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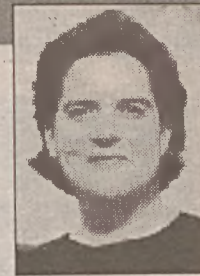
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General gayety

Leslie Robinson



Love hurts

Those who work in government buildings have reason to be fearful these days. Such structures, owing to their symbolic value, are favored targets of terrorists both foreign and homegrown.

That's why anyone passing by San Francisco's City Hall recently could be excused for dialing 911. With throngs of people outside and raucous cheering inside, it might have seemed like Muhammad's Muttonheads and the Mendocino Militia were attacking at the same time.

There were no bombs, no fires, no ricin or anthrax. One thing, however, did break out at several spots in the building: marriage.

It's potent stuff. It caused many who came into contact with it to cry uncontrollably. It's so powerful it even caused people thousands of miles away to get a rash.

At the direction of San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom, city staffers began issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples on Feb. 12. Nearly 2,500 gay couples had been hitched by the end of business on Feb. 16.

Feb. 16 was a holiday, Presidents' Day. I won't make the case that George Washington and Abe Lincoln would've been thrilled to see gays marry. They probably wouldn't be so pleased with female presidential candidates, synthetic fabrics and disco either.

I will suggest that it's in keeping with America's promise that the day set aside to honor the leader of the Revolutionary army and the signer of the Emancipation Proclamation saw 825 couples extended new rights. Much more appropriate than a car dealer donning a wig and chopping down car prices.

The successor to Washington and Lincoln is not happy with the goings-on in San Francisco, not to mention Massachusetts. On Feb. 24 President George W. Bush announced his support for the Federal Marriage Amendment, otherwise known as the "We can get married and you can't, nyah, nyah, nyah!" amendment.

Bush said that "our nation must enact a constitutional amendment to protect marriage in America." Many people appear to feel that gays being able to marry is just as scary as international terrorists plotting inventive ways to murder Americans. Amending the Constitution to forbid suicide attacks wouldn't be effective, but by God, they can keep the fruits from the fruits of marriage.

The ironic part of all this is those who stood in line for hours to get married aren't like terrorists, looking to destroy. They're looking to build, to create an official union where married partners must, by California law, give each other a back rub on Tuesdays and Fridays.

These people didn't surround City Hall to trash it; their fondest hope was to get inside it. They want not to tear society down, but to join it. They aspired to walk inside that government building and commit a highly conservative act. A goal, I should point out, that makes non-assimilationist gays reach for a barf-bag.

In this era when hate can propel airplanes into buildings, you might think we'd be supporting love wherever it exists. In an era when half of all American marriages wind up in the dumpster, you'd think people itching to take their chances would be embraced. You'd be wrong.

I saw a picture of the first couple to be wed during this same-sex spree. Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin, together for over 50 years, were the very image of terrorists in pantsuits. Whoops, I mean activists — in 1955 they founded the Daughters of Bilitis, American lesbianism's first major organization.

Rounding out the assault on City Hall, Rosie O'Donnell and Kelli Carpenter were married on Feb. 26. This was a really clever terrorist tactic. Americans worship celebrities, so Rosie getting hitched suggests gay marriage might actually be okay. How insidious.

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