

The Nation

PEOPLE

Provincetown tragedy



Gwen Bloomingdale (left) and Barbara Gard

The dreams of a well-known lesbian couple from Provincetown, Mass., who had planned to fly around the world, died with the couple March 6,

when their twin-engine plane crashed off the coast of Iceland. Barbara Gard, 52, and Gwen Bloomingdale, 59, both seasoned pilots, left Provincetown for

London March 1. From London, they planned to participate in the London to Sydney Air Race 2001, then to fly back to the States via the Pacific Rim.

Provincetown's small band of year-round residents planned to follow the couple's four-month journey on the Web with help from a cockpit-mounted camera. So did many first- and second-grade students at the school Bloomingdale's grandchildren attend.

"They had been preparing for this trip for most of the year, and everybody was full of happiness for them," said the Rev. Alison Hyder, minister of the Uni-

tarian Universalist Meeting House. "It's just horrifying."

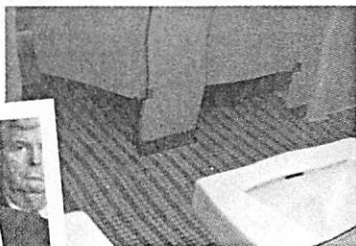
Gard was a retired marine and retired major in the National Guard. Bloomingdale was a lawyer who had argued before the U.S. Supreme Court and was the great-great-granddaughter of the Bloomingdale's department store founder. They met in 1985 and called the tiny Cape Cod community home.

"They were both very involved, both very dynamic, loving, and funny," said friend Irene Rabinowitz. "It's an incredible loss. People are just walking around here stunned." —Victoria Scanlan Stefanakos

POLITICS

Public sex predicament

Massachusetts governor Paul Cellucci and state police seem to be at odds over public sex. Just days after the police's March 1 announcement that they would no longer arrest people for having sex in public rest areas—as long as it was hidden from view—Cellucci said the state would "absolutely not tolerate any" sex there. *The Providence [R.I.] Journal* quoted Cellucci spokesman John Birtwell as saying that the governor, who has been nominat-



Governor Cellucci gets wrapped into a debate over rest-area sex.

ed by President Bush to be ambassador to Canada, does not distinguish between sex that is observed and sex that is unobserved.

The state police announced a settlement of a lawsuit brought by Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders on behalf of a gay man who was being ejected from highway rest stops.

"There's a difference between doing it on a pitcher's mound in the middle of the day and obviously taking steps to secrete yourself," GLAD's Mary Bonauto told *The Boston Globe*.

But Birtwell insisted that anyone caught having public sex will be prosecuted. And according to Cellucci spokesman Jason Kauppi, "The concern was that a family may feel they could not stop at a rest area safely and free from seeing something they may not want to see." It might be something Cellucci doesn't want U.S. senators (whose confirmation is required for his ambassadorship) to see either. —David Kirby

RELIGION

Forgive and forget

After little more than a month as senior pastor of Dallas's predominantly gay and lesbian White Rock Community Church, the Rev. James



The Rev. James Simmons

Simmons resigned February 28 from his post after he failed to win a vote of confidence from the congregation.

The revelation in December that Simmons was really Wesley Barrett "Barre" Cox, a San Antonio minister who disappeared in 1984, drew unexpected attention to the church and left the congregants divided over their new minister. Despite skeptics' suggestions that his disappearance was an elaborate coming-out cover-up, Simmons maintains that he suffers from amnesia as a result of being attacked and beaten more than 16 years ago. He claims to have no recollection of his former life, including the wife and daughter he left behind when he disappeared. —Richard Tate