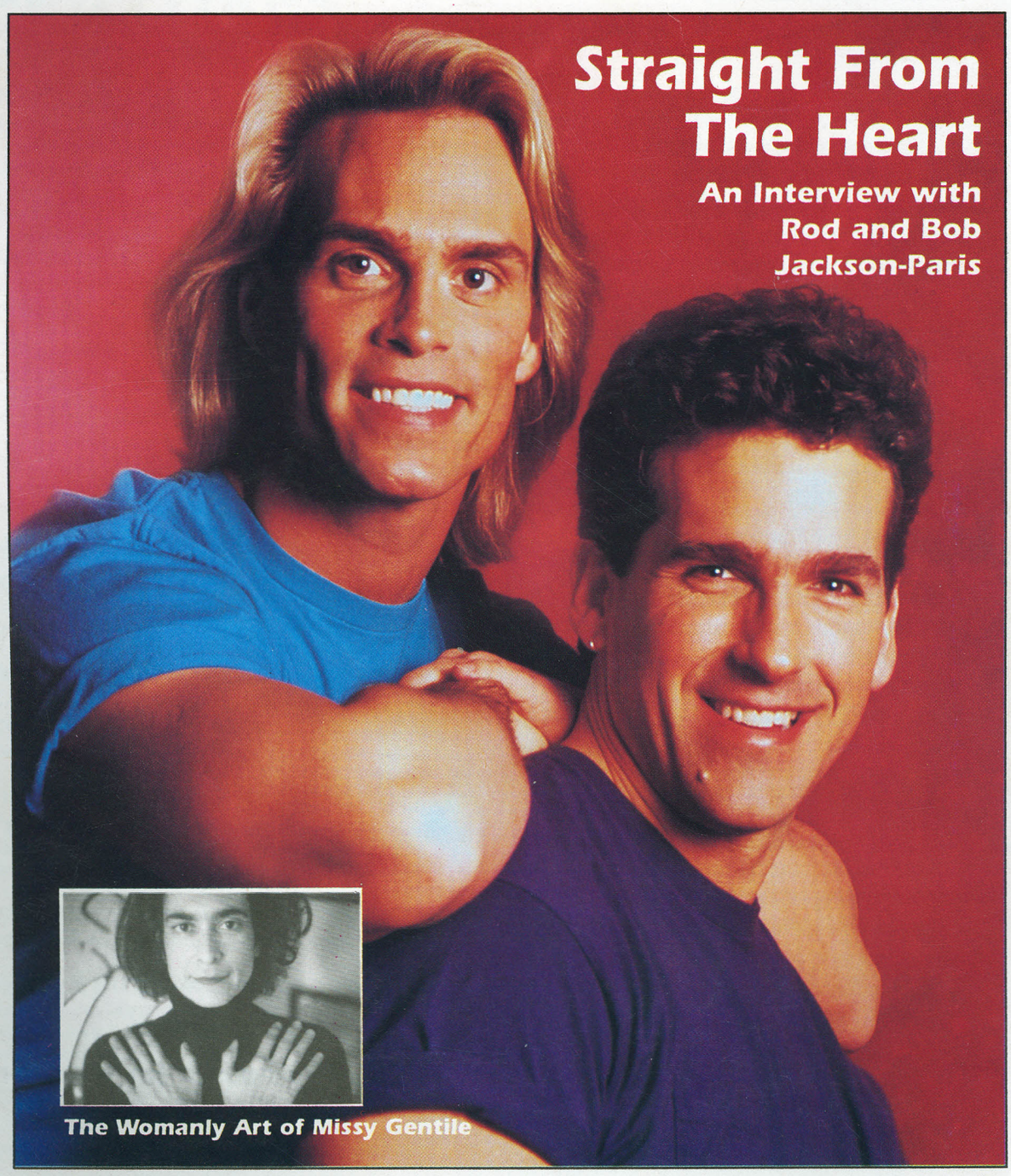
PREMIERE ISSUE • FEBRUARY 15 - MARCH 14, 1994 • COMPLIMENTARY COPY

Out▼Smart

HOUSTON'S GAY & LESBIAN MONTHLY MAGAZINE



Straight From The Heart

An Interview with Rod and Bob Jackson-Paris

The Womanly Art of Missy Gentile

LOBO welcomes *OutSmart* to our community. Like the rest of our community, gay journalism has, in most cases, greatly evolved since the early days of crudely done "bar rags" that were nothing more than one large advertisement for the bars, and then only the ones willing to buy advertising.

Unfortunately, some aspects of these early days still linger on. Not all of the gay press has risen above the "bar rag" stage, and some publications still tie advertising to who or what gets listed.

Actually, greater progress usually occurs nationally. *The Advocate* has evolved from a poorly printed tabloid to a glossy magazine. A few political magazines, *Outweek* and *QW* come to mind, appeared on the scene, captured a following and stirred controversy before vanishing into that great wasteland of the defunct.

Local gay newspapers advanced more slowly, unable or unwilling to break from the strong reliance on bars. Yet, as our community broadened its interests and horizons, the bars, while still a vital meeting place, do not monopolize the gay and lesbian social scene today.

It is as if the gay press was the last to discover that our community is so diverse, so encompassing of the greater American society. If you glance at some of the larger gay newspapers— *The Washington Blade*, *Bay Area Reporter*— the ads are dominated by a wide variety of retail stores and listings of professional services unheard of 20 years ago or less.

One of the hindrances to broader advertising was the advent of the "sex ads" that accompanied deregulation of phone services. Often, more mainstream gay advertisers did not want to appear alongside or even near such ads. This even led *The Advocate* to create an entirely new magazine to handle its classified and sex ads— opening the door then to national ads from companies welcoming the gay dollar.

Some gay newspapers have followed in similar path, barring sex ads altogether or placing them in a special section. The success of national gay publications like *Genre* or *Out* is due in large measure in gaining these national ads, to the exclusion of the sex ads.

It would even be fair to say that the maturity and the professionalism of a gay publication is directly tied to, first, its ability to break from the 'bar rag" syndrome and, second, to attract a greater diversity of advertising as well as content.

Any step, such as *OutSmart*, that furthers that evolution deserves our support and encouragement.

Lobo

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T-Shirts • Magazines • Cards • Books • Accessories • Necessities • Video Sales & Rentals

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ATTORNEYS

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Julie LaRue, LUTCF and the Acacia Financial Center of Houston, recognizes and congratulates **Out▾Smart** in its efforts to provide quality information to business owners, professionals and executives.

While our community faces common financial issues that everyone must address, we also have unique and specialized problems which require and deserve clear and thoughtful solutions.

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OutSmart

Houston's Gay & Lesbian Monthly Magazine

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

OutSmart provides positive information to gay men, lesbians and their associates to enhance and improve the quality of our lives. Our goal is to build a bridge of communication and understanding between cultural and social communities that are separated by traditions of ignorance and misinformation, thus creating a healthier community for us all.

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From the Publisher...

A healthy city is one that exercises cooperation and understanding among all its communities. Houston, the fourth largest city in the United States, is home to one of the fastest growing gay and lesbian communities in the nation. With that growth comes the need for a publication which encourages communication and positive information.

Having published *Uptown Express* magazine for nearly ten years, Houston's need for an informative, entertaining magazine that enhances and expands the currently available roster of gay/lesbian-oriented press has frequently been brought to our attention.

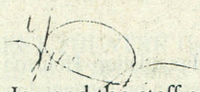
It is the goal of *OutSmart*, Houston's Gay and Lesbian Monthly Magazine, to address the diversity of this community, fostering understanding among all Houston's citizens, and beyond. *OutSmart* is designed to encourage greater cooperation and understanding between Houston's gay and straight communities, recognizing and accentuating our similarities and building on our mutual strengths.

The emotional and pivotal experience of participating in the *1993 March on Washington for Gay, Lesbian and Bi-Equal Rights* was also integral in the decision to create *OutSmart*. The power of an estimated one million people converging on our nation's capital with such definition of purpose was unforgettable and life-changing.

It is critically important for each of us to use our talents and resources to inspire global change in the perception of who and what gay men and lesbians are. It is equally important to illustrate what gay men and lesbians are not.

Gays and lesbians are our neighbors, coworkers, friends and family. A recent poll indicates that 65 percent of professional gay men and lesbians think it would be socially beneficial if all gay people were out of the closet. Seventy percent are optimistic about the progress of civil rights in the 90s. *OutSmart* invites you to celebrate this optimism, offering an oportunity to become "part of the solution" with business visibilty, support and participation.

It's time to be Out.
It's time to be Smart.
It's time for OutSmart.



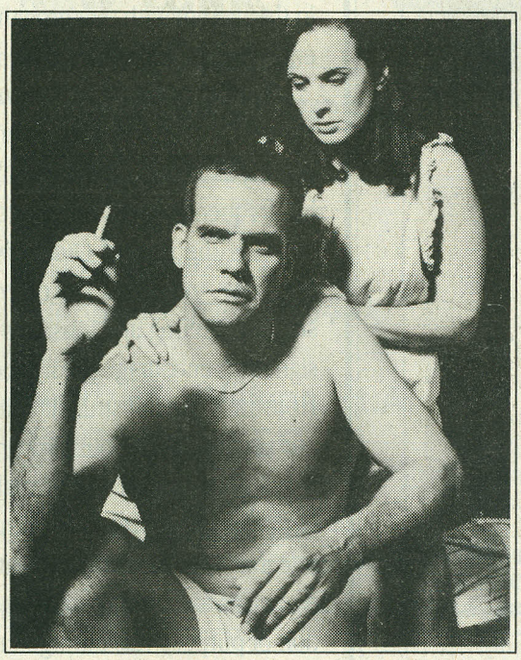
Greg Jeu and the staff of *OutSmart*

This issue is dedicated to Joey D. Cundiff
4/18/55—9/8/92

CALENDAR

If you are part of a group or have a function that you would like listed in our calendar, please send announcements by the 1st of the month to: CALENDAR EDITOR, OutSmart, *2990 Richmond, Suite 316, Houston, TX 77098. Inclusion in the calendar is based upon general interest to our readers, space availability and the whims of the editorial staff.*

COMMUNITY EVENTS AND MEETINGS



Beirut is a fable about a young man and woman trying to live and love in a society consumed by anarchy, oppression and plague. The government is contolling their lives—they're quarantining all who are infected with the plague and they've made sex a capital crime. Lynn Miller, Jr. (seated) and Celeste Cheramie star in this scorching drama presented by Theatre LaB Houston. The show opens Thursday February 17 and will run Fridays and Saturdays from February 18 through March 12 at 8 pm. Call 868-7516 for reservations.

FEBRUARY

15 Houston Pride Committee seeks members and volunteers. General meeting, 7 pm, Multi Purpose Center, 1475 West Gray, 529-6979.

16 Men's Network for gay and bisexual men, 7-9 pm, Montrose Counseling Center, 900 Lovett, 529-0037.

18-19 *Lovve/Rituals & Rage*, Root Wy'mn Theatre Company, 8 pm, The Heinen Theater, 3517 Austin, 630-1138.

22 Exploring Sensual Eroticism safer sex workshop, 7-9 pm, sponsored by AIDS Foundation Houston, 3202 Weslayan Annex, 623-6796.

AIDS Equity League, 12 noon, Charlie's Restaurant, 1100 Westheimer, 871-0092.

23 Women's Network for lesbian and bisexual women, 7-9 pm, Montrose Counseling Center, 900 Lovett, 529-0037.

28 Past Life Regression Workshop with Sandra Nicolas, 7-9:45 pm, for more information or to register call 522-0990.

Log Cabin Republicans of Houston general meeting, call 681-2607 for meeting time and place.

AIDS Foundation Houston hosts Richard Elbein, who will present nutrition education for those living with HIV disease, 6:30 pm in the downstairs conference room of the Montrose Library, 4100 Montrose, free. Call Bart Loeser at 623-6796 for more information.

MARCH

2 Men's Network for gay and bisexual men, 7-9 pm, Montrose Counseling Center, 900 Lovett, 529-0037.

3 AIDS Foundation Houston presents a panel discussion on recognizing and coping with grief, stress and burnout among caregivers and health care providers. 6:30 pm in the downstairs conference room of the Montrose Library, 4100 Montrose, free. Call Bart Loeser at 623-6796 for more information.

5 Spiritual Renewal Reception with Rev. Steve Pieters, 7 pm, Metropolitan Community Church of the Resurrection, 1919 Decatur.

6 P-FLAG General Meeting, 2 pm, St. Francis Episcopal Church, 345 Piney Point Road. P-FLAG Houston Helpline: 867-9020.

Spiritual Renewal Worship with Rev. Steve Pieters, 8:30 pm, Metropolitan Community Church of the Resurrection, 1919 Decatur.

8 Super Tuesday Primary Elections - Don't Forget to Vote!

AIDS Equity League, 12 noon, Charlie's Restaurant, 1100 Westheimer, 871-0092.

9 Women's Network for lesbian and bisexual women, 7-9 pm, Montrose Counseling Center, 900 Lovett, 529-0037.

11 P-FLAG Healing the Hurt Conference on Homophobia, 7:30 am-5 pm, University Hilton, 4800 Calhoun. Call 867-9020 for more information.

12 The DIFFA Collection (fashion show and auction), 6 pm, Grand Ballroom, George R. Brown Convention Center. For ticket information call DIFFA/Houston, 523-5350.

15 Houston Pride Committee seeks members and volunteers. General meeting, 7 pm, Multi Purpose Center, 1475 West Gray, 529-6979.

SNEAK-PEEK
March 19 AmFAR Benefit Concert with Liza Minelli, hosted by Angela Lansbury. Tickets range from $106-$506 and are on sale now through the Arena Theatre, Box Office 988-1020.

ONGOING

ACT-UP Gulf Coast, weekly meetings, Thursdays, 9:30 pm, 3400 Montrose @ Hawthorn, Suite 520, 523-9199.

AIDS ALLIANCE OF THE BAY AREA, support group for those infected and affected, Tuesdays, 7-8:30 pm, 17511 El Camino Real, #106, 488-4492.

AIDS FOUNDATION HOUSTON, free creative writing workshop for anyone affected by AIDS with freelance writer Gregg Rodriguez. Mondays, 3-6 pm. Call 623-6796 or 868-0008 for more information.

BINET (Bisexual Network of Houston), Wednesdays, 7 pm, MCCR Church, 1919 Decatur, 861-9149.

EMPOWERMENT FOR LIVING, a weekly support program and pot luck supper, Tuesdays, 6 pm, MCCR, 1919 Decatur. For more information call 861-9149.

EN*LIGHT*EN UP, a gay men's spirituality group, Thursdays, 7:30 pm, The Center for Light, 3408 West Lamar. Call Michael Coll at 520-6996 for more information.

GAY & LESBIAN LATE NIGHT RADIO: Saturdays, Midnight to 3 am. Featuring the QMZ (Queer Music Zone) with Jimmy Caper. KPFT 90.1 FM.

THE DIZINGER FOUNDATION offers free classes in art and photography to HIV+ individuals. The Foundation also gives grants to people for their completed works. Please feel free to visit the foundation office at 3701 Montrose to view the many works on display. 522-8660.

THEATRE

A. D. PLAYERS Through March 20: *Lettice and Lovage.* 2710 Alabama. 526-2721.

ACTORS THEATRE OF HOUSTON Through March 6: *The Owl and the Pussycat.* 2506 South Blvd. 529-6606.

ACTORS WORKSHOP March 4-April 11: *Dearly Departed.* 1009 Chartres. 236-1844.

ALLEY THEATRE Feb. 20: *Keely and Du.* Feb. 24-March 27: *Tartuffe.* 615 Texas Ave. 228-8421.

COMPANY ONSTAGE Through March 5: *How the Other Half Loves.* 536 Westbury Square. 726-1219.

CURTAINS Through March 5: *The Trilumph of the Spider Monkey.* 3722 Washington. 862-4548.

DIVERSEWORKS Feb. 18-19: *lovve/rituals & rage.* 1117 Washington. 223-8346.

DREEM KATZ Through March 12: *Planet Spivey.* Heights Theatre, 339 W. 19th St. 525-5959.

THE ENSEMBLE THEATRE Through March 6: *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf.* 3535 Main. 520-0055

GRAND 1894 OPERA HOUSE Feb. 18: *Grandma Moses, An American Primitive starring Cloris Leachman.* 2020 Postoffice. 1-800-821-1894.

HOUSTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE Feb. 17-26: *Thomas Melocon: A New Work.* 3517 Austin. 630-1138.

HOUSTON SKYLINE THEATRE Feb. 25-March 26: *The Lady's Not For Burning.* 1617 Fannin. 759-0701.

MAIN STREET THEATRE Through Feb. 20: *Julius Caesar.* 2540 Times Blvd. 524-6706.

NATIONSBANK HOUSTON BROADWAY SERIES Feb. 22-27: *Camelot starring Robert Goulet.* Music Hall, 810 Bagby. 1-800-377-6456.

RADIO MUSIC THEATRE Ongoing: *Wiener Day at the Rollercade!* 2623 Colquitt. 522-7722.

RICE PLAYERS Feb. 16-19: *Masterpieces.* Hamman Hall, Rice University. 527-4040.

STAGES Feb. 16-March 13: *A Parader Without a Permit.* 3201 Allen Parkway. 527-8243.

THEATER LAB HOUSTON Feb. 17-March 12: *Beirut* 706 Alamo. 868-7516.

THEATRE SOUTHWEST Feb. 25-March 13: *Tea and Sympathy.* 3750 S. Gessner. 661-9505.

THEATRE SUBURBIA Feb. 25-March 26: *The Black Duck.* 1410 W. 43rd at Oak Forest. 682-3525.

THEATRE UNDER THE STARS Through Feb. 20: *The Most Happy Fella.* Music Hall, 810 Bagby. 520-0111.

WEST-MON REPERTORY THEATER Through March 6: *Closed for Repairs.* 1102 1/2 Westheimer. 995-3720.

MUSIC

DA CAMERA Feb. 15: *Pulitzer Prize Winner George Perle.* Menil Collection, 1515 Sul Ross. Feb. 19: *La Guitarra.* George R. Brown Education Center at Houston Zoological Gardens. Feb. 24: *In Her Majesty's Service.* Stude Concert Hall, Rice University. 524-5050.

HOUSTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE Feb. 22: *Black History in Song* presented by HCC Chorus and TSU Choir. 3517 Austin. 630-1138.

HOUSTON GRAND OPERA Feb. 18: *United Negro College Fund Benefit.* Feb. 19-21: *Program of Schubert, Mendelssohn and Janacek.* Wortham Center, 500 Texas.

HOUSTON MASTERWORKS CHORUS Feb. 19: *HMC Goes to the Opera and the Follies.* Stude Concert Hall, Rice University. 529-8900.

HOUSTON SYMPHONY March 5-7: *Dvorak Violin Concerto with Christian Tetzlaff.* March 11-13: *The Smothers Brothers.* Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana.

SOCIETY FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS Feb. 23: *Violinist Pinchas Zukerman.* Jones Hall, 615 Louisiana, 227-ARTS.

Out In Our World

Report of 'Natural Resistance' to HIV

CHICAGO (Jan. 3 GayNet) —A report in the Journal of the *American Medical Association* describes several cases of possible "natural resistance" among HIV-exposed health care workers, raising the tantalizing possibility that the secret to fighting HIV may hide somewhere in the body itself. Drs. Mario Clerici and Gene Shearer and their team of researchers at the National Cancer Institute report that anti-HIV activity was observed in the immune systems of 6 of 8 HIV-negative health care workers who were exposed to the virus through on-the-job accidents. The immune systems of the HIV-exposed workers showed activation of the "cell-mediated" branch of the immune system, the researchers reported. It is this arm of the body's immune system that launches killer T-cells, whose job it is to attack foreign organisms like HIV. But there was no evidence of activation of the "humoral" arm of the immune system, which produces antibodies, the researchers said. No antibodies to HIV were seen in any of the exposed health care workers. The report is the latest in a flurry of recent evidence suggesting that when HIV enters the body it doesn't always cause infection and that some individuals are able to fight off the infection through some natural immunity.

No U.S. Funds for Global TB Battle

WASHINGTON (Dec. 24 GayNet) — Dr. Ann Van Dusen, global health chief of the U.S. Agency for International Development, says the United State can't help finance the $9 million program proposed by the World Health Organization to battle the worldwide tuberculosis epidemic. Although WHO has warned that a resurgence of TB in the U.S. is being fueled by the global epidemic, Van Dusen said the government's international health funds are pledged to AIDS and child-care programs.

Pneumonia Treatment Causing Shifts in Opportunistic Diseases

BOSTON (Dec. 26 GayNet) — *The New England Journal of Medicine* reports that the early and widespread treatment of AIDS-related pneumonia in the U.S. is changing the pattern of illnesses related to HIV. Because drugs treating pneumocystis carini pneumonia extend life expectancy of people with AIDS without stopping the decline of the immune system, 4 types of AIDS-related illnesses occur more frequently: mycobacterium avium complex disease, esophageal candidiasis, wasting syndrome, and cytomegalovirus disease. The four, once relatively uncommon, are now fairly often found among patients.

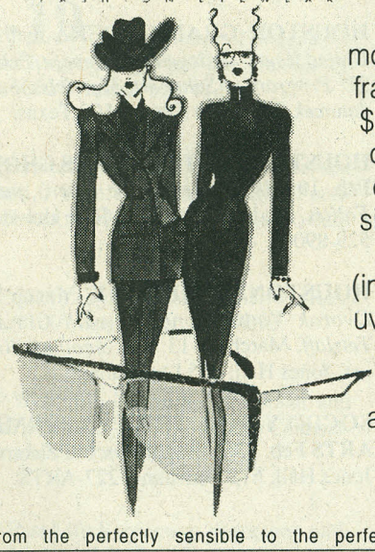
What Sign Are You?

DETROIT (Jan. 5 GayNet) — Just thought you'd like to know that, according to Patricia Fedelum of the Deaf Hearing & Speech Center in Detroit, deaf Americans have generally stopped using a limp wrist to sign the word indicating a homosexual. As a sign of the times, the newest sign is simply the letter Q for (guess what?) the word "queer."

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Family Support Essential for Healthy Gay Kids

WASHINGTON (Jan. 3 GayNet) — A tolerant, loving and supportive environment built around young gays and lesbians could be the life-saving force that counteracts the problems that often place them at high risk for HIV infection, said Rayford Kytle, deputy director of the news office at the U.S. Public Health Service, in a recent speech to the agency's employees. Kytle, who said he has experienced first-hand the intolerant attitudes towards gays and lesbians, said that a negative attitude toward homosexuality by family and friends creates a confused young adult who, in trying to come to terms with sexuality, often succumbs to isolation and low self-esteem. These traits can lead to self-destructive behaviors - such as alcohol and drug abuse, suicide, and unsafe sex - which place them at risk for all sexually transmitted diseases, and especially for AIDS. Accepting a young homosexual and providing a supportive family climate, on the other hand, could allow these youngsters to value themselves enough to want to stay healthy and live fulfilling, responsible lives, Kytle said. He added that gay and lesbian youths need community role models who promote healthy and responsible choices.

Anti-Gay Initiative Filed in Nevada

CARSON CITY, Nev. (Jan. 26 GayNet) — Lou Mabon, founder of the anti-gay Oregon Citizens Alliance, joined with Daisy Stanley of the newly formed Nevada Citizens Alliance, Tuesday, Jan. 25, in filing a petition to prohibit the "presentation of homosexuality as a positive lifestyle" by any government institution in Nevada. The initiative petition, similar to the voter-approved Amendment 2 in Colorado, needs only 51,000 signatures to qualify for the ballot this November. Gov. Bob Miller had denounced the anti-gay initiative as a "message of intolerance and discrimination." Mabon, however, snapped back that Miller "will ultimately pay the price" for opposing the initiative.

Sir Ian Enters the 'Ring'

HOLLYWOOD (Jan. 5 GayNet) — Sir Ian McKellen, the openly gay noted British actor, is set to co-star as a political adviser in the long-buried Orson Welles movie project, *The Big Brass Ring*, based on a fictional story about a U.S. presidential candidate who must hide his homosexuality to run for office. No date has been set for the delayed film to go into production.

Virtual Safe Sex

SAN FRANCISCO (Jan. 3 GayNet) — The high-tech computer world inched forward (maybe even 8 inches forward) with the premiere of "Dream Lovers," the first gay sex CD-ROM at the MacWorld Expo. For the computer illiterati who don't know a CD-ROM from Baba Ram Dass, suffice it to say that ROM (or "Read-Only Memory") is to your average desktop computer what videotape is to 8mm film - a high-tech zoom that reproduces and generates amazingly sharper, more detailed images. With interactive capabilities, CD-ROM allows the user to manipulate the images in a variety of ways not possible in any conventional medium - which means you can do a lot more with "Dream Lovers" star Joe Romero than you ever thought possible. Romero, who attended the opening of the 10th annual MacWorld Expo where "Dream Lovers" was ... ahem ... being exhibited, said he was surprised by the "number of women who are just going crazy over it." (Well, if you've ever seen the swarthy Romero's "it," you wouldn't be all that surprised.) But without batting an eyelash, Romero points out with perhaps justifiable pride of ownership, that the program's windows displaying the sex-acts menu "is the largest window size. The heterosexual versions [of porn CD-ROMs] have small windows." And because inquiring minds want to know, we can assure readers that Romero's claims of gigasize are not mere hubris or some optical illusion. It's tough work, but someone's got to do it.

'Harvey Milk' - The Opera

SAN FRANCISCO (Jan. 30 GayNet) — At the snail's pace rate the Oliver Stone proposed motion picture "The Mayor of Castro Street" is moving, you may be able to catch the opera based on the assassinated gay politician Harvey Milk's life before it hits the big screen as a biopic. The opera - called simply *Harvey Milk* - is slated to premiere at the Houston Grand Opera on Jan. 21, 1995, followed by a spring 1995 performance by the New York City Opera and a production by the San Francisco Opera in the fall of 1996. The opera was commissioned jointly by the three companies and is the work of composer Stewart Wallace and librettist Michael Korie.

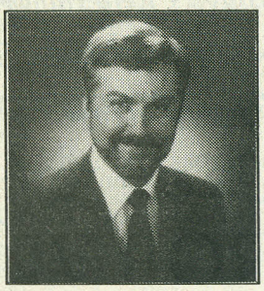
1993's Most Profitable Film? Guess Again!

HOLLYWOOD (Jan. 30 GayNet) — Forget *Jurassic Park, Schindler's List, Philadelphia,* and similar motion picture box office blockbusters, the real profit in movies is in queer films. According to *Variety*, the motion picture industry trade paper's just published listing of the most profitable films released in 1993, *Jurassic Park* came as last year's "second" most profitable film, topped by *The Wedding Banquet*. Ahn Li's film about a racially mixed yuppie gay couple who try to hoodwink Wei-Tung's parents from Taiwan into believing he is straight by mounting a fake wedding grossed more than any

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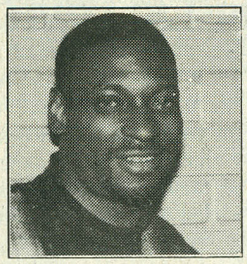
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SPEAK▼OUT HOUSTON

by Chris Price

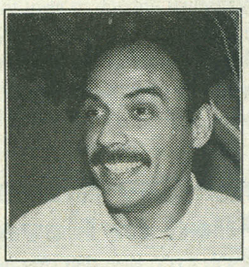
THIS MONTH'S QUESTION:

This June marks the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion, when members of New York City's gay community, predominately men dressed in drag, first resisted unrelenting police harassment. It was then that the gay liberation movement is said to have been born. Since that time, drag queens have frequently endured severe political and social ridicule from other factions of the gay and lesbian community. Often drag is viewed as embarrassing, demeaning and worse. What do you think of drag?



I feel that I have learned something from drag queens because they're people who aren't afraid to let their other feelings, their other side, come out. They have the courage to say, "This is me. You either accept me or you don't."
—Ray Anderson

I think drag is great. You either like it or you don't. It expresses a fun part about people and it expresses some things that people are afraid of. It's fun if you really feel like it doesn't hurt you. I've had some of the best, best, fun nights of my queer life in drag.
—Richard Cortez





I think if people want to dress that way it's fine. You know, it's up to them. It's a free world, right?
—Sandi Maldonado

I find nothing the matter with drag. Out of curiosity I would try it. I absolutely adore drag queens.
—David C.





Being in drag has been a part of gay society whether it's leather drag, cowboy drag or female drag. It has been a part of us for many years.
—Jimmy Arispe

Want to know what Houston thinks about a particular subject? Send your questions to OutSmart 2990 Richmond #316 Houston, TX 77098 or FAX them to us at 713-522-3275.

film in 1993 compared to its expenditures, *Variety* says. The Hollywood trade paper reported in its annual survey of most profitable films that *The Wedding Banquet* grossed a staggering 23 times what it cost to produce, handily beating Stephen Spielberg's dinosaur blockbuster *Jurassic Park,* which earned only 16 times its production expenses.

GLAAD Honors Philadelphia, Band' and Angels

LOS ANGELES (Jan. 31 GayNet) — Major feature films, TV and theater productions last year got nods for the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation for positive portrayals, giving Hollywood and Broadway a back-door way of presenting homosexuals stricken by the epidemic sympathetically. Jonathan Demme's film *Philadelphia*, the HBO production of Randy Shilts' "And the Band Played On," and Tony Kushner's massive theater piece *Angels in America* were prominent works recognized by GLAAD's media awards for 1993. Also honored at a GLAAD March. 19 dinner are: singer Melissa Etheridge, playwright Harvey Fierstein, syndicated columnist Deb Price, journalist Farai Chideya, and TV reporter Maria Shriver; television shows *Seinfeld, Sisters, Law and Order and Other Mothers,* and independent films *The Wedding Banquet and Forbidden Love: The Unashamed Stories of Lesbian Lives.*

Paperback Version of 'Queer in America' Due

NEW YORK (Jan. 24 GayNet) — Anchor Doubleday will release the paperback edition of Michelangelo Signorile's bestseller *Queer in America* this spring, in conjunction with a national tour by the author. The Doubleday edition will include a new "afterword" by Signorile on recent developments in the gay rights movement, the media's response to the political tactic of outing which he has championed, and "pointing out a growing force on the political landscape: conservative, rigid and intolerant individuals who comprise the new Gay Right."

Louganis Coming Out - Wow, What a Surprise

NEW YORK (Jan. 25 GayNet) — Gossip columnist Liz Smith reports that Olympic gold medalist Greg Louganis has signed a book deal with Random House for his biography in which the reserved athlete-turned-entertainer will finally discuss his homosexuality. Even so, don't expect a kiss-and-tell-all bio, Smith says, because Louganis "fervently hopes this [his sexual orientation] does not become the primary focus of media attention." Revealing an open secret? Ten years after his Olympic fame? After the outing of J. Edgar Hoover? Not likely.

Gender-Bender Barbies & G.I. Joes a Christmas Hit

NEW YORK (Dec. 29 GayNet) — He's big, bad, burley and butch. And the Talking G.I. Joe Battle Commander is supposed to roar off things like "Attack!" and "Vengeance is mine." But instead, because of the work of a group of New York artists, several hundred of the G.I. Joes this Christmas are saying things like "Will we ever have enough clothes?" and "I love to shop with you." The group, which calls itself the "Barbie Liberation Organization" (or B.L.O.), earlier this year bought some 300 G.I. Joe and Barbie dolls and swapped the computer chips that give the popular dolls their collection of set phrases. The switched dolls were then carefully repackaged along with a flyer urging the purchasers to contact their local media "about this funny doll they got" and stealthily put back on toy store shelves in more than 40 states, Canada and England. When Christmas rolled around, of course, the effort, which the B.L.O. admits is an "unabashed publicity stunt," became public as kids found their G.I. Joes exclaiming in the voice of teenage girl, "Let's go to the beach," and their Barbies snarling out in a deep baritone, "Eat lead, Cobra!" The B.L.O. says the voice-change operation was a head-on attack on "gender-based stereotyping in children's toys." And it must have been a success because everyone who's gotten one of the dolls so far seems to be thrilled with them. No one has taken up Mattel's offer to exchange any of the butch Barbies, and several major toy stores have reported a number of inquiries about the new gender-bender dolls.

North-LaRouche-Quayle: Politics as Usual

NORFOLK, Va. (Jan. 27 GayNet) — Just thought we'd point out that Oliver North, convicted Iran-Contra scandal figure with a penchant for telling anti-gay jokes, has formally announced his bid for the Republican nomination to run for the U.S. Senate seat now held by Democrat Charles Robb. The day before, political extremist Lyndon LaRouche, who's fond of urging quarantines for people at risk for HIV infection, was released from federal prison in Rochester, Minn., after serving 5 years for fraud and conspiracy, and promptly announced he would again make a presidential run in the 1996. Just days before, former vice president Dan Quayle, better known as "Mr. Potatoehead," said he also continues to think about a 1996 presidential bid "probably once or twice an hour." And you wonder why Americans are cynical about politics?

The Wedding

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HOUSTONEWALL 25:
Interview with Pride Week Co-Chairs Julie Siska and Ray Ramirez

Interview by Chris Price

OutSmart recently had the opportunity to meet Julie Siska and Ray Ramirez, co-chairs of the 1994 Houston Lesbian and Gay Pride Committee. They talked to us about this summer's Pride Parade and Rally, which will commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion.

Tell me a little bit about yourselves.

JULIE: I'm Julie Siska; I'm a CPA. I got involved with the Pride Committee about two years ago when I took on the treasurer's position. I really got excited because I saw how much fun was available out of being in this project. So when the position came available this year for the female co-chair, and Ray had already taken on the male position, I knew I wanted to work with Ray so I decided to take it on. I'm really excited about working on Pride Committee 1994.



Julie Siska and Ray Ramirez are this year's Houston Lesbian and Gay Pride Committee co-chairs.

RAY: A year ago I became involved with the committee because of my involvement with the skate club; I wanted to know the logistics for my skate club. Then came time for fireworks, and no one was willing to look for money for fireworks. So I went out and found the funds and was pretty successful at that. I became fund-raising chairman, and Julie and I worked together. She was the treasurer. After last year's event our predecessors were getting pretty burned out. They had been co-chairs for three consecutive years. We decided to do it.

JULIE: One thing that Ray and I both are committed to is having a large network of people involved in the organization. In the past, only a very few people have put this thing on—and they've done a masterful job—but what we want to see is more participation. One of our goals has been to fill all the committee positions with some real key people, and they're showing up! It's incredible; we have almost a full line-up of co-chairs.

What we're focusing on—and this was Ray's idea—is to have gender parity, which is to have male and female co-chairs in all the various positions. It's coming through successfully, and we're excited about that.

RAY: We are trying to spread responsibility throughout the community. When we joined the executive committee, there may have been fewer than ten or fewer than seven. Now, when you come to our meetings, we may have more than twenty. It's really building up.

Is there anything you would like to change about the way the celebration has been handled in earlier years?

RAY: Just to make the community aware that it is open to the public. If you want to join us, you just have to come to two meetings, and you'll have a vote in our organization; that's the important thing. It can't be put on by one segment of the community—the social group, the leather group or the business group — it has to encompass everyone.

JULIE: I'd say, rather than changing anything, what we are doing is enhancing the basis that has been established. It's a wonderful framework that they have designed—Pride Week and the programs. All we are doing is taking it on and enhancing it.

Many people who are closeted may stand by and watch the Pride Parade and really wish they were out. Do you have any advice you would like to give them?

RAY: Start small; join a community organization. It doesn't matter whether it's bowling or *Lesbians in Business*. Go to that meeting, and then in small increments you can come out a little bit more and a little bit more and see all the groups that are out there. We have a large variety of groups that are starving for membership.

JULIE: I agree. Also in coming out in small increments, you get to see how many there are out there that are like you. You establish a comfort zone of comraderie, and you can step out further and further to the degree that you are willing to step out.

Every year I hear people in the community say that some group in the parade—drag queens or leather people or some other group—is embarrassing. How do you respond to that?

JULIE: My response is that they are a part of the community. We try to monitor it in a way that it is appropriate to the parade.

RAY: We have a mechanism to prevent it from being too decadent and too unpresentable. We *do* want to present a picture that is marketable. Our

mission statement is to show the lifestyle of gays and lesbians in a positive way. If someone objects to a faction of our community, my suggestion is that he educate himself on that faction. There are some beautiful people out there. They hurt the way we hurt.

If you're afraid of the transexuals, go to one of their meetings sometime and see what they're really like before making the kind of generalizations that we're guilty of sometimes. If you're not familiar with the leather story, go see what they do; they raise a lot of money for our community. Go look at the drag queens; they raise thousands of dollars. Those people need to be patted on the back for the work they do.

I also hear the complaint that the parade is always held at the hottest time of day on the hottest day of the year. Has a nighttime parade ever been considered?

RAY: It's been considered, but Houston city ordinance restricts the time the parade can be held. On a Sunday, it's between the hours of one and seven.

JULIE: One thing we have done is that in the past it has been starting at four or five o'clock. Now we're moving it up. We're saying noontime is the start time, but I think the official start time is going to be one o'clock. We're trying to confirm that with the city. We're trying to make more time for the rally. This year it will be bigger and will start at 4:30 pm.

Any last remarks?

RAY: We would ask the community to give us the opportunity to try some new things. The parade and the rally are growing, and we have to do some new things to facilitate that growth.

JULIE: The focus this year is to be all-inclusive. All the community from the religious section to the bar people to the closeted people, we want them all to be a part of the parade and the rally and the Pride Week events. That's the goal. Remember, there's still time to enter the parade. Applications will be going out March 21.

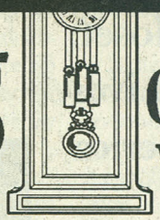
For more information regarding Pride Week 1994 call 529-6979.

Feb./March Houston Lesbian & Gay Pride Week Meeting Schedule

Feb. 15 Pride Week General Meeting—Grand Marshal Nomination and Parade/Rally Application Approval.
Feb. 15 Pride Week General Meeting—Grand Marshal Nomination and Parade/Rally Application Approval.
Feb. 16: Merchandise Out
March 1: Newsletter Mailout
March 1: Pride Week Executive Meeting
March 15: Pride Week General Meeting—Grand Marshals Vote
March 21: Mailout of Applications
March 28: Newsletter Mailout

All Pride Week General Meetings are open to everyone and held at 7 PM at the Metroplitan Multi-Service Center, 1475 W. Gray.

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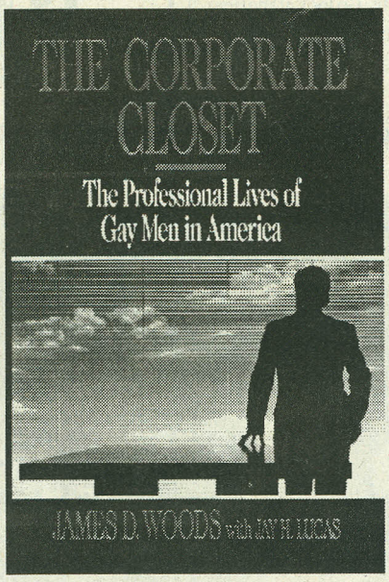


Cracking open the corporate closet door

The Corporate Closet: The Professional Lives of Gay Men in America

James D. Woods, with Jay H. Lucas
Free Press/Macmillan, 1993, $22.95

Reviewed by BARBARA I. BOND
OutNOW! - San Jose, California
GayNet News Service



The corporate workplace usually is not considered a hostile environment. Yet, for gay men and lesbians, that is often what it becomes as they struggle to fit into an extremely heterosexist world. In the recently published book *The Corporate Closet: The Professional Lives of Gay Men in America,* James D. Woods examines the survival strategies of a handpicked group of gay men, and discusses the ramifications of the choices they have made.

Woods says that he hopes his book will reach an audience that includes executives and human resources professionals. He also wants to have a more profound effect on the gay and lesbian community. "Increasingly the workplace is moving up the list of [activism] priorities," says Woods. "People are talking about lesbian and gay workplace issues in a way that they were not even two or three years ago. We've really reached the time when I think the workplace is going to become the frontier of gay and lesbian activism."

In his engaging book, Woods recounts the history of corporate America's relationship to sexuality. Even now, almost 25 years after Stonewall, sexual orientation is usually not included in nondiscrimination policies. He then analyzes how gay professionals get by, in three categories of strategies highlighted by personal examples from the interviews he and collaborator Jay Lucas conducted. These chapters are filled with experiences many readers will recognize as typical survival techniques. Included are elaborate stories of counterfeiting heterosexual lifestyles, acting asexual, or just withdrawing from the office social scene. The tales of the most closeted men are moving and are filled with the hopelessness that seems to permeate their lives.

Woods goes on to discuss some of the alternatives available and what his vision is of the corporate future. He argues convincingly that large corporations can no longer afford the drain on productivity and creativity this type of deception encourages. Sadly, some corporations may never come to support diversity. Instead they will argue that they have to "pander to the customer." The weakness of this argument was part of a discussion in the July-August issue of the *Harvard Business Review.* Woods, an assistant professor of communications at the College of Staten Island, was part of an expert panel called upon to comment individually on a case study involving the coming out of an exceptional employee. He contended that one could make the argument that the obligation to the customer stops with the product itself. Woods also observed that people seem to care about the moral code exemplified by different corporations, and that affects their choices. Commenting further on the *Harvard Business Review* report, he also said, "Some companies will always pander to a group that is homophobic or racist or whatever, but companies stand to gain as much as they might lose by saying we recognize and celebrate the diversity of our work force and we also make a terrific car. If you have a problem with our moral values, you're welcome to shop elsewhere." This is, of course, wishful thinking.



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Squandering human resources is not cost-effective business and, sooner or later, corporations will have to make the connection that heterosexism causes employees to spend needless energy on deception. As Woods points out in the last chapter of the book, "The loss to the organization in spontaneity, creativity, and solidarity is incalculable." Although hard to measure or even document, employers cannot afford to continue this self-defeating behavior. In several chapters of the book, Woods talks about how a "presumption of heterosexuality" pervades the workplace. He thinks that will be one of the first things to go as more people realize that the workplace must become more openly diverse. "It is just getting harder and harder for people to be totally oblivious to the likelihood that they work with lesbian or gay people," says Woods. He points out that some professions and urban areas have become sensitive to the fact that not every employee is heterosexual.

The new corporate emphasis on managing diversity fits right into Woods' philosophy of inclusion. Several examples are given in the book of corporations that have chosen to embrace the diversity of their employees. He thinks that this is the "back door" many gay and lesbian groups use to get management to talk about gay and lesbian issues. Woods calls it the "add gay people and stir" approach. He goes further and contends that companies that have training for diversity in place are more receptive to adding gays as another minority. The places that have no commitment to diversity are going to be the last to change.

Companies may have had to grapple with diversity issues in other contexts. "Sexual orientation has always been framed in moral terms, and what's happening gradually is that the moral vocabulary is giving way to the minority/diversity vocabulary."

Woods has made an important contribution to the growing body of gay and lesbian studies with *The Corporate Closet.* The book does not contain a representative study; however, Woods still feels confident that the information the book contains is dependable. If persons are engaged in behaviors described therein, they will have predictable problems as a result. On a personal note, Woods observed he has not had to have any coming out conversations at the university where he is employed, due to the subject matter of his thesis and other publications. He did, though, find himself forced to come out to several relatives, due to the publicity accompanying the release of his book.

Among those relatives was a very religious, conservative grandmother. It seemed that his whole family was terrified of how she would react. Woods is one of the lucky ones. He said that those experiences "have turned out to be so wonderful. My grandmother fell over herself with pride telling everyone about the book. And this was the woman we really though was going to have a hard time with me being gay." Woods also said, "I am grateful that I was pushed in that way, by my own work, into dealing with those things in my personal life." Hopefully, others can find the strength within themselves to slowly do the same thing and, eventually, the corporate world may catch on. ▼

A Rock and a Hard Place

By Anthony Godby Johnson
Crown, 1993, 213 pp.
$20.00 hardcover, $10.95 paperback

Reviewed by Susan Mortell
OutNOW! - San Jose, California
GayNet News Service

In 1992, Paul Monette received a letter from a 13-year-old boy who had contracted AIDS through childhood sexual abuse. Monette was not quick to reply.

As the author of *Borrowed Time*, Monette received many such letters from people with AIDS who wished to connect with him. Monette had seen enough sadness and hard luck to last a lifetime, and he was living on borrowed time himself. He had barely enough time to share with his own family and friends. However, Monette did write the boy a short letter, if only to clear his desk. Ten days later, Monette received a call from the boy's adoptive mother, saying how much the reply meant to her son. She suggested that Monette call the boy. Monette wanted to bolt, but the mother insisted, "You'll like him, I promise. He's not depressing at all." Thus began a relationship between Paul Monette and Anthony Godby Johnson. Eventually, at Monette's urging, Johnson ended up writing the memoirs of his short life, which became the book *A Rock and a Hard Place*. This is an extraordinary book about an extraordinary boy, and his age should not deter anyone from reading it.

Tony Johnson was born into an extremely abusive situation where he was beaten, raped and severely neglected. Despite all this, he did well in school and, in fact, was placed in a progressive school because of his high IQ. By the time he was old enough to understand that he was being abused, he was intelligent enough to call a crisis line and plead for help. The man who answered the crisis call managed to get Tony into a foster home. Ironically, the man behind the crisis line ended up meeting Tony's foster mother and falling in love with her. They married, adopted Tony, and, through their efforts, Tony's biological parents — who had nearly killed him — are now in prison. When Tony was diagnosed with AIDS, his adoptive parents sought out an HIV-positive gay man for Tony to talk to. In the book, Tony goes into detail about the very close bond of friendship that he and the gay man shared.

Tony also talks at length about his observations of the gay community and of his inability to comprehend the discrimination and hatred that is aimed at them. He tells of attending his first gay pride parade and writing a school paper on it, only to be called a "fag" by his classmates. He also tells us that his own biological father, who raped him and had sex with other men, hated gays. His father called Tony a "faggot" because he read books. He warned Tony that, if he ever caught him fooling around with another boy, he would castrate him.

Tony's observations of life's injustices are not limited to homophobia. He makes some very eloquent remarks about racism (his adoptive father is black and his adoptive mother is white) and about sexism, as he observes how his male classmates harass his female peers. Tony seems destined, in his short life, to be a visitor on this planet and to make a statement about the total ludicrousness of all he sees. Because he is here so briefly, his statements are all the more poignant.

The only weakness that the book has is that, at times, it is too sentimental. But considering the age of the writer, anything that comes off too sappy or innocent is to be justified. Since his AIDS was advanced by the time this book was written, Tony's is an adulthood that this world will never be blessed with. Bright, sensitive, and a excellent writer, Anthony Johnson would have grown to be a wonderful man. Still, we all have much to gain from his short life. Tony was able to draw more meaning out of his life than most people ever will. Anyone who feels cheated by life, especially anyone affected by AIDS, needs to read this book. ▼

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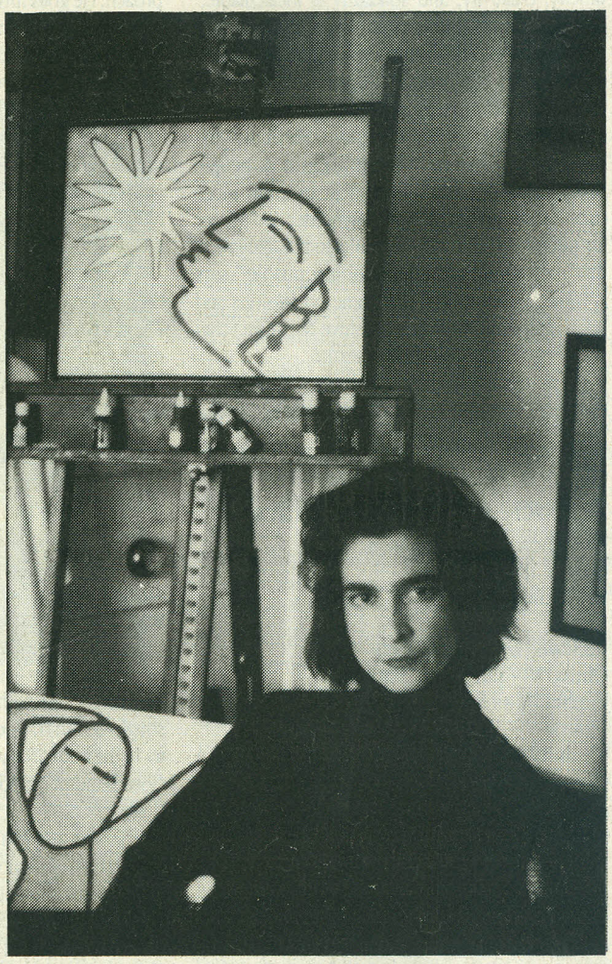
"When I dare to be powerful—to use my strength in the service of my vision—then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid."
Audre Lorde—writer, activist, poet, warrior

Walk into this youthful, old room. It's full of colors and women, bold colors and bold women. It's Missy Gentile and her art.

Her studio room is full of her paintings that enliven the walls of a well lived-in apartment. The natural light from the big windows never seems to leave the room cold. It is from here Gentile works, creates, paints.

"I never decided to become an artist painter anymore than I decided to become a lesbian," says the Italian American originally from upstate New York. She paints because "it's a visual form of expression. I can see my feelings on canvas."

The rows and rows of books are testament to a woman loving women who are strong, expressive and impacting—Audre Lorde, Maya Angelou and Zora Neale Hurston. Gentile says she is drawn to black women for "their passion because of their past-life histories."



Pieces of paper with empowering quotes from magazines or pamphlets clutter door frames and a bulletin board. Cards with inspirational words are positioned between notebooks and work piled on her desk.

She says her inspiration comes from the fabric of her life experiences. These experiences are evident on the many canvases that clutter the room—canvases covered with bold colors and shapes, primal images—mostly of women. Strong, simple, sincere… just like Missy, the artist, painter, woman, lesbian that she is. Gentile says she feels power, beauty and freedom when she paints her women figures.

Her inspirations also include strong women who knew what they wanted from life and overcame adversity to obtain it. Women like Barbara Jordan of Houston's fifth ward, the first black woman elected to Congress. Women like Nobel-Prize-winning author Toni Morrison. Women like her mother, grandmother, her few intimate friends. Women like Sophia Loren, for whom she named her cat.

Her lover is also an inspiration for her because "She allows me to be me. She's the first person in my life who saw so much in me as a person than what was on the outside," Gentile says.

There is another time when Gentile is inspired to be creative. She calls it "menstrual wisdom" (when she is PMSing).

One woman who likes Gentile's work said she felt power when she saw her piece "Feeling Her Power," which was featured in Gentile's first exhibition. "It

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was empowering to look at it; it tapped into my own strengths," the woman said. "Her work makes me smile. You don't have to study it. It's moving in a childlike way."

This reaction is what Gentile wants from people who look at her art. "I want people to smile when they look at my artwork, something that touches them inside," she exclaims. "It is important to be expressive, to get a reaction from people, to bring some feelings out in other people."

Gentile wasn't always an artist. She has been a counselor in a juvenile prison, lifeguard, factory worker, massage therapist and landscaper, but, she says, she knew none of those things were what she wanted to do.

"When I was little, I used to paint my bedroom. I'd paint it crazy, crazy colors, like 50 different colors," she recalls, "all lines and circles. I didn't have permission to do it either. But it's still there."

Gentile's quest for expression sent her away from home. When she was 21 and came out to her parents, her mother told her to leave. Gentile went to Paris for a year and worked as a nanny. Though it was hard for her, she remembers, "I really felt free."

Gentile found her first chance to show her art when she participated in the *Lesbians in Art* show held at Unique Boutique and Gallery in August 1993, to help benefit *Lesbians in Business (LIB)*. She was featured along with other lesbian artists in Houston like Nedra Hawks, Holly Glen Gearheart and Liz Zambrano.

Patti Oriot, owner of Unique Boutique, says she liked Gentile's work because "of the simplicity of it. . . it doesn't reflect any boundaries. It's spontaneous and it's easy to connect with."

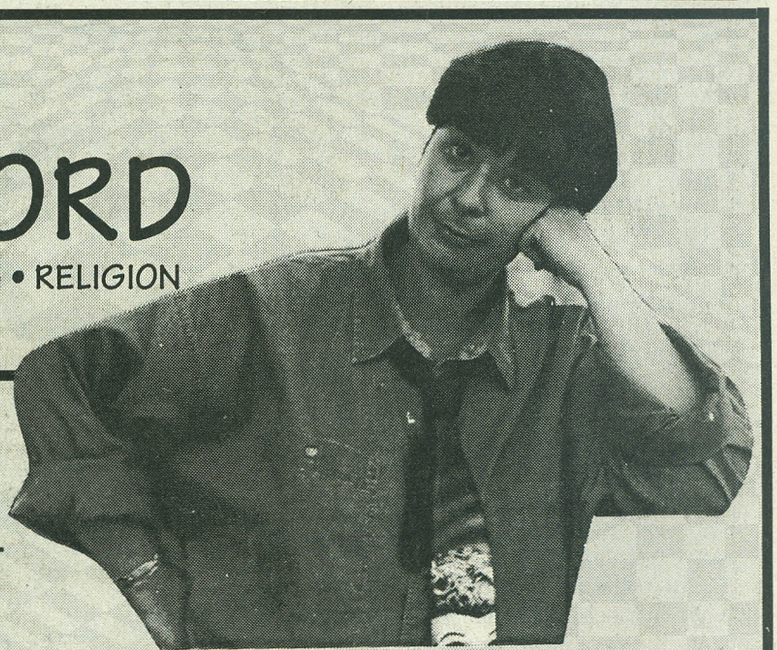
Within five years Gentile wants to be painting full time. "I'm excited about becoming a better artist, deeper and truer to the things I find exciting," she says. "My canvas is my outlet."

Missy Gentile's art is featured at Dreamland Gallery, 239 Westheimer through March 23. Her next show will be in June at the River Cafe, 3615 Montrose.

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Pieces of Paper That I Color On:

Damion Sondergaard's World of Contemporary Surrealism

BY ERIC L. ROLAND

The bright, bold colors of the geometric lines and forms, often transformed into a surrealistic fantasy, are indicative of the artwork of Damion Sondergaard.

"I just love colors," exclaims Sondergaard. "Colors have meanings. For instance, the sphere [in the painting shown here] is blue to represent cool and comfortable."

The inspiration behind all of his works are emotions—feelings of the past and present, motivations for the future. Sondergaard, who was born in Tigueria, Libya, Africa, says he often looks at a finished piece and understands more clearly the emotional intensities he was enduring while the work was in progress. "I've been told that I'm too deep, too intense—which is probably true," Sondergaard admits. "If I'm really tense and quickly need to work it out, I write a poem. Often that poem inspires me to paint.

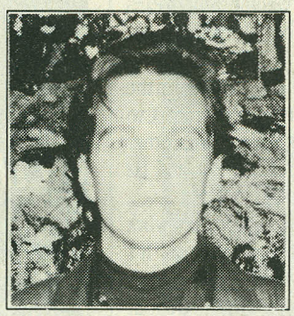
"But if I need to sit and think something through, I usually doodle on paper," he says, "and that usually becomes a larger piece."

The 32-year-old Sondergaard, whose works are often compared to the cubist works of Picasso, began his craft nearly ten years ago as a means of enlivening the bare walls of his apartment. One evening a guest expressed interest in purchasing one of the works.

"I told him I had already sold it for 50 bucks and was waiting on the payment. When he said, 'Oh, I'll give you $80,' I freaked," recalls Sondergaard. "I couldn't believe that someone was interested in pieces of paper that I had colored on."

His reaction was quite similar when he had his first show, organized by Nongalleried Working Artists, now called Houston Artists Society, in December 1992 at Saks Pavillion.

"I wanted to find out if people liked my work," he said. "I walked through the show and was pleased that no one else had art like mine, *and* that people were very interested in my pieces."



Damion Sondergaard



DESTINY

Inside outside
Round about worn
Tittering tattering
Tottering torn

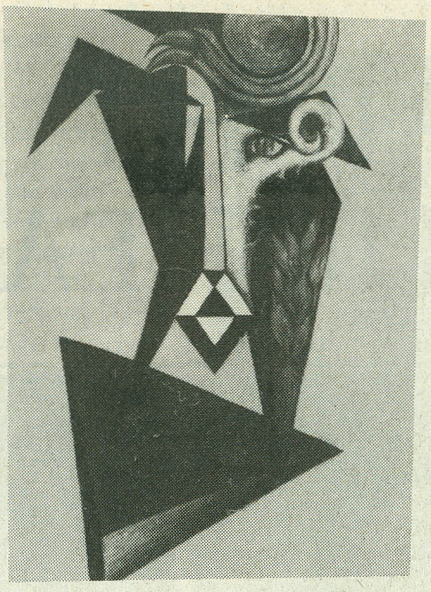
Blueness pitch blackness
Confusion in the,
Oneside rests inside
The other side with me

Lovely rejection
Hate breeding scorn
Middleness and madness
Sadness no mourn

Flipping flip flopping
Settle your mind
Choices loud voices
Internally blind

How is it from outside
Another side can see
Oneside the other side
Inside should be.

Damion. 1993



He sold four works at that show over a year ago, and since then has had 6 shows with the Houston Artists Society.

The untrained artist, who likes to call his work "100 percent natural, learned through trial and error," uses mostly colored pencils. Although he has experimented with watercolors and pen and ink, he says he'll never use oil paint. "I'm afraid I would end up with a big mud puddle."

Damion Sondergaard's work, including ten enormous brightly-colored canvases used as backdrops in some of his exhibitions, are on display (and priced to sell) at Club Houston, 2205 Fannin.

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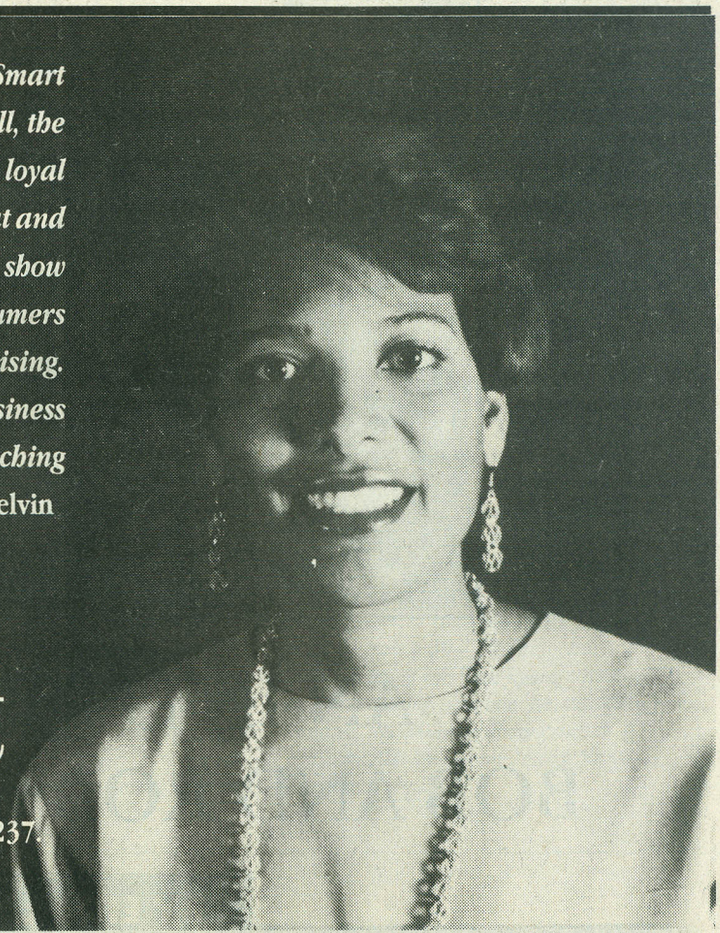
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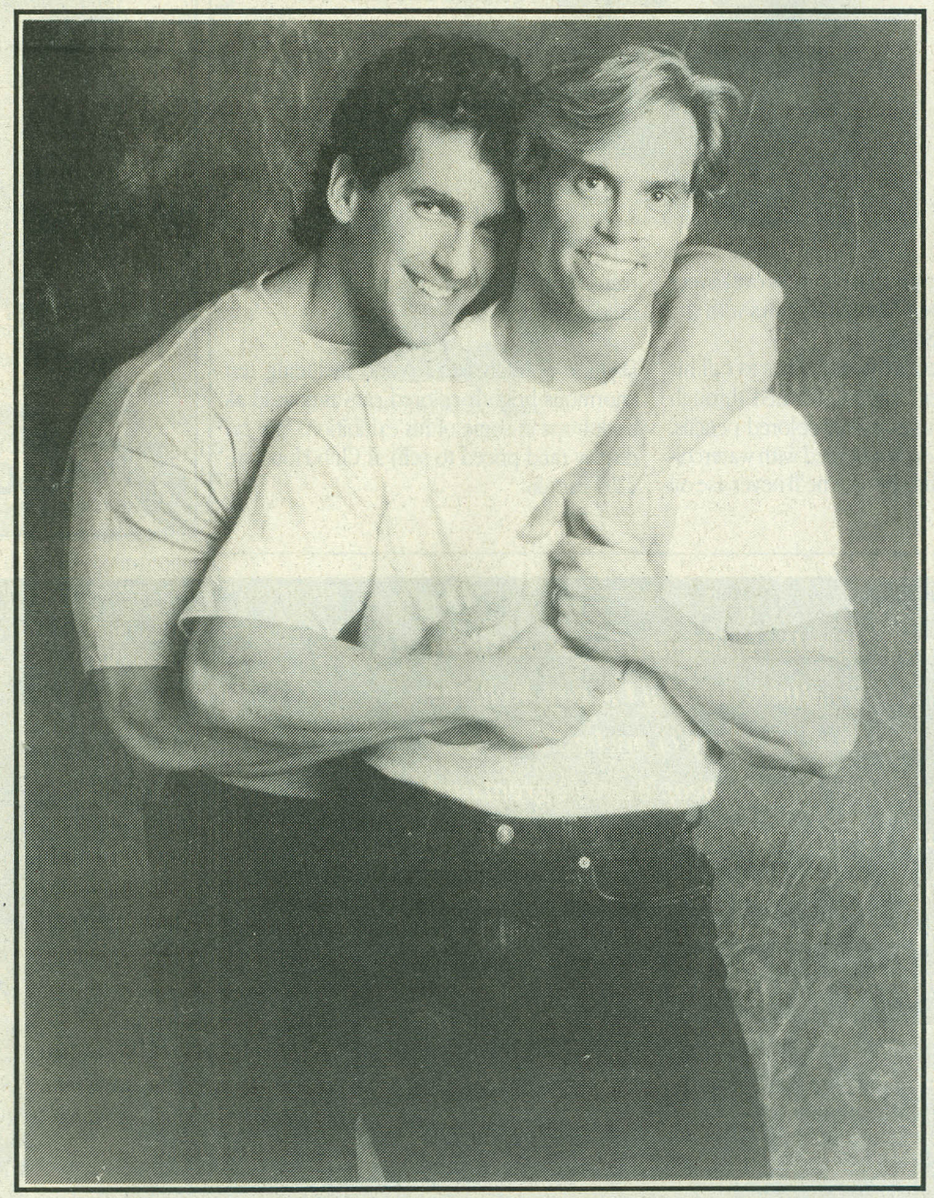


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STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART



AN INTERVIEW WITH BOB AND ROB JACKSON-PARIS

BY ERIC L. ROLAND

You may know them separately as Bob Paris, former Mr. Universe and author of two successful fitness books, and Rod Jackson, former Playgirl centerfold and international model. Or you may know them together as Rod and Bob Jackson-Paris, the famous gay couple who have graced the covers of the *Advocate, Out, Genre,* and *MuscleMag International* as well as appearing on *Oprah*, *Donahue*, and the *Joan Rivers Show*.

But Rod and Bob Jackson-Paris would like you to know them as advocates for the rights of the gay and lesbian youth of America.

"All citizens deserve the right to feel they are a part of American society," says 32-year-old Rod Jackson-Paris, "and that includes the right to an education."

"And to be treated with equality in their education and in the social environment of the school," adds Bob Jackson-Paris, 33.

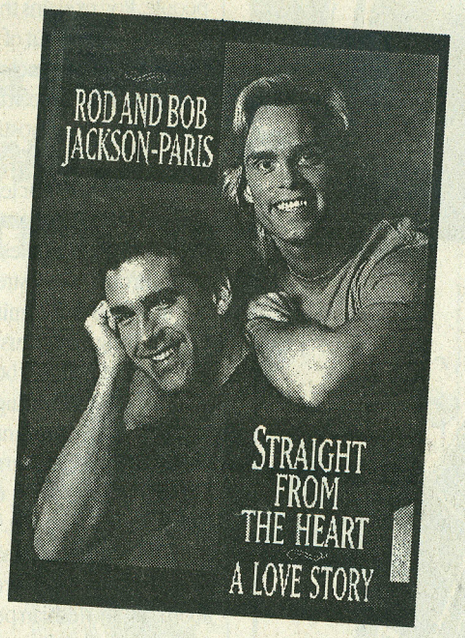
As an educational tool they created an award-winning video titled *Be True to Yourself*, an informal Q & A with gay, lesbian, bisexual and straight teenagers. The video covers everything from teen suicide and homophobia to deciding if and when to come out to your parents. Following the airing of the video on PBS stations around the country, Rod and Bob officially launched the Be True to Yourself Foundation at last April's March on Washington.

"The Be True to Yourself Foundation is solely a funding organization for any 501c.3 [not-for-profit organization] that is specifically oriented to sexual minority youth," explains Rod. "The foundation will support projects that create an environment where gay, lesbian and bisexual youth can thrive, prosper, develop self-esteem, be safe and live free of oppression and discrimination."

Because of their dedication to the empowerment of the gay and lesbian youth of America, Rod and Bob have traveled across the country speaking at colleges and universities about the positive and negative aspects of living in America as a sexual minority.

"What we're doing is discussing the political and social issues around gay people in America through our own personal stories," Bob says.

In his examinations of campuses across the country, Bob has noticed the more diverse campus populations are generally the most supportive.



"That doesn't mean to go to the extraordinary extremes of political correctness," explains Bob, "but it means that all the people that make up the fabric of that campus are appreciated for their contributions."

The presentations themselves frequently elicit campus controversy, as Rod explained, often accompanied by protestors, death threats, and some booing and heckling.

"But we just ignore it," Rod says. "We're so comfortable with who we are now that there's nothing anyone could say to make us shake in our boots."

The controversy usually enters the auditorium wherever they are speaking in the form of a question. Controversial questions, of course, cannot be ignored when your role is as educator. Rod and Bob both say that the ignorance is often padded with religious intolerance. Both being spiritual people, they are affronted by these questions, and their standard response forces people to realize that religion is a matter of choice.

"We just like to say there's no Brand-X God. Nobody owns God. You don't go to the grocery and buy him for $3.95," Rod says. "We always let these people know that their church might share those opinions, but no one can get all of the religious denominations in the world to agree on this."

Despite controversy, ignorance, and difficult questions, the presentations always conclude with a standing ovation from the appreciative audience.

Coming Out

Both Bob and Rod encourage gay and lesbian youth to come out of the closet, but they stress that it should only take place when the time is right.

"I encourage these youths to first develop a support system of friends," Rod advises, "that can support who they are and help them through the troubles that they're going to have in society."

More about Mr. and Mr. Jackson-Paris...

Straight from the Heart: A Love Story (Warner Books, $21.95), written by Bob and Rod Jackson-Paris with Eric Marcus is currently available at most book stores.

Their mail-order-only video, *Be True to Yourself* is available through 21st Century News for $32.95. A resource guide accompanies the video to aid educators.

The coffee-table book, *DUO* (Twin Palms, $49.95), a photo essay shot by Herb Ritts, artfully showcases the two buffed, nude men on the beach.

Another coffee-table book, *Rod and Bob*, photographed by Tom Bianchi, will be available this autumn.

Bob and Rod Jackson-Paris will be participating in an exclusive Houston book-signing for their autobiography, Straight from the Heart: A Love Story, *at Crossroads Market, 610 W. Alabama, on Monday, February 21 from 5:30-7:30 pm.*

Following the book-signing there will be a fundraising reception for the Victory Fund at the Museum Restaurant & Bar, 1512 W. Alabama, from 7:30-9:30 pm. A donation is requested.





Coming out to friends may be one thing, but coming out to your parents and family is usually far more difficult for all gay and lesbian people. Rod explains that the risk is high, since 30% of all gay and lesbian youth are kicked out of their traditional family homes upon coming out. Bob stresses that each situation is different.

"If a kid thinks that coming out to his or her parents will only contribute to the postive aspects of their life," says Bob, "then by all means they should."

"But many gay or lesbian people never give their families a chance," Rod says. "Our self-hate is so deep that we disenfranchise ourselves from our own families without ever giving them the opportunity to work through the issues."

Rod feels that coming out to family and friends is vital to the gay and lesbian struggle because it is only then that the stereotypes with which they were raised will be challenged.

"Society is maturing because we *are* coming out to our families and because the media cannot hide us anymore," Rod says. "And the [gay and lesbian] movement is maturing. We are realizing that it is just as important to express ourselves sexually as it is to go home to our families and come out."

Their personal coming-outs were equally difficult because, as Bob says, "Our families were spoon-fed the same mythology that we were about gay and lesbian people." But in the end they both say that coming out to their families, as well as to the world, has had an extremely positive affect on their lives.

"I've faced obstacles that most people never face," Rod says about their on-going lecture appearances and his national coming out. "It has given me the confidence that has helped me develop. It has been truly liberating."

Mr. and Mr. Jackson-Paris

On July 22, 1989, in a traditional church wedding, Rod and Bob exchanged vows to become the Jackson-Paris duo, which was featured in the photo book *DUO* by Herb Ritts. Subsequently, they came out to the media as a proud, public, and very-much-in-love male couple. Media sensation followed in the sports press, talk-show circuit, tabloids and gay press.

Four-and-a-half years later, they are again in the media spotlight and currently on an 18-city tour promoting their autobiographical book, *Straight from the Heart: A Love Story*. The book, released by Warner Books on February 14, Valentine's Day, tells their individual life histories, both of which included growing up in conservative, small-town families; their first meeting, "a truly cosmic moment," according to Rod; and their subsequent union. In the second half of the book they describe their work with the Be True to Yourself Foundation and chronicle their experiences on the college lecture circuit.

In the book Rod and Bob speak proudly of their love—the love that traditionally "dares not speak its name" in our homophobic society. They have always spoken candidly about their love for one another, especially during their college and university presentations, since, as Rod says, "everyone in that room can relate to that desire."

"The one message we always try to get across is that love is universal," Bob says. "In relationships between two consenting adults, regardless of their gender, love is the bottom line."

Love *is* the bottom line for Rod and Bob Jackson-Paris. Their love brought them together. Their love inspired them to form a union. Their love became the subject of the first *true* gay male love story. And their love is motivating them to break down hate and prejudice across this country in an effort to help gay, lesbian and bisexual youth come out and be true to themselves. ▼

CONSERVATORSHIPS: THE NEW KEY TO CO-PARENTING RIGHTS

by Connie Moore

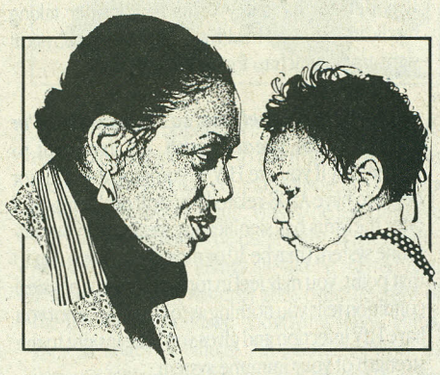
Lesbian and gay couples who share parenting responsibilities have always had to jump through hoops for any type of recognition for the rights of the co-parent (the non-biological parent). Many parents sign powers of attorney to give authority to make medical decisions to their partners. Even then, many outsiders are just not willing to extend certain rights to a co-parent. Insurance companies seem to be the least willing to cooperate, and medical insurance seems to be the most sought after benefit. However, thanks in part to the broad provisions in the Texas Family Code, there is now relief for co-parents through the court system.

The Texas Family Code provides for the appointment of Joint Managing Conservators. Joint managing conservatorship means the sharing of rights, privileges, duties, and powers of a parent by two or more parties. Usually one person is given the power to designate the primary physical residence of the child. Joint conservatorship is a common resolution of the custody issue in the typical heterosexual divorce situation. The same section of the Family Code can be used by same-sex couples to facilitate the sharing of parenting rights and responsibilities.

This provision can be used in several circumstances. The easiest, proceeding from a technical point of view, is the situation which arises when a child is adopted or conceived by artificial insemination and there is only one legal parent. In that case, the parent can fully consent to the sharing of his or her parental rights. This type of proceeding is considered uncontested because there is no party with any interest in the matter to object to the approval of the agreed order.

The next circumstance is the case where the child has two legal parents but the non-custodial parent is agreeable to the inclusion of the co-parent in the joint managing conservatorship. This also makes the case uncontested and fairly easy from a procedural viewpoint. Unfortunately, these conditions are not very common.

More familiar facts involve a second parent who is absent and uninvolved with the care of the child. Proper notice must be given to the absent parent to comply with all provisions of the Family



Code. Many times, after notice, the absent parent will ignore the legal proceeding. This leaves the biological parent and the co-parent free to continue on a default basis. This court can proceed without the absent parent if proof of notice is satisfactory. Again, the case is considered uncontested but can be more difficult because of the notice requirements.

If the non-custodial or uninvolved parent decides to challenge the conservatorship, the case can become the proverbial custody battle. If not resolved by the parties, it will ultimately be decided by the court based on all the facts.

As in all family litigation decisions, the facts must be carefully evaluated, along with the law, to reveal as many options as possible. Only then can the best results be obtained.

Connie Moore is a partner at Moore & Hunt, a lesbian/feminist law firm based in Houston. Since graduating from the University Law Center, Connie has pursued the area of human rights law with an emphasis on lesbian and gay rights. Under Moore's guidance, Moore & Hunt is part of the cooperating attorney network of the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund. In addition to feminist, lesbian and gay issues, the firm concentrates in family law, contract negotiations and disputes, corporation and small business formations, wills, estate planning and probate matters. Moore and her partner, Debbie Hunt pride themselves on creating a warm and safe place for people of all backgrounds to bring their legal matters.

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Exploding The Myths of HIV Testing

by Bart Loeser

As the primary issue of our grneration, AIDS has profoundly impacted Houston's gay and lesbian community. Few gay men or women have avoided the devastation of losing friends, lovers and family. We have been coping with these issues for over twelve years, and, for many of us, it has become an integral part of our lives. Our community continues to stand at the forefront of this epidemic, shaping policy and setting the standards for compassion, advocacy, education and support. We can take pride in the courage and dignity with which we face this challenge.

But as time moves on, we must stay wary of the dangers of burnout, compacency and denial. We must care for ourselves, as well as others. We must also fight the greatest threat to our community: the rumors and the myths that continue to place our lives at risk. Many of these myths center around testing issues, HIV transmission and early intervention. In this article, I will primarily focus on the testing myths.

Myth #1: ***There are too few treatment options to warrant getting tested.*** (Many also use this excuse for doing nothing once they find out they are HIV+). Misinformation prevails regarding the effectiveness of anti-retroviral drugs and early intervention. Many balk at medical intervention because of anecdotal horror stories of drug side effects and other problems. They do not realize that, while no medication is completely effective for everyone, most people are not adversely effected. It is difficult for many of us to consider taking medication to stay healthy if there are no physical signs upon which to focus.

Myth #2: ***I feel fine, so I'm sure that I'm uninfected/in great health.*** It's important to realize that if you are HIV+ you probably will not begin to have AIDS-related physical problems until after the virus has significantly weakened your immune system (maybe 10 or more years later). Up to that point, you may feel in top shape. Your physical condition tells you nothing as to whether or not you have HIV infection and gives you little insight to the strength of your immune system.

Myth #3: ***Instead of getting tested, I'll just live my life as if I was positive.*** (Many make similar assumptions about their sex partners). The fact is you cannot begin to deal with the many vital issues facing you unless you know what you are up against. Nothing can substitute for that knowledge. I encourage everyone at risk to get tested—preferably anonymously with counseling. If you are HIV positive, begin to map out a course of action. Talk with a friend. Get a "buddy" from Body Positive. Attend the Montrose Clinic's "Next Step" program. Read up on the issues. Attend support groups, etc.

Myth #4: ***The test isn't very accurate, so how can I really know for sure?*** While it is true that a negative test cannot guarantee that you are free from infection, the test can be considered very accurate after a minimum of three months—or better still, six months—since your last poissible exposure. There should be no need to continue testing year after year unless you continue to put yourself at risk. Classes are offered to teach risk reduction so that you can learn how to enjoy your sexuality without significant risk.

Myth #5: ***The test is not so important as long as I treat all my partners as if they were HIV+.*** This works great in theory, but unfortunately does not hold true in the realities of many sexual experiences. The fact is that gay and bisexual men today still have unprotected sex occassionally and become infected. According to some estimates one out of every two or three gay/bisexual men is currently infected with HIV. Many men don't worry about safer-sex issues and often "slip," unless their partner actually tells them they are HIV+. Many men who are negative, or who hope they are generally look for reasons not to use protection (e.g. avoiding HIV+ partners, finding someone they consider "low risk," especially partners who state or imply that they are negative). No matter who you sleep with, unprotected sex is a very risky gamble to take unless you can be certain of your partner.

People have a variety of reasons and excuses for putting themselves at risk for this easily preventable disease. There are also are many options for taking control of your life. It is possible to improve the quality and perhaps the quantity of your years. Consider all aspects of your health maintenance: the mental, emotional and spiritual factors, as well as the physical ones. The AIDS Foundation offers many programs for people, regardless of their HIV status. These programs encourage HIV-negative people to remain so, and offer optimism and direction to people learning to live powerfully with HIV.

Bart Loeser is an HIV educator with AIDS Foundation Houston (AFH), coordinating health and education programs for people living with HIV/AIDS, via the AFH Wellness Program. He also supervises the "Safer Sex/Gay Outreach" program and the AIDS Hotline (559-2437). As an openly HIV+ individual, Bart offers a wide array of presentations ranging from living with HIV to risk reduction workshops to all aspects of wellness.

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Change Your Smile

by Bruce W. Smith, D.D.S.



A great-looking smile is a tremendous asset, not only in your personal life but also in your professional life. It's a fact that beautiful people often are more successful in their professions, and that a great smile can be a big self-esteem builder. Methods of improving your smile are legion, but the most popular include bleaching, composite bonding, porcelain veneering, porcelain caps or bridgework and tooth-colored fillings.

Bleaching is the application of powerful peroxide-based chemicals that remove the color from tooth enamel and desiccate the enamel, resulting in a lighter color. This can be done by your dentist in the office or through at-home methods, or sometimes a combination of both. It removes only shallow surface stains, not deeply embedded color such as that caused by antibiotics taken during childhood (e.g., tetracycline). Not all dentists recommend bleaching because of side effects such as pain, temperature sensitivity and chemical tissue burns that can cause the gums to recede. Over use of these chemicals can result in a flat, chalky appearance. Repeated treatments are often needed to keep the original color from coming back, which over time can be very expensive. If you want bleaching, be sure to discuss all risks with your dentist first.

Composite bonding is the adhesion of a tooth-colored composite resin to the front of your smile teeth, which is sculpted and polished to create a lighter, uniform smile line. This is the least invasive method and can often de done without anesthetic. Any decay or faulty fillings should be treated first. Then the bonding material goes over the front of the teeth to camouflage underlying stains, chips, gaps or edges of fillings. No laboratory work or impressions are needed and the process is complete at the end of the appointment. One or two appointments are needed, depending on how many teeth are to be bonded. If a second appointment is needed it is usually for final polishing and touch-ups. Composite bonding will last an average of five years and can be easily repaired. The main advantage is cost, which is more than bleaching, but less than porcelain veneers or caps.

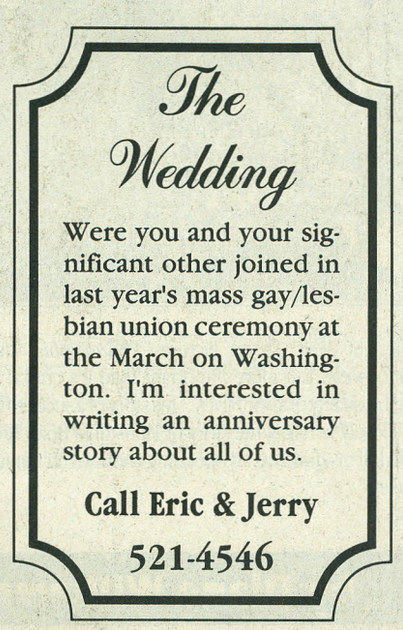
Porcelain veneering is the bonding of thin slivers of laboratory-fabricated porcelain to the front teeth, most often the upper smile teeth and sometimes also the lowers. It requires at least two appointments, the first for shaping and impressions and the second for bonding on the veneers. Just like composite bonding, stains, chips and gaps can be corrected. The main advantage over composite bonding is stain resistance and durability. Your dentist will have more control over change and contour change. Many patients report the porcelain feels more like natural smooth enamel, especially those who have replaced composites with porcelain. While some tooth reduction is often done, and anesthetic is sometimes needed, this is less invasive than full caps (crowns) and is the preferred method if the teeth are structurally sound.

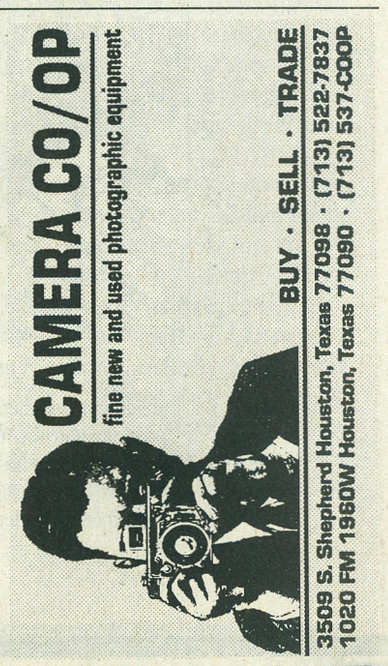
Porcelain caps (crowns) are preferred when the teeth are badly decayed, broken or cracked. If there are numerous large fillings in the front teeth this can result in weak teeth that would not support veneers adequately. Two or more appointments are needed—the first for reducing the size of the teeth, impressions and temporary plastic crowns; the second for fitting and cementing the permanent crowns. This method gives your dentist the maximum control over color and contour and is often the preferred method when strength is needed in addition to cosmetic improvement. While crowns are the most expensive method, they are also the longest-lasting.

Tooth-colored fillings have been available for front teeth for many years, but until relatively recently have not been strong enough for back teeth. Tremendous materials improvement now allows this option for white back teeth. Composite resins similar to those used for composite bonding can be used where only silver amalgam or gold could be placed before. Slightly more expensive than amalgam, composite fillings take approximately twice as long to place.

Cosmetic dentistry has become increasingly popular, and its methods legion. If you have questions, please write to Dr. Smith at 1006 Missouri Street, Houston, TX 77006. Questions on all aspects of dentistry are welcome, many of which can be addressed in future columns.







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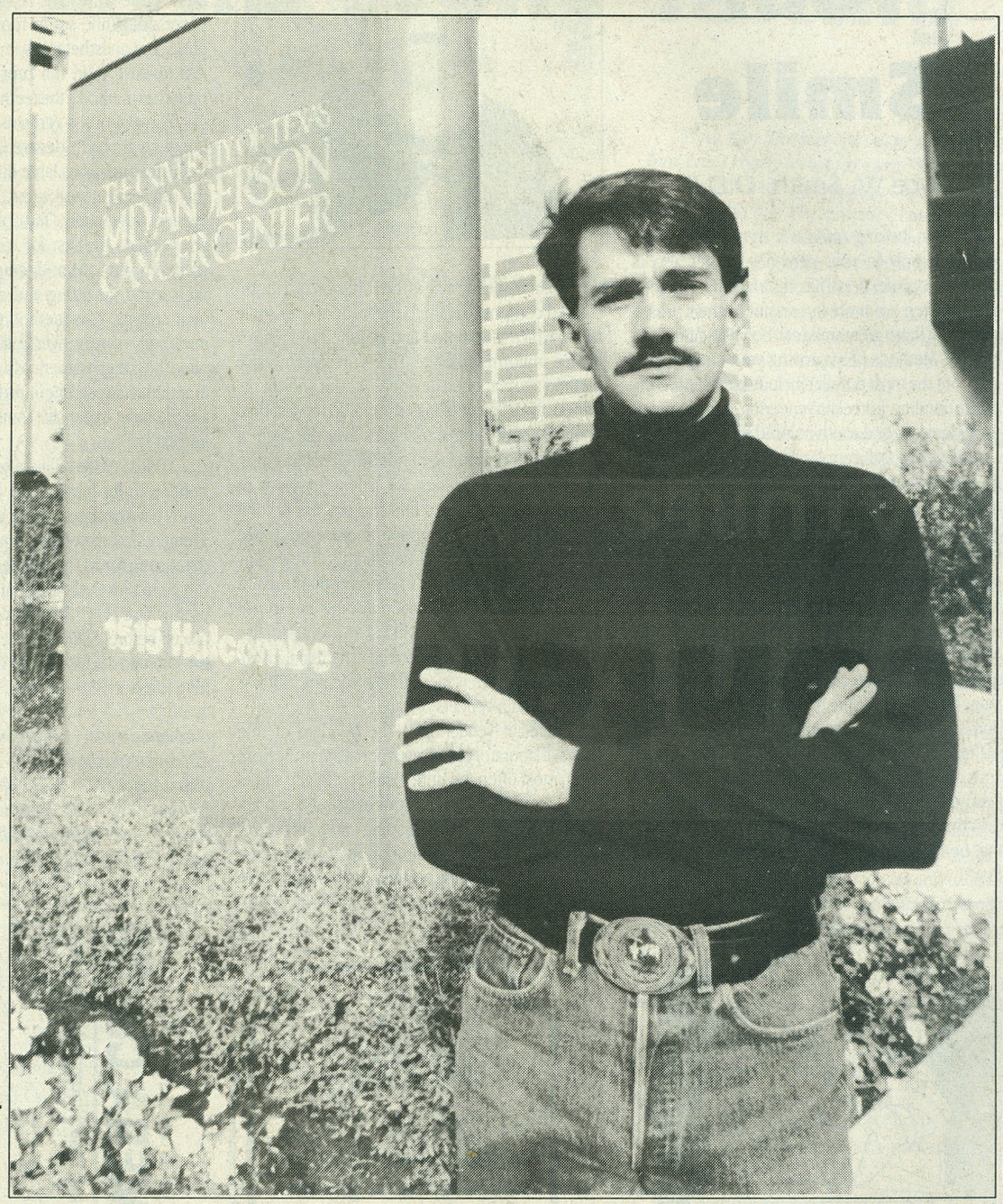


Photo by Nick Adamo

Since it's release earlier this year, TriStar Pictures' *Philadelphia*, starring Tom Hanks, has been entertaining and enlightening audiences nationwide. But more important than it's critical success, is its focus on homophobia and AIDS prejudice and how it affects the quality of all our lives. This story of a successful business professional, fired after his employers discover that he has AIDS, closely parallels the story of Houston's Brian Bradley. A heathcare worker with M. D. Anderson hospital, Bradley was relieved of his duties as an operating-room scrub nurse without medical basis. His case goes before the Supreme Court later this year.

by Diane Williams