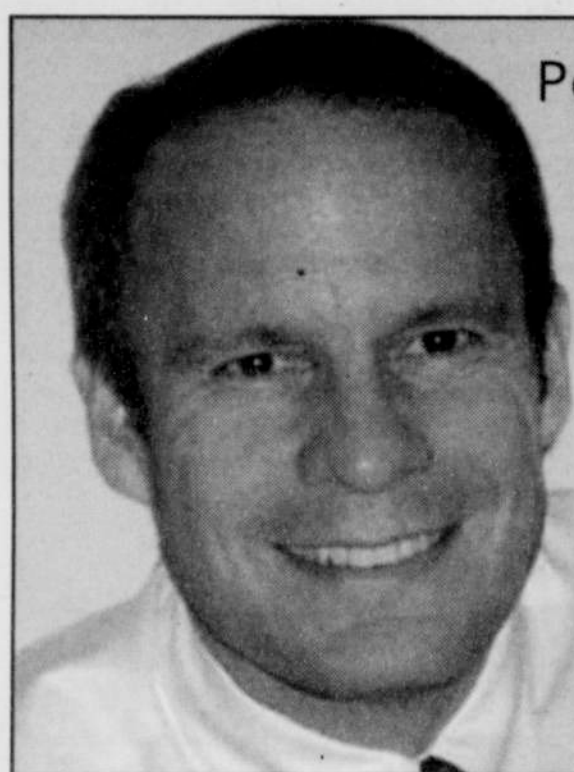




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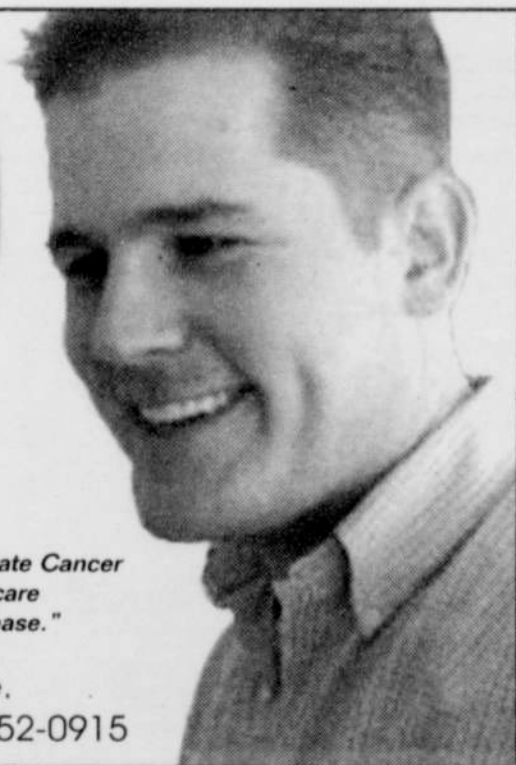
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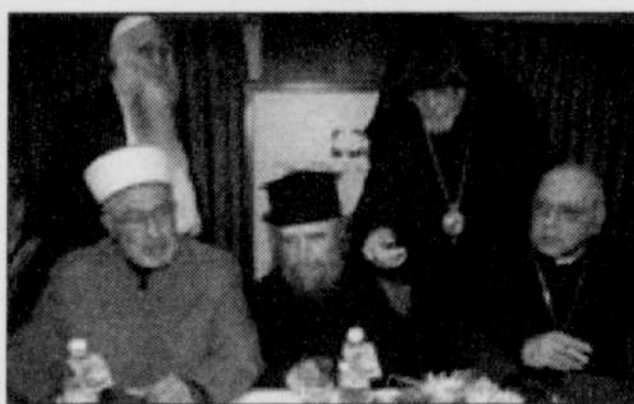
MIDEAST/AFRICA

THREE RELIGIONS TARGET GAYS IN JERUSALEM

A dozen Muslim, Jewish and Christian leaders ganged up on gays March 30 in Jerusalem, strongly denouncing August's planned Jerusalem WorldPride 2005 march and festivities.

"We are shocked to have received notice that a worldwide assembly of 10 days including an immodest parade devoid of minimal propriety is scheduled to be held in Jerusalem this summer, which will offend the very foundations of our religious values and the character of the Holy City," said the group, which included Israel's chief rabbi, the Latin patriarch, the Vatican ambassador to the Holy Land, three Muslim sheiks and representatives of the Armenian and Greek Orthodox patriarchates.

"Such an event would constitute a severe affront to the hearts and souls of adherents of all



Rabbis, Muslim clerics and Armenian and Greek Orthodox archbishops reject the presence of WorldPride in Jerusalem.

religions—Jews, Christians and Moslems alike," the declaration said. "We call upon and demand...the Israeli government and all responsible officials and Israeli police to realize the full implications of their plans and to prohibit any march of this kind, and especially in the Holy City of Jerusalem."

At a press conference to release the statement, Yehuda Levin, who said he represents more than 1,000 U.S. Orthodox rabbis, called the parade "spiritual rape" and said: "This is not the homo land. This is the Holy Land."

Vatican Ambassador Archbishop Pietro Sambi suggested the parade would provoke violence. "No one can be sure it will go on in a peaceful way," he said.

Muslim Sheik Abdel Aziz Bukhari said the parade could cause God to destroy Jerusalem to express disapproval of sodomy.

The last WorldPride was in Rome in 2000. The event is a project of InterPride, the International Association of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Pride Coordinators.

105 MEN JAILED IN SAUDI ARABIA FOR HOMOSEXUAL CONDUCT

Around 105 men have been sentenced to jail and flogging in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, for alleged homosexual conduct. They were arrested March 10 at a private party for dancing and "behaving like women," reports said.

A Jeddah court, meeting March 26 in a closed session from which defense attorneys were excluded, sentenced 31 of the men to 200 lashes each and to prison from six months to one year. Four other men received 2,000 lashes and two years' imprisonment.

More than 70 other men were released, reportedly because they had influential connections. But they were summoned back to a police station April 3 and informed that they, too, had been sentenced to a year in jail.

"Prosecuting and imprisoning people for homosexual conduct are flagrant human rights

violations," said Scott Long, director of Human Rights Watch's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights Program. "Subjecting the victims to floggings is torture, pure and simple."

The International Commission of Jurists also denounced the sentences.

"These convictions and sentences are unacceptable—and imposing them based on the victims' real or perceived sexual orientation, or their consensual sexual conduct, is worse," said Secretary-General Nicholas Howen. "Saudi Arabia is a member of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. We call on the government to stop these practices, which disregard basic principles of human rights law that all members of the commission should uphold."

AMERICAS

HONDURAS BANS SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

In a second and final vote, Honduras' National Congress unanimously amended the constitution March 29 to ban same-sex marriage and adoption by same-sex couples.

The amendment also forbids recognition of same-sex marriages or civil unions from other nations. Gay activists said they might respond with an outing campaign.

URUGUAY GETS GAY MONUMENT

Latin America's first gay public space and monument were unveiled Feb. 2 in Uruguay by Montevideo Mayor Mariano Arana.

The Sexual Diversity Plaza is located in the historic city center and is marked with a granite pink triangle plaque sitting atop a concrete base. The plaque reads, "Honoring Diversity Is Honoring Life: Montevideo for the Respect of All Genders, Identities and Sexual Orientations."

"I want nothing more of this night than to



Although small, this monument commemorates the struggles of queers in Uruguay.

remember the countless men and women who where persecuted, burned, mutilated and killed, condemned for the crime of simply being themselves, and to praise the numerous activists who have had the courage to publicly say, 'Yes we are different, and so what?' " said writer and activist Eduardo Galeano at the ceremony.

ASIA/PACIFIC

MEN JAILED FOR PRIVATE, CONSENSUAL SEX IN FIJI

A 55-year-old Australian man and a 23-year-old Fijian man were jailed for two years April 6 in Fiji for having consensual sex in private.

Tourist Thomas Maxwell McCosker, a retired university teacher from the state of Victoria, and Dharendra Nandan, a delivery man, were convicted of "unnatural offense" and "indecent practice between males" after pleading guilty to having sex in an apartment in the city of Nadi. Magistrate Syed Mukhtar Shah called their crimes "something so disgusting that it would make any person vomit."