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Anything But Straight

by Wayne Besen . Contributing Writer

In-flight reading

I was exhausted and on my way home from Phoenix, where I participated in a protest against Focus on the Family's ex-gay Love Won Out Conference. One of the few remaining joys of flying these days is reading without all of the earthly distractions, such as cell phones and email — at least until the terrorists figure out how to make a newspaper bomb, and then we will be left with nothing to do but twiddle our thumbs while we levitate.

While gliding, I came across several stories worth commenting on:

Smear campaigns

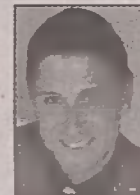
While on the plane I got a rare insight into the psyche of smear by reading a *New York Times Magazine* article on, of all things, "designer dogs." The article discussed the combining of two purebred pooches to produce a new breed. For example, if a Labrador is mixed with a poodle, they get a "Labradoodle." A Boston Terrier and a Beagle makes a "Boggle."

By most accounts, these combo-canines are wonderful pets that are cute and cuddly. However, they have raised the ire of traditional breeders who consider the mutts impure. In their zeal to tar the designer dogs, the purebred Puritans have resorted to mudslinging. Like anti-gay zealots who pretend they love homosexuals, the breeders pretend they are only looking out for the welfare of the dogs. One breeder summed this up by saying, "Who is going to take care of that dog when the fad fades."

However, the real truth quickly became apparent when the same breeder unfairly claimed the "puggle" is an unsuitable pet because it would merge the worst traits of the pug and the beagle. The puggle, the breeder concluded, must be "a shedding, snorting, wanderlust dog that's going to pee all over your house." Just like the case with minorities, people can't even accept differences in pets and will say virtually anything to support their notion of purity and goodness.

Basketball outing

Former National Basketball Association center John Amaechi came out of the closet and The Associated Press interviewed basketball star LeBron James about Amaechi. He said that he did not think an openly gay per-



son could survive in the league. However, he also took issue with a player that might remain in the closet.

"With teammates you have to be trustwor-

thy and if you're gay and you're not admitting that you are, then you are not trustworthy," James said. "So that's like the number one thing as teammates — we all trust each other. There is a locker room code. What happens in the locker room stays in there. It's a trust factor, honestly. A big trust factor."

It seems like a Catch-22. James thinks an openly gay player wouldn't survive, but if he stays closeted, his secret life is detrimental to team unity. Damned if you do, damned if you don't I suppose.

Ted Haggard

So, Rev. Ted Haggard sang a few hymns and now he is only sexually interested in "hers." The claim is so preposterous that it became the realm of late night comedians. Haggard has done more to erode the sexual conversion movement in one week than 10 years of activism. Although this has been written about extensively, Haggard's whistle blowing (among other things) escort, Mike Jones, summed it up best when he told the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force: "It's hard for me to believe that he's 'recovered' in three weeks when he'd been having oral sex with me for over three years."

The presidential race

So far, Obama looks great as he deftly handles the hype and is the only major candidate who was correct on the war from the start. Hillary's fancy footwork has her tap dancing around her war vote. But with civil war intensifying, "Taps" might be her theme song as Iraq slowly bleeds the life out of her campaign. John Edwards has also sprinted out of the gate in Iowa, giving a glimmer of hope to his presidential aspirations.

In terms of gay rights, a Rudy Giuliani presidency might be the best bet. As the Iraq war heads inexorably south, the stage will be set for further Democratic gains in the House and Senate. If Giuliani wins, it will be over the loud objections of social conservatives. This could create a situation where a Democratic Congress signs gay rights bills and a Republican president signs them into law. However, Giuliani's kissing up to George W. Bush may be his undoing, just as John McCain's call for more troops will likely come back to haunt him. ▀

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