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A GAY & LESBIAN NEWSLETTER ON COUPLING

COUPLES

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Bookshelf...

New Releases

▼ *Love Between Men*

by Rik Isensee

Prentice Hall Press

This acclaimed best-seller is now available in paperback. An excellent and very practical guide for making relationships work. This is the reading for male couples, according to David P. McWhirter, M.D., and Andrew M. Mattison, M.S.W., Ph. D., authors of *The Male Couple*.

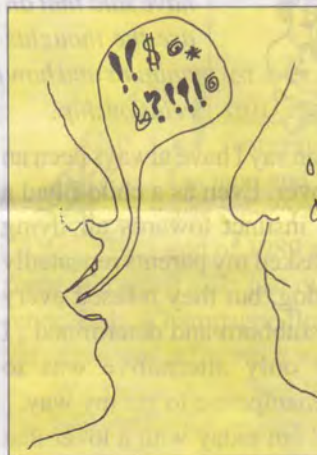
▼ *Intimacy Between Men*

by John H. Driggs, M.S.W. & Stephen E. Finn, Ph.D.

Dutton Books, The Penguin Group

This November 1990 printing (hardback) explores the inabilities of some men to become truly intimate with another person. The authors—experienced therapists—draw on years of experience leading counseling groups for gay men to present a practical path towards greater intimacy in gay love relationships.

Try them both, insightful! [ED]



My Lover Dearest... am I abused?

Gay & Lesbian Domestic Violence
by Patrick Letellier, M.A. & David Island, Ph.D.

There is an epidemic of domestic violence in American society today. According to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, (1990, 264, 939-940) battering is the single greatest cause of injury to heterosexual women in the United States, more than rapes, muggings and auto accidents combined. For lesbians and gay men, the reality of domestic violence is equally grim. An estimated 500,000 gay men, and an equally alarming number of lesbians, are abused by their lovers each year. Thus only AIDS for gay men, possibly cancer for lesbians, and substance abuse adversely affect more people in our community, making domestic violence the third largest health problem facing the homosexual community today. This problem is too brutally realistic to be ignored any longer.

Since the gay and lesbian commu-

nity is just beginning to learn about domestic violence, ignorance and mythology is widespread. Outreach to victims and batterers is scarce, and few services are provided. Education about domestic violence is urgently needed, because a lack of information only helps perpetuate the problem.

▼ Am I being abused?

If you are wondering whether or not you are being abused, the fact that you ask the question suggests the answer is "yes." Think about the following definition: lesbian and gay domestic violence is any unwanted physical force (including sexual abuse), psychological abuse, or property destruction inflicted by one gay man or lesbian on another. Implicit in this definition is that the two men or two women are involved in some relationship together. They may be lovers,

See *Domestic Abuse* page 7

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Parenting...

Gay and lesbian couples who decide to have children through artificial insemination should see an attorney before they enter into an agreement.

During the first week of April, the state Court of Appeals in California handed down a decision that denied a lesbian mother visitation and custody rights to the two children born through artificial insemination to her lover of 15 years.

Nancy S. and Michele G. met in August of 1969. Three months later they held a private "marriage" ceremony. Eleven years later Nancy gave birth to a daughter. Michele was listed on the birth certificate as the father, and the child was given Michele's last name. Four years later the couple had a son. He too was given Michele's last name. The next year the couple separated. And after three years of sharing custody of the children, Nancy wanted to change the arrangement. Nancy took her ex-lover to court and stripped Michele of her rights to the children.

Nancy filed a motion under the Uniform Parentage Act, which defines a parent as one who is the biological or adoptive parent of the child, of which Michele was neither.

The court ruled that it could not award custody of the children over the objections of the biological parent. The court awarded sole physical and legal custody to Nancy.

The message to gay and lesbian couples entering into a parenting situation is enter the arrangement with your eyes wide open, knowing that the non-biological parent will not have the same rights if the couple breaks up, and most importantly draw up a co-parenting agreement.

by Kathleen Baca, San Francisco, Portions reprinted with the permission of the *San Francisco Sentinel*

ANIMALS

The Joys Of Having A Pet

by Paul McSorley



For years psychologists and specialists on the elderly have said that an animal is a perfect companion. Below are the thoughts of one reader as regards to keeping animals and how they can play an important part in your relationship. [ED]

I guess I can say I have always been an animal lover. Even as a child I had a maternal instinct towards all living things. I had asked my parents repeatedly for a cat or dog, but they refused every time. Being stubborn and determined, I realized my only alternative was to scheme and manipulate to get my way.

So here I am today with a lover that I've been with for three and a half years (Brian) and I would have to honestly say I have only become worse with age. To date, Brian has had to encounter a six foot Boa Constrictor, a very loud parrot, a kiddie pool in the bedroom filled with Japanese Koi, a pair of Chinchillas, numerous fish tanks, and an assortment of other animals including two African Elephants (just kidding). I realized that I was not being fair to Brian, who was not particularly fond of these strange and exotic creatures. We decided to do what we both thought would be appropriate...COMPROMISE.

Compromising meant parting with several of my animal menagerie. We did however keep Tasha, our Siamese cat since we both had become attached to her. We thought it might be interesting to get her a little companion; so off to the cat show we went (always purchase a puppy or a kitten through a breeder and you will probably end up with a healthier, less expensive pet). We had an interest in "Burmese," a breed which I had read about. When we arrived at the cat show one of the first things I saw was an adorable small sized sable brown cat looking at me with its head hanging upside down

while rolling around on its back. Sure enough, a sign that hung on the cats' cage read Burmese.

After purchasing our first "Burm" we realized that just one of these short haired beauties was not enough. Brian and I discussed it and we thought it might be fun to show the second cat that we subsequently purchased, a rare cream colored Burmese. Before we knew it all of the judges at a Boston cat show started hanging ribbons on our cats cage which read "First Place," "Best of Color," "Best of Breed," and many more. Let me tell you about feeling proud...our cat won everything! It was like getting our child's first report card with all A's.

Here we are five cats later, with two litters of kittens in the house, two more on the way and loving every minute of it.

Sometimes I like peeking around the corner of our in-home office to see Brian studying with one cat on his lap and another sitting on top of his desk, and I think to myself, is this the same guy who once told me he didn't like pets?

Keeping or breeding animals is not for everyone, but in our case we have found that the cats have brought us closer as a couple. We have found common ground that we both can enjoy and the cats have added immeasurable happiness in our relationship. They have filled a gap in our lives, and we now consider them to be our little family....our children. ▼

Paul McSorley owns & operates The Rite Type Cattery, Quincy, Massachusetts, 617-472-9182.

Pass That Bill...

Domestic partners legislation has dominated the news during March and April.

Washington, DC—Introduced by D.C. Council Chair John Wilson, the Domestic Partnership Act of 1991, is far reaching for gay and lesbian couples and straight couples alike. The Act would extend health and leave benefits to D.C. government employees, hospital visitation rights to D.C. residents, and would require public and private schools to give equal access to records of dependent children of either partner.

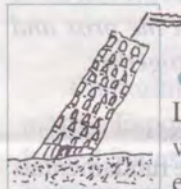
‘The legislation defines domestic partners as “two persons who are in a committed relationship characterized by mutual support and caring...” Almost all of the council’s 13 members have expressed support for some form of domestic partnership legislation during the past two years. Mayor Sharon Pratt Dixon said last year during her campaign for office that she would sign a domestic partnership bill’ according to *The Washington Blade* (March 29, 1991).

Boston, MA—May soon have a domestic partners law on the books. The Family Protection Act introduced on March 27, is not about benefits according to City Councilor David Scondras. The FPA is a two part ordinance: a category of domestic partnerships for gays and lesbians and heterosexual couples, and a category “extended family” for those couples not traditionally covered by family benefits packages. The FPA would only mandate these benefits to city employees. The FPA would amend the Boston Human Rights Ordinance by replacing the term “marital status” with the term “marital and family status.”

FOREIGN RELATIONSHIPS

A Foreign Affair

by Louis DeFrancis-Block



Just over a year later, I still remember the first conversation that Luciano and I ever had. It was New Year’s Eve, the end of 1989 and I was at a party in a small villa just outside of Florence, Italy. Champagne flowed but conversation was difficult; it was in Italian.

We spoke in hesitant bits of broken English and Italian, smiling and laughing nervously. With a great deal of patience and a primitive sort of sign language, I learned that he was from Rome and had

his country to mine. He is here for several reasons: so that we can be together until I graduate from college in May, so that he can study English, and most importantly, so that he can learn about the culture in which I was raised. We both feel it is important that Luciano understands as much about my upbringing and the American culture as I have come to learn about his homeland and culture.

Luciano and I share an apartment and finances as well. I cook, and Luciano does the dishes. I do the laundry and Luciano does the ironing. The two of us are learn-

Neither one of knows what the future holds for us or where we will make our life together

only come to this party at the insistence of a friend. He learned that I was in Italy to study for a short time and that in eight months I would be returning to the United States.

From the first conversation at the beginning of the New Year, Luciano and I have had to overcome more than just the language barriers. We grew up in two different cultures. Our life-styles are vastly different as are our ways of thinking. Luciano grew up in a closely knit family with a strong Italian heritage, while I was raised in a divorced family and have very loose ties to my relatives. Luciano followed his parents wishes—I was more than ready to rebel at every given opportunity. Yet, after a year together we have taught each other not only about ourselves but also about all the things which make us different.

Today, Luciano is here in the United States. Our relationship has moved from

ing to share, to cook, to talk, to live on our own (in Italy one generally lives at home until “married”) and even to spend some time alone. Of course, like most couples, we each have our little idiosyncrasies—I throw away left-overs, Luciano wraps them in tin foil. I, on the other hand, still leave piles of books and newspapers all over the house.

We both understand that while we have covered a great deal of ground in the last year, we have so much yet to learn. But with this understanding comes a desire to move toward the future together.

Neither one of knows what the future holds for us or where we will make our life together (we have currently appealed to immigration for an extension on Luciano’s visa). However, whether here in America or in Italy, our life will continue to be one of adaptation and constant learning. ▼

Anniversaries...

Van-John Sfiridis (35) and George D. Williams (34) of Brooklyn, New York celebrated their 7th anniversary on Tax Day, April 15, 1991.

They are now working on extending the family by adopting a child in the not-to-distant future. With two cats, Avery and Betty, there can be no denying that "We are a family!"

Congratulations!

[ED]

The Courts...

Several court decisions released in March appear to signal a greater willingness on the part of judges to apply to gays laws governing family relationships.

Florida—On March 15 a trial court judge ruled that gays are a clearly oppressed minority and that a state law which bars all gays from adopting children is "blatantly unconstitutional" according to *The Washington Blade*. The State of Florida has not yet decided to appeal, it has until April 15 to file such an appeal.

Ohio—An Ohio intermediate level appeals court ruled on March 21, that laws concerning domestic violence could be applied to same-sex couples.

According to *The Washington Blade*, Judge Dean Staughtaugh wrote "[T]his court concludes that the legislature intended that the domestic violence statute provides protection to person who are cohabitating regardless of their sex..."

Send your news notes to:
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REAL ESTATE

How To Buy Real Estate Together

Part 2

by Donald Vaughan

This is the second of a four part series. The first part, appearing in the last issue of COUPLES, dealt with the pros and cons of buying property together.

The looking Process.

There are three fundamentals a couple need to make in the looking-at-property process:

▽ What type of property should we buy?

• *Single family?* Many of us think of this type of home as the ideal.

• *Multi-family, generating income?* Many find this type of property to be a good first home, using rents to help defray expenses. There can be substantial tax advantages to owning rental property beyond those had with single family homes. Don't go this route unless you can afford professional management or don't mind getting calls from tenants at all hours and doing maintenance work yourself. Rent control, landlord liability and tax issues need to be explained to you in greater detail by your own legal and tax advisors.

• *Condo/Co-op?* These can combine the privacy and tax advantages of single family dwellings with low maintenance and the amenities offered in larger, multi-unit complexes. A lawyer should review and explain to you the condominium or cooperative documents as they can be complex.

• *Buy a vacation home first?* This option would allow you to gain the tax benefits of owning while delaying the expense of acquiring a year-round home. The vacation property can be treated as income-producing, if certain guidelines are followed. If rented out, though, the maintenance and tenant issues involved

need to be considered too.

▽ Where to buy—neighborhood issues.

These include concerns all couples have, such as for the likelihood of the property appreciating or depreciating in value over time; convenience to work, stores and schools, if children are involved; the "feel" of the neighborhood; its architecture; and the mix of types of persons making up the neighborhood. That last issue, along with safety concerns, can be of major importance to gay and lesbian couples.

▽ How much can we afford?

As a general rule, most couples find they can comfortably expend about 33% of their gross income on housing expenses. For most, that translates to about 25% of after-tax income. "Housing expenses" here include not only mortgage payments, but also the costs of real estate taxes, insurance, maintenance, etc. This 33%/25% rule, or some variant of it, is used by most institutional lenders to determine whether to make a loan to a couple. Lenders vary as to the portion, if any, of rental income they include in the formula, and as to down payment requirements.

Often times, smaller banks and mortgage companies which do not sell their loans to other lenders or the so-called "secondary market" of mortgage investors, are more able to bend the rules a bit, focusing on other strengths the applicant has if the income/expense test isn't met. If one uses family members, or work-related credit unions, pension or profit sharing funds as the lender, these concerns generally are lessened.

Factored into the economics of buy-see *Real Estate* on page 7

THE UNION

Lori Livingston

Gay Commitment Ceremonies



“We do” As Carolyn and Nancy, professionals in their mid-thirties smile and exchange silver-and-

amethyst bands the wedding party of old friends witness. Later, a midnight celebration supper will include Nancy’s mother and Carolyn’s two children.

Star and Brigid choose to simplify their commitment ceremony, reciting vows and making love on a secluded stretch of beach in Aruba.

Michael and Kevin, antique dealers who have co-habitated for three years opt for the traditional trappings of matrimony: tuxedos of dove grey, exchanging rings and vows in the Universalist Church in Boston, Massachusetts.

Trish and Patty wear matching gowns, organdy and white lace for their Autumn union. No one gives the bride away; willingly she takes the arm of her lover as they stand beneath the laden grape arbor in their Madison, Wisconsin backyard.

Jo and Kelly, avid bikers, wear leather and commit themselves in a celebration of joined life, riding Harley Davidson motorcycles in Colorado.

And in windy Chicago Tim and Pat quietly re-affirm their sixteen-year relationship every 365 days; sharing a bottle of cognac and a ritual reading of Charles Dicken’s *A Christmas Carol* each Christmas Eve.

Commitment ceremonies. Matrimony. Espoused union. Across the United States and beyond gay men and lesbians are joyously, openly and privately, noisily and in quiet pledges joining in a wave of loving ritual.

▽ Gay Marriage. Is this a new trend?

One might suppose yes, citing the number of public commitments in recent years but in actuality same-sex couples have been sharing life and hearth for eons, albeit discreetly.

Still technically not legal in the United (in the Netherlands, however same-sex unions are given the same status as heterosexual counterparts) gay marriage is gaining slow acceptance as society gains realization of alternative life-styles.

In 1989 an estimated three hundred gay men and lesbians clad in attire ranging from formal to ultra-casual and hailing from as far away as Japan came together on the streets of our nation’s capital and publicly acclaimed their unions in a great Gay Wedding.

Churches and religious institutions such as the Universalist Meeting House and Unitarian sects accept and encourage gay marriages, offering same-sex couple counseling and performing services.

Those gay men and lesbians who choose not to affirm their joining religiously can and do create their own personal expressions of shared love, as

varied and diverse as the individuals themselves.

Released this year from Seal Press and edited by Becky Butler, *Ceremonies of the Heart* is a documented account of same-sex commitment ceremonies. Well-researched, it is a moving testimony of gay couples acknowledging their unions, both traditionally and avant-garde.

As we approach the twenty-first century, seemingly in the final rounds of a fight for gay rights which we will win, the trend to publicly acknowledge gay unions with the institution of marriage is on the upswing. With the self absorbed 80’s decade at out backs more homosexual couples are declaring their relationships in all manner of ritualistic creativity.

▽ Gay Marriage?

Nothing new, just out of the closet! ▽

Partner Notices...

On March 21, the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* began publishing same-sex domestic partner notices along with opposite-sex engagement and wedding announcements. The *Star* has a daily circulation of 400,000.

Late in 1990, the *Everett Herald* in Washington state, and the *Brattleboro Reformer* in Vermont began publishing same-sex partner notices. It is believed that the *Everett Herald* was the first major daily paper in the country to publish domestic partner notices.

According to the *Bay Area Reporter* of San Francisco the *Star* has received mixed reaction—outrage to support.

With Boston, Massachusetts on the verge of passing family protection act legislation and Washington, DC contemplating similar legislation, main stream papers may soon follow in the *Star’s* footsteps.

More News...

Gay couples and other unwed domestic partners would be treated just like married couples when it comes to health insurance and other benefits under a bill proposed in the State Legislature of New York.

"We are attempting to have public policy catch up with the lives of New York's families," remarks Assembly woman Deborah Glick, a Manhattan Democrat and sponsor of the bill. Glick is the only state legislator here to have publicly acknowledged being gay.

The proposed law would allow unmarried partners to be considered a family when it comes to health and life insurance benefits, hospital visitation rights, and succession rights in rent-regulated housing.

—Associated Press

Texas law states that a marriage license must be issued to a man and a woman, and may not be issued for the marriage of persons of the same sex.

A bill was filed March 8 by Rep. Debra Danburg, D-Houston, that would delete the law's gender references. The bill, which would take effect Sept. 1, has not been referred to a committee.

Danalynn Recer and Pamela Voekel said they planned to challenge the current law in court, but have not yet filed a lawsuit. They said it violates the Equal Rights Amendment of the Texas Constitution, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender.

The couple said being denied legal married status hurt them economically, from being unable to obtain joint credit or frequent flyer cards to losing thousands of dollars in health insurance benefits.

—Associated Press

THE DATING GAME

Dating: The Gay & Lesbian Way



For most of the word "Dating" invokes thoughts of terror... what a grueling ritual! You're supposed to go out with someone you hardly know, usually pay an expensive tab, have a wonderful time and fall in love forever. Sound familiar?

Like it or not, asking for a date is usually interpreted as a statement of intent, and expectations rise.

Before dating someone new, spend some casual time together. Going out for coffee, to lunch, to a group activity, or going "dutch" keeps the expectations, and the pressure lower.

Gay and lesbian dating is:

- for people who have established a good reason to get closer.
- for lovers who want to spice up their lives with romance or celebrate a special occasion.
- for old friends when you want to show them they're special.

▽ What's different about gay dating?

A major difference in gay dating is confusion about who leads and who follows.

For us, it's a question of preference or personality, and it's worked out individually.

▽ The First Date: A How-To Guide.

You've met, talked, and gotten to know each other. Your friend hasn't made the first move, so it's up to you. What do you do?

By this time, you should have some

idea of what the other person likes to do, so plan accordingly.

Make your invitation specific: "I've got tickets for..."; "I know a great restaurant."

Don't ask "What are you doing this weekend?"—too vague, and easy to turn down.

Saying, "I'd like to take you to..." or "Be my guest at..." let's your date know that you're paying.

If there's any out-of-pocket cost for your partner, let him/her know before agreeing to go.

▽ Do's and Don't's—Guidelines for Gay Dating.

Do's:

- Do listen. Don't monopolize the conversation.
- Do focus on friendship.
- Do let your date know if you enjoyed his/her company.
- If you promise to call, mean it.
- Do get feedback on your evening—offer your comments on the restaurant.

Don't's:

- Don't be afraid of silence.
- Don't make sex the objective.
- Don't date beyond your budget.

Following these simple guidelines, getting to know each other, and focusing on fun can change your dating from grueling to great! Enjoy! ▼

Portions excerpted from: *Gay Relationships: How to Find Them, How to Improve Them, How to Make Them Last* by Tina Tessina, Ph.D. /Jeremy P Tarcher, Inc., \$10.95/May 1990.

Real Estate from page 4

ing property together may be the need to sell or lease property already owned or rented by one or both of the couple. This can affect not only the funds the couple has for the new property, but also the timing of its purchase, should the old property have to be sold or relet prior to buying the new one.

In addition to these three basic concerns, couples often need to determine when and to what extent during the looking process to be up front with lenders, brokers and family about being a gay or lesbian couple. Lenders probably don't "need" to know (as of this writing, only three states have laws barring discrimination in credit decisions on the basis of sexual orientation). It may be helpful for brokers to know. A broker may then be able to point out neighborhoods where other gay and lesbian couples have been welcomed, or not. And to paraphrase a line from *The Boys in the Band*, 30-year-olds don't have co-owners, so the family is likely to catch on, sooner or later, once you buy the property.

Beside these factors to be weighted, also consider the positive statement made to lenders, brokers, and family by being honest about being a gay or lesbian couple taking this major step together. ▼

Follow Up...

The much publicized domestic partners policy enacted by San Francisco law makers in February, has been followed up by a San Francisco Health Services Board approval for a medical insurance plan to cover companions of unmarried employees of the city.

According to the *Sentinel* of San Francisco, some 2,000 city employees (evenly split between gay and straight) will take advantage of the new plan.

Domestic Abuse from page 1

ex-lovers, boyfriends or girlfriends, or even just dating. Domestic violence is abuse or violence, in any form, that is *unwanted* by the victim. If you have let your partner know that you want to stop, but it continues, you are being abused.

A central element to this definition of domestic violence is power. Abuse and violence are used by the batterer to maintain power and control over his or her partner. Through the intentional use of violence, or the threat of violence, the batterer creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation to get his or her partner to do what is wanted. Thus, domestic violence is more than just acts of violence that a perpetrator commits against his or her lover; it is also the power imbalance that is maintained through a pattern of deliberate abuse and violence.

Ask yourself some questions. *Are you afraid of her? Do you want him to stop? Do you go to great lengths to "keep peace" because his or her anger scares you?* Recognizing abuse by our partners is the first step in stopping domestic violence. Getting help must follow. Victims and their friends, however, must remember: nothing *you, the victim*, do, or do not do, can stop the violence. Only a batterer can stop his or her violence. Get help for yourselves.

▼ **What else is involved in domestic violence?**

Our society does not hold perpetrators accountable nearly enough for their abusive behavior. Battering is criminal conduct, and most batterers are, by definition, criminals. Batterers choose violence and make premeditated decisions to harm their partners. Battering is the most primitive method of getting your way known to the human race. It is unacceptable, abnormal and wrong.

▼ **A few words about what domestic violence is not.**

• *Domestic violence is not S & M. It is not sexual behavior. S & M relationships entail some sort of mutually agreed*

upon limits or boundaries. Domestic violence has no such agreement, since it is abuse and violence that is *unwanted* by the victim.

• *Domestic violence is not caused by alcohol, drug abuse or AIDS.* Society does not cause individual acts of domestic violence any more than society causes individual rapes. Domestic violence is caused only by violent individuals, and there is no excuse or justification for this behavior. Drinking, having a bad day, burning dinner, being "angry," and the "unacceptable" behavior of the victim are all used as excuses for battering. The only causes of lesbian and gay domestic violence are violent lesbians and gay men.

• *Domestic violence is not more common among the poor, among people of color, or among people who hang out in bars.* Domestic violence does not discriminate. Abusive lesbians and gays come from all socio-economic classes, all religious backgrounds, and all ethnic groups. Wealthy, white, educated, "politically correct" gay men and lesbians batter as much as any other group in society.

Domestic violence in the gay and lesbian community is a huge legal problem, a devastating medical problem, and a serious mental health problem. It is a problem *within* our community, one that we have the power to end. Only when we as a community understand the dynamics of domestic violence will we become sufficiently outraged to demand that batterers stop their violence.

In the May issue, "relationship" aspects of domestic violence. ▼

David Island and Patric Letellier live in San Francisco and are the co-authors of the new book, *Men Who Beat The Men Who Love Them: Batterer Gay Men and Domestic Violence*, soon to be released by Haworth Press (Harrington Park Press.)

FYI...

If you live in Minnesota you may be interested to know that the University of Minnesota is now offering an extension class (during the evening) called Women's Studies. The course will cover various issues related to lesbian and gay experience and will make available to students literature and research work on lesbian and gay topics.

Check out your local colleges and universities. Higher educational institutions are now offering gay and lesbian studies all over the country.
[ED]

Upcoming...

Real Estate, Part 3

Domestic Violence, Part 2

One Couples Ceremony

Divorce

Alcoholism

AIDS at home

If you have anniversaries, "You knew your were a couple when..." responses, local news briefs, articles, or story ideas forward them in writing to: *COUPLES* c/o TWT Press, Inc., P.O. Box 253, Braintree, MA 02184-0003. Please include your Address and telephone number for verification purposes. All submissions are subject to verification. If you need to reach us quickly call 617-770-3156 and follow the instructions for leaving voice mail or sending a fax.

All issues mailed discreetly. If you have friends that are interested in *COUPLES*, forward their name and address and we'll send them a free issue.

News Briefs

▽TEXAS—A bill filed on March 8 by Representative Debra Danburg (D-HOUSTON) would delete from Texas law books reference to gender in issuance of a marriage license. As it now stands, the law states that a marriage license must be issued to a man and a woman, and may not be issued for the marriage of persons of the same sex.

▽MINNESOTA—Fireman's Insurance Co. has instituted a homeowner's policy change that extends to all domestic partners coverage previously available only to spouses and relatives. A domestic partner is defined as a person "resided with continuously for at least six months and with whom you have a close, committed personal relationship that involves shared responsibilities and joint ownership of property—*Equal Time*."

▽HAWAII—March 21, Hawaii has become the third state to pass a gay rights law. The new law prohibits employment discrimination based on sexual orientation

▽ONTARIO, CANADA—Public employees are now eligible to apply for benefits for their unmarried partners. Ontario is the first province to extend domestic partner benefits for civil servants.

▽WASHINGTON STATE—As a result of a discrimination complaint brought about three years ago, the American Automobile Association (AAA) chapters in central and western Washington agreed to allow domestic partners and other household residents to take advantage of the auto clubs membership.

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