

The FRONT PAGE

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Serving the Carolinas' Gay & Lesbian Communities Since 1979

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It's Smarmy Recollection Time in America

By Ann Rostow
The Texas Triangle

I've been reading quite a few articles on "our" reactions to Reagan. For the record, we weren't too crazy about him, considering his administration was responsible for killing off half a generation of gay men by pretending that a major epidemic did not exist. Aside from that that minor detail, he was just dandy. We particularly appreciated the fact that he probably single handedly defeated a citizen-led effort to ban gays and lesbians from teaching in California's public schools. The Briggs Initiative, as it was called, was considered a likely winner at the ballot box until the popular former governor came out publicly against it in 1978.

News with a View

When he was first elected, my neighbors and I were so distraught that we drank everything in our adjoining New York apartments, including a half bottle of some mint stuff that had been under my sink for several years (which I have never forgotten — God it was horrible). We then watched him preside, in his unconvincingly genial fashion, over a slew of misguided policies. His insane tax cuts — which Paul Krugman now informs us were promptly reversed. The reckless and ill-planned deregulation of the S&L industry — how much did that cost us?

Over time, I have come to respect the once discomfiting figure of Nancy Reagan, who now seems quite courageous, devoted, and dignified. And I have no problem with a fancy Presidential funeral, complete with riderless horse and missing man fighter jet formations. After all, the man was President of the United States for eight years. But let's cut down on the smarm just a bit, shall we? One commentator on Saturday afternoon intoned, "none of us will ever forget where we were on this day." Please! September 11, 2001. Sure. November 23, 1963. Yes. But the day Reagan died after a decade of senility? I don't think so!

Hate Campaigns Can Be Harmful to your Health

We now have six states preparing to send anti-marriage constitutional amendments before their voters this year, but this week we can report one silver lining. Missouri's high court has ruled that the governor has the right to schedule an anti-marriage amendment for

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Pride + Vote = Power

By Bob Roehr
Contributing Writer

Pride + Vote = Power, the theme of gay pride in Washington, DC, kicked off with a June 6 forum of local and national leaders discussing those issues. It was no surprise that talk of gay marriage dominated the evening. Most notable were a consensus on principles and a minimum of partisanship.

"We're an economic powerhouse. The problem is that some people think we can't talk about activism and talk about economics in the same sentence," said Justin Nelson, co-founder of the National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce. He said other communities have used that power to help gain acceptance.

"When you take this out of the bedroom and stick it in the boardroom...when you talk about job creation, healthcare for employees, how do you grow the overall economic health of our community and our nation," then some people are more likely to listen.

Mara Keisling, executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality, was perhaps the most upbeat. She recounted how in 2002, about 5% of the population was covered by laws protecting the rights of transgender persons. Legislative action and the courts have expanded that to about 45%. "During that time the population protected on the basis of sexual orientation has remained almost stagnant at 45%."

She could count 30 trans friends that had been fired in the last two years, and yet there is resistance to including trans persons in the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA). "We are spending so



Cornelius Baker

Photo by Bob Roehr

much of our energy fighting our friends." She singled out Barney Frank for criticism. "We have traded the closeted folks for the assimilators who have sort of gone away. Before, where we couldn't get most of the people because they were in the closet, now we can't get a lot of them because they've move on. We've shifted that much."

"I think we are all very nervous about what will happen if Bush is reelected," said one young member of the audience. "But in some ways I'm even more scared by the direction of the Democratic Party, because these people are suppose to be our allies. How can we keep them accountable?"

Moderator Jonathan Capehart asked whether Senator John Kerry's opposition to the Federal Marriage Amendment (FMA) but possible support of an amendment to the

Massachusetts Constitution "kind of sounds like he's trying to have it both ways. Can we really trust the guy?"

"I think we can," said Chrissy Gephardt, representing the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund. It is about "which candidate is going to further our rights the most...[Kerry] is going to be leaps and bounds above President Bush."

"There is a common language in this country, and it is called money," said DC Council member David Catania. He said the GLBT community is the fourth largest block of contributors to the Democratic Party — unions, trial lawyers, Jewish Americans, gay Americans. "What do we expect of the Democratic Party? It [the gay community] should get something in return."

"If the community is disproportionately in one party, then we really have no place to go," he argued. Catania raised over \$75,000 for President Bush's reelection. "But there comes a time when a party does something so egregious that it makes it impossible for us to be at home there." Catania broke with the President when Bush announced his support for the Federal Marriage Amendment (FMA).

"George Bush won 25% of gay votes in 2000; he will be lucky if he gets 12% this time. And what he will have done is hurt two generations of gays who will be outside." He compared it with 1960 when Richard Nixon won 26-27% of the African American vote, but that fell to 12% in 1964 under the insensitive policies of candidate Barry Goldwater. The party has yet to

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Members of the Pride + Vote = Power Panel

Photo by Bob Roehr

North Carolina Pride 2004: www.ncpride.org