



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

# The Wisconsin Light

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## National Political Conference In Madison Nov. 17

[Madison]- Dane County and Madison's openly Gay and Lesbian elected officials announced that the national Fifth Annual Conference for openly Lesbian and Gay public officials will be held in Madison on November 17-19, 1989.

The first conference was held in West Hollywood in 1985. Subsequent conferences have been held in Washington, D.C. in 1986, in Minneapolis in 1987, and in San Diego in 1988. The past conferences have been attended by Congressman Barney Frank, state legislators, judges, county board chairs and supervisors, mayors, city council members, a town clerk, a school



Tammy S.G. Baldwin

board member and various appointed officials. Attendees have been Democrats, Republicans and Socialists. International guests have included the Honorable Chris Smith MP, an openly Gay member of the British House of Commons.

The conference was invited to Madison by Dane County Board of Supervisors Chair Richard Wagner and Supervisors Kathleen Nichols, Tammy S. G. Baldwin and Earl Bricker and Madison Alderman James McFarland. The letter of invitation noted "We think it particularly appropriate that our conference should meet in the capital city of the nation's only Gay rights state." Wisconsin has been represented at each conference by officials from Dane County.

In 1989, Wisconsin will observe the seventh anniversary of the first statewide law banning discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and Madison will observe the 20th anniversary of Gay activism in its community.

A special effort will be made for the fifth anniversary to reunite the 12 officials

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## Wisconsin Light Exclusive Interview

# HARVEY FIERSTEIN TALKS ABOUT FILMING "TORCH SONG"



Arnold (Harvey Fierstein) and "Ma" (Anne Bancroft) discuss love and respect between mother and son on the occasion of Arnold's birthday.

By Terry Boughner

His voice is not what I expected. It's not guttural, but more silken-soft with just a touch of Mae West's sensuality to it. There is also more than a hint in it of the kind and gentle man that comes across so well on the screen.

By all accounts, Harvey Fierstein is a star. The movie "Torch Song Trilogy" which is, above all his labor of love, is doing very well indeed, not only in Milwaukee, but in the rest of the country as well. Yet, he is so easy to talk with and patient in answering the questions that he has undoubtedly heard a million times before.

Is "Torch Song" autobiographical? "No," he says. "Not really." It is no more the story of his life than the work of any other author. But, since any writer creates only from what and who they know, Fierstein adds "The real Alan (played in the film by Matthew Broderick) is alive and well in Chicago and the real Ed (played in the film by Brian Kerwin) is living in New York."

The making of the film has been described as "A labor of love" yet, it had its difficult moments. For Fierstein, the hardest of these was the filming of "Alan — Matthew's death." It was raining, he says and, in-between takes, the actors "joked a lot — danced a little in the street to relieve tension. A lot of people," he says, "were shocked by this," but it got them through an emotionally rough scene. To make matters worse or, perhaps with a terrible irony, real Gay-bashers stood near-by laughing at the whole thing. You can hear the sadness mixed with anger in Fierstein's voice as he recounts the incident. And, I admit, because I find Matthew Broderick wonderfully attractive in a vulnerable way, what Fierstein says, hurts.

Some people have wondered at the neighborhood in which Alan and Arnold (Fierstein) choose to live. "It's a real neighborhood," Fierstein says. "Where it takes place is on the corner of Thompson and Spring in lower westside Manhattan in the Little Italy section of New York." When I tell him that some wonder at the run-down building and the beautiful apartment, he chuckles and replies, "Tell them that's what New York is like. That's a real loft. It was a factory — you can see that in the film if you look closely." As to the furniture, well, "It was all second hand stuff." If people thought it was beautiful, "well, what can I say? Fag skills?" I think of a friend who talks about "The queen's touch."

One thing about the film puzzles me. In the scene where Virginia Hamm is singing and being heckled by an obnoxious type, why does a man leap from his chair and, knife in hand, grab Broderick who was clearly not responsible?

Again Fierstein chuckles. "The heckler had slipped away," he answers. "He and his friend jumped over the railing." But, Fierstein admits, "The action was very fast, too fast. It should have been slowed down. A number of people missed it."

Then he says, "Here's something for you. Did you recognize the heckler?"

I admit that I didn't. "The heckler," says Fierstein, "was the same guy who played Alan in the stage production of Torch Song. I think your readers might be interested in that."

Both Broderick and Kerwin do, I think, warmly sensitive jobs playing Gay characters. But, does a person playing an open and sympathetic Gay role suffer when it comes to getting future parts?

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## Dallas Judge Hampton Widely Condemned for Anti-Gay Actions

[Dallas, TX]- Elected officials and leaders of civil rights, victim rights and law enforcement groups condemned the actions of Dallas Judge Jack Hampton in connection with the sentencing of Richard Lee Bednarski, who was convicted for the brutal murder of two Gay men. Judge Hampton sentenced Bednarski to 30 years in prison instead of the full life sentence sought by the prosecution because the murderer's victims were Gay. At the sentencing hearing on December 15, 1988, Judge Hampton said, "I don't much care for queers cruising the streets picking up teen-age boys... I put prostitutes and Gays at about the same level, and I'd be hard put to give somebody life for killing a prostitute."

It has been reported that one of the murdered Gay men pleaded for his life as the gun barrel was put into his mouth and fired.

At the request of the Texas Human Rights Foundation, the Texas State Commission on Judicial Conduct held a hearing on January 13 to investigate Judge Hampton's behavior in the case.

According to Dennis Vercher, editor of

Dallas Voice, the Gay/Lesbian newspaper in that city, at its meeting on the 13th, the Commission took public testimony. The Commission will have 60 days to make a response. It's deliberations are secret.

Vercher told Light that the Commission has four options: 1) drop the charges against Hampton entirely, 2) a private censure, 3) a public censure, 4) initiate proceedings that will lead to the judge's ouster. Should this happen and ouster take place, Vercher said, Hampton can appeal to the Texas Supreme Court. "It's up in the air," Vercher said, as to which option the Commission will take.

Regardless of the outcome, Hampton faces an election in 1990. Vercher told Light that, in the contest, Democrats and "centrist" Republicans will "line up" against Hampton. "His Hampton's support will come from the Republican far right," Vercher said.

The Dallas Gay Alliance urges all persons outraged by the Judge's conduct to write letters to: Robert C. Flowers, State Commission on Judicial Conduct, P.O. Box 12265, Capitol Station, Austin, TX 78711.

## Judge Orders Sharon Kowalski Moved to Rehab Facility

[St. Louis County, MN]- District court judge Robert V. Campbell has ordered that Sharon Kowalski be moved to Miller-Dwan Medical Center in Duluth to begin receiving communication and other rehabilitation therapy.

Kowalski, who was severely injured in an automobile accident in 1983, has been kept in a nursing home since 1985. She has received little rehab there and has not been allowed to see visitors of her choice. Kowalski has been under the legal guardianship of her father, Donald Kowalski, since 1984.

Karen Thompson, Kowalski's partner, has been pursuing legal action since 1984 for "proper medical care for Kowalski, as well as for the right to visit and help care for her.

Campbell's order stated that "Ms.

Kowalski may have visitation... with those personal friends who she specifically and reliably request visit her."

Kowalski's parents have obtained a stay of the order while they prepare an appeal. Thompson and other activists working for improvements in Kowalski's situation were surprised by the parents' appeal. Thompson said, "I just don't understand how they could try and get out of giving their daughter rehabilitation."

At this critical time, the case is on the threshold of major changes, and the National Committee to Free Sharon Kowalski is in need of funds to continue working for Sharon's freedom. Donations may be sent to the National Committee at 1725 17th St., NW, Rm 515, Washington, D.C. 20009.