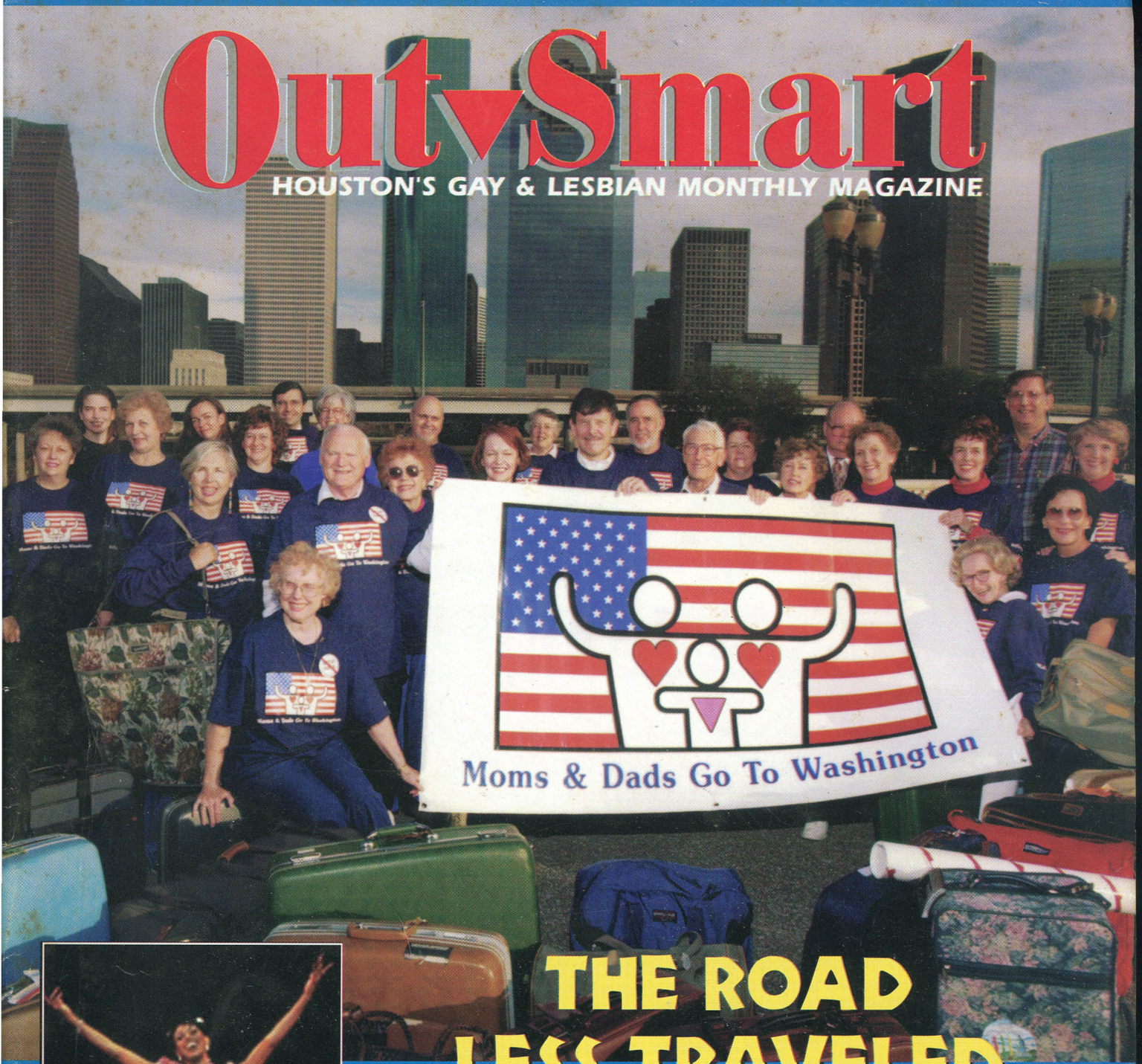
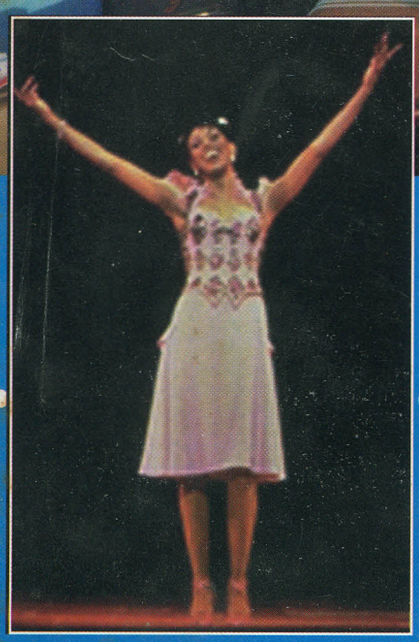
Volume 3 ▼ Issue 2 March 15 - April 14, 1996 Complimentary Copy

Out▼Smart

HOUSTON'S GAY & LESBIAN MONTHLY MAGAZINE





THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

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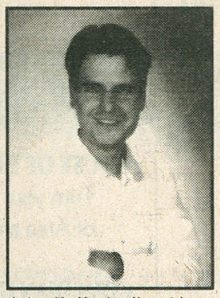
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Out▼Smart

HOUSTON'S GAY & LESBIAN MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Volume 3, Issue 2 MARCH 15-APRIL 14, 1996

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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Eric L. Roland talks to Houston PFLAG-ers heading to Washington, D. C. to lobby Congress and support the passage of ENDA.

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A rose by any other name may still smell as sweet, so why should membership to this choir be restricted by a little thing like its name? By Nancy Ford.

JUNE'S BUSTIN' OUT ALL OVER 44
June Pointer ain't misbehavin' when she tells Blase DiStefano why gay audiences are "the best in the world."

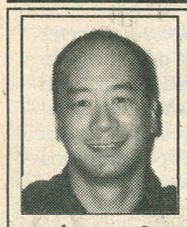
GREEN UP YOUR CONTAINER GARDEN 53
Yvonne Bohanon offers an affordable alternative to moving to the country or (*God forbid!*) plastic perennials.

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ON THE COVER: Moms & Dads Go To Washington: Myrtle Meaux, Terrie Cooney, Penny Leuchtag, Peter De Michele, Fred Wilson, Rosemary Wilson, Irv Smith, Sherry Stephens, Russell Jones, Don Upchurch, Ann Chapman, Susan Upchurch, Jane Montgomery, Jane Smith, Don Sinclair, Edna Martin, Donna DeCamp, Pat Rickey, Gordon Weisser, Mary Lou Kurtz, Mary K. Jones, Norma Graves, Gail Rickey, Kathy Sinclair, Blake Weisser, Barbara Winston. Photo by Alan Montgomery, WOODALLEN Photography.
INSET: June Pointer. Photo by Joan Marcus.

From the Publisher



This month, when each of us had another chance to help determine the way our LIVES, our city, state, and nation are being run, on the average, only 20 percent of the general population found their way to the voting booths.

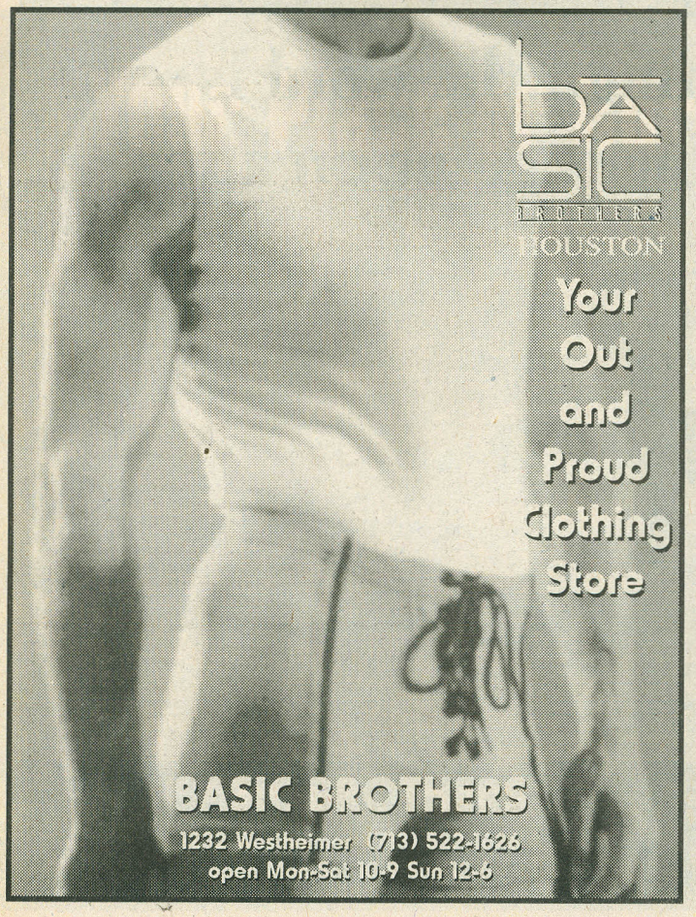
Why so low a turnout? It's a question that seems to stump even the experts. One theory speculates complacency. Some people really do think that "things are not that bad, therefore things don't need changing." Another speculation is pure apathy. "Who cares? Nothing I do will change that much."

A few years ago on election day, I asked a couple of coworkers if they had voted yet. I was surprised when some said they had no intention of going to vote. I guess they had yet to discover how powerful they could be in initiating change for the better.

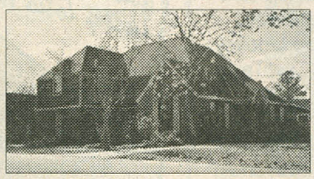
What prompted a few coworkers to hightail it to the booths was when I told them a mutual friend of theirs was supervising the election site. "Imagine how bad you might look—especially since the magazine just published a story on the power of the gay and lesbian vote." Everyone has a motivation—some are motivated from the outside, and others motivated from within.

Whatever the reason for choosing NOT to vote, we might gain insight from those who consciously choose to vote. For the most part, those who took the time to head to the ballot box are much like those who didn't, but besides just bemoaning the way things are, they have a bigger vision of the way things might become. Those who vote take greater initiative in life and actively participate in helping to make things happen—even when it means expanding their comfort zone. Like the saying goes, "Achievements rarely come to those who sit back and wait for it to happen." Here's to progress.

—Greg Jeu



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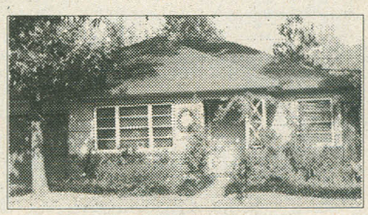
Soft contemporary interior with expanded large living areas, french doors, enlarged master bedroom, private entry courtyard and rear yard with lush landscaping, decking and spa. Reduced $130's



RIVERSIDE—Classic Medical Center Estate on almost 2 acres. Grand Formals, Den, 5 Bedrooms, 3½ Baths, Master has sitting room, Pool and Quarters. $690's.



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BIRTHDAY GREETINGS!

Thanks for two years' worth of a really class magazine. Out of all the papers and magazines I read, I can honestly say that *OutSmart* is my number one favorite. Thanks also for all the community events your company has sponsored!

—Lydia Godfrey
Missouri City, Texas

WEDDING BELLS

In the September 15-October 14, 1994 issue of *OutSmart*, I ran [a personal] ad in the "Women Seeking Women" column.

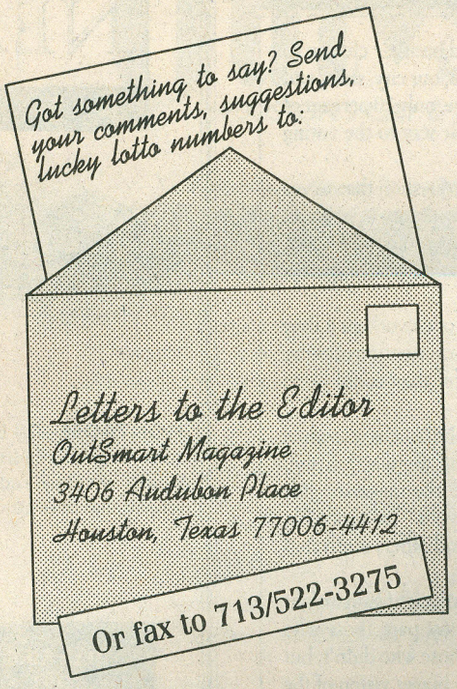
...We had our first date Saturday, October 8, 1994, at Chances.

[Enclosed is] the invitation to our Holy Union.

We would really like to thank you for making this happen. We welcome you at our celebration! If you attend, please let our ushers know, and we will seat you in the reserved section for our family and special guests.

—Lynn Kelly
Houston, Texas

Ain't love grand! Glad we could be of help, and congratulations to you both.—Ed.



"OUT BUT NOT SMART"

OutSmart magazine—informative, trustworthy, respected. I always use the magazine as an educational tool for my non-gay friends, family, and coworkers. My mother reads it and recently passed it on to a friend of hers who had just learned her son is gay. My nephew, 11, has read it often to learn more about his aunt. *OutSmart* has always lived up to its statement of purpose, until "The Sex Issue" [Volume 3, Issue 1].

My problem is not with a sex issue in general. It would have been a wonderful opportunity to present and educate your readers—gay and hetero—about true, healthy gay and lesbian sexuality, relationships, etc. Instead, you used the sex issue as an excuse to promote and perpetuate the homosexual stereotype and harmed the very community you serve.

The cover story was void of any educational or entertainment value. It was a poor—no, terrible—choice for the cover of a sex issue. The article read like the reporter was obsessed with the physical attributes of his subject and pot smoking rather than providing a better understanding of an industry that the world uses as a stereotype to describe homosexuals and their behavior. "Queer Quotes" was more explicit and stereotypical; was the "Sex Issue" an excuse for that as well? Finally, the article, "The Dating Game," while containing some positive educational information, was overshadowed by providing the public with a stereotypical negative portrait, along with Anal Sex 101, men enjoying facial hair between the legs...I could go on. Was this information necessary? There are other, less-respected publications that provide this information—publications that don't have the statement of purpose *OutSmart* does. I felt betrayed.

When my mom asked where her copy of *OutSmart* was this month, I could only say, "You won't be getting one this month." Neither will the other six gay and non-gay friends and family I

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usually pass your magazine along to.

Which brings me to another point. This magazine is available free in public locations—Kroger, Walgreens, etc. Would you have wanted your nephew to pick one up? How about your mother?

A sex issue could/would have been a great idea. Instead, you used it as an excuse to degrade your magazine. Now for the irony: Aside from the articles mentioned above, this issue was one of *OutSmart*'s best ever. The info on the presidential candidates was great. So was most of the magazine. It's too bad no one I know will see it. It's the first issue I won't keep out on my coffee table or in the office.

I'll have to rethink using *OutSmart* as an educational tool in the future. I suggest you refamiliarize yourself with your own mission statement. Out "Smart"? Your actions were anything but smart.

—Andi Morgan, aka Shari Evans
Houston, Texas

1-900-OUTSMART

I was more than delighted to respond to your survey, as it's a very good magazine you produce. (Okay, enough schmoozing....)

Frankly, until I happened to stumble upon *OutSmart*, I was darn near convinced that every local gay publication (by some law) had to be crammed with advertisements for 1-900-FOR-DICK businesses. Entertainment firms have every right to advertise, but the crassness of these ads tend to dull the credibility of the publication a tad. Hey, I'm no firebrand preacher, just a person who frankly doesn't need somebody who's probably got a bigger spare tire than mine, moaning over the phone to me for two bucks a minute.

OutSmart also impresses me, as it's not another "sales circular" masquerading as a relevant source of information. Your articles and features are diverse, engaging, and informative. Thanks for the obvious earnestness that is put into the publication. It truly shows in the final product.

—Mitch Bourque
Houston, Texas

CORRECTAMUNDO

As a regular reader of your magazine, I would like to take this opportunity to commend you on producing a high-quality periodical that is a much-needed component of our community in Houston. I have enjoyed each issue without exception.

However, I feel the need to point out an error in a review in your most recent issue (February-March 1996). Your magazine (the actual author's name escapes me) mistakenly refers to the renowned Spanish poet and author *Federico* Garcia Lorca as *Fernando* Garcia Lorca. Given the importance Lorca has for the Spanish/ Hispanic literature throughout the world, I would think that you would want a correction to be made in your next issue. Granted, mistakes will happen. I just thought this should be brought to your attention in as timely a manner as possible.

I look forward to continuing to enjoy *OutSmart* and thank you for taking the time and energy to produce quality reading material for Houston's gay and lesbian community.

—Glenn M. Bayron
Houston, Texas ▼

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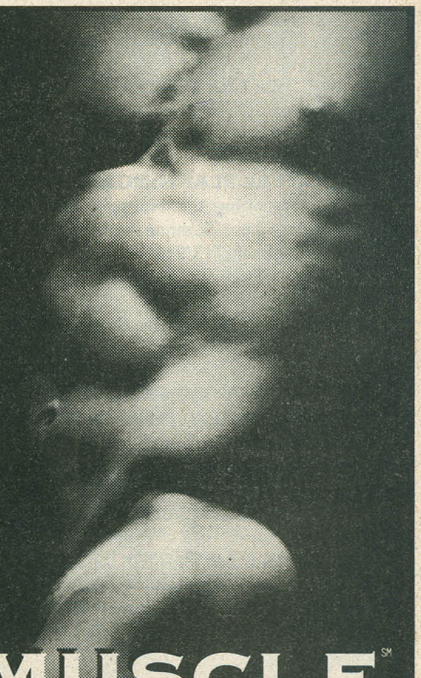
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OutSmart Calendar

If you are part of a group or have a function that you would like listed in our calendar, please send an announcement by the 1st of the month to: CALENDAR EDITOR, OutSmart Magazine, 3406 Audubon, Houston, TX 77006. 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

March

15 **JAZZ AND FUN,** Cy Brinson and David Caceres with Joe Bourgea, 9 pm-1 am, Ovations, 2356 Times Blvd. at Kirby, 713/522-9801.

LESBIANS IN BUSINESS, 6 pm, Innova Building, 20 Greenway Plaza, 713/529-0077.

16 **PFLAG PEP RALLY,** cheer on parents and friends driving to Washington, D.C., to lobby Congress for the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, 7-9:30 pm, Christ Church Cathedral, 1117 Texas, 713/528-6477.

NIGHT IN BLACK LEATHER, 9:30 pm, Venture-N, 2923 Main, 521-0911.

17-22 **OZARK SPRING EQUINOX,** meditation retreat, $250 fee covers room and board, call 713/528-7977 for more information.

18 **TLC PLANNING MEETING,** for all lesbians organizing the Houston Texas Lesbian Conference, 7 pm, Suzanne Anderson Properties, 239 Westheimer, 713/916-8110.

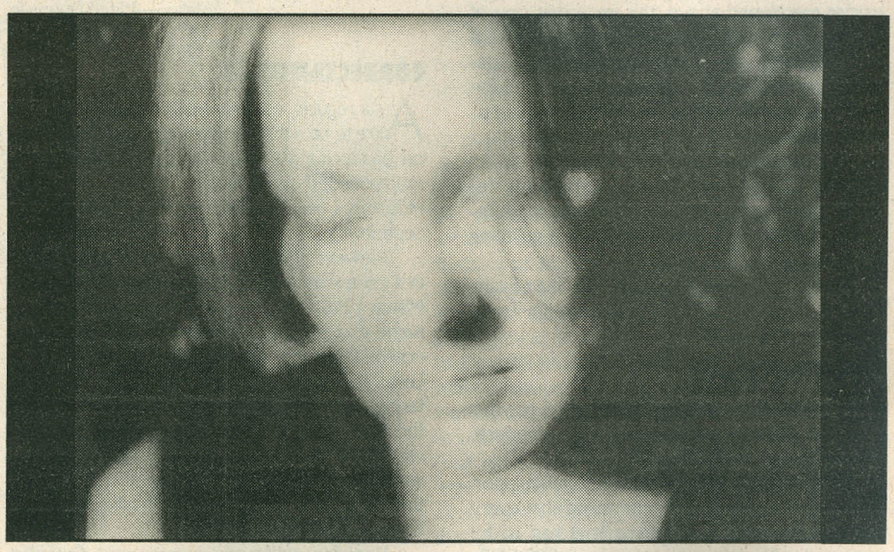
FEMALE RAPPERS, part of the 6th Annual Women's Month at the UH-Downtown, free, 12 noon, cafeteria, One Main Street, 713/221-8093.

19 **TREATMENT ADVOCACY FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS,** Dr. Pedro Diaz will present the most current information on medical tests and procedures in diagnosing and treating OIs, 6 pm, Metropolitan Multiservice Center, 1475 W. Gray, 713/626-2837.

BREAKFAST NETWORKING MEETING, hosted by Coy Tow, co-chair Greater Houton Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, 7:15 am, Allen Park Inn, Nashville Room, 2121 Allen Parkway, 713/523-7576.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE PANEL, part of the 6th Annual Women's Month at the UH-Downtown, free, 1 pm, Student Lounge, One Main Street, 713/221-8093.

SEX TOYS AND VIDEOTAPE: Erotic Choices in Safer Sex Workshop explores the options of safer sex and sensuality through discussion and games, 7-9 pm, AFH Office, 3202 Weslayan, 713/623-6796.



Popular Austin-based singer/songwriter/guitarist Diana Jones will celebrate the release of her latest CD, *Imagine Me*, by performing her original music and sign copies of her CD on Saturday, April 13 at Ms. B's, 9218 Buffalo Speedway. Opening for Diana Jones is local acoustic duo Girls with Guitars. Admission is $4.

PRIDE COMMITTEE OF HOUSTON, general meeting and social hour, 6:30 pm, 2700 Albany, 529-6979.

20 **GREG LOUGANIS,** will be signing copies of the paperback edition of his book, *Breaking the Surface*, 7 pm, Crossroads Market, 610 W. Alabama, 713/942-0147.

ICONS OF HAIR, DRESS AND WEIGHT, Shirley Basey speaks on the expense and time committed to "dressing to attract" and the reality of being defined by others, part of March lecture series on women's issues, 7:30 pm, MCCR, 1919 Decatur, 713/861-8238.

WOMEN AND PRISON, part of the 6th Annual Women's Month at the UH-Downtown, free, 10 am, Student Lounge, One Main Street, 713/221-8093.

MEN'S NETWORK for gay and bisexual men, topic: *Hypnosis: Your Key to Peace of Mind* by Betty Ann Lockhart, 7-9 pm, Montrose Counseling Center, 701 Richmond, 713/529-0037.

21 **PLANNING FOR PEOPLE WITH HIV,** panel discussion on the legal and financial planning needs of people with HIV/AIDS, 6-8 pm, Montrose Library, 4100 Montrose, RSVP 713/981-9595.

ONCE WE WERE WARRIORS, film, part of the 6th Annual Women's Month at the UH-Downtown, free, 7 pm, 1099N, One Main Street, 713/221-8093.

23 **NAVIGATING THE 90S,** day-long conference for lesbian and gays in journalism, University of Houston Hilton Hotel and Conference Center, 713/220-6025.

25 **GAY & LESBIAN READERS GROUP,** will discuss *Stir-Fry* by Emma Donoghue, 7 pm, Barnes & Noble Vanderbilt Square, 3003 West Holcombe, 713/349-0050.

FEMINIST BLUES, part of the 6th Annual Women's Month at the UH-Downtown, free, 12 noon, Cafeteria, One Main Street, 713/221-8093.

LOG CABIN REPUBLICANS of Houston general meeting, 7 pm, Sierra Grill, 4704 Montrose, 713/529-9100.

26 **NAMES PROJECT VOLUNTEER MEETING,** come learn more about the Washington, D.C. Quilt display in October, 7 pm, The NAMES Project Houston, 2410 Woodhead, 713/52-NAMES.

HIV/AIDS TREATMENT MIXER, open forum for sharing information, 7-9 pm, 2700 Albany, Suite 205, 713/527-8219.

AIDS EQUITY LEAGUE, 12 noon, Charlie's Restaurant, 1100 Westheimer, 713/871-0092.

LOVE, SEX, & INTIMACY, explores the options of safer sex and sensuality through discussion and games, 7-9 pm, AFH Office, 3202 Weslayan, 713/623-6796.

27 **MATUSCHKA,** artist and breast cancer activist, will present a lecture and slide presentation, 2-3 pm, University of Houston, Central Campus, Roy Cullen Bldg., 3rd Floor Lounge, 4800 Calhoun, 713/520-7840.

BLACK SUN RISING, a performance poem by Jacsun Shah and Risë Collins that chronicles the developing friendship between two women, part of March lecture series on women's issues, 7:30 pm, MCCR, 1919 Decatur, 713/861-8238.

WOMEN'S NETWORK for lesbian and bisexual women, 7-9 pm, Montrose Counseling Center, 701 Richmond, 713/529-0037.

28 **MATUSCHKA,** artist and breast cancer activist, will present a lecture and slide presentation, 12 noon-1 pm, UT Health Science Center, 1200 Herman Pressler Blvd. 7-8 pm, University of Houston-Clear Lake, Forest Room, Bayou Bldg., 2700 Bay Area Blvd., 713/520-7840.

SAFER SEX FOR LESBIANS, seminar sponsored by AIDS Foundation Houston and presented by Nancy Ford, 9:30 pm, Plaza 9200, 9200 Buffalo Speedway, 713/666-3464.

29 **MATUSCHKA,** artist and breast cancer activist, will present a lecture and slide presentation, 2-3:30 pm, Texas A&M, Stark University Center Galleries, College Station. 7 pm, University of St. Thomas, Anderson Hall, 3800 Montrose, 713/520-7840.

HIV/AIDS BENEFIT, for His Touch Ministries, Jesus of Nazareth presented by Christian Tabernacle Church, 13334 Wallisville Rd., 7:30 pm, 713/453-7000.

30 **GAY MEN'S CHORUS OF HOUSTON,** *Singin' On 42nd Street (at last)*, spring concert benefiting AFH Stone Soup Pantry, 8 pm, First Unitarian Universalist Church, 5200 Fannin, 713/521-SING.

AALGA AWARDS BANQUET, to celebrate the first anniversary of the African-American Lesbian and Gay Alliance of Houston, keynote speaker will be Keith Boykin, executive director of the National Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum, call 713/864-2242 for details.

April

1 **GREATER HOUSTON GAY & LESBIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE,** general business meeting for all members, 6:30 pm, call 713/523-7576 for meeting location.

2 **HIV COMMUNITY CAUCUS,** public round-table discussion of HIV/AIDS concerns for all affected individuals, 6:30-7:30 pm, 811 Westheimer, Suite 203.

PRIDE COMMITTEE OF HOUSTON, executive meeting, 6:30 pm, 2700 Albany, 529-6979.

3 **HOUSTON GAY & LESBIAN POLITICAL CAUCUS,** 7:30 pm, 2700 Albany, 3rd floor, 713/521-1000.

MEN'S NETWORK for gay and bisexual men, topic: *Understanding Grief* by Michael Wilson, 7-9 pm, Montrose Counseling Center, 701 Richmond, 713/529-0037.

6 **JUNGLE LUST IV,** annual greenhouse party hosted by Bayou City Boys Club, tickets available at Basic Brothers and LOBO, or call 713/520-5253.

9 **HOUSTON GAY & LESBIAN PARENTS** Support Group, MCCR library, 1919 Decatur, 7-8:30 pm, 713/980-7995.

AIDS EQUITY LEAGUE, 12 noon, Charlie's Restaurant, 1100 Westheimer, 713/871-0092.

10 **WOMEN'S NETWORK** for lesbian and bisexual women, 7-9 pm, Montrose Counseling Center, 701 Richmond, 713/529-0037.

11 **MUSCLE UP AND SURVIVE WITH POWER,** workshop on HIV-related wasting prevention/reversal presented by Nelson Vergel and Dr. Arlette Pharo, 5:30-8:30 pm, Montrose Library, 4300 Montrose, limited seats—RSVP 713/526-5883.

NETWORKING MIXER, hosted by the Greater Houton Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, 6 pm, 7-Seventeen Agency, 2525 Robinhood (Rice Village), 713/523-7576.

MONTROSE ICE PICKS for lesbian/gay ice skaters, 8-10 pm, Galleria Ice Rink, admission is $4.75 plus $2 for skates, 713/629-1432.

12 **ASTRO RAINBOW ALLIANCE FOR THE DEAF,** general meeting, 7:30 pm, Montrose Clinic, 215 Westheimer, 713/869-2287 via Texas Relay 1-800-735-2988.

HOUSTON PROFESSIONAL MEN'S ASSOCIATION, general meeting, 7-9 pm, call for location and to RSVP 713/866-4079.

13 **DIANA JONES' CD RELEASE PARTY,** Austin-based singer/songwriter/guitarist will celebrate the release of *Imaging Me*, $4, Ms. B's, 9218 Buffalo Speedway, 713/522-2598.

Theater

THE ACTORS WORKSHOP, 1009 Chartres, 713/236-1844. Through April 13: *The Lady from Havana.*

A.D. PLAYERS, Grace Theater, 2710 W. Alabama, 713/526-2721. Through March 17: *Summerhope.*

ALLEY THEATRE, 615 Texas Ave., 713/228-8421. Through April 7: *The Cryptogram.* March 29-April 27: *A Streetcar Named Desire.*

THE COMPANY ONSTAGE, 536 Westbury Square, 713/726-1219. Through April 20: *Love Letters.*

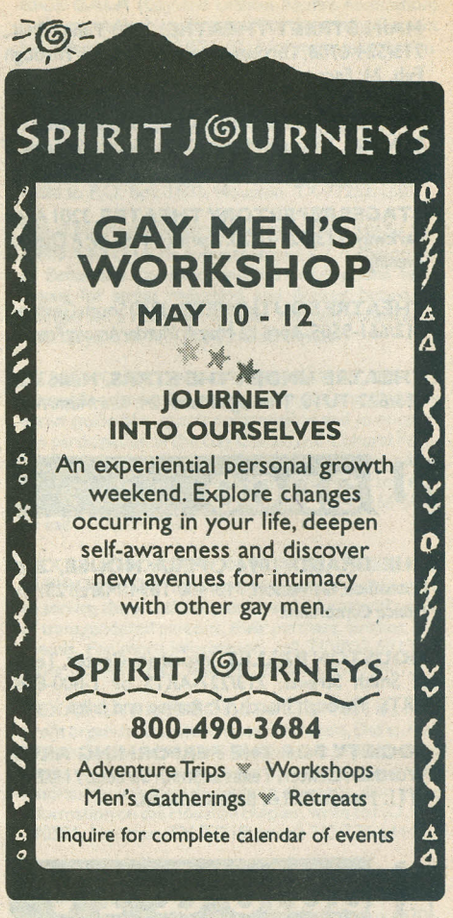
COUNTRY PLAYHOUSE, 12802 Queensbury, 713/467-4497. Through March 30: *Godspell.*

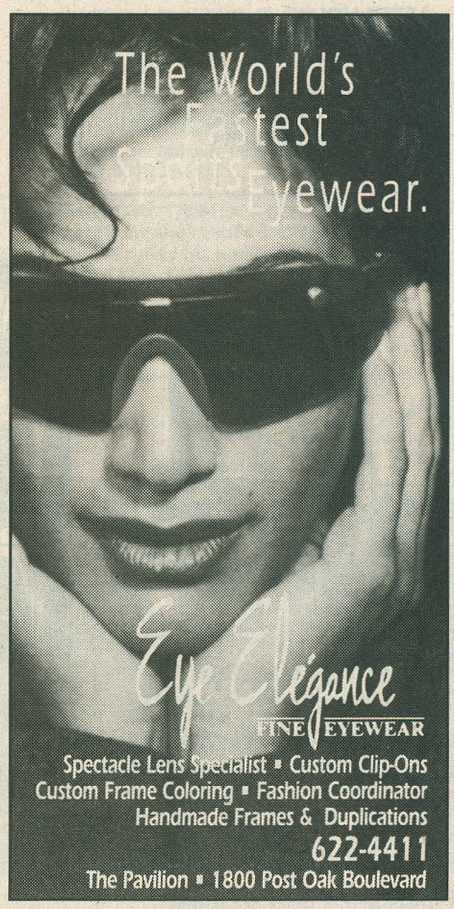
DIVERSEWORKS, 1117 E. Freeway, 713/223-8346. March 21-23: *Mississippi Freedom.*

ENSEMBLE THEATRE, 4212 Main, 713/520-0063. April 4-May 19: *Before it Hits Home.*

THE GRAND 1894 OPERA HOUSE, 2020 Postoffice, Galveston, 713/480-1894. April 6: *42nd Street.* April 14: *Radio Days.*

HOUSTON BROADWAY SERIES, Jones Hall, 713/629-3700. April 2-7: *Ain't Misbehavin' with The Pointer Sisters.*





MAIN STREET THEATRE, 2540 Times Blvd., 713/524-6706. Through March 31: *Marisol.* Through Feb. 24: *Face to Face.*

NEW HEIGHTS THEATRE, 339 W. 19th, 713/869-8927. Through March 17: *The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe.* March 20-31: *Pretty Fire.*

STAGES REPERTORY THEATRE, 3201 Allen Parkway, 713/527-0220. April 24-May 19: *A Cheever Evening.*

THEATRE SOUTHWEST, 3750 South Gessner, 713/661-9505. April 12-May 4: *Murder Among Friends.*

THEATRE UNDER THE STARS, Music Hall, 713/622-TUTS. Through March 24: *The Music Man.*

Dance

THE GRAND 1894 OPERA HOUSE, 2020 Postoffice, Galveston, 713/480-1894. March 23: *The Dance Consortium.*

HOUSTON BALLET, Wortham Center, Texas at Smith Streets, 713/227-ARTS or 1-800-828-ARTS. Through March 17: *Romeo and Juliet.*

SOCIETY FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, Wortham Center, Texas at Smith Streets, 713/227-1111. March 22: *Les Ballets Africans.*

Radio & TV

AFTER HOURS: (Radio) Saturdays, midnight to 3 am. Featuring the QMZ (Queer Music Zone) with Jimmy Caper. KPFT 90.1 FM.

LESBIAN & GAY VOICES: (Radio) Thursdays, 9-11 pm. Features news, music, interviews, reviews, and commentary. KPFT 90.1 FM.

GAY 90s: (TV) presented by Monticello Entertainment. Other times are listed in local television guides under Public Access Cable (PAC) channels. For more information, call 713/949-3119.

OUT! IN HOUSTON: (TV) presented by The Agora on Public Access Cable (PAC). Showtimes are listed in local television guides under PAC channels.

AIDS TALK HOUSTON: (TV) Public Access Cable (PAC). Showtimes are listed in local television guides under PAC channels.

LIFE. . . TODAY: (TV) Public Access Cable (PAC). Showtimes are listed in local television guides under PAC channels.

FEM TV: Public Access Cable (PAC). Showtimes are listed in local TV guides under PAC channels.

Ongoing

20 SOMETHING, a social group for adults, ages 20 to 29, addresses issues concerning bisexual, lesbian, and gay individuals. For more information, contact Jeff or Cindy at 713/315-6786.

AIDS ALLIANCE OF THE BAY AREA, support group for those infected and affected, Tuesdays, 7-8:30 pm, 17511 El Camino Real, #159, 713/488-4492.

AIDS HOUSING COALITION HOUSTON runs the nonprofit TLC House program, a 90-day, gay positive, emergency house for PWAs in transition. For more information about joining, call 713/521-1613.

AIDS MASSAGE PROJECT, sponsored by AIDS Foundation Houston's Wellness Program, call Jeffery at 713/768-4267 for an appointment.

ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA ALLIANCE, an organization dedicated to ending the irrational fear and general dislike of gay and lesbian people, harnesses support from a cross-section of the gay and non-gay population through the use of dialogue, educational workshops, and advertising, and by using effective activism based on non-violence, intelligence, and common sense. For more information, call 713/659-8181.

THE ART LEAGUE OF HOUSTON is offering free art classes for people with HIV. The ongoing course meets every Thursday and Friday from 1-4 pm. Among other media, the course offers lessons in painting, printmaking, and ceramics on a rotating basis. For information, call Patrick Palmer at 713/523-8817.

BINET (Bisexual Network of Houston), Wed., 7 pm, MCCR Church, 1919 Decatur, 713/861-9149.

CAFE MAISON COFFEE ROASTERY, 2089 Westheimer, 713/528-6750, is the only gay-owned and -operated coffee roastery in Houston. Live music every Friday and Saturday nights. Thursday night is singles night/movie night. Sunday is open mic night hosted by Somewhere South.

CROSSROADS is a support group for gays and lesbians who are currently in full-time church work, have been in the past, or are pursuing their calling. It is not exclusively for pastors, but is open to chaplains, administrators, musicians or music-, youth- and educational-directors. Meets the third Saturday of each month. Call 713/681-9082 for meeting date, time, and place.

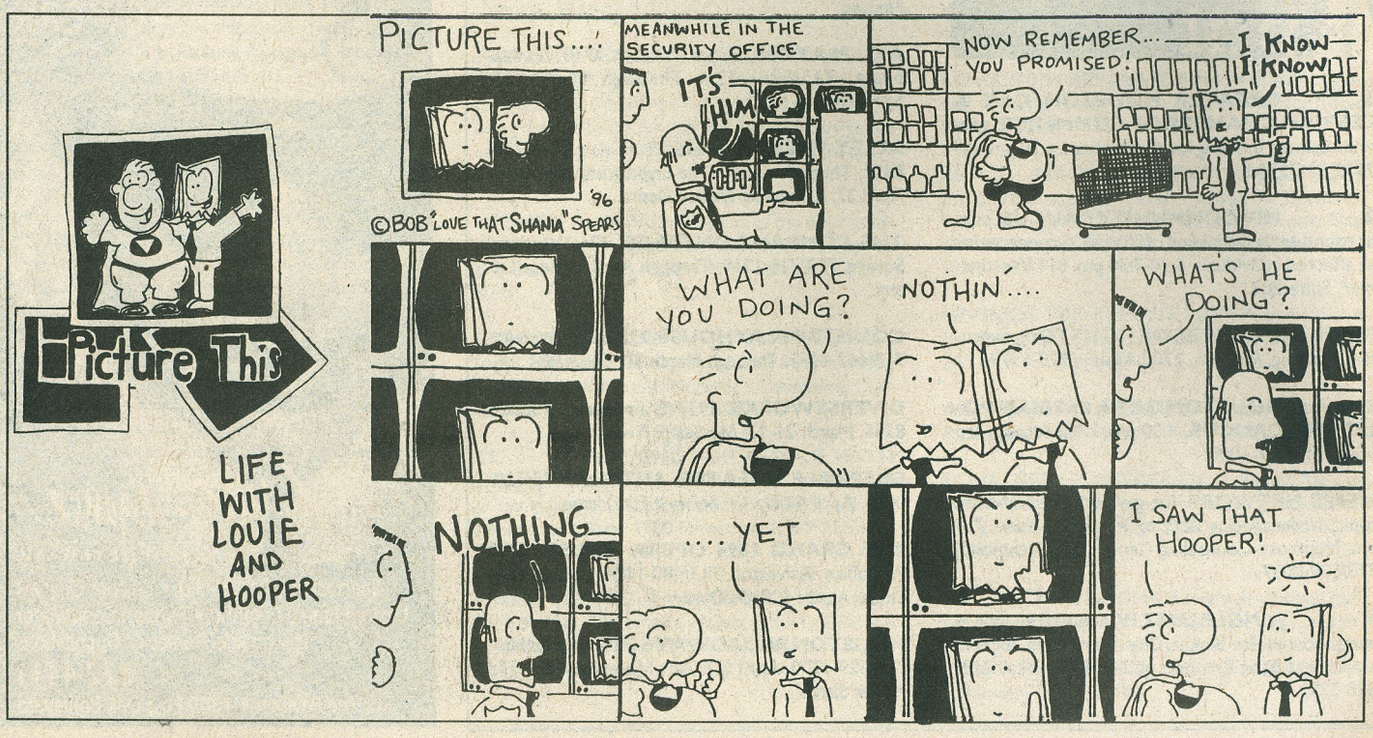
DELTA LAMBDA PHI is a Social Fraternity at the University of Houston that does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. Interested members of the University of Houston should contact 713/597-2673 for more information.

DIGNITY HOUSTON, dedicated to the welfare of gay and lesbian Catholics and their friends, meets Saturdays at 7:30 pm, 1307 Yale, Suite H, 713/880-2872.

EMPOWERMENT FOR LIVING, a weekly HIV-positive and negative support program and potluck supper, Tuesdays, 6 pm, MCCR, 1919 Decatur. For more information, call 713/861-9149.

EXXON ASSOCIATION OF GAY AND LESBIAN EMPLOYEES (EAGLE) meets monthly at the Montrose Library to discuss workplace issues, empowerment, social events, etc. For more information, please call 713/916-8110 or 713/522-6212.

FIST (FEMALES IN SEARCH OF TROUBLE) is a social group of women who explore the S/M, B/D, and fetish lifestyle. Monthly meetings and social events. Write: P.O. Box 20127, Houston, TX 77255-0217 or call 713/781-3567.



GAY AND LESBIAN HEALTH PROFESSIONALS meets monthly, providing socials, speakers, networking, and practitioner referral line. For information or a referral, call 713/523-4700.

GAY & LESBIAN PARENTS SUPPORT GROUP meets to discuss issues pertaining to today's gay families. If you have children or plan to have children, our support group can help with issues like coming out, ex-spouse problems, step relationships, etc. Meets at MCCR, 1919 Decatur, the second Tuesday of every month from 7-8:30 pm, 713/980-7995.

GAY FATHERS of Houston is a support group of gay men who meet every Monday, 8-9:30 pm at Grace Lutheran Church, 2515 Waugh, to discuss problems gay fathers share. For more information or directions, call 713/861-6181.

GLOBAL (Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Alliance at the University of Houston) is a social, political, and support group for the university GLB population and its supporters. Everyone is welcome. The group meets weekly on Wednesdays at 4 pm in the University Center. For more information, call Richard Parent at 713/743-7690.

HEARTSONG WOMEN'S CHORUS rehearses at 7 pm on Mondays on the third floor of the First Unitarian Church, 5200 Fannin at Southmore. New and former members welcome! Call 713/947-1488 for information.

HELPING CROSS DRESSERS ANONYMOUS (HCDA) meets 8 pm every Tuesday at 239 Westheimer.

HIV SURVIVOR SUPPORT GROUP for anyone whose life is touched by HIV. Meetings include a relaxing meditation, information about community resources, and occasional speakers. The group meets Wednesdays from 7 to 9 pm at Unity Church of Christianity, 2929 Unity Drive at Hilcroft. For further information, please call 713/782-4050.

THE HOMELESS PET PLACEMENT LEAGUE is a nonprofit animal welfare organization that rescues and rehabilitates stray and abandoned cats and dogs. To inquire about volunteering, foster care, or adopting, call 713/862-PETS.

HOPE PROJECT (HIV, Outreach, Prevention, and Education) provides HIV/AIDS information to the African-American community. Board meetings are held every second Wednesday of the month. Contact the HOPE line at 713/741-2450 for more information.

HOUSTON AREA TEEN COALITION OF HOMOSEXUALS (HATCH) is open to gays and lesbians, age 15-21, meets Fridays from 7:30-10 pm and Sundays from 6:30-9 pm, call 713/942-7002 for location and information.

HOUSTON OUTDOOR GROUP is a social group for gay men and lesbians who enjoy the outdoors. Activities include camping, hiking, horseback riding, canoeing, etc. Day trips, weekend trips (typically a two- to four-hour drive from Houston) and extended trips to places such as Wyoming, Canada, and the Cayman Islands. Call 713/KAMP-OUT or write to P.O. Box 980893, Houston, TX 77098.

HOUSTON PRIDE BAND provides musical entertainment for the lesbian and gay community. They are seeking musicians of all skill levels and instrumentation. Rehearsals are held at Dignity Houston, 1307 Yale on Wednesdays from 7-9 pm. Contact Russell at 713/524-0218 or e-mail HousTxBand @aol.com.

HOUSTON TENNIS CLUB, an affiliate member of the Gay and Lesbian Tennis Association, welcomes men and women of all ages and skill levels. They meet Wednesdays and Fridays from 7:30-9 pm and Sundays from 9 am-12 noon at Memorial Park Tennis Center. To join, call Bobby Riggins at 713/868-5039.

KOLBE PROJECT is an ecumenical outreach to gays, lesbians, and other sexual minorities modeled after the ministry of St. Francis of Assisi. Potluck and community-concern programs, first Thursdays, 7 pm; Healing Service, second Thursdays, 7 pm; Spiritual Direction by appointment; HIV/AIDS hospital chaplaincy. For information, call 713/522-8182.

LIVING IN PROCESS GROUPS: Ongoing mixed group for men and women three Wednesday evenings per month. Ongoing gay men's group three Thursday evenings per month. Recovery, healing, and transformation are possible. Call Eric Mayo at Living in Process Southwest for more information—713/622-7250.

LONE STAR NUDIST GROUP for gay or bisexual men who wish to share nude experiences together. Singles and lovers welcome. Monthly meetings. Nude social events, massage group, and out-of-town gatherings. Call 713/866-8847 for more information.

MONTROSE COUNSELING CENTER offers numerous counseling groups, including groups for men and women living with HIV, people in recovery, lesbian survivors of cancer, survivors of sexual abuse, people living with chronic pain, lesbian survivors of domestic violence, and many more. For more information, contact (24 hrs.) 713/529-0037.

NEXT STEP is a free confidential program of information and medical testing for persons who are HIV positive. Provided by Montrose Clinic. Call 713/520-2000 for schedule and to register.

OUTVOTE, nonprofit organization dedicated to registering, educating, and motivating our community to vote, meets at 7 pm the third Wednesday of the month at the Multiservice Center, 1475 W. Gray. For more information, call 713/520-VOTE or 713/522-9837.

PRIME TIMERS HOUSTON, promotes social activities for the older gay and bisexual male. Some of the activities they participate in are theater, dining out, movies, pot luck dinners, card games, and weekend daytrips. For more information, call 713/867-3903.

PROTECT (People Respecting Ourselves Through Establishing Community and Trust), an HIV-negative support group, provides a safe place to share experiences, strengths, and hopes in an effort to remain HIV negative. Tuesdays, 7-8:30 pm, Bering Church, 1440 Harold. For information, call Marty at 713/520-7870.

Q-PATROL is dedicated to the prevention of hate crimes against gays and lesbians, patrols the bar areas in Montrose, and are always looking for volunteers. If you have at least one Friday or Saturday night per month, please call 713/528-SAFE (7233).

RAINBOW RANGLERS, a gay country and western dance club, teaches beginning level dance every Thursday at 8:30 pm and advanced level dance every Wednesday at 7 pm at the Brazos River Bottom, 2400 Brazos. Dance classes are free and open to the public. Call 713/880-0670 for information.

RICE GALA (Gay and Lesbian Alumni Association) seeks gay and lesbian alumni of Rice University. Contact Neal Tannahill at 713/526-6718 for more information.

SOUTHERN COUNTRY HOUSTON provides country and western dance lessons, exhibitions, and charity events to benefit service organizations. Free dance lessons are offered every Tuesday at The Ranch, Plaza 9200, 9200 Buffalo Speedway. For more info., write to P.O. Box 1502, Houston, TX 77252-1502.

SELF-HYPNOSIS FOR IMPROVING HEALTH AND ATTITUDE, hypnotherapist T. C. LeNormand of Behavioral Dynamics teaches self-hypnosis techniques for stress reduction and desired behavioral changes for a healthier, happier life, two consecutive Thursdays. Call 713/789-0713 to register.

TEAM HOUSTON FOR THE GAMES, INC. is a nonprofit organization to educate and inform all people about gay/lesbian sports competitions and to encourage participation in the Gay Games and Cultural Festival. The next Gay Games will take place in Amsterdam, August 1-8, 1998. For more information, write to Team Houston, P.O. Box 66405, Houston, TX 77266-6405 or call 713/935-1060.

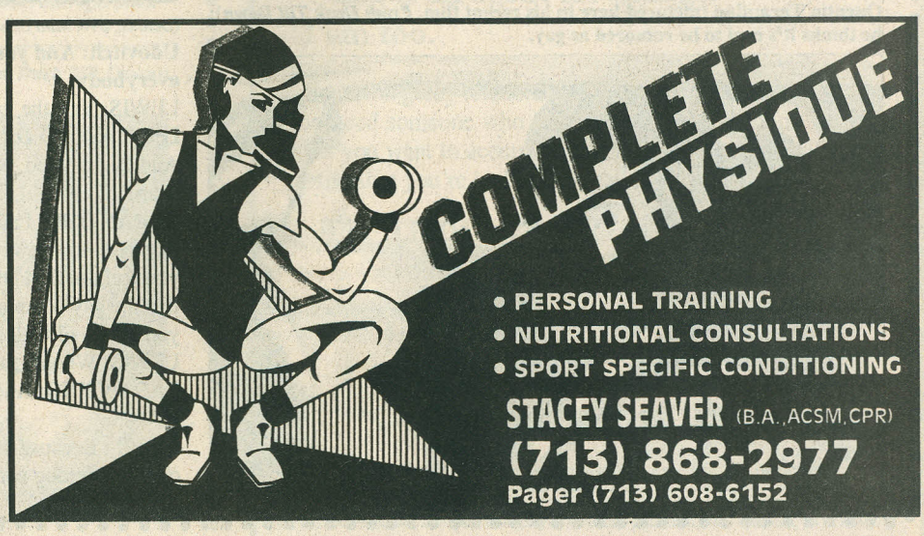
TEXAS ASSOCIATION FOR TRANSEXUAL SUPPORT (TATS) is a peer support group devoted to serving the emotional, social, and educational needs of transgendered persons, their partners, families, and friends. For more information, call 713/827-5913 or write to TATS, P.O. Box 142, Bellaire, TX 77401.

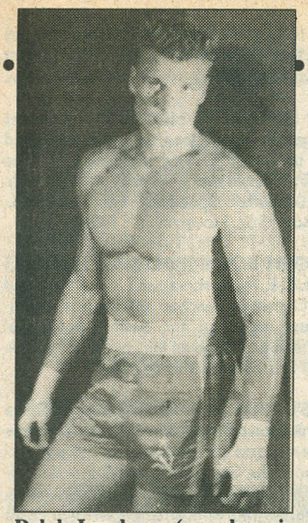
TEXAS GAY RODEO ASSOCIATION is a nonprofit organization, with chapters in Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio, and Houston, that promotes and stages an annual rodeo event as well as engaging in fundraising activities throughout the year. For more information on the Houston chapter, write to P.O. Box 130585, Houston, TX 77219 or call 713/777-1444.

GAY, LESBIAN & BISEXUAL VETERANS OF AMERICA, Houston Chapter. Location and times of meetings as announced. Write to GLBVA, P.O. Box 66706, Houston, TX 77266-6706. Phone/Fax: 713/951-9925.

TEXAS HUMAN RIGHTS FOUNDATION, a statewide, not-for-profit legal agency, advocates on behalf of the lesbian, gay, and HIV community and publishes the booklet *AIDS and the Law: Know Your Rights.* If you feel you have been discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation or HIV status and need legal advice or attorney referral, call their toll-free number, 1-800-828-6417.

WOMEN'S ACTION COALITION (WAC) is an alliance of women committed to direct action on issues affecting the rights of all women, Wednesdays, 7 pm at Toopees. P.O. Box 131148, Houston, TX 77219-1148, voice mail 713/867-9581.





Dolph Lundgren (seen here in 1985's *Rocky IV*): Keanu Reeves, gay bar, transvestites—rumors, rumors, rumors.

Queer Quotes

Compiled by Blase DiStefano

Dolph Lundgren

(*Loaded*, 7/95, Michael Holden)

Holden: What's the best rumor you've heard about yourself?

Lundgren: There was an interesting one last year *[1994]* about me and Keanu Reeves going to a gay bar with two transvestites in Toronto. It wasn't the best rumor, but it was pretty good.

Butch Patrick (Eddie Munster)

(on AOL, from *Entertainment Weekly*, 2/16/96)

"No, I'm not married. But I like girls, and I have a wonderful girlfriend. When you're 42 and single and neat in Hollywood, people think you might be gay. Not that there's anything wrong with that."

Johnny Depp

(*Movieline*, 10/94, Stephen Rebello)

Rebello: Speaking of rumors, despite those who dog you with stuff about drugs and your relationships with beautiful actresses, nobody much has gossiped that you might be gay.

Depp: No, but some tabloid said that I was a huge homophobe. Figure this out. One of my best friends is John Waters. We went for a drink in a gay bar that John has gone to in New York City. A guy comes up and says, "Hey, John, I'm a big fan of your films," and "Oh, Johnny, I've liked your movies." A real nice guy. He began to tell us about himself and said, "I'm HIV-positive." And what do you say to that kind of thing? At the end, when we were saying goodbye, he said, "John, do you mind if I give you a kiss on the cheek?" John said no and the guy kissed him on the cheek. And he said, "Johnny, do you mind?" and I said, "No, go ahead," and he gave me a kiss on the cheek, too. We finished our drinks and split, went to some other bar or something. The next day, one of those tabloid shitheads said I was standing at the bar with John Waters and some guy came up and kissed me and I ran out of the place freaked out, all...weirded out by the whole scenario. If I was homophobic, why would I be in the bar and why would one of my best friends be John Waters? [But] they can say what they want because I don't read it....

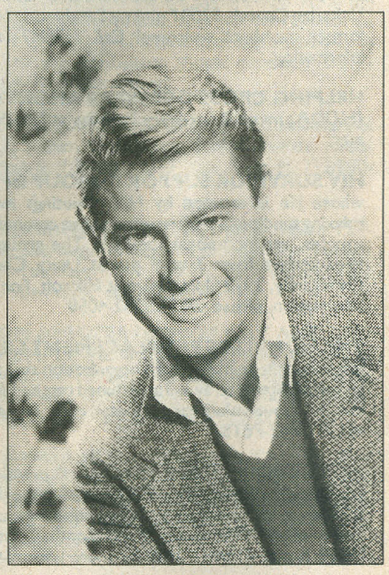
Troy Donahue

(*Globe*, 10/13/92)

" '...I think if a person is a homosexual that's their choice and I admire them for being able to be what they are. But I am not. For the record, all my life I have been a heterosexual. I'm not bisexual or homosexual. I am heterosexual.'

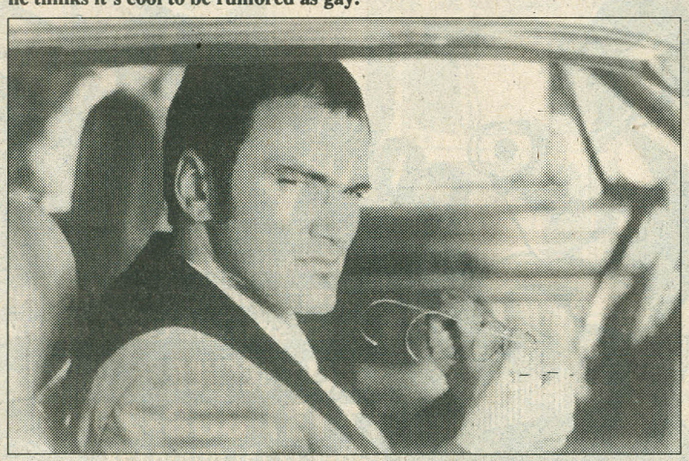
"Troy . . . claims that Hollywood rumors were spread about him because he is a victim of mistaken identity.

" 'There is this famous actor who is an avowed homosexual and people get us confused. . . . We look alike, our names are similar and they confuse our sexual preferences. I have often been mistaken for him, but I don't want to mention his name.' "



Straight sixties screen idol Troy Donahue (shown here in an early '60s portrait): often confused with *gay* sixties screen idol, Tab Hunter.

Quentin Tarantino (pictured here in his recent film, *From Dusk Till Dawn*): he thinks it's cool to be rumored as gay.



Juliette Lewis & Quentin Tarantino

(*Details*, 2/96, Mim Udovitch)

Udovitch: And you do tend to hear gay rumors about almost everybody.

LEWIS: Yes, the gay rumor goes wild. For everyone. Like with Leo *[Leonardo DiCaprio]*, he was like: "Is Brad *[Pitt]* gay?" And I said, "Leo, *you're* gay, don't you know? Haven't you heard?"

TARANTINO: I always thought it was really cool when Jami Bernard interviewed me for her book on me, she goes: "How do you feel about (1) the rumors that you're gay, and (2) the fact that the gay community has embraced your movies and claimed you as one of their own?"

LEWIS: Whoa! Quentin has a gay rumor too!

TARANTINO: And I go: "Really? That's cool, man. I totally dig it."

LEWIS: Because they're the underdogs or whatever. I have kind of the underdog connection too.

Agnes Moorehead

(*Hollywood Lesbians*, 1994, Boze Hadleigh)

Hadleigh: ...Numerous Hollywood actresses—Garbo, Gish, Dietrich, Jean Arthur, um, Kay Francis, Stanwyck, Bankhead, Del Rio, Janet Gaynor, etc., etc.—have enjoyed lesbian or bi relationships. Have you ever...?

Moorehead: Yes, you'd love to put me in their excellent company! Even if I don't belong in the same category. [Smiles wryly.]

You don't?

Those ladies were more beautiful than me.

Off the record? I can turn off the tape recorder.

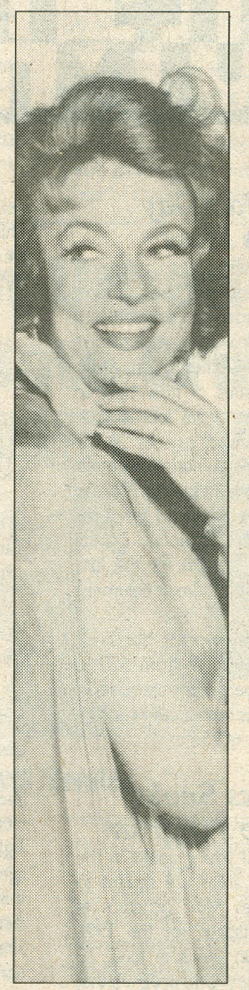
Leave it on, leave it on. [Sighs.] You apparently have your own informants [half smiles]. I don't know what you've heard, and I don't want to hear, and some of it may even be true.

The truth gets around.

...Somehow.

Would the truth hurt you professionally, now?

Now? Probably not. But I don't want anyone misinterpreting what was beautiful and even spiritual....



Agnes Moorehead (seen here as Endora, the enchanting witch she played for the entire run of the TV series, *Bewitched*): didn't want her lesbianism misinterpreted as anything other than beautiful and spiritual.

Terry McMillan

(novelist, *Waiting to Exhale*)

(*Movieline*, 4/95, Heidi Parker)

Parker: The film industry is full of rumors. Are there any about you?

McMillan: Someone is going around saying I'm a lesbian. Why, because I make a few dollars and am strong and single? Are those prerequisites to being a lesbian? Okay, I'll be a lesbian for you this week, if that's what you want. Give me a break!

Juliette Lewis (shown here in her recent film, *From Dusk Till Dawn*): she roots for the gay underdogs.



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Texas Lesbian/Gay Journalists Meet

Navigating the '90s is the theme for a conference presented by the Texas chapter of the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association, set for March 23, 1996. To be held at the University of Houston's Hilton Hotel and Conference Center, the day-long conference addresses the issues of how best to "navigate the '90s" as a lesbian or gay journalist, as well as offering tools for the future.

Provocative writer and *Chicago Tribune* columnist Achy Obejas is the morning keynote speaker. Roman Catholic priest and best-selling author of *What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality*, Daniel Helminiak, gives the keynote speech for the luncheon, hosted by comedian and *OutSmart* columnist Nancy Ford.

The conference begins Friday evening, March 22, with a reception. Registration ranges from $20 to $55, and is open to non-members of the association. For more information and registration, call 713/220-6025 or 1-800-735-3800, ext. 6025.

DiverseWorks Seeks Artists for June Program

Gay and lesbian teens and young adults in the Houston/Austin/San Antonio areas are sought to participate in the *12 Minutes Max!* program at Houston's DiverseWorks Artspace for the 1996 *Beyond Desire* gay and lesbian series in June. *12 minutes Max!* is a regular DiverseWorks program that allows selected artists 12 minutes onstage to present their work. All performance media will be considered (video, performance art, dance, music, etc.). For more information on how to submit an audition, contact program curator Travis Mader at 713/667-8975 or travism@neosoft.com., call DiverseWorks at 713/223-8346, or visit its web site at http://diverseworks.org.

Houston Area Women's Center Offers Individual Counseling for Abuse Survivors

The Houston Area Women's Center offers free individual counseling and support services for lesbian and bisexual survivors of domestic violence.

Battered lesbians/bisexual women must overcome the obstacles that all battered women must face, including fear for their lives and their children's lives, lack of resources, isolation, self-blame, and denial. Additionally, if battered lesbians report the assault, they often face the problem of being "outed" to police officers, the District Attorney's office, the local women's center, and often their families. There is now help available for lesbians/bisexual women who are confronting these issues.

The Women's Center offers free individual counseling, support services, and shelter to all women and children who have been battered or sexually assaulted. To schedule an appointment, call 713/528-2121.

Virginia Slims Legends Return to Houston

Martina Navratilova, Billie Jean King, and Virginia Wade are among the tennis icons who will return to Houston for the Virginia Slims Legends tennis tournament.

The popular tournament begins the second year of its six-city tour with additional stops in Chicago and Tampa. The annual event is scheduled for May 18 and 19, 1996, at Houston's Westside Tennis Club.

Houston Area Women's Center Supports Mail Drop on Washington

The National Coalition Against Sexual Assault has designated April 1, 1996, as "Mail-Drop on Washington Day." The coalition is asking those concerned about violence against women and children to contact legislators, urging full funding of the Violence Against Women Act. This action would also encourage continued funding and legislative commitment to this issue. The funds for the Violence Against Women Act come from the Crime Bill trust fund—money already set aside from the federal workforce reductions and other budget cuts. The new legislation, therefore, will cost the federal government no additional funds.

The Houston Area Women's Center is in full support of this effort. Below is one example of a letter that concerned individuals can copy and send to their legislators:

> Dear Legislator,
>
> While government is changing and evolving, one thing remains clear—part of the role of the government will always be to protect the citizenry. I am writing to encourage you to support full funding for the Violence Against Women Act as well as a renewed commitment to funding to end the violence against women and children.
>
> Sincerely,
> Your Name and Address

Annual Easter Weekend Parties Set to Take Place

Satisfy your primal pleasures at Jungle Lust IV, hosted by the Bayou City Boys Club, on Saturday, April 6 from 10 pm to 3 am. With Boston-based D.J. Joe Espinosa providing the music, the annual jungle-themed party will again be held in the tropical setting of the Spencer Company, 1609 Ennis at Leeland, a

warehouse-type building used as a greenhouse storage space for tropical plants. Proceeds from Jungle Lust IV will benefit Body Positive/Houston, AIDS Foundation Houston, and the Houston Clinical Research Network. Advance tickets, which include an open bar, are available for $30 at Basic Brothers and LOBO.

After recovering from Jungle Lust IV, you can celebrate Easter by attending the annual Bunnies on the Bayou party on Sunday, April 7. The popular outdoor spring fundraiser (charities to be annouced) will again be held on the steps of Fish Plaza adjacent to the Wortham Center in downtown Houston.

PFLAG Houston Announces Scholarship Program

Recognizing the limited specific opportunities for gay and lesbian youth and the acute need for positive role models, PFLAG Houston has announced its new scholarship program. The program is designed to recognize outstanding gay or lesbian students and to contribute toward their continuing education.

The award consists of $1,000 each year for four years to recognize outstanding achievement in the areas of academic excellence, leadership, and extra-

Coalition Urged to Combat Hate Crimes



Rep. Garnet Coleman: combating hate crimes.

by David Morales

The recommendation was clear at a recent town hall meeting aimed at combatting hate crimes: targeted groups need to form a coalition if they want to send the strongest possible message to the state legislature. State Rep. Garnet Coleman spoke eloquently about the coalition strategy. "You must try to have some focus. There are a lot of groups that may not agree on the lifestyle issues, but do agree that penalties should be stiffer when a crime has been committed which targets race, religion, or sexual orientation."

Almost 100 concerned members of the community attended the meeting, which was held at the Jewish Community Center on March 6, co-sponsored by Coleman and City Council member Martha Wong. About a third of those in attendance represented the gay and lesbian community. State Sen. Rodney Ellis, who has been working to pass hate crimes legislation since 1990, emphasized the need for an all-inclusive hate crimes bill, referring directly to the murders of gay citizens Paul Broussard, Michael Burzynski, and Fred Mangione. Ellis sent a strong message to all targeted groups present that the wording of any hate crimes statute must include sexual orientation.

Members of PFLAG Houston were present and was also represented on the panel of speakers by Susan Upchurch. Upchurch is the director for Houston Project Open Mind, an annual PFLAG conference addressing homophobia. During the meeting, when a member of the transgender community spoke about feeling excluded from these efforts by organized groups, Upchurch responded that it was not PFLAG's intent to discriminate against the transgendered community in any way. Other organizations representing the community were the African-American Lesbian and Gay Alliance (AALGA), the Anti-Homophobia Alliance (AHA!), Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals (H.A.T.C.H.), Houston Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus (HGLPC), and Queer Nation, as well as John Kellet of the Kellet Foundation.

In an opening address to the town meeting participants, Wong (District C) acknowledged the diversity of minorities that create her district, however she left out the fact that gays and lesbians also are a part of her district. In a later phone interview with Wong, she explained her omission. "Technically the area that is known as the gay and lesbian area, if I'm right, is the Montrose area. Is that right?" Later, Wong agreed that there were gays and lesbians living in the district she represents. When asked whether she was in favor of including sexual orientation language in the hate crimes statute, Wong said she "hadn't seen the wording on anything yet" and would have to "wait and see." Wong stated she had to leave for another engagement before the hate crimes meeting had concluded, and therefore was unable to report on any recommendations which may have been made.

The meeting sends two strong messages to the community. First, a coalition of the targeted groups could result in a powerful lobby to get an all-inclusive hate crimes statute passed on the books in the next legislative session. Second, in addition to united efforts aimed at the passage of such a statute, standing up in defense of any targeted group when derogatory remarks, jokes, or hate speech occur is something everyone can do on an individual basis.

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We Came all the Way from Cuba So You Could Dress Like This?
Achy writes no-holds-barred stories of lesbian love (lost and found) and illuminates an outsider's point of view as a Latina, an immigrant, and a lesbian. She will read from both her first book and her new work soon to be published.

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Out Here

Continued from previous page

curricular activities by a gay or lesbian student.

Deadline for application is April 27, 1996. For more information, contact PFLAG Houston, P.O. Box 53796, Houston, Texas 77052-3796.

Contemporary Arts Museum Announces Free Admission Policy

Marti Mayo, director of the Contemporary Arts Museum (CAM), announced that Les and Diane Marks, Les Marks Chevrolet-Mazda-Geo, Jay Marks Toyota, and Jay Marks Mazda-Hyundai will underwrite free admission to CAM for the entire 1996 exhibition season.

"Contemporary art is often challenging and difficult," said Mayo. "It can seem especially perplexing to audiences less familiar with modern and contemporary art. Free admission removes a barrier to their experience and encourages increased familiarity with the work of regional, national, and international artists. It allows visitors to come to each exhibit as often as they like."

The removal of an admission fee allows the Houston community unlimited access to the museum's exhibitions and programs. For hours of operation and additional information, call 713/526-3129.

TWU, AFH Prepare to Open Spirit Clinic in Houston

Afflicted with a disease that strikes fear by its name alone, persons living with HIV/AIDS face increasingly difficult access to healthcare. Costs, transportation, and medical and social support often prevent an HIV/AIDS client from receiving healthcare. In Houston, however, Texas Women's University (TWU) and AIDS Foundation Houston (AFH) have joined hands and resources to provide healthcare through their new Spirit Clinic. At the clinic, clients and their family members will receive healthcare, with no direct charges incurred by anyone seen at the clinic.

The clinic is "...dedicated to the care of persons living with HIV/AIDS and their families," said Dr. Diana Ragsdale, TWU Professor of Nursing who worked with AFH to establish the clinic. Glaxo-Wellcome provided a start-up grant for the continued purchase of medical supplies.

The clinic opens in March and will operate by appointment only on a part-time basis three half-days per week. For information, call 713/524-6052.

Gay and Lesbian Medical Association Meets With Shalala

Leaders of the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association (GLMA) met in February with U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala to push for action on two key issues.

The plight of HIV-infected healthcare workers, and what Benjamin Schatz, J.D., described as "the need for a proactive and comprehensive initiative by HHS on lesbian and gay health issues" were the focus for the hour-long meeting. He reported that GLMA urged a broad approach: "It is vitally important that HHS help America understand that homophobia is a major health hazard."

At the meeting Shalala instructed HHS officials to examine whether current Centers for Disease Control guidelines that restrict infected health professionals are scientifically valid, and whether they have resulted in unnecessary discrimination.

The Gay and Lesbian Medical Association is the U.S. and Canadian organization of lesbian, gay, and bisexual physicians, medical students, and their supporters. It works to maximize the quality of health services for lesbian, gay, and bisexual people, to promote full civil rights, and to foster a professional climate in which its members can achieve their full potential. For more information, call 415/255-4547.

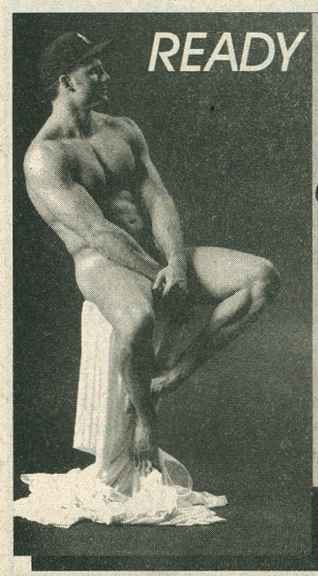
Area Teachers Unite to Combat Homophobia

HOUSTON - A group of Houston area educators and supporters met on March 5 to form a local chapter of GLSTN - The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Teachers Network. National Executive Director Kevin Jennings was in Houston last month, co-sponsored by The Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals (H.A.T.C.H.) and the Houston and Victoria Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (P-FLAG). Jennings gave a dynamic presentation to an audience of about 50 at Grace Lutheran Church. "Every 5 hours and 48 minutes a gay youth dies," said Jennings. "Every time we teach, somebody dies."

GLSTN strives to assure that every member of every school community is valued and respected, regardless of sexual orientation. Statistics show that 28 percent of all gay youth drop out of school—three times the national average.

Both P-FLAG and H.A.T.C.H. are lending strong support to the formation of the local GLSTN chapter. They feel that their combined efforts will help more school administrators, parents, and faculty become aware of the need for intervention on behalf of all youth—gay, lesbian and straight—to combat homophobia in schools.

The local chapter of GLSTN meets the first and third Tuesdays of each month at 8 p.m. at the First Universal Unitarian Church, 5200 Fannin@Southmore. The next meeting will be held there on March 19. All concerned educators, parents, and anyone interested are encouraged to attend. For more information on this local chapter, please call 942-7002, box 4. The national organization of GLSTN can be reached at 212-727-0135, or GLSTN@glstn.org. ▼



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OUT IN OUR WORLD

From Gaynet Wire Service

GAY MARRIAGE PROPOSALS...

Ballot Measure in Washington to Legalize Gay Marriages?

SEATTLE—Zakmichael Tazmon, a computer programmer with no affiliation to any gay rights groups, has filed papers to begin collecting signatures for a ballot initiative to legalize same-sex marriages in Washington state. According to the state registrar's office, Tazmon has until July 5 to collect the 181,667 signatures of registered voters in order to put the proposed ballot measure before the voters this November.

Marriage Laws: 1 Down, 2 Pending

OLYMPIA, Wash.—Washington state Republican legislators have all but conceded that a proposed ban on same-sex marriage in the state will probably never make it out of a state senate committee controlled by the Democrats. Washington state Senate leader Sid Snyder said the anti-gay measure was not slated for committee hearings and will be allowed to die there. Meanwhile, Wisconsin state Rep. Dean Kaufert has said he will soon introduce a bill that would bar recognizing same-sex marriages in the state, even if they were legally performed elsewhere. And in Maryland, Delegate Emmitt Burns introduced a measure that would bar recognizing same-sex marriages in the state, declaring such marriages "repugnant" to public policy.

Anti-Marriage Law Signed in South Dakota

PIERRE, So. Dakota—Governor Bill Janklow has signed a bill approved recently by the South Dakota legislature that would refuse recognition in the state to same-sex couples that might be legally married elsewhere and that restricts marriage to opposite-sex couples only. The measure, which died last year in the legislature and looked as if it would suffer the same fate again this year when a committee voted not to report the measure to the legislature for a vote, is the second to become law in the wake of a Hawaii supreme court ruling. The Hawaii ruling makes it likely that same-sex marriages in that state may become legal later this year.

Overriding its own judiciary committee, the South Dakota state Senate has forced a measure that would bar recognition of same-sex marriage in the state to the chamber for a vote. The Senate's judiciary committee had rejected the proposed measure by a 4-2 vote earlier in the month, but senators overrode the committee vote in order to bring the proposed law to the floor for a vote. The measure has already been approved by the state House of Representatives.

In the meantime, David Lord, a Black Hill State University student, had filed papers to begin gathering signatures on a petition to put a ballot measure before the state's voters this November that would give domestic partnerships in South Dakota legal recognition. Lord said the state lawmaker who introduced the anti-gay marriage bill, Rep. Robert Hunt, wants "to protect the traditional definition of marriage" and that his partnership ballot measure would protect "the Christian concept of marriage while assuring that gay couples get some of the benefits." To qualify for the November ballot, Lord will have to collect 15,581 valid signatures of registered voters by May 7.

One immediate and surprising side-effect of the bill being signed into law is that Jacques Soukup and Kirk Thomas, notable balloonists who are also longtime partners, have withdrawn their support for the Governor's Cup hot-air ballooning event in the state. The two men, founders of the Soukup & Thomas International Balloon and Airship Museum in Mitchell, South Dakota, told the Governor's Cup committee that they couldn't be "associated with a government that has just passed a mean-spirited and hateful piece of legislation that hurts us." The couple, well-known in national ballooning circles, had been expected to serve as officials with this year's event.

Anti-Marriage Legislative Update

OLYMPIA, Wash.—State legislatures around the country are continuing in their efforts to ban same-sex marriages, although with very little actual effect, it seems. In New Mexico, Senate majority leader Tom Rutherford sent an anti-marriage resolution on the issue back to the rules committee because no hearings had been held. The proposed measure would ask voters there to amend the state constitution, rendering the resolution dead for this session.

Meanwhile, the Washington House of Representatives has approved with a 60-36 vote a bill that would prohibit same-sex marriages in the state. The proposed ban, which some lawmakers say is unnecessary since the state doesn't recognize gay and lesbian marriages anyway, says: "It is a compelling interest of the state of Washington to reaffirm its historical commitment to the institution of marriage as a union between a man and a woman, and its fundamental role in the procreation and development of children." The measure requires state Senate approval where it is expected to have a more difficult time. But because the measure calls for it to be placed before the voters, it would not require the signature of the governor if it should get the Senate's OK.

For the second time in as many years, an anti-marriage measure has failed to win approval of a state Senate committee after being passed by the South Dakota House. The Senate's judiciary committee voted 4-2 against the proposed measure, effectively killing it again this year unless backers of the bill can force it to the full Senate for a vote.

The Illinois state Senate has also received an anti-marriage bill, introduced by state Senator Peter Fitzgerald as part of a broad piece of legislation dealing with a variety of prohibitions on who can and cannot legally get married in the state. The restrictions include age, familial relationships, as well as the ban on "two individuals of the same sex." And according to a report in the gay paper *Wisconsin Light*, state Rep. Dean Kaufert has announced plans to introduce a measure barring same-sex marriages in the state as well. The paper reports the measure has not yet been drafted.

Hawaii Anti-Marriage Efforts Limp Along

HONOLULU—In their ongoing efforts to try to extricate themselves from the politically and socially charged issue of same-sex marriages, the Hawaii state Senate's judiciary committee has rejected two bills but accepted one. The committee nixed by a 1-6 vote a proposal that would have simply legalized same-sex marriages in the state. By a 3-4 vote, the senators also rejected a proposal that would have banned same-sex marriage in Hawaii. The lawmakers finally agreed by a 5-2 vote to accept a proposed measure that would institute a statewide domestic partnership, a compromise proposal that a state commission impaneled to study the question had put

Kentucky Gay Conference Gets Green Light

LEXINGTON, Ky.—The University of Kentucky's student association has approved a $1,800 grant to the campus gay organization, UK Lambda, to help coordinate its April 19-21 "Come Together Kentucky Youth Prevention Conference." The conference, which also has received funding from the Lexington Frontrunners and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, is aimed at gathering Kentucky students to discuss effective strategies for HIV prevention through the building of community and self-esteem as gay, lesbian, and bisexual young people. The keynote speaker at the conference will be Urvashi Vaid, former director of the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force.

Episcopal Bishop Faces Heresy Charge for Ordaining Gay Priest

WILMINGTON, Del.—An Episcopal church court has convened at St. John's Cathedral here to begin one of the church's most rare and unusual proceedings: trial of a bishop for heresy. The charge against the Right Reverend Walter Righter, now retired and living in New Hampshire, is that while he was an assistant bishop in Newark, New Jersey, he ordained Barry Stopfel of Maplewood, New Jersey, in 1990 as a priest, although he knew that Stopfel was, as the official presentment has it, a "non-celibate homosexual." The charge against Bishop Righter, 72, is that the ordination violates a 1979 resolution by the church's General Convention against ordaining gay and lesbian clergy if they are sexually active. At least five—possibly as many as 76—other Episcopal bishops who have dissented from the anti-gay clergy resolution could also face heresy charges, depending on the outcome of the trial in Wilmington. Bishop Righter's heresy trial is only the second of its kind since the Episcopal Church in the U.S. was founded in 1789. In 1924, a retired bishop was tried for preaching communism. Bishop Righter's position, and that of his dissenting brother bishops, is that the 1979 resolution constitutes merely a recommendation, not an issue of church doctrine. Bishop Righter's defense against the heresy charges rests mainly on this question of whether the resolutions of the church's General Convention are doctrine or not. If the church court should find Righter guilty, he could be defrocked for his actions.

Across the Nation

forward after the state supreme court made it clear that there was a good chance Hawaii may be legally required to recognize gay and lesbian marriages. A just-released Honolulu Advertiser-Channel 2 News poll indicates that, despite the state's strong liberal reputation, 71 percent of the voters polled said they oppose same-sex marriage, while only 18 percent said they favored extending marriage rights to same-gender couples. Some 9 percent of those polled indicated they were undecided or didn't know. As an indicator of how worried some state lawmakers are becoming, eight state representatives, backed by Pat Robertson's American Center for Law and Justice, have filed a court motion to be allowed to intervene in the suit that initially raised the same-sex marriage issue in the state. The brief in the case is strongly critical of the Hawaii attorney general's office for not adequately defending the state against the lawsuit.

Iowa Lawmakers Nix Same-Sex Marriage

DES MOINES, Iowa—Lawmakers have voted 86-11 in the Iowa House of Representatives for a bill that would prohibit the state from recognizing same-sex marriages. The issue has surfaced in statehouse after statehouse around the country after Hawaii's supreme court made it likely that the state may be forced to recognize same-sex marriage there.

Some political observers in the state have suggested the legislation, which was introduced by Republican state Rep. Steve Grubbs, was mainly a partisan issue because Grubbs is running for the Republican nomination to unseat U.S. Sen. Tom Harkin, a Democrat.

Alabama Joins Anti-Marriage Rush

BIRMINGHAM, Ala.—Add Alabama to the rapidly growing list of state legislatures considering measures to bar same-sex marriages in response to fears that Hawaii courts will soon legalize such marriages there. State Sen. Bill Armistead, who recently led a battle to keep a gay and lesbian conference from being held on the campus at the University of Alabama, is proposing a "marriage protection act" that he claims would strengthen traditional heterosexual marriages by barring the state from recognizing same-sex marriages, even if legally recognized elsewhere.

Colorado Legislative Committee OKs Marriage Ban

DENVER—A committee of the Colorado House of Representatives has approved proposed legislation that would bar recognizing same-sex marriages that might be legal in other states. The measure is one of a string of such bills being introduced and passed in state legislatures out of concerns that Hawaii courts will soon legalize same-sex marriages in the state. Such marriages, the lawmakers fear, might be legally valid if couples married in Hawaii moved to their states.

GOP Presidential Primary and Anti-Gay Marriage

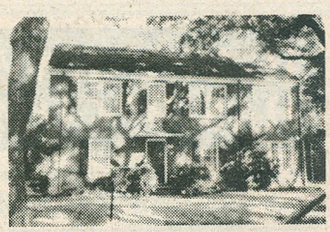
DES MOINES—A number of anti-gay organizations, including Colorado for Family Values, the Christian Coalition, the Eagle Forum, and the Traditional Values Coalition, drew several thousand fundamentalists together under an umbrella group known as the National Campaign to Protect the Sanctity of Marriage. The combined organizations are asking all the Republican presidential primary hopefuls to sign their pledge against same-sex marriages.

Not surprisingly, three of the most outspoken anti-gay candidates, talk show host Alan Keyes, Patrick Buchanan, and Texas Sen. Phil Gramm, were on hand to sign the anti-gay pledge that declares that "the State should not legitimize homosexual relationships by legalizing same-sex 'marriage,' but should continue to reserve the special sanction of civil marriage for one man and one woman as husband and wife." The other leading GOP hopefuls—Senate majority leader Bob Dole of Kansas, former Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander, and multi-millionaire publisher Steve Forbes—all said they would sign the anti-marriage pledge as well, even though they didn't actually attend the event.

Speaking of gay marriages, check out the review of *The Birdcage* on page 34.

'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' Doesn't Work, Group Charges

WASHINGTON, D.C.—A just-issued report says the compromise policy reached by the Clinton administration with Congress that was aimed at lessening bias against gays and lesbians in the U.S. armed forces is being widely violated by the military. Penta



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Out in Our World

Continued from previous page

gon officials insist, however, that the so-called "don't ask, don't tell" policy, in effect now for two years, is working properly. The report by the Washington, D.C.-based group, Service Members Legal Defense Network, charges there is a continuing pattern of abuse by the armed service that has rendered the administration's policy toward gays and lesbians in the military as bad, if not worse, than its predecessor. The organization says that despite the seemingly more lenient approach, the nation's military has recently been expelling more service members for homosexuality, which the group charges violates the policy by harassing servicemen and women believed to be gay.

The organization estimated in the report that it cost the federal government $21.3 million to train replacements for the gay men and lesbians discharged by the military.

During a press conference, Defense Secretary William Perry said the charge of witch-hunts against gays in the military is a serious allegation and will be examined very carefully.

World's First Gay Shopping Mall

MANCHESTER, England—Terry King, a 28-year-old businessman in the North Midlands industrial city of Manchester, says the $49 million Phoenix Centre will be the world's first gay shopping center when it opens on Easter Sunday, April 7. King says that nearly all of the 14 sites in the shopping center's initial complex, which is located in a gay section of the city in a set of converted Victorian offices, are already leased and that plans are already on the drawing board for ways to expand even further. Despite initial criticism that the shopping center would attract "undesirable types" to the area, the city council quickly approved plans.

The most controversial establishment with an outlet at Phoenix is a dry cleaning shop that, in addition to the usual suits-and-shirts trade, says it will also specialize in cleaning the glittery gowns of drag performers.

Stanford Jock Investigated for Soliciting Nude Photos

PALO ALTO, CA—Authorities have confirmed that Eric Abrams, Stanford University's 22-year-old All-American place-kicker, had been arrested on January 26 after he picked up a package that had been mailed to him by a high school football player. Posing as a member of the university athletic department, Abrams had allegedly asked the student to send nude and semi-nude photos to him. Police have not yet filed any charges in the case, saying they believe other high school players here and on the East Coast may have also been asked for nude pictures of themselves.

Transsexual's Killer Sentenced to Electric Chair

FALLS CITY, Neb.—John Lotter, earlier found guilty on three counts of murder in the deaths of Brandon Teena, Lisa Lambert, and Philip DeVine, has been sentenced to death in the electric chair. Brandon Teena, a pre-operative female-to-male transsexual who had been living as a man in the rural area, was raped in late 1993 by Lotter and Marvin Nissen after it was revealed by a local newspaper that Teena was, in fact, still a female. The men threatened to kill Teena if the assault was reported, according to testimony during the trial. Although Teena reported the assault, no charges were filed at the time .

Nissen said in court that the two men had found Lambert and DeVine staying with Brandon at a farmhouse and killed all three. Nissen was earlier found guilty of a single count of first degree murder in connection with the killing of Brandon and two counts of second degree murder in the killings of Lambert and DeVine.

Montana City Goes 'Hate-Free'

MISSOULA, Mont.—The Missoula County health department has adopted a resolution that calls on residents in the western city, home of the University of Montana, to "establish, live by, and enforce a policy of zero tolerance for discrimination or crimes that are motivated on the basis of hate based on race, religion, sexual preference, disability, or gender." The resolution came about as a result of efforts by a group known as the Campaign for a Hate-Free Missoula after several businesses in the area, including the city's newspaper, repeatedly received hate mail that told "cattle rustlers, horse thieves, drug-dealers, and queers" to get out of the state or "hang." The printed hate mail also threatened "any individuals in support of, or associated with" such people to "leave immediately and save their necks." The hate literature was signed by an unknown organization named The Vigilantes and included a drawing of a coffin with two men hanging by their necks by ropes.

Yes, Virginia, the Judge Is No Santa Claus

RICHMOND, Va.—A Virginia court judge has again rejected an appeal by lesbian mom Sharon Bottoms in her three-year effort to gain custody of her son Tyler. Ironically, Judge William Boice questioned Bottoms' financial ability to care for her son, while at the same time he criticized her for signing a $75,000 contract to allow ABC-TV to make a television movie about her struggle to get custody of the child.

Woman Sentenced to 11 Years in Slaying

SAN RAFAEL, CA—Marin County Superior Court Judge Lynn Taylor has sentenced Phyllis Robbins, a 68-year-old retired teacher, to 11 years in state prison for the beating death of 71-year-old Barbara Wilson. Robbins admitted the killing, saying she had acted in the heat of anger after learning that Wilson and Robbins' lover, Maureen Zwemke, were considering renewing their relationship.

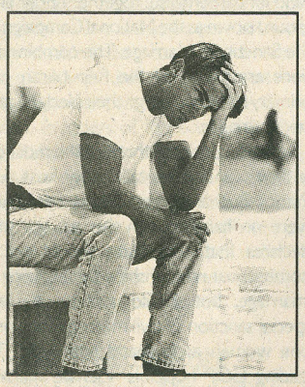
School District Bars All Organizations to Block Gay Group

SALT LAKE CITY—Following a crowded four-hour meeting of the city's school board here, the trustees voted 4-3 to outlaw all non-academic student clubs in the district's public schools rather than allow a gay and lesbian student group to form. The ban takes effect at all public secondary schools in the city beginning this fall.

The restriction does not apply to campus groups that are connected to classroom work. More than a hundred people lined up to address the board during

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a two-hour opening segment, with most urging the board not to shut down campus groups. The controversy erupted late last year after several students from the city's East High School asked for permission to form a gay and lesbian club. State officials ruled that the only way to prevent the gay groups from forming was either to refuse more than $100 million in federal education funds or to bar all non-curricular groups at public schools.

New Hampshire Schools' Anti-Gay Policies Challenged in Suit

CONCORD, N.H.—A group of parents and other concerned citizens have filed suit against the Merrimack school board in U.S. District Court, charging that the board's recently adopted policy of prohibiting any materials that have "the effect of encouraging or supporting homosexuality as a positive lifestyle alternative" violated First Amendment rights of free speech.

The suit claims that the policy has led to books being removed from schools, classroom discussions being cut off, and curriculum topics being restricted. At a press conference, Debra Herget, one of the plaintiffs in the suit and the mother of three children attending schools in the district, said, "This policy hurts and distorts the education of students every day. Now is the right time to put an end to it and return to the sound policies which have always guided our children's education in the past."

Lesbigay Conference Proceeds in Alabama

TUSCALOOSA, Ala.—The Lesbian, Gay & Bisexual College Conference of the Southeastern United States went ahead at the University of Alabama, more or less without incident, despite attempts by state officials to block the confab taking place at a state-funded facility. Just days before the conference was slated to start, a federal district court judge rejected the state attorney general's argument that the conference was illegal and ruled that the conference would go ahead as planned.

As the conference itself got started, the manager of WMCF-TV, a Christian Broadcasting Company television affiliate, charged the station's First Amendment rights had been violated when organizers refused to let his TV crew videotape the conference's workshops. Organizers of the meeting said videotaping the event would have been disruptive and would have violated the privacy rights of those attending the meeting.

New Hampshire Anti-Bias Measure Goes for 'Extended Study'

CONCORD, N.H.—New Hampshire's legislature has voted 293-35 to send a proposed measure adding sexual orientation to the state's civil rights statutes for "extended study." The move effectively puts the proposal on hold for this year while a legislative committee studies the measure and reports back to the full legislature next fall.

State Court Topples Montana Sodomy Law

HELENA, Mont.—Montana District Court Judge Jeffrey Sherlock has ruled that the state's sodomy law is an unconstitutional infringement of privacy protections guaranteed under state law. State officials are expected to appeal the ruling to the state supreme court, although the attorney general's office gave no indication of its intentions about Judge Sherlock's ruling, which orders the state not to enforce the law.

The statute made sodomy a felony in Montana, carrying a penalty of up to 10 years in prison and a maximum fine of up to $50,000. Although enacted in 1973, no one had ever been prosecuted under the law.

Gunderson & Partner Pen Book About Family Values

MILWAUKEE—U.S. Rep. Steve Gunderson (R-Wisc.), one of only three openly gay members of Congress, says he and his lover, Rob Morris, have written a book about family values from their perspective as gay men. Gunderson said the book, *Of House and Home*, is scheduled to be published this summer by Dutton Books of New York.

CompuServe Reinstates Banned Internet Groups

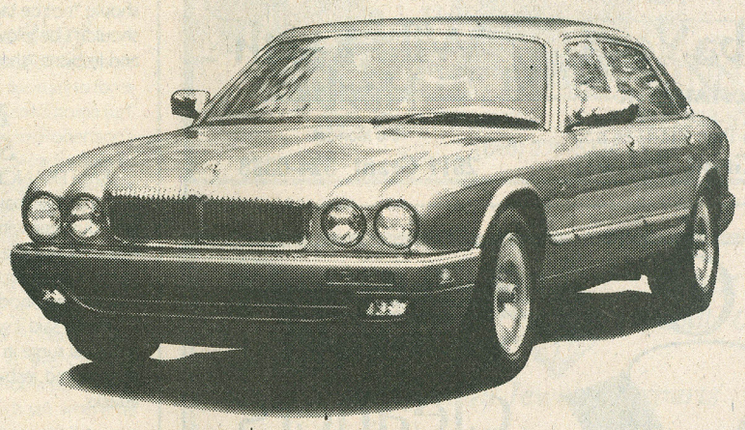
COLUMBUS, Ohio—CompuServe Inc., the computer on-line giant owned by H&R Block, says it has given its 4.3 million subscribers access again to some 200 Internet newsgroups that it had banned in December after a German state prosecutor questioned whether the groups included illegal sexually related materials. The computer service said at the time that it could not selectively restrict Internet materials by country and had therefore blocked access to the groups to all its subscribers. Included among some of the banned groups were several that contain explicitly adult material, as well as a few that suggested they might include digital images involving children and animals. But a number of the banned newsgroups were gay and lesbian discussion and support groups, including one for younger gays that specifically barred pornographic materials. CompuServe says it will now give its subscribers software that will let them pick which, if any, material they don't want to be able to access. The firm believes parents will use the blocking utilities to keep children from seeing or reading material they don't deem appropriate.

Washington University Students Protest Unequal Benefits at Women's Hoops Game

SEATTLE, Washington—About 25 members of the campus student group Queer Dawgs showed up to protest outside the University of Washington's Intramural Activities Center to draw attention to unequal treatment of gays and lesbians at the school. Michael Duckworth, who organized the protest, says the university denies same-sex couples a variety of benefits that it automatically extends to married students, faculty, and staff even though the school has an anti-bias policy.

Not getting the same kind of spousal memberships at the IMA center, Duckworth says, is just one of the imbalances. Duckworth said his group decided to protest at the Saturday night women's basketball match because the women's games are extremely popular with lesbians and gay men on campus.

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Continued from previous page

Lesbian Mom Appeals Custody Decision

PENSACOLA, Florida—Mary Ward has appealed an August ruling that ordered her 11-year-old daughter be given over to the custody of the child's father, who was convicted of killing his first wife. The decision last year by state Circuit Court Judge Joseph Tarbuck stunned many when he ruled in favor of John Ward, the girl's father, who served nine years in prison for killing his first wife during an argument over custody of their daughter. In deciding against Mary Ward, Tarbuck ruled that the daughter "should be given the opportunity and the option to live in a non-lesbian world."

One new witness slated to testify in the appeal will be Michelle McInnes, 25, the daughter of John Ward and the wife he killed. During a television interview announcing that she would testify, McInnes said her father also tried to molest her when she was 14 years old.

Eleventh Victim in Virginia Serial Killings

CHESAPEAKE, Va.—Police say they want to talk to two men in connection with the death of Jesse J. Spencer Jr., believed to be the 11th victim in a string of serial killings in the area that have had mainly gay men and male hustlers as their victims. Authorities said the first man they want to talk to is believed to be the last person seen with Spencer before his body was found on January 27. The other man was seen driving in the area just before a local resident discovered the dead man's body.

Since the summer of 1987, someone has killed 11 men and dumped their bodies in the Chesapeake, Suffolk, and Isle of Wight areas of southern Virginia. Spencer is believed to be the most recent victim. Eight of the 11 were strangled; two others were too decomposed for police to determine a definite cause of death. Police have not said how Spencer died. Spencer was dumped nude, as all but one have been, in plain view of nearby residents.

Oklahoma Lawmakers Considering Anti-Gay Resolution

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla.—Rights activists say that a resolution introduced in the state House of Representatives against portraying homosexuality in a positive light or as a "normal lifestyle" will probably pass. Although legislative resolutions don't have any legal force, activists say one like this would "open the doors for discrimination and bias." The resolution, introduced by House Majority Leader Representative Loyd Benson, a Frederick Democrat, says that homosexuality should "not be taught as a natural lifestyle in public schools"; that gays and lesbians shouldn't be allowed to "adopt or provide foster care to children"; and that gays and lesbians "should not be entitled to any special status under the law."

Reported Anti-Gay Crimes Skyrocket in San Francisco

SAN FRANCISCO—The San Francisco Police Department's hate crimes unit says that bias-based crimes rose 23 percent to 350 incidents in 1995 over the previous year, with anti-gay and -lesbian incidents constituting both the largest single category and the largest increase. The hate crimes unit reported that 144, or 41 percent, of all such crimes reported in 1995 were based on sexual orientation and that anti-gay incidents increased nearly a third last year over 1994.

Police said it was not clear whether the number of reported incidents reflected an actual surge in anti-gay attacks or was a result of greater willingness on the part of gays and lesbians to report such incidents because of increased publicity of attacks.

The Benefits of Partners' Benefits

SAN FRANCISCO—While state legislators around the country have been quickly jumping on the bandwagon to outlaw same-sex marriage in their states, the San Francisco board of supervisors is considering a measure that would identify businesses in the city that offer domestic partners benefits for unmarried same-sex and opposite-sex employees.

Introduced by Tom Ammiano, an openly gay supervisor, the proposed measure would make it possible for the city to give more favorable consideration to such firms when it awards lucrative city contracts.

Minister Comes Under Scrutiny for Welcoming Gays

SPRING LAKE, Mich.—The Reverend Richard Rhem, pastor of the Christ

Community Church near Grand Rapids, will be the subject of a "pastoral inquiry" by leaders of the Reformed Church in America's western Michigan region at the end of February because of his teachings that homosexuality is not a sin but "just a difference."

Rhem's views came to the attention of church leaders after he and his church publicly encouraged gays and lesbians to join them. In January, Rhem's parish adopted a resolution backing their minister's welcome to gays and lesbians at their church.

The Reformed Church in America officially holds that homosexuality is a sin against God.

Far-Right Drawn to Buchanan Candidacy

WASHINGTON—Far-right GOP hopeful Patrick Buchanan surprised almost no one when he said during a CNN-TV interview that having openly gay or lesbian people in a Buchanan White House would "discredit the administration." And while no credible U.S. politicians have endorsed Buchanan, despite his stunning performances in Alaska, Louisiana, and New Hampshire Republican primaries, the arch-conservative commentator has gotten the support of far-right Russian nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky, who is running for the presidency in his country, too.

Zhirinovsky told the Russian Interfax news agency that if they win, the two presidents could cooperate in deporting Jews from their respective countries. "We could set aside places on U.S. and Russian territory to deport this small but troublesome tribe," Zhirinovsky is quoted as saying of Buchanan's sudden lead in the GOP primary race. Buchanan has been repeatedly charged with being anti-Semitic and once called the U.S. Congress "Israeli-occupied territory."

The *New York Times* reports that three Buchanan delegates he won in the Louisiana caucuses have ties to one-time Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke. The paper also said that Bill Carter was dismissed as a Buchanan campaign aide after reports surfaced that Carter led Duke's 1992 unsuccessful presidential campaign in South Carolina. Duke himself had earlier this year endorsed Buchanan's presidential bid.

Rich Tafel, executive director of the Log Cabin Republicans in Washington, D.C., said of Buchanan's sudden center-stage political position: "The Republican Party is beginning to reap the harvest of pandering to the far right. Since 1972, Republican candidates thought they could harness the working class Democrat vote to their advantage. Buchanan's tapped into these social conservative and fiscal liberals, many who were Democrats. He's played the anti-gay card, the race card, the anti-Semitic card, and the corporate-bashing card. Ralph Reed now has the true far-right candidate he's been demanding. And now the Republican Party looks poised to tear itself apart and hand Bill Clinton a victory."

White Returns to Pat Robertson's Turf

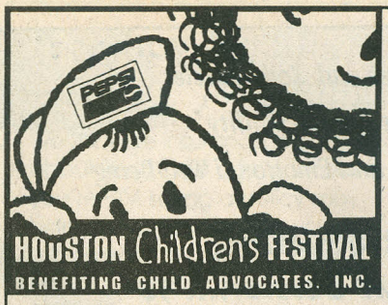
VIRGINIA BEACH, Va.—The Reverend Mel White, a Texas-based Metropolitan Community Church minister who last year went on a hunger strike in jail to force a meeting with his one-time boss Pat Robertson, was back in Robertson's home turf. This time White was showing a video of anti-gay comments taped from Robertson's nationally syndicated *700 Club* television show in an effort to get broadcasters to condemn the far-right religious televangelist. White said he also plans to take the video footage to the Federal Communications Commission "to get it [Robertson's show] censured, not censored." White emphasized that his campaign wasn't aimed at keeping Robertson from broadcasting, just getting him to be more responsible about his statements. "I think he should be more responsible in his rhetoric about gays and lesbians," White said. "I don't think he should be taken off the air."

Last year, White, who had at one time done ghost-writing for Robertson and other conservative Republicans, was arrested for trespassing at the Christian Broadcasting Network after he repeatedly tried to meet with Robertson there. Instead of posting bail, White decided to go to the Virginia Beach jail, where he fasted for three weeks until Robertson finally agreed to meet with him. White said that he had hoped that their brief meeting would prompt Robertson to reduce his attacks against gays but that it hasn't happened. "Not only has it not abated, most of the statements [videotaped from Robertson's TV show] were made in the last nine months," White said.

Rally Against Efforts to Block Gay Clubs at Utah Schools

SALT LAKE CITY—Hundreds of gay rights activists, including the parents of gay and lesbian teens, rallied outside the state Capitol to protest a move by conservative lawmakers who have said the state should not allow gay and lesbian student groups in public schools, even if the state has to refuse a $100 million education grant from the federal government or even bar all student groups.

Kelli Peterson, the East High School student who asked to organize the gay and



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Out in Our World

Continued from previous page

lesbian campus club, told the cheering crowd she didn't try to start the group to advocate homosexuality or to recruit heterosexual classmates into a "homosexual lifestyle." Instead, she said, "I started this group to end the misery and isolation of being gay in high school."

Utah legislators held a secret meeting earlier in the week with the state school superintendent, the commissioner of higher education, and members of the Utah Attorney General's office, reportedly to discuss legal methods to prevent gay clubs from being formed at schools in the state. But Senate President Lane Beattie dismissed the protest as a tempest in a teapot. "The information given them was in error," he said. "It [the secret meeting] was not an anti-gay, anti-lesbian meeting. The meeting was not held to discuss issues they think we discussed." Beattie said that lawmakers at the meeting were not anti-gay but were anti-immorality. "That includes heterosexual immorality as well as homosexual immorality. We are not going to allow immorality to be taught or encouraged in our public education system. Period."

Rights activists point out that a measure that has not yet been printed for public review—SB 246—would "prohibit schools from supporting illegal conduct" and may well mimic an Alabama state law barring publicly supported schools from supporting any organization that advocates illegal activities. The Alabama measure was specifically aimed at preventing state colleges from allowing gay and lesbian student groups on campus because sodomy is illegal in Alabama, as it is in Utah. The Alabama measure, however, was recently declared unconstitutional by a federal court.

...But Was She Driving a U-Haul?

BURLINGAME, Calif.—If the California GOP convention, over the weekend of February 9-11, can be taken as a harbinger of things to come when the Republicans gather later this year in San Diego to nominate their party's banner carrier, the 1996 presidential race could be one of the nastiest and potentially one of the most homophobic elections in history. Former Nixon White House aide Lyn Nofziger first raised the "lavender menace" at the confab by joking with California Republicans at an opening session, asking with malicious humor if the 2,000 delegates knew how Bill and Hillary Clinton met. Nofziger's wisecrack answer to his own joke setup was: "They were both dating the same girl."

Of the slightly more than 21,000 party faithful who paid $25 each to cast ballots in the California poll, few were surprised that Senate majority leader Bob Dole of Kansas finished first with 36 percent. A surprisingly strong second-place showing with 25 percent of the vote by one of the GOP's most homophobic contenders, Patrick Buchanan, added a good deal of fuel to the television commentator's campaign, which appears to be continuing momentum after winning the Louisiana caucus earlier in February and the Alaska GOP straw poll before that.

British Transsexuals Lose Court Fight to Change Records

LONDON—Without comment, Britain's High Court has refused the request of two male-to-female transsexuals, known in court documents only as "P" and "G," for the legal right to have their birth certifications changed from identifying them as males to females. British officials have been adamant about refusing to allow post-operative transsexuals to have their birth certifications changed to reflect their new gender, and the European Court of Human Rights is currently reviewing similar British cases.

The Dyking of Moll Flanders

LONDON—Granada/ITV, the British television production conglomerate best known to American viewers for classy Masterpiece Theatre offerings like *Jewel in the Crown*, has announced that its next major TV undertaking will be an adaptation of Daniel Defoe's 1722 classic novel, *Moll Flanders*. Granada producer David Lascelles said on British TV interviews recently, however, that they will be taking "liberties" with the Defoe story—not the least of which is that the central character will switch orientations and be recast with a lesbian lover, Lucy Diver. Lascelles explained the orientation switch this way: "Moll is clearly heterosexual, but in the female bonding there is a sexual element. It is a film with a lot of sexual content, but it is not soft porn."

Aussie Gay Cops Named in Palm Springs Drug Sales

SYDNEY—The Australian gay newspaper *Brother Sister* has reported that a gay

Sydney police officer has testified against other gay and straight cops before a commission of inquiry, charging drug use and trafficking both in Australia and in California. The gay officer, whose identity was not released by the commission, testified that among the gay cops involved in drugs was gay and lesbian liaison Officer Bruce Mexon of the suburban Waverly police force. The unidentified officer told the commission that Mexon sold cocaine and ecstasy in Palm Springs, California, in September last year while he was there attending the second annual International Conference of Lesbian and Gay Criminal Justice Professionals. Officer Mexon, however, denied the charges and told the commission that he never sold cocaine. Mexon did say he had sold a kind of "substitute ecstasy" while in Palm Springs and Los Angeles for the conference, but insisted it was an herbal mixture "made up of Chinese black ginseng [and] guarana" that he said is legally available in the Los Angeles area.

Canadian Court Rules for Alimony for Lesbian

TORONTO—The Ontario Court General Division, which has jurisdiction, among other things, over the Family Law Act in the province, has ruled that a lesbian couple who have dissolved their relationship fall under the definition of "spouses." One of the women, identified only as "Julia" in court records, is entitled to alimony support and property division the same as a divorced wife would. In ruling in the case, Justice Gloria Epstein also declared Ontario's Family Support Act's definition of a spouse to be unconstitutional.

Although the couple ended their relationship three years ago, the two women have not divided their property. In court papers, attorneys representing "Julia" said their client had filled a role in the relationship that was more typical of a wife and sought a court order dividing the property the couple had accumulated during their relationship and alimony support.

Tutu, Other Prominent Anglican Leaders Call for Change

LONDON—Hundreds of prominent Episcopal clerics from around the world signed an advertisement commending the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement on the group's 20th anniversary of working to change the Anglican Church's views on homosexuals. Best known of the signatories of the ads, which appeared in Anglican, Methodist, and Catholic religious publications in Britain, was Desmond Tutu, Archbishop of Cape Town, South Africa.

Tutu was joined in signing the ads by three other Anglican primates from Scotland, Canada, and the U.S., as well as several bishops from the Church of England, as the denomination was about to begin its annual synod. He told the BBC it was simply a "matter of justice, compassion, and consistency" for the church to accept that there are homosexual clergy, who technically are barred from being ordained in the Anglican Church.

South Africa Military Policies Being Reviewed

CAPE TOWN, South Africa—Politicians, military leaders and defense industry representatives have begun discussions on the role and nature of South Africa's armed forces, including whether gays and lesbians should be allowed to join the nation's military force. The meeting is expected to produce a report later this year that would be used by the defense ministry to guide it in formulating specific policies concerning the armed forces.

Defense ministry officials noted that the national armed services in the country have never actually had any policy excluding individuals based on their sexual orientation, but African National Congress officials have pushed for including the topic of sexual orientation in the defense review discussions.

Brits Expected to Keep Anti-Gay Military Policy

LONDON—London newspapers have reported that British defense ministry officials remain opposed to ending the ban on gays and lesbians in the nation's armed forces. Several newspapers reported that Michael Portillo, the defense minister, will announce sometime in February the findings of a ministry review of the policy excluding homosexuals in the military, but several ministry officials have already said the review found no reason to change the policy.

If the government keeps the current policy, there will almost certainly be a legal challenge before the European Court of Human Rights, where four discharged gay and lesbian service members have already applied for a review of their case. The national gay rights group Stonewall has also applied for permission to appeal the policy to the House of Lords, Britain's highest court of appeal. ▼

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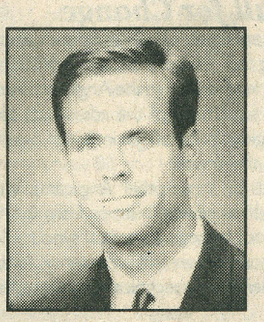
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THE GAY STRUGGLE WITHIN

(Part 2 of 2):

The Fear of Being Extraordinary



by Dale Carpenter

They are living in fear on six figures a year. They are the professional class, for the most part. They are the doctors, the lawyers, the securities brokers, the entrepreneurs, the corporate managers. Or they are the leisure class, men and women of inherited wealth with large trust funds who enjoy being a part of what passes in America for an aristocracy. Their politics are mostly conservative, though they generally dislike the excesses of the preacher–politicians who rant and rave on television about other people's morals. And they are gay and closeted, living every day with the fear of being extraordinary.

Last month on this page I diagnosed a problem I see mostly on the gay left. The problem is that many radical gay leftists cannot stand the thought that gays might one day be seen as just plain folks. They want gays to be special, to be romantic revolutionaries, who don't want a place at the table so much as they want to turn the table over. The problem is evident in the movies, in books, in articles, and in cultural criticism. It is occasionally apparent in groups like ACT UP and Queer Nation. They suffer, I said, from the fear of being ordinary.

The counterpart to that fear—the fear of being extraordinary (I use "extraordinary" in the sense that you are seen by others as "out of the ordinary")— is far more endemic among gay people and is in some ways more harmful to the cause of equality because it keeps so many good people from contributing. It manifests itself in the intense effort to stay in the closet with one's family members, friends, and coworkers even when you have a comfortable economic and social position in the world. It's one thing for the 20-year–old Stop N Go employee whose parents are religious fundamentalists to stay in the closet, it is quite another for the 60-year-old retired banker with three summer homes and a yacht in Galveston Bay to hide there.

The fear of being extraordinary is perfectly understandable to me, if only because I had it until a few years ago. If you're gay, you grow up learning to hide your sexuality to save your parents from disappointment and embarrassment, to keep your friends, to avoid getting hassled at school, to have a successful career, to have a family and kids like everybody else, or perhaps even to stay alive in an especially hostile environment. As you grow up, you develop friendships and social supports based on the myth of your heterosexuality. That myth places a premium on conformity, on meeting others' expectations of what you should be, do, and think. It requires that you not "stick out" in some way that might tip everyone off to your true sexual orientation. It requires that you not be extraordinary. You get so good at hiding that it becomes second nature.

Then when you encounter other gay people who are out of the closet, they make you uncomfortable. They seem happy and well–adjusted. It pricks your conscience. Perhaps you write an occasional check to a gay organization, letting others do the work. You also come up with some rationalizations to protect your choice to remain in the closet. Here are some favorites:

Rationalization No. 1:

"No one cares what my sexual orientation is." If no one cares, why not tell them?

Rationalization No. 2:

"My family will disown me, my friends will desert me, and my employer will fire me." Some or all of these things could happen. They almost never do. There's an adjustment period for the people to whom you come out, but it's usually short. Of all the people I've come out to in my life, I've never gotten a reaction that was worse than I thought it would be. Most people react more positively than you project. Give the people around you a little more credit. Besides, I hear people using this excuse even long after everybody knows they're gay.

Rationalization No. 3:

"It's nobody's business," or, *"It never comes up,"* or, *"I'm there to work, not to socialize."* Unless you're schizophrenic, you don't lead more than one life. Your "work" life touches upon your "social" or "private" life and vice versa. Don't tell me it "never comes up." Think of how many times you self–censor when coworkers start talking about weekend dates or attractive passers-by.

Rationalization No. 4:

"I can be more effective for gay civil rights in the closet." The theory here is that, when you're in a position of power and influence (like political office), you can do more good in the closet than out of the closet, where you might be discredited and stripped of your influence. In theory, it's a plausible scenario; in practice, it's almost never true. The fear of being extraordinary keeps people so deep in the closet that they are immobilized. To the degree that they're willing to "fight from within" at all, they run the risk of being outed — and they know it. So they often end up doing zilch with their supposed "power" and "influence."

On the other hand, imagine what a person with power and influence could do as an out, proud, and active gay person. Imagine how that person could use his influence to affect how others view gay people.

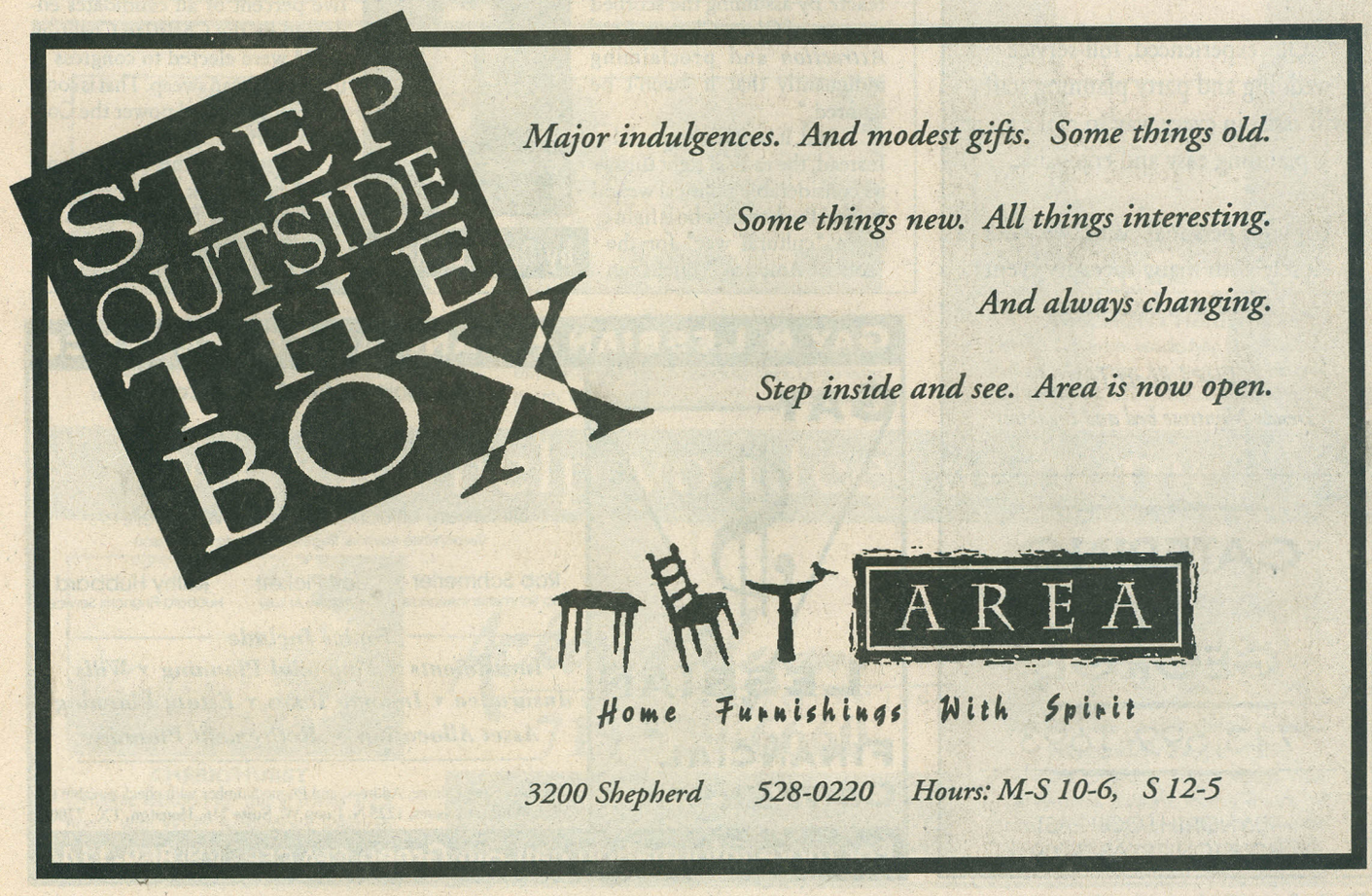
Malcolm Forbes is a good example of someone who could have had a far greater influence if he had been publicly out as a gay man during his life. He was rich, successful, and famous. Sure, he gave money to AIDS charities. But it appears he never discussed his homosexuality with his children. One of his sons, Steve Forbes, is the publisher of an important business magazine, and has been running for the Republican presidential nomination. He may run again in 2000. At any rate, Steve Forbes is influential and will remain so if only because he's so wealthy. Suppose the elder Forbes had sat down with his son one day and spoken candidly about his life and his loves. Don't you suppose that conversation would have had a profound effect on the younger Forbes' view of gays? I bet his views on gay marriage, gays in the military, and a non–discrimination law would be vastly more sympathetic.

The fear of being extraordinary is perfectly understandable to me, if only because I had it until a few years ago. If you're gay, you grow up learning to hide your sexuality to save your parents from disappointment and embarrassment, to keep your friends, to avoid getting hassled at school, to have a successful career...

Finally, although I understand the fear of being extraordinary, I have lost patience for complaints from closeted gay people about the negative public images and stereotypes associated with homosexuality. From the safety and security of their cocktail–sipping superiority, some of them pass judgment on the Luke Sissyfags and ACT UP clones of the world. Well, the excesses of these people *should* be criticized, but they're in no position to do it. If you decline to come into the light to show the world a more balanced picture of homosexuality, you don't have a vote on the important issue of our "public image."

Privileged people can use their privilege to do good, to do bad, or to do nothing at all. When the fear of being "out of the ordinary" in the eyes of others paralyzes you, your six figures a year avail you nothing. And the movement loses another badly needed emissary. ▼

Dale Carpenter, a lawyer in Houston, is state president of the Log Cabin Republicans of Texas.



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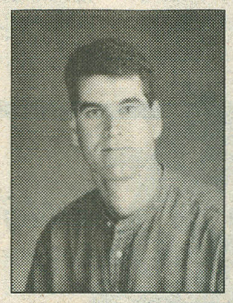
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Go, Pat, Go!

As some members of the Grand Old Party live it up throughout the 1996 presidential primary season, others may have even more to live down.

Patrick J. Buchanan is causing political chaos within the Republican Party. He won New Hampshire, came in second in Iowa and Arizona, and ran strongly in the Dakotas. By press time of this column, Super Tuesday (including Texas) will have passed, and Pat Buchanan will either be a contender for the Republican nomination or a power broker headed toward the Republican convention in San Diego. Buchanan's sudden rise in political influence is largely based upon those extremely conservative Republicans (socially, that is) that many refer to as the radical right.

Panicked by this surge in extremism, the Republican establishment responds by "dissing" the radical right like a scorned lover after an unpleasant encounter, hoping it will just go away. How does the radical right react? By assuming the scorned persona of Glenn Close in *Fatal Attraction* and proclaiming indignantly that it "won't be ignored."



by Daryl L. Moore

And, it isn't letting itself be. Instead, the radical right throws its considerable political weight behind Buchanan, who is fighting a "cultural war" for the "soul of America." Buchanan is the figurehead of the radical right. He says all the right things and endorses all the right positions: a ban on all abortions (even when the mother's life is in danger); a constitutional amendment for prayer in school (Christian prayer, that is; other religions, especially Judaism, are not favored in Pat's kingdom); and a prohibition on any law that would ensure equal treatment for gays and lesbians.

Why is it that Republicans, Dole included, who have pandered to members of the far right to gain positions of political power, are suddenly denouncing them as extremists? After all, the Christian Coalition and its progeny are the reason so many Republicans currently hold office. For example, the Christian Coalition accounts for almost 40 percent of Republican primary voters. Fifty-five percent of all candidates endorsed by the Christian Coalition in '94 were elected to congress in the Republican sweep. That is some righteous political power the Coalition is wielding.

Where did this power come from? Look back to '88, when TV preacher Pat Robertson ran for the Republican nomination. During his race for the presidency,

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Brother Pat created a mailing list of more than 800,000 registered voters who supported his candidacy. When Pat was bounced out of the race, George Bush openly courted this small but cohesive group of voters, which was big enough to help his campaign, but too small to demand a plank in the Republican platform. 1988 was the Republican Party's first *real* encounter with the radical right, an encounter that turned out to be more than a one-election stand.

During the next four years, that small group did like the Bible says—it went forth and multiplied. The Republican Party rewarded the far right by adopting controversial changes in the party platform on issues like abortion and school prayer. The party also allowed another Pat, Pat Buchanan, to speak at the '92 convention, giving him an uninterrupted, nationally televised forum to promote hatred and division, all in Jesus' name.

What the Republican Party did not realize was that the political baby Pat Robertson fathered in '88, and the party coddled in '92, would grow into the political Pat-monster of '96 that threatens to turn on and destroy its creator.

The monster is taking no prisoners. It largely, if not single-handedly, gutted Phil Gramm's ultra-conservative quest for the White House. It now has Bob Dole's campaign on its heels, resorting to name-calling for lack of better ideas on how to handle Buchanan. And what is the Dole campaign calling Pat that is so hurtful? An extremist. Lo and behold, Republicans across America are joining him, denouncing Pat as an extremist, a radical, a racist, an anti-Semite, a protectionist, and all sorts of other ugly names unbecoming a '90's Republican. "Sure," you say. "Lots of people call Pat those names." But this time it's different. Now it's William Bennett, Jack Kemp, Colin Powell, and Rudolph Giuliani—prominent Republicans—who are doing the name calling, not those "liberals" who typically do. As Pat leads the Republican Party toward a convention that threatens to turn San Diego into a political Armageddon, those Republicans who baited and fed the Pat-monster now realize it has a life of its own. To those who did, I can only say, *Go, Pat, Go!* ▼

It now has Bob Dole's campaign on its heels, resorting to name-calling for lack of better ideas on how to handle Buchanan. And what is the Dole campaign calling Pat that is so hurtful? An extremist.

Daryl L. Moore is a lawyer in Houston, Texas. He has a general practice and is board certified in civil appellate law.

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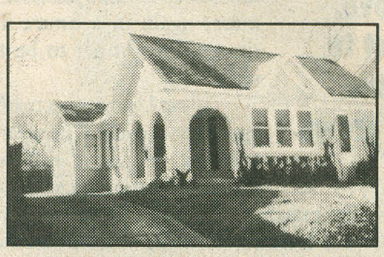
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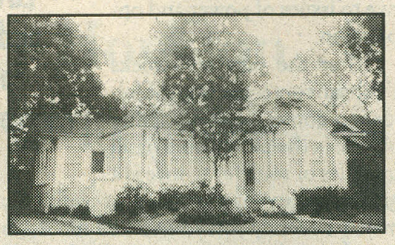
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They say that behind every good man is a good woman. But please don't say that to Risë Collins

Embracing Our Differences

by Risë Collins

The following address was delivered by Risë Collins to attendees of The Bold and the Restless, a mixer hosted by the Houston Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus on February 13, 1996.

Thanks to the board of the Houston Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus in general, and thanks to LuJack Tyler in particular, for originally allowing me five minutes to introduce my husband [Jew Don Boney, city councilman, District D] to you tonight—and then changing and expanding that to allow me five minutes to speak to you on the topic of my choice. I love freedom. Thank you for giving me an open door, for giving me a choice.

As a woman in a male-dominated world, as an African-American woman in an Anglo-dominated nation, as an ECKist [student of Eckankar] in a Christian-centered society, and as one who is sometimes referred to as the nameless "current wife" of a newly elected city councilman, I feel less peripheral and more included when I am given a choice. This is the way I want gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, and transsexual people to feel in the modern world. I want to help you feel not peripheral in a heterosexual, heterosexist, and often homophobic world, but included—given a choice.

There is at least one benefit to the experience of being "the other." It makes us sensitive to issues of power and oppression.

For the past few weeks I've been contemplating the following quote: "The capability of love is the most noble of all qualities of soul, for to love is a greater ability than to rule over one's fellow man." Recently someone asked me if I believed that homosexual people should be allowed to marry. I answered yes. Love is love, and I want to foster love wherever it grows.

Recently someone asked me if I believed that homosexual people should be allowed to marry. I answered yes. Love is love, and I want to foster love wherever it grows.

It is my view that committed same-sex partners deserve the same rights and privileges as committed opposite-sex partners. For example, married heterosexuals receive the benefits of their partners' health insurance, social security, retirement, and property. Legalized homosexual marriage would assure you of those same benefits. This seems fair.

As a student of Eckankar, the Religion of Light and Sound, I hold space for the concept of reincarnation. I recognize that I can't have the full range of human experience in one lifetime—as a member of one race, one gender, one economic status, one religion.... My view is that if I am not now an Anglo male homosexual, then either I have been or I will be. My view is that if you are not now, or if you haven't in the past been a six-foot tall, African-American woman who wears silver bangles and Ethiopian beads in your hair, then at some point, you may have a similar experience.

This view allows me to better embrace differences between people; to be more culturally pluralistic; to consider myself a world citizen—a "cosmopolite," even. Of course, I pay a price. Sometimes my husband considers me "a mystery."

When I was in my 20s, between acting jobs in New York City, I once worked in a lesbian bookstore. Last weekend I spent three days and nights in silent retreat at a Catholic convent. Lesbians and nuns have wondered how I can be so comfortable in a woman's space. Any space that I'm in is a woman's space—because, among the many things that I am, I am a woman.

However, because I am also a *human* who was raised in a matriarchal household without men, I recognize that for the sake of balance I must also hold space for and embrace men—even, no, especially, a self-proclaimed patriarch, from a long line of patriarchs, like my husband, Jew Don Boney. What we both must keep in mind is that if we marry again in a future lifetime, he might get to be the wife!

What I want most to hold space for is each of us as soul, spiritual beings, at different states of consciousness, having the experience of life in physical form. We are learning to love; to be coworkers with each other and with God. As we make space for our differences, whatever we put our collective love and patience into will flourish.

In closing, please know that I recognize the big part that you, the [Houston] Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus, played as coworkers in helping Jew Don Boney to get elected to this office. I trust that you will help keep him honest, that you will hold his feet to the fire.

I also trust that through speaking to you not directly about Jew Don, but from my heart—the heart of a woman who loves him and is married to him—that you get an indirect sense of who he must be in order to dare to be married to me. ▼

Risë Collins is a contributor to Life Notes: *An anthology of the personal writings of contemporary black women.*

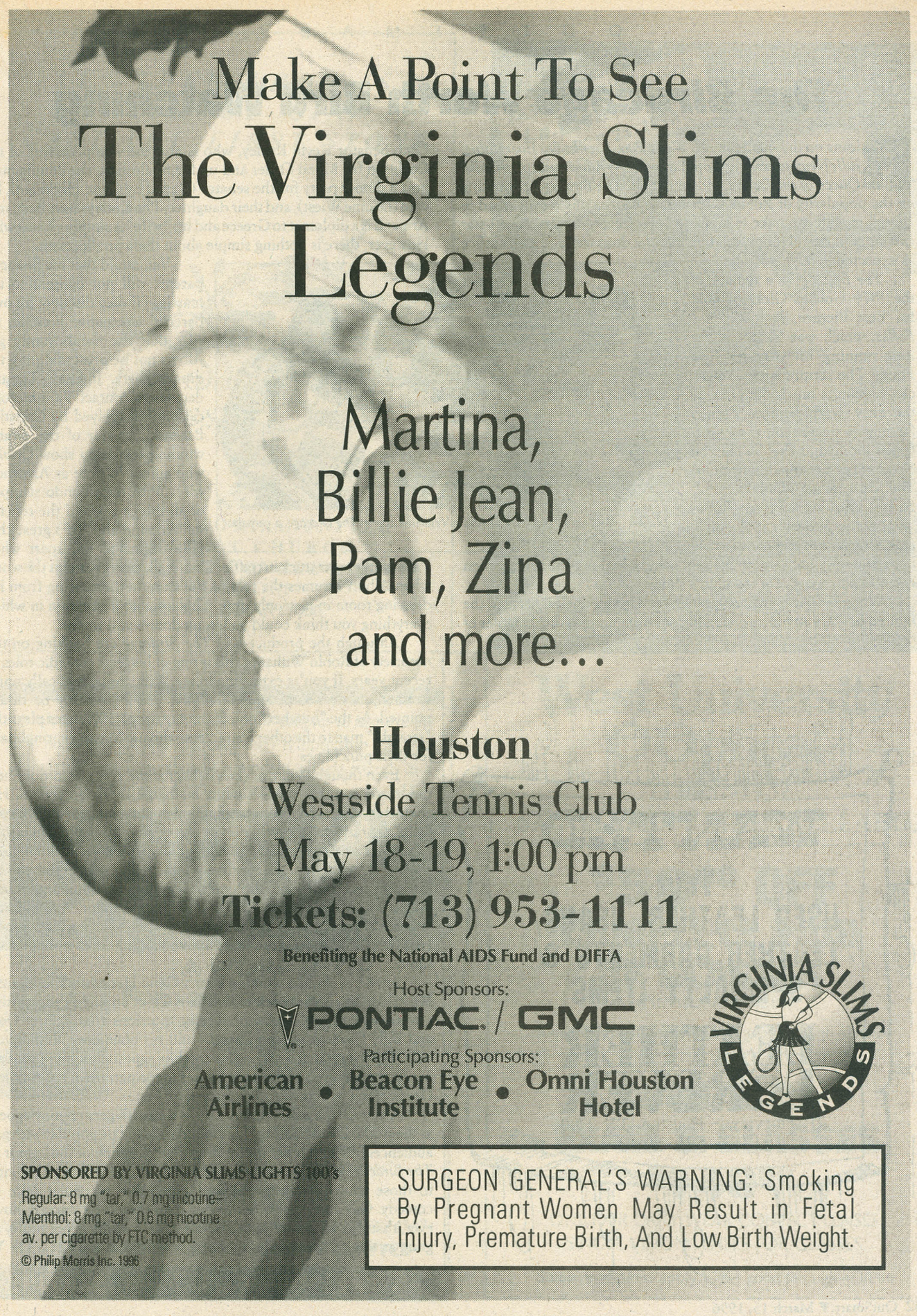
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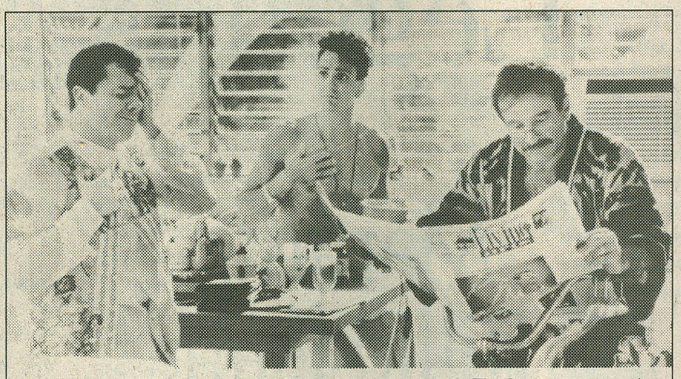
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The Birdcage Worth Bird Watching

Riding on the success of *To Wong Foo, Thanks For Everything, Julie Newmar* and the popularity of *The Adventures of Priscilla: Queen of the Desert*, Mike Nichols' *The Birdcage* is counting on the popularity of Robin Williams, as well as this recent trend in "drag" movies, to make it successful. However, despite the all-star cast and wonderful script, this film may not do as well at the box office as expected.

The Birdcage is a remake of the 1979 Golden Globe winner for Best Picture, *La Cage Aux Folles*, which was based on the long-running hit play by Jean Poiret. The script for the American version is much the same as the zany, warm-hearted French farce, with the exception of a different locale and slightly skewed character names and descriptions. This time taking place in South Beach, Florida, Armand (Robin Williams) is the owner of The Birdcage, a nightclub featuring female impersonators, and Albert (Nathan Lane) is his long-time companion and star personality for the club's shows.



Nathan Lane, Hank Azaria, and Robin Williams star in *The Birdcage*, a remake of 1979's *La Cage aux Folles*.

When Val, Armand's 20-year-old son from a one-night stand (he figured he'd try anything once), becomes engaged to the daughter of Ohio Senator Kevin Keeley, who is also the vice president of the Coalition for Moral Order and up for re-election, the couple must host a dinner party for the senator (played by Gene Hackman), his wife (Dianne Wiest), and their daughter. The Keeleys have been told Armand is a diplomat to Greece and his "wife" is simply a housewife. However, there is nothing simple about their predicament.

Val, afraid that his financé's parents will not consent to the marriage if they discover his own parents' alternative lifestyle, insists that the flamboyantly gay Albert not be present during the dinner party. Instead, Armand decides to contact Val's biological mother (played by Christine Baranski, co-star of the award-winning television show *Cybill*), who agrees to pose as Armand's wife. With their condo stripped of all things gay and the scheme set, Armand and Val's great charade begins to fall apart when Val's mother gets stuck in traffic. Then it all takes a turn for the worst when Albert assumes the role of Val's mother, emerging from his dressing room in matronly drag. This leads to a situation in which everything you think could go wrong does—and worse!

Although the producers of *The Birdcage* are banking on the notoriety of Robin Williams, this is one of his least comedic roles in recent years. If you're expecting to see Williams comedically unrestrained, as he was in *Mrs. Doubtfire*, you'll probably be disappointed. As the "butcher" one of the gay couple, Williams plays the "straight" man to the other characters, who use him as a springboard for their punchlines.

Even though Williams does deliver some very humorous lines, the movie is at its funniest when Nathan Lane is on screen. His characterization of the incessantly flamboyant Albert is superb—the facial expressions and voice alone are enough to make you laugh. Albert is not afraid of who he is (he's a queen!), yet Nathan Lane shows that Albert is at the core a sensitive, caring, and, in some ways, innocent human being. Also carrying many of the humorous moments on screen is Hank Azaria, who plays Agador, Armand and Albert's Hispanic houseboy. His lispy, Hispanic accent, his mannerisms, and his skimpy, gay outfits are nothing short of outrageously funny.

Academy Award-winning actors Gene Hackman and Dianne Wiest are, of course, perfect for the roles of an ultra-conservative government official—Senator Keeley mentions that Robert Dole and Billy Graham are too liberal—and his obedient, Washington wife. Their interaction at the dinner table, especially when speculating on the activities of the male figures in the pattern of the classical Greek china, is comedic chemistry at its best.

Although the movie may not do as well with general moviegoers as the studio is anticipating, *The Birdcage* should be popular with gay audiences. As with other recent drag movies, much of the humor in *The Birdcage* is from a gay point of view and oftentimes only funny to those who have been "blessed" with this particular style of comedy. Gay and straight audiences alike should be warned, however, that this version of Jean Poiret's stage comedy is not nearly as good as the 1979 camp classic, *La Cage Aux Folles*. ▼

review by Eric L. Roland



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John 8:7



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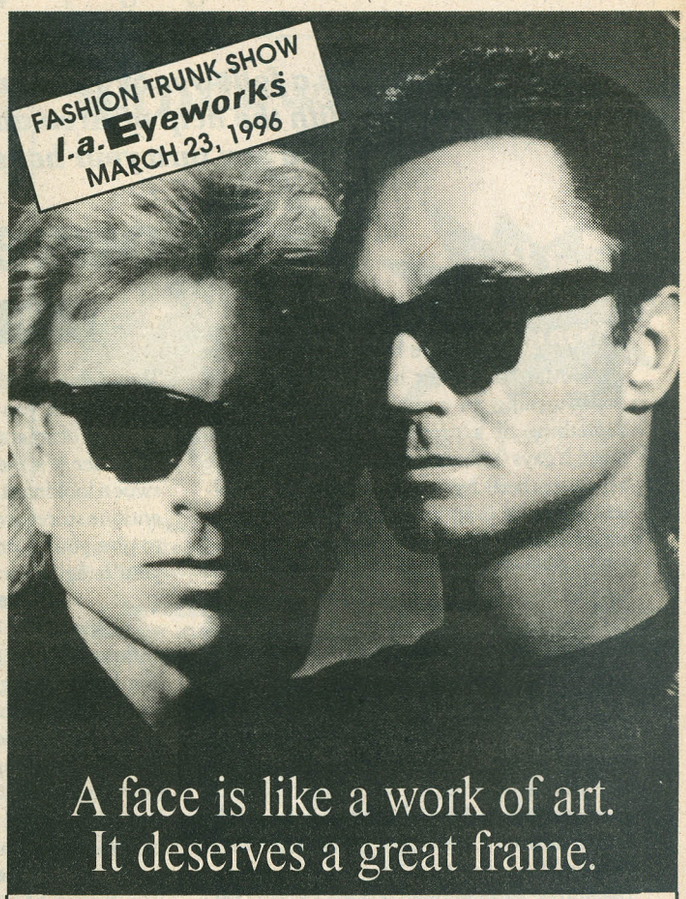
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You think muslin is a follower of Mohammed and an ottoman is a World War II dictator. That's okay. With the help of Area and other near-and-far decorating specialists, you can turn your house of horrors into one of hope.

House of Hope

by Steven Foster

Love her or hate her, decorating diva Martha Stewart has quite a way with turning an ordinary milk crate into something of a provincial art piece. And though gays (lesbians, mercifully, have come off unscathed) have been portrayed countless times as limp-wristed interior decorators, the truth is a lot of us need help in the home decor department. For that, *OutSmart* sought the experts at Area and others for their advice and added a few good ideas of our own, for good measure.

Mi Casa, Tu Casa

The Spanish hospitality phrase is nice and all, but the truth of the matter is the home is yours. *Tu* wit, it should reflect you. Are you Aspen-lodge cozy or so high tech that everything looks like it can be easily hosed down for cleaning? You decide, then go from there. But no matter what your taste, the hottest shop in town is **Area** (528-0220), so check it out for buys and ideas. (You'll want everything in the place.) The good news is they have some incredible bargains on things for every taste—kitchy retro refrigerator magnets to exquisite accessories, tables, and beds.

Antiques Ain't What They Used to Be

Forget the notion of grandma's dining table as the only antique to acquire. With the abundance of **Heights** and **Montrose** antique stores, you can find an amazing, magical array of creature comforts great and small. Whether it's the four-poster bed you just swoon looking at or a tiny little gilded frame, antique stores are a great place to find things to give your home just the right touch. Use your imagination.

Make Light of It

One of the objects you can snag at an antique store (or garage sale, for that matter) is a lamp. Thing is, the shades are usually awful, like big hair on a gorgeous femme. **IKEA** has inexpensive, fun shades that can really make a lamp light up. Want something more upscale? Check out **Surroundings'** hammered metal shades studded with Mexican postage stamps.

Color Your World

Remember Teri Garr's apartment in Scorcese's *After Hours*? Makes you dizzy just thinking about it, doesn't it? Again, check out Area. Eclectic does not mean every color of the pride flag is equally represented in your home. Your home is like an outfit. Continuity is key. The more monochromatic your color scheme, the more elegant your home will be.

Home Is Where the Art Is

Buy good art. And that doesn't mean expensive art, either. Houston is filled with so many amazing (and amazingly *affordable*) artists, there is no excuse in heaven or earth to purchase a framed repro of those damn Raphael angels. Enough already. Need suggestions? Do the art crawl, hit the local galleries, or just call up one of the artists on the wall at Noche or any other trendy eatery—remember, everybody deals. Equally affordable is local find, **Harriet Babchick** (228-3193). Her paintings of hefty, but weightless family members in dreamy, haunting play (reminiscent of Bob Yarber, but definitely warmer) are a steal starting at $300. Babchick's work is lyrical, charming, and perfect in virtually any room in any home.

Bed of Nails (and Other Bad Buys)

That dining room table you've been eyeing is just gorgeous, but the chairs that go with it are like sitting on strategically placed planks. Don't get it. Remember, furniture is like shoes. Better do more than just look good, it better be comfortable.

Bed of Dreams (and Other Good Buys)

If you're not doing anything this weekend, head on up to Fredericksburg (it's safe). As the *New York Times* said, this sleepy little town is becoming the new Aspen—there's so much Hollywood showing up—so you better hurry while antiques and things are still affordable. One of the town's many finds is **Room No. 5**. On the main thoroughfare, this drop-dead gorgeous store's first half is filled with darkly romantic iron bedframes with twisting, turning spires wrapped in gauzy gold tapestries. Each is custom-made, taking up to 6-8 weeks to handcraft. They're pricey, but worth it. Also in this room are Gothic façades from old churches, candelabras, and the broodingly beautiful like. You drift through the room's arias, and cool, mysterious tunes from groups like October Project seduce you. You'll want to move in. The back half is the "white room," where everything is a shade of white, from the hand-milled soap bricks to the antique dentist medicine cabinet. This place is a marvel. But what if you're not going to Fredericksburg any time soon? Well, use the coupon in this issue and head up to **Gallery Furniture** (694-5570). They will "save you money" and some travel time across Texas!

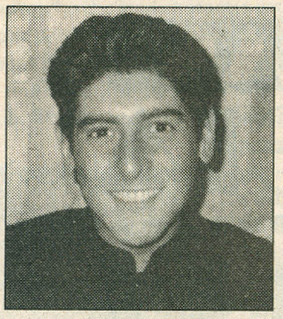
Up the Wall

These days, everyone's coloring walls. Why not go one step better by having your walls painted with actual art? Local artist **Courtney Daniels** has been the quiet secret of West U so long (you West U people were never good about sharing) that she could be charging a fortune for her charming, free-spirited murals. She's not. Her work can convey a stately elegance or a delightful whimsy. Sure beats wallpaper strips just below the ceiling. You'll drive all your friends crazy and up the interior decorating ante for your whole circle of friends. Her phone number is 521-2360, but you didn't hear it from me.

And One More Thing

As **Don Connelly** of Area says, "Be patient. *Instant House* does not always translate to instant happiness." So just pick up a little piece here, there, and in no time, you'll have a showplace that's expressly you, or you and someone else's. And, as Saint Martha says, "That's a good thing." ▼





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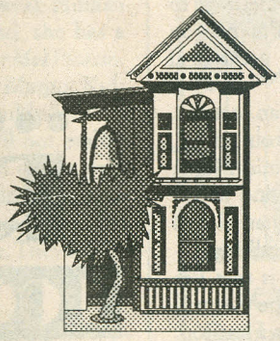
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COMEDIAN GEORGIA RAGSDALE:

LOCAL GIRL MAKES GOOD



by Nancy Ford

It's almost like a stand-up send-up of *The Rose*, in which Bette Midler triumphantly returns to her hometown to perform a concert. "Except I'm not on heroin, and my manager is a great deal better than Alan Bates."

Georgia Ragsdale, comedian, actress, dancer, out lesbian, and non-heroin addict, returns to Houston's Laff Stop mid-March to film her "bright, intelligent, and witty" brand of stand-up comedy that has a lot of powerful show-biz type people talking.

"The thing that's exciting is that I'm going to be making a concert tape that will be marketed, and I'm doing it in Houston. It's going to be a really special night for me, because it's my hometown.

"I left with this [17-year-old's] attitude of 'I'll show you,' having been outed, and going through a lot of stuff about being gay."

Oopsie. Did she say she was outed? At the tender age of 17? In Houston, Texas? In the less-than-friendly-to-homos climate of the late '70s?

"I made the mistake of telling Cindy King, who was the head cheerleader, and Cindy King told her mother, who told the hairdresser for all these ladies."

One more reason to never trust a cheerleader. "They would just sit around and talk about it all day long. It inflamed the entire community. People called the school, saying I should be taken out of school. People were calling my parents saying your daughter's sick, and blah, blah, blah. It was very traumatic for a little teenager."

In a classic case of turning a negative experience into a positive one, she continues. "That's why I'm very protective of gay teenagers. One of the reasons I'll always be out and always deal with it rather than having to hide it is that I just don't want teenagers to have to go through that. Because you're a teenager, you're 16, you're living at home, your life is completely shattered and ruined. You're like 'Hmmm, should I kill myself, or should I smoke pot? Should I kill myself, or should I smoke pot?'"

The good news is she chose something completely different.

Like so many comedic performers, she started doing stand-up on a dare. Not too many years later, her media kit now describes her as "an anthropologist of modern culture," which is another way of saying her comedy is observational. No smut, no bashing; just funny stuff.

"It's just my personality. If I do material that's complaining or kvetching about this or that, it makes me depressed as a person. So I try to focus on things that would make me laugh."

A lot of the things that make Georgia Ragsdale laugh make other people laugh. Hard. Hard enough, in fact, for Georgia to be the first out lesbian offered her own prime-time network situation comedy development deal. Again, the operative word here is *out*..

"We're waiting on our pilot script that's being re-written even as we speak. All the people at Act Three, which is Norman Lear's development company, are very excited about it.

"My involvement has to do with initial input. What I got to work with was a script

that was sort of stuck. They didn't really know who the lead character was or how this story could work, but they loved something about the idea."

At this point it's easy to get an image of Rob, Buddy, and Sally huddling around the typewriter, putting together an outline for Ragsdale, Alan Brady's guest star for that week. Imaging *The Dick Van Dyke Show* is, however, not a big stretch; she credits Lucy, Rob and Laura, and Gilligan as her mentors. But we digress. Back to the writers' room.

"It's just my personality. If I do material that's complaining or kvetching about this or that, it makes me depressed as a person. So I try to focus on things that would make me laugh."

"They had this really, really rich New York society girl taking a job in the police department, teaching communications, messing things up, and getting into all these dangerous situations while she's in New York. Since I'm a Texan, I was talking and using all the dialects and everything. And this guy goes, 'You know, what if you were from Dallas?'"

Like the old saying goes, there's nothing funnier than the truth. "I came back a week or two later with all these jokes and all these ideas and who this person is. And it's funny because, yes, she's super-educated, yes, she's fabulously rich, but she also has that Southern idealism which really comes from an innocent place, from not having experienced things like people on the streets of New York."

Her character is not being written as a gay one, nor is her own sexuality something the show will focus on, but "Wouldn't it be funny if, with her mother, she got swept into the gay pride parade?" Ragsdale speculates.

When Ragsdale returns to her family in Houston, she looks forward to laying on the couch, watching TV, and raiding the refrigerator. She also expects to "visit my grandma at the Humble, Texas Museum. Many of the exhibits are actually donated from my family." Quickly she slips into High Hick. "...an' this used to be your sista's tea set, an' this is an old chair that ah got outta the garage...."

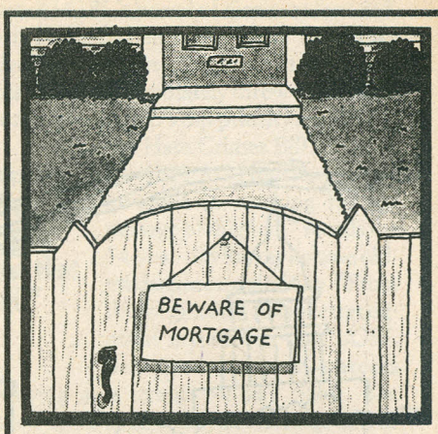
One can almost see the anecdotes take shape and become a sitcom script. "They have the head of a bull on the wall. 'This is the biggest known bull ever known to live in these parts.' He would break down fences and go wherever he wanted and he roamed three counties until some hunters chased him down and shot him."

And what about after her triumphant homecoming? "I'm doing as much stand-up as possible. It's kind of hard, because it's not really great to leave town so much, now that I have acting and things like that going on. But this year, I'm doing several Human Rights Campaign events." And, she has a part in the upcoming film *Never Met Picasso*. In it she has a love scene with Margot Kidder, whom she considers "a daddy."

But perhaps Ragsdale will not realize her own immortality until one of her own personal belongings is installed in the humble Humble museum. "'This is from the sex toy collection of Georgia Ragsdale. They finally took it out to the back yard with a hoe and chopped it in two.'" ▼

Lone Star Entertainment brings Georgia Ragsdale to The Laff Stop, 1952A West Gray on Tuesday, March 19, at 8 pm. $12 advance/$15 day of show. Opening is comedian Nancy Ford with musical guests Kathy Drake and Robin Borthwick. Call 713/524-2333 for reservations.

Nancy Ford is a Houston-based comedian and writer who does all her own stunts.



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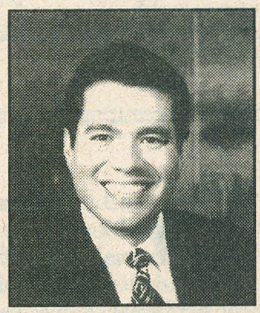
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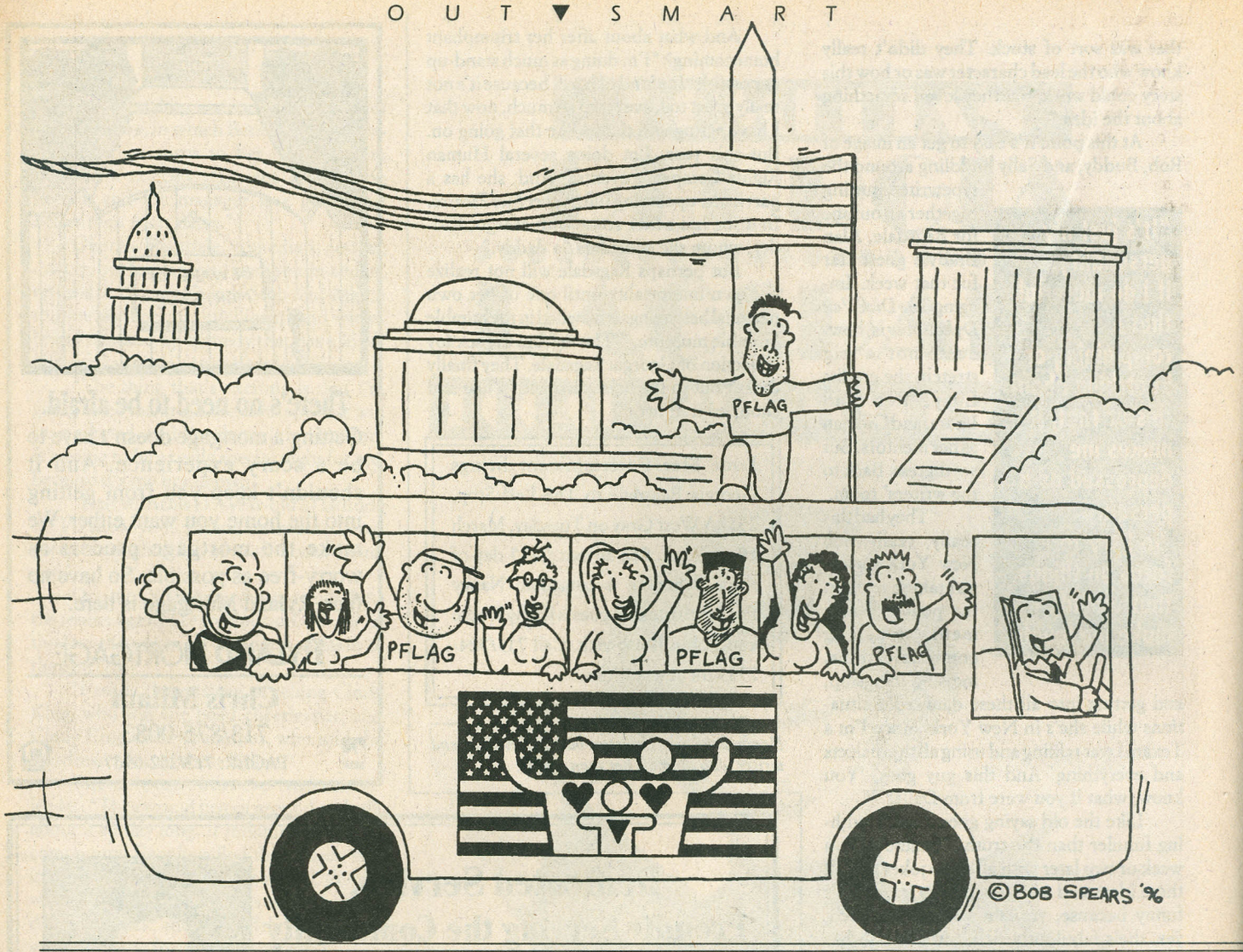
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Dean Luttrell was fired from his job a year ago this month. He wasn't laid off due to budget cuts or terminated because of poor performance. No, Dean Luttrell was fired because he is gay.

Luttrell's termination came through the mail on March 30, 1995, with no explanation for the firing. However, Luttrell knows that his supervisor had discovered he was gay two days prior to his firing and had refused all communication.

Much like the dismissed employees of Randall's and of Cracker Barrel restaurants a few years ago, Luttrell had no legal recourse. That's right, in Texas as well as 40 other states in a country where we cherish our "freedom," no law exists that protects gay, lesbian, and bisexual people from being fired simply because they are, or are perceived to be, gay.

ENDA would end that. Reintroduced to Congress last June, ENDA is the Employment Non-Discrimination Act and, if passed, would extend fair employment practices to lesbian, gay, bisexual, *and* heterosexual Americans. In essence, it would prohibit employers, employment agencies, and labor unions from considering sexual orientation as the basis for employment decisions, such as hiring, firing, promotion, or compensation.

Many gay and lesbian groups, including the Washington-based Human Rights Campaign, are working toward its passage, lobbying Congress, writing letters, and seeking endorsements from major corporations and civil rights organizations. But none are as passionate as PFLAG.

At 7 am on Saturday, March 16, 30 members of the Houston chapter of Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) will board a bus bound for Washington, D.C. On its way to the nation's capitol, where the "Bus Bunch," as they're called, will have face-to-face meetings with congressional members, the bus will weave its way through the South, picking up passengers from other PFLAG chapters along the way.

by Eric L. Roland

Conceived by the Houston chapter of PFLAG, the project's intention is to have hundreds of parents of gays and lesbians from across the United States lobbying lawmakers in support of ENDA. As final schedules were being completed for the trip, 178 people from 28 states plan to be in Washington on March 19 and 20 to support the passage of this bill.

Some are mothers of gay sons, some are fathers of lesbian daughters, some have no gay children, and some don't have children at all (and they're straight). Differences aside, the common denominator that bonds them together is their belief that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is wrong, and taking that message to our nation's Capitol is their vision. They're going to Washington not to protest, not to march,

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED:
Moms & Dads Go to Washington

Houston PFLAG members have invited a few of their friends to join them on a cross-country bus ride to Washington, because they're tired of their children being forced to sit in the back of one.

not even to rally, but instead to insist on equal protection under the law for gay and lesbian Americans.

Although their numbers may be small, their power is mighty. These people are lobbying for a cause that does not directly affect them, and somehow that forces our nation's elected officials to stand up and take notice. When gays and lesbians lobby for themselves, their presence is often ignored by lawmakers, who look at it as "Oh, it's just those gays in town. Wait till next week and they'll be gone."

While many will speak to individual legislators about discrimination against gays and lesbians, a greater spirit exists in this group. After a mere five minutes with any one of these bus riders, an incredible, motivating energy is evident. Already prepared to be in the media spotlight, these parents and friends want to let the country know that their voices are the voices of "good Americans" and are very different from the voices of the Radical Right.

"When I tell straight friends about a gay friend who lost his job because his boss found out he was gay, they say, 'Well, he should sue!' They're astonished when I tell them that gay people have no legal recourse. I think most Americans feel that job discrimination is wrong. It's time to make it illegal."
— Ann Chapman, 54

"I want the world to know that we are ordinary people with the same dreams and aspirations for our children as they have for theirs," says Norma Graves, who, with her husband, will travel to Washington on the three-day bus pilgrimage to speak out for her gay son and lesbian daughter. "We rejoice as they do when our children are doing well, and we hurt in the same way they do when our children are hurting. The big difference is that our children are not assured the basic human and civil rights that other parents can afford to take for granted."

"I've been a part of the problem most of my life. Now I have a chance to become a part of the solution. If we, as parents, are willing to speak out against the myths and hatred, there is a chance for our gay children to live productive lives without fear of discrimination."
— Ken Market, 47

The Birth of an American Idea

So why would this group of people, ranging in age from 24 to 77 years old, want to spend three days on a cramped bus? Why not just fly to Washington, D.C.?

Inspired by President Clinton's bus tour during his 1992 campaign, PFLAG parent Barbara Winston had wanted to form a group which would allow parents to tour on a bus with the intent of being in the public eye, showing their faces, and speaking up for their gay and lesbian children. Winston, a 58-year-old single mother of six whose youngest son came out to her three years ago, didn't know where she wanted to tour or who the group would talk to, but she knew she had a great idea.

During that same time period, PFLAG members began to get involved in lobbying lawmakers here in Texas. Dianne Hardy-Garcia, executive director of the Lesbian Gay Rights Lobby of Texas (LGRL), invited three Texas PFLAG parents to become members of LGRL's board of directors for 1995. Gail Rickey, chair of PFLAG Houston's advocacy committee, was one of those parents, and she immediately threw herself into working on LGRL's top priority for 1995—the Hate Crimes Bill.

"PFLAG Houston got very involved in working for the passage of that bill," recalls the 54-year-old Rickey, whose oldest daughter is a lesbian. "From the beginning, Dianne recognized a resource that LGRL had never tapped—parents lobbying as a group for gay rights. She called upon us to testify at hearings and to lobby in person. Back at home, we wrote, called, faxed, and in general, made our presence known to our legislators."

Their work didn't go unnoticed. Legislators did respond to their pleas; some, who had wavered before, had now decided to endorse the bill. Even gays and lesbians who had lobbied for years were amazed at the response these neophyte lobbying parents had gotten. Unfortunately, the Hate Crimes Bill was tabled by a vote of 70 to 68. However, that was the closest a hate crimes bill has ever come to being passed in the state of Texas, and it's evident that these PFLAG parents were partially responsible for that accomplishment.

Despite the loss and their disappointment, something greater happened—the lobbying bug had bitten everyone involved. They each had a newfound commitment for speaking to elected officials, and, following the end of the legislative session in Texas, they began to think about where to focus their attention next. Meanwhile, the Employment Non-Discrimination

Moms & Dads to Washington

Continued from previous page

Act (ENDA) had just been introduced to Congress.

Barbara Winston's bus touring idea: lobbying Congress in support of ENDA. The two ideas merged and a new PFLAG project was born.

Nurturing an American Idea

With the help of the Human Rights Campaign and the advice of political experts from across the country, a time period when it would be most effective to lobby Congress was decided upon. The Human Rights Campaign was enthusiastic about PFLAG Houston's efforts to lobby on behalf of ENDA, but advised them that the project would be somewhat futile unless they got PFLAG parents from other states to join them.

> **"Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is not only wrong, it's irrational. It doesn't make sense, and it's not good public policy."**
> —Penny Leuchtag, 39

PFLAG Houston had their work cut out for them as they began contacting all 380 PFLAG chapters in the U.S., urging members to be in Washington on March 19 and 20 to lobby Congress. From as far away as Oregon and California (Alaska had to cancel at the last minute), 28 states will be represented by PFLAG members, all with plans to speak to their congressional representatives urging them to pass ENDA.

The plans for the Houston-to-Washington bus trip soon evolved, and the bus became more than just a mode of transportation to the nation's capital. With hopes of encouraging more parents to attend, PFLAG Houston invited those chapters along the bus route to hop on the 55-seat bus and join them on their pilgrimage. Going within 100 miles of 22 PFLAG chapters, the bus bunch will make stops in Southern cities like Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Commerce, Georgia; Dallas, North Carolina; and Richmond, Virginia before their final destination of Washington, D. C. Stops along the way include lunch with a 91-year-old Louisiana grandmother of a lesbian, meeting with university students, offering support to other parents, speaking to church groups, and holding press conferences, as well as picking up passengers, and, of course, stretching their legs.

> **"Everyone will see us as we are— proud parents who love their children and are determined to make the world a safer place for them."**
> —Blake Weisser, 77

"We're going to Washington to speak to the nation and to use the Capitol of the United States as our podium," says Rickey. "Yeah, we're lobbying. Yeah, we're talking to members of Congress. But I want the nation to hear that a person can be fired simply because of their natural sexual orientation, and that is wrong! Most Americans do not know that, but I think most Americans want to be fair-minded and do not believe in discrimination."

Mr. and Mrs. *Smith Go to Washington*

Among the group of bus riders are Irv and Jane Smith, whose 33-year-old son Gary and his partner Paul are their main motivation for joining the trek. With plans to lobby Rep. Tom Delay, Sen. (and presidential dropout) Phil Gramm, and Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, they simply want lesbian and gay Americans to have the same rights as any other American citizen.

"Not special rights. Equal rights," says Jane Smith, 60. "No one should have to fear that an overheard conversation, a slip of the tongue, a chance meeting at a party, means the loss of your job, your insurance, everything. We know so many people who have to hide their sexual orientation. ENDA simply means fair treatment for everyone."

Once in Washington, all of participants have a full itinerary of activities to partake in. At 8:30 am on Tuesday, March 19, the parents will attend a welcome reception at the White House, followed by a group photo taken on the Capitol steps. After a televised congressional briefing focusing on the progress of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, the afternoon will be spent lobbying.

On Tuesday evening, everyone will again gather on the steps of our nation's Capitol building for a candlelight vigil. Forming an inverted triangle on the north steps, participants will be welcomed by Rev. Dr. Don Sinclair, pastor at Bering United Methodist Church, led in prayer by Rev. Susan Quinn Bryan, pastor of Sagemont Presbyterian

The Employment Non-Discrimination Act: *What It Does*

The Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) extends federal employment discrimination protections to sexual orientation that is currently provided to all Americans on the basis of race, religion, sex, national origin, age, and disability. Under ENDA, covered entities cannot subject an individual to different standards or treatment based on real or perceived sexual orientation, or discriminate against an individual based on sexual orientation of those with whom the individual associates.

—ENDA exempts small businesses, as do existing civil rights laws, and does not apply to small businesses with fewer than 15 employees.

—ENDA exempts religious organizations including educational institutions substantially controlled or supported by religious organizations.

—ENDA prohibits preferential treatment, including quotas, based on sexual orientation.

—ENDA does not require an employer to provide benefits for the same-sex partner of an employee.

—ENDA provides for the same remedies (injunctive relief and damages) as permitted under Title VII of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

—ENDA applies to Congress, with the same remedies as provided by the Civil Rights Act of 1991 and the ADA.

Reintroduced to Congress on June 15, 1995, ENDA's lead congressional sponsors are Sens. Jim Jeffords (R-VT) and Ted Kennedy (D-MA). On October 19, 1995, President Bill Clinton signed on his support of ENDA, saying that, "Individuals should not be denied a job on the basis of something that has no relationship to their ability to perform their work.... [ENDA] is designed to protect the rights of all Americans to participate in the job market without fear of unfair discrimination." Currently, 30 U.S. senators and 130 U.S. representatives have signed on as co-sponsors of ENDA.

Through the work of the Human Rights Campaign, ENDA has been endorsed by large corporations, such as Apple Computer, Merrill Lynch, Microsoft, RJR Nabisco, and Xerox; labor unions, like AFL-CIO, Actors' Equity Association, and Association of Flight Attendants; daily newspapers, including *New York Times, Los Angeles Times,* and *Austin-American Statesman*; as well as people like Coretta Scott King, John Kenneth Galbraith, and Govs. William Weld (MA) and Christine Todd Whitman (NJ).

Church, and invited to sing along with the Lesbian and Gay Chorus of Washington, D.C. Donna Morrow DeCamp, who will be riding the bus to Washington with her husband Don, will lead the group in a responsive reading written by Bob Bernstein, author of *Straight Parents, Gay Children.*

Family Values

Many gay and lesbian people are shunned by their families, never having parents that will accept them, much less support them. These parents, on the other hand, are proud of their gay and lesbian children for their ongoing courage in a hostile society, grateful to them for being honest about an important aspect of their lives, and outraged at the discrimination they must endure. They're a special lot, these moms and dads, who are traveling over 1,400 miles by bus to speak to our nation's elected officials about securing protection from loss of employment for their children.

"It is the American way to seek redress for inequity by petitioning our representatives," says PFLAG national president, Mitzi Henderson. "Families are saying 'no' to arbitrary firing. Families are saying 'no' to bias in hiring. All our children deserve the chance to prove their abilities and their worth."

That's what family values is truly about. ▼

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A rose by any other name may still smell as sweet, so why should membership to this choir be restricted by a little thing like its name?

What's in a Name?: The Gay Men's Chorus of Houston

by Nancy Ford

It's true that the Gay Men's Chorus of Houston is:

1) comprised of men, and

2) based in Houston.

But that's it. "You don't have to be gay, but it helps," reads the organization's new campaign recruiting slogan. So, naturally, the first question was, why call it the *Gay* Men's Chorus?

"Because we *are*," chuckled Mike Nelson, GMCH marketing chairman. Nelson estimates that GMCH has two non-gay team members in a field of 40 to 50 players (unless some of the boys are closet heterosexuals). "There are a number of people who would like to sing but can't be 'out there.'"



The Gay Men's Chorus of Houston

Not an unusual phenomenon. The clause "inclusion does not necessarily indicate preference or endorsement of sexual orientation," or one like it, is popping up in a number of homo-oriented places one would not expect to see it. The disclaimer is often used to "protect the privacy" of those who, for whatever reason, choose to enjoy association with a gay organization, but do not want to necessarily fall under the umbrella classification of being assumed gay. It is a widely used tool employed by many gay-based organizations, including the Greater Houston Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce.

Despite the fact that Nelson speculates the name has hindered its growth, the Chorus changed its name in 1992 from The Montrose Singers, as it was christened in 1979.

In 1979, Jimmy Carter was still grappling with the Hostage Crisis in Iran. There was deep-felt grief among the citizens of San Francisco following the assassinations of Harvey Milk and George Moscone. The "Gay Plague" had not yet reared its ugly head. Thousands bonded together to participate in the first National March on Washington for Gay and Lesbian Rights. And the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus was the first gay

According to a report in the *Arizona Republic*, the Maricopa County Republican Party, where Phoenix is located, canceled an appearance by the Gay Grand Canyon Men's Chorale because the lyrics of one of its songs, "Diversity," said: "We're gay men, and we're here to sing for you."

The paper quoted Bernice Roberts, the party chair, as telling the chorale's director, Kerry Bedwell, to drop the song because she didn't want the singing program "turned into a special-interest agenda." When Bedwell refused, Roberts cut the group from performing at the GOP's annual Lincoln Day dinner. Bedwell, who is a Republican, said he told Roberts "that what you are doing here is only further supporting the fact that Republicans are seen as a group of narrow-minded, bigoted, and petty people."

—From GayNet Wire Service

chorus to organize and include Houston on its national tour. Moments later, The Montrose Singers formed.

At that time, The Montrose Singers was little more than "a group of guys who loved to sing," says Nelson, who has been with GMCH for about three years. As time passed, the Chorus' concerts became more purposeful—their performances have netted thousands of dollars in charitable assistance to organizations including the Montrose Clinic, AIDS Alliance of Coastal Texas, Stone Soup, and many others. Their audiences have come to include blue-haired grandmothers, proud of their warbling kin, to the most militant of queer music-lovers.

New artistic director James Marley Winslow, a choral instructor and veteran of Houston Grand Opera productions, has recently been hired to lead the otherwise all-volunteer chorus in future community appearances. Winslow and his wife are long-time Houston residents. In making the announcement, chorus president Ralph Sikes said, "James brings an exciting, fresh approach to the chorus."

The chorus' first recording, *To Friends & To Life*, was released in December. Nelson describes the CD as "a 15-year retrospective of their best and favorite works. In addition to recognizable numbers such as "The Rhythm of Life" and a stirring rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner," *TF&TL* includes a musical trilogy, "Though Much Is Taken, Much Abides," penned by long-time former director John Michael Albert. The piece is a personal and moving tribute to chorus members and supporters passed. The CD is soon to be available at Lobo, Inklings, and Crossroads.

The chorus' upcoming annual Gay Pride Concert is tentatively scheduled for June in Wortham Center's Cullen Theater. The chorus then travels to Tampa, Florida, to sing at a "gayla conference," joining 95 other chorales from around the U.S.

The Gay Men's Chorus of Houston meets every Thursday evening at 7 pm for rehearsals at Grace Lutheran Church, 2515 Waugh Drive (at Missouri Street). There, one can expect "to be greeted warmly, come together and sing for three hours." New members are always welcomed and are not required to audition. What is required is that you love to sing, have Thursday nights open, talent and/or enthusiasm, and a Y chromosome, whether it's bent or not. They'd love to include you.

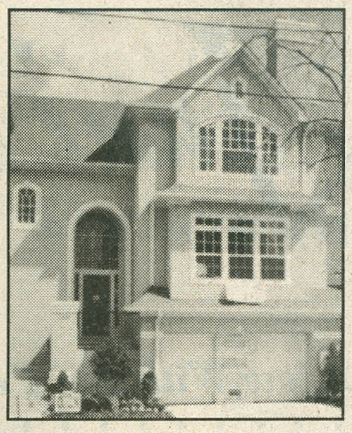
The Gay Men's Chorus of Houston's March concert benefits Stone Soup Food Pantry. *Singin' on 42nd Street (at last)* will be a concert of Broadway songs and other American pop standards. Admission to the concert is virtually free. There are no tickets to buy, no seats to reserve. Instead, GMCH asks everyone to bring a donation for Stone Soup, in the form of non-perishable food or toiletry items for men and women, or even cash, which GMCH will collect at the door.

"We see this concert as a wonderful opportunity for us to give something back to the city and the community," explained Mike Nelson, GMCH marketing chairman. "It's our way of thanking everyone who has supported the chorus over its 17-year history. We could think of no better way to express our gratitude than to help an organization that does a wonderful job for a lot of people."

Singin' on 42nd Street (at last) will be presented at Houston's First Unitarian Universalist Church, 5200 Fannin Street, on Saturday, March 30, at 8 pm. The brand-new, 18-member Bayou City Chorale shares the program.

The Gay Men's Chorus of Houston wishes to thank the First Unitarian Universalist Church, which very graciously donated the use of their church for this concert. A suggested donation of $10 worth of items, or cash, is requested of each concertgoer by GMCH for this event. ▼

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June's Bustin' Out

Interview With the Pointer Sisters' June Pointer

42 years old.
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No children.
Lives with mom.
Gay?

"I'm not gay, but I don't like labels, anyway.
Why can't we just be a human race?"

June Pointer isn't gay, but she definitely ain't shy *talking* about gays...and a variety of other subjects. I talked to Pointer by phone before she flew out the door for a sound check for *Ain't Misbehavin'*, the Broadway musical in which she's touring with her sisters, Ruth and Anita. On this particular day, she was in Columbus, Ohio (the Pointer Sisters will be here in Houston with the show April 2-7 at Jones Hall).

Although this is the first tour of its kind for the Pointer Sisters, they are no strangers to music, however. During their 20-year career, they've been nominated for 10 Grammys and have won three: Best Country Vocal Group for "Fairytale," Best Pop Performance by Group or Duo for "Jump," and Best Vocal Arrangement for "Automatic." They've had seven top ten hits, and their duet with Clint Black ("Chain of Fools") went platinum and was nominated for Best Song of the Year by the Country Music Association. They've also been awarded a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Though our conversation was short, its content was more than I could have asked for.



Norman Seeff

The Pointer Sisters (l-r): Ruth, Anita, & June.

DiStefano: I read that you were born in Oakland, California, in 1953. Were you born in the month of June?
No, I was born in November [30].
Were there any other children besides the four girls [the original Pointer Sisters were Ruth, Anita, Bonnie, and June]?
Yes, I have two older brothers. One of 'em is an NFL referee. I love watching him run up and down the field. They're always telling him he oughta go sing with his sisters.
Do either of them sing?
No. They want to, but we don't let them.
Are you the youngest in the family?
Yes, and I was spoiled by my mom. Whenever my mom would get mad and run away, she would just take me, and they'd be on the porch screaming and crying, and I'd wave goodbye.
Are your parents still living?
My mother's living. My father passed away. And my mom is living with me now.
Your father was a minister....
My mother, too.
Is she still a minister?
Yes, she is.
How does that affect your spiritual beliefs?
It enhances it much more. We pray before

by Blase DiStefano

...All Over! (Over Gays, Love, Discrimination, Religion, Family, & Ain't Misbehavin')



June Pointer and Eugene Barry-Hill misbehavin' in the Broadway musical tour of *Ain't Misbehavin'*.

Joan Marcus

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June Pointer

Continued from previous page

we go onstage, altogether in a circle. I believe we each have our God within us. I know there's a higher spirit that's looking out for all of us. There's so much confusion and turmoil going on in this world, but there's still a lot of joy in life to be lived.

What is your take on spirituality in general?

I think if you have some type of spirituality going on, then you have more power, for sure. It's a positive weapon that you can use to help you knock off a lot of stress and negativity, and it can keep you going when you feel like you *can't* go.

What was it like being the first black female group to perform at the Grand Ole Opry?

That was very scary. They didn't know we were black.

What?!

They had heard the song on the radio and asked us to perform without having seen us. When we got there, they were [shocked]. One man jumped up and yelled, "Well, hot damn, them gals is black" *in the middle of our song*. But the audience loved it, and they laughed, and we laughed, and we kept on singing. But we've been accepted—we won a Grammy [for Best Country Vocal Group] for a country song that even Elvis recorded ["Fairytale"]!

In your early career, did you feel much discrimination?

There was one time when we were thought to be maids at a party that was given for us, and they made us go through the back door at our own party.

When was the last time you felt discriminated against?

Probably a couple of years ago. I'll run across somebody who won't know who I am, and once they find out I'm one of the Pointer Sisters, they're suddenly nice.

When you were younger, did you know any black gay people?

Oh, yes. I had a friend named Curtis, but we called him Chris, and he was a very good friend of mine.

How did he handle the double discrimination?

It was a very hard for him at the time, because there was nobody coming out.

How did it first come about that you knew he was gay?

He was close enough to me to tell me. I knew probably before his parents or anybody else. He would come over to my house and change clothes, and I would let him wear some of my things. I really loved him, and I miss him. He died of AIDS. A lot of my friends have passed away from AIDS. **It's been going on way too long.**

Yeah, it definitely needs a lot more attention than it has gotten. There is a cure out there. It has to be. It's major. It's common law. I know there's a cure.

What do you think of homosexuality being discussed in elementary school?

I think it definitely should be discussed. *Sex in general* should be discussed. People are afraid of sex, and yet it's such a beautiful thing.

I'm sure you've traveled extensively, so do you think there's a tendency for gays in Europe to be more out and open than here in the States?

Yes. It's no big deal to see two women or two men kissing.

On the streets?

On the streets. Oh, yeah. They've got it one up on us over there. But I think here [in the U.S.] gays and lesbians are getting more independent about the way they feel and more secure about it.

Even young kids are willing to say they're gay.

I think that's very positive.

Do you have any children?

No, but I have two of the best big sisters you could find. They are also grandmothers, and they love their families. And I love them for that. I miss my sister Bonnie very much [she left the group in 1977], but she's doing fine. She's in the studio [recording].

I would have never thought of the Pointer Sisters as....

Yeah, the Grandmothers of Rock 'n' Roll!

How long have you been on tour with *Ain't Misbehavin'*?

Six months, and July is the end of it.

Isn't that a tad bit taxing on y'all?

It's very hard work, honey. And it's very disciplined. Especially on the weekends with the matinees. 'Cause we're used to doing shows at 10:00 or 11:00 at night, and all of a sudden we have a show at two in the afternoon.

And you have to do another one that night?

Yes, so there are four shows over the weekend.

What day do you have off?

Monday.

And that's it?

That's it. And usually we're traveling on that day.

Then the three of you better get along.

[*Laughter*] We better get along real good. All hell would break loose if we didn't. That's where we lucked out, 'cause we really love each other.

Didn't Bob Mackie design the fashions for this show?

Oh, yes, he did. He is the sweetest man, I

love him. And it's like we've come to a complete full circle, because we started singing in the old clothes...

I swear, a friend of mine wanted me to ask you what happened to all those dresses the Pointer Sisters wore [at the time of their debut in 1973].

[*Laughter*] We still have them!

Yes, but can you still fit into them?

We can *squeeze* into a couple of them.

Do you think someday there might be a Pointer Sisters museum where you'll put all those dresses on display?

Oh, I hope so. And my sister Anita is the one who would do that—she will not let go of anything.

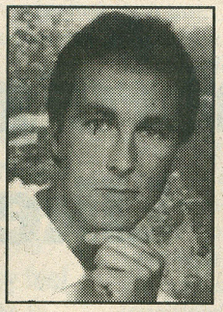
This is your first tour of this kind. It must have been a major risk.

It was a very hard challenge, but the Pointer Sisters are known for challenges. They told us they wanted us to sing R&B, we ended up singing pop. They don't know what to expect from us; we like keeping that little excitement there.

Apparently, you're pretty aware of the gay fans you have.

Oh, yeah. You know we're gonna be the grand marshals at the Gay Pride Parade in San Francisco. It's gonna be fabulous. I try to connect with the gay community in every city, go to a couple of clubs, and they put shows on for me. And I love meeting the people. I just love people in general. It doesn't matter what color skin you have or how you like to make love—it's what in your heart that counts. Please tell everybody in the gay community, "You *are* the best audiences." ▼

Ain't Misbehavin' *will play at Jones Hall from April 2-7. For ticket information, call 713/629-3700.*



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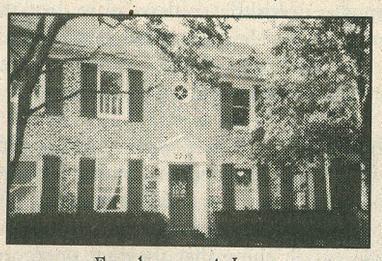
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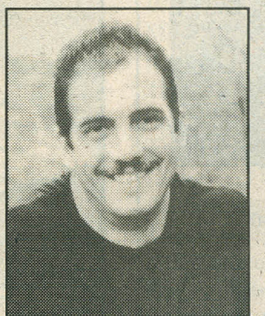
There's No Place Like Home

Sayings like "Home for the Holidays," "Home Is Where the Heart Is," and "Home Sweet Home," are phrases commonly brought up when one thinks of home. So are the various definitions of home, such as "the place of one's origin," or "the region in which something is common or native." However, the "home" that I will be focusing on is not one of physical form—each and every one of us is likely to have something or someplace that we call home. Instead, I would like to focus on that inner place, deep in the recesses of our consciousness, a home that we all have in common. Home is a direction that we are all either consciously or unconsciously heading toward.

When Dorothy asked Glenda The Good Witch where she would find her answer, Glenda responded by saying, "You've had it all along."

In IMAGO theory there is a belief that we all have similar origins dating back millions of years. Regardless of one's belief system, there seems to be a common theme which implies that long ago we were connected at a deep level and, since that time, have separated. The energies in which we all began were once more static and relaxed until an event set the universe, as we know it, in motion. Since that time we have been attempting to regain that state, which is called "Relaxed Joyfulness." It is suggested that, at a subatomic, cellular level, all of us have memory of that relaxed joyfulness, which I will refer to as "Home" in this article.

As sperm and egg came together, each one of us began our journey. Nine months later we entered what we know as the physical world. For most of us this idea of relaxed joyfulness had likely already been interfered with. Drugs, alcohol, life stress, and physical complications experienced by our mothers may have impacted our innate being even before we were born. However, I will focus on aspects of our environment that affected us after our entry into this world.



by Patrick Vachon

There are four basic parts to each human being that are identified by the IMAGO model. These four parts include a knowledge part, an emotional part, a physical part, and a behavioral part. At birth these four parts were relatively intact, well balanced, and complete. Shortly after birth, however, we began to experience the impacts of the physical world. Our parents, grandparents, siblings, and other caregivers had potentially the greatest impact on us. Direct and indirect messages are relayed to us throughout our lifetime; however, those messages communicated at the earliest years seem to have the greatest impact in forming our personalities.

In a healthy environment children would be allowed to have full access to their four parts and would be given messages that support each part. Most often though, our primary caregivers, as well as our culture, delivered negative and repressive messages. These negative messages caused us to repress parts of ourselves, which is called the Lost Self. We learn to push away emotions, or certain emotions, as well as behaviors, thoughts, and even our bodies. We might learn not to express the feelings or needs that we have or to deny them completely. Having pushed away these parts of ourselves, our original wholeness and our relaxed joyfulness begin to disappear.

As people grow they often experience a sensation of emptiness or incompleteness. When friends invite them to do something that they are uncomfortable doing they might respond by saying things like, "I'm just not an emotional person," "I've never been one to get out in front of people," "I'm not very smart," or "I'm not very

creative." The truth is that everyone is born with the potential to be all of these things no matter how deeply it may be buried. "You already have what you think you lack, and you already are what you think you are not." How then do we reclaim that part of ourselves that has gone unnoticed and unnurtured?

It seems that everyone has an unconscious desire to feel whole and complete. Since the journey to wholeness seems difficult, we often take what appears to be an easier route. Alcohol, drugs, sex, food, and other external stimuli often provide momentary glimpses of wholeness. People often state that they feel more sexual, competent, creative, or emotional while under the influence of chemicals. The unconscious drive for wholeness often unknowingly leads us in a self-destructive, instead of a life-enhancing, direction.

In the first phase of love relationships, couples often report feeling "whole" or "complete." The reason that they feel more complete is that they have found their opposite that provides the illusion of wholeness. They have also found a part of themselves that they were born with, hence a "I feel I've always know you" sensation.

The IMAGO model suggests that it is through our relationships that we have the most potential to identify and grow into our lost parts. Although the model suggests that committed love relationships offer the highest potential for healing and growth, all relationships certainly provide opportunity.

In a committed love relationship, there tends to be an attraction to someone who has intact the parts of ourselves that we have "lost." It is no surprise that the old saying "opposites attract" has maintained such powerful meaning. In the first phase of love relationships, which is called the Romantic Phase, couples often report feeling "whole" or "complete." They often say things like, "I feel like I've always known you." This is more true than most people realize. The reason that they feel more complete is that they have found that their opposite provides the illusion of wholeness. They also have actually found a part of themselves that they were born with, hence the "I feel I've always known you" sensation. These feelings of ecstasy and completeness contribute to the bonding process for which romantic love is intended.

This temporary return to "home" is replaced in a relatively short time by the "Power Struggle" phase of relationships. Although intended to be transitory, this stage often leads to relationships ending because most couples don't know how to negotiate the separation and the sense of incompleteness that ensues. The Power Struggle phase, however, provides the best opportunity for identifying lost parts that can be nurtured and developed. The conflict that ensues in the power struggle can be used to identify aspects of a relationship that can benefit from healing. As it turns out, the traits of a partner that attract a person the most in the romantic love phase become the very aspects that tend to separate the most in the Power Struggle. This is because we are threatened by the presence of our lost parts in the body of the other. Looking at our mirror reflects our own shortcomings and misgivings. Rather than looking deeply at those parts, many, if not most, couples choose to end the relationship in pursuit of a more "compatible" partner. "Most couples tend to break up right before the breakthrough." Truth be known, if you fell in love with a person in the first place, they are probably a good match, providing excellent opportunities for growth.

This principle applies to other relationships as well. What we are most disturbed by in another person is likely a reflection of a part of ourselves that we don't want to own. This is called the Denied Self. This projection of our disowned or denied parts is an attempt to avoid looking at our own shadow. The unfortunate outcome, however, is that as long as we project it outward, we remain entrapped by the very thing we dislike the most. In essence, what we hate in others is a projection of the disowned parts of ourselves. By judging and hating it in others, we inadvertently also reverse the hatred back on ourselves. For many people this is a most disturbing thought, and one which is not often embraced. Our shadow is a part of ourselves, which for survival reasons has been pushed back and allowed to come forth only in safe situations. Claiming this shadow, however, is the first step toward healing and growth. We must first bravely enter the darkness, claim our shadow, and take it to the light. Once we are willing to do this, we can rid aspects of ourselves that no longer serve us well. In doing so, we can also continue our journey back to that original loving, relaxed joyful place that we are calling home.

These are two ways in which relationships afford us an opportunity to return "home." By claiming our lost and denied parts, we first embrace them and understand their function at some period of our life. We can then choose to nurture those parts that facilitate our return to wholeness and release those that no longer serve us well.

One of my favorite stories that relays this concept is *The Wizard of Oz*. In the movie, you will remember that the main characters were all in search of their Lost Parts. The scarecrow had lost his intelligence, the Tin Man his heart, the Lion his courage, and Dorothy, having gone completely unconscious, had lost her way home. Their journey took them in search of the obscure and evasive Oz, that entity outside of themselves which was to provide them with what they thought they had lost. In the end, when the truth was revealed and the veil of denial raised (Oz exposed), the Lion found his courage, the Scarecrow his intelligence, the Tin Man his heart, and Dorothy her way home. When Dorothy asked Glenda The Good Witch where she would find her answer, Glenda responded by saying, "You've had it all along." In your quest to find your own lost parts, remember that you too have had it all along, and that there is truly "no place like home." ▼

Patrick J. Vachon is a Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) and Advanced Clinical Practitioner (ACP) in private practice at the New Counseling Center in Houston. He is also a Certified IMAGO Relationship Therapist and workshop presenter. He can be reached at 713/529-1913, voice mail #4. Some of the ideas in this article refer to the IMAGO model developed by Dr. Harville Hendrix, author of Getting The Love You Want *and* Keeping The Love You Find.

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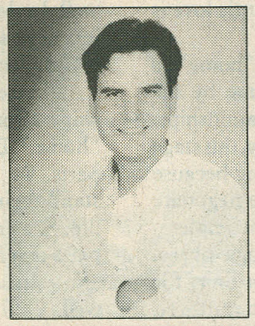
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Loan programs are available with as little as three percent of the purchase price as a down payment. Single men and women, or couples, with a total gross yearly income of $45,000 or less can qualify for a Community Homebuyer Program. This is a great deal for first-time home buyers, as it allows you to qualify with higher debt load and less cash in the bank. What follows is how you can figure out how much home you can afford—it's the formula that the mortgage company will use in reviewing your mortgage application. This formula (called the ratio of 28/36) means that, all things considered, you should qualify for the mortgage loan if your monthly expenses do not add up to be more than 28 percent of your total monthly gross income, and the house payment you will be making will not bring your spending to above 36 percent of your total monthly gross income.



Top perfect ratio 28— Total your monthly expenses (car payment, credit cards, department store payments, etc.) and divide by your gross monthly income. Do **not** include rent, utilities, or payments on loans from a friend. Only include items that will show up on your credit report. Incidentally, it's a good idea to request a credit report (often through your bank or credit union or directly from one of the credit bureaus) before you begin shopping for your new home. This way you'll know what your credit will look like to the mortgage company.

Bottom perfect ratio 36 — Take your monthly expenses from above and add what you think you can afford as a monthly house payment. It's important to include in this payment amounts for city, county, and school district taxes as well as homeowner's insurance (for these purposes, let's say $150). Divide this amount by your monthly income.

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This brings us to the question of buying on your

by John Frels

own or buying with your partner. Rely on logic and good business sense in making this decision, and not just on your heart! A home of your own will most likely be the largest purchase you will ever make. As unromantic as this may sound, a joint purchase is a business transaction and a legal contract. Figure out and document who is paying for what. If you are in a relationship and will be living together in the home, but buying alone, it's a good idea to show a lease, W-2 (showing your partner's income), and letter from your partner stating that he or she will be helping with all expenses. This will not be counted as actual income in the formula, but will be used as a compensating factor in your favor. If you decide to buy a place together, take a look at all financial aspects of each other (income, credit, debts, etc.), decide who is the strongest financially, and make that person the primary borrower. Don't be shy about getting, and taking, some legal advice. This will prevent misunderstandings down the road, and leave you both freer to enjoy your new home. If the thought of buying together brings on any other feelings besides being the perfectly natural thing to do...DON'T DO IT!

A good mortgage company can help answer your questions and explain the particulars of the home-buying process that you may not understand. Always be up front and frank with your mortgage loan officer—they can handle your papers faster and more efficiently when surprises arise at the last minute (and they will). If owning a home is your dream, following through with these suggestions in mind can make it a reality for you. ▼

John Frels is owner of Mortgage Associates of Texas and has been in the mortgage business for over four years. He can be reached at 713/524-1850.

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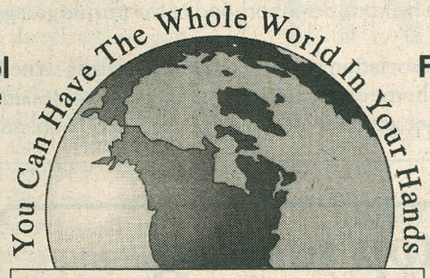
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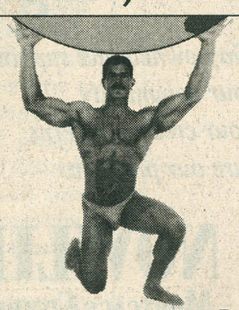
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Your home is your castle, and nobody's going to tell you what you can or cannot do with it, right? Wrong. Before you put that satellite dish in your front yard, you better check your neighborhood's deed restrictions.

Deed Restrictions—Your Friend or Foe?

So you have finally made the big step toward home owner ship. You've found a nice house in a nice neighborhood, and you even have a nice mortgage with a decent interest rate. You had a great Realtor who told you all about the history of the place and happened to mention that the area was subject to deed restrictions. That fact was disclosed to you again in writing when you went to closing. Deed restrictions do not bother you. After all, controlling the continuity of the neighborhood is part of what makes it a neat place to live, right?



by Debra Hunt

After living there for a few months, you notice new neighbors moving into the vacant house down the street. They seem to be pleasant enough. However, one day you come home from work and see that they have painted their garage door bright purple. All the other houses on the street, including yours, have neutral color doors. You get to talking with your other neighbors about it (because it really is disturbing), and someone mentions the deed restrictions. After some research, your group discovers a restriction that prohibits home owners in your neighborhood from substantially changing the architecture or appearance of their houses.

You may discover a restriction that prohibits home owners in your neighborhood from substantially changing the architecture or appearance of their houses.

What actions can you take as a home owner or through your home owner's association to rid your neighborhood of the purple garage door?

A home owner's association representative will usually write a letter to the offending home owner notifying them of the complaint and giving them a set amount of time to cure the problem. Depending on the nature of the offense, the offending home owner will either take the steps necessary to fix the problem or ignore the request altogether. It is usually when they ignore the request that an attorney will become involved.

If further requests from the lawyer do not work, the home owners may decide to file a lawsuit. Each home owner who is subject to the deed restriction is eligible to file suit against the violating owner. However, if the home owners decide to bring suit, they themselves cannot be in violation of the restrictions, and they should be prepared to pay costs and attorney's fees until the case is finished.

In counties with a population larger than 2.8 million, the county attorney is also authorized to bring suit to enforce land use restrictions (but not changes in structures) contained in a neighborhood plan on record with the county. The home owner's association itself can file suit, but it doesn't have to. Often an association will not have enough money in its treasury to pay for a lawsuit, therefore being forced to decline. Frequently, home owners misunderstand this concept and will try to force the association to do something by not paying maintenance assessments.

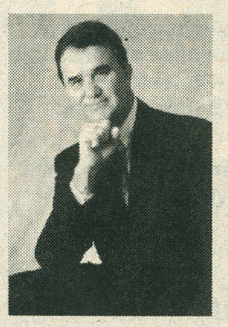
Home owners choosing this route will not get what they want and are likely to be sued by the association instead for non-payment of fees. The law is clear that a home owner's obligation to pay maintenance assessments is independent from the association's responsibility to enforce deed restrictions. If the association will not (or cannot) enforce the restriction, the home owner must bring suit against the offending home owner directly and not against the association.

In most cases, the person or persons filing the lawsuit will ask the court to make the offending home owner stop violating the restriction or to undo what has already been done. In legal terms, this is called an injunction. Depending on the reasonableness of the restriction, the court will either grant or deny the injunction. The longer an offending home owner has been violating the restriction, the harder it will be for the court to make them stop. Hence, the quicker a home owner or the association acts, the better the chance of getting the violation stopped.

The court will also look at the consistency of enforcing the restriction across the neighborhood. The home owners may have a tough time getting the offending neighbor to repaint the garage door if another neighbor has had a lime green garage door for a while without complaint. However, one neighbor's violation does not create an automatic "waiver" of the restriction altogether. In deed restriction enforcement, each case depends on its own facts. ▼

Debra E. Hunt is a partner at Moore & Hunt, a lesbian/feminist law firm based in Houston. She concentrates on issues important to gays and lesbians. For more information, call 713/522-4282.

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Yearn for the greenery of wide open spaces, but your back acreage is limited to a balcony or patio? Container gardening is an affordable alternative to moving to the country or (God forbid!) plastic perennials...

Green Up Your Container Garden

by Yvonne Bohanon

Is your balcony barren? Are your patio pots looking puny? Greening up your container garden with some well-chosen selections will see you through not only the current planting time, but beyond. Continually replacing all of your container plantings with flats and flats of colorful annuals each season can be a costly and time-consuming process. Therefore, you should consider creating a backbone of evergreen plant materials in your containers, and then you can add spots of colorful annuals as the season, time, and your finances allow.

Hardy evergreen plant materials can add continuous color in containers just as they do in the landscape.

Hardy evergreen plant materials can add continuous color in containers just as they do in the landscape. And you can create different effects using traditional ground cover materials, perennials, dwarf shrubs, and small trees in a wide variety of site exposures or conditions.

Instead of replanting a container three times a year and still risking that bare look after a severe frost, you might consider undertaking one major planting of evergreen materials. Then you can add touches of extra color rather than entire flats as the seasons change. This can be very cost effective over the long term, since a flat of seasonal material may cost between $10 and $15. Adding this up, seasonal replacement costs for plant materials alone would be $40 to $60 per year. For the same amount of money, you could purchase enough evergreen or perennial plant materials to keep your container garden presentable throughout the entire year.

A sunny patio containing a large pot (over 20" across) could hold a five-gallon shrub trimmed to resemble a small tree, one to three one-gallon-sized plants, and three to five four-inch pots of smaller plant material. You can easily create a silvery gray and pink theme by using the following plant materials: one pineapple guava (*Feijoa sellowiana*), under planted with three one-gallon size dwarf Japanese garden juniper (*Juniperus procumbens 'nana'*) and three four-inch pots of Saint Paul Verbena (*Verbena peruviana 'Saint Paul'*). This near evergreen variety of verbena has a trailing habit and pink blossoms for up to nine months of the year. By adding a six pack of colorful annuals such as carpet pink vinca (*Catharanthus roseus*) in summer and white pansies (*Viola tricolor hortensis*) in winter, you can have splashes of color at a fraction of the usual seasonal replacement cost. Even without the annuals, there is still enough evergreen color, texture, form, and contrast to keep the container interesting throughout the year.

You can also create shade-loving mixes of evergreens for low-light areas in the same manner. First, choose a standard pittosporum (*Pittosporum tobira*), trimming and using it as a small tree. Under plant the pittosporum with three one-gallon Holly fern (*Cyrtomium falcatum*) and three small pots of trailing variegated Asiatic Jasmine (*Trachelospermum asiaticum 'Variegata'*). You can brighten your low-light area further with a six pack of white impatiens (*Impatiens wallerana*) in summer and white pansies (*Viola tricolor hortensis*) in winter if desired.

It's best to use a good soil mix especially formulated for container growing when planting. These mixtures tend to be light in weight, sterile, and have some water retentive properties. Water retention is a very important quality to have during Houston's scorching summers, but even still, daily watering of containers is often necessary during the hottest months

Continued on page 71

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To insure or not to insure—that is the question when home security requires more than a deadbolt and an alarm system.

The Home Owner's Dilemma: To Insure or Not to Insure?

"CONGRATULATIONS! YOU'RE A HOME OWNER!" announces your real estate agent. Shaking hands with the previous owners, escrow officer, and the seller's realtor, you turn toward your partner and smile. Everyone is happy with this transaction. The details are wrapped up and you are handed the keys. It's yours! Whether it's a house, a condo, or a townhouse, it's yours! Your home. The place to have wonderful parties, to suffer through sad moments, to celebrate happy times, to raise your children, and to grow older together.



by Julie LaRue

Now that you own this precious investment, most people want to protect it against something bad happening. If you have a mortgage, your mortgage company also wants to protect your home and usually requires you to purchase home owner's insurance. This will protect your home in the event of fire, wind, water, or other situations that could cause damage. For example, in the event of fire, the insurance would help pay to rebuild your home. Home owner's insurance is a great way to decrease your, as well as the mortgage company's, risk.

But what would happen to your home if you or your partner should die? If you depend on both your incomes to pay the mortgage and other monthly bills, you could be in serious trouble if death should occur. Monthly expenses might be too high for a single salary, forcing you to sell your home to reduce expenses. There are ways, however, to reduce the risk of something happening to your home if you or your partner should die. You could consider either mortgage insurance or life insurance. First, let's look at **mortgage insurance:**

1. Mortgage insurance is generally offered through your mortgage company and will pay the loan balance on your home in the event of an owner's death. Sounds great, right?! Wrong!!! This is typically one of the most expensive policies for the least amount of flexibility.

2. Mortgage insurance is generally not transferable from one home to another. If you decide to move and purchase another home, you get no credit, no carry-over, no nothing toward this new policy. All the money you paid into the other plan just disappears. In addition, the new mortgage insurance on the next home starts at whatever age you are at the time of purchase. With increasing age, mortgage insurance gets more expensive as your chance of dying for any reason increases.

3. If a death occurs, the mortgage insurance policy monies will go toward eliminating the mortgage only. You have no choice or ability to use that money for other expenses. Your partner couldn't live on it, no other bills would be paid with it, and no additional funeral or final expenses could be taken care of with this money.

4. If you are someone with a life-threatening illness, mortgage insurance might be a decent investment since you may not be eligible for life insurance. This would allow you to, at least, pay off your home for your surviving partner in the event of your death.

The other alternative to mortgage insurance is **life insurance.** I recommend life insurance for all the reasons mortgage insurance is

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Devotional Thought for the Month by Rev. Janet



As we approach this Easter season there is one key word that comes to mind: FORGIVENESS. We have all looked at Easter with its promise of new life through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. What we must realize is that the Resurrection is not possible without first experiencing forgiveness. It is forgiveness that laid the groundwork for receiving a new life and beginning anew. Some of us would like to be able to go to the dumpster and exchange what we have as a "life" for another one. The cares of this world can get to be heavy. We would like to be able to erase some of our past and the decisions we've made that got us where we are today. The yearning in the hearts of people for a fresh start is evident. What some people do not realize is that you can begin anew. You can have a fresh start.

What may seem like an impossible task is not out of reach. Forgiveness is made possible for everyone because God forgave us. We were forgiven of every sin we ever committed BEFORE we were born and before they we actually committed! God's forgiveness is not even attached to our awareness of the need to be forgiven. The nature of forgiveness is "I forgive—PERIOD!"

One thing that is important once you accept God's forgiveness is that we must then learn to forgive ourselves and others. That's where the hard part comes in. Most of us can accept God's forgiveness, but we have a difficult time forgiving ourselves. Some of the roadblocks to forgiveness are: 1. Holding a Grudge. We must let go of the past if we want to look toward the future. 2. Self Pity. People who fall into this category are generally inward focused. 3. Anger. Many times anger is deep seated pain and hurt. When we don't let go of it and we put a "D" in front of the word, it becomes "Danger." It is a fearful thing to live with an angry person. You don't know when they will blow up and say things they will regret. Anger can wound others severely. 4. Pride. If our tempers get us into trouble, it is pride that keeps us there. Two of the most difficult words to say are: "I'm sorry." 5. Revenge. Trying to get even with others is like putting a stick of dynamite inside your coat so that the next person who slaps you on your chest will get their hand blown off. It always backfires in our face. 6. Fear. Forgiveness is vulnerability, transparency, openness. It is risky because we might get trampled on again. 7. Judgmental Spirit. Why do we judge others by their outward actions, yet we judge ourselves by our inward motives. If we could see each other's heart, we might be more hesitant to jugde others so quickly. 8. An Unwillingness To Forgive. Forgetting is a choice. We have to be willing to forgive and put things behind us. 9. Insecurity. Show me an insecure person and I'll show you a person who has a hard time forgiving others. 10. Alibi's. These are the people who have their reasons for not forgiving. They may think the person deserves what they get, or that they will go on doing the same thing over again.

In the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray he said, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Or as the little girl would say, "Forgive us our trash baskets as we forgive those who have put trash in our baskets." Let this Easter season be one of forgiving, releasing, letting go, forgetting—and take hold of that Resurrected life in Christ!

not typically a good buy.

1. Life insurance is generally less expensive.

2. Life insurance usually stays with you wherever you move to and does not lose its value.

3. The money from a life insurance policy can go to anything (mortgages, living expenses, funerals, new cars...whatever). It is very flexible!

4. You can purchase life insurance when you are young, get a lower premium, and lock in that lower price as you age. Of course, if you buy more life insurance at an older age, you will probably pay a slightly higher premium.

Mortgage insurance is generally not transferable from one home to another. Life insurance usually stays with you wherever you move to and does not lose its value.

If you and your partner are purchasing a home together, it's time to look at life insurance planning seriously. For the amount of time, energy, and effort you took to find a real estate agent, look at homes, apply for a mortgage, comply with the credit check requirements, go to closing, move, and finally settle in, it takes minutes to do proper life insurance planning.

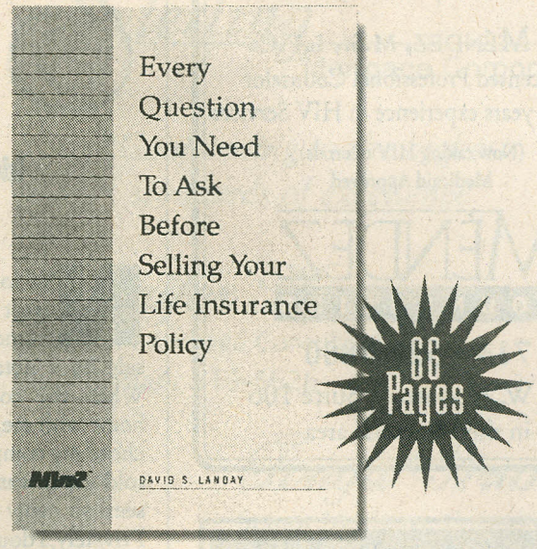
So let's talk planning! I am often asked what type of insurance I recommend. That's difficult to answer in today's world because there are so many different types with different purposes and functions. Sometimes what works for one client is a horrible plan for another client. It really depends on your individual circumstances as to the type and amounts of insurance needed. If someone should begin to talk to you about a certain type of insurance or the amount before asking you a lot of questions about your financial goals, the purpose of your life insurance, how much other life insurance you own, how much you have with your employer, or whether you have other needs for life insurance, you need to seek out another opinion. Life insurance can be a wonderful financial tool if used properly.

Something else to consider is the flexibility of your owning your own life insurance. Many people are provided with life insurance through their employers. This is a nice benefit but usually is not enough to provide for surviving partners, children, or other family members. Also, if you leave that employer, you no longer have that coverage. Then what do you do, especially if you are older now or no longer insurable? By owning your own policy, you are not tied to a particular employer, you lock in your insurability, and you have the choice of purchasing the amount you desire to pro-vide for your survivors, cover your expenses, and/or pay off your home mortgage.

As a financial advisor, I might not recommend paying off your mortgage. Your survivors might be better off investing the proceeds of your life insurance policy to recreate your income and continue paying the monthly mortgage amount. This way the money goes to work for them instead of going into the home equity where it can't be retrieved unless you sell the house. This area of planning can be very specific to clients' needs, and that's the point. Your life insurance planning should be done for specific goals and plans so that a surviving partner or family member has flexibility and choices. ▼

Julie LaRue, LUTCF, is a financial advisor with The Acacia Group. She is a Registered Representative and Investment Advisory Associate with The Advisors Group, Inc., the registered broker-dealer and investment advisor of The Acacia Group. Information is general in nature. Be sure to consult an attorney for specific legal advice. For more information, call 713/888-3500.

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We Lead, Others Follow...

Identifying your business as gay- or lesbian-owned may be more than just a matter of pride.

Not long ago, I presented a contract for the purchase of a large home in Montrose offered for sale by a heterosexual couple. When the couple listed their home with me, I asked why they chose my company. The woman told me it was because she had seen so many signs in the area. Privately, I doubted this—we sell our listings quickly, so they don't have much "sign life." When I presented the contract, the woman asked with great interest if the purchasers were gay. I told her they were. "Oh, that's wonderful!" she exclaimed. She said she had thought that gays would appreciate the architectural details and the beautiful things inside. Her comments brought into focus her motivation: She chose us because we promote ourselves as lesbian and gay Realtors in Houston.

As our own internalized homophobia is fading, our desire to patronize community-owned businesses grows stronger.

Recently, I asked another client how he had heard of our company. He said he'd seen our ad in a local newspaper. The only advertisement we run in this paper is our generic queer ad: "Serving Houston's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Community." This man—also straight—wanted to live in Montrose and said he figured we were the experts. He was extremely comfortable in our offices as we helped him find a home.

These experiences are becoming more common. Less and less often are we meeting or hearing of gays and lesbians who won't use our company because they're afraid that our sign in their yard or our name on their offer will declare their sexual orientation. As we mature as individuals and as a community, our own internalized homophobia is fading, and our desire to patronize community-owned businesses grows stronger.

There is a lesson here not just for us as lesbians and gay individuals, but for our businesses. We need to declare who we are and who we want to serve. It's not just the occasional home owner or buyer in Montrose who realizes they need the lesbian and gay market. Huge national and multi-national corporations like American Airlines, American Express, and Toyota spend millions of dollars each year directing advertising toward homosexuals, a market so lucrative that the risk of backlash from the more conservative elements of the heterosexual community does not deter them. We need to be as "brave" as they are, to take a page from their book. We need to come out of the closet and claim *our* market.

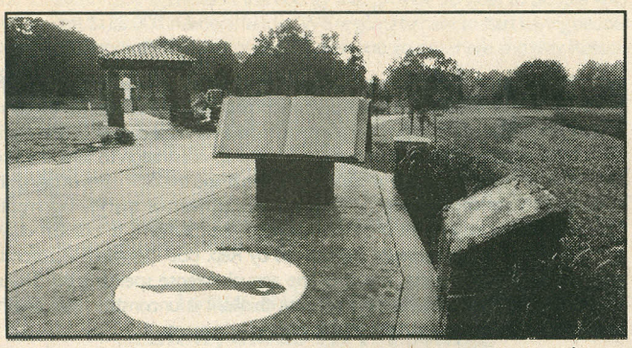


by Suzanne Anderson

Our company has long used in its advertising what is both its identification and its vision—to serve the lesbian and gay community. Our marketing and advertising strategy used this theme before any other Realtors in Houston—when it was unpopular, and a joke to some, and when it cost us business. But now it's in to be out, and it's profitable. Those who feared or scoffed are copying us. Great!

Currently, we are beginning another advertising campaign: "We lead. Others follow...." We invite and challenge other lesbian- and gay-owned businesses to come out of the closet and claim a share of the market. The choice becomes clearer every day with every client and customer who walks through your door or doesn't—the closet is a dark and lonely place to be. ▼

Suzanne Anderson is the owner/broker of Suzanne Anderson Properties. She is co-founder of LiB, a lesbian empowerment group, the Lesbian Health Initiative and a board member of the Greater Houston Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce.



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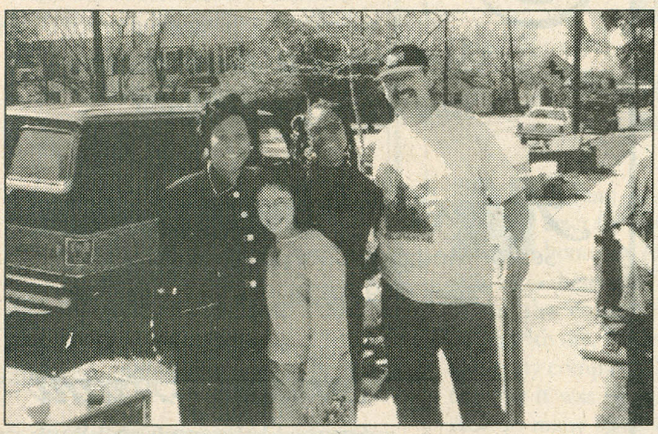


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(L-r): U.S. Rep. Shelia Jackson Lee; Heather and her mother, AHCN vice-chairperson Barbara Joseph; and AHCN chairperson Richard Rancier.

AIDS Housing Coalition Houston Rummage-a-Rama Huge Success

Executive director of AIDS Housing Coalition Houston, Matt Locklin, is thanking volunteers and participants for helping raise more than $1,600 in early March at the organization's massive Rummage-a-Rama. All proceeds benefitted the TLC House emergency shelter for those who are homeless and living with HIV/AIDS.

One of the more recognizable bargain shoppers was Congressperson Sheila Jackson Lee, who discussed her recent actions on behalf of the AIDS population. Special thanks also are offered to EuroTan for its donation of six truckload of items from its museum area estate.

AHCH is an all-volunteer effort and welcomes public support and donations of all kinds. For more information or to volunteer, call 713/521-1613.

Gingrich Backs HIV Discharge Measure

ATLANTA—Asked at a congressional district meeting with constituents, House speaker Newt Gingrich said neither Magic Johnson nor President Clinton understand "the danger of being in combat" in backing a repeal of a measure that mandates discharging military personnel infected with HIV. During a question period in his home district, Gingrich, who has no military service himself, said, "No one who has ever studied seriously how bad combat can get wants to have a person in your unit who's HIV-positive, because you have a very real danger of transferring blood. It is a totally irresponsible position for the administration to take. It's a sign of how little President Clinton understands combat and the difficulties of being able to deal with these kinds of dangers." Gingrich failed to mention that Pentagon policy already prohibits assignment of HIV-positive service members to combat duty.

The HIV discharge measure, introduced by Rep. Bob Dornan (R-California), was approved by Congress as part of the annual defense spending bill. Though Clinton signed the measure, the President thinks it is unconstitutional and has ordered the Justice Department not to defend it in court.

Journal: AIDS Drug Development Task Force Flops

CHICAGO—A report in the journal *Science* says the National Task Force on AIDS Drug Development, a much-touted Clinton administration working group to streamline the process of getting HIV drugs from development to distribution, has disbanded, largely because it failed to accomplish what it was designed to do. "I cannot point to anything that the group accomplished that would not have happened without it," said Harvard Medical School clinician and task force member Doborah Cotton.

Other members of the task force agreed that recent changes at the Food & Drug Administration that have dramatically speeded up the actual review and approval of AIDS drugs had nothing to do with anything the task force did. And government red tape kept the working group from even identifying which drug manufacturers were working on promising therapies, task force members said.

Senate Measure Aims at Speeding Drug Approval

WASHINGTON—Congressional committee hearings will begin later in February on proposed legislation introduced by Sen. Nancy Kassebaum (R-Kansas) on speeding up approval of new medicines by the Food & Drug Administration. The Kassebaum measure would force the FDA to complete reviews of "priority" drugs (those aimed at fatal or otherwise untreatable illnesses) within four months and six months for other medications. It would also require the FDA to tell drug manufacturers what they need to do in testing new medicine to satisfy FDA approval requirements. The bill would also allow some medical treatments that have received government approval in specific foreign countries to go on sale in the U.S. before receiving official FDA approval.

Potent New AIDS Drugs May Be Too Pricey for Most Patients

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The most potent and promising medical treatments against HIV, two drugs known as protease inhibitors, soon will very likely receive government approval for distribution in the U.S. Yet researchers and AIDS treatment specialists around the country are increasingly expressing concerns that the new combination therapies will be far too expensive for the vast majority of people.

The two new drugs, used in combination with the already-approved AZT and 3TC, are expected to be approved by the Food & Drug Administration this year. They are also expected to increase the costs of medications alone for the average AIDS patient to between $12,000 and $18,000 a year. With some 50,000 AIDS patients in the U.S. dependent on state and federal funds to help pay for treatment, expected budget cutbacks may prevent thousands of people stricken by the disease to remain healthy because they simply won't be able to afford effective medication.

"The picture is looking pretty grim," said Joseph Kelly of the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS directors. "Most of the states are already facing shortages." Kelly has estimated that giving Americans with AIDS access to the new combination therapies would cost some $152 million annually beyond the current $195 million a year the federal government distributes to the states to cover AIDS medications.

Pennsylvania Councilman Votes Against AIDS Funds as 'Behavioral Disease'

MEDIA, Pa.—Calling AIDS a "behavioral disease," Delaware County Councilman Wallace Nunn was the sole vote in a purely symbolic 3-1 decision by the

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council authorizing agencies in the county that provide services to people with AIDS to get $188,000 in federal funds. "We're going to have to start having people take some responsibility," Nunn said. "When you go out there and play Russian roulette, I'm not sure that's society's problem."

In casting his lone dissenting vote, Nunn said he thought the money should go to people who contracted the disease through transfusions, children who were infected at birth, and others who we infected "through no fault of their own." Even if the other councilmembers had sided with Nunn, however, the funds would not have been redirected to other AIDS agencies since the federal funding program is already earmarked and local governing bodies only have the power to either accept the money or reject it entirely.

Iowa Bill May End Anonymous HIV Testing

DES MOINES, Iowa—Iowa health officials are supporting a proposal to end anonymous HIV testing in the state, a move which AIDS activists say will prevent voluntary testing. Conversely, officials with the Iowa health department say that having access to the names of those who test positive for HIV will make it easier for them to prevent further spread of the virus. The proposal comes in the form of a bill introduced by Rep. Joseph Kremer that would keep test results "confidential," but would allow health officials to contact people who test positive, as well as their sexual partners.

North Carolina Lawmakers Want Separate HIV Prison

RALEIGH, N.C.—North Carolina legislators are considering the possibility of setting up a separate prison facility for inmates who are infected with HIV. State prison officials say it would be easier to deal with infected inmates and reduce the spread of HIV through sexual contact among prisoners if those with the virus were incarcerated in a segregated facility, but confidentiality laws prevent such separate facilities.

Officials say there are about 500 inmates in state correctional facilities at any given time known to be infected, but they say the actual number is probably much larger since routine HIV testing is not conducted.

Court Says Place Child With HIV-Positive Foster Parent

LINCOLN, Neb.—The Nebraska state Supreme Court has ruled that a juvenile court judge must return a four-year-old boy to his father and to GayLynn Brummett, his foster mother who has AIDS, or explain to the court why not. Officials with the state's social services department have been working to have the foster child placed in another home because of Mrs. Brummett's HIV infection.

Illinois Reports First Decline in New AIDS Cases

SPRINGFIELD, Ill.—Illinois health officials have reported the first drop in the annual number of new AIDS cases in the state since the epidemic began sweeping through he U.S. 15 years ago. According to Dr. John Lumpkin, the state's director of public health, there were 2,186 newly diagnosed cases of AIDS reported in Illinois, a 28 percent decline over the 3,040 cases reported in the state in 1994. Lumpkin said the drop-off may indicate "the start of a downward trend" in new AIDS cases in Illinois.

"National, state, and local education and prevention efforts initiated over the past decade are having an impact," he said.

The latest figures showed decreases in new AIDS cases in both rural and urban areas in the state, but most dramatic was a reported 30 percent decline in the number of new cases in Chicago last year. The health department figures also showed a continuation, observed both in Illinois and nationally, for a growing proportion of new AIDS cases among women. Although men still make up the vast majority of AIDS cases (82 percent), the proportion among women continued to grow in Illinois, from 10 percent in 1991 to 15 percent in 1994, and now 18 percent in 1995.

FDA Head Doesn't Like Kassebaum Bill

WASHINGTON—David Kessler, Food & Drug Administration commissioner, testified before the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee that some provisions in a bill proposed by Sen. Nancy Kassebaum (R-Kansas) to reform drug approval policies would be bad for the public health. Kessler told the committee members that the FDA was in the process of revising its policies and

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HIV/AIDS Watch

Continued from previous page

procedures, and that the agency was already reviewing new drugs for AIDS and other life-threatening illnesses faster than the four months mandated by Kassebaum' s proposed legislation.

The Kassebaum proposal would require that the FDA review new drugs for major illnesses like AIDS and cancer within four months or the drug would get automatic approval for sales in the U.S.

Boxer/Actor Tests HIV-Positive

TULSA, Okla.—Speculation was rife following the indefinite worldwide medical suspension of heavyweight boxing contender and sometime actor Tommy Morrison for medical reasons by the Nevada State Athletic Commission. Reportedly, the popular fighter tested positive for HIV.

Morrison is perhaps more widely known for his appearance in the film *Rocky V* and more recently in a guest role on TV's *Cybill*. The fighter always had a strong popular appeal as much for his blond good looks and pumped physique as for his 45-3-1 boxing record, which included a 12-round decision over George Foreman in 1993 for the World Boxing Organization title.

Nevada is one of only two states in the U.S. that tests boxers for HIV.

Joint Public-Private Vaccine Venture

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Government AIDS officials have unveiled plans for a cooperative private-public venture aimed at developing an AIDS vaccine by the year 2002, largely by removing government and bureaucratic obstacles that have made some companies shy away from work on vaccines.

Dr. Anthony Fauci of the National Institute of Allergy & Infectious Diseases said it will be years before any vaccine is likely available, but the joint project may help smooth out and speed up the process. The cooperative project involves basic medical research being done by federal agencies that private pharmaceutical and biomedical firms involved in the project could use in developing possible vaccines. The project also would establish specific clinical criteria for safety, testing, and evaluation of effectiveness trials of such vaccine candidates.

Doctors: Baboon Marrow Procedure Not a 'Failure'

WASHINGTON—Doctors who transplanted baboon bone marrow cells into AIDS patient Jeff Getty in San Francisco this past December say "hundreds of volunteers" are volunteering for the same operation. Dr. Stephen Deeks of the University of California at San Francisco and Suzanne Ildstad, transplant surgeon at the University of Pittsburgh, who led the marrow transplant effort, agreed they had hoped that the baboon cells would engraft themselves in Getty's immune system and pass on their innate resistance to the HIV virus.

Though the procedure apparently didn't work in Getty's case, Ildstad said she doesn't consider the experimental transplant a "failure." "Even if we don't have engraftment," she said, "I don't feel that we failed at all. I think that we learned a great deal of very important information that has potential interest for gene therapy, for solid organ transplants, and a number of other areas." The doctors said they hope to make another attempt at the new procedure in four to six months with another AIDS patient.

HIV Strain Raises Fears of Heterosexual Epidemic in the West

BOSTON—Writing in the journal *Science*, Dr. Max Essex of the Harvard AIDS Institute warns that new Asian and African strains of HIV spread much more easily among heterosexuals than previously identified HIV-1 strains of the virus. "If it takes hold here (in the West) we could face a much more significant epidemic among heterosexuals," Essex warns.

Researchers have found that a strain of the virus found in Thailand thrives in the reproductive tracts of women, making it far more likely to be transmitted during heterosexual intercourse than the HIV-1 strains common in the West.

FDA Panel Considers Growth Hormone Approval

WASHINGTON, D.C.—An advisory panel of the Food & Drug Administration has begun reviewing an application for full-scale marketing of a growth hormone. Serono Laboratories, Inc. of Norwell, Massachusetts, has offered the growth hormone, known as Serostim, as a way to fight AIDS-related weight loss, one of the most serious medical complications faced by people stricken with the disease. In later stages of the illness, between 15 percent and 40 percent of those with AIDS suffer from this wasting syndrome, making them far more susceptible to infections. AIDS experts estimated that nine out of ten AIDS deaths in the U.S. are related to excessive weight-loss problems.

Researchers Say They've Identified KS Virus

SAN FRANCISCO—Researchers at the University of California at San Francisco report in the journal *Nature Medicine* that they have grown a virus in laboratories that they say causes Kaposi's sarcoma, a rare cancer that has been closely linked to AIDS. The researchers, led by Dr. Don Ganem, also report that they are studying the effectiveness of several AIDS drugs in combating the cancer virus, one of several herpes-like retroviruses recently discovered.

Prominent HIV-PositiveMD Gets OK to Operate

GLASGOW, Scotland—An internationally prominent surgeon, Dr. George Browning, has been given approval by the Glasgow Royal Infirmary to resume his surgical career even though he is infected with HIV. Browning, 55, who is the father of three children, acknowledged his bisexuality when he learned he was infected with the virus late in 1994. At the time, he continued his teaching career, but stopped operating while he asked health officials to decide if he could resume surgery with patients without risk to their health. ▼

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Many doctors unaware of the benefits of anabolic steroids for wasting prevention or reversal only prescribe FDA-approved appetite stimulants like Megace (a progesterone-based product) or Marinol (a derivative of marijuana), but there are problems with these therapies...

Good News in the War Against Wasting

by Arlette Pharo, DO, and Nelson Vergel, BsChE, MBA

Wasting, or involuntary weight loss, is unfortunately a common and serious occurrence in patients with a wide variety of illnesses and conditions. Illnesses that have wasting as a hallmark include severe trauma, extensive surgery, certain types of cancer, HIV/AIDS, burns, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, gastrointestinal (GI) disorders, renal failure, and sepsis. Involuntary weight loss is often multifactorial in origin, with inadequate nutrition and metabolic alterations playing central roles. Regardless of the cause, involuntary weight loss results in a state of malnutrition that depletes lean body mass (LBM). If not stopped or reversed, this weight loss can directly contribute to mortality. The best solution to wasting is prevention and not waiting until body reserves of LBM decrease to critical levels.

Many options are being tried to prevent this weight loss, including anabolic steroids (compounds analog to testosterone, a male sex hormone) and human growth hormone; however, their correct application for wasting has not been included in most physicians' training. Controlled studies in the area of anabolic steroids are generally lacking up to now. Some physicians still think that anabolic steroids are illegal to prescribe to HIV-positive patients or other patients with metabolically challenging illnesses. However, the truth is that they are perfectly justifiable for wasting illnesses.

Many doctors unaware of the benefits of anabolic steroids for wasting prevention or reversal only prescribe FDA-approved appetite stimulants like Megace (a progesterone-based product) or Marinol (a derivative of marijuana), but there are problems with these therapies. Megace has been shown to increase fat weight, not LBM, and cause impotence in men and excessive menstrual bleeding in women. If the goal is to increase LBM for survival, these drawbacks should not be overlooked.

Until now, doctors who prescribed anabolics to their HIV-positive patients had only limited choices in injectable anabolic steroids like testosterone or its analogs like nandrolone (Deca-Durabolin), and oral anabolic steroids like Winstrol. These products are prescribed on an "off-label" manner by these progressive physicians since their actual intent is not to reverse weight loss.

December 5 marked the return to the United States market of the oral anabolic steroid oxandrolone (tradename Oxandrin), a popular drug among bodybuilders in the United States in the 1960s until the late 1980s (called Anavar then). This is especially interesting because this product is being put on the pharmaceutical market with the intention of being delivered to AIDS patients specifically. What is so special about Oxandrin is that it could be a viable, lower-cost alternative to growth hormone because it is essentially devoid of any of the potential side effects that are attributed (sometimes incorrectly) to other anabolic steroids. In fact, it's so safe that its original indication was for use with stunted-growth children, usually combined with growth hormone.

The introduction of an anabolic steroid like Oxandrin, that is so safe and so effective, may over time drive home the message that perhaps we were wrong to vilify and criminalize these medicines, and that the law should change to reflect that.

One of the major problems with typical anabolic steroids is that they are molecular "cousins" of the male sex-hormone testosterone and, because of this, they generally impart, in varying degrees, androgenic or masculinizing side effects. This makes many steroids questionable for therapeutic use for women because of the potential to create masculine characteristics like a deepened voice, body and facial hair growth, and increased clitoral size. It also creates problems for therapeutic use with children because of the potential for inducing premature sex characteristics or stunting the child's growth. The good news is that Oxandrin has been used successfully with minimal problems for 30 years with male and female children who have stunted growth and has an extremely low potential to virilize women.

LIVER TOXICITY

Oxandrin seems to challenge some of the other stereotypes of what's wrong with anabolic steroids, too. While common anabolic steroids that are in oil-based injectable form are known to be non-toxic to the liver, oral steroids like Oxandrin, which are in a family of compounds dubbed "17-alpha alkylated," are generally thought to be "liver toxic." Is this liver toxicity actually real? Recent studies, showing Oxandrin's overall liver safety raise some compelling questions about whether 17-alpha-alkylation is really so liver toxic after all. For instance, in studies published in the prestigious publications *New England Journal of Medicine* and *Hepatology*, Oxandrin was used with alcoholic hepatitis patients using dosages that in the past would be considered to be about four to eight times the recommended dosage (40 and 80 milligrams a day). Oxandrolone was so therapeutically beneficial that liver function improved approximately 20 percent in one patient group and one-year mor-

tality was reduced in another patient group by over 500 percent! [1,2,3]

LEAN MUSCLE GROWTH

But does Oxandrin stimulate lean tissue growth as effectively as Serostim, the expensive ($4,000/month) growth hormone that is prescribed to AIDS patients? This question should be answered this year with the publication of studies on Oxandrin and PWAs. Many who are familiar with this anabolic steroid assert that it will perform as well or slightly better than growth hormone when it is used in appropriate dosages. So far, the only study we can refer to that examined this anabolic steroid in men was with Kotler, et al., in 1994, with a five-milligram dose, which bodybuilders or anyone familiar with this compound would assert is far too little to produce any significant effect on lean muscle mass. The new studies will report on dosages of 15, 20, 40, 60, and 80 milligrams a day.

LEGALITY AND THE DOCTOR

One of the other important points to consider regarding Oxandrin is that from the standpoint of the physician, Oxandrin will be more "legal" to prescribe than nandrolone (Deca-Durabolin), because the FDA-approved indication is so general that a doctor shouldn't feel legally compromised in prescribing it. The FDA indication reads: "Adjunctive therapy to promote weight gain after weight loss following extensive surgery, chronic infections, or severe trauma, and in some patients who, without definite pathophysiologic reasons, fail to gain or to maintain normal weight...." (Unlike testosterone "replacement," which basically requires the patient to have low blood testosterone levels, this indication is simply for "normal" weight gain.)

As it stands now, nandrolone (Deca-Durabolin) comes under the heading of an anabolic steroid that might only be used if testosterone failed to put weight on the patient, rather than as a first therapy. However, this reasoning is backward, since nandrolone is a more benign compound that should be a first choice depending on individual circumstances. Some patients who have low energy, for instance, appear to need testosterone itself to boost their energy. Also, some of the more "ectomorphic" body-types seem to grow better with more androgenic steroids like testosterone, even though, technically speaking, nandrolone is supposed to be more anabolic. However, oxandrolone may soon become a first choice for some doctors because they will feel less legally compromised in prescribing it. Additionally, Oxandrin is an oral steroid, and while some doctors prescribe injectable steroids to take home for self-administration, many doctors would prefer not to, so they'd feel more comfortable prescribing an oral steroid.

PROGRESS

Oxandrin's re-introduction into the United States market is a great step forward. The use of anabolic steroids as valuable, low-cost medicines was derailed with the Anabolic Steroid Control Act of 1990, and subsequently, thousands of critically ill people (with numerous pathologies, including AIDS) became all the more the victims. The introduction of an anabolic steroid like Oxandrin, that is so safe and so effective, may over time drive home the message that perhaps we were wrong to vilify and criminalize these medicines, and that the law should change to reflect that.

OXANDRIN FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Women and children suffering from involuntary weight loss have been specially affected and underserved when it comes to wasting prevention/reversal. Most doctors are cautious to give a woman an anabolic steroid for fear of masculinizing her. Also, most anabolic steroids would stunt growth in children. Since Oxandrin does not produce masculinizing effects at dosages between 7.5 and15 mg/day, it is a good option for HIV-positive women who want to prevent or reverse wasting. Also, since it does not stunt growth in children, it is also a good option for pediatric AIDS patients at dosages between 2.5 and 5 mg/day.

OXANDRIN AND MEN

Very few physicians know what the right dosage is for reversal or prevention of weight loss while using Oxandrin in men. There are very few studies that show a potential for prevention of weight loss at 15 mg/day for men. From the experience gathered from the bodybuilder community and doctors who worked with athletes in the 1980s, it seems that dosages around 30 to 40 mg/day are needed for those men who have lost considerable amounts of weight to be able to reverse the wasting process effectively. Of course, for this therapy or any muscle gain therapy to work, adequate amounts of protein (0.8-1.5 grams/lb of body weight/day) and resistance weight training are needed. Resistance weight training, even if it is using light weights for those with minimal energy levels, is key to enhance the effectiveness of anabolic steroid therapy.

AVAILABILITY

Oxandrin is available by doctor's prescription only from pharmacies that are authorized by Bio-Technology General (the manufacturer of Oxandrin) to carry it. Physicians can also get the drug sent to their patients after filling out the required

Continued on page 71

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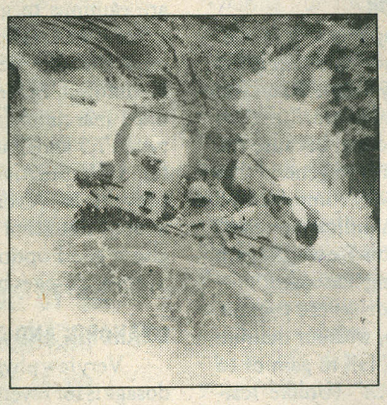
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I've been wondering lately if it's just me, or if most people feel that there really aren't enough hours in the day or night to keep up, stay current, be on top of things. It seems as I get older my world gets smaller, my interests and passions more keenly defined, and the time I have to allot to the world at large gets less and less.



Looking back, I know I have always loved to travel precisely because it enlarged my world and showed me new things that I could incorporate into my own life. When I discovered travel as a profession, after six previous careers, it stuck, for all of 17 years now. My profession allows me to escape the thief of time, and for the joyous days when I'm out of my particular environment, my world is large again, and my life is full.

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Houston men are in for a wonderful treat the weekend of May 10-12, when Spirit Journeys hosts their "Journey Into Ourselves" workshop at a private conference center in the Museum district. This popular workshop provides a special environment for gay men to share an exploration of personal transition and life changes. David says, "By accessing more deeply your own wisdom and intuitive guidance, this workshop helps you take a clear assessment of your life, explore new ways of self-perception, and provides you with the means to create a fresh vision of who you are becoming." What a wonderful journey to take, and you don't even have to leave your hometown!

The weekend of May 24-27, 1996, will see Spirit Journeys host a Holiday Weekend Retreat at Camp Ronora, Michigan. Situated on 300 acres of unspoiled woods, this is an ideal location for a group of like-minded men to gather for three nights and four days of rejuvenation, self-discovery, play, and celebration. The daily schedule incorporates group sessions, optional group activities, and leisure time. The group sessions help you to unwind, step back from your daily routine, and gain clarity about such aspects of your life as career, relationships, spirituality, and sexuality. This weekend is affordably priced at $375, which includes lodging, all meals and activities, with airfare to Chicago extra.

A long-time favorite tour company of mine is Progressive Travels, pioneers of quality biking and walking tours in Europe. Company officers Travis Penn and Dominique Parisot believe that "many of you are looking for something more from your vacation...a sense of exploration, adventure, and discovery." Progressive Travels caters to people who believe a vacation should be a real adven-

by Sandra Wilkins

ture underscored by good food and refined lodgings. Offering close-up views of intriguing places, the people, their culture, their history, and the land, Progressive Tours provides the gay and lesbian traveler with a vacation experience worth remembering.

There are two exclusive gay/lesbian bicycling tours scheduled this year, the first set for June 1-7, 1996, in Umbria, northern Italy. The tour begins in Florence and follows the Roman roadways into the rolling hills, staying in farmhouses that have been converted into fine country inns with restaurants. Easy cycling 40 to 60 kilometers each day, the tour winds its way through Assisi, Perugia, and Spoleto, allowing participants to experience the rich history and natural beauty of this special part of Italy.

What a wonderful journey to take, and you don't even have to leave your hometown!

Following the Italy trip, Progressive Travels moves to France and the Loire Valley, September 29 through October 5, 1996. Never is there a more close-up and personal way to experience the chateaux of the Loire, renowned for their magnificent proportions and fairy-tale appearance. The Loire Valley perhaps represents the most typical French landscapes, fertile with vineyards and rich with history. The tour begins in Orleans and continues to Chateau de Chambord, largest of the Loire chateaux, with the surrounding woods a favorite hunting ground for past princes and kings. Other day's rides will encompass Chateau de Chissay, Chateau de Cheverny, and Chateau de Chenonceau. If you have dreamed of visiting this beautiful area of the French countryside, this is your opportunity to make that dream come true in the company of gay brothers and sisters.

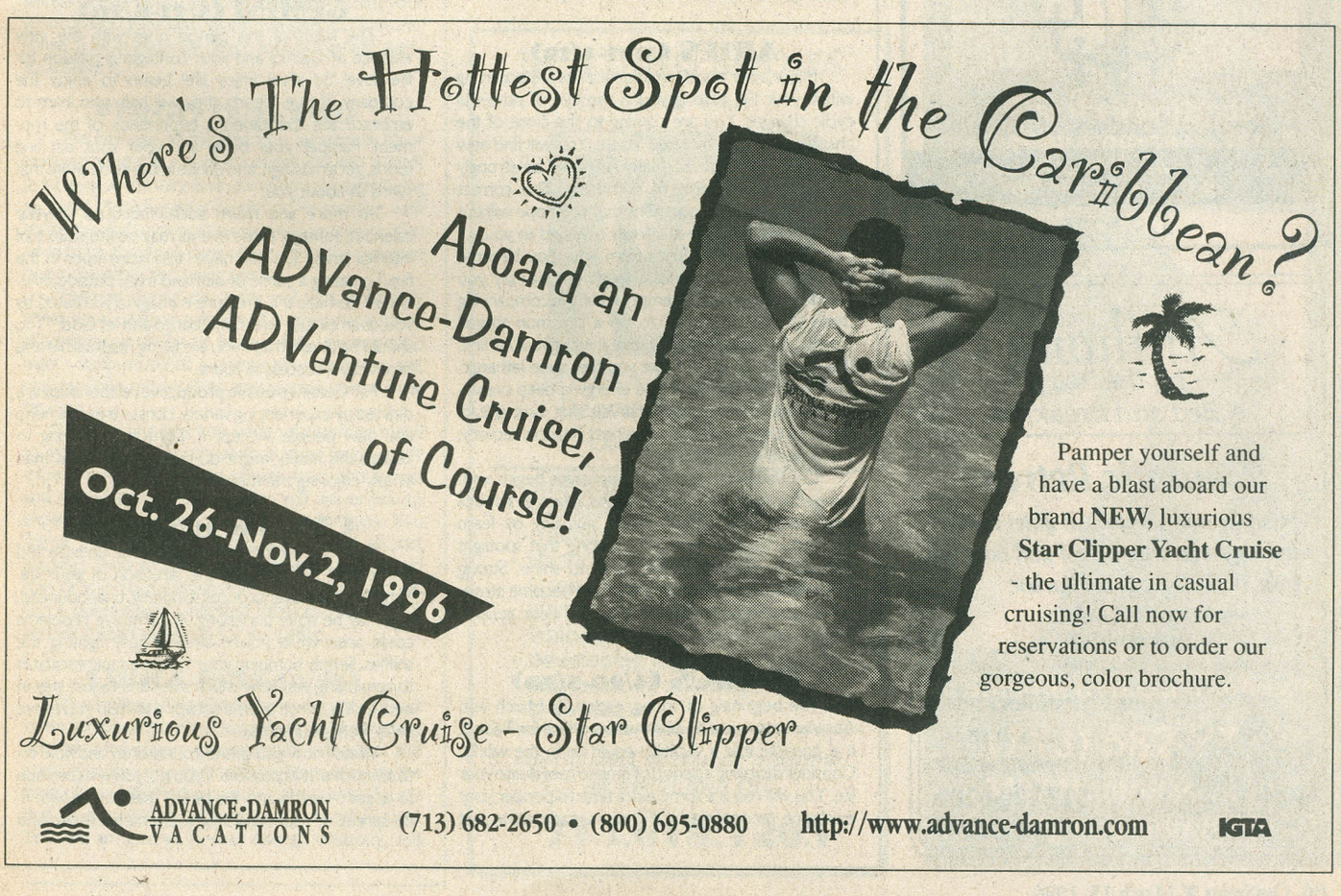
Gay women will love Mariah Wilderness Expeditions, a company owned and operated by Donna Hunter and Nancy Byrnes, who bring a wealth of outdoor, people-oriented experiences to their adventures. The Mariah philosophy is to combine exciting, challenging outdoor experiences with an exceptionally warm and supportive environment, providing high quality, non-competitive, wilderness experiences to discerning travelers who want to have fun and increase their skills and self-confidence. This first-class operation is ideal for mothers and grandmothers who want to share a once-in-a-lifetime experience with their children and grandchildren on their special family rafting trips with storytellers.

Cataract Canyon of the Colorado River is the site for their June 17-22 all-women river rafting trip. The diverse itinerary begins in Moab, Utah, and continues down the Colorado river through the middle of Canyonlands National Park. The first two days are an easy float past majestic sculptures of sandstone spires, mesas, monuments, and sheer cliff walls. On day three, the Green and Colorado Rivers meet, and for the next two days the river doubles in size and force, and the challenge begins along the rollicking rapids. On day five, the group floats to the take-out on Lake Powell and returns to Moab by small charter plane. The all-inclusive land cost for this trip is $862.

In July, Mariah operates similar tours to the Salmon River in Idaho and Rogue River in Southern Oregon. Between May and September they have one- and two-day whitewater rafting trips throughout California, ranging in cost from $98 to $325 land inclusive.

If you've made time to read this article, take a few moments to reflect on just how enriching a journey of self-discovery would be, and put such a trip on your 1996 travel wish list! Until next time, au revoir. ▼

Sandra Wilkins is owner and president of The Travel Partnership, Inc., a travel company proud to serve gay and lesbian travelers. For more information, call 713/526-4471.



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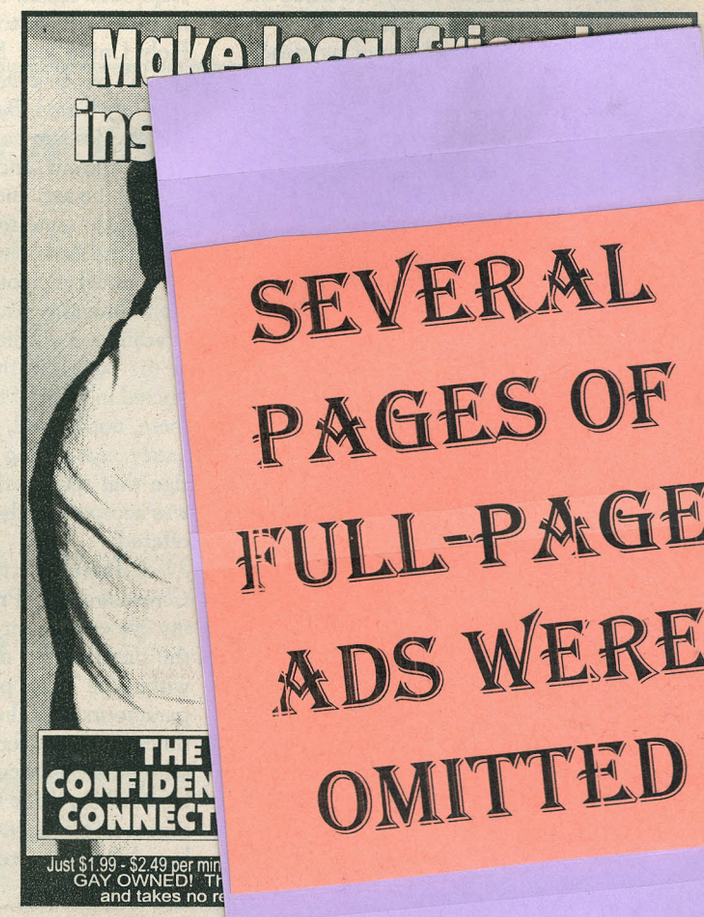
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What a World, What a World...



by Nancy Ford

Not that you asked, but March 20 marks what I consider to be the zenith example of my finding myself in the wrong place at the wrong time: it would have been the 20-year anniversary of my brief, albeit telling heterosexual wedding. Twenty, as you may or may not know, is the "China" anniversary. Wouldn't you know—I love to travel.

My husband. That sounds so funny now.... not *ha-ha* funny. More like *Why-is-it-that-after-one-of-your-limbs-is-amputated-you-can-still-feel-it?* funny.

I should have smelled trouble the moment the presiding minister refused to remove the word "obey" from the list of things I promised my husband. Nice guy that he was, we were doomed. *He'd say "Hetero!," I'd say "Homo!" He'd say "Fellatio!," I'd say "No-no!" Hetero! Homo! Fellatio! No-no!* Needless to say, we called the whole thing off.

I should have smelled trouble the moment the presiding minister refused to remove the word "obey" from the list of things I promised my husband.

Many of my friends, for one reason or another, have been previously, legally, and ceremoniously wed to a member of the opposite sex. A friend of a friend reports that, upon announcing that she, too, was divorcing her husband of four months despite a lavish celebration because of her own new-found lesbianism. Her mother could only respond, "But you haven't even finished your thank-you cards."

There's a reason all this wedding stuff has been on my mind. I recently received in the mail an invitation—a tasteful, lovely lavender card with a delicate purple heart airbrushed on the front.

Lynn And Rhonda met through a personal ad Lynn had run in *OutSmart*, back in October of '94. Lack of response determined the demise of that particular department in this magazine, but in Lynn's case, it was quality, not quantity that was key.

A woman read her ad, responded, and responded again. And again. And again. And the rest is history in the making. Their Holy Union was March 8. Who says it doesn't pay to advertise?

Holy Union, Batman. More and more gay and lesbian couples are flying in the face of the law, and promising each other to love, honor, and the whole bit. More and more same-sex lovebirds have followed the lead of over a thousand couples who joined each other in a mass commitment ceremony prior to the 1993 March on Washington. Adding to the supreme irony of the occasion, the ceremony was conducted in front of the IRS building. I was there, not to wed, but to witness. Fortunately, my wearing all white and holding a sign that screamed *Will Work For Wife* was accepted in the spirit in which it was offered.

A feature article in the *Houston Chronicle* called "Prisoners of Love" caught my eye one recent Sunday. It concerned the proliferation of marriage of inmates within the Texas prison system, either to paramours "on the outside" and, sometimes, even between the prisoners themselves. One particular groom was wed to his blushing bride while serving a 99-year sentence for aggravated rape, who was herself later incarcerated. The law says any prisoner who finds a willing partner on the outside is allowed to be married. All that is required is the filling out of a proxy form and mailing it to the county clerk.

Seems simple enough. If two committed, consenting adults want to, they can be legally married.

Okay. Let's see if we can understand this. Slowly now—tell us once more why two committed, consenting adults of the same sex can't legally marry? We're paying close attention and concentrating very hard.

As a result of all the positive gay activity in Hawaii regarding legalizing same-sex marriage, states either currently possessing or soon voting on legislation that would ban it include California, South Dakota, Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Tennessee, and Washington State. On the other hand, San Francisco's (naturally) city board of supervisors voted unanimously in January "to allow a civil ceremony at City Hall when gay couples register under the city's five-year-old domestic partnership policy. At $30 a ceremony, the city is expected to turn a profit from its broad-mindedness," as reported in the March 5, '96 issue of *The Advocate*. Betcha San Francisco turns a bigger profit on same-sex unions than the whole state of Texas does on inmate weddings.

Good luck to both of you, Lynn and Rhonda. Twenty years from now, I hope you're buying each other new china. I hope the whole marriage thing works better for you than it did for me. My personal experience left me considering a marriage license to be little more than a piece of paper documenting the transference of property from the father to the groom. Kind of like transferring the title when you buy a car.

So you see, speaking as a confirmed single lesbian, getting married is not something I would personally choose. But I do want the choice.

At least we're allowed to drive. ▼

Nancy Ford is a Houston-based comedian and frequent contributor to the gay and lesbian press.

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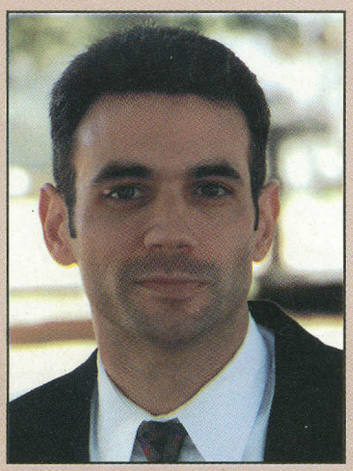
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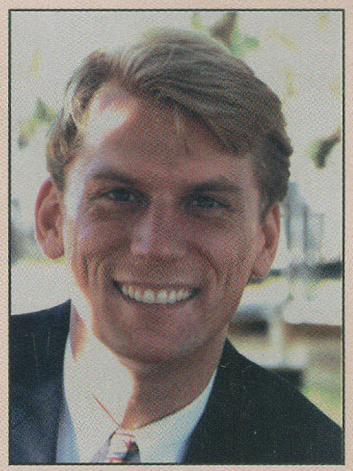
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