

## National News Notes

by David Stout . Q-Notes staff

### First gay congressman dead

BOSTON, Mass. — Former U.S. Rep. Gerry Studds (pictured), 69, the first openly gay member of Congress, passed away Oct. 14 due to a blood clot in his lung. Studds was first elected in 1972 to represent his southeastern Massachusetts district. He held the seat for 12 terms before retiring from the House in 1997.



In 1983, Studds acknowledged he was gay after a 27-year-old man disclosed that he had had a sexual relationship with Studds a decade earlier, when the man was a teenage congressional page. The House of Representatives censured Studds for his conduct. With a mix of humility and grace, Studds faced his constituents in a series of public meetings and kept their support.

Although Studds married his surviving spouse, Dean Hara, shortly after same-sex marriage was legalized in Massachusetts in 2004, Hara has been disqualified from receiving Studds' congressional pension benefits under the federal *Defense of Marriage Act*. At the time of his death Studds was receiving an estimated annual pension of \$114,337.

### Gay marriage good for economy

LOS ANGELES, Calif. — According to a new study, extending marriage rights to same-sex

couples will be good for the economy. Conducted by the Williams Institute, a gay think tank at UCLA, "The Effect of Marriage Equality and Domestic Partnership On Business and the Economy" finds that productivity from happier and healthier workers will outweigh employers' costs for adding spousal benefits. In addition, increased spending for marriage ceremonies and allied services is projected to be substantial.

"Spending on new weddings alone would generate \$2 billion for businesses in the wedding industry," said study co-author Gary J. Gates, senior research associate at the Williams Institute. "Places that allow same-sex couples to marry have reported noticeable boosts in business for hotels, caterers, florists and other wedding-related businesses."

The study notes that current differences in states' policies regarding same-sex couples can be confusing and costly for businesses. Employers also risk losing good employees to jobs in states with more favorable laws.

### Gay men named Disney Legends

BURBANK, Calif. — Since 1987 The Walt Disney Company has honored 191 individuals for their significant contributions to the Disney legacy in the fields of music, journalism, art, performance, engineering and business. On Oct. 9 Disney Legends Awards were handed out to 12 more recipients, including two openly gay men: singer/songwriter Sir Elton John ("The Lion King") and actor Tommy Kirk (pictured, "Old Yeller," "The Shaggy Dog").

Kirk was Disney's top young male star of the late '50s and early '60s, but his sexuality

ended his career at the company. "When I was about 17 or 18 years old, I finally admitted to myself that I wasn't going to change," he said in a 1993 interview with *Filmfax* magazine. "I didn't know what the consequences would be, but I had the definite feeling that it was going to wreck my Disney career and maybe my whole acting career. It was all going to come to an end. Eventually, I became involved with somebody and I was fired."



The first recipient of the Disney Legends Award was actor Fred MacMurray ("The Shaggy Dog"). Additional honorees include Julie Andrews, Steve Martin and Dick Van Dyke.

### Online AIDS Quilt display planned

NEW YORK, N.Y. — On December 1, World AIDS Day, here! Networks will unveil the first-ever Virtual AIDS Quilt to pay tribute to the many lives that have been lost to AIDS during the pandemic's first 25 years. here! is inviting the public to visit their interactive media website and submit a photo or image along with a short message or special memory.

"After 25 years, the AIDS epidemic has become a global concern," said Paul Colichman, here!'s founder and CEO. "HIV/AIDS has become a killer that does not discriminate based on race, creed or sexual orientation, and the Virtual AIDS Quilt will celebrate the lives of all of those who have been taken from us while helping to promote HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention efforts around the globe."

Starting on World AIDS Day the global online community will be able to watch the Virtual AIDS Quilt grow with images and stories posted by victims' families and friends. Participate or view the landmark project at [aidsquilt.heretv.com](http://aidsquilt.heretv.com).

### 'Grey's Anatomy' actor is out

HOLLYWOOD — T.R. Knight (pictured), 33, a featured actor on ABC's smash television drama "Grey's Anatomy," came out last month in a statement to "People" magazine. No previous actor has ever acknowledged being gay while appearing on such a highly-rated program. Knight, a Minneapolis native, plays Dr. George O'Malley on "Grey's Anatomy." His television credits also include roles on "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation" and "Law & Order: Criminal Intent."

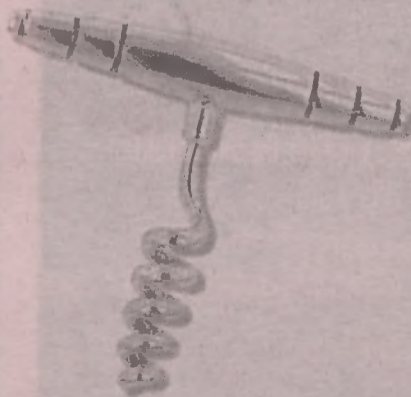
Addressing the Tinseltown scuttlebutt that had been swirling, Knight told "People," "I guess there have been a few questions about my sexuality, and I'd like to quiet any unnecessary rumors that may be out there. While I prefer to keep my personal life private, I hope the fact that I'm gay isn't the most interesting part of me."

Damon Romine, GLAAD Entertainment Media Director, said, "T.R. is part of a growing trend where more and more gay people, including celebrities, are living openly and honestly, and this has tremendous impact in terms of creating awareness, understanding and acceptance." ▀



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