



BGLAD Newsletter

October, 1999

Bisexuals, Gays, Lesbians and Allies At DuPont

Contact: BGLAD.BGLAD@usa.DuPont.com

See us at www.DuPontbglad.com

Transgender -- Discussion with One of Our Members

One of BGLAD's Critical Operating Tasks this year is to help us all learn more about transgender/transsexual people. Darla (not her real name) is an out transgendered DuPonter who recently met with the BISC and related her story.

BISC: When did you first realize you were "different"?

DARLA: I knew from age 10 or younger that I was a girl, no matter that I had a boy's body. I just felt there was "something different" about me; all my best friends were girls; I wanted a sleepover for my 10th birthday and only invited girls. There are reportedly 150,000 transgendered people in the U. S. If they're like me, they know, deeply, that they are mentally and emotionally a gender different from their outward appearance.

BISC: What was it like as a transgendered adolescent?

DARLA: I had a rough time at puberty -- cramps, sickness, strain. I was on tranquilizers at age 12 -- and hoped I would "outgrow" it, whatever it was. My distress was increasingly visible to my parents and teachers. (continued on Page 2)

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Charlotte Von Mahlsdorf: I Am My Own Woman

He was born in 1928 in Mahlsdorf, a small village outside Berlin as Lothar Berfelde but lived all of her life as Charlotte von Mahlsdorf. Raised by an authoritarian father who demanded Lothar "be a man", Charlotte knew from a very young age that she was mentally female. Lothar's mother was "the good fairy in my life...I declared when I was twenty that "I am really your oldest daughter.""

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Transgender -- Discussion with DARLA (Continued)

I eventually met a school psychologist who assumed I was gay and introduced me to his gay friends -- it didn't help at all. I was picked on in high school -- beaten -- and survived. At college I tried to hide by picking a stereotypical male occupation: I tried to be a forest ranger, in hindsight an obvious mistake. The tension mounted and I had a nervous breakdown as a freshman and came home to get my self together.

BISC: How did you come to be at DuPont?

DARLA: I got interested in aviation and went to the Academy of Aeronautics in New York. For the first time, I met a number of gay men and fell into a number of gay relationships. It felt good and better than hetero relationships, but still not quite right. I was searching for myself, but hadn't connected yet. I worked in the aviation industry for eight years, and when the bottom fell out of aerospace, I followed the course of my grandfather, uncle, and father and got a job at the plant. I've been at the plant ever since.

BISC: How did your gender confusion affect your relationships?

DARLA: In 1969, I met a woman and we married. Although we had two children together, my life wasn't satisfying. She expected me to be the dominant person in the relationship and in bed; I just wanted to be made love to -- I wanted to *not* be the aggressor, but rather to be held and "just be friends". I was still searching for the real "me", trying to be a straight husband but feeling like someone else. We divorced in 1989.

The key event in my life was meeting Marla (not her real name...ed) -- my life partner for 10 years now. I married Marla 8 years ago when I was still male. She's one of the reasons and catalysts for the change in me. We had discussed our sexual lifestyles even before marriage and she knew of my experiments. I treated her very badly for the first 6 years of marriage -- episodes of being unfaithful --

and we almost broke up. Finally the pieces of the puzzle fell into place. Marla helped me face my gender issues and with her encouragement I began to consciously deal with my gender. Now she fully accepts me; she's not just being tolerant. She loves Darla and I love her much more than I did when I was male. She's a strength in our relationship. She is a registered nurse, and she knew enough to be sensitive to the medical and emotional issues. I started cross-dressing at home in 1994 and began living as Darla full-time in 1997. We planned the formal transition to be unhurried, but the schedule was suddenly accelerated when someone took pictures of me as Darla out of my briefcase and handed them around the plant.

BISC: What is involved in the transition?

DARLA: There are three phases: Hormone therapy, real-life test, and surgery. The first phase started with hair removal. I took laser treatments on my face. There's no getting around it: IT HURT! I took 10 treatments and then electrolysis -- I'm fortunate that I only need treatments on my face and neck -- I'm not a hairy person. The hormones help by reducing hair loss on the head and make other body hair a bit finer. I expect to spend my whole life in electrolysis, but hopefully only once each quarter eventually -- I'm spending one-half hour/week now.

Hormone therapy is a risky business. From all the literature I read, the rule seemed to be "if you make it through the first 6-8 months without dying, you've got it made." The mortality rate does increase because a lot of transsexuals get drugs from overseas and on the black market and get the dosage wrong or have drug interaction problems, leading to malformation of the breast, thrombosis, heart problems, and sometimes death. It's really scary! Marla was afraid for me and it drove a wedge between us at first until we collaborated on dosage and regimen. I've had no problems with hormones now for two years.

It is so frustrating to have to wait years... once you make up your mind, you really want to make the

change immediately! But your body just isn't ready. I'm seeing the effects of the drugs now: testosterone level low, breast developing nicely, male reproduction organs shrunk to practically nothing; softer skin; finer hair, more hips.

Changing your life style to be female is a big trauma. There's so much to learn about being a woman -- dress, speech, mannerisms, etc. I've not decided whether to have the surgery, but more on that later.

The "real-life" phase involves living in public as the other sex. I officially changed my driver's license, bank accounts, and social security records in 1997. I went "public" to most friends and family.

BISC: How has the transition affected your family?
DARLA: My Dad doesn't know and we've not talked in years; my mom knew and had been through my past frustrations and experiences -- I could always talk to my mom. Mom passed away just two months ago -- she might have not understood me but she always accepted me. My two brothers and my sister don't accept me well -- one brother and sister will talk to me, but the other brother will have nothing to do with me. It was a tough funeral.

My son and daughter are in their early 20's. My daughter accepted me and we still have fun together -- my mom's funeral brought us even closer together. My son accepts me on a certain level and we talk; but he still won't go out with me.

BISC: How have you been treated at work and in the community; what has been the reaction?
DARLA: In the two years I've been in transition, I haven't experienced much hassle. In the community, I've been fully accepted as a female. Marla and I are antique dealers. Most of our associates just figured we were lesbians; now they accept as we are. At the beginning, people stared a lot, because the transition wasn't complete. The most embarrassing situation is when my telephone voice leads people to think I'm a man. Voice

therapy helped a little and the hormones did too. But because I don't get enough feedback, I struggle to improve my voice.

At the plant, there were two options: leave the job and seek employment under the new gender or do the transition "on the job"; I chose the latter. I have been at the plant for 20+ years. Our town is a conservative, Catholic area and I really expected things to be very difficult. The scariest part was walking into my office that first day as Darla! The schedule was rushed because of the picture theft. HR issued a letter to the plant explaining "a gender situation on the plant", including information about crossgendering. I met with my own work group to explain beforehand. HR was concerned about the potential for physical violence, more than I thought was realistic. One guy in my group supported me and told everyone that "anybody who wants to hurt Darla has to come through me first"!

Someone putting my private pictures on the bulletin board was a horrible way to "come out" on an industrial site. It was a period of intense rumors and accusations. A lot of what was said was out of fear. The maintenance people are having the hardest time accepting me. There's one person who will never accept me: he avoids me and walks out of rooms I come into.

All things considered, I got a really positive reception at DuPont. There are so few workplace transitions and most are much rougher. I'm a lab analyst and I have a lot of contact with production areas and outside vendors -- somewhat unusual compared to transitioning as a clerical worker.

There was a major issue with bathroom facilities: I couldn't use the men's room and a number of the women weren't comfortable with me using the women's. The plant built a small unisex bathroom which others use and I use exclusively.

My first business trip was very nervous: how do I act, how will they treat me, what do I wear? To my

great relief, the trip went fine. They treated me just like a lady, and I sure was relieved that even people who knew me before were gentlemen.

BISC: What's the story on your name, official gender, and marriage?

DARLA: The "real life test" phase includes legally changing the name, and getting the gender changed on social security and driver's license, which requires a psychiatrist's evaluation and affirmation. It's a bigger problem to get the gender changed on the birth certificate -- New York State won't change the gender until after surgery. Marla and I are in a very unique position: we're two women, married to each other. I think my situation is rare: Less than 1% of wives stay with transitioning husbands. Our marriage status is very murky. Lots of lawyers and advocates want to help me. We're the only couple we know of in the U.S. who are still legally married.

BISC: What about the genital reassignment surgery?

DARLA: I'm pre-operative. Considering my age and the great relationship with Marla, I'm not sure I'm going to have the surgery. Genital reassignment surgery is a major, major operation and requires constant care to ensure cleanliness and that the surgery doesn't ultimately fail -- it's a very expensive, life-long surgical commitment. If I wasn't in a strong and secure relationship, I would consider this more. Some other surgical procedures can be part of the third phase: tracheal shaves (reduce size of adam's apple), facial reconstruction, rhinoplasty, and removal of two lower ribs to decrease waist and accentuate hips. Insurance covers everything (psychiatrist, drugs, laser), but not electrolysis nor genital reassignment surgery.

BISC: What role did religion play?

DARLA: I was very religious and a missionary for a time in Haiti and working with American Indians. But my minister told me that I could not return to my church as a woman. This caused me much self-searching, self doubt, and pain. We're now

involved with a caring and supportive Methodist church.

BISC: How has Marla dealt with the changes?

DARLA: It was rocky at first: many discussions and things to consider. We loved each other enough to communicate and work out the issues. It must have been the hardest thing in the world for Marla to accept my new gender! But she has worked through it and now loves me as her female partner. Are we lesbians? We're just two women living together...the labels don't matter.

BISC: Are you unique in DuPont?

DARLA: I know of two other transsexuals in DuPont. It is estimated that there are 150,000 transgendered people in the U. S. of which 30,000 are in a medically-supervised program...maybe many more.

It's important to understand the difference between transgendered people and cross-dressing. Cross-dressers are either homosexuals who cross-dress for fun and sexual excitement or heterosexuals who occasionally expressing the opposite gender. Transgendered people cross-dress because they deeply feel themselves to be the other sex.

DARLA: I've got a question for you (BISC): Why are transgendered people not accepted into the gay community?

BISC: There are a lot of factors: lack of education, prejudice, selfishness ("we're oppressed already ...let us get our problems solved and then we'll worry about yours"), desire to avoid association with the stereotype "all gays want to be the other gender anyhow" (which most gays do not want).

BISC: What could BGLAD do to help you and other transgendered people?

DARLA: Generate more information on transgender issues, including to HR people -- gender transition in the workplace is not something most

HR people know how to handle. Put out more information on gender issues to BGLAD and put material on www.DuPontbglad.com, which is public. Both reach people in DuPont and the www site reaches people outside also.

BISC: You started transition two years ago. How are you feeling now?

DARLA: In the two years, there have been very few incidents. Some things still hurt: people avoiding me, people using the wrong gender pronoun, the occasional nasty look. The majority of the people on the plant really don't understand. I'm glad that my situation has created awareness in people and they are increasingly receptive to transgender issues. But I still hear a lot of people struggling to understand. Some say: "I want to still be your friend, but don't try to change me", as if gender or sexual orientation were contagious. It still hurts.

BISC: Has it been worth it?

DARLA: In spite of all the hassle, challenges, and pain, I say to myself every night at the kitchen table with a cup of coffee that I'm much happier now than before. I can love others because I love myself now. The last two years of my life have been very rewarding.

Editor's note: The day after Darla returned to the plant from meeting with BISC, there were two "hate" incidents directed at Darla, perhaps kindled by her visit to Wilmington. Investigation is underway, but it is evident that discrimination and oppression are still an everyday concern.

Darla also attended the BGLAD workshop with Heather Wishik on October 4th and helped all of us further our understanding. Darla, thank you very much! for being with us and for your advocacy for transgendered people. (ed)

Transgender References

Gender and Diversity in the Workplace: Learning activities and Exercises. G. N. Powell, Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage Publications (1994)

Transsexuals in the Workplace: A guide to Employers. Copeland. Beverly (1991) Available from Aegis, P. O. Box 33724, Decatur, GA 30033

True Selves. Brown and Rounsley; Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco (1996)

Gender Blending. Bonnie and Vern Bollow and James Elias. Prometheus Books (1997)

The Transsexual Phenomenon. Harry Benjamin (see below)

Organizations

The Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association (HBIIGDA) P. O. Box 1718, Sonoma, CA 95476

"Standards of Care for Transgendered Persons"

International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy (ICTLEP) P O. Drawer 35477, Houston, TX 77235-5477 (713) 777-8452 email: ictlep@aol.com

American Educational Gender Information Service (AEGIS) P. O. Box 33724, Decatur, GA 30333-0724 (770) 939-2128 email: aegis@mindspring.com

On the Internet

Anne Lawrence's site (she's a transsexual and a MD) www.annelawrence.com

Aegis www.gender.org

Charlotte Von Mahlsdorf (Continued from p.1)

From age five or six, Lothar loved to play with old junk and began collecting old furniture, clocks, etc. in the neighborhood. Charlotte loved to dust and do all "woman's work". Lothar's father repeatedly beat his wife and Lothar, culminating in Charlotte/Lothar killing the father in 1944. Lothar was sent to Dr. Ritter's neurological clinic in Tübingen, the same clinic in which some of the more nefarious genetic studies (Mengele) had their origin. Sentenced ultimately to four years in a juvenile prison, Lothar was miraculously freed by the Russian invasion of Berlin. Lothar had started to dress as a woman some years before, and continued in spite of attempted rapes, execution by retreating Nazis, violence by skin heads and many others. Charlotte inhabited the Jewish Old Age Home in her home town (the Jews having been all "called for" and gone) and continued collecting things from the Grunderzeit period (1870-1900), often things discarded by or liberated involuntarily from Jews, gypsies, gays, and other "undesirables". Her fascination with preserving antiques and old buildings grew throughout her life. Against overwhelming bureaucracy, mendacity, incessant discrimination and often physical threats, Charlotte occupied and restored with her two hands a series of great houses and palaces, including the Friedrichsfelde Palace, Schloss Dahlwitz, the Markische Museum, "the Mahlsdorf an der Ostbahn" mansion, and others. Each restoration was done while living a subsistence existence. The Mahlsdorf Museum remains a treasure of Grunderzeit antiques.

Charlotte recounts a history of gay/lesbian life in Germany, from the relatively benign and gay-friendly period of the Kaiser through the death camps, communist East Germany, to the reunification. The tale is one of repression and fear interspersed with hilarity and tenderness. She relives the life of the Mulackritze gay bar, the Goldschmidt and City-Klaus, and gives a glimpse into gay liberation found, lost, and found again.

The book and video provide a glimpse into Charlotte's love life and her philosophy. "I had my passions. I was close to three men, some of them at the same time, for over twenty years. They helped me, advised me, encouraged me in bad times. We had exciting sex, but an all-consuming passion it was not...With the men in my life, I experienced much more than sex. Was it love? Regardless, there was tenderness, affection, and trust."

In 1974, Lothar received the Service Cross on the Ribbon of Merit for service to the German Bundesrepublik and remarked "it would have been nicer if the document had been made out in the name of Charlotte von Mahlsdorf."

The book and video are in the BGLAD library and I heartily recommend you check both out -- they're complimentary. Charlotte's story is a wonderful/sad/hopeful portrayal of a transgendered person who lived her life in unspeakable hardship...and prospered. This is a tale of determination and faith that speaks to and beyond sexual orientation and gender. (ed)

STAYING CONNECTED TO BGLAD...

Did you know that you can stay connected to BGLAD after you retire? DuPont pensioners can remain in the network as "Learning Partners." If you can receive email, we will put you on our distribution list. (Sorry, we will only send email, no paper mail.) So, if you are thinking about retirement, keep this in mind.

Also, if you know of any network members who have retired and might be interested in keeping in touch, have them contact BGLAD.

Letters To The Editor

On Partner Benefits

"It is commendable, and also unusual, for a senior leader to talk about the topic of Partner Benefits and B/G/L issues at length. But some of the comments were also disheartening because they are so symptomatic of the cautious stance of reluctance !

Management says: "If the businesses do not see this issue as important to their success, they won't have the energy to support the change and to sustain the drive for change in the face of opposition from those who view gays negatively."

Just think of what the outcry would have been, if the same had been said about opportunities or benefits for blacks, or hispanics, or women. That we had to demonstrate a benefit before demanding action. Recall that once there was an attempt to invoke the reverse with regards to race, an attempt to argue that desegregation could be damaging for business therefore it was justifiable to segregate and exclude -- and that attitude was eventually judged illegal. In DuPont of the early 80's, there was an attitude towards diversity, exemplified by a then DuPont Vice-President who lectured me: 'you have to demonstrate a competitive advantage to diversity, before you will be taken seriously'. We knew that there was a competitive advantage to diversity, but how to demonstrate it without a diverse work force was beyond me. But ultimately, leadership all supported opportunities for blacks and other minorities, and while some became genuinely convinced that it was the "right thing to do", in the final analysis most supported diversity because they were told to do it! by a committed senior leadership. And because they were to be evaluated -- and compensated -- in part, on their actions to support diversity, whether by making progress with "strategic staffing" or another yardstick. Self-interest remains an important motivational tool for change.

But there is one huge difference with this issue of partner benefits, or any B/G/L advocacy for that matter. While supporting "acceptable" diversity, advocating the redress of historical injustice towards blacks, hispanics or women makes a leader appear enlightened, just and generous. No such positive accolades are granted when supporting what is seen by many as "unacceptable" diversity; doing so is perceived as all-loss-no-gain. The possibility of public support for a B/G/L cause generates feelings of fear and vulnerability. Fear by the image-conscious leader to appear, at best, misguided, and at worst, of "questionable" orientation. So the hook has to be "what's in it for them". Management is correct when they say that seeing actions as important to "their" success is crucial, the implication is for business success. But I believe that it is personal success --not just business success-- that will trigger action and support. So our intent must be to define how can the support of what we want (demand?) be made to be perceived and felt as "gain". It is only the commitment of Senior Leadership, their demand that changes take place, and their assurance that accountability will be certain, that will push the equilibrium to the side of "gain". Just as it did for other diversity issues. Not conviction! So, we should not go after a change of heart, but a change of behavior. Our task is, I believe, to **remove some of the fear** that a leader feels in supporting this cause. Because it is fear of rejection that is at the root of the reluctance.

Patience is invoked by management and many others as necessary. We could wait until our retirement "cake and cookies", and the basic attitudes will not change significantly. There should not be a need for complete consensus or even attitudinal change to modify a policy. It is a matter of justice, yes. But a new approach to

benefits is also, if we are wise enough to recognize it, an important competitive advantage to DuPont.

On Domestic Partner Benefits

I saw the note regarding the need for people to speak out about DuPont providing DPBs. I am sending this note to you to share with the network. I have copied my Plant Manager. I am so thankful I am out to my manager and he has been extremely supportive. He has been very helpful and supportive during my recovery from a recent illness. I am out to the network, my plant manager, and several friends at the Memphis site. Also to Chad Holiday as I participated in the meeting with Chad last year.

I also saw our sponsor 's comments in the newsletter telling us we must get people from the SBU's to start asking DuPont to provide DPBs. I believe he said it would not be an issue with DuPont until it was an issue with the SBUs. I will ask my supporters here at the plant to somehow comment on the need for DuPont to provide DPBs. I know this will not be easy for them and they may choose not to respond. I only know if I don't speak up, I can not expect anyone else to do so.

Now for my story. I had a heart attack on August 7th while on vacation. We were 3 days into the trip to Cape Cod. While being treated in the emergency room, I looked over at my partner. I was concerned for her as she sat there with me. I remember two things in particular about that event. My first thought was for myself and was praying I would survive the attack. The second thought was that I would not have 25 years with the company until mid September. Why would I think about that while lying on a gurney in an emergency room in a hospital thousands of miles from home? Well, my partner of 32 years would not receive survivor benefits until I had 25 years with DuPont. I had the age, but not the service. I was so concerned about what would happen to her if I did not survive. No one should have to go through that thought process. It is not a concern for most of DuPont employees. My partner should have the same benefits that other

DuPont spouses have. It is not a BGLAD issue. It is a human rights issue. No one should have to worry that their partner in life will not receive pension, insurance, and other basic benefits.

Well, I survived the attack. I am back at work and have made my 25 years. I am still not satisfied. I won't be until my partner is eligible for the same benefits the majority of DuPont families enjoy. I encourage others to speak out on this issue. It is ironic that an issue is not an "issue" until someone makes it one. I ask others to help us make DPBs an issue for our SBUs and DuPont.

Thank you,

GAY WORLD NEWS

Good News...

WEST MONROE, La.

Four books banned from the West Monroe High School library for three years may be available to students soon following a school board vote to settle a lawsuit. The Ouachita Parish School Board decided August 17 to settle a federal suit filed in 1996 by the American Civil Liberties Union on behalf of librarian Deloris Wilson, a student, and his parents. The agreement requires the board to adopt a uniform library policy and return the books to the shelves. The four books are Heartbreak and Roses: Real Life Stories of Troubled Love, by Janet Bode and Stan Mack; Gays In or Out of the Military, by Ron Ray; Everything You Need to Know about Abstinence, by Barbara Moe; and Everything You Need to Know About Incest, by Karen Spies.

SACRAMENTO

A hate-crimes bill boosting penalties for murders committed because of the victims' gender, sexual orientation or disability was approved August 17 by a state Senate committee. The measure cleared the Senate Public Safety Committee on a 4-0 vote. It now moves to the Appropriations Committee, before going to the Senate floor. Under the bill, the

penalty for killing someone because of their gender, sexual orientation or because they were disabled would be life in prison without the possibility of parole. The current penalty is 25 years to life.

PROVIDENCE, R.I.

Officials with the Boys Scouts of America are launching a major study into what makes a person gay, to essentially determine whether they will revise their policy that says homosexuals should be banned from the Scouts.

The study, which was approved at the Scouts' national conference, will be conducted over the next year by a 12-member panel and will review a number of areas, including the scientific and medical basis of sexual orientation, the Providence Journal reports. The findings will help determine whether the Boy Scouts' membership policy should be based on sexual orientation, as it is now, or on sexual behavior. The national BSA organization concedes that recent conflicts could be harmful to the Scouts' image. "Further delay in addressing this issue may result in the diminution of scouting's leadership as one of the nation's most effective character-building programs for youth," the resolution states.

INDIANA

The Indiana Court of Appeals reaffirmed that sexual orientation may not be used as the sole reason for denying parents custody of their children in divorce cases. "This decision is an important victory for gay and lesbian parents and for all fair minded citizens in Indiana," said Sean Lemieux, Director of the ICLU Project for Equal Rights.

WASHINGTON DC

An amendment (sponsored by Rep. Steve Largent, R-OK) that would have banned same-sex couples and unmarried heterosexual couples in the District of Columbia from adopting children failed by two votes. With an estimated 3,100 children in D.C. needing loving adoptive parents, a majority of Congress recognized that public health agencies and not politicians should decide what is in the best interest of a child.

WASHINGTON DC

The Policy Institute of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) announced the creation of a Family Policy program to secure inclusive definitions of family in national, state and local policy contexts. The Family Policy Program will engage in research, policy analysis, coalition building, strategy development and collaborative work with a wide range of family-focused organizations to ensure that the needs of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender families are considered and protected.

NAMIBIA

Namibia's high court ruled that gay couples have the same rights as heterosexual couples. Judge Harold Levy's decision came in the case of German lesbian Liz Frank who was fighting to stay in Namibia with her Namibian lover, Elisabeth Khaxas. "I have no hesitation in saying that the long term relationship between the applicants in so far as it is a universal partnership, is recognized by law."

NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands's Cabinet approved an introduction into Parliament of bills that will open marriage and adoption to same-sex couples. The measures are expected to take effect in 2001. The nation already has a gay partnership law that grants all the rights of matrimony but the new law will permit marriage itself. The female spouse of a woman who gives birth will not be listed on the birth certificate as the "father" but will be permitted to become the child's parent in adoption. Gay couples will not be allowed to adopt babies from foreign nations.

SWITZERLAND

The Swiss government has initiated a complex process that should result in recognition of gay/lesbian couples next year. The most likely outcome will be a Scandinavian-style registered-partnership law that grants most of the rights of matrimony. A recent survey found that 68 percent of Swiss support legal recognition of gay partnerships. Any measure passed by lawmakers could be subject to a national referendum if 100,000

Swiss sign a petition demanding a say in the matter. The vast majority of popular referendums in Switzerland fail.

LONDON

Discharged from the British military because they were gay, three men and a woman spent five years seeking the right to serve their country in war. On Monday, they won a landmark case as Britain's ban on homosexuals serving in the military was ruled illegal by the European Human Rights Court in Strasbourg, France. While the ruling is not binding on Britain, Defense Secretary George Robertson said the government would accept the judgment and suspended pending disciplinary against alleged homosexuals. Unlike America, which has a "don't ask, don't tell" policy, Britain simply bans gays from serving in the military. The court in Strasbourg declared that using sexuality as a bar to military service was illegal under the European Convention on Human Rights. The British government contended the presence of homosexuals in the armed forces would affect the morale, fighting power and effectiveness of its forces.

AUSTRALIA

Lesbians who want to become mothers are using a gay parenting service provided through a London clinic where the women are matched with gay men. The prospective mothers are given photographs and descriptions of the men including ethnic, religious, educational and employment backgrounds. They can choose men who are interested in shared-parenting or men who are interested in being sperm donors only. The service included lessons in home insemination and "do-it-yourself" kits.

...Bad News

DUBUQUE, Iowa

On August 16 the City Council rejected an amendment that would protect residents from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, as well as race, sex, religion and age. The ordinance would have made it illegal to deny someone an

apartment, a job, a promotion, service at a business, credit, or housing solely on the basis of sexual orientation.

The vote was 5-2 after little discussion. Council members were split on the issue. "I consider it strictly to be a constitutional issue," said council member Ann Michaelski. "It's a matter of rights--the rights of citizens who are equal under the law." Council member Dan Nicholson said Iowa's laws against hate crimes already protect the gay and lesbian community from discriminatory acts. Cedar Rapids, Iowa City and Ames have ordinances similar to the one Dubuque was considering.

WINSTON-SALEM

Wake Forest University is discussing a policy on same sex marriages in one of its chapels, an issue that has delayed a ceremony two women have been trying to get for nearly two years. Susan Parker, 40, and Wendy Scott, 44, asked the congregation of Wait Chapel, one of two on the university campus, for permission to have a covenant ceremony in November 1997. Parker and Scott say they're not just trying to make a point. It's crucial that their ceremony take place in their own church, they say. They haven't considered holding it anywhere else. "This is about spiritual relationships: to each other, to our families and to God. We trust the university will do the right thing," Parker said. A congregation vote approving same-sex ceremonies hasn't settled the issue. The women, who had planned an Aug. 20 ceremony, have been put on hold while the university board debates the issue. The congregation--Wake Forest Baptist Church--meets in Wait Chapel, which is owned by the university. School officials say the issue goes beyond the congregation that meets in Wait Chapel and involves the question of whether same-sex unions can occur anywhere on campus.

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla.

At age 88, a childless man adopted his 72-year-old longtime male companion, squeezing out a niece in line for a hefty inheritance of more than a half million dollars. Now Sylvia Rickard is contesting the father-son adoption by her late uncle, claiming

Florida law prohibits homosexuals from adopting. Rickard filed suit in Palm Beach County Circuit Court this week challenging the adoption as illegal. W. Donald Blackwell could only leave his family trust fund to his child but since he was up in years and had never married, he adopted a son. Rickards will have to prove Blackwell was gay at the time of the adoption. Homosexuals are forbidden from adopting under a 1977 revision to the state's adoption laws. Florida is the only state in the nation that bans homosexual adoption.

GREENFIELD, Mass.

Prosecutors dropped two charges August 20 against a former private school student accused in carving an anti-gay slur in the back of a schoolmate. Jonathan Shapiro, 18, of Keene, N.H., was charged instead with a single count of assault with a dangerous weapon. He pleaded innocent in Franklin Superior Court in Greenfield.

Prosecutors said he encouraged the knife attack, and his knife was used. They said a second student, Matthew Rogeis, of Franklin, Tenn., actually did the cutting. The attack occurred in May in a dormitory room at the Northfield Mount Hermon School, a private academy in Gill. The 17-year-old victim was held down and "homo" was cut in shallow markings into his back after an argument arose over the rock band Queen and the characterization of its music as "gay."

PENNSYLVANIA

An Erie County judge says that Pennsylvania law dictates that only one man can be the legal parent of two children (an 8 year-old boy and a 6 year-old girl) who were adopted by one parent and raised by the male couple since infancy. Judge Shad Connelly ruled that only the man who legally adopted years ago could be the legal parent. The men, aged 42 and 43, have been together for 18 years. They are considering an appeal of the decision.

CALIFORNIA

The State Supreme Court rejected an appeal by a woman who helped her lesbian partner raise two children and sought visitation after the couple broke

up. The couple began living together in 1985, when one child was almost 3 years old. The couple then had another child together through alternative insemination. The appellate ruling is now binding on trial courts statewide. The children, now aged 17 and 12, will not be able to see their mother until they turn 18 years old.

KAMPALA, Uganda

President Yoweri Museveni has ordered the arrests of homosexuals in Uganda, saying U.N. human rights conventions do not necessarily apply to Africa, a newspaper reported. Homosexuality is illegal in Uganda and carries a maximum punishment of life imprisonment. "I have told the Criminal Investigation Department to look for homosexuals, lock them up and charge them," Tuesday's [28 Sep 1999] edition of the government-owned New Vision newspaper quoted him as saying. The Ugandan leader criticized the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, saying it had not been drawn up with the participation of African countries.

GERMANY

In a recent letter to a fellow Cabinet minister, German Defense Minister Rudolf Scharping said gays are unfit to hold leadership positions in the army. "Homosexuality justifies considerable doubts about suitability and excludes soldiers from posts entailing leadership, training and education," Scharping wrote to Environment Minister Jurgen Trittin. The letter was leaked to the media. Trittin has championed the case of Lt. Winfried Stecher, 29, who has filed a federal court case alleging he was not promoted because of his sexual orientation. German newspapers said Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder has quietly urged Scharping to be less homophobic.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

We now have 240 members: 126 BGL's and 114 allies, 47 of whom are Advocates.