

# Local comic's putdown of lesbians no laughing matter for B.C. tribunal

By **LISA TALLYN**  
Staff Writer



**GUY EARLE**

A Georgetown comic's putdown of a lesbian and her companion at an amateur comedy night in B.C. nearly three years ago is at the centre of a Human Rights Commission tribunal underway in Vancouver this week.

On Monday afternoon the comedian Guy Earle, 41, who has lived in Georgetown since September, was awaiting word from his lawyer representing him at the tribunal that was about to begin. He's hoping to participate in the hearing by phone.

Earle, whose day job is a physicist at a Georgetown business, has been a stand-up comic for more than 20 years and was working as a volunteer master of ceremonies at amateur night at a Vancouver restaurant in May 2007 when the incident occurred.

A lawyer for Lorna Pardy, a woman and her same-sex partner who were sitting near the stage says, as they spoke with the waitress, Earle bombarded them with several gay slurs.

But Earle says they were being disruptive, heckling him, and were ignoring his requests to quiet down because a new comedian was about to take the stage.

"They were being ignorant to me, and I shoved it down their throat," said Earle. "My material isn't anti-gay. I'm just dealing with

hecklers."

He said the women were "making out and flipping me the bird."

At one point he said to the women, "You're not a lesbian, you're fat and ugly and no one will sleep with you."

He admits he broke Pardy's sunglasses that were on her head, calling it a "stupid move".

He said the woman threw a drink in his face when he first walked by her table, then later when he went over to smooth things over.

"No matter what I said, as far as I'm concerned, I'm protected," said Earle, who believes his remarks come with the comedy show territory and his right to free speech as an artist performing on stage.

He said he has the right to be offensive, but just because they didn't like it they can't take him to the human rights tribunal.

"I don't have a problem with lesbians, but I do have a problem with a Human Rights Tribunal that would take this case on," said Earle.

"You can make art that's offensive. It's a side effect of being in a free society. Stand up comics are the canaries in a coalmine of freedom of speech. When they start restricting what we say, you're next," he said.

The tribunal rejected Earle's call-in request this month.

Earle's position is that there should not even be a hearing as last September the B.C. Supreme Court quashed the tribunal's decision to have a full hearing. However, in January the tribunal said it would decide if it has jurisdiction only after a full hearing.

The publicity from the incident has not helped Earle's ability to book comedy gigs, but he says comedy is his passion, not his career.

"It's not the kind of fame that's helpful," said Earle, who lives here with his wife and 10-week-old child.

## Students to Walk With Jesus

The Halton Catholic District School Board is planning an event for its senior students that will raise money and their self-awareness.

The first annual Walk With Jesus is scheduled for Thursday, May 6, during Catholic Education Week (May 2-7).

"The Walk With Jesus event is a part of our board's Focus on Faith initiative," stated a Catholic board news release.

An opening liturgy will be held at Bronte Creek Provincial Park in Oakville with participants then walking to nearby Corpus Christi Catholic Secondary School on Upper Middle Road. Once there, an outdoor mass will be celebrated by Bishop Gerard Berge, Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Hamilton.

Each of the Halton Catholic board's elementary schools will select 20 Grades 6-8 students to represent their school at Walk With Jesus; each secondary school will select 20 students to be there.

Students will gather pledges with proceeds going to designated charities and programs supported by the Catholic board.

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