

On the Dial

# The Call-In People's

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By Jeffrey Yorke

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## Court

**R**adio call-in shows, unlike the print media, have little control over what gets on the airwaves. Thus it was that murmurs about Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas's alleged interest in pornography continued to be heard recently on radio talk shows. On Oct. 16, the day after the Senate's close vote to confirm Thomas to the court, a caller to an open-phone segment of Diane Rehm's WAMU-FM (88.5) show said he was certain that Thomas had rented pornographic videos.

"I know for a fact that Clarence Thomas was a customer at Graffiti on Connecticut Avenue in the early '80s. It was a regular video store with a porno section in back. I know for a fact that Clarence Thomas went in there and rented porno videos," Rehm recalled the listener telling the WAMU audience. "He was very intense about getting that story out there and wanted to know why the press had not pursued it," Rehm said yesterday.

After the show, Rehm called Graffiti and spoke to the owner, Bary Maddox. He said the Connecticut Avenue location "did have a porno section [in the early '80s], and Clarence Thomas did come in. But neither I nor my employees can remember whether he did or did not rent pornographic videos," according to Rehm. Maddox also told Rehm that all written records of video rentals were destroyed when the store was converted to merchandising video hardware.

Rehm added that Maddox told her "that he knows of one customer who has been relentlessly pursuing this story" about Thomas renting porno films. That customer has spoken with reporters, Maddox told Rehm.

The issue came up again Friday on Rehm's show when a different male caller, who identified himself as Harold, complained that the media had failed to follow up on certain matters, including allegations that Thomas had rented pornographic films at a Washington video store. He acknowledged that it was on Rehm's Oct. 16 show that he had heard the allegation that Thomas had rented a movie starring "Long Dong Silver" at the video store.

"I want to set the record straight," Rehm said, interrupting the caller. She then recounted her conversation with Maddox. "There has been apparently one client, one customer, at that store who has spread this story around. I think we ought to nip it in the bud," Rehm said emphatically.

"Well, the film was there and Clarence Thomas was a member..." said the caller before being cut off by Rehm with a scolding. "So what! So what! So what!"