

## glaad notes

by the Gay & Lesbian Alliance  
Against Defamation

### Healing the lame

*Ride BMX*, a youth-oriented magazine for freestyle BMX riders, recently responded to concerns over its frequent use of the word "gay" as a pejorative. One example: a photo caption in the April/May 1999 issue read: "This has to be the gayest sport ever, frisbee golf."

After concerns were raised by a San Francisco bicycle store owner who had placed ads in the magazine, *Ride BMX* editor Mark Losey explained in a letter that the publication spoke the "same language as its readers" and that the term is "not intended as a sexual epithet." GLAAD explained to publisher Brad McDonald that while readers might use the term with no intended malice toward gays, the social stigma of its pejorative use negatively impacts gay and lesbian teens.

In response, McDonald said: "GLAAD raises an interesting point in taking exception to the use of the word 'gay' as a synonym for 'lame' in *Ride BMX* magazine. While the origin of the use of the word in this way is clearly derogatory towards homosexuals, I do not believe that this is the intent of most people who use the term today. However, it is understandable that many people find this usage hurtful. *Ride BMX* magazine strives to be inclusive to individuals from all backgrounds, and for that reason we will use our best efforts to eliminate this usage of the word 'gay' in future issues. While I am under no illusion that *Ride BMX* magazine will change the language habits of America's youth, we will do our small part to stop perpetuating the use of this expression."

Write *Ride BMX* and its parent company, Times Mirror Magazines, and thank them for addressing the community's concerns. Contact: Brad McDonald, Publisher, and Mark Losey, Editor, *Ride BMX*, 1530 Brookhollow Dr., Suite A, Santa Ana, CA 92705; Martha H. Goldstein, VP Corporate Communications, Times Mirror, Times Mirror Square, Los Angeles, CA 90053; email: martha.goldstein@tm.com.

### Funny business

For 28 years and through 10,000 comic strips, Gary Trudeau, winner of a Pulitzer and a 1995 GLAAD Media Award, has created a venerable body of work with his daily strip, "Doodlesbury." The strip has paved the way for a generation of animators and comic book artists to deal honestly with socio-politically progressive themes, to satirize and critique gender roles, and to contest social mores and norms.

"Doodlesbury" has been groundbreaking. In a recently unfolding plot line, it has focused on the impending marriage of Mark Slackmeyer, "the only FM disc jockey known to have outed himself on the air," to his life partner, conservative commentator Chase Talbott. The series has a story arc that began with the fallout from the couple's announcement of their commitment ceremony and evolves with the growing acceptance on the part of Reverend Scot and other members of the "Doodlesbury" cast.

This plot line has drawn criticism from conservative readers. Commend Universal Press Syndicate for standing by such uncompromising and sensitive subject matter. Contact: Lee Salem, VP and Editorial Director, Universal Press Syndicate, 4520 Main St., Kansas City, MO 64111-7701; fax: 1-800-255-6734.

### Elementary journalism

Nationally syndicated columnist Brent Bozell wrote a scathing indictment not merely of the documentary *It's Elementary*, but of homosexuality itself in a recent piece entitled "Gay Lifestyle Promoted on PBS program." Bozell, executive director of the Conservative Victory Committee, has used the controversy surrounding *It's Elementary* to spew anti-gay venom. Bozell falsely labels the work "pure propaganda" and frames it as something that "flies in the

face of not only public broadcasting's supposed commitment to balance but also common sense and decency." As Bozell's rant draws to a close, he takes aim at disparaging those who supported this film — the National Endowment for the Arts and newly-appointed US Ambassador James C. Hormel.

Tell Creators Syndicate that this column was sensationalistic and a thinly-disguised attack against our community. Contact: Katherine Searcy, Editorial Director, Creators Syndicate, 5777 W. Century Blvd., #700, Los Angeles, CA 90045-5677; fax: (310) 337-7625.

### Son rise

In a poignant June 20 article entitled "Making Men: The Boy Who Doesn't Fit In," *Boston Globe* writer Mitchell Zuckoff chronicles the story of one Arkansas father's decision to move his family from their longtime home in order to protect his openly gay son. Zuckoff describes the Wagner family's hometown of Booneville as a "Bible Belt town of 3408 people, where homosexuality is still seen by many as proof of the devil," and father Bill Wagner says "out here you get killed for being different."

Wagner's upbringing and history in Arkansas are described in detail — as a means of relating the natural difficulties one would expect he'd face in leaving his home. But Zuckoff tells us that for Wagner, the choice was easy: "All he knew...was that it was a father's place to do the best he could for a son." Later, he describes young Willi's coming out, in which the 14-year-old said: "Mom...Dad...I'm...gay. I don't think I'm gay. I don't want to be gay. I just am." He also relates Bill's calm reaction to his son's coming out: "It wasn't that Bill didn't know that some men explode at such news, he just couldn't see why. I think a lot of fathers have a negative reaction because they think it reflects on him, or his manhood or something, and it doesn't."

In the end, Zuckoff ties the two Wagners together, beginning with a description of Bill's tenderness at the scene of a hate crime committed against Willi, leading to his accompanying Willi to a Pride rally in Tulsa, and closing with a touching scene from Willi's first gay and lesbian prom.

Thank the *Boston Globe* for this piece — unusual in its quality for even a paper so frequently GLBT-inclusive. Contact: Gregory L. Moore, Managing Editor, *Boston Globe*, 135 Morrissey Blvd., Dorchester, MA 02125-3338; fax: (617) 929-2098; email: letters@globe.com.

### Stars and bars

The *Nashville Tennessean* reported in its June 18 edition that Grammy Award-winning country superstars Trisha Yearwood and The Mavericks headlined a benefit for a local makeup artist diagnosed with cancer. What made the event particularly interesting was that it was held at a local gay club called The Connection, and, in the *Tennessean's* words, "is believed to be the first time that a country artist [has] played an openly gay venue in Nashville." After the show, Yearwood put the performance in perspective, "It's just not an issue for me. I have a lot of gay fans, and I'm sure there's a real cool mixture out there." Avid *Ellen* fans may remember that the artist was one of many singers who performed on the now-cancelled show.

The *Tennessean* resisted the temptation to sensationalize the event and chose to report an interesting story about an industry not usually perceived as being close to the community. The Mavericks and Yearwood have used their voices to support our community more visibly than perhaps any other country artists outside of Garth Brooks (a GLAAD Media Award-winner who used his hit single "We Shall Be Free" to advocate for gay and lesbian equality).

Thank the *Tennessean* and the two performers for their acceptance and willingness to help. Contact: Gail Kerr, Managing Editor, *The Tennessean*, 1100 Broadway, Nashville, TN 37203; fax: (615) 726-8928; email: letters@tennessean.com; Trisha Yearwood, c/o MCA Records, 60 Music Square East, Nashville, TN 37203; The Mavericks, c/o MCA Records, 60 Music Square East, Nashville, TN 37203. ▼



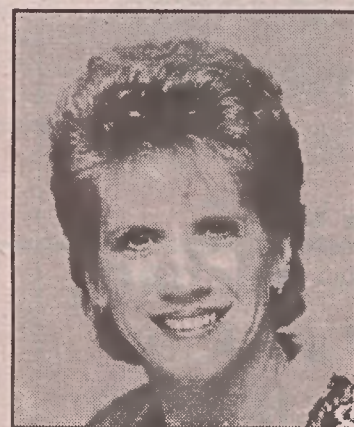
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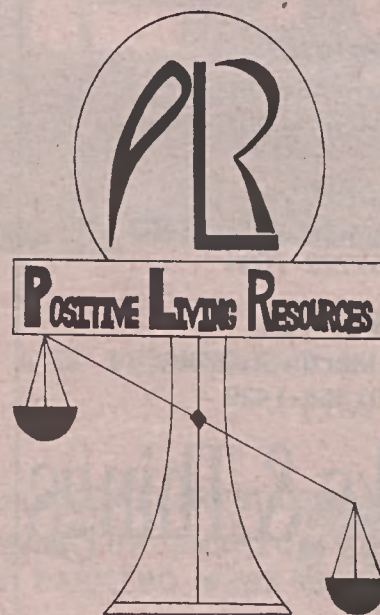
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