



## general gayety

by leslie robinson :: *qnotes* contributor

*They meant well*

VIEWWS

We've reached a point in America where many companies seek to do right by gay people. Once in a while, they get bit on the butt for it.

Microsoft recently lost a piece of its posterior to 26-year-old Josh Moore of West Virginia. Moore is an avid gamer and as an unemployed factory worker, he's got plenty of time to indulge his passion for Microsoft's Xbox Live.

Moore favors "shooters" like Call of Duty, Medal of Honor and Ghost Recon. Since I don't know Ghost Recon from Casper the Friendly Ghost, I'm out of my depth here.

But, I do grasp that people play these games online and Moore was gearing up for a Search and Destroy competition when Microsoft searched and destroyed him or at least his alter ego. The colossal corporation suspended Moore's gaming privileges, believing he had violated Xbox Live's code of conduct.

In his profile, Moore had listed his hometown as Fort Gay.

Can you see where this is going?

Fort Gay is a real town of about 800 located along West Virginia's border with Kentucky. But, somebody, presumably a fellow gamer, smelled insult among the bullets, explosions and general mayhem and complained to the Xbox Live folks.

"Someone took the phrase 'fort gay WV' and believed that the individual who had that was trying to offend or trying to use it in a pejorative manner," said Stephen Toulouse, director of policy and enforcement for Xbox Live, to The Associated Press. "Unfortunately, one of my people agreed with that."

Moore found himself up a creek without a joystick.

"At first I thought, 'Wow, somebody's thinking I live in the gayest town in West Virginia or something.' I was mad . . . It makes me feel like they hate gay people," he said.

"I'm not even gay and it makes me feel like they were discriminating."

I am gay, and I'm confused.

It's not clear whether Moore thought Microsoft or the person who complained was discriminating against gays. Either way, Microsoft and the complainer were actually trying to do the opposite. Moore intended no offense. Microsoft intended to prevent offense. Moore was offended.

Who, huh, wha'?

An angry Moore called customer service, figuring he could explain that Fort Gay really exists. But, the representative said if Moore put Fort Gay in his profile again, Xbox Live would cancel his account and keep his money.

Now I know whom they use as a model for their games' tough-guy characters.

"I told him, Google it—25514!" Moore said, listing Fort Gay's ZIP code. "He said, 'I can't help you.'"

Mayor David Thompson got involved and I can just imagine his call to customer service: "What do you people think I'm the mayor of, Brigadoon?"

Even if Thompson managed to convince the representative of Fort Gay's existence, it didn't solve Moore's problem. The mayor was told the city's name didn't matter — the word "gay" was inappropriate in any context.

Hmmmm. Protecting us by eliminating us. Making us as ghostly as Casper. I'm feeling mighty pallid.

The employee got that wrong, said Toulouse, the Xbox Live rules enforcer. The player's contract says users may not write profile text that could offend others. But, the Code of Conduct says players can use such words as gay and transgender in their profile.

Toulouse said the company has modified its training and he plans to apologize to Moore.

Microsoft might be feeling that no good deed goes unpunished. In this swirl of good intentions, the vacuum sucked up everybody. It's a good thing, though, that this incident showed the Xbox honchos the need to refine their procedures. Before they get calls from Gay, Mich., and Gay, Ga. ::

info:

LesRobinson@aol.com . generalgayety.com

## talkback

Letters to the editor and comments from *goqnotes.com*. Web comments are not edited for grammar or punctuation.

### Thank you, Lady Gaga

I was lucky enough to go see Lady Gaga in concert in Charlotte, *front row!* Never have I had more fun or been so personally moved at a concert before. So many will hate on her for her outrageous costumes or attack her for her personal appearance and especially her stand on gay rights. Yet her message is love — love yourself for who you are, accept those who are different, allow equality to everyone.

I carefully examined the diverse crowd that filled the sold out arena. There was no "one type" or specific group of people. Gay and straight. Black and white. Old and young. Boys and girls. Such diversity! Together we all were united by Gaga's message of acceptance and unity, not to mention her unbelievable performance.

Ironic — on my way into the concert, a group of protestors were yelling and screaming to the fans approaching the arena. Shockingly, a man yelled into my face, "God does not love you because you show your

fleshy breasts, you homo loving heathen." Gaga's words to us: "God loves us all. God doesn't make mistakes."

I think everyone could learn a lesson of tolerance for others from this young woman. I will end with another Gaga quote of the night: "Don't leave here tonight loving me more. Leave here loving yourself."

— Amy Laugher, letter

### Pride Charlotte feedback

In response to our Sept. 18 article on Pride Charlotte, two readers say:

I wish Pride a lot of luck this year because there are a lot of people in this community who won't go near anything that Denise Palm Beck touches. I'm on the fence.

— billy j, web, Sept. 18

I too wish them great success with this event. But I am not attending for multiple reasons one being I don't like the location. I am going to Blue Ridge Pride instead.

— Rita, web, Sept. 18

# Double

*double / adjective*

**an alcoholic drink containing twice the usual amount of alcohol**

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