.

According to the book, Thomas was blackmailed repeatedly by people threatening to expose his homosexuality, and Abse helped pay off some of the blackmailers.

ISRAEL

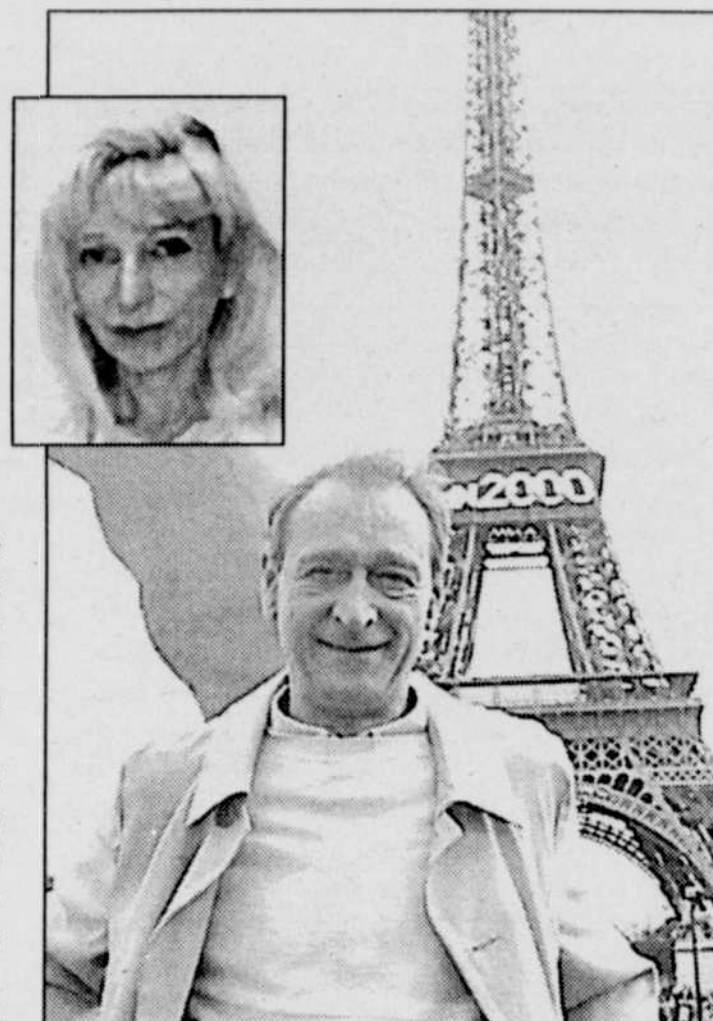
The Israeli High Court of Justice overturned a rabbinical court ruling March 19 prohibiting a lesbian from seeing her children from a previous heterosexual marriage if her female lover was present.

"I feel that I am beginning to live my life freely, the way everyone is supposed to live in this country, without anyone interfering in my private affairs," the unidentified women told the *Jerusalem Post* after the decision. "The hardest thing was the knowledge that someone can interfere with your most private affairs, especially when you know that you are living a good life and are happy with the choice you made."

PARAGUAY

The country's first gay community center opened last month in Asuncion. The facility was created by the Gay-Lesbian Action Group with funding from Spain's Triangle Foundation.

"The Gay-Lesbian Action Group plans to move forward with information projects for the general population and Paraguayan gays and lesbians to achieve simple equality for gays and lesbians in society," the group said in a press release. "We also will continue recognizing and confronting all cases of discrimination against gays and lesbians."



Gay Paree Mayor Bertrand Delanoe and (inset) City Councilor Camille Cabral

LEBANON

A case that started when Lebanon's Internal Security Force attempted to find out who owned GayLebanon.com has ended with fines of \$219 each for Kamal Batal, director of the human rights organization Multi-Initiative on Rights: Search, Assist, Defend, and Ziad Mughraby, owner of the local Internet service provider Destination. They were convicted of violating Article 157 of the Military Penal Code, which bans defamation of the army or the flag.

Batal and Mughraby allegedly tarnished the reputation of the vice squad by distributing a printed flier. They deny the allegation and think the document in question was a printout of an e-mail the organization sent its members after police visited Destination and demanded the names of the owners of GayLebanon.com, which, it turned out, was not hosted by Destination or any other Lebanon-based Internet provider.

SCOTLAND

An Edinburgh man who infected his girlfriend with HIV while aware of his own HIV status was jailed for five years March 16 for culpable and reckless conduct. Stephen Kelly, 33, learned he was HIV-positive in 1993, then had unsafe sex with his girlfriend six months later.

"She has suffered several years of serious illness, and her life expectancy has been seriously reduced," judge Lord Mackay said in handing down the sentence.

NAMIBIA

President Sam Nujoma told police to arrest, imprison and deport gays March 19.

"The Republic of Namibia does not allow homosexuality, lesbianism here," he said in a speech to students at University of Namibia. "Police are ordered to arrest you and deport you and imprison you."

Nujoma previously has said: "Those who are practicing homosexuality in Namibia are destroying the nation. Homosexuals must be condemned and rejected in our society."



Namibia President Sam Nujoma (left) shakes hands with China President Jiang Zemin