

Two Stations Drop Homosexual Episode Of 'Marcus Welby'

ABC Affiliates in Philadelphia
And Boston Cite Protests
By Gay Groups, Show Itself

By a WALL STREET JOURNAL Staff Reporter

NEW YORK—The American Broadcasting Cos. television network said two of its largest affiliate stations—one in Philadelphia and one in Boston—had dropped the controversial Oct. 8 episode of "Marcus Welby, M.D.," following protests from homosexual organizations and others.

The network said four advertisers had also dropped their advertisements during the episode: Colgate-Palmolive Co., Shell Oil Co., Sterling Drug Inc., and Thomas J. Lipton Inc., a tea and food subsidiary of Unilever N.V.

This was the first time major television stations had ever canceled a show, and that major advertisers had ever canceled national television commercials, following pressure from the homosexual community, Bruce Voeller, executive director of the National Gay Task Force here, said. The episode in question deals with a high school teacher who rapes a 14-year-old male student.

An ABC spokeswoman said she believed the homosexual campaign against the episode was "the main reason these stations are dropping the show—very definitely."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
Monday, Sept. 30, 1974 9

The Boston and Philadelphia affiliates say they were influenced by the protest but also found the show offensive on their own.

"If it weren't for all this mail, the show would have run like any other show," said a spokesman for station WPVI, the ABC affiliate in Philadelphia owned by Capital Cities Broadcasting Corp. "Who checks Marcus Welby? That's like attacking Young Dr. Kildare," he said. Following the "unprecedented amount of mail for a show that had never been shown," the station decided to preview the episode and decided it was offensive, he said.

The station said in a public statement it was "especially concerned about the additional burdens of prejudice" that the episode would "doubtless lay upon a newly emerging minority in our society."

Station WCVB in Boston, which also dropped the show, was influenced by the "quality of the letters" protesting the show, but acted mainly because it found the show objectionable, Robert M. Bennett, vice president and general manager, said. He said he feared the show would reinforce the notion that homosexuals are commonly child molesters. "That isn't true, but that's what would come through to an audience," he said. This is also the principal reason that homosexual groups object to the show.

Church supports 'gay' pastor's bid for restoration

TM/UMR Staff Special

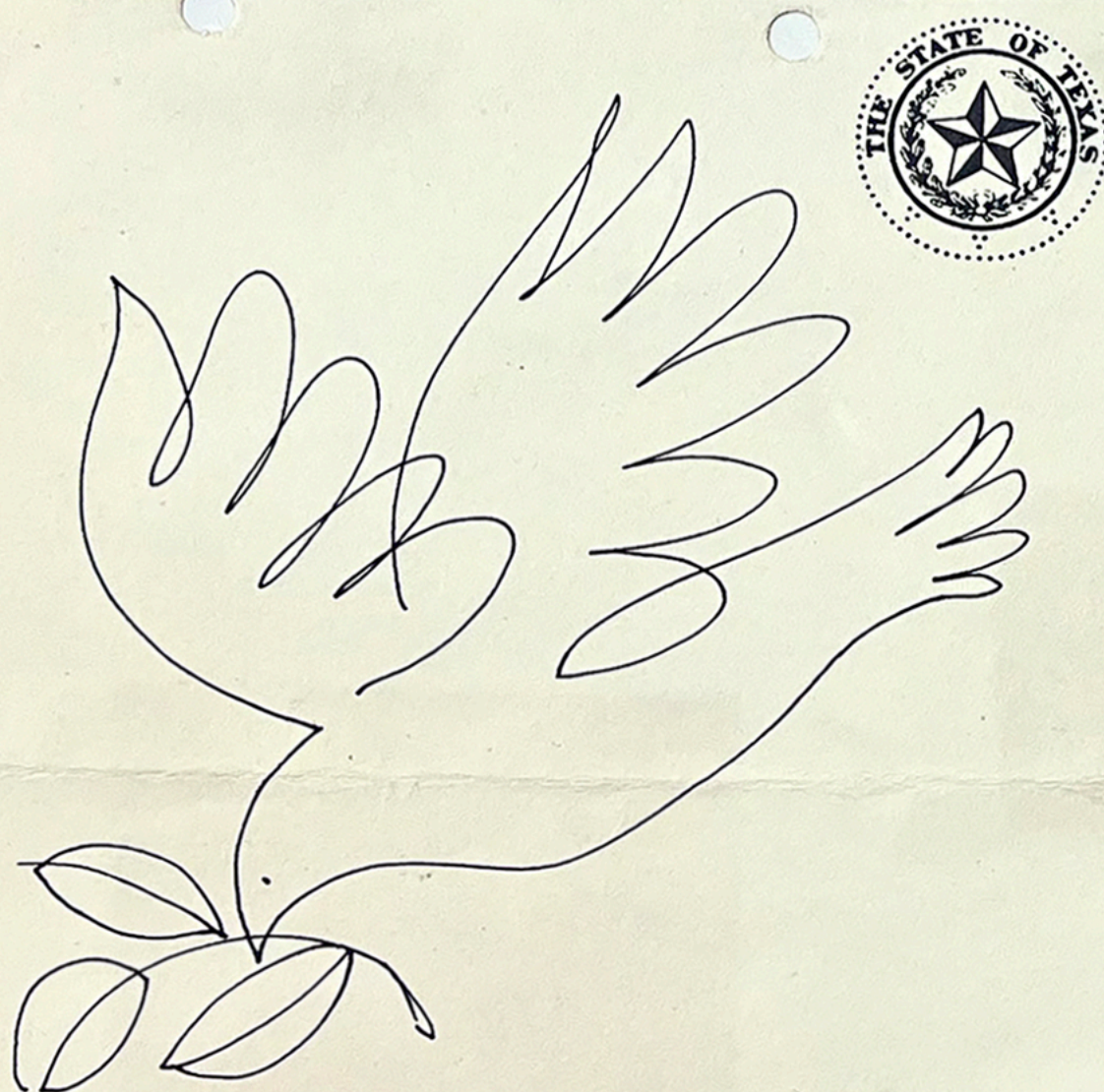
SAN ANTONIO, Tx. — A former United Methodist minister whose ministerial orders were suspended in 1971 after he publicly announced he is homosexual has been supported by a local church here in his bid to have his credentials restored.

St. Stephen's United Methodist Church, meeting as a charge conference April 13, voted 20 to 4 with one abstention to approve the character of self-avowed homosexual Gene Leggett and recommend to the annual conference that his ministerial orders be restored.

The charge conference action places Mr. Leggett's petition on the agenda of annual conference. If approved by the annual conference, Mr. Leggett would be permitted his ministerial title and could administer the sacraments and carry on other ministerial functions under the supervision of St. Stephen's UMC. The action would not restore his conference membership or make him eligible for appointment to any other United Methodist Church.

Mr. Leggett has tried unsuccessfully since 1971 to have his full conference membership restored by the annual conference.

Following the action at St. Stephen's UMC, Mr. Leggett said that for the first time "a local (United) Methodist church has placed qualifications for ministry on a basis other than sexual orientation."



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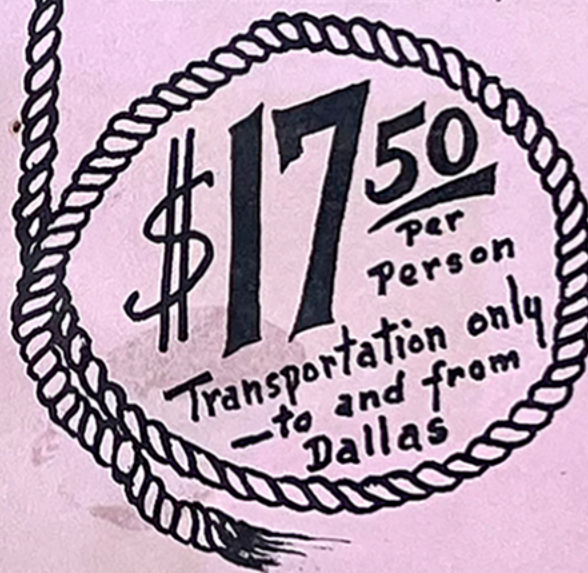
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Wednesday, October 9, 1974

HOUSTON CHRONICLE

TV Scene

'Marcus Welby' Episode: From Gay to Zzzzzzz

BY ANN HODGES
TV-Radio Editor

The Gay Lib activists who protested about "Marcus Welby's" case study of a male rape of a teen-age boy surely accomplished one thing: Welby's Tuesday night audience probably was his biggest in a couple of ABC seasons.

And the fact was, Welby's medical melodrama wasn't worth the trouble it caused.

Homosexual activists pressured the network to drop the show, and when ABC refused, they went to individual stations. Four of the 185 affiliates dropped out, including one in Corpus Christi.

But now having seen it, I'm confounded if I can see what the uproar was all about. Given the usual run of

regular tune-ins, this Welby episode would have stirred up little more than a basic irritation that it treated such a subject in such an abysmally shoddy script.

Not content with the problem at hand—the mental and physical injury to a teen-age victim of perverted child molestation—writer Eugene Price pulled in every hokey old gimmick he could think of. Including a set of parents so neurotic that they needed psychiatric counseling far worse than their injured son.

As usual, Welby and his disciple Kiley were the only two around with sense enough to cope.

The show wasn't guilty of bad taste—just of being bad. And regarding the homosex-

ual charges that it might reinforce old stereotypes if the pressure groups hadn't made such a point of gilding that issue, it would have seemed to the average viewer a clear case of perversion.

The argument they might better have used was that to deal with a subject like this on a show like "Marcus Welby" is pure and callous ratings exploitation anyway. If such things are to be tackled in the guise of TV entertainment, surely there could be a better framework than the regular old stable of fictional medical father figures.

Protests come and go, and nearly always find themselves reflected in the ratings. Witness the Italians over the "Untouchables" to Catholics

objecting to "Maude's" abortion programs, Jewish groups down on "The Merchant of Venice" and the Polish pressures on "QBVI" and even "Banacek" with his pitiful proverbs.

Where attempted prior censorship is involved, however, the issues broaden. And in most cases, I'm convinced, the causes concerned would be better served by not giving impetus to the kind of pre-publicity that merely builds a curious audience.