



# Automobile Club of Southern California

PROCESSING CENTER: P.O. BOX 25001 • SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA 92799-5001

January 28, 1987

Michael A. Vasquez  
4017 Division Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90065

Dear Mr. Vasquez:

We are returning your \$12 payment because it is not the correct amount for membership renewal.

Member dues are \$34, spouse dues \$12, and each dependent associate \$13. Westways Magazine, if desired, is an additional \$7.

Please return \$34 to renew your membership through February 8, 1987. It is helpful if you write your membership number on your check. We are not able to add Thomas F. Coleman to your membership as spouse associate.

Your prompt reply within ten days will be appreciated. An envelope is enclosed for your mailing convenience.

Sincerely,


Shyrlene Somers  
Correspondence Analysis Department  
Membership Communication Processing

SS:ttv

Enclosure

MEMORANDUM

8

TO: Tom Coleman and Diane Himes  
FROM: David Link   
DATE: February 5, 1987  
SUBJECT: AUTO CLUB POLICY FOR SPOUSAL BENEFITS

---

In conversation today with employees of the Auto Club's Membership and Sales Department, a systematic policy of discrimination against gay and lesbian couples became evident. The Auto Club offers a special membership discount to spouses of its regular members: regular membership is \$34 and spouses are allowed membership for \$12, or approximately 1/3 of the regular membership.

While this may or may not be acceptable in theory, the practice appears to directly violate the Los Angeles public policy of non-discrimination against homosexuals. As I was told by both Auto Club employees I spoke with, Theresa Vargas, a sales representative, and Mrs. Jordan, her supervisor, the Club, which has no means or ability to verify the actual marital status of its approximately 3 million members, simply and routinely accepts the claims of any couple who appear to be of opposite sexes that they are "spouses." I was explicitly told by Mrs. Jordan that the only applications which are automatically rejected are those which list a Spouse Associate who seemed to be of the same sex as the member.

In the absence of an active policy on the Club's part to verify all claims of marriage, the "Spouse Associate" discount neither promotes marriage, nor does it confer benefits on anything like a cohesive and identifiable group of members, since that group includes both married and unmarried heterosexual couples, and those few homosexual couples lucky enough to have gender neutral names, or others clever enough to use initials rather than first names which would give them away. In fact, the only people this benefit, as it is practiced, can exclude are the vast majority of homosexual couples.

In light of the fact that this almost unquestionably constitutes discrimination which the City of Los Angeles prohibits, and since the verification procedure could be tremendously burdensome on the Auto Club, perhaps we should recommend to the Club that they either redefine the benefit category to use the State's criteria of "Household Member," or institute the Domestic Partnership Agreement we are proposing to the City.

# COUPLES, INC.

February 12, 1987

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **AUTO CLUB "SPOUSE-ASSOCIATE" MEMBERSHIP POLICY TO BE CHALLENGED BY SAME-SEX COUPLES**

A delegation of same-sex couples will attend the annual members meeting of the Automobile Club of Southern California to protest what they consider "discriminatory membership policies and practices." The delegation will include representatives from Couples Inc., the national organization for the advancement of lesbian and gay couples.

Los Angeles attorney Thomas F. Coleman and his spouse, Michael A. Vasquez, will present a list of grievances and suggest revisions to eliminate the discrimination. Coleman and Vasquez exchanged marital vows in international waters off the California coast on October 17, 1981.

The members meeting will be held at the Los Angeles Hilton Hotel, 930 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, at 2:00 p.m. on March 9, 1987.

Member dues in "AAA" are \$34, while "spouses" pay only \$12. The term "spouse" is not defined in the club's by-laws.

Coleman, who teaches a class on "Rights of Domestic Partners" at USC Law School, says the club's membership policies and screening practices may constitute illegal marital status or sexual orientation discrimination under state and local laws.

Membership practices of "AAA" were recently reviewed by a sub-committee of the city's Task Force on Family Diversity, Coleman said. That study uncovered "a systematic policy of discrimination against gay and lesbian couples," he added.

David Link, the Task Force member who examined the associate membership issue, said his investigation revealed that "AAA" routinely denies all "obvious" same-sex associate applications, but accepts all opposite-sex applications, even if the male-female couple's last names are different. The membership department does not ask opposite-sex members to verify their marital status, Link noted.

"AAA" management attempted to defend its screening practices, arguing it has "no means or ability to verify the actual marital status of its approximately 3 million members," Link added.

All "AAA" members who bring their membership cards to the Hilton Hotel on March 9 may attend the meeting, Coleman observed. "It certainly would make an impression on the management if scores of gay and lesbian members showed up to support this cause," he said.

For further information, Coleman may be contacted at P.O. Box 65756, Los Angeles, CA 90065 or (213) 258-8955.

## AAA 'Spouse' Policy To Be Challenged

A delegation of same-sex couples will attend the annual members meeting of the Automobile Club of Southern California to protest what they consider "discriminatory membership policies and practices." The delegation will include representatives from Couples Inc., the national organization for the advancement of lesbian and gay couples. (See story below).

Los Angeles attorney Thomas F. Coleman and his spouse, Michael A. Vasquez, will present a list of grievances and suggest revisions to eliminate the discrimination. Coleman and Vasquez exchanged marital vows in international waters off the California coast on October 17, 1981.

The members meeting will be held at the Los Angeles Hilton Hotel, 930 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, at 2 pm on March 9, 1987.

Member dues in AAA are \$34, while "spouses" pay only \$12. The term "spouse" is not defined in the club's by-laws.

Coleman, who teaches a class on "Rights of Domestic Partners" at USC Law School, says the club's membership policies and screening practices may constitute illegal marital status or sexual orientation discrimination under state and local laws.

Membership practices of AAA were recently reviewed by a sub-committee of the city's Task Force on Family Diversity, Coleman said. That study uncovered "a systematic policy of discrimination against gay and lesbian couples," he added.

David Link, the Task Force member who examined the associate membership issue, said his investigation revealed that AAA routinely denies all "obvious" same-sex associate applications, but accepts all opposite-sex applications, even if the male-female couple's last names are different. The membership department does not ask opposite-sex members to verify their marital status, Link noted.

AAA management attempted to defend its screening practices, arguing it has "no means or ability to verify the actual marital status of its approximately 3 million members," Link added.

All AAA members who bring their membership cards to the Hilton Hotel on March 9 may attend the meeting, Coleman observed. "It certainly would make an impression on the management if scores of gay and lesbian members showed up to support this cause," he said.

For further information, Coleman may be contacted at P.O. Box 65756, Los Angeles, CA 90065, or (213) 258-8955.

# THOMAS F. COLEMAN

ATTORNEY AND COUNSELOR AT LAW

CENTER FOR PERSONAL RIGHTS ADVOCACY  
POST OFFICE BOX 65756 • LOS ANGELES, CA 90065 • (213) 258-8955

March 9, 1987

Alice Cohen Bisno  
Auto Club Secretary  
2601 S. Figueroa St.  
Los Angeles, CA 90007

Re: Proposed Amendment to Club's By-Laws, i.e.,  
Change "Spouse" Associate to "Household" Associate

Dear Ms. Bisno:

Attached to this letter is a proposed Amendment to the By-Laws of the Automobile Club of Southern California. This proposal is being submitted by me on behalf of numerous members of the Auto Club. The background and necessity of this proposal are explained in this letter. We request that you transmit this proposal to the Board of Directors for consideration within the next 90 days at a regularly scheduled Board meeting. I request permission to appear at such Board meeting so that I can explain the proposal further and answer any questions that Board members may have. Please give me two weeks notice of such meeting so that I can arrange my schedule accordingly.

Having been a member of the Auto Club for 19 years, I have enjoyed my membership and wish to continue it. However, I, and other longstanding members, feel that the Auto Club's policies or practices should not penalize us because of our sexual orientation or marital status.

Several years ago (October 17, 1981 to be exact), Michael Andrew Vasquez and I exchanged marital vows in international waters off the California coast. Our marriage was witnessed by several hundred friends, co-workers, and family members.

That same year, Mr. Vasquez became a member of the Auto Club. We have both paid for full memberships for the past six years. Although we live in a spousal-type relationship, we have been paying more than our fair share in membership dues. As you know, the Auto Club gives many couples a substantial discount in the form of lower spouse associate membership dues.

It may interest you that my concern with the Auto Club's membership policies and practices is more than personal. As a lawyer and as an educator, I have been working professionally for several years to eliminate unjust discrimination against cohabiting couples.

Last year, I was informed by National Gay Rights Advocates (NGRA) that the Auto Club had taken a major step in eliminating discrimination against domestic partners. In the past, the Auto Club would not offer joint

auto insurance policies to unmarried cohabiting couples. That practice has now changed. Joint auto policies are now available to cohabiting couples, regardless of their marital status. I would like to take this opportunity to compliment the Auto Club on this reform.

Unfortunately, NGRA has also reported that the Auto Club refused to modify its policy with respect to associate memberships. The by-laws were cited as the obstacle.

This year I renewed my personal and my professional interest in the associate membership issue. On a personal level, when Michael's membership came up for renewal, I applied for an associate membership. On January 28, 1987, Michael received a letter advising him that the Auto Club was "not able to add Thomas F. Coleman to your membership as spouse associate." He received no explanation for this decision.

We then asked several other gay couples who were also members of the Auto Club if they had ever experienced a problem in obtaining associate memberships. We were surprised to learn that some had associate memberships and others had been refused. Some reported that they obtained associate memberships by using their initials rather than their full names. Only one couple reported obtaining associate membership even though they used their full (and clearly same-sex) names.

When Michael received a renewal reminder (2nd notice), I looked more carefully at the "qualifications" for associate memberships. The notice contained directions to "review instructions on the renewal statement for qualifications of spouse and dependent associates." I noted that the only qualification listed for a spouse associate was that the associate "must reside in the members household." No other criteria was mentioned.

I therefore reapplied for associate membership on Michael's renewal statement, only this time I used my initials rather than my full name. The other day I received an associate membership card in the mail.

From my professional perspective, I shared information about the membership problem with David Link, a member of the Los Angeles Task Force on Family Diversity. He contacted the Auto Club, asked for a copy of the by-laws, and also interviewed two employees (one of whom was a supervisor) in the Auto Club's Membership and Sales Department. A copy of his findings are attached to this letter. He was advised that the Auto Club routinely accepts all applications for associate membership, unless the name of the associate is clearly of the same sex as the regular member. All "opposite-sex" applications are accepted, and all ambiguous applications are generally accepted, even if the associate and the regular member have different last names. No proof of marital status is requested. As a result, the Auto Club probably has issued associate memberships to hundreds, if not



thousands, of unmarried opposite-sex couples (and some same-sex couples who slipped through on an ambiguity). Mr. Link concluded that these practices have a discriminatory impact on same-sex couples. His report has been given to the appropriate sub-committee, which undoubtedly will report the matter to the full Task Force.

The Auto Club's discriminatory practices have also been scrutinized by Couples, Inc -- the national organization for the advancement of lesbian and gay couples. A copy of their press release is attached to this letter. Recently, the local gay press reported on this story.

### CONCLUSION

(1) The Auto Club has partially eliminated discrimination against domestic partners, by revising its guidelines so that unmarried cohabiting couples may obtain joint auto insurance policies.

(2) The Auto Club utilizes membership sales practices which allow most cohabiting opposite-sex couples to obtain spouse associate memberships, regardless of their marital status.

(3) The Auto Club utilizes membership sales practices which disallow most same-sex cohabiting couples from obtaining spouse associate memberships.

(4) These practices are unfair and need to be reformed.

(5) The by-laws, and/or the membership sales practices, may also violate state and local laws prohibiting arbitrary discrimination, marital status discrimination, and sexual orientation discrimination.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

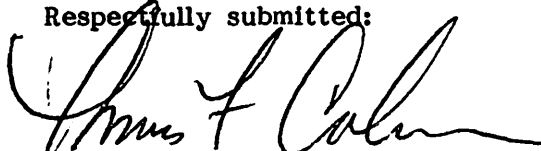
It is recommended that the by-laws of the Auto Club be amended by the Board of Directors and that the membership sales practices be revised to reflect the by-law change.

Section 2 of the by-laws presently contains two forms of associate membership: (1) spouse associate, and, (2) dependent relative under age 21.

The "spouse" associate category should be changed, so that "one adult residing in the household of the member" is eligible for associate membership.

It is further recommended that this proposal be considered at a meeting of the Board of Directors within 90 days.

Respectfully submitted:



THOMAS F. COLEMAN

**PROPOSED AMENDMENT**  
**to the**  
**BYLAWS**  
**OF THE AUTOMOBILE CLUB OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**

A proposal to amend "Section 2. ASSOCIATES"

Presently, Section Two contains an eligibility clause which reads: "To be eligible, an associate must be either: (1) the spouse of a member residing in the same household; or (2) a dependent relative, under the age of 21, of a member residing in the same household."

This amendment would change eligibility for category (1) but would not change eligibility for category (2).

As amended, the eligibility clause of Section 2 would read: "There are two classes of associate membership: (1) adult household associate; and (2) youth-dependent associate. To be eligible as an adult household associate, the prospective associate must be over 18 years of age and reside in the same household as the member. Only one adult household associate may be admitted per member. To be eligible as a youth-dependent associate, the prospective associate must be a dependent relative, under the age of 21, of a member residing in the same household."



# Taking a new view of family

By Julie Jaskol

"Most of the time you mention 'family,' a good hunk of the country tunes out because it doesn't mean anything to them anymore," says Christopher McCauley, co-chairman of the Task Force on Family Diversity. "On the other hand, you start talking about non-traditional family units and alarms go off and people have lots of anxiety."

The task force was appointed by Councilman Mike Woo to explore and report on the rapidly expanding definitions of the word "family." "Los Angeles has the fastest-changing demographics in the country," says McCauley, and the structure of the family is changing along with the population. The once-traditional family unit consisting of a male breadwinner, a female homemaker, and their two children today accounts for fewer than 15 percent of the country's households.

"This is a cause of great concern to traditionalists who think it means the end of the family as we know it," says McCauley. "Well, they're partly wrong and they're partly right." They're right because the Ward and June Cleaver model is largely obsolete. They're wrong because new kinds of families are forming to replace them. "These new units have strong family ties," says McCauley, "but different arrangements."

The new family may consist of working couples, single parents and children, unmarried partners both gay and non-gay, senior adults, or disabled people. The new family may be homeless, or immigrants. The new family may even consist of a single individual. "We're going to propose a broader, more inclusive definition of 'family,'" says McCauley. "We want to encompass the broader experience of family in this city. I want to tell you, it's a real challenge."

The task force, which was appointed last spring, includes members from all across the city, representing gays and lesbians, Asian Pacifics, Native Americans, the homeless, disabled people, children and seniors, as well as religious leaders and representatives of the traditional family. In a series of hearings, task force members are listening to expert witnesses on issues affecting the family in Los Angeles, including teen parenthood, family violence, housing and insurance discrimination, and immigration.

The task force will report its findings in October. "We plan to not just briefly state the various experiences of the contemporary family, but to make specific recommendations of how the city can be supportive of the family," says McCauley.

One of the ways in which the city can respond to families is with its employee benefits. The city is now considering a flexible benefit plan in which municipal employees can choose benefits to suit the needs of their families, rather than accept benefits based on an outmoded family structure. Such an insurance plan would go a long way toward legitimizing various family structures and meeting their needs, says McCauley.

"The whole society is going through all these convulsive changes, and government has to be on the cutting edge of these changes," says McCauley. He acknowledges that many of these changes are difficult for people to accept. "But look at social security. What was once radical becomes a need. The same is true with environmental impact reports, and disabled access. The day will come when we consider family issues as a matter of course."

McCauley emphasizes that the task force is looking at the common interest among all types of families, and that more and more people support varying family structures because their own families have changed so significantly. "It's easier for people to understand what we're doing if they just look at their own families. It's not a partisan issue. It's not a question of right or wrong or good or bad, but of reality and how we deal with it. If we get comfortable with new family arrangements we can strengthen family life."

Classified: 482-5277  
Other Depts: 484-2940

FREE COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

Additional Copies 25¢

Copyright  
National Media, Inc. 1987  
All rights reserved

WEDNESDAY  
MARCH 4, 1988

# Griffith Park News

**SUPPORT FOR PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO BY-LAWS  
OF THE AUTOMOBILE CLUB OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**

**A proposal to amend "Section 2. ASSOCIATES"**

Presently, Section Two contains an eligibility clause which reads: "To be eligible, an associate must be either: (1) the spouse of a member residing in the same household; or (2) a dependent relative, under the age of 21, of a member residing in the same household."

This amendment would change eligibility for category (1) but would not change eligibility for category (2).

As amended, the eligibility clause of Section 2 would read: "There are two classes of associate membership: (1) adult household associate; and (2) youth-dependent associate. To be eligible as an adult household associate, the prospective associate must be over 18 years of age and reside in the same household as the member. Only one adult household associate may be admitted per member. To be eligible as a youth-dependent associate, the prospective associate must be a dependent relative, under the age of 21, of a member residing in the same household."

AS MEMBERS OF "AAA," WE SUPPORT THE ABOVE-DESCRIBED  
AMENDMENT TO THE BYLAWS OF THE AUTOMOBILE CLUB OF SOUTHERN  
CALIFORNIA.

NAME (print)	°	SIGNATURE	°	MEMBERSHIP #
1. David Rosenbaum		<i>David Rosenbaum</i>		14924849 0059
2. Barry Greenberg		<i>Barry Greenberg</i>		30920185 0090
3. Robert Adels		<i>Robert Adels</i>		24270811 0120
4. <del>Joseph Schraeder</del>		<del>Joseph Schraeder</del>		<del>24017352 0110</del>
5. JOHN N. BOROZAN		<i>John N. Borozan</i>		41181801 0090
6. TIMOTHY W. RINEHART		<i>T. W. Rinehart</i>		37065992-0034
7. John Ferrari		<i>John Ferrari</i>		52290103 0120
8. MANUEL MAZIVER		<i>Manuel Maziver</i>		32297202 0042
9. Jo Cary Junkin		<i>J. Cary Junkin</i>		48097810 0060
10. _____				

(When completed, return to: THOMAS F. COLEMAN, P.O. BOX 65756,  
Los Angeles, CA 90065.)



**SUPPORT FOR PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO BY-LAWS  
OF THE AUTOMOBILE CLUB OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**

-----  
**A proposal to amend "Section 2. ASSOCIATES"**

Presently, Section Two contains an eligibility clause which reads: "To be eligible, an associate must be either: (1) the spouse of a member residing in the same household; or (2) a dependent relative, under the age of 21, of a member residing in the same household."

This amendment would change eligibility for category (1) but would not change eligibility for category (2).

As amended, the eligibility clause of Section 2 would read: "There are two classes of associate membership: (1) adult household associate; and (2) youth-dependent associate. To be eligible as an adult household associate, the prospective associate must be over 18 years of age and reside in the same household as the member. Only one adult household associate may be admitted per member. To be eligible as a youth-dependent associate, the prospective associate must be a dependent relative, under the age of 21, of a member residing in the same household."

-----

AS MEMBERS OF "AAA," WE SUPPORT THE ABOVE-DESCRIBED  
AMENDMENT TO THE BYLAWS OF THE AUTOMOBILE CLUB OF SOUTHERN  
CALIFORNIA.

NAME (print)	◎	SIGNATURE	◎	MEMBERSHIP #
1. JAMES RIEGER		<i>James Rieger</i>		12935805 0020
2. PAUL J. NASH		<i>Paul J. Nash</i>		14589246-0020
3. MICHAEL A. LOMBARDI		<i>M. Lombardi</i>		38640892-0100
4. WES DAVIS		<i>Wes Davis</i>		1856 5412 7
5. Peter M. Smith		<i>Peter M. Smith</i>		52393584-0010
6. GLORIA HOEFT		<i>Gloria Hoeft</i>		270-1290908
7. ERIK GRADY		<i>Erik Grady</i>		
8. Al Lewis		<i>Al Lewis</i>		213-478-3910
9. JIM KLECKNER		<i>Jim Kleckner</i>		19747286 0080
10. _____				

(When completed, return to: THOMAS F. COLEMAN, P.O. BOX 65756,  
Los Angeles, CA 90065.)





**PARTNERS**  
THE NEWSLETTER FOR  
GAY & LESBIAN COUPLES  
Box 9685, Seattle, WA 98109  
Stevie Bryant & Demian  
Publishers/Editors  
206-784-1519

October 19, 1988

Thomas Coleman  
Family Diversity Project  
P.O. Box 65756  
Los Angeles, CA 90065

Dear Thomas,

Thank you for discussing the new L.A. policy with me, and for rushing written materials to me. As you can see, I relied on your information for my cover story. — \* NEWSLETTER SENT BY BULK MAIL, SEPARATELY —

Please keep us informed about your ongoing efforts to implement the task force's recommendations.

One other thing: My partner, Demian, has filed complaint alleging marital and sexual orientation discrimination by AAA of Washington for their refusal to extend their spousal membership rate to us. AAA has responded by claiming that giving our class of members this discount would cause a hardship for their business.

We are looking for information that would help deny this claim -- particularly any contradictory information from other AAAs, or similar membership clubs. If you have any information or ideas, we would welcome them. *your City Attorney's opinion, if favorable, would be most helpful.*

Again, thank you.

Best wishes to you and yours,

Stevie Bryant  
Co-Publisher/Editor

P.S. Shelly Cohen has expressed an interest in meeting you when she travels to L.A. in a couple of months. Shelly is an attorney who co-chairs the Seattle Mayor's Lesbian/Gay Task Force. She is the leading advocate for local efforts to extend city benefits to domestic partners. I think you would enjoy one another and mutually benefit by the association. I have suggested she contact you directly.

*S.A.S.E. Enclosed*

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
SCHOOL OF LAW  
400 TOWN HALL  
BERKELEY, CALIF. 94720  
(415) 848-4100

October 19, 1988

Thomas Coleman  
Family Diversity Project  
P.O. Box 03788  
Los Angeles, CA 90008

Dear Thomas,

Thank you for discussing the new L.A. policy with me, and for pushing  
written materials to me. As you can see, I relied on your information for  
my cover story.

I have made no attempt to contact your contacts or implement the last  
month's recommendations.

One other thing: My partner, Damian, has filed complaint alleging marital  
and sexual orientation discrimination by AAA of Washington for their refusal  
to extend their spousal membership rate to us. AAA has responded by  
claiming that giving our class of members this discount would cause a  
handicap for their business.

We are looking for information that would help deny this claim --  
particularly any contradictory information from other AAA's or similar  
membership clubs. If you have any information or ideas, we would welcome  
them.

Again, thank you.

Best wishes to you and yours.

Steve Geyer

P.S. Shelly Geyer has expressed an interest in meeting you when she travels  
to L.A. in a couple of months. Shelly is an attorney who co-chairs the  
Seattle Gay and Lesbian Task Force. She is the leading advocate  
local efforts to extend city benefits to domestic partners. I think you  
would enjoy one another and mutually benefit by the association. I have  
suggested she contact you directly.