

lived together for at least two years.

Río Negro is in south-central Argentina, south of the La Pampa province and southwest of Buenos Aires. It is best known for growing apples and pears and exporting fruit juice and cider.

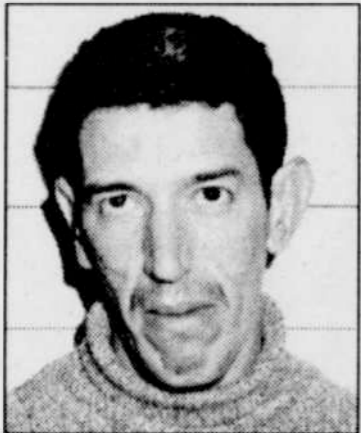
CHILE

Cops have solved only one of 24 anti-trans murders known to have been committed during the past two years, TravesChile and Unified Sexual Minorities Movement reported Dec. 12. The organizations accused the police and the judicial system of inaction based on homophobia.

FRANCE

The man who tried to kill gay Paris Mayor Bertrand Delanoë in October is mentally unfit to stand trial, two psychiatrists who examined him said Dec. 20.

Azedine Berkane has said he attacked Delanoë because he hates homosexuals and politicians. The psychiatrists said Berkane suffers from the "mental illness" of "chronic delirium."



Azedine Berkane

Delanoë was stabbed in the stomach during a party Oct. 6 at City Hall. He spent two weeks in the hospital and underwent surgery to repair internal organs.

UNITED KINGDOM

The British government has announced plans to give same-sex couples marriage rights. Areas that could be covered by a partnership law include inheritance, pensions, tenancy, taxes, property and immigration.

"I do think society has moved on, and I think that we recognize that there are very many people in gay relationships who are in very loving relationships...but their partnership has no recognition in law," Barbara Roche, minister for social exclusion and equalities, told the British Broadcasting Corp. "You have people who have shared their lives, shared their homes, whose lives are entwined with each other. Why shouldn't their relationship be recognized as the loving and secure relationship that it is? We are not talking about marriage here. What we are talking about is the signing of a register."

London Mayor Ken Livingstone welcomed the announcement. "I am delighted the government has recognized the gross inequalities," he said.

Political parties expressed support across the board. "Whilst we attach a huge importance to the institution of marriage, we do recognize that gay couples suffer from some serious particular grievances," said Oliver Letwin, the Tory spokesman on domestic issues.

The law, should it pass the House of Commons and the House of Lords, would apply in England and Wales. Scotland would consider the proposal separately.

People who change their gender are set to have greater rights in Britain. The government said Dec. 10 it will introduce legislation allowing transsexuals to revise the gender listed on their birth certificates and then marry someone of the opposite sex.

The moves are a response to a ruling by the European Court of Human Rights in the case of a British transsexual bus driver who wanted to be legally recognized as a woman in order to obtain her



A U.K. watchdog agency has banned a Yahoo! ad depicting a naked bachelorette (left) stalked by an effeminate homosexual

retirement pension at an earlier age. British women can get their pensions at age 60, while men must wait till age 65.

Ending a 30-year battle, the British gay group Torch has been granted official affiliation with the Conservative Party.

The vote by the Tory board was unanimous. Approval by the party's constitutional committee, a formality, is expected early this year.

"We can help the party a lot more if we are inside than if we are a loosely associated organization on the outside," Torch chairman James Davenport told London's *Times*. "That can only be good news for the Conservative Party and for the gay community."

Yahoo! screwed up, Britain's Independent Television Commission ruled Dec. 23. Dozens of viewers had complained to the watchdog agency about a commercial in which a man left tied to a tree naked after his bachelor party is stalked by an effeminate, predatory homosexual in a raincoat.

The commission banned the ad, calling it "outdated and offensive." Yahoo! and the ad agency Euro RSCG Wnek Gosper took "insufficient care...to avoid the use of a stereotype that could feed prejudice and perpetuate damaging misconceptions, with potentially harmful consequences," officials said.

SWITZERLAND

The Swiss canton of Valais rejected a gay partnership bill Dec. 6.

"The local government...has made a social decision to support the family, not the 'Civil Solidarity Pact,'" canton spokesman Jean-Rene Fournier told reporters. The vote was 64-51 with five abstentions.

Valais' decision came just one week after the federal Cabinet unveiled a proposed national partnership law. Under that plan, same-sex partners, including those in Valais, would register at the Civil State office and commit to mutual respect, assistance, economic life and living together. A non-Swiss partner would be granted residency.

Registrees would acquire marriage rights in the areas of inheritance, social security and divorce. Adoption and assisted-procreation rights would not be available.

ITALY

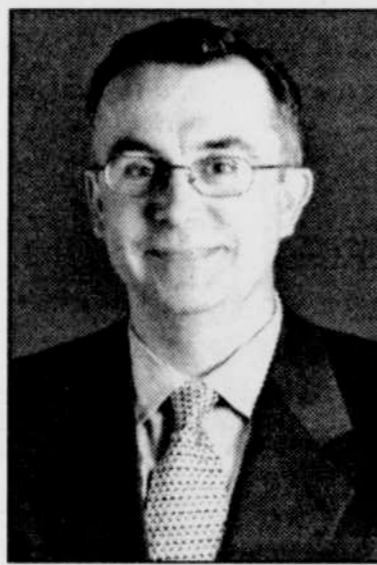
Pedro Almodóvar won Best Movie, Best Director and Best Screenwriter awards at the European Film Academy's 15th annual ceremony Dec. 10 in Rome. The gay Spaniard was honored for his latest movie, *Talk to Her*.

The Best Actress award went to the entire cast of 8 *Women*—Catherine Deneuve, Isabelle Huppert, Emmanuelle Béart, Fanny Ardant, Virginie Ledoyen, Danielle Darrieux, Ludivine Sagnier and Firmine Richard. The Best Actor statue went to Sergio Vastellitto for his work in both *Mostly Martha* and *My Mother's Smile*. □

Compiled by REX WOCKNER, who has reported for the gay press since 1985. He has a bachelor's degree in journalism from Drake University and started his career as a radio reporter.

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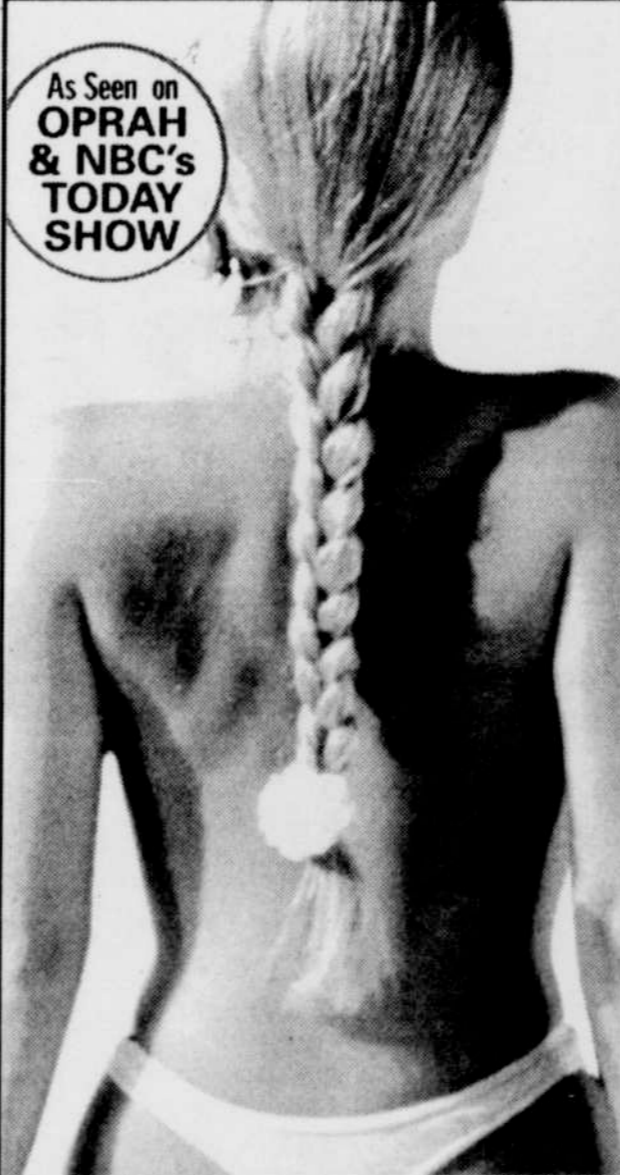
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