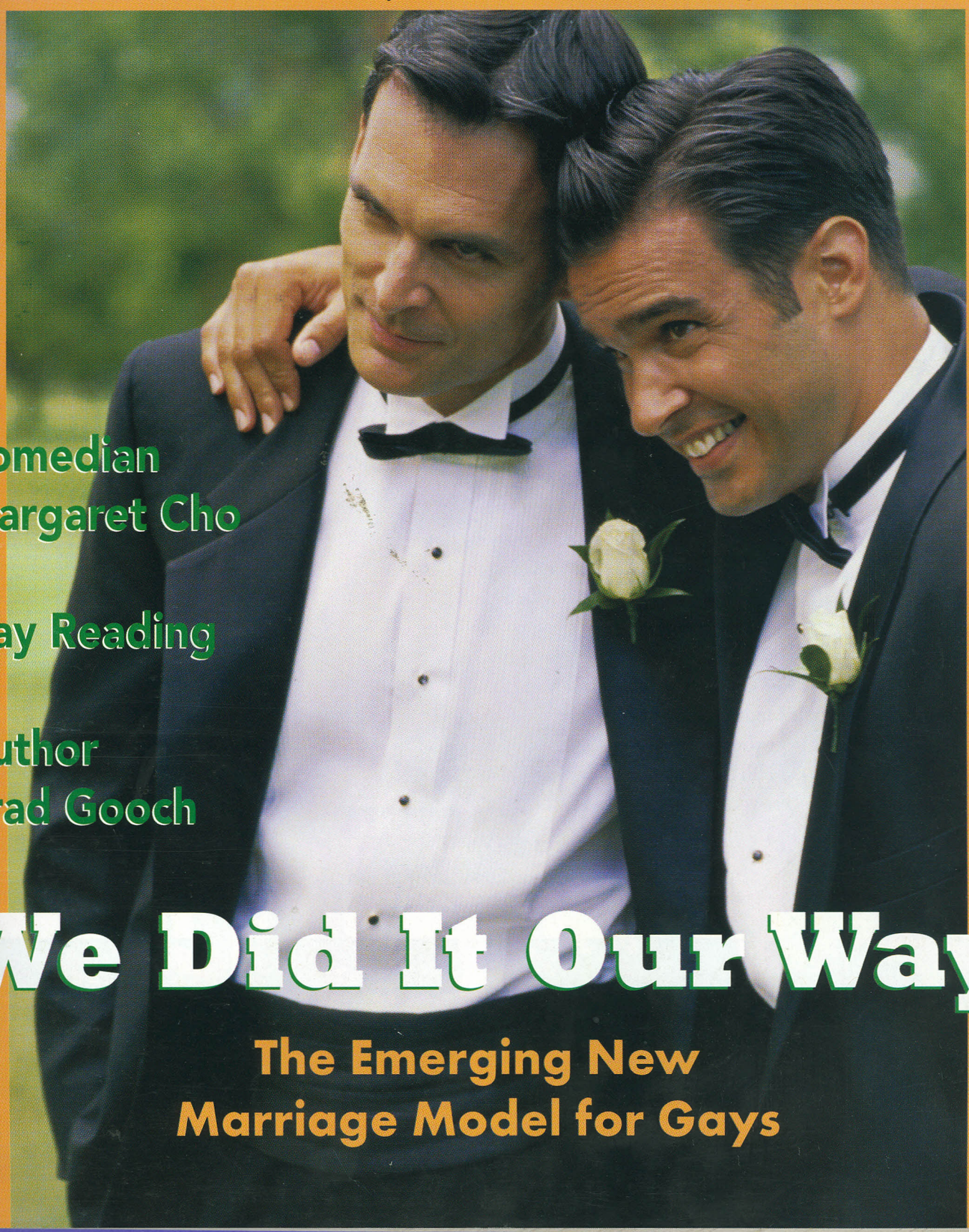
JULY 1999 • COMPLIMENTARY

OutSmart

Houston's Gay & Lesbian Monthly Magazine



Comedian
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We Did It Our Way

The Emerging New Marriage Model for Gays

TimeOut

by Steve Poruban

AIDS FOUNDATION HOUSTON

...Working Until It's Over



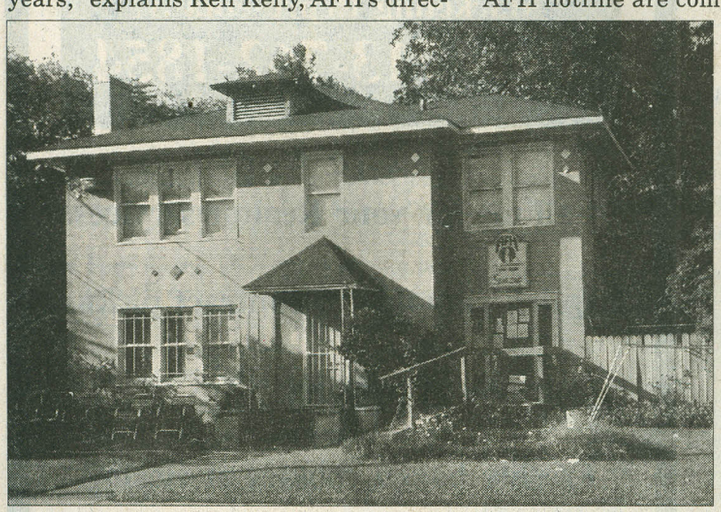
Stone Soup Food Pantry was moved to 608 Westheimer on Valentine's Day as pictured in 1985.

In Houston in 1982, as in countless other cities around the world, an increasing number of people were becoming infected with, and subsequently dying from, the then little-understood HIV virus. It was around that same time, too, that a group of civic-minded Houstonians and medical professionals joined forces to aid in making a difference and hopefully to save some lives.

The end result was a nonprofit agency committed to "improve the quality of life in the greater Houston community through HIV/AIDS education, health care, social services, and volunteerism," better known to most of us as AIDS Foundation Houston (AFH).

"AFH has really evolved over the years," explains Ken Kelly, AFH's director of communications. "It started out with a group of people trying to make a difference and has grown into a $4.2 million agency. We currently have a complete array of client services and our education department is very much out there in the community and abroad, and has won numerous awards."

And Kelly couldn't be more correct. AFH is one of the most multifaceted organizations in the Houston area, if not in the country. And like many nonprofit agencies, at the core of the wide success and continued growth of AFH is its volunteers, who, after attending a one-day training program, are placed in one of many client service areas. Programs such as Stone Soup and the AFH hotline are completely volunteer-driven services.



The McAdory House was the nation's first privately funded residence for people with AIDS and the home of Stone Soup Pantry in 1984.

"Bragging on our staff here," says Kelly, "we have an incredible volunteer department. They do a really good job in managing and having a good relationship with all of our volunteers. Plus I think that they see that, with the work they do, they really do make a difference."

Education has been at the center AFH's work since its inception. In 1982, AFH created the first educational booklet on AIDS, the AIDS-Talk manual, which is still used to this day, albeit in an updated form.

"I think that's why it was significant, because it was the first," recalls Kelly. "And it's my understanding that it was just so well written." So well written, in fact, that the Texas Department of Heath recommends the booklet as "the model prevention curriculum for Health Education/Risk Reduction service providers in Texas."

Every year, AFH's education department, also started in 1982, reaches as many as 50,000 individuals. The department's current project is AFH's gay men health initiative, Project CAESAR (Community Advocates for Education, Safer sex And Risk reduction).

"Recently, we are working within the prison system," said Kelly. Working with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, AFH is training inmates to become trainers for peer-based education and to teach about HIV and AIDS transmission. "It has proven to be quite successful so far," says Kelly. The program, like many of the services provided by AFH, already has a waiting list filled with interested participants.

TIMELINE 1982-84

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

1982 A group of medical professionals and other civic leaders joined forces against the growing crisis of HIV and AIDS in Houston, forming AIDS Foundation Houston (AFH). For more information on its genesis, see related column, opposite page. Now in its 17th year, Basic Brothers was founded by Richard Wiederholt. Now retired, Wiederholt and his first lover, Jerry Prox—who has since passed away in 1989—opened up a 400-sq. ft. shop at 1624 Richmond Ave. that featured resale merchandise such as antiques, bricabrac, and clothes—particularly Army clothes and combat boots. The couple chose the name "Basic Brothers," says Wiederholt, "because we didn't know what we were going to be doing, or which direction we were going to be headed." About 12 years ago, the store was moved to its present location on Westheimer, at which time the couple abandoned resale completely and began to carry new clothes, including drag gear. The store's key to success? "You need to listen to your customers," Wiederholt told *OutSmart*, "because they know the market as well as we do, and they know what they want." Besides listening, Basic Brothers also is involved in the community: selling tickets to countless community events and donating gift certificates to numerous of Houston's nonprofit organizations. "I've always felt, from the time we opened the store, that the more we give to the community, they're going to give it back to us," notes Wiederholt.



Basic Brothers first location at 1624 Richmond Ave.

1983 Texas Gay Rodeo Association (TGRA) started as a nonprofit organization, which helped to raise funds for charities through events preceding and including the Houston rodeo, held every year in November. The slogan of TGRA members, comprising both men and women, is "to accomplish the common goal of community spirit, public benefit, and a better gay profile overall." Starting as a Halloween party, Outrage Inc. was organized to "put on fabulous events to raise funds for Houston area HIV/AIDS charities." Since that time, Outrage has put on its Hallowween Party event, raising more than $93,000 for local charities through 1997. Outrage now produces the Construction Party, one of the hot events during Pride.



Basic Brothers (l-r) Richard Wiederholt, Cody Holt, Ken Claude, and Bill Pearse.

1984 Two social organizations formed to add to the realm of recreational activities for gays and lesbians: Frontrunners and the Houston Outdoor Group (HOG). While the former of the two promotes competitive and recreational running for men and women, the latter is all about roughing it through camping, hiking, biking, and other outdoor-related events. And things get even busier from 1985-1987, so look for the happenings of these times next month.

Timeline constructed from personal interviews, personal recollections, and from information found in the Houston Gay & Lesbian Yellow Pages.

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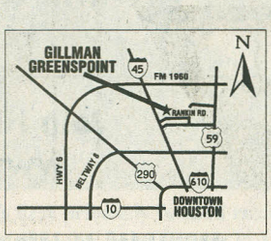
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Also helping "get the word out" about HIV and AIDS is AFH's hotline, started in 1983. Today, the service responds to 2,500 callers every year. "When we answer the phone," explains Kelly, "we not only answer questions about our services we offer or programs we are involved in, but it's a complete resource guide to anybody who can call in. Anything from, 'How do you get HIV?' to 'What is HIV?' to 'Where can I get a test done?' to 'What services are in areas outside what we do here at AFH?' It's a wealth of information."

AFH has discovered over the years that working toward conquering AIDS, oftentimes, takes more than education. Its housing programs, for example, set a precedent for many such programs around the country. The latest of these, Project LifeRoad, is a multi-leveled program that combines several services offered by the agency.



Groceries for Stone Soup are collected from the Houston Food Bank and private donations.

"LifeRoad is becoming an incredible model," says Kelly. "We feel here at AFH that, the 'AIDS system' throughout the country has set up an incredible system of taking care of HIV-positive individuals and those with AIDS with regard to shelter, food, and drug-assistance programs. I think that LifeRoad encapsulates all of these elements.

"It's really anything that anybody who is HIV positive and homeless could hope for. You have your housing, furnishing, medical care, psychosocial care, job and educational training, substance abuse support groups all encompassed in a collaboration between eight other agencies," says Kelly.

These agencies are: Bering-Omega Services, CASA, Milam House, People With AIDS Coalition-Houston, Steven's House, The BLOCK, Vita Living, and Sage & Associates.

Kelly notes: "We already have some folks going through the different levels, and people that want to work the program, it really works out really well for them. We've actually had at least two people returning to work through our partnership with Vita Living. The goal is to get the people with HIV empowered, get them, first of all, cleaned up and off of drugs and alcohol, get them stable, get them on the proper HIV medication, and then empower them to get their life back."

The work remains challenging for organizations like AFH. At the top of the list of challenges for the new millenium? The increasing

number of HIV infections continues to climb, even with education programs such as these.

"If you look at the increasing rate of new HIV infection and couple that with people with HIV living longer—which in itself is incredible news—it puts a strain on those organizations like ours because we're having to take care of both ends," explains Kelly.

"We're getting new people each month and still taking care of the existing clients. So it continually puts a strain on our resources to provide food or shelter or whatever. That would be our challenge, I think, keeping pace with the growing numbers, and unfortunately they're growing."

Are we close to finding a cure for AIDS? Kelly would like to be more optimistic:

"There has been incredible amounts of progress made in cocktail therapies, and progress made toward an AIDS vaccine but there is still no cure and it's important for people to understand that."

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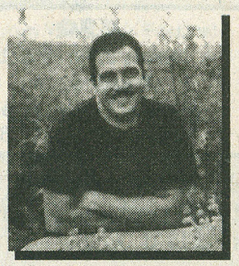
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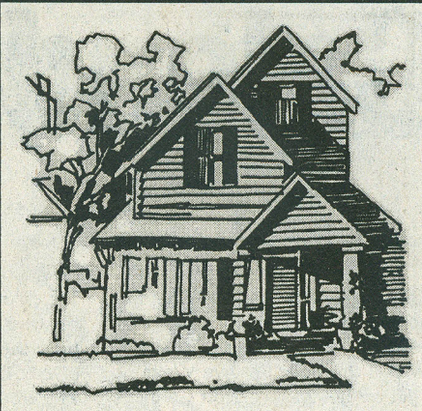
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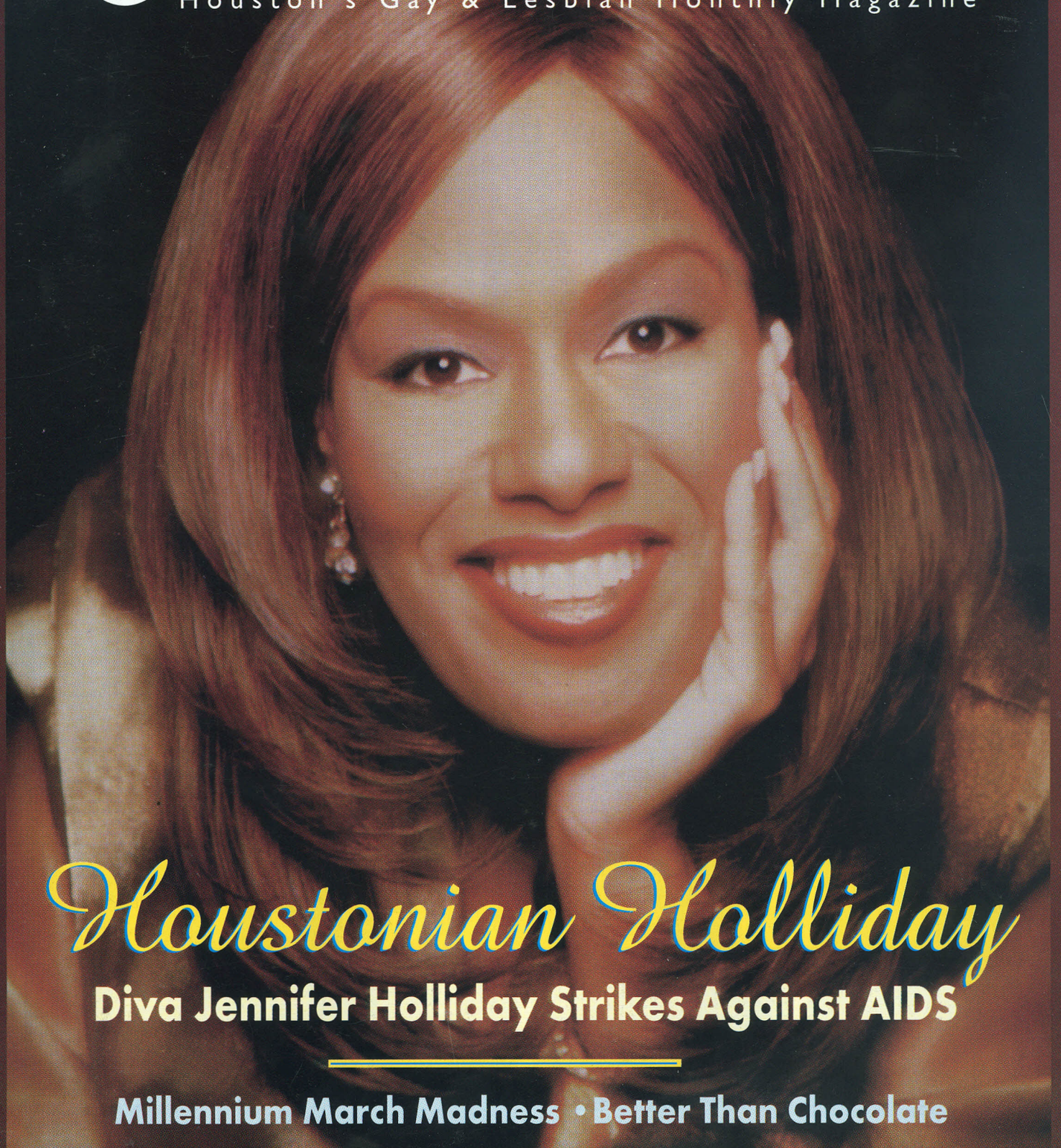
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Houstonian Holliday

Diva Jennifer Holliday Strikes Against AIDS

Millennium March Madness • Better Than Chocolate

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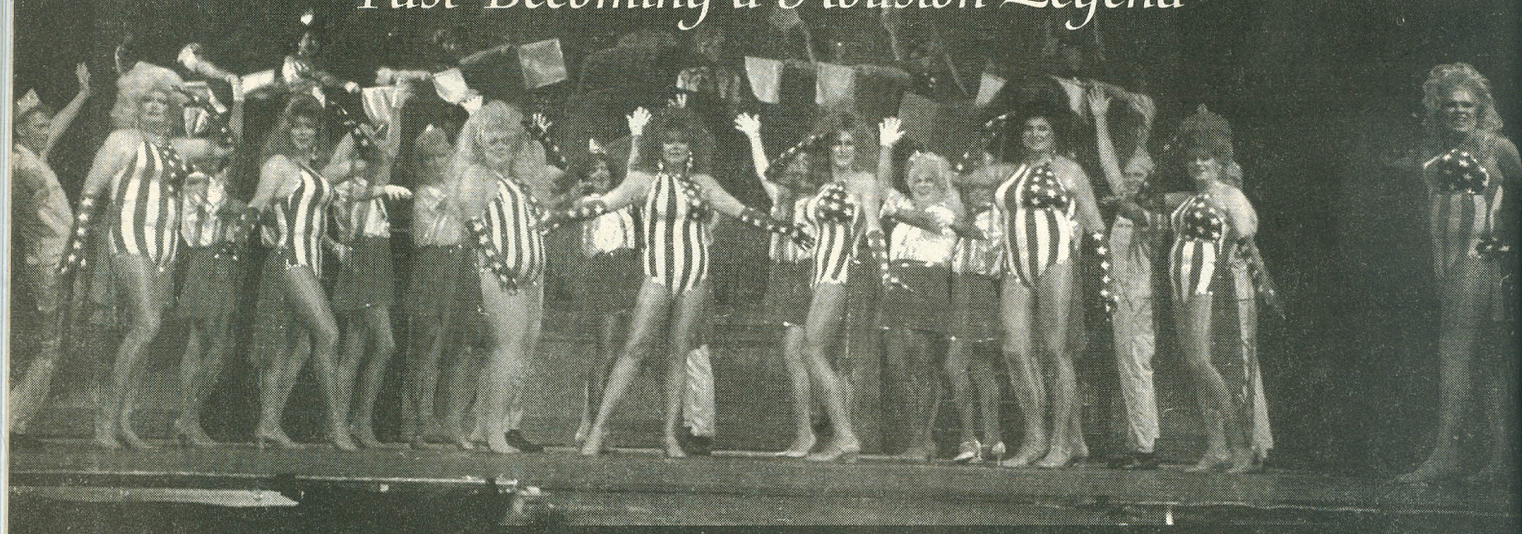
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TimeOut
by George Rimmey

MISS CAMP AMERICA

Fast Becoming a Houston Legend



The Red, White & Blue Closing Act 1995

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If you were to pick one trait typical of the gays in this millennium it probably would be our sense of humor and clever repartee we have all come to call "camp." At the beginning of the century Oscar Wilde was the master of camp. He was soon followed by Noel Coward and later by many other notables. Camp was established as a special brand of humor and joy to gays facing almost unendurable persecution. "When you can laugh at yourself and your problems—they disappear." Through the 1950s camp was an important part of gay life, since most of our socializing was at small private parties behind closed doors.

In the 1960s the sexual revolution was going full force. Blacks were striking out for civil rights, and hippies were creating havoc everywhere. Consequently, police harassment of gays pretty much came to an end. Gays were now able to expand into many fields. The first political movements, newspapers, magazines, and a variety of social clubs were begun. Energy was soon diverted from trying to be the most clever, the most funny, or what was called the campiest gay person to advocacy and the activism still present in gay society.

However, in September of 1969 "two newlyweds," Pat Petty and David Stewart, would take steps to see that camp would continue to thrive and keep going strong in Houston. Petty, with a special talent for organization, had been conducting a series of small-town beauty pageants throughout the state, in addition to his job as a salesman. He decided that month that he would have his own gay pageant to coincide with the Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City, and he and David invited eight friends to their apartment to participate. With David and his eight guests, he had the necessary 10 contestants to vie for the Miss America Crown. However, one of the guests showed up with a friend, and the number was now 11. Not wanting to exclude any of their guests from participating, Petty crowned himself Miss Camp America 1969 and relinquished the crown an hour later when the new Miss Camp America was picked by a draw among the other 10. A crown, robe, and scepter was furnished, along with a very long speech covering the duties of the new Miss Camp America—Coretta Scott King.

The following year 50 people were invited to the newlyweds' apartment for the pageant and each was given the name of a state, with a script that covered that state. The format began to take on the structure of what has today become the annual Miss Camp America Pageant.

In the years that followed, the pageant was held in a series of small clubs. Then, in 1976, things changed when Bill Halbert, with his unique talent for design and construction of theater sets, became a member of the organization. That year the event was held at the Sheraton Hotel, complete with sets, props, scenery, and even a revolving stage. Miss Camp America was now on its way to becoming one of the most popular drag shows in America.

Over the years the Miss Camp America Pageant has been held at the now-shuttered Tower Theater and Music Hall, the Alley Theater, and Cullen Performance Hall at the University of Hous-

TIMELINE 1985-87

Each month OutSmart continues its timeline series on the past 30 years of Houston gay history.

1985 The gay and lesbian community continued to emerge with the formation of organizations such as the **AIDS Interfaith Council, the Houston Forum**, and **Houston Pride**. However, it was the explosive opening of the **Heaven Dance Club** that got people moving. Unfortunately, Heaven couldn't sustain the heat of being the hottest dance club; it closed in 1997 when it caught fire and sent screaming queens prancing out the door. Heaven was expected to resurrect as South Beach last year, but everyone is still waiting....

1986 **Bering Omega Community Service Foundation** began when then 76-year-old Eleanor Munger, while visiting local AIDS patients at Jefferson Davis Hospital, decided to seek out a place for a residential hospice for medically indigent, terminal-phase AIDS patients. Munger sought out space for the proposed center, attaining only one hospital bed at first, and Omega House was born. The housing eventually grew to three beds, and today, the nonprofit, volunteer-supported foundation serves hundreds in the Montrose area. Omega's list of services has also grown over the years and now includes centers for financial assistance, psychosocial support, dental care, daycare, as well as providing a support network. **PWA (People With AIDS) Coalition** also began to provide direct services and support for those with HIV/AIDS. Today, the coalition serves more than 1,600 people in Harris and neighboring counties. Some of the key coalition services include the warehouse program, which provides furniture and household goods to indigent PWAs free of charge. Other coalition programs include case management, the volunteer program at Thomas Street Clinic, emergency rental, and utility assistance. The coalition prides itself as being "the only Houston organization of, by, and for people living with HIV/AIDS [in which] 51 percent of its executive board is HIV positive."



Bowlers have fun at past Strikes Against AIDS, one of the PWA Coalition's largest fund-raisers.



1987 **DIFFA/Houston (Design Industries Foundation Fighting AIDS)** boasts itself as "the largest source of private dollars for AIDS care in the greater Houston area." Since starting up, DIFFA/Houston has provided more than $2million for HIV/AIDS care, research, treatment, and preventive education, according to the organization. **H.A.T.C.H. (Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals)** was started to provide sponsorship and role models for Houston's gay and lesbian population between the ages of 15-21. "It is the goal of H.A.T.C.H. to enable youth to be positive contributors to the gay and lesbian community and to society as a whole," says H.A.T.C.H.'s mantra. The organization holds weekly meetings, which "provide peer support, esteem-building activities, educational and motivational speakers, social and recreational opportunities, small group discussions, and HIV/STD information."

Timeline constructed from personal interviews, personal recollections, and documented information.

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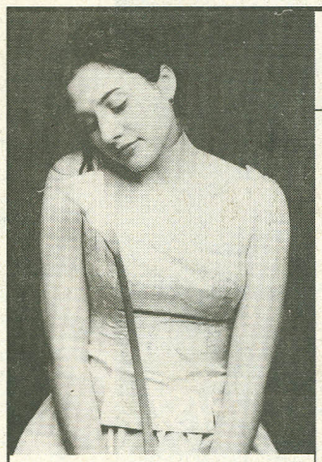


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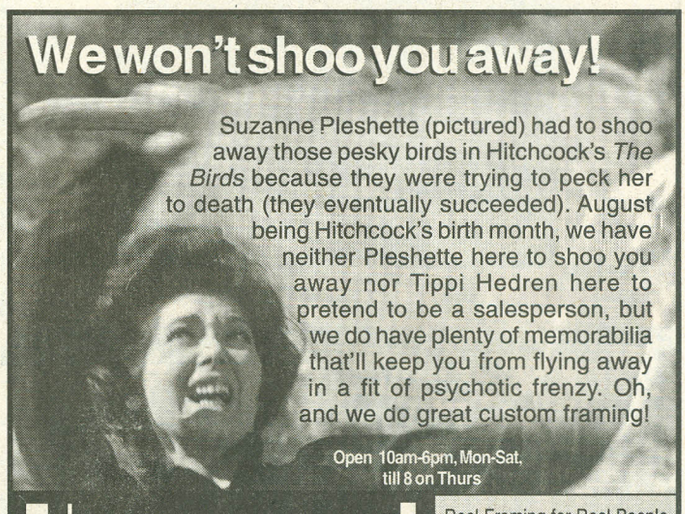
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ton. Performances held at the Music Hall attracted nearly 2,000 patrons.

The pageant closely follows the format of the Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City. The participants compete in evening gown, swimsuit, and talent presentation. When two-piece swimsuits and bare feet were permitted in Atlantic City, Miss Camp did as well. The only difference in the format of the two is that contestants in Miss Camp were picked by a drawing process; thus the words "BEAUTY CONTEST" went out the door. A Miss Camp America contestant can be six feet tall, anorexic, or a full-figured beauty of undescribable girth. The humor and bizarre antics seen and heard on stage during a Miss Camp America Pageant make it a league of its own. There is always a surprise around the corner.



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Vegas Showgirls 1993

In 1993 during Desert Storm, a contestant wearing a military evening gown came on stage riding a camel. The overfed camel soon began "pooping" all over the stage, and the other contestants ran for the hills, leaving the sole contestant by himself. The following year history repeated itself when the same contestant appeared in evening gown presentation with a 12-foot boa constrictor, rather than a feathered boa, wrapped around his neck and arms. Yep, he gained control of the stage for himself once again.

The pageant each year also has several major production numbers which are performed by the entire cast. You will see more feathers, rhinestones, and sequins during those numbers than most people see in a lifetime. Another highlight of the pageant is the presentation of the Princess Paza Marcella Borghese Taylor Award, which was created in 1984 in memory of Jim Taylor, the first MCA member lost to the battle against AIDS. The award recognizes the Miss Camp America member who best exemplifies the fine art of camp. Winners are selected by the membership.

In June of 1992 Miss Camp America became a non-profit organization and begsn raising funds for AIDS. In that year alone the pageant raised $14,000 for local organizations. During the years 1997-1998 a combined amount of $150,000 was raised. To date Miss Camp America has distributed in exess of $359,500 to some of the most important AIDS support groups in Houston.

In addition to the pageant, Miss Camp America has two other fund-raisers for AIDS each year, both in keeping with the theme of camp—the "Deb U Not Ball" in February and "Wigs on Fire" in June. The Deb U Not Ball introduces new MCAF members to

the public. A "coming out" party, so to speak. If you have never been to a debutante ball (or a coming out party) this is not to be missed. Wigs on Fire is a party where everyone attending has an opportunity and is encouraged to participate. The most outrageous, bizarre wigs, hats, crowns, or whatever else someone can get on top of his head appear at this party. There is no way to describe this one. Plan to attend.

In 1988, the reigning Miss Camp America Lana Love created a projectcalled "Care Bear" that was quickly embraced by the membership Four times a year the Miss Camp America membership contributes its time, talent, and own money to decorate stuffed bears and to present them to HIV/AIDS patients in area hospitals and hospices.

The Miss Camp America Pageant in recent years has hired professionals to help with the evening's entertainment. Ms. Stephanie Mitchell now does the choreography and Mr. Danny Williams has been the master of ceremonies for the past few years. Willams, who normally commands impressive fees for his talent, waived his fees upon hearing of MCA's role in raising funds for AIDS charities.

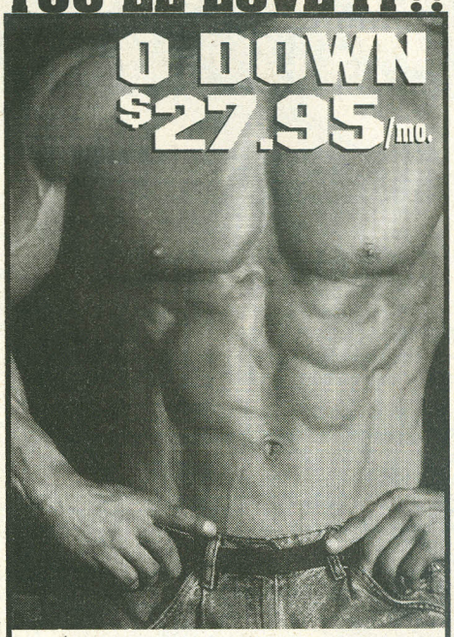
Of the many awards received by the organization over the years, the most cherished are the letters of commendation from governors Ann Richards in 1994 and George Bush in 1995, acknowledging the Miss Camp America's annual evening of joy and laughter and important fundraising for AIDS-related charities.

Harold Myrick, the current Miss Camp America president, said, "Not only the joy and laughter, but the funds for AIDS makes all the hard work worthwhile." He said that this year's performance will cover a period from the 1920s to the end of the millennium.

The 1999 pageant will be held at 8 p.m. on Sept. 18 at the Lilly and Roy Cullen Theater at the Wortham Center. Tickets may be purchased by calling 713/940-STAR. If you want to have a laugh of a lifetime, don't miss this "camp" event.

George Rimmey, is a community advocate with a long history of charitable involvement. He can be reached care of this publication at GeorgeRimmey@outsmartmagazine.com

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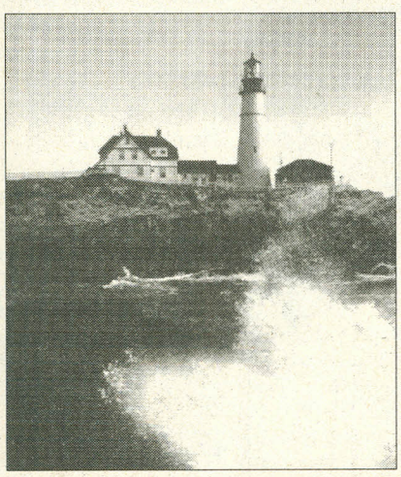
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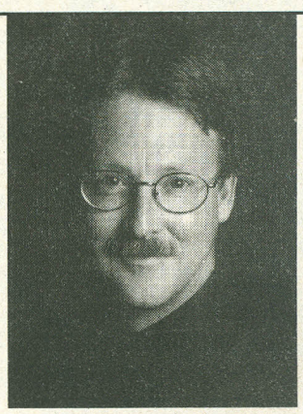


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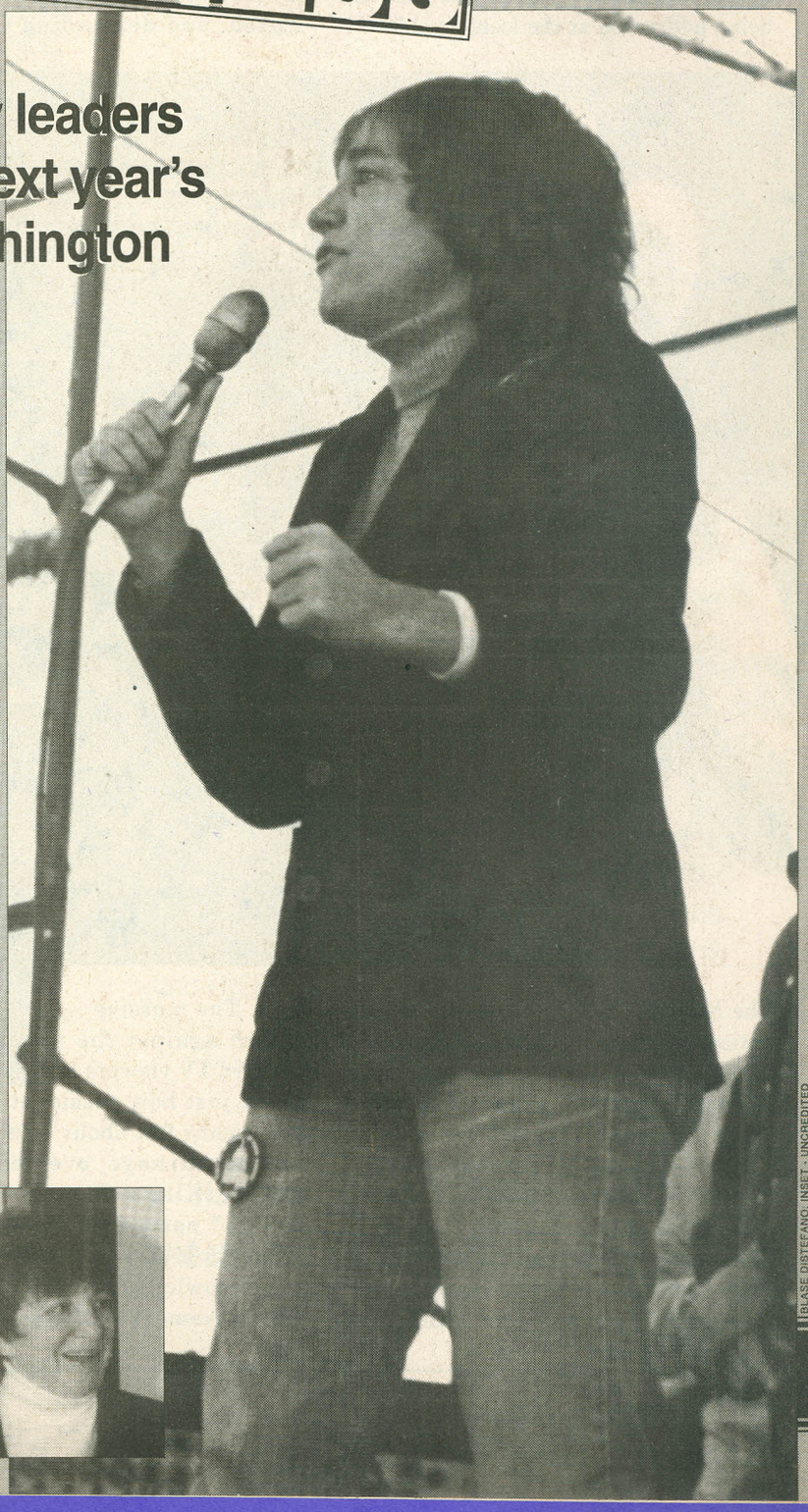
Why local and national gay leaders are divided over plans for next year's Millennium March On Washington

by Bradley David

While the world waits with anticipation to see if the technological doomsdayers are correct in their forecasts of mass chaos at the stroke of midnight on January 1, 2000, the gay community may be faced with a Y2K problem of our own. Ambitious plans for a Millennium March on Washington—scheduled for April 30, 2000—have been met with extreme opposition, even from some of our movement's most high-profile movers and shakers.

U.S. Rep. Barney Frank, the highest openly gay elected official in the country, has called the march "a diversion of resources" and "not a good idea."

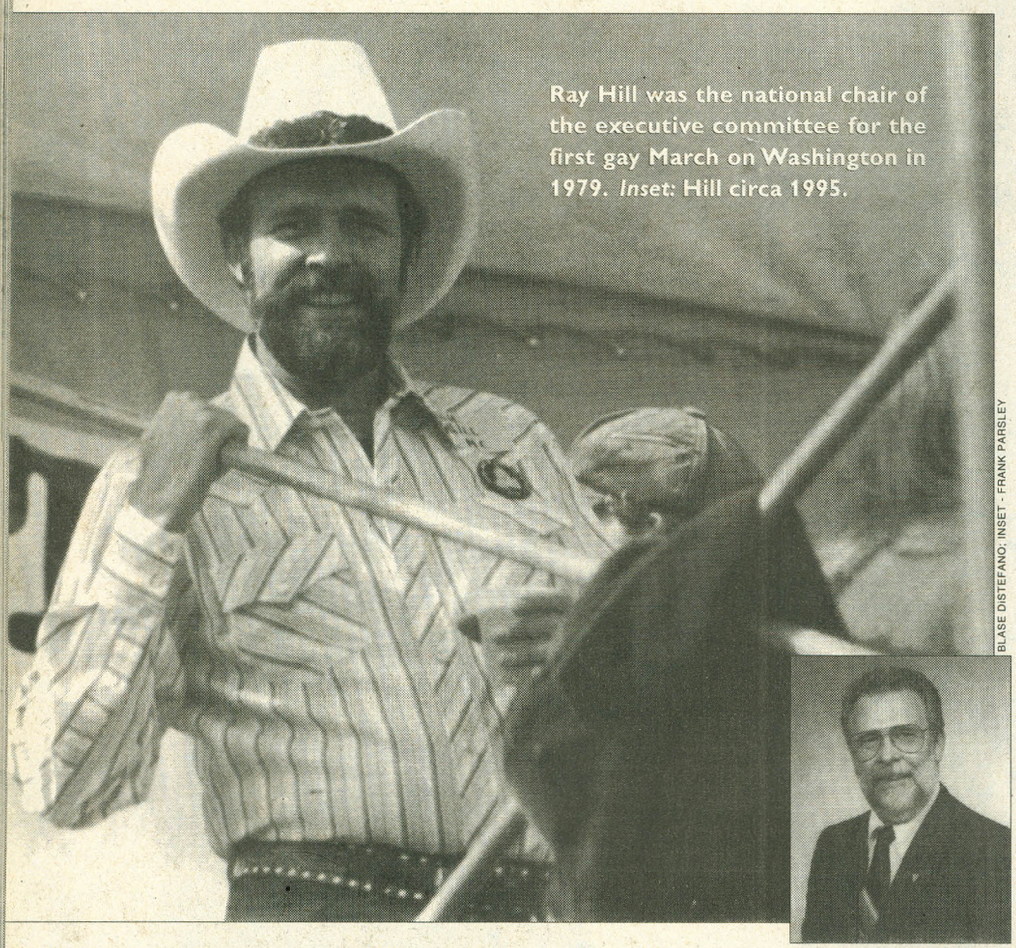
Other activists complain that, unlike previous marches in '79, '87, and '93, this one is being run by a small group of elitist national leaders who decided on the theme and focus of the march before inviting activists at the grassroots level to be involved.



Robin Tyler co-emceed the 1979 March on Washington. *Inset:* Tyler is executive producer of the 2000 March.

BLASE DISTEFANO; INSET - UNCREDITED

"Each of the three previous marches had a process that involved lots of different kinds of grassroots organizations and leaders, and that's what you need for a national march to work," says Urvashi Vaid, the dynamic lesbian visionary and orator who currently heads the New York-based Policy Institute of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF). "You need discussion. You need smart people from all over the country giving input about how the march will impact key issues that are being addressed at the local level."



Ray Hill was the national chair of the executive committee for the first gay March on Washington in 1979. *Inset:* Hill circa 1995.

BLASE DISTEFANO; INSET - FRANK PARSLEY

The NGLTF, the oldest national organization in the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) movement, withdrew its initial support for the march in April when NGLTF executive director Kerry Lobel resigned her seat on the march's board of directors. In her letter of resignation, Lobel stated, "The board has largely ignored the fundamental issues that led me to become involved: why we should march, the agenda, and the involvement of the entire GLBT community. I cannot serve on a board that will not open itself to greater input and scrutiny from the communities we claim to represent."

Political marches on our nation's capital have been a hugely important tradition in American history. When people think of the suffrage movement, they automatically replay in their minds the grainy black and white film footage of suffragettes, dressed in white, marching on Washington, and demanding the right to vote. The massive march against the war in Vietnam allowed TV viewers across the country to see just how passionately so many Americans felt about bringing an end to the carnage overseas. Martin Luther King's famous "I Have A Dream" speech at the civil rights march in 1963 forced many Americans to acknowledge the righteousness of that movement's efforts.

But more importantly, marches are empowering and often life-altering experiences for the individual marchers.

"It doesn't make a damn bit of difference on Capitol Hill—we do this for ourselves," says longtime local activist Ray Hill, who calls himself "the old man of the Houston movement." Hill says the purpose of marches "is to reinforce your own troops and to build your own movement."

While he plans to attend the Millennium March, Hill has been critical of corporate involvement in the event. Unlike previous marches that have refused to accept corporate sponsorship (often resulting in massive debt after the marchers have gone home), the Millennium March will be sponsored by PlanetOut, which has pledged $250,000 in cash and plans to carry the event on a live worldwide cybercast.

"If we convert from marches based on grassroots politics to marches that are merely commercial enterprises, the future of our movement will be for profit and not for principle," says Hill, who was national chair of the executive committee for the historic first gay March on Washington in 1979.

Hill also has problems with the event's executive producer Robin Tyler, with whom he emceed the rally at the '79 march.

"She stands to make several million dollars off of this," Hill alleges, referring to Tyler's booking of 3,000 Washington hotel rooms through her own travel business to re-sell to march participants.

Tyler, a pioneer in the gay rights movement as well as the world's first openly gay or lesbian comedian, says that any profits made from the brokering of hotel rooms will go back to the march.

"As a tour operator, I knew to call and secure these rooms," says Tyler. "I think it was a great idea because apparently the last march only collected $15,000 in revenue from hotel rooms, and we'll be able to collect almost a third of a million dollars. People have also said that I'm getting the T-shirt money, but all of the proceeds go to the march and all of the contracts are in the name of the march."

Another of Tyler's detractors is Houston activist Deborah Bell, who spent 10 months in Washington as national organizer of the '93 march and is now a member of the Ad Hoc Committee For An Open Process, an organization formed specifically to pressure Millennium March organizers for more inclusive planning. Bell had a run-in with Tyler in May at the Texas Lesbian Conference in Dallas, where Tyler, a featured speaker at the event, objected to Bell handing out anti-march flyers rather than following the conference rule to place leaflets on a designated literature table.

"It's just an example of the way these people behave," Bell says of the march organizers. "You have to question what's going on here, that they're not willing to be open."

Tyler says she thinks the march's vocal critics are small in number, citing a recent poll in *The Advocate* indicating that 86 percent of respondents hope to attend the march.



TOP - TERRY GYDESEN; BOTTOM - GREG JEU

Top: **Lisa Sullivan, Nancy Ford, and Greg Jeu demonstrate their pride at the 1993 March on Washington.**
Bottom: **The Houston, Texas, contingent make their mark in Washington, D.C. at the March on Washington in 1993.**

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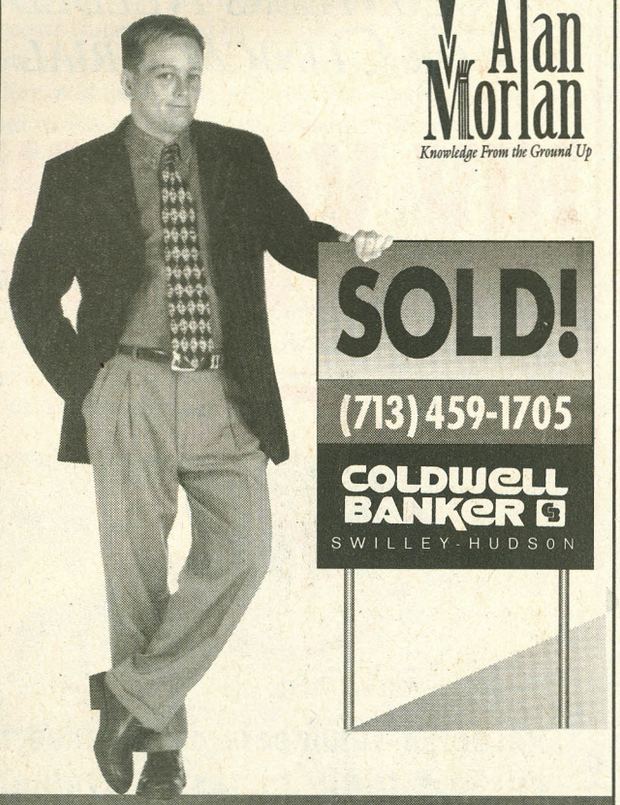
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OPEN LINES OF COMMUNICATION

MMOW distributes community ballot for platform preparations

Over the next several weeks, supporters of the Millennium March On Washington (MMOW) are launching "the largest grassroots polling operation in the history of the glbt justice movement," said Jim Birkitt with MMOW communications.

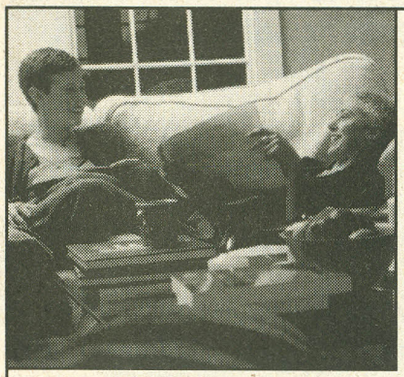
As part of the platform preparations for the Millennium March On Washington—the 4th national glbt march and the first human rights march of the new millennium—MMOW organizers have created a ballot to determine what areas of interest will be addressed at the march. Thirteen key issues have been identified on the ballot as predominant concerns for the community.

In past marches, participants had to travel to designated cities to participate in the platform preparation. Now, for the first time, members of the community have the opportunity to have a direct vote and voice in the platform of the upcoming march on Washington. The platform survey ballot will be distributed by volunteers and grassroots activists across the country, or participants can vote on-line at www.mmow.org.

Platform Survey Ballot

Cast your ballot for the platform of the Millennium March On Washington for Equality
April 30, 2000, Washington, D.C.

You can help make history! For the first time, every member of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender communities—and our families, friends, and allies—has the opportunity to vote for the



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"I think it's a few people and they've just been allowed a voice," Tyler says. "I think when some people talk about diversity, they mean diversity as long as it fits in with their political agenda. The majority of gays and lesbians in this country are not highly to the right or highly to the left. They're essentially like everybody else; they're moderate or they're centrist. We have to be able to work around what we agree on and not kill each other over what we don't agree on."



UNCREDITED

Houston activist Deborah Bell, a national organizer of the '93 march, is pressuring Millennium March organizers for more inclusive planning.

Tyler calls the infighting among activists "extremely dysfunctional," and says "it's the pathology of oppression to do this to each other. It's like fighting within a family—it becomes so crazy that you don't even remember what you're fighting about. Continuing to waste our energy by fighting with each other is very sad and extremely self-serving, and I believe it is why leftism has seen such a demise in this country."

The march board tried to be inclusive, says Tyler, by creating a Leadership Coun-

continued on page 66

March on Washington platform.

Take a moment to make your voice heard by casting your vote. While all of the issues below are important to the glbt communities, please vote for only your five of top concerns.

Ballots must be completed in full to be counted, including name and address. All information will remain confidential. Names and addresses will not be used, released, or sold to any other organization or for any purpose other than MMOW. They will only be used to follow up with 1) those interested in serving as march volunteers and organizers, 2) those interested in lobbying Congress during the march, and 3) those indicating they have not yet registered to vote.

Ballots will be collected through Nov. 30.

VOTE
for up to five issues:

___ Hate Crimes Legislation
___ Right to Marry
___ Non-Discrimination in Employment
___ Right to Serve Our Country
___ Lesbian Health Issues
___ AIDS/HIV Issues
___ Child Custody and Adoption Rights
___ GLBT Aging Issues
___ GLBT Youth Issues
___ Immigration Rights
___ Overturning Anti-GLBT Laws
___ Right to Privacy/Choice
___ GLBT Global Issues
___ Other: _____

Name _____
E-Mail Address: _____
Mailing Address _____
City: _____ State _____ Zip: _____

Do you plan to attend the march on Washington?
__Yes __No __Not Sure

Are you willing to serve as a volunteer in your community for the march? __Yes __No

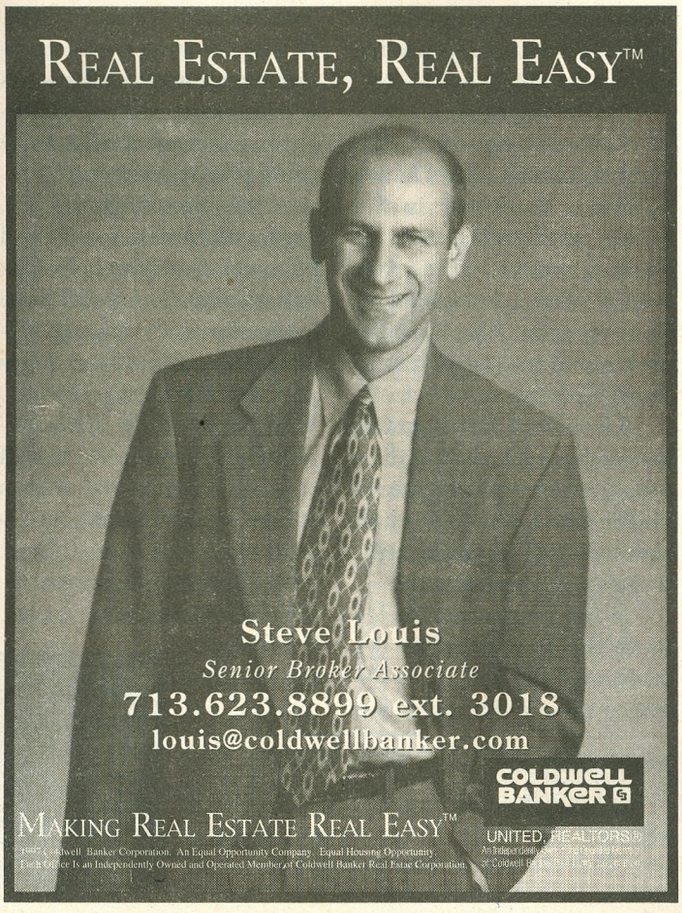
Are you registered to vote? __Yes __No

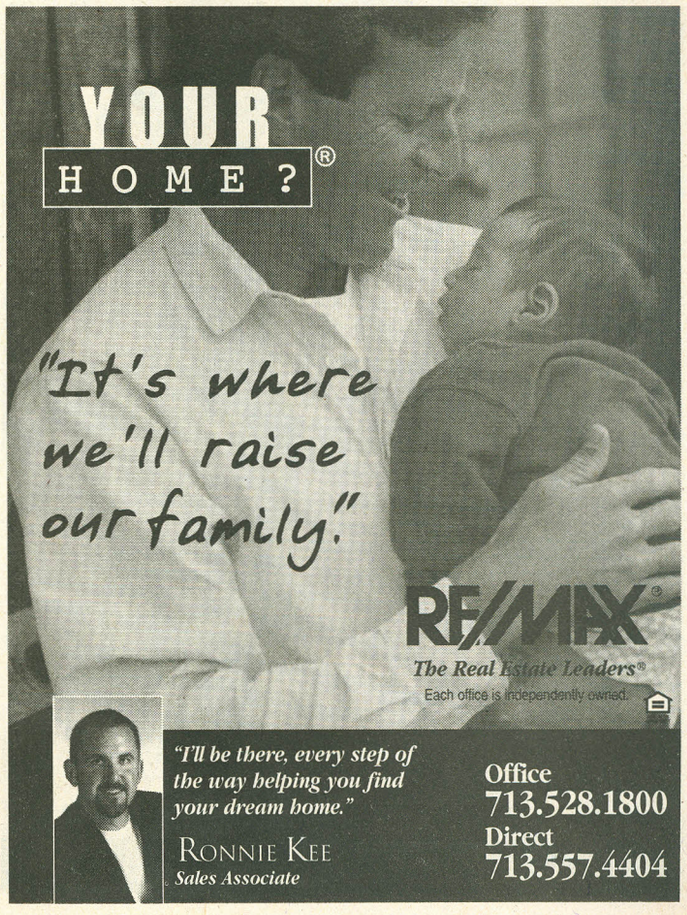
Would you be willing to visit your Congressperson while attending the march? __Yes __No

I self-identify as:
__Lesbian __Gay Male __Transgender
__Bisexual __Straight __Other

An e-mail version of this ballot is available by writing to MMOW2000@aol.com. You may reproduce and distribute this ballot in your community. Ballots may be faxed to 818/893-1593 or mailed to:

Millennium March On Washington Platform Ballot
15842 Chase St.
North Hills, CA 91343

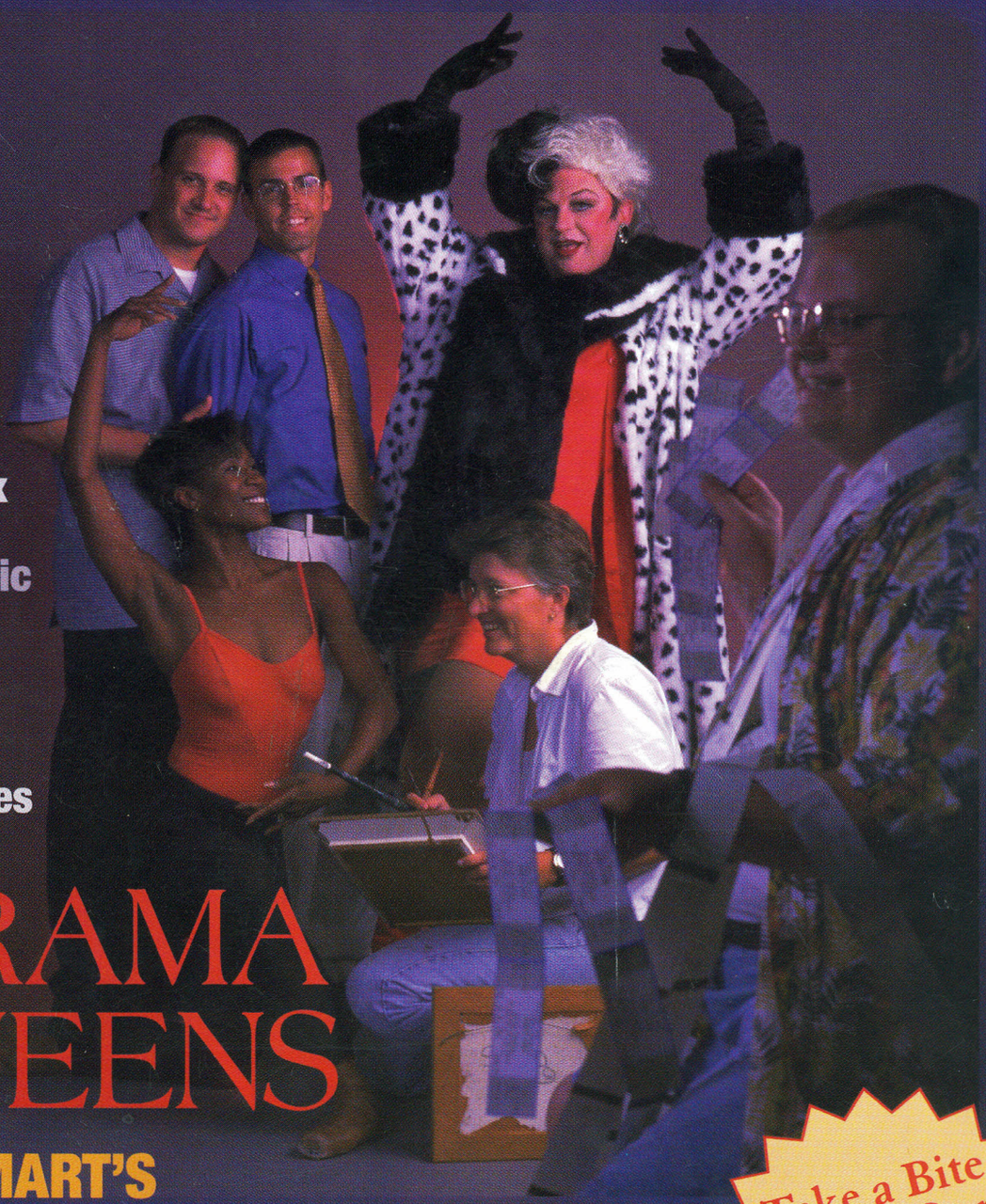




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Houston's Gay & Lesbian Monthly Magazine



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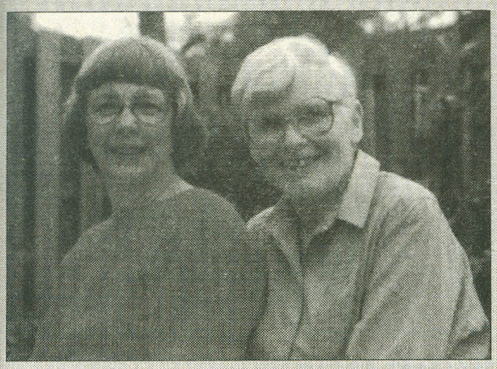
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OUTSMART'S ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT ISSUE

Take a Bite Out of Our New Dine-Out Section

Lesbians Over Age 50



Arden Eversmeyer and Charlotte Avery



LOAF at the 1994 Gay Pride Parade

Older Lesbians Find Solace in Sisterhood

About a decade ago, when Arden Eversmeyer was faced with the loss of her partner of 33 years, she discovered something: Houston didn't have anything to offer in the way of support for her kind—a recently singled gay female, in her mid-50s, and very isolated. "This is the kind of isolation I'm talking about," she explains. "All of a sudden, you're out there, by yourself and saying, 'What am I going to do?'" That's when she took a little trip excursion to the West Coast in pursuit of some answers.

"I was looking for community," recalls Eversmeyer. "I was looking for women my age [and] I was already in my mid-50s, and they just were unavailable."

It was in San Francisco that she got her hands on some really good information from a couple of senior organizations, including GLOE (Gay & Lesbian Outreach to Elders). She also wrote New York City's senior social and service group, SAGE (Senior Action in a Gay Environment), and again, got some more ideas.

"And with that," she said, "I came back to Houston and with some younger women in the community, we did a little brainstorming." And with that, Lesbians Over Age Fifty (LOAF) was born. The group held its first meeting on the third Sunday of October in 1987. Six women attended.

"The organization, pure and simple, is a social networking and support system for lesbians 50 years of age or older and their partners, should they be under 50," Eversmeyer told *OutSmart*. "We have one social [event] a month, usually hosted by a member of LOAF, and we do all kinds of different activities. We do lots of potlucks. It's a good way to get together."

And LOAF has held its meetings ever since, always on the third Sunday of the month. Over the last 5-6 years, the group's membership has hovered at around 100, with a 50:50 mix of single and coupled women. "There's no restriction on being singled or partnered," quips Eversmeyer, "and it's not political. As a matter of fact, a lot of these women are apolitical." LOAF's oldest member is now 83.

So, why an organization of lesbians over 50? "Frequently," Eversmeyer explains, "the issues and interests of women under 50 are different from those over. Our needs are different." In addition, Eversmeyer finds that many older gay and lesbian individuals tend to be very closeted. She explains, "It is very definitely true of old, gay women because it's just been so necessary to be discreet in terms of family and job...and if it's always worked, why should they change?"

"Basically," she adds, "I think the big thing is to try and provide some kind of a networking system because so many of these women are isolated. It's very, very difficult at that age to start peeking out of the closet a little bit."

But LOAF has been more than a way to socialize with other lesbians over 50. Over the course of LOAF's existence, Eversmeyer has witnessed some truly memorable moments. "We've had six or seven women over the years who have become ill and subsequently died, and it's been really nice to watch the way the women have been there to assist in any way that's possible."

"[LOAF] has probably connected with somewhere around 400-500 women in the last 12 years. And [the organization] isn't meant to be the end-all for everybody. A lot of times, women will connect, and because they have found us, they subsequently find other things too, and some of them have become very active in the community, and some of them will find a partner and start nesting. We won't see them [anymore]. But I think that's kind of a normal situation," said Eversmeyer.

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LOAF Members at the 1st Annual LOAF Camp out! 1989

Although she doesn't find it to be a common occurrence for LOAF's members to cross-over memberships into other 50-plus gay organizations, Eversmeyer finds herself the exception to the rule. In fact, she has just returned from San Francisco, where another senior organization—this one much more issue-oriented—was holding its second annual conference.

The group is Old Lesbians Organizing for Change, or OLOC. One must be 60 to join. OLOC is an anti-oppression, politically based organization that fights ageism. Eversmeyer explains her involvement as such: "I think if a woman has been political to some extent, it might be comfortable [for her] to become political in the gay community. But, if you don't have that kind of bent to begin with, I wouldn't think that it would be just the normal thing to have happen. However, sometimes they get inspired by somebody, you know?"

LOAF basically promotes itself through word of mouth. "LOAF has become pretty well known," explains Eversmeyer. "We've done radio programs; of course, we're in the [Pride] parade [as we] have been for 10 years now; we have a flyer out with gay-friendly therapists; we are known at the women's center. People know or have heard about LOAF and that's just because we've been around for a long time now."

And if you happen to be or to know a lesbian over age 50, perhaps LOAF may have something to offer you. Eversmeyer says: "Listen, [LOAF] saved my life. I had been in a relationship for 33 years and my partner died, and even though I had a very good strong friendship group, I didn't even know there was community."

Living in Houston since 1952, Eversmeyer says that younger gay and lesbians within the community enjoy a visibility that wasn't available to her, or people like her, when she came out. "When I came out in the '40s, first of all, we didn't even have a vocabulary and there certainly weren't any organizations."

So lesbians then didn't even know what to do themselves?

"That's it."

TIMELINE 1988-90

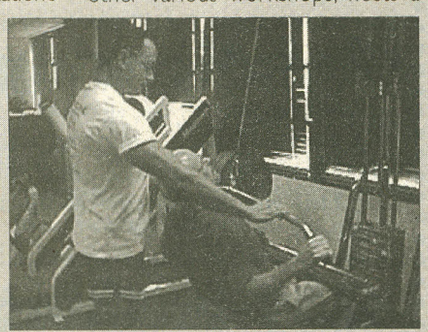
Each month OutSmart continues its timeline series on the past 30 years of Houston gay history.

1988 Hoping to relieve certain costs involved with the treatment of HIV-positive individuals, **The Assistance Fund** was founded. The organization helps to pay medical insurance premiums and emergency prescription drug expenses for persons with HIV until they qualify for Medicare coverage. "The cost of caring for persons with AIDS," says the organization, "creates an extreme financial burden for the patients, their families, and employers. Often patients lose their jobs and are left without any financial means to establish their medical needs." More than a decade later, The Assistance Fund continues to assist HIV-positive individuals with an all-volunteer board of directors. **Body Positive/Houston** began, says director and creator of the organization's wellness center Nelson Vergel, as a support group run by those with HIV for those with HIV to help them to die with some dignity. But over the last two years—just as improved treatments and medications have lengthened the life spans of those with HIV—the center's focus has shifted to helping individuals live healthier lives. "We are truly pioneers," said Vergel of the treatment advocacy program, which is run from the 6th floor of 3400 Montrose. The wellness center is often one of the first places a newly diagnosed HIV-positive individual contacts for support and information. What began in San Francisco as a type of "folk art" to memorialize those who had fallen to the AIDS epidemic, **NAMES Project Houston** grew into one of the most visible displays of community strength and support in the nation. The organization's Pete Martinez explained that the AIDS Quilt was first displayed on Mother's Day. The Quilt will have its next showing in Washington, D.C., in April 2000. And Houston will host a panel dedication on Nov. 30—on the eve of World AIDS Day—at the Museum of Fine Arts. The panels continue to be used as a method to instruct those about AIDS in area schools, businesses, and houses of worship, "to help put forth the names behind the statistics."



Volunteers of the 1st showing of the quilt display at the George R. Brown Convention Center.

1989 **AVES** (Amigos Volunteers in Education and Services) added its name to the list of those organizations providing social and healthcare services to HIV-positive individuals. The **Kolbe Project** started, distinguishing itself as "a Franciscan Ministry of loving, caring, and sharing to persons who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or trangendered and to persons with HIV/AIDS as well as their families and caregivers." The group welcomes those from all faiths, it says, or those with no religious affiliation. Kolbe sponsors monthly potlucks with speakers on topics concerning the gay and lesbian community. It also holds other various workshops, hosts a women's group, and shows movies every other Friday night in a smoke-, drug-, and alcohol-free environment.



Body Positive helping individuals live healthier lives.

1990 **Houston Gay & Lesbian Yellow Pages** is still used to this day to assist in the location of gay-owned and gay-friendly businesses and community

Timeline constructed from personal interviews, personal recollections, and documented information.

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- 18-60 years of age
- Gay or bisexual males at risk for acquiring HIV
- Negative for HIV by HIV-screening test
- Willing to accept safe-sex counseling

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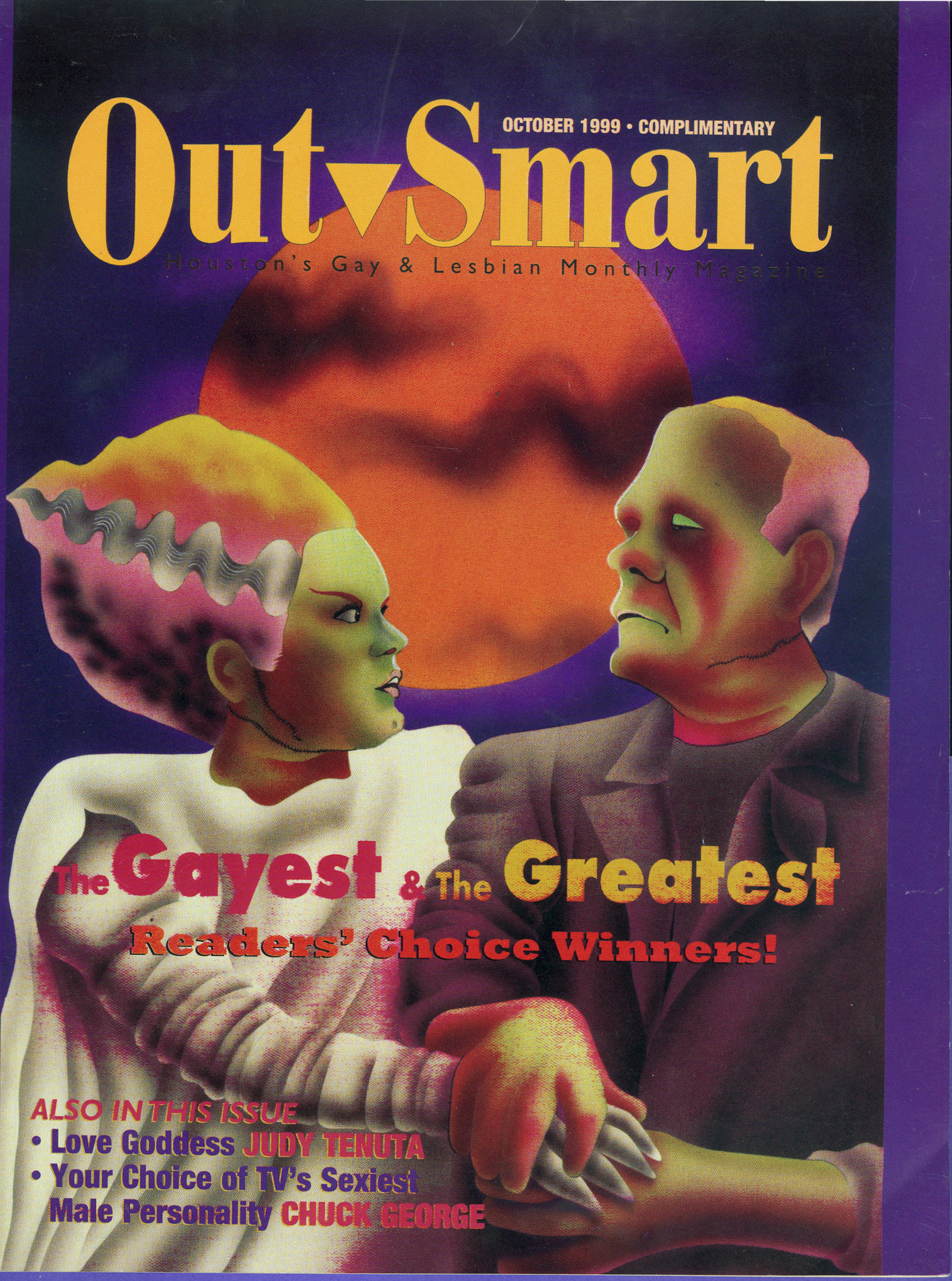
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by Steve Poruban

Houston's Nonalcoholic Gay Hot Spot
CROSSROADS MARKET

Before Crossroads Market became what it is today—a neon-lit storefront teeming with a mixture of gay and lesbian faces: perusing popular gay literature, consuming caffeinated libations, and chatting it up, all the while checking out incoming patrons—there were numerous hurdles to surmount. The place, after all, did not become "the place" overnight.

For example, the original Crossroads Market actually has its roots in Dallas, our sister city to the north. And, it was in existence for about 10 years before business partners Joe Ramunni and Tom Kane purchased the 3,000-sq. ft. space in 1991.

The store was already dubbed "Crossroads Market" because of its location—at The Crossroads, the core of Dallas' gay scene. And, it was a much larger venue than the bookstore that Houston's gay and lesbian patrons have come to know so well. It resembled more of a marketplace than a bookstore and café.

"The name...is really a good indicator of what the store originally was when we bought it," explains Ramunni. "It was a large space... that was occupied by about 10 gay men and lesbians, each of whom had a booth within the store." It was from these booths that the peddlers sold books, health food, and even antique furniture to Dallas' gay and lesbian community.

"We basically bought [the Dallas store] for the location," he recalls, "but the name was pretty well embedded in the community, so we completely reformatted it over the following three years."

After about a year, the partners worked to open a Crossroads store in Houston, but they had difficulty in finding the right location. "Houston, unlike Dallas, doesn't really have a gay epicenter. In Dallas, everything is very concentrated, so there was really no equivalent here," Ramunni says.

The corner where the current Houston store stands—at bustling Westheimer and Waugh—was identified early on as an ideal location, and the partners eventually purchased the space. But it took about four years to move the store to its current plot from its first location on West Alabama.

It was at this time that the café portion of the store was added. "We had the idea to serve coffee for six years, but again it was an issue of location," Ramunni says. "We couldn't do it in Dallas, because we didn't have the space and because of parking restrictions. It took us literally six years to get that going in Dallas by the time we got the city approvals and the additional space. So, the Houston thing happened first because we were able to get that corner and because there was sufficient space. That was always our design, we just didn't have a place to put it."

The Houston store very much resembles its Dallas counterpart. The open setting and bright illumination reminds one of a fishbowl more than a store—a design that took some getting used to for both the gay and straight community. Some people expected something more "back alley" and without "full exposure."

"Every time a gay and lesbian establishment opens up and it has no windows or it has few windows, the immediate thought, especially amongst gay men and lesbians, is: 'well, you know what kind of place that is,'" Ramunni says. "And, among straight people, I mean, forget it."

Ramunni admits that there was one event that occurred even while the new edifice still had paper taped over its massive storefront windows.

Ramunni tells the story: "I get a phone call in my office one day from a very prim and proper man, who said, 'I have been designated by a group to speak to you about something. We've been looking at your store, and we would like to know where the entrance is going to be?' And I told him that it would be right under the marquis, in the front.

"He says, 'Will there be a rear entrance?' And I said, 'No.' And he said, 'Quite honestly, my friends and I are very concerned about the amount of glass and the location of your entrances.

"We are not the traditional 1960s, 1970s gay and lesbian, back-street, back-alley store. We're very open, we try to maintain a look and feel that no one, absolutely no one, should be ashamed to come in."

TIMELINE 1991-93

Each month OutSmart continues its timeline series on the past 30 years of Houston gay history.

1991 The early '90s were marked by the gay and lesbian community continuing its efforts to assist in the AIDS crisis. The '90s also were marked by a continuance of speaking out for the rights that other groups so enjoyed. **LiB (Lesbians in Business)** began to provide area lesbians with a forum to confront issues in their places of work. The group also assists to "empower lesbians to lead proud, positive, and integrated lives in the workplace and the world at large." Through charitable and service-oriented work, LiB increases the visibility of lesbians within the community, while projecting a positive image of lesbians beyond the gay community boundaries. Members of LiB possess different abilities and interests and come from various races, areas of employment, and educational backgrounds. Helping to curb the rise in hate-related crimes, **Q-Patrol** was formed. The group, affiliated with the Houston Police Department's Citizens on Patrol program, is made up of volunteers who monitor the Montrose bar areas looking for suspicious and malicious activities. Q-Patrol accomplishes its goal through the use of "noninterventionist" techniques, watching out for potential threats to gay and lesbian safety, usually on the weekends. When suspicious activities are spied, the police are notified and, following an offense, the appropriate actions are taken. Q-Patrol also actively educates the public in self-defense techniques as well as first aid and CPR.

1992 **Asians & Friends of Houston Inc.** (A&FH) was formed as a nonprofit organization for gay men and lesbians of Asian or Pacific Islander decent. A&FH accomplishes this goal though numerous activities, including cultural and educational programs; discussion groups, which feature topics of importance to its members and to the gay and lesbian community; and various social functions. Social events vary from viewing movies at the home of an A&FH member to dim sum Sunday brunches at Asian and non-Asian restaurants. A&FH also provides the community with AIDS educational materials in numerous Asian and Pacific Island languages. **Log Cabin Republicans-Houston** was begun in Houston to ensure that "the Republican Party fulfills its promise to be a party of principles, a party of ideas, and a party of inclusion." The group also tracks the Grand Old Party candidate's position on gay and lesbian issues.

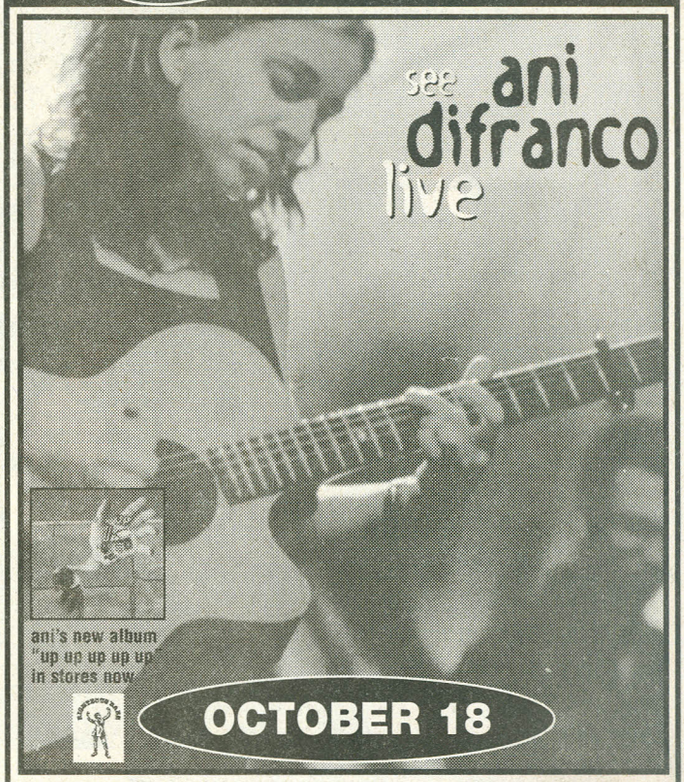
1993 **Just For Us** began as a spin-off of Houston Gay and Lesbian Parents as a social and support group for children in 6th-12th grades with gay or lesbian parents. Joining the ranks of growing AIDS/HIV services, **Steven's House** was started after receiving an initial grant to help obtain and operate a facility for up to six people for one year. The organization provided intermediate care for the daily living activities of its residents free of charge. Steven's House intermediate care residences help chronically sick individuals—usually those recently discharged from area hospitals—to "renew themselves physically, spiritually, and emotionally before resuming independent activities." Trained nurse's aides provide caring and companionship in a nurturing home-like environment, says the organization. "It is the combination of skills and experience that makes Steven's House a viable and valuable community service agency," the organization says.

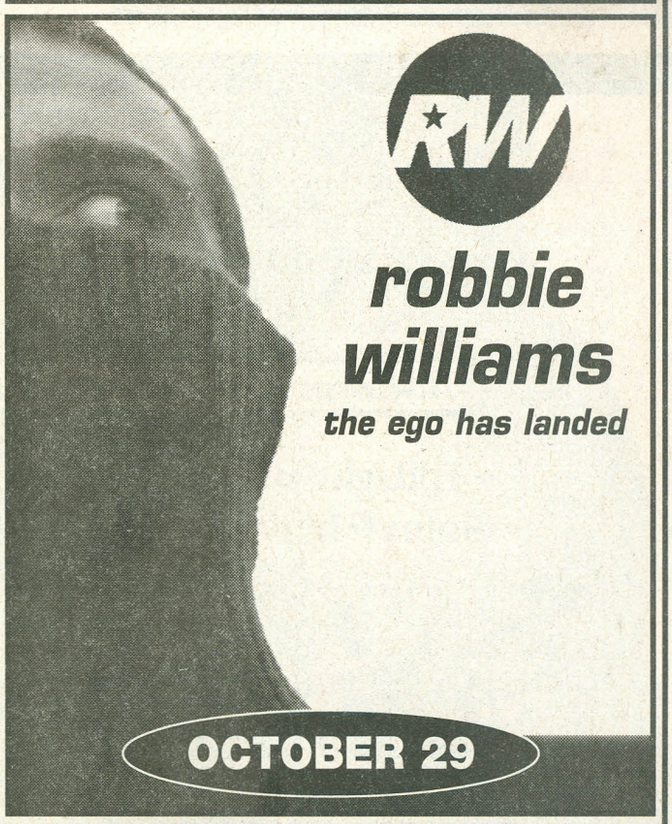
Timeline constructed from personal interviews, personal recollections, and documented information.



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Many of us are very prominent in the community and have very important jobs, and we would not want any of our associates who may be, say, going to Ruggles, to see us sitting in the window or going into the store.'"

Needless to say, Ramunni was a bit taken back by the phone call, almost breathless. "That attitude is such a throwback and this man was perfectly serious and very concerned," says Ramunni. "He wanted a back door!"

It is for that reason that Ramunni thinks that Crossroads is more defined by what it is not. "We are not the traditional 1960s, 1970s gay and lesbian, back-street, back-alley store. We're very open, we try to maintain a look and feel that no one, absolutely no one, should be ashamed to come in."

And although it may be most convenient to call Crossroads a bookstore, in reality, it's much more. "It's a gay and lesbian meeting place," says Ramunni. "We are very non-traditional from a gay and lesbian point of view in terms of our approach. We think that there's a lot more to the world and a lot more to going out and seeing people than looking at pornography, for example."

And, this is the very element that Crossroads invites through its doors. Patrons who aren't afraid to sit in the store's window and have coffee across from their partners and reach over to hold their hand or perhaps even give them a kiss. "People do that in our store all the time," says Ramunni. "And that's what we want."

Crossroads has been labeled, more than just a few times, a nonalcoholic JR's. "I've heard it called that over and over and over, and...as I look at the clientele and what they do, it really is a nonalcoholic gay bar," says Ramunni. "They stop there on their way to the bars; they will stop there because they don't want to drink or because they don't want to smell the smoke."

And, so far, after the initial obstacles were hurdled, the hard work has paid off. Ramunni attributes much of the store's success to a strategy of

continued on p. 67

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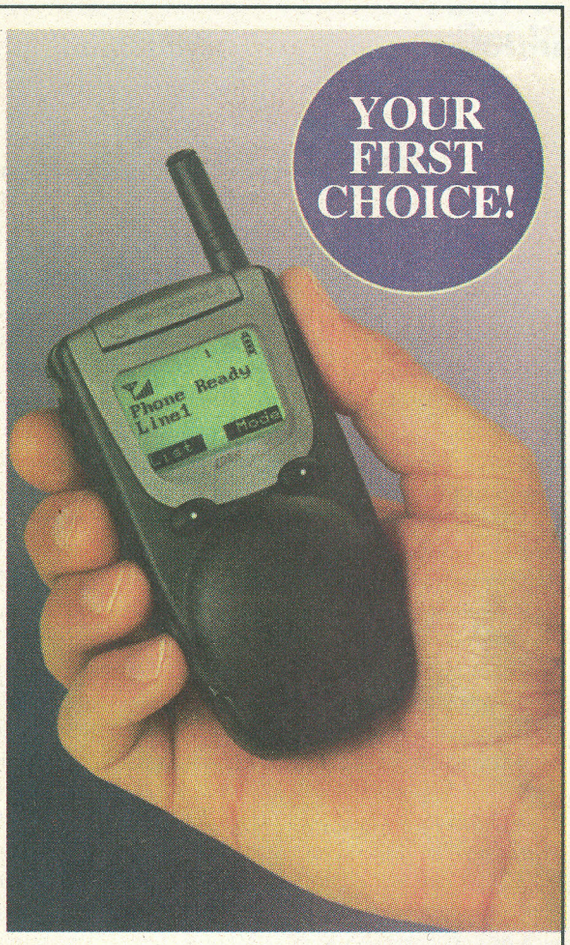
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continued from page 19

constantly changing to suit its customers, who have changed considerably over the years.

"When we got into this business," he explains, "there were lots of gay and lesbian bookstores across the country, but there were only two big chains: Lambda Rising in Washington, [D.C.], and A Different Light, which has stores in several cities.

"Well, Lambda Rising has been getting beaten about the head really badly and A Different Light [according to an article in a bookseller publication] is now considering closing their stores, because they are losing money.

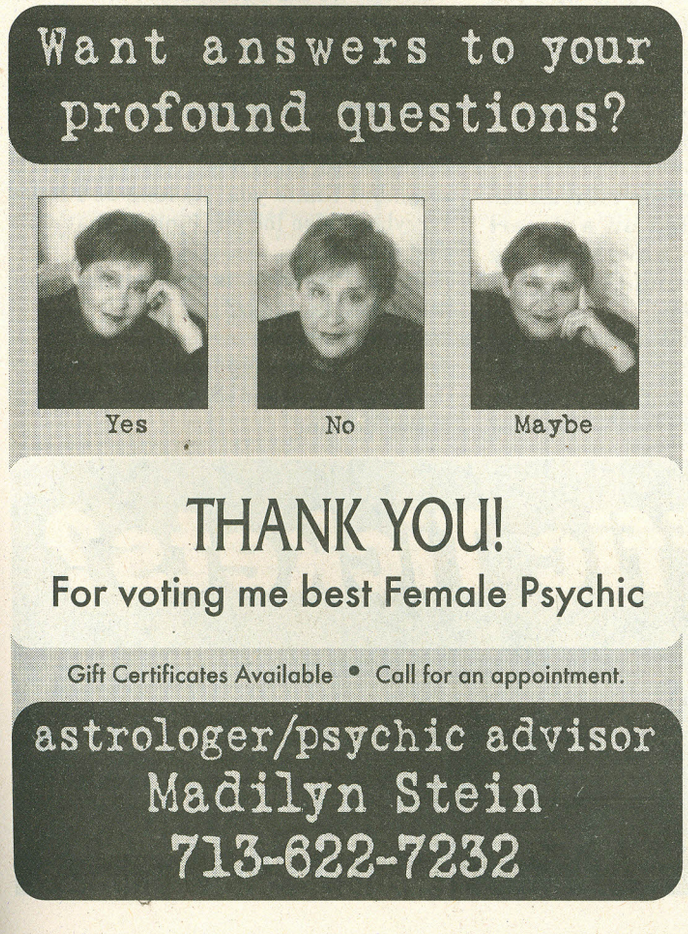
"Crossroads Market has now become the No. 2 gay and lesbian bookstore in the U.S.," Ramunni says. "Between the two cities, we now sell more gay books than probably...we're probably on par with Lambda Rising."

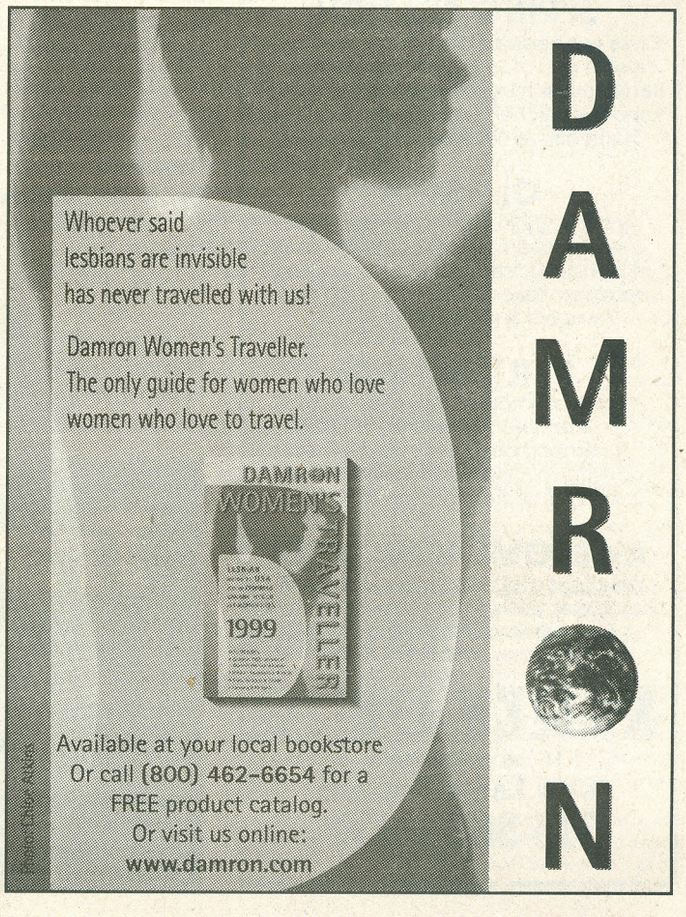
So, what's the draw to the store if all the material contained within the store is available on the Internet at Amazon.com? "Even though this stuff is available everywhere else, it's not available in the quantity and variety that we have and it's all in one place," says Ramunni.

"There's a big sense of gratification in knowing that people are enjoying what you're doing. And, I think, in our small way, hopefully we have an impact in providing people with something other than a bar to go to and sit down and be able to do what they want to do."

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







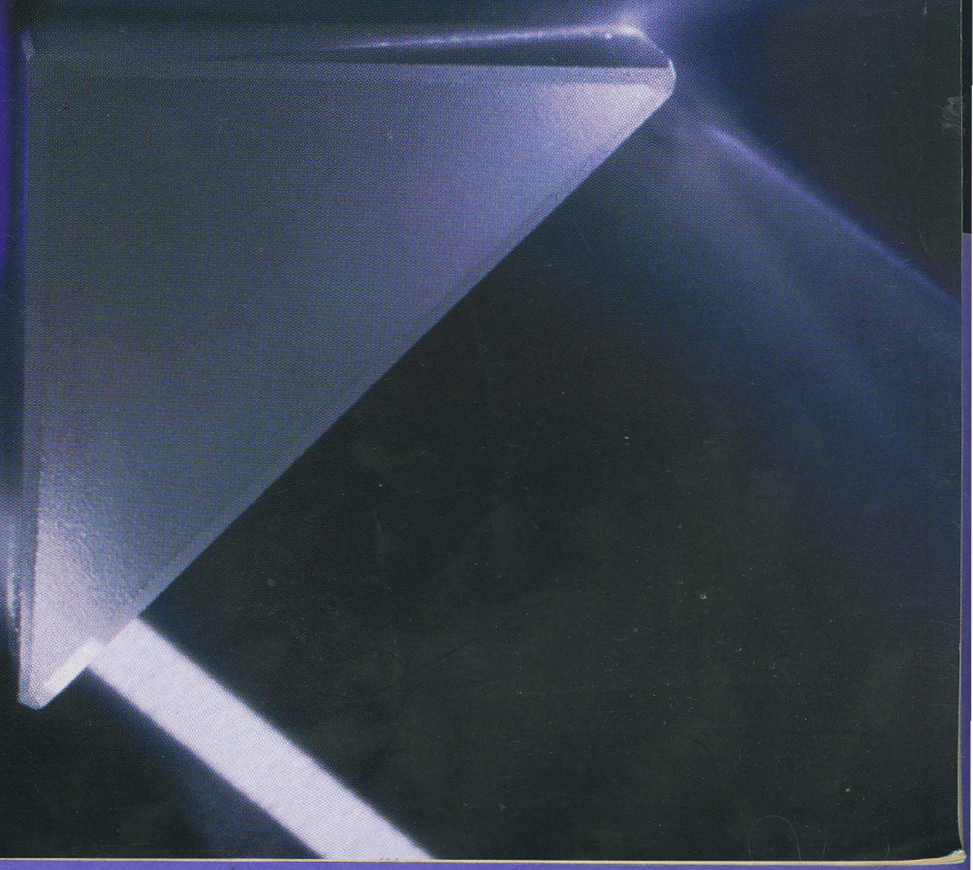
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WHITE LIGHT

Gay Religious Leader Mel White Reaches Out to Jerry Falwell



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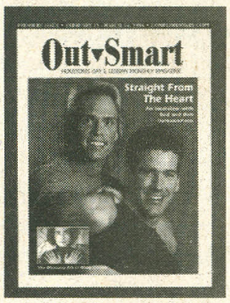
- Three Houston Women Artists Show Their Skills
- HIV-Positive Triathlete Jim Howley Runs for His Life

TIMELINE 1994-96

Each month OutSmart continues its timeline series on the past 30 years of Houston gay history.

by Tim Brookover

1994 Following the 1993 March on Washington, thousands of re-energized gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered individuals returned home to establish a wave of new service and social organizations in their communities. In Houston, the years after the historic event saw the founding of a number of groups that remain fixtures today. Businessman and activist Jay Hollyfield created the **Hollyfield Foundation**, which was endowed by his estate upon his death from AIDS-related conditions in 1994. This prominent organization continues to provide grants in the fields of HIV/AIDS service and gay and lesbian civil rights. The foundation also offers meeting space to organizations at its headquarters, the Hollyfield Center, a venerable building on Albany recalled by gentlemen of a certain age as the Officers Club. Another organization with an advocacy mission, **It's Time, America!**, became the first group with a national scope seeking to secure the rights of transgendered and gender-variant persons. Formed during the 1994 Transgender Law Conference, It's Time, America! works at the federal, state, and local government levels to influence legislation. **SISTERS**, a support group for African American women, began meeting at the Montrose Counseling Center. Two popular social groups, the **Houston Area Bears** and the **Rainbow Ranglers**, arrived on the scene. The former promotes "friendship and brotherhood among like-minded men," according to a local bear website, and raises money for charitable efforts. The latter promotes Western dancing. Finally, inspired by the March on Washington, the founding fathers and mothers of ***OutSmart*** magazine launched this publication.



The premier issue of *OutSmart* magazine

1995 A group of business-minded types founded the **Greater Houston Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce**, now one of the most visible organizations in the community. Best known for sponsoring the annual Empower expo in October, the chamber offers networking opportunities for members and guests at monthly dinner meetings and other events, a small-business counseling service through the University of Houston, and a business mentoring program. The chamber is now helping to identify the next wave of community powerhouses through its ongoing Leading and Learning Initiative. **The Center for AIDS** opened as an information and advocacy organization that shares news on medical treatment and scientific advances in HIV/AIDS. The center continues to perform this critical work through a newsletter, regular forums and infomal mixers, and a useful website. A Houston chapter of the national **Uncommon Legacy** organization began advocacy and fundraising for causes of interest to and benefiting lesbians. The group awards



Janine Brunjes, an original Uncommon Legacy member



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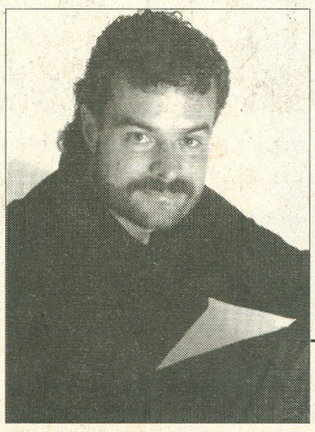
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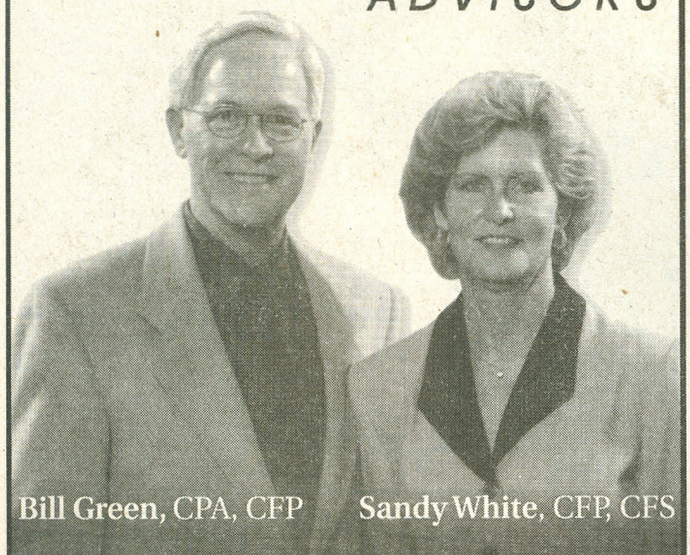
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raising for causes of interest to and benefiting lesbians. The group awards scholarships to promising students with leadership potential, and awards grants to fund projects and organizations that contribute to the community's health, education and culture. Legacy also promotes philanthropy among women and demonstrates the growing power of lesbian giving. Another advocacy and social group, the **African American Lesbian and Gay Alliance**, got its start in 1995.

1995 **AssistHers** started serving women with life-threatening or debilitating illnesses this year. A corps of trained volunteers provides direct care, including emotional support, meal preparation, shopping, hospital and home visits, pet care, transportation, and other nonmedical duties. Assistance often extends to a woman's partner, caregiver, or family. Another organization for women, **Lesbians United in Coalition**, debuted. Two now-prominent gay and lesbian employee groups at major local firms—the **Chase Bank PRIDE Team** and **SEAShell** at Shell Oil Company—demonstrated the growing acceptance of the community within corporate America. The **Garden And Yard Society** (GAYS), an association of gay men and women interested in gardening and landscaping, started keeping things beautiful on the home front; this group also wins best acronym. **Queer Artists Collective (QuAC)** began striving to create a new arts culture in Houston. For the next three years, this group of people in their 20s (more commonly known as QuAC) presented exciting, challenging performances and events, including the 1997 HomoImprovement. In July 1999, QuAC gave its final show, Y2Q. The individual QuAC artists promised to continue pushing queer art into the next century.

Timeline constructed from personal interviews, personal recollections and documented information.

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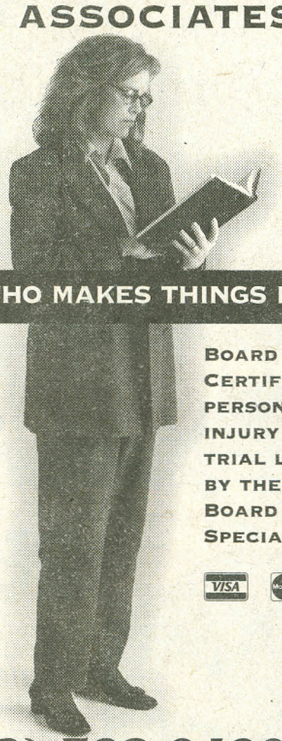
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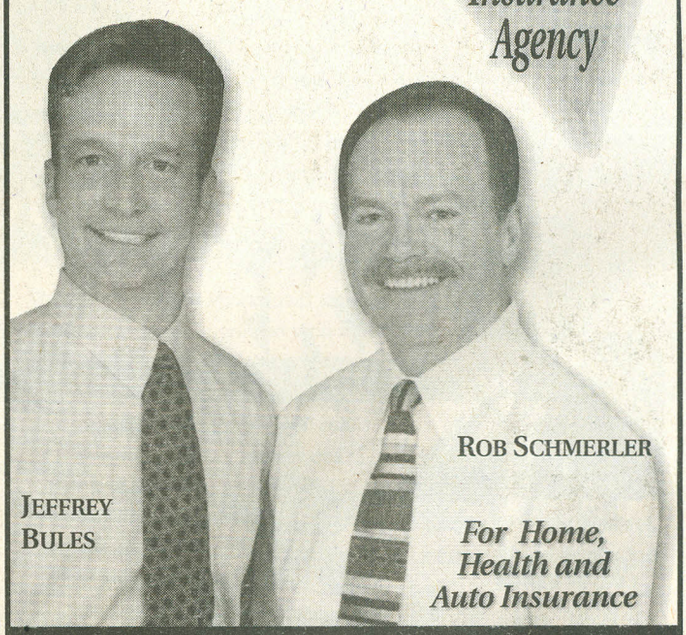
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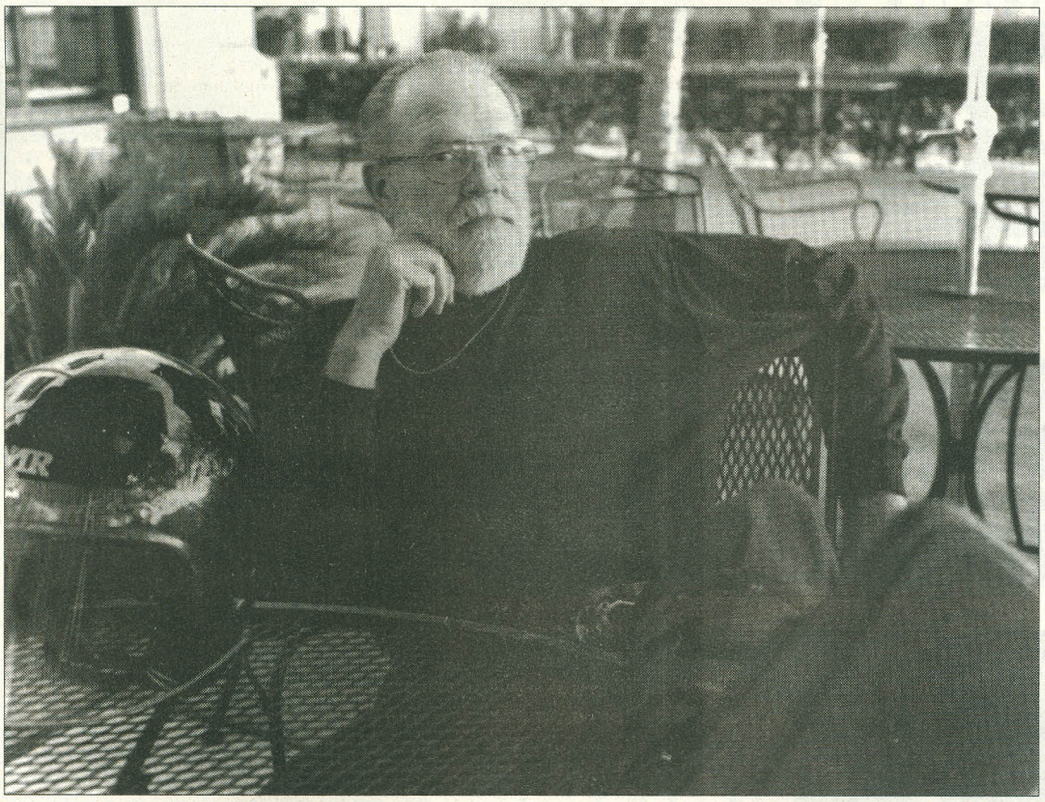
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RAY HILL IN LOVE

Falling in love again: Montrose's grizzled gadfly recounts the loves of his life ... and of all our lives

by Ann Walton Sieber

Photographs by Debra Rueb



"I have a theory of relationships which I got from my mother, Frankie: All men are sorry, and five years with any of them is more than they deserve, present company not excluded."

If Ray Hill were not a real man, it would be impossible to create him as a work of fiction for fear of sounding preposterous. "Ray Hill is a many-faceted gem," as he'll tell you, only half-ironically, and it's true.

His grizzled generous self knows everything there is to know about the Montrose gay community and politics, about prison and criminal justice issues, and about the euphemistically termed "sex industry." Quoting activist theory and Supreme Court judgments one moment, recounting a salacious encounter while cruising the Ship Channel the next, Ray is one of those fascinating self-created icons, an ebullient appealing ham, always happy to fill you in on the latest cause (the current latest cause being the Exxon-Mobil protest, for which Ray is one of the organizers), his bluntness both exasperating and endearing.

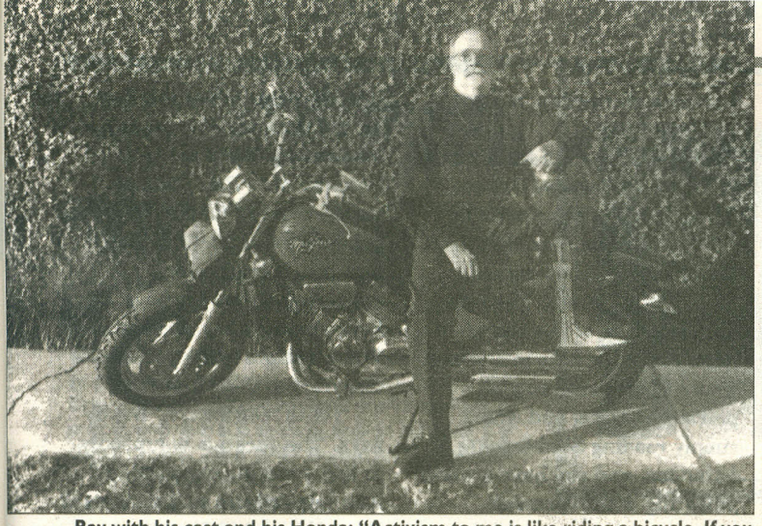
Now Ray is further perpetuating the Ray Hill myth with his latest monologue, *Ray Hill and Love*, to be performed one night only, on February 14, Valentine's Day, at Stages. This is the third installment in a series ("It's really just a cheap easy way to do a memoir"), the first two being *Ray Hill: The Prison Years*, and *Ray Hill & the Sex Police*. Ray presented his first monologue at Actor's Workshop and The Little Room Downstairs in 20 performances, and the second piece upstairs at Diba's One's a Meal on West Gray for 11 performances. The Stages production is a step into the "big time," part of Stages' artistic director Rob Bundy's opening up of his swank facility to smaller theater groups. Produced by Diana Weeks, the show will benefit her newly formed nonprofit Art Action, whose goal is to get more art in the news and into the mainstream consciousness.

Ray Hill and Love is "the story of six wonderful men in my life," Ray says. "I love being gay, and unlike Dale Carpenter, I don't want to be assimilated. Being gay and lesbian gives us the chance to be very creative in constructing our lives. And by being creative, I don't just mean in arranging furniture or arranging flowers in vases."

Just like everything else in Ray's life, the inventory of his lovers makes for an interesting tale. From his first great love, Kenneth Whitehead, much better known as Tiffany Jones, the renowned "Texas Tornado" drag queen in the '70s, who used to come out into the audience dressed as a nun on roller skates; to Dale "Fluffy" Sweat, a demure country boy from Lufkin who restored Ray's sense of himself after Ray got out of the penitentiary; to the Reverend Kent Naasz, a Lutheran minister ("I was a callused old atheist ex-teenage evangelist, and Kent could cut through all that"). As Ray spins the tale of his lovers, it's not just about six men, but also about the times and events that transpired around those loves.

Those who know Ray will want to see his show because you know what an irascible storytelling phenomenon he is, an amazing assortment of insider information and devilish quips. "Not a cliché the whole evening," Edward Albee said of Ray's *Sex Police* monologue. And if you don't know Ray, you should go, not just because he's so interesting, but because he's a one-man guided tour of the Montrose, the *real* Montrose, and the Houston gay community over the past 40 or so years.

For those unfamiliar with the Ray Hill legend, he grew up in Houston, and came out in Galena Park High School in 1958, which should give you some idea of his gutsiness right there. Always active in gay politics, he was sent to prison



Ray with his cast and his Honda: "Activism to me is like riding a bicycle. If you stop pedaling, you fall off."

from 1970 to 1975 as a result of his "night job," in which he was part of a gay burglary ring. ("We stole antiques, oils, and jewels—the money was good, and we specialized in things that queers know about. The only thing wrong is the retirement system ... I took full retirement.") After he got out of the pen, he became general manager of KPFT Pacifica. Only problem was that "neither perverts nor convicted felons could be on the air waves—and I was both"; Ray successfully challenged this FCC rule, becoming both the first openly gay person and the first ex-con to manage a broadcast facility. While managing the station, Ray started "The Prison Show." Still running every Friday night, 9-11 p.m., after 20 years, his show and its unusual format has become recognized throughout the country. After an hour of Ray and company discussing criminal justice issues, he opens up the phones, and families of inmates call in; for those inmates who have been shipped to facilities at a great distance from their families, "The Prison Show" is oftentimes their only way to communicate.

On January 27, Ray was awarded the First Amendment award by the Houston Trial Lawyers' Foundation, an honor given by the civil lawyers association to members of the media who best exemplify the exercise of the first amendment. ("Funny, I'll be up in that building getting a fancy award one night, and the next day at the foot of the same building staging a protest," Ray said, referring to the January 28 Equality Rally against Exxon-Mobil.) Approaching 60, Ray's been having diabetes-related problems with his foot lately. Although he wears a cast and may have to have it amputated, the day we met to talk, he roared up to Crossroads Market on his motorcycle. Still roaring away after all these years, Ray says part of the motivation for his monologues is to let the up-and-coming gay generation know about the continued exuberant possibilities of life.



"When I was young and pretty," Ray says, "back then, I didn't think I'd make it to the new millennium. But today life is so rich—I didn't have a hint. I paint word pictures of the life I've lived and I'm living, so they [those currently young and pretty] won't fear living long enough and being lucky enough to become a senior. ...Although I suspect only old farts will come."

Does the foot get him down?

"I was already mentally qualified for the Special Olympics. I decided to get on with it. Life is like a golf game—you play the ball where it lies. If it lands in the rough, whack at it until you hit it."

Ray Hill and Love *will be presented on Tuesday, Feb. 14, 8 p.m. at Stages. For tickets, call 713/523-6969. $20/$15 seniors and students.*

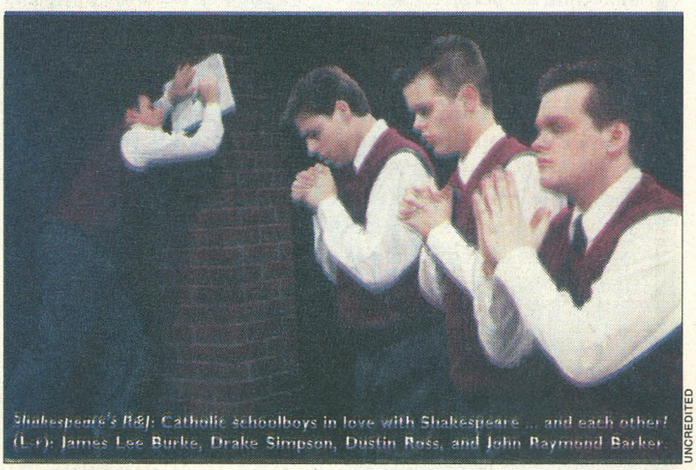
FORBIDDEN LOVE: OUR FAVORITE KIND

Rekindling the fire in the belly of Romeo and Juliet, as seen through the eyes and lips and hearts of four Catholic boys at Stages by Ann Walton Sieber

Young love. Forbidden love. Fist-through-the wall. Pining. Heart-break-for-no-reason. Faint-dead-away-from-the-altogether-too-muchness-of-it. Love, love, love. Great god almighty, spare us all. But ... if for some crazy misguided Valentine's Day reason, you're wanting to voluntarily drink of the romantic drug, what better place to imbibe than at that fountainhead of amour, that love story from which were fashioned all other love stories, *Romeo and Juliet*?

And has Stages got a *Romeo and Juliet* for you. Adapted by New York playwright Joe Calarco, the premise of *Shakespeare's R&J* is that four adolescent Catholic schoolboys have stolen a copy of *Romeo and Juliet*, after it has been banned by their school as too full of lust. The teenagers cut classes, convene in a basement, and start acting out the script, with giddy, almost hysterical mania. But the more they get into it, the more the love story takes them over, especially the boy playing Juliet and the boy playing Romeo. And then there's that Kiss. They surprise each other and they surprise themselves with the depth of their feelings. And then there's that Kiss.

An off-Broadway hit, *Shakespeare's R&J* is being given its Houston premiere in an intense, kinetic production directed by Stages' artistic director Rob Bundy. Bundy picked the play because it is about the forbidden, and this energetic charismatic theater impresario *loves* to take on whatever's controversial, enlivening, and likely to get an



Shakespeare's R&J: Catholic schoolboys in love with Shakespeare ... and each other! (L-r): James Lee Burke, Drake Simpson, Dustin Ross, and John Raymond Barker.

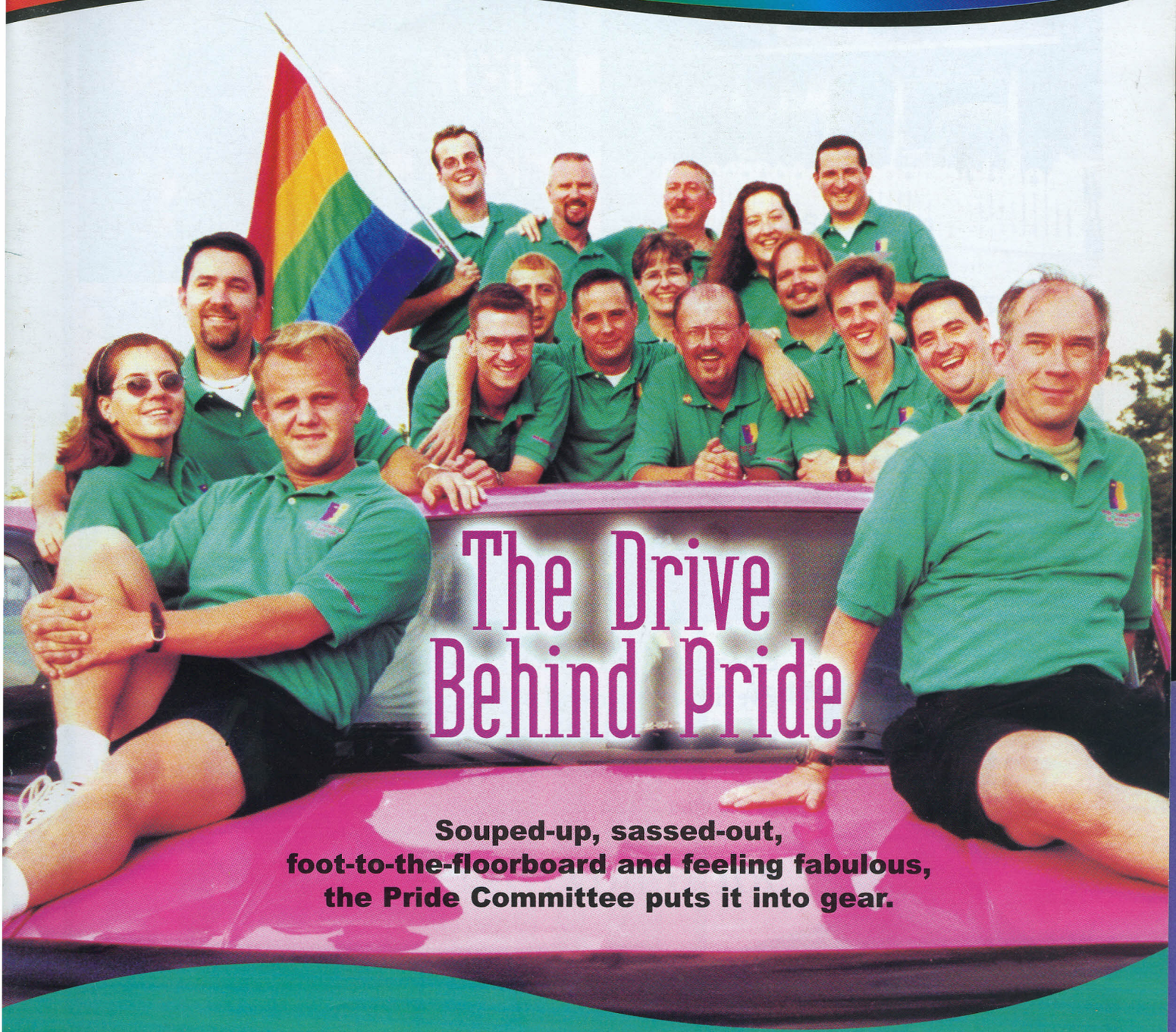
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Your Complete Pride Guide: Pride Grand Marshals Tori Williams, Rev. Don Sinclair, Richard Wiederholt (in memoriam) • Pride Co-host Ernie Manouse • Pride Calendar

PRIDE HIGHLIGHTS

compiled by Ann Walton Sieber

OUR HISTORY IS WORTH PRESERVING

Remember the "Louie, Don't Shoot" T-shirts (from Louie Welch's famed remark about what he'd like to do to gays)? How about "Louie, You Missed!"? Ah, our precious history as a community, passed on most precariously by word of mouth, by rumor, by exaggeration, by Ray Hill, by crumbling old copies of *Upfront* and *TWT*.

To address this problem, the newly formed Gulf Coast Archive and Museum (GCAM) is seeking to create a more permanent repository of Houston's GLBT memory and memorabilia. In what should prove one of the more interesting debuts of Pride Week, the archive and museum will have their grand opening on Friday, June 16, and be open through the weekend of the parade.

"We need to save our history," says longtime community activist Judy Reeves, who has embraced the archiving project heart and soul. "There's so much of our history that's been lost or subject to interpretation because person A remembers this and person B remembers that. History is something that gets rewritten all the time by government anyway—but if we start saving our history so that it's not so open to interpretation, then we'll be a lot better off in 20 years.

"In the past 20 years, we've lost a lot of our history because the family comes in and throws out everything, because it doesn't mean anything to them. The notes of an early GLPC meeting, all that stuff, it doesn't mean anything to them, it can end up in the garbage. But it's important to us."

Shepherded by Judy and Bryan Reeves, along with Richard Hunt (a.k.a. Rainbo de Klown), Jim Carper, and a board of advisors that includes Dr. James Sears, with the International Gay and Lesbian Archives, the GCAM started meeting in June last year, and became incorporated as a nonprofit a few weeks ago, in May. They're fundraising and looking for volunteers, as well as looking for a place to have a permanent home. Chase Texas Foundation has lead the way with corporate sponsors, giving GCAM a grant of $500.



This Tiffany Jones photo is only one of many items on view at the Gulf Coast Archive and Museum.

The group's purpose is two-fold: to create a museum that will be interesting to visit, as well as an archive that people can access for research (or curiosity). They will also store "age-sensitive" material, although that will be under lock and key, and require ID to peruse. There has been some controversy between GCAM and MCCR, which has been the longtime repository of the sizable archive/collection of Charles Botts.

On display in the Gulf Coast Archives and Museum will be such items as: more than 80 different T-shirts (they're still trying to amass a complete Pride set), 150 buttons, a numbered poster from the Silver Bullet from the 1970s, a World AIDS Day sculpture by Christine Olejniczak, dresses and a backdrop from the Krewe of Olympus balls. They hope to have a tape playing of the first visit by the NAMES Project quilt.

"I got in a nostalgic mood watching it," Judy says. "I just cried and cried, because there were so many people I hadn't seen for years, there volunteering, helping with the unfolding. It's like renewing old relationships."

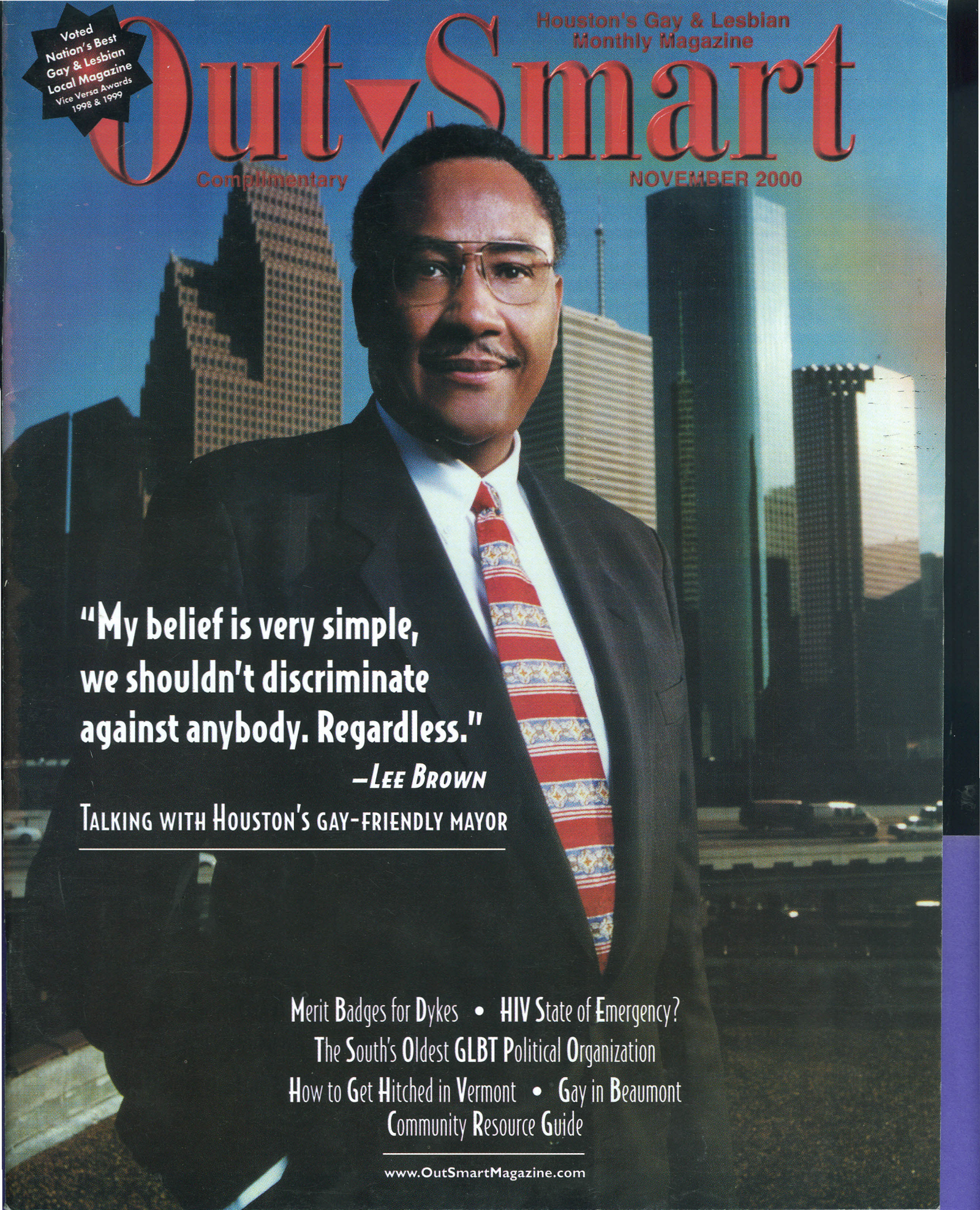
GCAM has made a special point of inviting H.A.T.C.H. and PFLAG to the opening.

"We want them to know they are more than welcome," Judy says. "We *value* their presence. We want these kids to know their history."

The Gulf Coast Archives and Museum grand opening is Friday, June 16, 7–9 p.m. It will be open Saturday and Sunday, June 17 & 18, noon–6. There will be a preview "gala," Thursday night, 7–9 p.m., with wine, cheese, and a door price of $15. The museum is located in temporary quarters in a donated warehouse at 2507 Capital, just east of downtown. (Coming from the Montrose, take Westheimer, which turns into Elgin, left on Dowling, right on Capital, one and a half blocks on left, look for illuminated pink triangle.)

You can call to donate your own precious items, or make a special viewing appointment, at 713/227-5973. GCAM has a website (www.houstongayweb.com/gulfcoastarchive), a listserve discussion group, and e-mail (gcam@mail.com).

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Happy Birthday and Thank You

25 years of political activism at the Houston Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus

by Clarence Burton Bagby

In June of 1975, four people came together to found what would become the oldest gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender civil rights organization in the South. They called it the Gay Political Caucus. It's difficult to fathom that there were only those four: Pokey Anderson, Bill Buie, Hugh Crell, and Keith McGee. Even in 1975, few activists in Houston would speak out publicly for fear of losing their jobs and their apartments. People were still being fired for being gay and lesbian, and it was still illegal in Houston for people to dress in the clothing of the opposite sex. The law even banned women from wearing fly-front pants.

Now called the Houston Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus, the caucus is celebrating 25 years of political organizing, a birthday on which it can proudly claim credit for the rise of the gay and lesbian community in Houston as an effective political block.



We've come a long way, baby:
L-r: Rev. Robert Falls (MCCR), Ray Hill, Jerry Miller, Pokey Anderson

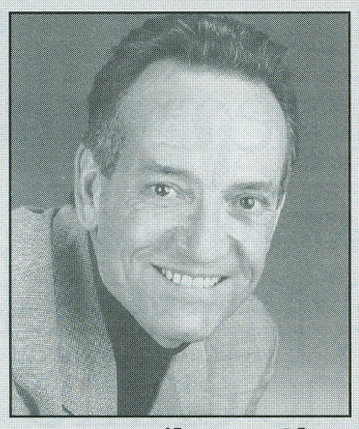
Just like the caucus itself, the founding four were not just flashes in the pan by any means. Anderson went on to serve on the national board of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force a few years later, and McGee was to play a leadership role with the Human Rights Campaign Fund. Crell stayed involved with the caucus until his death, and Buie is still a member.

Ray Hill was also an early prime mover in the caucus. When the GPC was founded, Hill had already been out of the closet for almost a decade and was actively campaigning for gay civil rights in Houston and against the prevailing public concept of homosexuality as an illness. Only two years earlier, in 1973, the newly founded National Gay Task Force (later to become NGLTF) had successfully worked to change the American Psychiatric Association classification of homosexuality as a mental illness. Two-thirds of Americans in 1975 still said they believed that sexual relations between two adults of the same sex was always wrong, although a little over half of Americans believed homosexuals should have equal rights in terms of job opportunities, according to the NGLTF Policy Institute. Only 27 percent of Americans favored hiring homosexuals as elementary school teachers.

"By 1975 we had come a long way, but still had a long way to go," said the late Gary Van Ooteghem in an interview a few years ago. Van Ooteghem was the first president of the caucus and later served as co-chair of the NGLTF national board. At the urging of NGLTF, United States Rep. Bella Abzug had just introduced the first gay rights bill in the U.S. Congress.

Back in Texas, state Rep. Craig Washington was being ridiculed on the floor of the Texas House of Representatives for his efforts to eliminate the homosexual sodomy law, Section 21.06 of the Texas Penal Code. After hearing of the raucous anti-homosexual debate, Anderson met with a group of friends in her Montrose apartment and laid plans for the creation of the GPC.

So on a bright summer day in June 1975, media representatives gathered for a press conference. Four of Houston's leading homosexuals, Anderson and Hill, along with Jerry Miller and Rev. Robert Falls, announced the formation of the GPC under the blazing light



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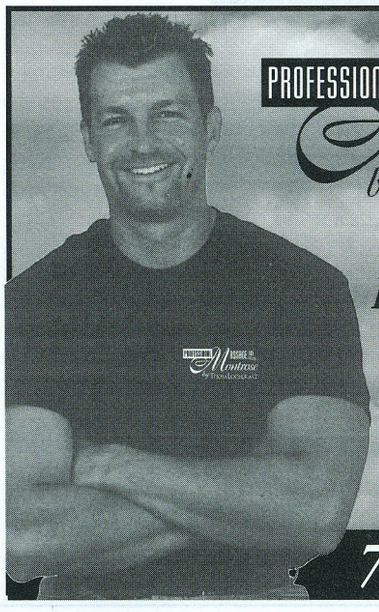


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of public scrutiny. Miller represented Integrity, Houston's most effective homosexual organization to date. Rev. Falls represented the alternative religious community as pastor of the newly formed Metropolitan Community Church of the Resurrection (now Resurrection MCC). Anderson represented Houston lesbians.

Hill, recently out of prison on a burglary conviction, represented no one in particular, but helped by lending his name recognition to the event. In his usual blunt manner, Hill said at the time, "Up until now, I was the only faggot with a face and name in town." This was indeed true, as for years Hill had been the only person willing to speak on record to the media and to advocate publicly for equal treatment of gays.

Miller quietly pointed out the changing times by stating, "In the '60s, if you were gay, you were a political radical. The community is more broad-based now."

The GPC's first candidate questionnaire included questions about the introduction of state legislation to outlaw employment discrimination against gays and lesbians, repeal Section 21.06, and give gay and lesbian couples the right to file joint income tax returns.

After hearing of the raucous anti-homosexual debate around the sodomy law, Pokey Anderson met with a group of friends in her Montrose apartment and laid plans for the creation of the Gay Political Caucus.

Van Ooteghem didn't know the folks who had called the press conference and was in Washington, D.C., meeting with Leonard Matlovich at the time. Matlovich, an Air Force sergeant and Vietnam veteran who had received the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart, had voluntarily declared his homosexuality to his supervising officer and resisted discharge under an exclusion clause that allowed "outstanding" homosexuals to remain in the Air Force.

Van Ooteghem, then the Harris County Comptroller of the Currency, admired Matlovich's courage and later said, "Leonard Matlovich was my role model, and I hope I can be someone else's."

So, upon returning to Houston, Van Ooteghem told his boss Harsell Gray, Harris County treasurer, that he was planning to appear before Commissioners' Court to urge them to pass regulations protecting the civil rights of gays and lesbians. Gray told him that appointed personnel were not allowed to engage in political activities during business hours and asked him to sign a letter acknowledging these instructions. When Van Ooteghem refused, Gray fired him. "GVO," as he became known in the community, later said that Gray's stated reason for his firing was simply a cover for the real reason: Gray was afraid Commissioners' Court would cut his budget for having a highly paid homosexual on his staff.

So the next day, August 1, 1975, Van Ooteghem addressed Commissioners' Court, professing his own homosexuality and proposing a civil rights resolution. Less than a month later, he filed suit against the county for unfair dismissal. His suit was eventually successful and he received back pay.

"Gary has this great, high-paying job and was willing to sacrifice it to advance the cause," Hill said. "Because of his celebrity, we

recruited Gary to be the first president of the caucus."

In the following years, the caucus started to mature organizationally and to gain political clout as well. Mickey Leland, who as a state representative had supported Washington's 1975 effort to repeal Section 21.06, thanked the caucus for helping him win election to Barbara Jordan's congressional seat in 1978. Leland included the names of Hill, Steve Shiflett (caucus president), and Van Ooteghem in his newspaper advertisements. Mayor Jim McConn said at the time, "I think it [the gay and lesbian community] is becoming a viable political force."

The caucus became and remains the community's chief advocate with the police department. In 1978, Shiflett appeared before Houston City Council to protest that no one from the gay community had been appointed to serve on the newly created Houston Police Advisory Board. Later that year the committee was increased in size from 15 to 21, and Mayor McConn telephoned Shiflett for a recommendation. McConn agreed to Shiflett's recommendation of Patricia O'Kane and, as alternate, Rev. Chuck Larsen, pastor of MCCR.

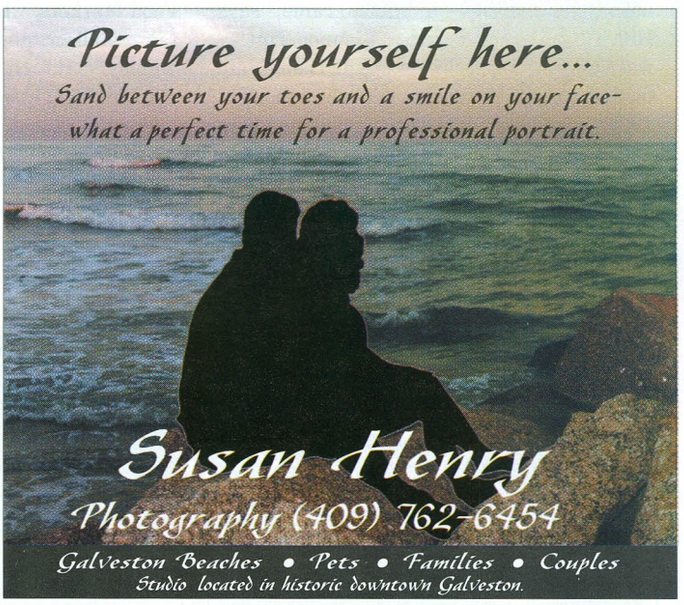
When the group was reconstituted in 1986, Annise Parker (caucus president), working with then Police Chief Lee Brown and Mayor Kathy Whitmire, succeeded in gaining the caucus a permanent seat on the Houston Police Advisory Committee, a seat that the caucus retains to this day.

According to Hill, in 1984, Jerry Mays, Jack Jackson, and Shiflett offered a resolution at a caucus meeting to support City Council passage of an ordinance banning city employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. "The resolution never came to a vote because it was clear that we [the opponents] probably had the votes to defeat it," Hill said. "So in those reconciliatory times of the caucus, the resolution was tabled indefinitely." HGLPC had initially discussed at great length the idea of asking City Council for an ordinance. "I, among others, was really concerned, with AIDS over the horizon, that it would result in a referendum and that they would beat us to death with the 'gay plague' offense," said Hill. Mays, Marion Coleman (later a caucus trustee) and others had organized Community Political Action Committee (C-PAC) because of dissatisfaction with the caucus. As part of the payback for C-PAC's support, City Council member Anthony Hall (the caucus had endorsed his opponent) sponsored the ordinance banning city employment discrimination. "The caucus was in a political box canyon," explains Hill. "Unable to oppose the ordinance, we dispatched Sue Lovell, caucus president, to City Hall to work on getting the votes, because Mayor Whitmire would not move forward without caucus support as well as assurance of a significant majority of the votes on Council.

"Members of the Klu Klux Klan and Black Ministers Association were outside City Hall arm-in-arm singing 'We Shall Overcome,'" said Hill. "It was quite a sight." Conservative Republican Steven Hotze made his political debut in Houston working for a referendum to repeal the ordinance. Holtze's group obtained the required signatures a month before the deadline.

Jerry Smith, then Houston city attorney, now a Reagan appointee to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, wrote wording that was intentionally confusing, according to several people involved at the time. It was easy to be confused: If you were for gay rights, were you supposed to be *for* the referendum or *against* it? Caucus-endorsed Democratic candidates were major contributors to the pro-referendum forces. "When the caucus appointed a Baptist minister from Beaumont to run the anti-referendum campaign, I was told to shut up and stay out of sight," said Hill. The only other item on the ballot was a Spring Branch school district vote, and so a large portion of the vote came from Spring Branch. Although the anti-gay referendum







was defeated in all Montrose precincts and in several Third Ward precincts, still passed overwhelmingly. "It buried any illusion that the caucus had any discipline or strength to get out the vote at that time," said Hill.

Hill says he and Annise Parker opposed Lovell's re-election; Hill campaigned for president on the platform of a major activist initiative, Parker campaigned for a "lay-low and blend in" strategy, and Lovell ran to continue the status quo and give her a chance to redeem herself. "That was the election where nobody [no political candidates] came," says Hill. City Council member Eleanor Tinsley was the only opposed City Council candidate to screen for endorsement with the caucus in 1985. The caucus endorsed Council members Ernest McGowen Sr. and Judson Robinson Jr. over their own objections. The Straight Slate—headed by Hotze and Ed Young, Second Baptist Church pastor—did not elect anybody to office. "So it was tit for tat, with the queers losing early in 1985 and the anti-queers losing later in the November 1985 city election," says Hill.

Parker was victorious in her 1986 bid for the caucus presidency and served two terms; she remains the only caucus president to have completed two consecutive terms as president.

In 1978, Mayor Jim McConn said, "I think it [the gay and lesbian community] is becoming a viable political force."

Hill ran successfully for caucus president in 1989 on the platform that the caucus needed a revival. "We boycotted Randall's Food Markets, who finally agreed to a written nondiscrimination policy in company employment," Hill says. "Caucus membership doubled; it was a very busy year."

For the caucus, the 1990s were filled with AIDS education efforts, while scores of members were lost to the disease.

After acrimonious battles over bisexual and transgender inclusion, the first transgender board member was appointed by the president in 1998, and a process was begun to change the mission statement so that it would be inclusive of the entire gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community. Two transgenders and one bisexual currently serve on the caucus board of trustees.

The Caucus Political Action Committee has endorsed 32 candidates for the upcoming November 7 election, a far cry from 1985's handful. Mayors and congresspeople now come to the Caucus PAC to interview for consideration for endorsement by the organization.

Twenty-five years later, the caucus remains a strong force working for freedom, justice, and equality as part of a broader social justice movement. For information, call 713/521-1000 or see www.hglpc.org.

Clarence Burton Bagby is a native Houstonian active in civic and political affairs, locally as well as nationally. He serves on the national executive board of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the Houston Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus board of trustees. He was president of the caucus in 1998 after serving as a caucus trustee for two years. He is the executive director of the Old West End Association.

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"Southern history is never simple and seldom straight"

Houston takes its place in the queer history of the South

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Our Queer Southern Heritage

Remembering and recording tales of gay Houston in the '60s and '70s

by Jim Sears

Photo by Greg Day

Houston 1967
The Tumblebugs Take on City Hall

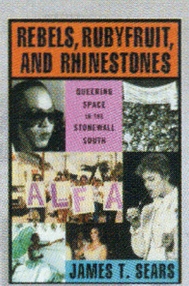
Tape measures and pencils crowded her pockets. Tools hung over her left shoulder. Rita Wanstrom trudged upstairs. It had been one of Houston's insufferable summer days when even the hardiest workers found themselves frequenting the five-gallon bucket of ice and lemons. . . .

Inside the apartment [she shared with her partner, Ricci Cortez], Rita kicked off her boots and rested for a spell. Rita had been setting up and serving drinks at the Roaring Sixties for three years. It had become a "family" operation. Peaches, who was known for his flawless interpretation of "My Way," choreographed the drag queens. Leo, who could rise from alto to soprano in a single refrain, bartended. And Ricci, who flawlessly stripped, held court while Rita greeted guests beneath her oil portrait.

Known as the homosexual playground of the South, Houston was already home to a dozen gay bars and clubs when the Roaring Sixties opened on June 23, 1967. Unlike Mafia-controlled bars of many Northern cities, gay clubs in "Space City" were often

"Southern history is never simple and seldom straight,"

writes Jim Sears in his introduction to *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones: Queering Space in the Stonewall South*. A professor at the University of South Carolina, Sears is slowly and thoroughly documenting all that is lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered in the South. Published in August 2001 by Rutgers University Press, *RRR* is the second in a multi-volume series in which Sears intends to portray the whole chronologic sweep of queer Southern history, woven from the stories of people who lived it. Many of Sears's stories are from Houston, which he dubs the "San Francisco of the South." We present here excerpts from *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*.



owned by straight women. There was Effies' Pink Elephant (which had been around since the '40s), catering to older gay men; Verlon's Surf Lounge; the Round Table on Westheimer, owned by Dorothy; Rocky's, a hole-in-the-wall working-class club on West Dallas; and the Desert Room, whose famed Sunday afternoon tea dances were guarded by Hazel with a watchful eye for the police and an agile thumb set to flicker the lights.

With its checkered tablecloths, crimson drapes, and ruby walls, the Roaring Sixties was a place that a lot of folks called home. . . . In addition to lesbian regulars like Dee Dee, who'd waltz in with slacks, cuffs turned up, hair slicked back, and tanned Mexican shoes, there was a one-armed guy who'd shoot pool with Rita for $20 a ball. Rita used one of her matched pair of San Toeos; he used the end of a broomstick—and "cleared the table."

Rita awakened as Ricci gently removed her pocket tools. "It's okay, Poppa Bear. Just go back to sleep. I'll set up for tonight's crowd."

In 1967 Rita, celebrating her fourth year with Ricci, opened the Roaring Sixties. "A lot of club owners back then said women

couldn't come in if they didn't turn their pants around" or wear dresses, remembers Rita. Two months after her club's opening, Houston's vice squad came to visit. . . . Separating out the more butch-looking patrons, an Irish sergeant barked out commands. "You get over here. You get over there." Twenty-five lesbians were hauled to jail for wearing clothing of the opposite sex. "The enforcement of the ordinance, of course, was directed only at those people perceived to be gay," underscores Rita. Used for police harassment and extortion, it was also a convenient excuse for some bar owners to restrict lesbians. "Everyone got mad," remembers Rita. "But what could you do?" Rita paid all of the $25 fines and hired an all-girl band, led by "little butch" Sandra to "pump our business back up."

A month later there was another raid. As in Stonewall, something snapped. "I don't think the other bar owners could see what was happening," swears Rita. However, she "saw the need for someone to speak out on behalf of this community." It was an unjust law that "deprived me of my right to do business."

Wanstrom sought out the help of Percy Foreman, whose legal fee matched his status as the preeminent lawyer of the Southwest. Foreman was willing to represent Rita when another raid befell her club. As Rita headed down to the Roaring Sixties that evening to rally folks, "I happened to see a little tumblebug. Now, a tumblebug will just lay there until somebody turns it over and helps it back on its feet." And so, as the summer of 1967 receded into history, the Tumblebugs were born.

Selling sweatshirts, hosting benefits, and sponsoring drag shows, the dozen or so women who made up the Tumblebugs raised Foreman's $2,500 fee. . . . In challenging the city ordinance, Rita hoped to get "people to think for themselves about what was happening to us and what *we* needed to do to take the heat off." However, Houston had precious little of what might be called a "gay community." Aside from the mostly straight-owned gay bars and the hundred or so "A-list" gay men who hosted the Diana Awards, a parody of the Oscars [for which Rita designed some of the costumes], there were mostly homosexual closeted individuals, some of whom displayed the Southern fondness for eccentricity.

One Diana member operated the Four Seasons on Market Square. "He had a beautiful house on Choclafile Road with a swimming pool on the second floor and live peacocks running on all of these acres of land," discloses Rita. Four bungalows surrounded the house. Here Rock Hudson and other closeted celebrities would come to party and bring their tricks. . . .

Few Houston homosexuals harbored any expectation of organized political activity. Wanstrom declares, "If we'd have had a parade down Westheimer in 1967, we would have been stoned. . . . We were," Rita continues, " a lost people who needed to come together."

Two nights before New Year's Eve, a sergeant and his men of the vice squad rushed into the Sixties and found women "dressed in men's pants, men's shirts, and men's shoes."

Rita reminisces: "They lined people up and started questioning. One woman who was asked her occupation said: 'I'm a weenie peeler.' That just broke everyone up. More cops came in and they made her repeat it. It turned out that she worked in a meat factory and when the weenies came through she would peel one to make sure it was stuffed right. So they put all of the butches in the paddy wagon."

This time, though, things were different. Amidst a bevy of "not guilty" pleas, a shocked magistrate stared down at the Tumblebugs as their celebrated attorney asserted: "This will not be a test of the law. . . . It will be a test of the vice squad's concept of the law."

Meanwhile, pugnacious activist Ray Hill worked for change behind the scene. . . . Ray was summoned to "come through the back door of City Hall and walk up three flights of stairs to the mayor's office." At the appointed hour, Ray remembers climbing the stairs, entering through the fire exit, and meeting with the mayor's assistant, Larry McKaskle, in a converted maid's closet. Ray wrenched from McKaskle a promise that City Hall would indeed "check into" the lesbian bar raids.

On the day of the trial, Rita and her "girls"—wearing dresses and makeup—appeared before Judge Raymond Judice. The cases against the 11 were dismissed due to the failure of the vice officers to appear. The sergeant, however, announced that he "definitely intended" to refile charges and to continue to enforce the ordinance. Inexplicably, however, he was transferred to the Narcotics Division. Rita affirms, "They never bothered us again!" →



ALL PHOTOS USED WITH PERMISSION OF RITA WANSTROM

SCENES FROM THE ROARING SIXTIES: Second from top is Rita Wanstrom (right) with her darling Ricci.



© GREG DAY PHOTO 2001

DIVAS WITH ATTITUDE The heroes for midseventies Southerners were not gay liberationists with queer placards and clenched fists but heroines adorned with rouge and rhinestones. Homosexual citizens of Atlanta, New Orleans, Houston, Miami, and Dallas had long enjoyed such shows. . . . Southern drag queens did more than imitate Vivien Leigh; they stood resolute against the ravaging of their homosexual Taras. As in Stonewall, divas with attitude were the vanguard for the gay freedom movement. North Carolina's Brandy Alexander first started doing drag as a Sarasota student in 1964. Refusing to be intimidated by police bullying, she was frequently "pulled out of the bars and beaten by the cops with billy clubs." Atlanta's legendary "jailhouse Jezebel," Diamond Lil, earned her moniker following a raid of a "masquerade" party held in a Savannah "dungeon" operated by "Cousin Cora"—herself known for assembling South Georgia's best rough trade, aristocratic closet belles, and top drawer entertainers. And in Tidewater, longtime activist "Diana Ross" mounted a court challenge to her police abduction from the local Steak 'N' Egg. —*from Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*

ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPH "Africa" (Brian Seabrooks) was elected Ms. Gay Charleston, South Carolina, by popular vote in 1979. It was the 20th Annual Ms. Gay Charleston Pageant. He is the first African American to hold this highly esteemed position. His performance was brilliant and he won the hearts of all Charleston's queer citizens both black and white. Only 19 years old at the time, he was soon discovered by talent agents and left Charleston to perform at the Sweet Gum Head in Atlanta. On the night of the pageant, former Ms. Gay Charlestons, some going back 20 years, sat at a long greeting table at the entrance. Many had bouffant-teased hair from the '60s. They were in a tizzy, upset with the prospect of having a person of color become Ms. Gay Charleston. Fortunately, their prejudice was not shared by the majority of the folks present! —*photographer Greg Day*

1973-74
Seventy-Five Lesbians

Put someone else's name down!" read the sign-in sheet.

Scribbling "Pokey," the five-foot-three social science major, recently arrived from college in Florida, walked into Just Marion & Lynn's. Wearing a pleated skirt, her brown hair trailing to her waist, Pokey Anderson stepped up to the bar and ordered a ginger ale. The bartender winced, as if to ask, "Do you know where you are?"

Identifying herself as a feminist and a lesbian, Pokey was neither a separatist nor "out" in early '70s Houston. . . . While living in suburbia, Pokey occasionally sneaked downtown to walk along "Peculiar Street" in the Westheimer Colony. Houston was "on the cusp of change from the bar lesbian to the lesbian-feminist," Pokey explains.

The lesbianscape was a set of loosely networked communities of women. . . . Not-so-closeted lesbians played fast-pitch softball at Memorial Park and relished the annual International Softball tournament at summer's end. Meanwhile, the "A-List Lesbians" enjoyed outings like Easter egg hunts on Lake Japhet and Halloween parties. . . . Most, like those frequenting the Roaring Sixties or Just Marion and Lynn's, "had lived this existence in the closet for all of these years reciting the mantra 'If you don't rock the boat, you'll be okay.'" But, a new lesbian wave, generally unaware of an earlier generation of activists like Rita Wanstrom and her Tumblebugs, was about to tip the boat of Houston heterodoxy. . . .


JEB


UNCREDITED

SCENES FROM THE SEVENTIES: Pokey Anderson (second from left) joins in the first March on Washington, Oct. 14, 1978. *Inset:* Montrose Gaze Community Center, 1973.

As 1973 began, Pokey attended the first National Women's Political Caucus convention held at the Rice Hotel. "Sissy Farenthold, Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem were all there—right in front of *me*!" exclaims Pokey. But the caucus was "very straight, although there were people in the closet"—including Pokey—who "kept sneaking off" to a sexual orientation workshop on the top floor. There she learned about the Montrose Gaze Community Center that had officially opened three months earlier, inspired by the Dallas gay pride parade that past June.

A few days later, Pokey parked her VW bug near the corner of Fairview at Whitney. . . . Inside the bungalow she found a couple of dozen people, mostly men, hanging out. Funded by the bars, there was a pool table and space for rap groups and dances.

Pokey also tracked down Integrity/Houston, which evolved from a small Dignity group at Holy Rosary Church three years earlier. . . . "But, again, it was all gay guys," Pokey said, "mostly older, conservative, closeted men." This self-described "fellowship for homophiles" included founders Bill Buie, Mark Barron, Hugh Crell, and Keith McGee. As an unaffiliated political group, it provided gay

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speakers, sponsored VD screenings, and supported political candidates. . . .

Later Pokey wrote a children's fable, "Star and the 75." This is a story of Star's love for Laura, who abandoned her for a man. Star, wondering if she was "the only woman in the world who thought women were important enough to love for real," went to the Center: "But there were mostly men there. So, as a joke, she would always pretend there were really 75 women there. Her friend John would say, 'Oh you just missed them. The 75 just left.' And Star would always say, 'Darn, I missed them again.'"

Pokey explains, "Back then, it was a total fantasy to find 75 lesbians anywhere in Houston, except for a bar."

. . . In Houston, a bevy of newspapers and radio shows, an array of groups ranging from softball teams to motorcycle clubs, and a stable political infrastructure transformed Montrose from an "amorphous cohesiveness" of individuals in 1970 to the "San Francisco of the South" a decade later.

When Integrity was founded in 1970, a local printer, Floyd Goff (under the name Phil Frank), published *Nuntius*, using money produced from his swinger's club newspaper and bingo parlor receipts to subsidize the paper. An alternative radio station (KPFT-FM) also started that year, and within a couple of years a live show with taped programs to "enlighten the straight community" had evolved into the show "Out of the Closets, Into the Streets" that aired every other Sunday afternoon.


OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO


BRANDON WOLF

More Scenes from the Seventies: Pokey Anderson (far left) poses with part of the group attending the National Gay Task Force White House Conference. The photograph was taken at the White House on March 26, 1977. After the meeting on gay rights, Anderson (inset) talks to reporters at a press conference.

Meanwhile, Houston women switched from fast to slow-pitch softball, opening up ball fields at Memorial Park to scores of other lesbians. Women formed basketball and touch football teams. Some men formed or joined biker communities. In 1972, the Houston Motorcycle Club held club meetings at Mary's bar. A year earlier, the Texas Riders, Houston's oldest motorcycle club, had begun publishing a newsletter. Headquartered at the Locker on Westheimer, these men of leather held Christmas and pledge parties, conducted change-of-command ceremonies, and sponsored interclub activities with local and regional "runs." . . . The Gaze Center hosted meetings for Christian gays. Eventually this study group, led by Arnold Lawson, would become MCC of the Resurrection.

During the '70s, the city bar scene grew proportionately with the gay population and its increasing openness. . . . Among the city's 30-odd queer bars, the most notorious and oldest was the hustler-friendly, poorly lit Exile on Bell Street (billed as "Texas' Oldest Western Bar") and La Caja on Tuam,

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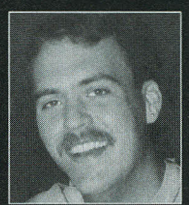
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boasting a back patio rife with sexual activity. One of the biggest gay dance halls between the East and West Coasts, the Bayou Landing, opened in 1973 [just off S. Shepherd, across the street from where Bookstop is today]. Both women and men would crowd onto the dance floor on a weekend night. It was there that Pokey learned to do the Cotton-Eyed Joe.

This was also an era, as David Patterson, one of the founders of the Promethean Society, remembers, when "the war on drugs was almost non-existent. It was easy to get almost any drug you wanted: tabs of acid, Quaaludes, pot, uppers."



ONE MORE SCENE FROM THE SEVENTIES: The Houston Ducks softball team, coached by the Pride Parade's Carol Clark (far right). Pokey Anderson is in the second row, second from right.

Leaders of Integrity/Houston called on bargoers to practice "enlightened self-interest," reminding them of the frequent appearances of plainclothes vice officers. They distributed silk-screened posters that reinforced the old Mattachine message—"What I do reflects on you. What you do reflects on me. What we do reflects on the entire gay community."

. . . In May 1973, Billy Walker, Chuck Berger, and Bob Osborne stood before Houston City Council. As leaders of the new political advocacy group formed out of the Gaze Center, the trio politely requested an end to police harassment of homosexuals, a liaison to the Police Department, and a declaration of gay pride week. Mayor Welch walked out, and the infamous homophobe council member, Frank Mann, shouted, "You're abnormal! You need to see a psychiatrist instead of City Council."

. . . During the dog days of August 1973, after Lou Reed's "Walk on the Wild Side" had dropped out of the Top 40, Texas lesbians and gay men also had a shock. The grisly discovery of the bodies of 27 young men, tortured and murdered by Dean A. Corll in his Pasadena apartment with the assistance of two teen accomplices, generated headlines across the nation. . . .

When Mayor Welch chose not to run for re-election that fall, Integrity/Houston invited the three top candidates to speak at a private meeting. Only one accepted: Fred Hofheinz.

Integrity circulated flyers to 25 gay bars on election eve supporting Hofheinz's candidacy during his runoff election with city councilman Dick Gottlieb. Although his opponent was supported by the mayor and construction interests, Hofheinz won with a margin of about 3,000 votes—allowing Houston gays to claim credit for his narrow victory.

Mayor Hofheinz brought in a new police chief with whom representatives of the gay community met in early February 1974. Chief C.M. Lynn gave the community "a degree of respect and confidence" toward the Houston Police Department. Further, he pledged not to raid bars if no illegal activities occurred. . . .

Although local homosexual political groups were no longer quixotic operations across the South in 1974, they certainly lacked a critical mass of homosexual Southerners, who generally preferred reading a just-released novel, *The Front Runner*, or a *New Yorker* gay short story, quietly switching the TV channel from *Marcus Welby*'s "The Outrage" or *Police Woman's* "Flowers of Evil," or weekend dancing to "The Hustle" or "Never Can Say Goodbye." Three years would pass before a former Miss America runner-up and an encyclopedia salesman would square off in Dade County to ignite the second Stonewall rebellion. ■

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MEET JIM SEARS and learn more about your queer Southern heritage October 1; Sears will be at Crossroads, 1111 Westheimer, 713/942-0147, at 7 p.m., followed by an interview on *Lesbian and Gay Voices*, on KPFT, 90.1 FM, 8–10 p.m. *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones* is available from your favorite local bookstore, Internet bookseller, or by calling Rutgers University Press at 800/446-9323. For more information on Jim Sears's work, see www.jtsears.com/histgal3.htm.

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