



Give the People Light and they will find their own way.

The Wisconsin Light

N.Y. Court Rules Gay Couple Is A Family

[New York, NY]- In a landmark ruling, *Braschi v. Stahl Associates*, the New York Court of Appeals ruled on July 7, 1989, that a Gay man could be considered a family member of his deceased lover.

"This decision marks the most important single step forward in American law toward legal recognition of Lesbian and Gay relationships," commented William B. Rubenstein, Staff Counsel to the American Civil Liberties Union's (ACLU) Lesbian and Gay Rights project, who argued the case for the Gay man. "This is the first time that a state's highest court has recognized a Gay couple to be the legal equivalent of a 'family.'"

The case concerned the interpretation of New York City's rent control law. The plaintiff, Miguel Braschi, had lived with his lover in a rent controlled apartment for 10 years. On the lover's death, the landlord attempt to evict Braschi on the grounds that only a family member can inherit a rent controlled lease. Braschi argued that he was a member of his lover's family and entitled to the lease.

In its decision, the court wrote that "family" must be interpreted realistically: "The intended protection against sudden eviction should not rest on fictitious legal distinctions or genetic history, but instead should find its foundation in the reality of family life." The court found the "reality of family life" in this case to be that the Gay couple was an "equally valid" family and one that comports with "society's traditional concept of family."

The New York decision outlines a number of factors for lower courts to consider in determining whether a family exists:

- the exclusivity and longevity of the relationship,
 - the level of emotional and financial commitment,
 - the manner in which the parties have conducted their everyday lives and held themselves out to society,
 - the reliance placed upon one another for daily family services.
- "Because these factors are generic in nature," Rubenstein emphasized, "the court's ruling will benefit not only Gay couples, but all people who live in committed family relationships throughout society."

LIGHT To Host Booth At Third Ward Block Party

[Milwaukee]- At the request of Kitty Barber and *Wisconsin Light*, Joan Zepecki, Executive Director of the Historic Third Ward Association is sponsoring a Gay/Lesbian community information and education booth at the Association's Best Block Party.

This very well attended annual event will be held August 4, 1989, on N. Broadway St. between Chicago and Menomonee Sts. from 11:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.

The Lesbian/Gay information booth will be number 64 and will be located on Chicago St. just off Broadway.

All Lesbian and Gay groups, organizations, clubs and individuals are encouraged to participate by having representatives and any materials you might wish to distribute or sell present at the booth for all or part of the day.

While several organizations have already indicated their desire to participate, the hope is that many more will do so. Let us take this opportunity to let people know who and what we are.

If interested, please contact *Wisconsin Light* at (414) 372-2773.

Milwaukee Sentinel Apologizes To Community For Misleading Article



Cheryl Williams

After the Pride Week Proclamation Victory, many of the celebrants went to the M and M Club. Shown watching the noon television news announcing the Gay/Lesbian victory are some of the 125 supporters who attended the Milwaukee County Board meeting at the County Courthouse.

County Supervisors Vote To Stand By Pride Week Proclamation

[Milwaukee]- To cheers and thunderous applause of over 125 Gays, Lesbians and their supporters, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors on July 20 defeated by a vote of 14-11, an effort by right-wingers to have the Board recant their earlier Proclamation honoring Gay/Lesbian Pride Week.

The Proclamation had been sponsored by Elizabeth Coggs-Jones (10-dist.) and co-sponsored by Dorothy Dean (13 dist.).

Approximately 40 of the opposition were present, including members of the Christian Civil Liberties Union, the American Family Association and representatives of the Christian media. Many were wearing badges bearing religious or pro-family slogans.

Much of the obvious pleasure at the vote came from the fact that it was generally believed in the community that the Board would follow the earlier recommendation, made by a vote of 5-1, of the Judiciary Committee that the full Board recant.

At 10:57 a.m., the resolution was moved to the floor. Supervisor Thomas A. Bailey (25 dist.), rose to make a motion to place it on file which would effectively kill it.

In his remarks, Bailey, after noting that he had a "magnificent" wife and 8 children, said that he believed homosexuality to be "unnatural, but I love the homosexual." He concluded by saying that adopting the recant resolution could play up to "a small segment of the community whose hatred is thinly disguised as righteous goodness."

Supervisor Gerald D. Engel (8 dist.), a co-sponsor of the recantation resolution, after noting that he had 7 children, shrugged off possible election repercussions as a result of this stand with a "so be it." He said his resolution was to "correct any impression that we endorse any lifestyle." Engel also criticized both the *Milwaukee Journal* and the *Sentinel* saying their "tolerance was intolerance."

The motion to file was then put to a vote and passed. (See map of Supervisory districts in this issue.)

The days following the Judiciary Committee's vote on July 11 and the meeting of the full Board were filled with great activity by various groups and individual members of the community. Petitions were reportedly passed throughout the bars, speakers addressed bar crowds urging as many as could to attend the Board meeting.

At the same time, Gays, Lesbians and their supporters made uncounted phone calls to the Supervisors while organizing a "rain and clouds" news video. (See letters to the Editor section in this issue for a sample).

Letters were also sent to the Milwaukee County Board from the Dane County Board of Supervisors and the Madison Common Council urging their colleagues not to recant. The Human Rights Campaign Fund and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force also offered advice and assistance.

A sampling of opinion indicates a feeling that the reportage of the event by both TV and the *Journal* and the *Sentinel* to have been fair to the community.

In calls and comments to *Wisconsin Light*, many also expressed their pleasure at the spirit of unity that grew and prevailed in the struggle throughout the community.

After the vote, right wing supporters of the resolution looked stunned. One complained to a reporter that the Supervisors were "chicken, no guts." Robert Braun of the Christian Civil Liberties Union was passing out letters calling for a demonstration against Rep. David Clarenbach (D-Madison) to protest his use of the word "lunatic" to describe them.

Editors Note: Milwaukee County residents may see how their supervisors voted by referring to the district map located on page 11.

San Francisco Fundamentalists Put Domestic Partnership Law in Peril

[San Francisco]- While Gays and Lesbians in New York rejoice over Mayor Koch's announcement that he intends to issue an executive order recognizing the rights of domestic partners, the San Francisco Gay community is facing a battle with local fundamentalists.

The San Francisco Domestic Partners Law enacted just last month, has excited the heated opposition of Rev. Charles McIlhenny and Rabbi Lionel Feldman. Together, McIlhenny and Feldman have collected 27,122 signatures for the repeal of the law the day it was to go into effect. The number of signatures is sufficient to force a referendum on the issue onto November's ballot.

The Domestic Partners Law was passed by the San Francisco Board of

[Milwaukee]- At a meeting with the editorial board of the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, held July 27, 1989, Keith Spore, the paper's Managing Editor, told representatives of the Gay/Lesbian community and their supporters who were present that, "We fell down on the job. We apologize to you." The story, Spore admitted, had "slipped by" the paper's usual editorial procedures.

Spore was referring to an article which appeared in the July 24 edition of the *Sentinel* entitled "Homosexual Prostitutes, Customers Cruise Third Ward Area." The article was by-lined to Tom Held, a *Sentinel* staff writer.

The meeting was held at the request of *Wisconsin Light* and was readily agreed to by Robert H. Wills, the *Sentinel's* Editor.

Present at the July 27 meeting in addition to Spore, were seven members of the Editorial Board of the paper including Wills.

Also present were eight members of the Gay/Lesbian community from Sheboygan and Milwaukee and supporters.

One purpose of the meeting was to acquaint members of the Board with positive approaches to reporting about the Lesbian/Gay community.

To this end, David Treece of Sheboygan, presented to everyone present copies of a six-page guideline prepared by the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD). The six page document which Treece discussed, points up words and points of linguistic style that should be used in sensitive reportage of Lesbians and Gays.

For example, Doug Nelson, Executive Director of the Milwaukee AIDS Project (MAP) pointed out that to write about "victims of AIDS" is not acceptable. For those living with AIDS, the phrase "connotes a lessening of power in their lives," he said.

Dan F. Schramm pointed out that the words "Gay" and "Lesbian" are to be preferred over "homosexual" which is a medical term.

In addition to terminology, the document also suggests positive stories about the Gay/Lesbian community for media reporting.

The second purpose was to voice objections to the July 24 article. Central to these objections were the lack of balance in the article. For example, no Lesbians or Gays were reported to have been contacted. "We can see we should have called the other side," Spore admitted. Nelson responded by saying that he had been contacted by the reporter, but that nothing he said had been used. "The article was not well done and is harmful," Nelson said. To this, everyone

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Supervisors unanimously. It provides for legal registration of "domestic partners" (including same-sex) and all benefits to both same-sex and heterosexual couples.

"We will have to mount a concerted get-out-the-vote campaign to overcome this right-wing challenge to our rights," said Matt Coles, Staff Counsel to the American Civil Liberties of Northern California and one of the ordinance's drafters.

McIlhenny first gained notoriety when he fired an openly Gay organist from his First Orthodox Presbyterian Church in 1978. Since then, McIlhenny has continued his anti-Gay crusade, claiming that his church "changes homos into heteros."