

Be proud, Candace Gingrich tells gays

Half-sister of House speaker honored here

By **CHAD BINETTE**
Houston Chronicle

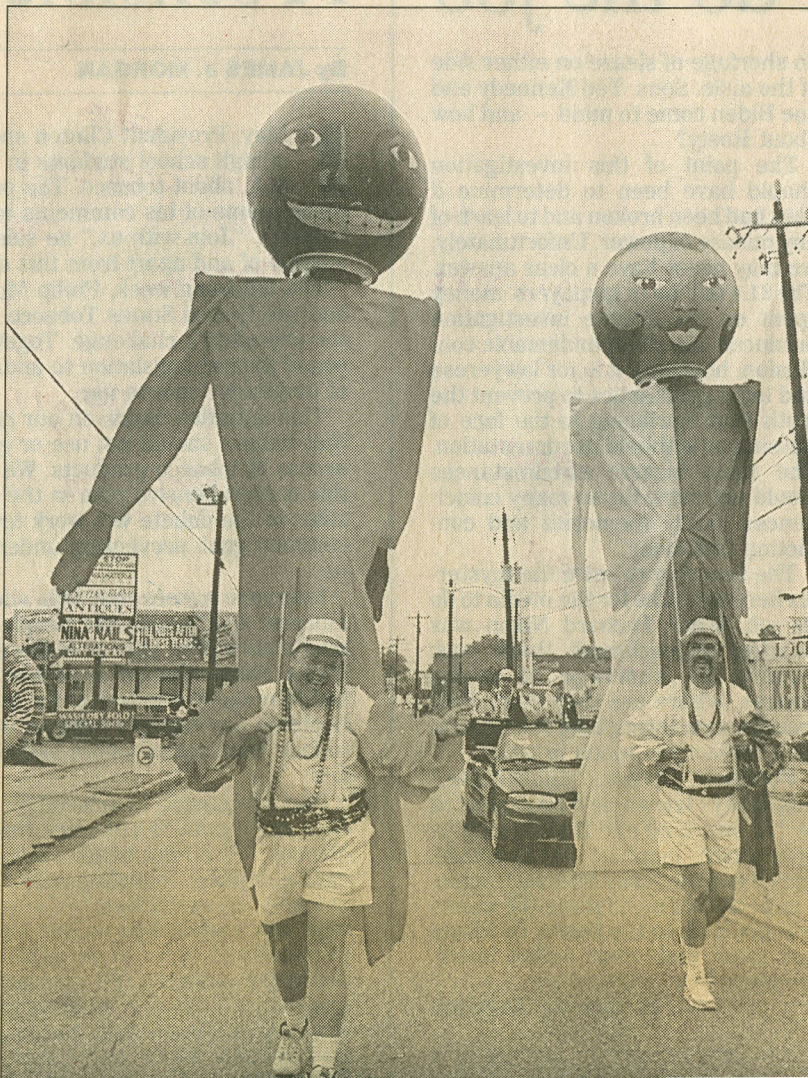
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Gingrich, a spokeswoman for the National Human Rights Campaign, received the Founder's Award at Pride Fest '96, part of Lesbian & Gay Pride Week. She also served as a grand marshal of the parade.

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Before Pride Fest, thousands lined Westheimer for the parade, organizers said. The crowd seemed smaller than in previous years because of morning and afternoon rain.

A sparse crowd gathered by the start at Woodhead, but many paradegoers flocked to the Montrose area, standing double- and triple-file and even sitting on a few rooftops.



Betty Tichich photos / Chronicle

Sunday's wet weather didn't keep the revelers from enjoying the annual Gay Pride Week Parade on Westheimer, including, at left, Steve Evans and John Weinfeld of the Olympus-Texas Mardi Gras krewe. Celebrants also included Candace Gingrich, above, sister of U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich.

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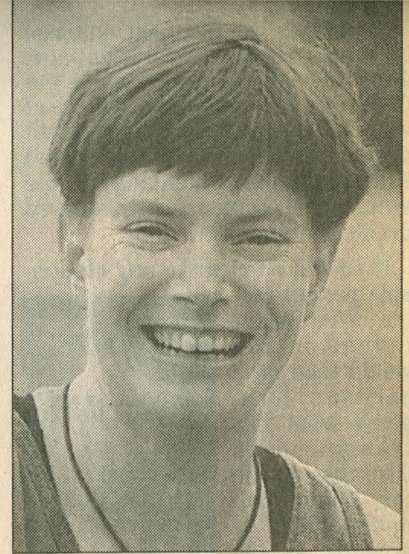
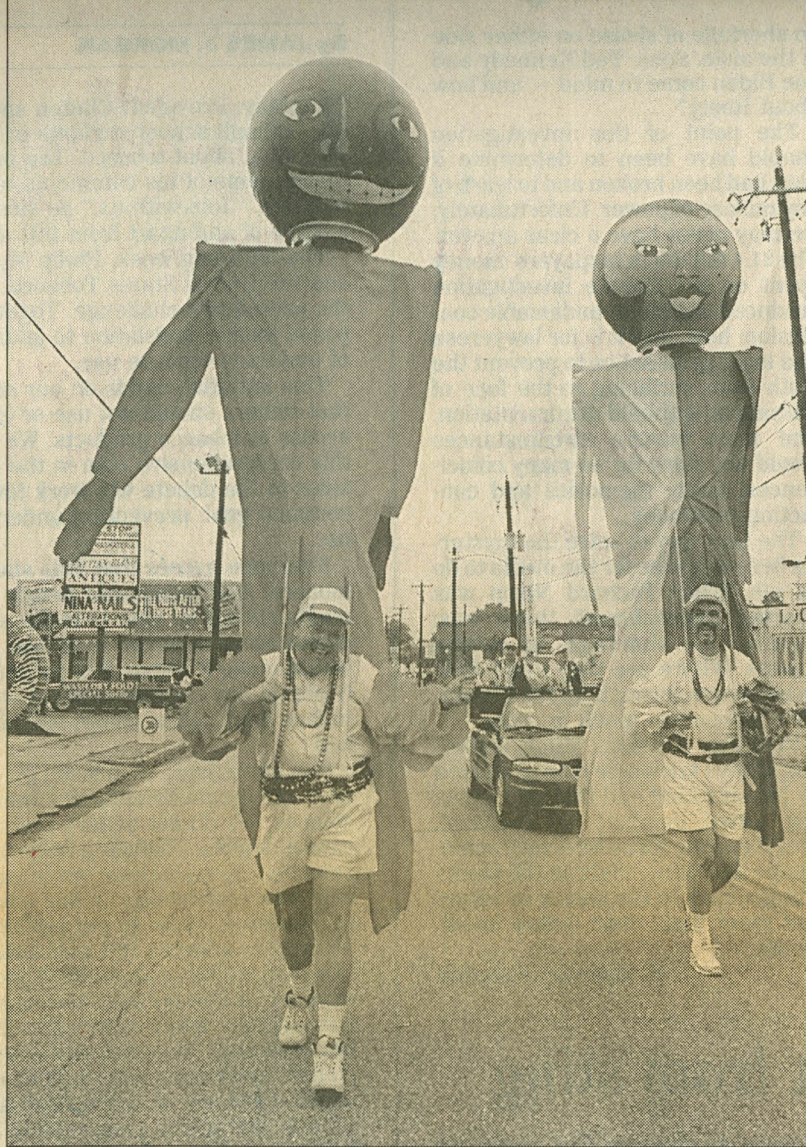
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"This is to remember within the gay community that we're together," said Carlos Briones of Houston. "And to show outside the community that we're proud to be gay. We have a right to be ourselves."

At one point during the afternoon, organizers decided to cancel the festival because they could not get a sound system. But they changed their minds and moved only the concert part of the festival to a local club.

"We were prepared for the heat, but we weren't prepared for the rain," said Howard McHale, a Pride Week co-chair.

McHale said Gingrich's presence gave the festival and the parade, in



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which about 100 groups participated, more of a national flavor than in years past.

Though gays and lesbians celebrated Sunday, Gingrich reminded them of recent congressional action that would define marriage as a

legal union between a man and a woman.

The U.S. House Judiciary Committee two weeks ago approved the bill, which would restrict same-sex marriages and would prevent surviving partners in gay and lesbian

marriages from receiving Social Security, tax and veterans' benefits.

The House is expected to vote on the bill in mid-July, and the Senate has not yet taken action.

Gingrich visited Houston last August to support legislation that would protect gays from losing their jobs because of sexual orientation. She served last June as grand marshal for the 25th annual gay pride parade in San Francisco.









