

NORTHWESTnews

THE LIBERAL MEDIA?

Fundamentalist "magazine" riles Post readers

by Bob Roehr

The religious right continued its smear campaign against gays and same-sex marriage with an advertising insert in 200,000 copies of the Nov. 21 edition of *The Washington Post*.

The 24-page supplement, carrying the name *BothSides*, is billed as "a magazine that gives a voice to the kingdom of God and impacts the larger culture with competing reason and a biblical worldview."

The small print said it was "created solely by Grace Christian Church and is not a product of *The Washington Post*." It prominently featured Derek Grier, an African American pastor at the little-known church in the fast-growing outer suburbs of Washington, D.C.

A reprint of questions and answers with Focus on the Family leader James Dobson suggested the deep pockets behind the expensive venture. The *Post* declined to discuss the cost of the venture with *Editor & Publisher*.

Articles recycled arguments that sexual orientation is not an immutable genetic trait, like skin color, and therefore should not be protected by law. It ignored the fact that religious belief is not genetic in nature and yet freedom of religion is afforded such protection.

It obliquely cited the long-discredited "research" of defrocked psychologist Paul

Cameron that gays die at a much younger age than blacks.

More than 1,000 people complained to the *Post* about the insert. "They were overwhelmingly negative," ombudsman Michael Getler told *E&P*.

"It looked a bit like an editorial product," he admitted. "You could argue that the disclosure could have been larger. But the *Post* did not commit a sin by accepting it."

The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation has had conversations with the *Post* about its advertising policy, regional media director Michael Young said. He suggested that many reporters working for the newspaper were unhappy with the company accepting something that was riddled with factual inaccuracies.

GLAAD also has been working with local organizations to help them express their displeasure with the *Post's* decision to carry the insert.

One of the strongest rebukes came from Jo Miller in a letter to the *Post* and posted on her blog, "Hiding in Plain Sight." It carries the subtitle, "Jesus is my co-blogger."

Miller argued that, in carrying the insert, "the *Post* has given its imprimatur to the idea that it's OK to oppress gay people.... You've amplified the drumbeat of their hate and given it the veneer of legitimacy, bringing their inflammatory, pseudoscientific horseshit that much fur-

ther into the mainstream. Someone has to stand up and say 'no' to these people. It should have been you." □



Derek Grier, a D.C.-area pastor and anti-gay activist



The cover of *BothSides* magazine, an anti-gay advertorial stuck in an issue of *The Washington Post* last month

than 60 percent had told their colleagues about their sexual orientation and that fewer than 7 percent considered their news organizations to be good working environments for gays and lesbians. When the survey was repeated in 2000, three times that number considered their organization a good environment, and there was a 93 percent increase in the number of people who had come out on the job.

"Because of Roy's passion and insight, the NLGJA has made coverage of LGBT issues better at news companies both large and small by creating a valuable resource for nongay journalists across the country," said Eric Hegedus, president of the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association. "And the NLGJA has brought together a broad range of LGBT journalists from 24 chapters, giving us more opportunities for development and professional networking while providing us with the momentum to help make our own newsrooms more skilled in fair and accurate coverage."

Aarons was the director of a program on sexual orientation issues and the media at University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication in Los Angeles. He had worked at *The Washington Post* and *The Oakland Tribune*. He was also an author, a librettist and a playwright.

—Sarah Dougher

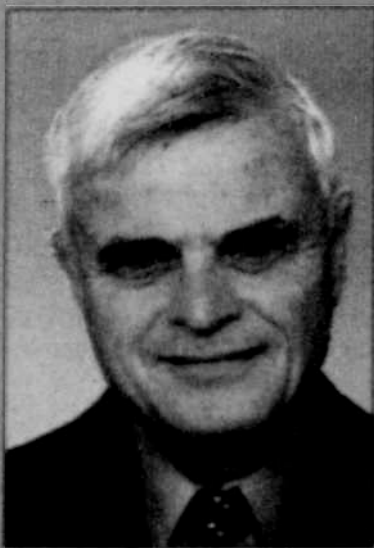
ADVOCATE FOR GAY JOURNALISTS DIES

Leroy F. Aarons, founder and first president of the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association, died of a heart attack Nov. 28 near his home in Sebastapol, Calif. He was 70.

He was undergoing treatment for bladder cancer at the time. He is survived by Joshua Boneh, his partner of 24 years.

Aarons rose to prominence in 1990 when he announced his sexual orientation to the American Society of Newspaper Editors and described the results of the first survey of gay men and lesbians in newsrooms. According to *The New York Times*, the results resonated widely because it was the first time such information had been discussed publicly in that important professional organization.

Statistics from the survey of 250 journalists indicated that fewer



Leroy Aarons founded gay journalist organization

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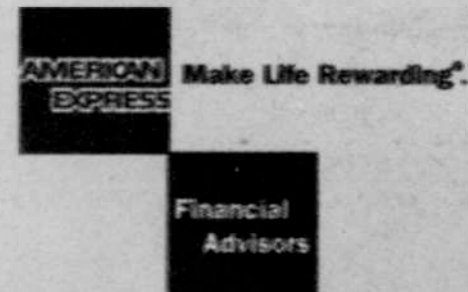
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