



MY MOMENT *to win big!*


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Ann Rostow: Hot Times

By Ann Rostow—

Hot Times

Summertime. And the living is easy. (Sing with me!) Fish are jumping. And the cotton is high. Mel and I are heading out for a three-week spree, starting with a thousand-mile road trip and ending in an exhausted collapse as the Canicula fades into September. Then, we have college football, the midterm elections, the holidays and a whole new year of dangerous chaos. Can't wait.

I gather the Gay Games are underway in Paris, a beautiful location for an event that used to irritate me. Started in 1982 as the Gay Olympics, the idea was to showcase those gay athletes who were not allowed to compete openly in other venues. It was also meant to present a positive community image at a time when the GLBT popularity rating was not particularly high, if I recall correctly. The early organizers were obliged to fight a lawsuit over their name from the regular Olympics (even though there were no legal challenges fought over the Special Olympics or the Police Olympics), eventually switching the designation to Gay Games.

After a time, it seemed silly to me. It wasn't 1982 anymore. If you're really great, why not compete in the actual Olympics? What's the point of winning a gold medal for fastest swimmer in a bunch of random lesbians between ages 40 and 50 who decided to go to the Gay Games? By all means hold the event. But stop with the self-important grandstanding.

Then, in the early 2000s, the Games became embroiled in an extended drama. Faced with poor fiscal planning by the would-be organizers of the 2006 Montreal-based Gay Games, the Gay Games officials reopened the bidding and awarded the event to a Chicago-based group, which only had a couple of years to prepare. The childish egos in Montreal couldn't handle this situation, and instead of backing away gracefully, they organized their own rival sports thing, called "OutGames," spitefully scheduled one week after the Chicago "Gay Games." In the end, the OutGames lost a bundle, something like five million Canadian, while Chicago broke even and held a nice event.

After that, we had some back and forth over the notion of producing not one, but two, worldwide GLBT athletic meets, held in different years. For reasons unclear, the flakey OutGames people refused to admit defeat or to disband, while the hard-working Gay Games people carried on as usual.

The next thing that registered on my otherwise disinterested subconscious was a complete collapse of the 2017 "World OutGames Miami" last summer, a result of total financial mismanagement. I guess they raised a million or two, but spent most of it on consulting, administration and advertising, etc. In other words, they blew it on themselves and their buddies and had to cancel the opening and closing ceremonies and most of the events. Lawsuits followed.

Meanwhile, it looks as if our Gay Games friends have chugged along in a responsible and successful manner, and are producing a lovely sports spectacle in the City of Light. Good for them. The Gay Games are now open to everyone, and have become the largest "come one come all" type of sports meeting in the world. So, I think I like them again.

Courting Trump

We have another victory in another of the four federal court fights over Trump's attempt to ban transgender men and women from serving in the military. In our last column, we mentioned that the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit refused to remove a federal court hold on Trump's policy. Now, U.S. District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly in Washington, D.C., has also refused a Trump administration request to lift a stay on implementing the horrendous policy. I guess Trump and company will appeal her decision to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, and once again, that court will slap them down.

After Trump's bizarre and unexpected trans ban announcement last year, our side jumped into action with separate lawsuits from the National Center for Lesbian Rights, the ACLU, Lambda and Equality California. We quickly won injunctions against the ban and are now fighting various attempts to have those injunctions lifted. So far, Trump has not asked the Supreme Court to review any of the appellate decisions. He is, no doubt, waiting for his fifth vote.

Meanwhile, as I was going back and forth to track down the complicated transgender military litigation, I encountered a phenomenon called "pee-gasm," in which some women are reportedly capable of reaching a sexual climax by avoiding the bathroom until their bladders are bursting and then letting it all hang out.

Holy golden shower! What will these crazy Millennials think of next?

I just spent ten minutes trying to think of the least sexy way to reach orgasm in order to make an amusing point, but I just can't top this. Not only is it weird and grotesque, but doctors say it's unhealthy to boot. New Zealand gynecologist Charlotte Elder told the *New York Post* that the end result is not worth the risk to your bladder health. "There are more practical and more pleasurable ways to have an orgasm," she says. "My advice is to try something a bit more old-fashioned." You said it, Doc!

Let Some of Us Pray

Speaking of a previous generation, I had not realized that the feud between certain lesbians and transgender women has not settled gently into the ash heap of discredited history, but still burns. This isn't the most interesting of subjects until we learn that one of these pockets of anti-transgender lesbian politics has taken the form of the "Pussy Church of Modern Witchcraft," which amazingly has been recognized as a legitimate "church" and thus granted tax exempt status by the IRS.

According to the group's website, church leaders and/or voting church members must be born female, live a "consistent lesbian life," be born again in lesbian feminism, be willing to give money and accept "the Tenets of Faith as set forth in *The Lesbian Heresy* by Sheila Jeffreys, *Gyn/Ecology The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* by Mary Daly, *Sister Outsider* by Audre Lorde and other texts as designated from time to time by the Trustees."

Are you kidding me?

I'm not a fan of organized religion in general with the understandable exception of my own faith, Pastafarianism, i.e.: the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster. True, this religion is a joke, a parody of organized churches, but it was founded to make an important constitutional point. What is a church? Should any and all things labeled as "faith" be granted respect under the First Amendment? Pastafarianism has developed a complicated religious structure during its first 20 years and makes as much sense as any other religion. But although it wins recognition here and there, it does not have tax exempt status.

Graciously, I've always accepted this second-class treatment by the IRS, but now I'm annoyed. Why should the pussy church get this kind of accreditation while the spaghetti church, which actually does have a faith-based *raison d'être*, gets nothing? Not only is the pussy church advancing discrimination on several fronts, but it seems political rather than religious in nature. Doesn't a religious order require an element of the divine? I guess not.

Meanwhile, Attorney General Jeff Sessions has announced a Religious Liberty Task Force at the Justice Department, focused entirely on conservative Christianity. The Task Force will remedy situations where vendors like Jack Phillips of Masterpiece Cakeshop are forced to transact with gay customers, or perhaps where a pharmacist might be obliged to fill a morning after pill prescription. You get the picture. I wonder whether the pussy witches or the spaghetti monsters will be able to appeal to the Task Force, should their liberties be trampled.

Jerk of a Clerk

And speaking of religious discrimination, or "liberty," depending on your point of view, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo is outraged over the behavior of a Montgomery County town clerk, Laurel "Sherrie" Eriksen, who flatly refused to marry two men from Root, New York, on August 1. Dylan Toften and his now husband, Thomas Hurd, were obliged to hit the next county in order to tie the knot after uber-Christian Erikson told them to find someone else to file the paperwork.

Later, after some hoopla greeted the news, the Root town attorney Robert Subik claimed lamely that Eriksen declined to process the marriage license because the men did not have an appointment. He acknowledged that Sherrie also had a religious objection and said a deputy clerk would have been available had the men pursued the matter.

Governor Cuomo has asked the New York Division of Human Rights to investigate, and I hope they throw the book at Sherrie and Robert and the whole gang over there. I read somewhere that Eriksen may have been inspired by the Masterpiece Cakeshop baker, Jack Phillips, who managed to avoid punishment for discriminating against gay clients. The Supreme Court did not, however, rule that businesses had a right to ignore civil rights laws. Instead, they avoided the question, ruling that Phillips was mistreated by a commissioner during his lengthy legal challenge. The sooner courts and commissions start clearing up the misperception about this case, the better. Meanwhile, Eriksen is a public servant, not a business, which makes her self-centered holier-than-thou behavior even more despicable.

Happily Ever After

Did you hear about the high school valedictorian from Jacksonville who was effectively disowned when his parents told him to worship with them or leave the house? Seth Owen came out to his parents as a sophomore, but had to put up with the family's strict church and conversion attempts. Lately, when Seth asked if he could switch to a church that did not denigrate gays and lesbians, his parents said no. Stick with the program or take a hike.

Meanwhile, Seth had won a partial scholarship to Georgetown, although based on his parents' income he was still obliged to pay a fairly big chunk of tuition. When his parents effectively disowned him, it seemed as if he had to say goodbye to his Hoya dreams.

That's when a teacher set up a Go Fund Me page which not only raised \$129,000, but also led Georgetown to offer him a full ride. Seth will create a scholarship for other GLBT kids with the extra cash. (See page 4 for more on Seth Owen.)

Watching

I've got other items on my news list. Marriage equality may be coming to Costa Rica, we had a transgender student ruling in our favor from an Indiana federal court, and some antigay shenanigans in Russia, or as Trump might call it, "Rusher." God, I hate that man.

I have been out of touch with my buddies at Lambda Legal, but Executive Director Rachel Tiven just resigned after a couple of years of running the place into what sounds like an increasingly depressing state. Lambda reportedly has seen high staff turnover, discontent, and anger at top-down management and benefit cuts, according to the *Washington Blade*. Sounds like a good reporter could get an earful with a few well-placed phone calls. (I did learn that Tiven is Michael Bloomberg's niece. Fun fact.)

Finally, it sounds like *The Miseducation of Cameron Post* is well worth the price of a movie ticket. According to a review in the *Atlantic*, the story of a teenaged lesbian sent to conversion camp in the mid-1990s is a "graceful coming of age tale," and is the winner of this year's Sundance Film Festival's Grand Jury Prize. Oh, and Roger Ebert (<https://www.rogerebert.com/>) gave it three and a half stars.

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And speaking of recommendations, have all of you seen, or at least heard of, *Nanette*, Hannah Gadsby's one-woman show on Netflix? It is indescribably good.

arostow@aol.com