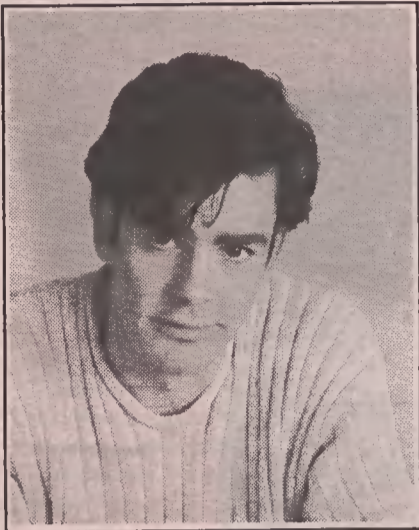


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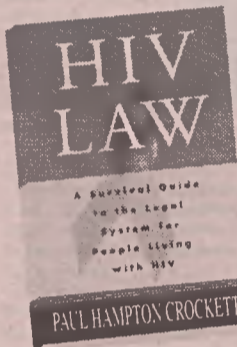
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Freedom to Marry Day in February

WASHINGTON, DC—The Second Annual National Freedom to Marry Day will take place on Friday, February 12, 1999.

In late 1997, the National Freedom to Marry Coalition declared that February 12, 1998 would be the First Annual National Freedom to Marry Day. Activists, students, members of the clergy and non-gay allies responded and staged over 50 events in 36 communities across the country to build support for equal marriage rights for lesbian and gay Americans, garnering coverage in major media markets nationwide.

February 12 was chosen to coincide with Lincoln's Birthday and Valentine's Day two days later, emphasizing the themes of Love and Equality.

Before the day itself, national, state and local partners in the National Freedom to Marry Coalition laid the groundwork by starting conversations with and asking for support from allies and potential allies outside the gay and lesbian community.

The Coalition envisions the Second Annual National Freedom to Marry Day as an opportunity to expand our movement's reach, in terms of both the total number of events and the extent to which we all reach out beyond our own communities.

For National Freedom to Marry Day 1999, the Coalition hopes that: a) actions and events will be planned in all 50 states, b) each local action group or committee will have moved week-by-week to assemble a broad array of allies, and c) local groups will reach as broad an audience as possible by securing coverage in the print, television and radio media.

The election results in Hawaii and Alaska may have prevented a breakthrough this year, but have not stopped our movement — and the breakthrough may still be at hand within a matter of months. Like all civil rights struggles, it will require great fortitude and persistence. The two election defeats place focus on what

needs to be done most: education and outreach. It takes more than political campaign work to change hearts and minds. It takes months and years of ongoing personal contact and public dialogue — exactly the kind of work that building toward and beyond National Freedom to Marry Day can entail.

Though a breakthrough decision is possible in Vermont and even in Hawaii in 1999, recent election losses demonstrate how important it is to be able to defend the victories secured through the courts. This means that the urgent task is to focus energies where they can have the most impact: at home.

A critical freedom to marry battle, for example, is facing Californians in just over a year. Will our movement focus now, build a diverse array of supporters, and help educate the California electorate about what civil marriage really means? That's what must be done in order to move closer to the end goal of full equality. And that's what needs to happen everywhere, beginning now, regardless of whether an initiative is on the ballot.

Some successful events from last year included: an interfaith breakfast; a "tying the knot" visibility campaign to communicate the importance of legal recognition of family ties; campus speak-outs, rallies and lectures; a news conference featuring a wedding cake; candlelight St. Valentine's communion service recognizing same-sex couples; a potluck dinner, "Celebrating Family;" panel discussions and town halls; and demonstrations at City Halls.

Plan to participate in your local event. If no event is planned in your area and you would like to plan one, help is available at such web sites as Lambda Legal (www.lambdalegal.org), GLAD (www.glad.org), the Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force (www.VTfreetomarry.org), the Partners' Task Force (www.buddybuddy.org), Human Rights Campaign (www.hrc.org) or the National Freedom to Marry Coalition (www.freetomarry.org). ▼

lesbian notions

by Paula Martinac
Special to Q-Notes

Because it's the end of the year, I've been taking inventory of the political and cultural topics I *didn't* write about in 1998 and trying to remember why I left them unexplored. Was it simply, "So much news, so little time"? Or was it, "I just can't come up with any lesbian spin on this"? Consider these abandoned gems:

1. Viagra was big news this year, and believe it or not, there's a file on one of my computer disks called "Lesbians and Viagra." Now what in the world was I thinking of? I was actually trying to assess whether or not the new-found salvation for "erectile dysfunction" would be of any use in the search for a cure for lesbian bed death. After all, if straight women and gay men could pop Viagra like candy in order to achieve the ultimate sexual experience, why not lesbians? In the end, I abandoned this story because I had a sneaking suspicion that most lesbians would be too embarrassed to call their doctors to even *ask* about Viagra.

2. On the same disk, there's a file called "Lesbians and Viagra #2." One of my readers suggested I examine Viagra's potential to bring senior women in heterosexual marriages out of the closet. My reader thought that these women were probably pretty happy having impotent husbands and the prospect of their spouses "performing" again on Saturday nights might force a lot of lesbian grandmothers to come out. It didn't work as an op-ed piece, but I decided it would make a terrific lesbian fantasy novel.

3. The Pope was at it again this year, threatening clergy members with excommunication if they dissented on issues such as the ordination of women, sex outside of marriage, and homosexuality. As an ex-Catholic who endured 12 years of Catholic schooling, I considered myself qualified to write a column headlined "John Paul Should Resign." But does a pope "resign"? Or does he abdicate? Doff his miter? I had a lot of semantic problems with this idea, so there's an empty file on my computer called "Pope."

4. Among my pet peeves are the tiresome cultural stereotypes imposed on lesbians, often by other lesbians. For example, Chastity Bono's new book, *Family Outing*, is chock full of them.

Some of these stereotypes include: we were all tomboys in dirty overalls; we all play softball for "The Awesome Amazons;" we all tinker with our Harleys; we all wield a mean wrench, so just let us at your leaky pipes. This column never got off the ground because it turns out that I am one of the few lesbians I know who can't identify with even *one* of the above stereotypes. Given my lack of athletic ability, my love of Hollywood musicals, and my obsession with personal hygiene, I decided that I must be a gay man.

5. Queer theory in the academy garnered mainstream attention this year. Even Mike Wallace featured a biased segment about it on *60 Minutes*. I wanted to write a column critiquing Wallace's report, but I had a problem: I didn't really understand much of the queer theory he put under the spotlight. I couldn't find words like "minoritizing," "performativity," and "structurations" in my *American Heritage Dictionary*.

6. There's been quite a bit of hype lately about lesbian-run medical services — safe places for lesbians who, fearing homophobia and often lacking health insurance, avoid getting regular check-ups and endanger their health. Unfortunately, I haven't written on this topic because I'm skeptical: My lesbian gynecologist, who advertised her practice widely among lesbians and has been heralded in the gay press, socked me with a \$350 invoice for a routine exam. I guess it's only "safe" to consult her if you're rich.

7. I contemplated writing a thoughtful feminist piece about John Glenn and the sexist remarks he made in 1962 when the space program put the clamps on women astronauts — some of whom you know had to be dykes. NASA decided that women couldn't go into space because, even though they might be expert pilots, they weren't experienced *fighter* pilots. (And the astronauts were going to have to fight whom? Oh, yeah, Martians.) At that time, hero Glenn went on record saying that women had no place in the space program, period. The kitchen or the bedroom, right, Senator? Ultimately, I axed this story because I refused to add to all the press about Glenn.

So ends another year. Stay tuned for '99. ▼
[Paula Martinac is the author of seven books. Her latest is *The Lesbian and Gay Book of Love and Marriage*. She can be reached care of this publication or at LNcolumn@aol.com.]

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