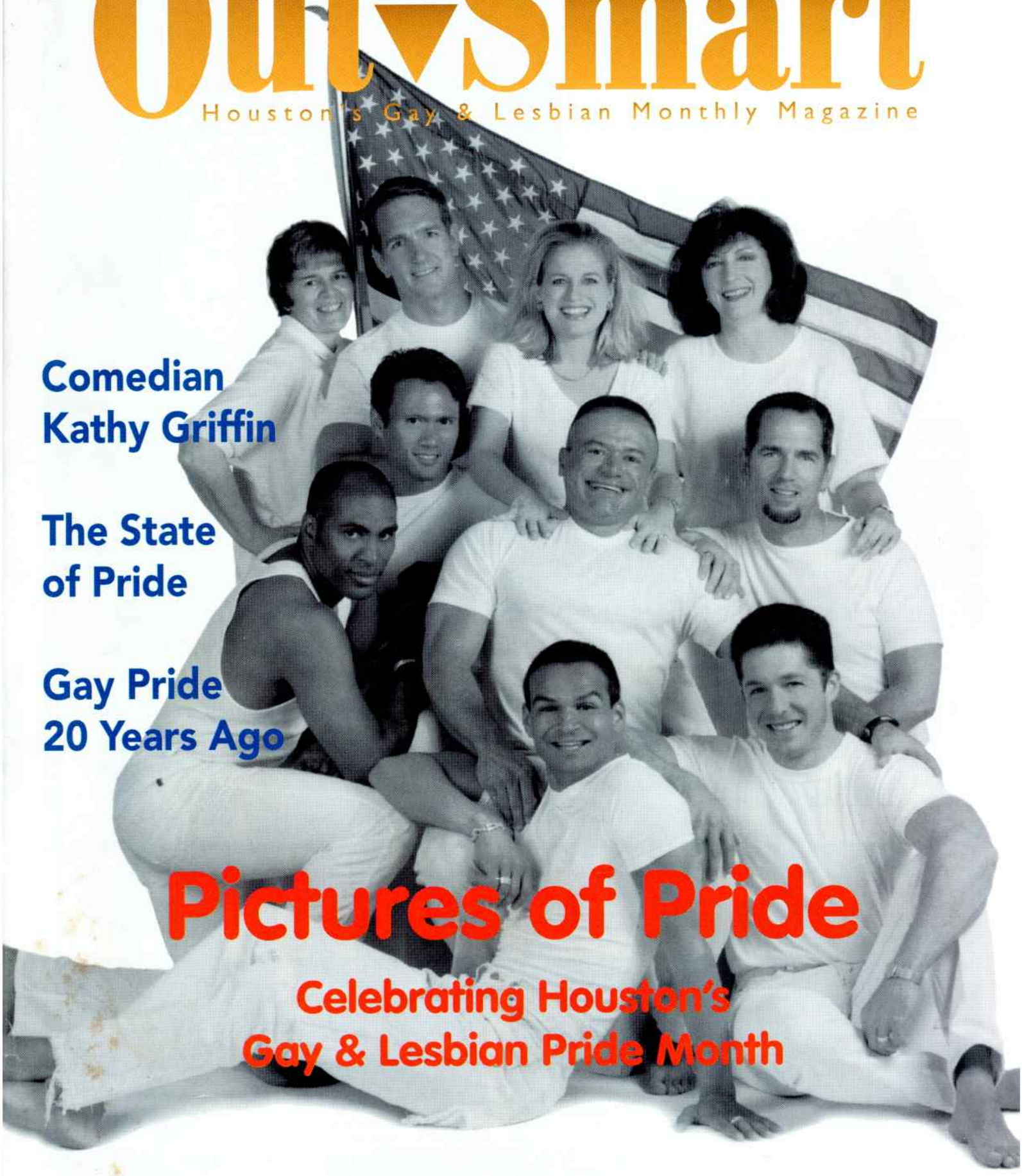
JUNE 1999 • COMPLIMENTARY

OutSmart

Houston's Gay & Lesbian Monthly Magazine



Comedian
Kathy Griffin

The State
of Pride

Gay Pride
20 Years Ago

Pictures of Pride

Celebrating Houston's Gay & Lesbian Pride Month

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Vol. 7 • No. 5 • June 1999



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Photo by Evin Thayer

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Photo by Blase DiStefano

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HOUSTON PRIDE Turns 20



• by Steven Poruban • photographs by Blase DiStefano •

This year marks the 20th anniversary of Houston's gay and lesbian pride parade and celebration. And this year's theme—"Pride, Power, and Pizzazz"—seemingly highlights the core elements underlying the community's overall achievements and long-time survival.

The presence and power of the gay and lesbian community has grown noticeably strong over the last 20 years and the community is, as it should be, extremely proud of its accomplishments. Plus, no other group of individuals seems better able to really put on a party than the gay and lesbian community. In the words of the first pride celebration's co-organizer Larry Bagneris at a rally following the first organized parade: "I'm beginning to think that only gays can do everything right."

There exists a discrepancy in Houston about how and when pride was started. In 1976, about 200 members of the now-defunct Gay Activist Alliance marched down a two-block stretch of road. Discovering the significance of this event and its placement in Houston's gay history merely depends on who is asked.

It would seem that no single incident sparked the first community-concerted observance of pride in Houston. Of course, the event's organizers intended, in part, to commemorate the infamous Stonewall Riots, then 10 years old. The riots still serve as a pivotal point in gay history, when the community spoke up and out with demands for fair and equal treatment. But the pride celebration in 1979 went beyond remembering. And the momentous occasion set a precedent for all future pride events to follow.



"Disco Grandma" Mary Thelma Hensel (l), the parade's grand marshal, and gay activist Ray Hill celebrate Gay Pride in 1979.

Around the time of the first organized pride event, gays and lesbians were moving to the Houston area in droves. Billed as the newest "Gay Mecca," Houston was quickly becoming a strong urban force, and the sense of community was a healthy one.

The theme of that first organized happening was "Proud to Be." With an estimated crowd of about 20,000, the all-gay parade was routed along Westheimer, starting from Shepherd and continuing to Bagby. A police escort accompanied the 20 floats along their passage through what was dubbed the "Great Gay Way of the Montrose."

"Disco Grandma" Mary Thelma Hensel acted as the parade's grand mar-

TIMELINE 1979-81

Each month OutSmart will feature sections of the Houston gay history timeline as featured in the January issue.

1979 Commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Stonewall riots in New York City, June saw the first organized efforts toward the start-up of Gay and Lesbian Pride Week Parades. The week-long event instilled a sense of pride and community that are still apparent in Houston today (see related story on previous page). The Gay Men's Chorus of Houston (GMCH) began and continues through to this day, performing at least two major concerts every season. The chorus' membership is comprised of both singing and non-singing members and invites members of both sexes and any sexual preference. Its mantra remains: "GMCH strives to instill community spirit though a mixed repertoire of formal, popular, and empowering music."

1980 In May, the Montrose Sports Association (MSA) became a Texas nonprofit organization appealing to gays who enjoyed organized competitive sports. The core idea behind the group was summed up in Article 4 of incorporation: "The specific and primary purpose is to foster sports competition among the membership for the pleasure and recreation of its members, with special interest for the gay community." MSA's first assistant director Patrick McIlvain said of the organization, "MSA is an alternative to bars, baths, and bookstores, centered around sports with a natural social outgrowth. The camaraderie generated by exercise is a lot more genuine than that mustered by martinis."

1981 Kathy Whitmire was elected mayor with gay and lesbian backing. Previous Whitmire campaigns for city controller were staffed with lesbian volunteers. The Montrose Clinic got its start through the work of Ruth Ravas, or "Mother Ruth" as she was known in the gay and lesbian community. Ravas helped to run a program that screened the homosexual community for venereal disease, which was becoming a growing concern. Initially, Ravas "in her own very ingratiating way, got herself into the bars" to screen the Montrose populace and then, later, was aided by a used mobile unit. Realizing the necessity for the service yet conceding to its shortcomings, the Gay Political Caucus' Medical Committee, under the stewardship of David Bonuelos, made plans toward a "free-standing medical clinic in the Montrose area that would be free [and] would serve the predominantly gay population." With the onset of HIV and AIDS, the clinic still plays a vital role as a nonprofit, low- or no-cost healthcare facility, serving the gay and lesbian community. Next month, *OutSmart* will highlight certain events that helped shape the Houston gay and lesbian community during 1982-1984.



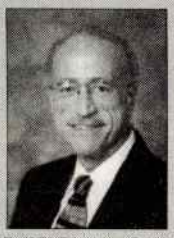
From all walks of life: 1980's Gay Pride Parade began with this proud banner.

Timeline provided by the Houston Gay and Lesbian Community Center and Steve Brown of the Botts Memorial Library of MCCR. Research obtained from "Twelve Fighting Years" by Bruce Remmington.

Pictures of Pride



NAME: Ian Leffler **AGE:** 40 **HOMETOWN:** Moline, IL **GAY OR STRAIGHT?** Gay **YEARS OUT:** Since birth **MOM AND DAD KNOW?** Yes **GAY HERO:** Tinky Winky **GAY ZERO:** Rev. Falwell **ADVICE FOR NEWLY OUT:** Play safe. **PET PEEVE:** Stereotyping **RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL?** Both **Y2K: HYPE OR HELP!** Over it already! **GAY STEREOTYPE THAT FITS YOU BEST:** See pet peeve. **GAY PREDICTION FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM:** People of all races, sexual preferences, and sexes will become closer and accepting. *Ian can be found at Basic Brothers clothing store.*



NAME: Richard Wiederholt **AGE:** 57 **HOMETOWN:** Maryville, MO **GAY OR STRAIGHT?** Gay **YEARS OUT:** 20 **MOM AND DAD KNOW?** Father died before I "came out." Mother knew before she died. **GAY HERO:** First drag queens at Stonewall who fought back. **GAY ZERO:** Anyone who believes God made homosexuals to be hated. **ADVICE FOR NEWLY OUT:** Come on out and join the rest of us. It's a great life. **PET PEEVE:** Gays and lesbians who refuse to get involved in our community. **RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL?** Spiritual **Y2K: HYPE OR HELP!** Help **GAY STEREOTYPE THAT FITS YOU BEST:** I don't believe in stereotyping. **GAY PREDICTION FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM:** Slow but definite progress in not only being recognized but being appreciated. *Wedding bells still ringing. Richard and Ian (above) are celebrating pride month as recent newlyweds.*



NAME: Sean D. Carter **AGE:** 28 **HOMETOWN:** Garland, TX (suburb of Dallas) **GAY OR STRAIGHT?** Gay! **YEARS OUT:** 8 **MOM AND DAD KNOW?** Yes, probably before I did. **GAY HERO:** Olympia Dukakis **GAY ZERO:** Martha Stewart **ADVICE FOR NEWLY OUT:** Respect the older members of our community. They had it rough and made it easier for us. **PET PEEVE:** Men who juggle other men. **RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL?** Buddhist (spiritual) **Y2K: HYPE OR HELP!** Blah, blah, blah! **GAY STEREOTYPE THAT FITS YOU BEST:** Swish! **GAY PREDICTION FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM:** Sequin tube tops, butterfly collars, and feathered hairdos will be hip again! *Sean is the development and marketing manager at the Montrose Counseling Center and is one of this year's proud grand marshals for the Gay Pride Parade.*



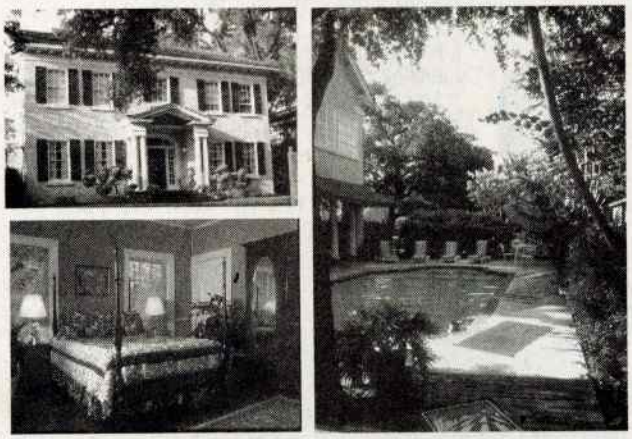
NAME: Caroline Burum **HOMETOWN:** Houston **GAY OR STRAIGHT?** Gay **YEARS OUT:** 9 **MOM AND DAD KNOW?** Yes **GAY HERO:** M. Dietrich **ADVICE FOR NEWLY OUT:** Find a support group like H.A.T.C.H. or Twenty Something **PET PEEVE:** When people accidentally out someone. **RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL?** Spiritual **Y2K: HYPE OR HELP!** Just relax—it'll be Jan. 2 soon. *Caroline is the proud owner of Toopees Cafe.*



NAME: Bridgette Chambers **AGE:** 29 **HOMETOWN:** Houston **GAY OR STRAIGHT?** Gay! Is there any other way to be? **YEARS OUT:** 6 **MOM AND DAD KNOW?** Yes. Dad is supportive; mom is out; sister is out. **GAY HERO:** Robert Sadler **ADVICE FOR NEWLY OUT:** Relax and breathe. It will all work out. **PET PEEVE:** When people chew ice. **RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL?** Both. This is something that me and my partner share and keep at home. **Y2K: HYPE OR HELP!** Hype. Nonetheless, I am still going to go to the ATM machine on New Year's—just in case. **GAY STEREOTYPE THAT FITS YOU BEST:** Let's see—there are typically two lesbian stereotypes: 1. Butch (I hate the word dyke) and 2. A lipstick lesbian. I am somewhat in between—clearly further from the lipstick stuff. **GAY PREDICTION FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM:** In the near future, gays and lesbians will enjoy federal protection at the workplace and protection from hate crimes. *The optimistic Bridgette connects us all as a wireless consultant.*

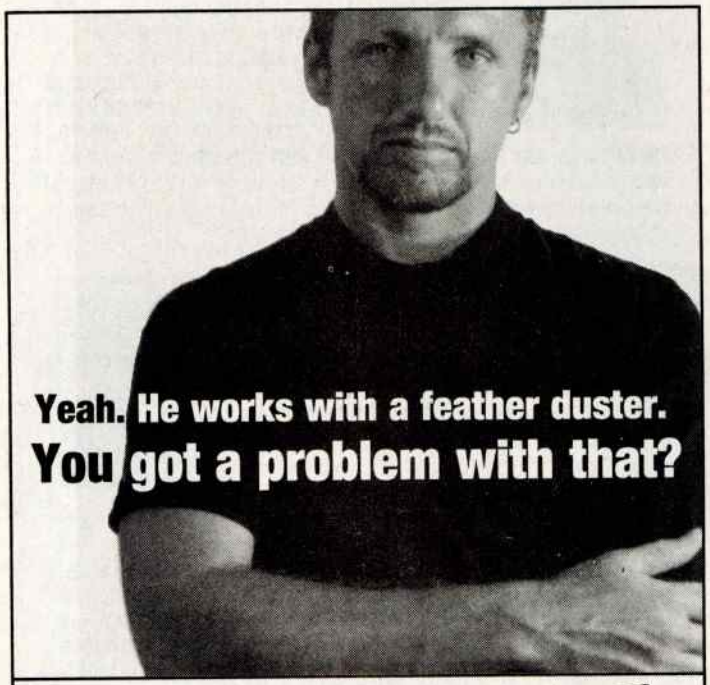
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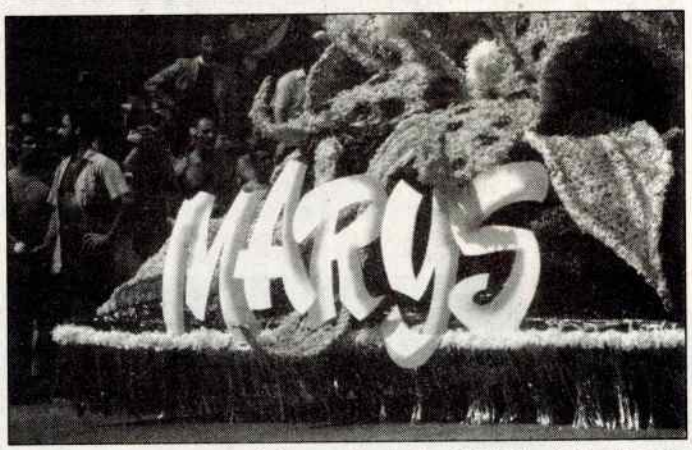
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MANMAID SERVICES

shal, led down the street by the MAC marching band and drill team. En route, she blew kisses to the crowd as they cheered wildly.

The floats were judged along the way. Mary's Lounge's float, titled "Proud to Be Beautiful," was awarded top prize.





Mary's Lounge was awarded top prize in the 1979 Gay Pride Parade.

Midtowne Spa turned out a second-place entry, while Dirty Sally's landed third place.

The parade was followed by an "Expressions of Freedom" rally at Spotts Park at the intersection of Memorial Drive and Waugh. The rally, which was presented by the Gay Political Caucus (GPC), reportedly attracted several thousand gay and lesbian participants. At the time, the GPC and Pride Committee worked together to sponsor the event.

The rally featured activist Ray Hill and GPC president Steve Shiflett, both of whom introduced the guest speakers. The speakers' respective topics addressed the issues of the time. The speakers included Tony Lazada, commenting on the 10th anniversary of Stonewall; Kathy Whitmire, making an appearance to vie for the gay vote; Jean O'Leary, co-founder of the National Gay Task Force, speaking about the national organization; and Midge Costanza, a former White House advisor to President Carter, commenting on the affluence and strength of the American gay minority. *This Week in Texas* (*TWT*) noted Costanza as saying, amusingly, that she had sat in the president's chair and that "it fit!"

Following the rally, $2,500 worth of fireworks were launched above the gathered mass of onlookers.

This year's pride celebration is bound to give previous years' events a run for their money, declares Brian Keever, Pride Committee of Houston, Inc. board member and banner district chair. "To me," he says, "Pride Week is just as important to our community as Thanksgiving or Christmas or anything else."

On the important function that pride serves within the community, Keever noted: "We have another generation of young gay men and lesbians that have no clue what 'Stonewall' is unless you educate them.

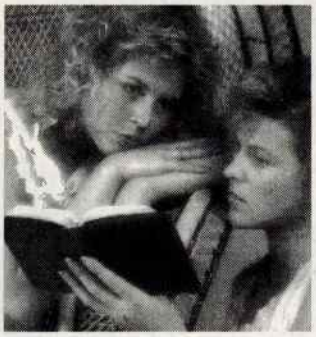
"It also helps people 'come out' because they see other people having a good time, it might give them the nudge to say, 'Wow, I could actually do that.'"

With that, Happy Pride, Houston! To quote Larry Bagneris, once again: "Remain gay, proud, and most of all, yourself."

Steve Poruban is a community writer and newly dubbed TimeOut historian. He can be reached care of this publication.

Getting the Love You Want

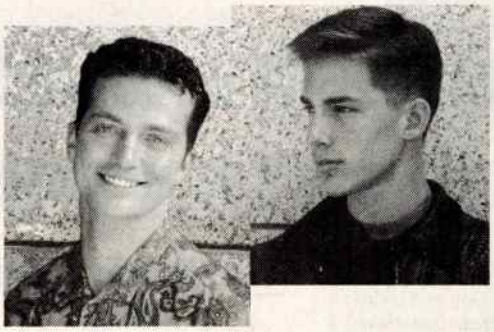
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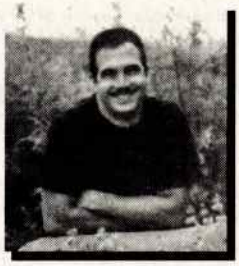
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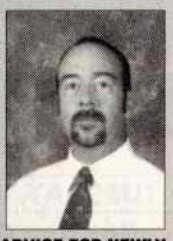
Pictures of Pride



NAME: Bruce Burgner **AGE:** 36 **HOMETOWN:** Houston **GAY OR STRAIGHT?** Gay **YEARS OUT:** 8 **MOM AND DAD KNOW?** Yes **GAY HERO:** Mitchell Anderson **ADVICE FOR NEWLY OUT:** Take your time and explore all the facets of gay culture. **PET PEEVE:** Those who do not realize that "gay" is a culture, equal to that of any other. **RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL?** Lutheran **Y2K: HYPE OR HELP!** Hype **GAY STEREOTYPE THAT FITS YOU BEST:** Southern preppy **GAY PREDICTION FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM:** That gays and straights will be governed by the same laws. *Bruce is the host with the most for one of Houston's hearty restaurants.*



NAME: Kathy (Joe) Marie Goodwin **AGE:** 19 **HOMETOWN:** Houston **GAY OR STRAIGHT?** Lesbionic **YEARS OUT:** Little over a year. **MOM AND DAD KNOW?** Yes, yes, oh yes! I have gay pride. **GAY HERO:** Ellen **GAY ZERO:** Bush or Clinton (take your choice) **ADVICE FOR NEWLY OUT:** Follow your heart. Homosexual people exist everywhere, and keep on comin'! **PET PEEVE:** When someone says "Uh, hey Kathy Joe, umm...do you umm...uh, never mind." **RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL?** I don't believe in organized religion, but I'm very spiritual. **Y2K: HYPE OR HELP!** Hype, help—only the future knows. **GAY STEREOTYPE THAT FITS YOU BEST:** The reason why I have my tongue pierced, soft butch, I scare Republicans. **GAY PREDICTION FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM:** We will rise from oppression. *Kathy is a "starving artist" working at Toopees, where she should eat something.*



NAME: Daniel Impastato **AGE:** 44 **HOMETOWN:** Buffalo, NY **GAY OR STRAIGHT?** Gay **YEARS OUT:** 26 **MOM AND DAD KNOW?** Yes. They are very supportive and loving. **GAY HERO:** James D. Sapienza, my best friend who died in '89. **GAY ZERO:** Fred Phelps **ADVICE FOR NEWLY OUT:** Dance your ass off. Play safe and don't be in a hurry to couple up. **PET PEEVE:** Gay citizens who do not vote. **RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL?** Spiritual **Y2K: HYPE OR HELP!** Hype. I've got a Mac! **GAY STEREOTYPE THAT FITS YOU BEST:** Interior decorator **GAY PREDICTION FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM:** First openly gay mayoral candidate in Houston (no, Sylvester Turner does not count!). *Daniel educates you adults in bilingual education.*