



and *Million Dollar Baby*—but a young Clint Eastwood is just about as badass as it gets. Got that, *punk*?

130) POLITICS

Are you a Republican congressman supporting the federal marriage amendment? Are you also a closeted homosexual? Meet Mike Rogers, the gay activist who will soon be outing you

BY JAKE TAPPER

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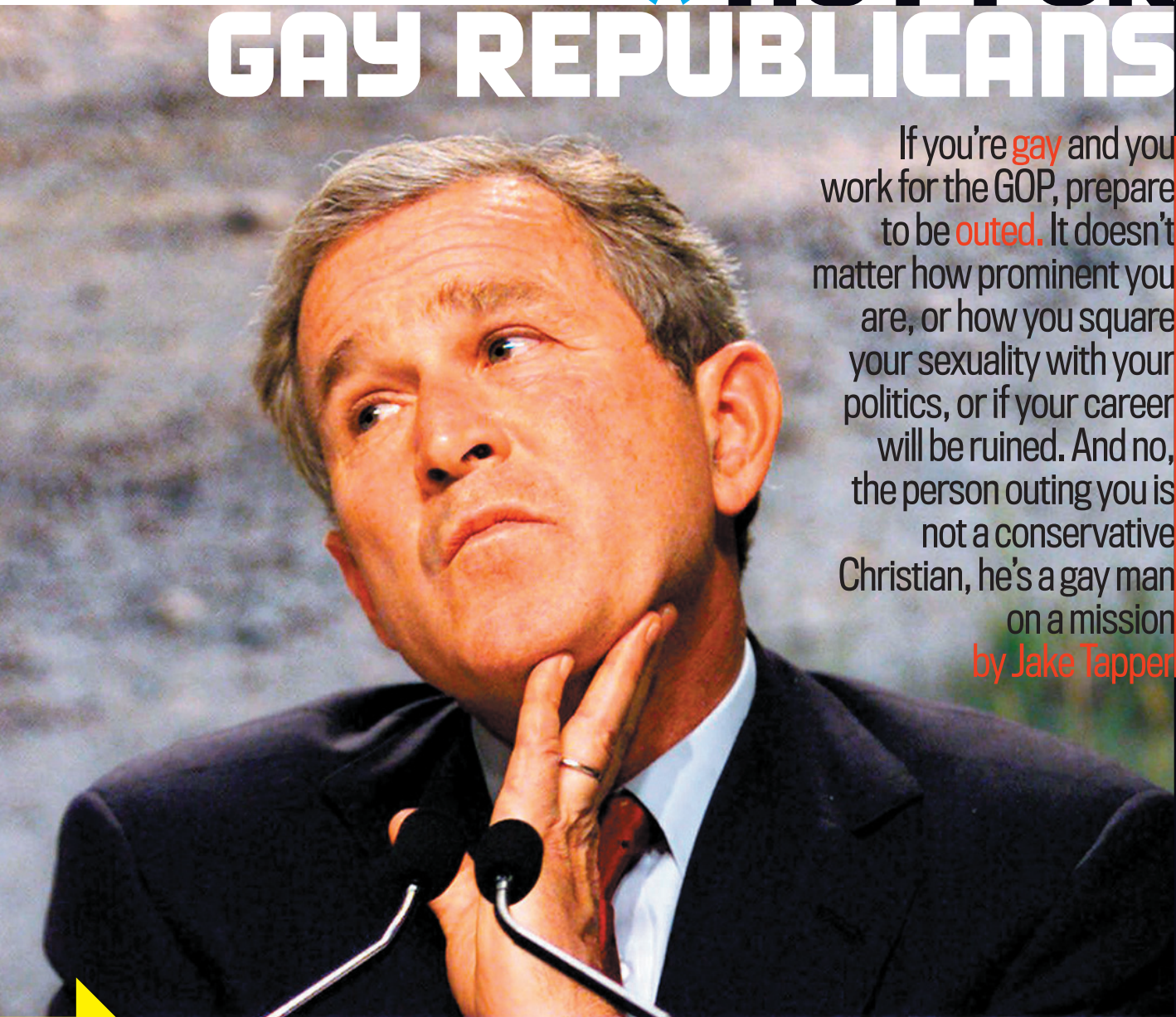
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*HOT FOR GAY REPUBLICANS

If you're **gay** and you work for the GOP, prepare to be **outed**. It doesn't matter how prominent you are, or how you square your sexuality with your politics, or if your career will be ruined. And no, the person outing you is not a conservative Christian, he's a gay man on a mission
by Jake Tapper



FROM HIS PHYSICAL PRESENCE alone, former congressman Ed Schrock of Virginia seems a model Republican. Trim, tall, his hair buzzed short, at 63 Schrock still walks with a military crispness. He's been married for thirty-seven years, and is a father and retired navy captain who served two tours in Vietnam and two terms in the U.S. House of Representatives. And as you might expect from a man who sang in the choir of the Atlantic Shores Baptist Church and whose congressional district included Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network, Schrock was also a vocal cosponsor of last year's proposed federal marriage amendment,

the bill that would change the Constitution to define marriage as a union between a man and a woman. He'd always been clear about where he stood on gays. As he told his hometown paper during the debate over Bill Clinton's "gays-in-the-military social experiment," "You're in the showers with them, you're in the bunk room with them.... You just hope no harm would come by folks who are of that persuasion."

Which is why it was a little startling to Mike Rogers, a gay activist in Washington, D.C., when he came into possession of several recordings of a man Rogers believed

to be Schrock expressing a decidedly different attitude toward naked gay men. The recordings were personal ads that had been placed on a gay dating line:

“Uh, hi, I weigh 200 pounds, six foot four, hazel eyes, blond hair, very muscular, very buffed-up, very tanned. Um, I’d just like to get together with a guy from time to time...just get naked, play, and see what happens.... Go down on him, he can go down on me, and just, uh, take it from there. Hope to hear from you. Bye.”

“On the one hand, I was shocked,” Rogers says of the first time he heard the tapes. “But you know, on the other hand it’s like, of course it’s going to be the notorious homophobe who’s judging in others what he hates in himself.” Rogers made several calls to sources on Capitol Hill to confirm that the voice was Schrock’s, and then on August 19, convinced that it was, he posted a story about Schrock on his blog—www.blogactive.com. Eleven days later, on the first night of the Republican National Convention, Schrock issued a statement saying he would not seek reelection. Immediately afterward, Rogers posted one of the recordings online. To this day, Schrock has neither confirmed nor denied that the voice is his.

Mainstream reporters pounced. *The Washington Post* ran a story about Schrock that included quotes from Rogers, and in what was one of Rogers’s proudest moments, *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* played the audio files.

Schrock disappeared from public view. His life entered a period of some darkness that lasted several months, a source close to him says. His marriage was shaken, his career over. Despite important hearings of the House Armed Services Committee—one on the status of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, another on Abu Ghraib—when Congress reconvened in early September, Schrock wasn’t there.

Mike Rogers has no qualms about upending Schrock’s life. “What about the thousands of careers that Ed Schrock supported ending for people who wanted nothing more than to do what he did, to serve their country?” Rogers asks. “I’m sorry Ed Schrock lives in a society where he felt he had to lie to his wife. But you know something? That’s not our side saying that—that’s his side.”



FOR MUCH OF THE PAST YEAR, Rogers, 41, has been holed up in his apartment in



★ Mike Rogers, in his D.C. neighborhood, takes a break from his outing spree.

front of an outdated Dell computer, receiving tips and filtering rumors, debating who deserves to be outed for supporting what he sees as an antigay agenda.

Schrock’s scalp is Rogers’s biggest trophy to date, but he tells me he has his crosshairs set on a number of high-profile members of Congress and the administration. In February, Rogers was preparing to out a high-profile member of the Bush Cabinet as a lesbian. A number of individuals from her past “allege that she’s gay, that she’s dated women,” he says. “One of my sources was an employee of a woman she dated.” His attorneys are advising him to proceed cautiously, but Rogers is in an especially optimistic mood, having come from a recent meeting of the Democratic National Committee, where various private individuals expressed their desire to help him out with leads and financial support. “I’ve been amazed at how many people who previously opposed what I was doing have now come around,” he says.

His mission started in earnest last June, when Majority Leader Bill Frist scheduled a Senate vote on the federal marriage amendment for July, two weeks before the Democratic convention. Within days, Rogers, with a small team of volunteers, began circulating flyers at a Gay Pride parade in D.C., seeking the names of gay and lesbian staffers who were working for amendment supporters. “Do not protect homophobes and the people who keep them in power,” the flyer read, and it offered a Yahoo address where anyone could name names.

He now has hundreds of files, each one representing a tip—some guy who saw so-and-so in an Austin gay bar in the ’90s; a woman rumored to have had a lesbian affair with such-and-such; a man who swears he and a certain senator had some fun in a Union Station men’s room. Of course, Rogers doesn’t run all of these stories—much of the evidence he’s collected is less than convincing—but he has exhibited a curious mix of caution and recklessness. For two of his more prominent targets—Representative David Dreier (R-California) and Ken Mehlman, President Bush’s choice as chair of the Republican National Committee—Rogers has taken a gossip-page approach, posing the rumors as questions. Neither Dreier nor Mehlman will answer the question as to whether they’re gay, Rogers has noted over and over on his Web site, as if this itself is proof of his claims.

“I called over to the Bush campaign this morning to speak to Ken,” Rogers wrote on November 10. “I was quite surprised when he picked up his own phone. Immediately after I identified myself and explained that I was to write a story on Ken running for RNC chair, Ken refused to answer any questions and hung up immediately. Hmmm, Ken...do you have something to hide?”



THERE’S A LONG, dirty history, of course, of smearing politicians by labeling them as gay. But until recently it was Republicans who did the deeds. In 1989 the RNC, then chaired by Lee Atwater, implied that long-married Democratic House Speaker Tom Foley was gay by distributing a memo entitled “Tom Foley: Out of the Liberal Closet.” “We hear it’s little boys,” an aide to Representative Newt Gingrich told the New York *Daily News* at the time. (In reality, there was no evidence that “it” was anyone other than Foley’s wife.) Karl Rove, Atwater’s acolyte, has also been accused of smearing political opponents as gay, including former Texas governor Ann Richards, a rival Texas Republican consultant, and a 1994 judicial candidate in Alabama.

This past year, with polls indicating that Americans overwhelmingly oppose gay marriage, and with the Massachusetts Supreme Court and San Francisco mayor Gavin Newsom making waves by supporting the rights of gays and lesbians to marry, President Bush barnstormed the country as the protector of one-man-one-woman

“Remember, these people are saying we’re **bad people**. What’s being outed here is **hypocrisy**, not homosexuality.”

marriage. The RNC followed up the president’s rhetoric with a controversial mailing to voters in Arkansas and West Virginia (and perhaps elsewhere) that derided liberals as wanting to ban Bibles and allow men to marry men. The mailings included a photograph of a goateed man on his knees proposing to his male lover, who was sitting on a porch swing.

As Mike Rogers sees it, all he’s doing is returning the fire. “I’m definitely pushing the limit as a journalist,” Rogers admits. “I don’t know if Ken Mehlman’s gay. But to me the whole point about Ken Mehlman is he could be perceived to be gay.” And if Mehlman, as Bush’s campaign manager, “is going to use my private life to elect a president, I have every right to ask about his private life. What I’m amazed at is that Ken Mehlman won’t say he’s straight!”

“Ken Mehlman is not gay,” insists Steve Schmidt, a senior official of the Bush campaign and a friend of Mehlman’s, who refers to Rogers as a “bottom dweller.”

So why won’t Mehlman just answer the question and put all the rumors to rest? Schmidt says he’s staking a position on privacy for others. “What Mike Rogers is doing to people is despicable. And Ken understands that his answering that question at the insistence of Mike Rogers legitimizes the question and compels every 22-year-old staff assistant on Capitol Hill to answer the question should Mike Rogers turn his sights on them.”

Representative Barney Frank (D-Massachusetts), one of only three openly gay members of Congress, has expressed support of Rogers. “Remember, what these people are saying is we’re bad people,” Frank tells me. “What’s being outed here is hypocrisy, not homosexuality.”

But is hypocrisy enough of a reason to justify Rogers’s actions? “I don’t think there’s any doubt that some people have put themselves in a very troubling position,” acknowledges prominent gay conservative writer Andrew Sullivan. “But the right thing is to feel extremely sad and angry that these people, whoever they are, have not stood up for what’s right, and yet also feel sad and angry that other gay men are persecuting them. I mean, hypocrites have human rights, too.”

The first person Rogers outed on his blog was a top official of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, the arm of the RNC tasked with getting Senate candidates elected. Four days later, he posted the names of staffers for three Republican members of Congress.

On July 8, Rogers posted the name

Jonathan Tolman, a staffer on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, chaired by Senator James Inhofe (R-OKlahoma). In 1993, Inhofe said he would not hire openly gay people. (It’s tough to argue that Tolman was really in the closet, however. In May 2001, he had appeared in the gay *Metro Weekly*, posing for beefcake photos and boasting that he’d been cruised at Home Depot and was seeking a five-foot-ten man who had “six-pack abs you could eat chip and dip off of.”) After Rogers listed him on his site, the committee issued a statement saying that Tolman worked for Environment and Public Works, not in Inhofe’s personal office. There, the statement emphasized, “Senator Inhofe does not hire openly gay staffers.”

Throughout last summer and into the fall, as Rogers’s Web site attracted more and more readers (he guesses that, before the election, he was receiving as many as 350,000 hits a week), he appeared to go after GOP staffers indiscriminately. He named three staffers for Republican senator George Allen of Virginia; a fund-raiser for Senate Majority Leader Frist; and someone who worked for Senator Trent Lott (R-Mississippi) on his political-action committee. When the granddaughter of former senator Jesse Helms ran for a judgeship, Rogers attempted to out her as a lesbian. It’s hard to make the case that any of these individuals were meaningfully responsible for the federal marriage amendment, but Rogers seemed to no longer care about that criterion.



IN SEPTEMBER, livid about the RNC mailing depicting the gay man proposing to another man, Rogers set his sights on the RNC—“I mean, that place is like a gay bar!” he says—and went after Dan Gurley, then the RNC’s national field director, with a particular vengeance.

“What he does is fundamentally wrong,” says Gurley. “Who is he to know or understand the personal journey a gay person makes?”

To be sure, to meet Gurley is to be confronted with the fact that politics doesn’t often recognize human complexity. Gurley is a mild-mannered North Carolinian who says he knew he was Republican before he knew he was gay. (He remembers wearing a Nixon-Agnew button on the school bus in second grade.) When he was 19, Gurley had his first sexual experience with another



★ Dan Gurley, whom Rogers attacked with a vengeance, in D.C.

male. Around six years later, he told his younger brother, a marine, that he was gay. His brother has been accepting, his parents less so.

And while it hasn’t always been easy being a gay Republican in the South, Gurley swears he has never pretended to be straight in order to be accepted within the party. “I tell the people I want to tell and I don’t tell those I don’t,” he says. “If someone has the balls to ask me if I’m gay, I have the balls to tell them.”

He’s a Republican for every reason—strong military, lower taxes, less government—except for the one that relates to his personal life. “I believe gay couples should have every legal right straight couples have,” he says. “That should be the goal. Call it whatever you like, but don’t call it marriage.” According to Gurley, matters were proceeding slowly but steadily in that direction until the Massachusetts court ruled in the fall of 2003 that the state’s ban on gay marriage was unconstitutional. As the RNC’s national field director, Gurley was an essential part of the team getting Bush voters to the polls, and that involved appealing to voters who were motivated by their opposition to gay marriage.

“I would rather it not have been done,” Gurley says of the RNC mailing featuring the gay bogeyman proposing to his partner. “But if the left had pursued civil unions as a positive affirmation of legitimate gay relations as opposed to calling it marriage, it’s highly unlikely a mailing like that would have existed.”

As is his practice before posting anything, Rogers called Gurley at work on September 26, recording the conversation but not telling him he was doing so,

which is legal in D.C.

"Are you 'out' at work?" Rogers asked.

GURLEY: Mmmm-hmmmm.

ROGERS: You are?

GURLEY: I mean, I don't go around telling people about myself. But my supervisors know; the people I work with and work for know. So it's not like I'm being outed.

Rogers then asked Gurley about the RNC flyers.

GURLEY: I'm not going to discuss those.

ROGERS: Are they something you agree with by your silence?

GURLEY: No. I don't discuss my work. I work for the committee, that's all I'm going to say.

ROGERS: So you have no crisis of conscience at all [about] what they are doing to gay people like you and me in the campaign?

GURLEY: I, like anyone else, have policy disagreements with any number of elected officials. I don't expect to agree on everything with everybody.

Though Rogers posted news about the call on his Web site, Gurley says he took no flack from anyone at work. But since Rogers had also posted Gurley's e-mail address on his site, Gurley's inbox was soon flooded with hundreds of "vile, hate-filled, nasty e-mails." All of them, he says, were from correspondents on the left.

But Rogers wasn't done with Gurley yet. Having obtained a personal ad Gurley placed online, Rogers posted it, contrasting President Bush's support for abstinence-only sex-education programs with the more explicit details from Gurley's profile.

Again, Gurley says, there was no reaction from his bosses other than support.

That reaction seems to be the common one. One person related to me a story of

Republican congressman Henry Hyde of Illinois joking that if he ever ran into Rogers, he'd punch him in the nose. Senator Elizabeth Dole of North Carolina reportedly told her staff they had nothing to worry about, should any of them be outed. With the exception of Senator Inhofe parsing between his personal and committee staffs, no one has said anything to distance himself or herself from a gay staffer Rogers has targeted.

"I think what he's done is make those of us who are gay Republicans—and used to fighting—more resilient to be who we are," Gurley says. "And he's pushed a lot of other Republicans towards us, to support us."

Barney Frank says the reaction to Rogers's campaign reflects a shift toward a slightly less malignant view among Republicans in Washington. "There still is this official doctrine that we're immoral," he says. "But the Republican attitude is that they have now moved to the point where they accept the fact that you're gay as long as you act somewhat embarrassed about it."

Indeed, senators and congressmen may posture as being less tolerant than they actually are, one GOP staffer told me. "We're a representative democracy," he said. "And while members may not have personal problems with having gay staff, they vote the way their constituents want them to."

"There's certainly a devoted minority who do care, and they care very intensely," the staffer went on. "That intensity comes through every election cycle, and Republicans can't escape it. When you're at meetings and three-fourths of the policymakers—congressmen, senators—don't really care about an issue like gay marriage and 25 percent of them are going to go to the mat on the issue, the 75 percent are like, 'Okay, fine, whatever.' But don't forget," the staffer says, "the federal

marriage amendment didn't pass the Senate. They didn't have the votes."



ED SCHROCK is another Republican who could argue that his party is more accepting than it might seem on the surface. Before Schrock's term officially expired, Congressman Tom Davis of Virginia, chairman of the House Government Reform Committee, hired Schrock to be a staff director for one of his subcommittees. Schrock "weathered the storm," says a source close to him. "The family unit is as strong as it has ever been," he adds, and Schrock now sees "the light at the end of the tunnel."

There are still only three openly gay members of Congress—Frank, Representative Jim Kolbe (R-Arizona), and Representative Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisconsin)—so it's not too far a stretch to assume that there are plenty more officeholders whose personal affairs might be destined for public discussion. "There's clearly a gay Republican mafia," agrees one gay staffer whom Rogers has targeted. "There's one in every office."

Given that the RNC and the GOP establishment seem relatively unconcerned with whether their top officials are gay, Rogers has a new plan. He has spent months culling from the Internet the e-mail addresses of more than 27,000 Republican Party officials on the state and local levels, as well as religious leaders. These are the people who really will care that those in power in the Grand Old Party are not subscribing to certain biblical standards. These are the voters that Karl Rove and his team just mobilized, and Rogers wants to mobilize them now himself.

"They want family values?" Rogers says. "I'll give them family values!"

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HEARD ON THE HILL: A QUARTER CENTURY OF D.C. OUTINGS

'80

Conservative congressman Bob Bauman (R-Maryland) is charged with, though not convicted of, soliciting sex from a 16-year-old boy in a D.C. gay bar. He loses reelection, his wife files for an annulment, and he becomes a gay-rights activist.

'81

Capitol Police arrest Congressman Jon Hinson (R-Mississippi) for having oral sex with a man in the bathroom of a federal office building. Hinson resigns, becomes a gay activist, and eventually dies from AIDS.

'83

Congressman Gerry Studds (D-Massachusetts) comes out of the closet. He is later censured by the House for having a gay affair with a congressional page in 1973. He goes on to win reelection six more times.

'87

After reporters disclose the secret gay life of nine-term representative Stewart McKinney (R-Connecticut), who has just died from AIDS, Congressman Barney Frank (D-Massachusetts) outs himself to *The Boston Globe*. Frank is currently serving his thirteenth term.

'91

The gay magazine *The Advocate* outs Pete Williams, assistant secretary of defense for public affairs. Dick Cheney, then secretary of defense, stands by him, and Williams stays on the job.

'94

On the floor of the House, Representative Robert Dornan (R-California) outs Congressman Steve Gunderson (R-Wisconsin) during a debate over whether any school receiving federal funding can present homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle. Gunderson continues to serve.

'96

Congressman Jim Kolbe (R-Arizona), under the impression that a gay publication is about to out him, holds a press conference in which he outs himself. Kolbe is currently in his tenth term.

'04

Published last December, *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln* claims that the sixteenth president was gay.—J.T.