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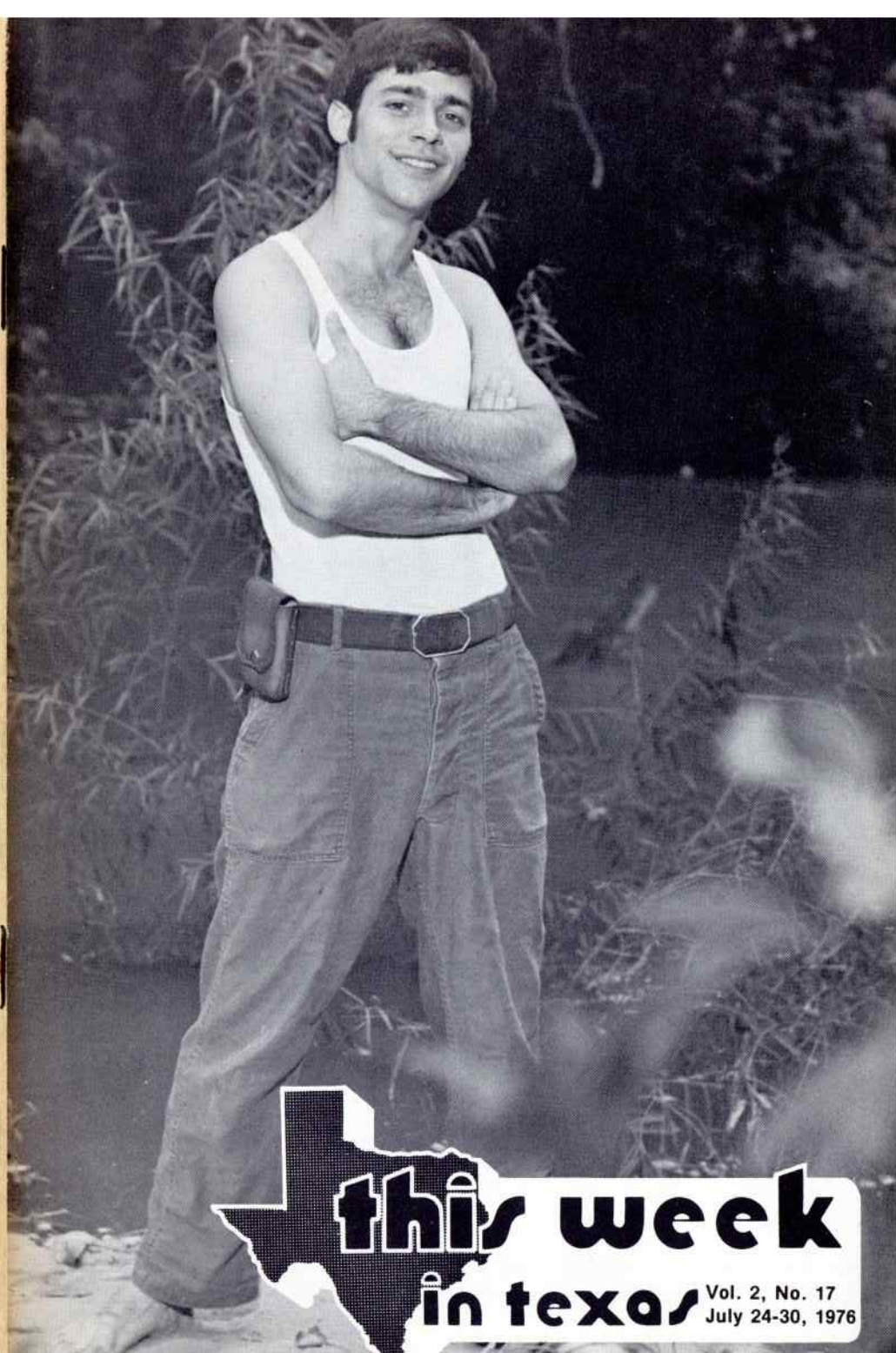


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in texas

Vol. 2, No. 17
July 24-30, 1976



The Texas Tornado, Tiffany Jones, and Co-Host C.J. Harrington

BECAUSE OF MASSIVE
TICKET SALES

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CONTEST**

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COVER PHOTO

photographed by
Sam Osuna

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NEWS UP FRONT

IT'S SHOWTIME

Seems that wherever you look throughout the Lone Star State, somebody has put together a really big show for your entertainment this week. The fun starts at 7:30, Friday, July 23 as Houston's Levi's bar when the curtain goes up on this year's edition of the annual Bartenders' Show. An annual event to benefit the Metropolitan Community Church of the Resurrection, last year's show at the old Hi Kamp was a raging success. This year's effort promises to be bigger, better and campier. Tom, manager of Levi's, reports that over 15 bartenders had signed up to participate as of TWIT's press deadline. The theme this year is "Grand 'Ole Opry" (a camp in itself), so there will be many laughs as your favorite bartenders (known to rise to any occasion) turn their talents from sloshing drinks to dishing the dirt in the finest Nashville mime acts to be found outside **Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman**. TWIT's Cruise Camera will be there to immortalize the highlights of the show. There's a dollar cover, and all proceeds benefit Houston's MCCR. The money collected will be used to send delegates from Houston's MCCR to the National Conference of the Universal Fellowship of MCC in Washington, D.C. the week of August 9-15.

Moving on up to Fort Worth, we find that the ever-popular Bailey St. Warehouse is staging its annual Entertainer of the Year Awards on Monday, July 26. Trophies will be given for the Best Serious Entertainer and the Best Comedy Entertainer with trophies in each category of the 1st and 2nd runners-up. The Entertainer of the Year will receive a trophy and \$300 cash. Deadline for entering this contest is Sunday, July 25.

Also in Fort Worth, the 500 Club is pleased to announce the return of Jacki Jorj as the headliner of the 500 Follies. Always a highlight on the Fort Worth entertainment scene, the Follies feature Ricky, Alice Phal-lus, J.J. Foxxe, April Love and Raina Lee. You can catch the Follies in "Midweek Madness" at 9:30 Wednesday, July 28.

Coming on back to Houston, the colossal Mr. Club Houston show hits the boards at The Depository on Tuesday, July 27. The inimitable Tiffany Jones will team up with Mr. David, C.J. Harrington, to emcee the gala event. Again, the TWIT Cruise Camera will be there to capture the glitter and sparkle and boxes.

And we will, of course, follow Tiffany and C.J. north to Big D where they'll get their act back together for the Mr. Club Dallas Contest to be held at the Bayou Landing, Thursday, July 29. The

Club Dallas contest promises to be every bit as exciting as the event in Houston. Larry, manager of Club Dallas, promises that their show will have just a bit more style and a bit more panache than the Houston event. So it will be worth your time to see both. TWIT's Cruise Camera will be there to catch the northern lights.

A show with a little different slant will hit San Antonio Friday, July 30, as the Hypothesis pulls together its annual "Mr. Hy Contest for Girls." Starting at 10:30, the Mr. Hy contest will have as special guests the reigning Mr. and Miss Hy—Irene and Pauletta. Others in the show will be Shelly Jean, Jerry Sammy Lee, and L'amor.

On across the plains of West Texas, we find that Laredo's El Vaquero Bar is planning "Maya's Follies." Scheduled to hit the stage Saturday, July 31 at 9, Maya's Follies will feature talent from Houston, Monterrey, San Antonio, and Laredo. After the El Vaquero closes at 2 a.m., the party will venture across the border for after hours at the Normandie Restaurant and Bar in Nuevo Laredo. This evening fun and entertainment can be had for only a \$2.00 cover charge.

GPC MEETING

The trustees of Houston's Gay Political Caucus held a special meeting this past Thursday, July 15th and voted to hold regular meetings in the future. Accord-

Continued on page 9

THE HORN-IT

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With Ernie

news

ing to trustee Don Hughes, the GPC will meet every Thursday night, beginning July 28th, at 7:30 p.m. at the Metropolitan Community Church, 1214 Joe Annie. Meetings are open to the public.

TURISTA LIVES!!

Our West Texas TWIT reporter has sent down a warning to any travelers planning to visit Juarez, Mexico toward the end of any month. Seems that the gay bars there are raided by local Mexican police once a month, most of the time around the 25th through the 31st when the city's purses are empty. If you like the excitement of a raid and a night in jail, be prepared to spend at least \$40.00 to get

out.

IS IT A BAR? IS IT A BOOKSTORE? NO. IT'S.....?

The one and only Mr. Peepers just returned from San Francisco and has brought with him an entirely new concept in gay adult entertainment. Watch for the grand opening of what promises to be Houston's HOTTEST new private gay club. Maybe it's tubs. No, it's gotta be coin-operated accu-jacs...or....

REST AREA TRUCKIN'

Those who travel the highways and interstates of the Lone Star State often make rest area connections. Our traveling reporters (or should we say Cruisers) have returned with some interesting rest-stop notes. For instance, the rest areas

continued on page 13

INHALERS

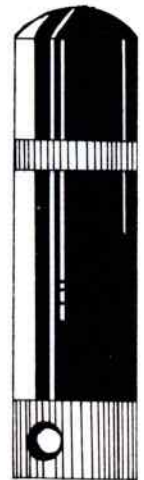
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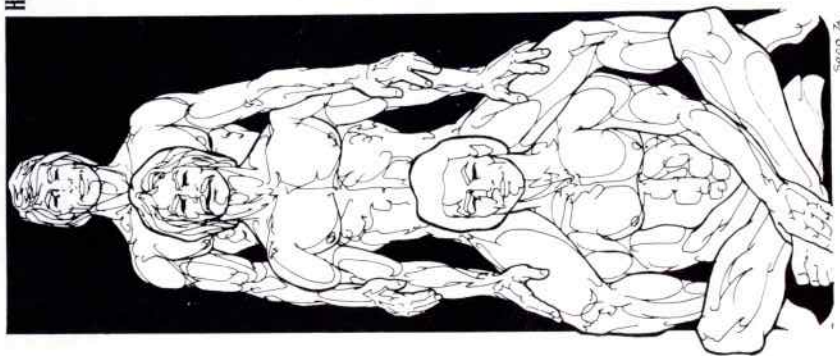
HOST & HOSTESS FOR THE EVENING "THE TEXAS TORNADO" MR TIFFANY JONES AND MR DAVID MR C. J. HARRINGTON ADMISSIONS \$2.00 AT THE DOOR.

JOIN US! AT THE 2ND ANNUAL MR CLUB DALLAS CONTEST...

9:P.M. THURSDAY JULY 29,
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Contestants register by Midnight!
Wednesday July 28, at...
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STARSCOPE

FOR THE WEEK OF JULY 23RD-29TH

Venus, which rules love, art and beauty, has just made a major constellation change — exiting the sign of Cancer and entering Leo for a week's sojourn. This week we will examine this change in Venus in relation to your sign.

AIRES (March 21-April 20): The entrance of Venus into your 5th house of love affairs brings the center of interest on love, amusements and pleasure. Popularity, affection, and social intercourse are accentuated.

TAURUS (April 21-May 21): Venus' moving into your 6th house means harmony will prevail in occupational matters. Smooth cooperation with others is likely. Success comes in your job and your health is likely to be good.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21): The shift of Venus into your 7th house means marriage will now play an important part regarding both personal happiness and material benefit. All partnerships are now favored.

CANCER (June 22-July 23): You now enter a period when Venus relates favorably to 8th house affairs such as legacies and other people's money. Being productive will more than pay off.

LEO (July 24-August 23): Your usual outgoing personality now becomes more lovely than usual. People now seek you out. An intense love may now begin to compliment your life.

VIRGO (August 24-September 23): Venus now enters your 10th house of career. Success is likely to be accelerated as a result of the benevolent interest of superiors. Nice things happen to you at work.

LIBRA (September 23-October 23): Friends now tend to assume greater importance and interest centers around your social contacts. The interest and assistance of others is now evident in your endeavors. You

meet nice new friends.

SCORPIO (October 24-November 22): Venus now sneaks into your 12th house of the inner self. Some secluded occupation is likely to offer the maximum possibility for gain or for work of a rather commonplace nature. Maybe you become involved in a secret love affair.

SAGITTARIUS (November 23-December 21): Your usual positive outlook on life is now even more positive, approaching an almost blind faith that all is well. Amiability and a cheerful temperament increase your popularity and desire for social life.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 20): If you were looking for marriage, the man of your dreams has already been met. Venus has already left the marriage sector of your chart, so rather than keep searching for someone new, try to remember someone you already know as being your next mate.

AQUARIUS (January 21-February 19): Venus now plunges into your 2nd house of money causing you to buy pretty items, to spend money on artistic entertainment, and to make money through creative endeavors. Watch out for extravagance, however.

PISCES (February 20-March 20): Welcome Venus to your 3rd house of short journeys and communication. Travel becomes a potential source of profit and pleasure. Messages, phone calls, and plans are marked for personal gain. Interest in literature and music now increases.

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news

between Houston and Dallas remain quiet unless you're into romping in the woods back behind the fences. The stop just north of Austin is quite worth a visit, especially the southbound side where a window in the wall functions. North of Dallas near the Oklahoma border both sides of the road are very busy. Over near Texarkana, the glory is open again thanks to some razorback from the Arkansas side. But, best of all, is the area between Orange and the Louisiana border on Interstate 10. There seems to be more action here than at the bar in Beaumont. Late reports say the eastbound for New Orleans is better than the westbound since new partitions have gone up on the westbound which have not as yet been dedicated with "glory" blessings.

A & M ACADEMIC HALL

About the only place to make a connection in the College Station - Bryan Area, other than the Holiday Inn Bar (really!), is the basement of the Academic Hall on campus. This location, known as "The Bell", continues to be very active. However, TWIT has learned of recent police harassment. No arrests were made, but one participant was detained for questioning for three hours. So, as with the University of Houston (where things aren't like they used to be), be careful when touring Aggiland.

THEY COME AND THEY GO

There's a new manager at the Briar Patch, a long time favorite Houston bar. Welcome aboard an old friend, the young and dashing Paul Taylor. Paul has been in the bar business over seven years and has some exciting new ideas for the rabbits in the patch. Congratulations to Mr. Taylor from TWIT. Go by and shake the hand of this Taurus Man named Paul.

In Dallas, the bar crowd will be saying goodbye to the lucky Ron T. as he leaves for sunny California. Ron was bartender at the ever-stylish Swamptrash. Taking his place will be John Irizarry. TWIT wishes Ron the best of luck and welcomes John aboard.

MORE MAE WEST

Mary's of Houston is making even more plans for the big Mae West Birthday Bash coming up on August 19th. Maurice Pfeider, manager, says the grand prize will be \$250.00 for the best Mae West lookalike. Since the whole affair is in a Hollywood Canteen setting, other Hollywood costumes are welcome, and cash prizes are offered for the best and campiest. Harlow or Clark Gable? Circa 1935 Drag is the theme as we all pay homage to Ms. West.

INTRA-MURAL SPORTS

The LampPost meets the Loft in another Sunday Softball Game this Sunday afternoon at 1:00 p.m. at the ol' ball diamond in

Continued on page 30

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BOX 22104

Do you have a complaint, a question, a comment, or even a compliment? If so, write to TWIT at P.O. Box 22104, Houston, Texas 77027. As space permits, we will print and answer your letters.

CARTER ON GAY RIGHTS

Box 22104: Now that Jimmy Carter has won the Democratic National Convention's nomination for president, I would be interested in knowing what his stand on gay rights is. Or, has he ever talked about the subject?

Editor: Jimmy Carter has made some public statements about gays and gay rights and they are somewhat encouraging. Recently on NBC-TV, Carter said he wanted harassment of gays to stop. He felt that gays should be allowed to live their lives as any other respectable citizens. Carter has even expressed sympathy for Air Force Sgt. Leonard P. Matlovich and his case against the USAF. In Georgia, where he was governor, Carter came out on several occasions with favorable statements about gay rights which helped to foster good will among the general public in their acceptance of gays. For instance, in Atlanta, gays have fewer problems than they used to have. So it appears that Jimmy Carter's profile on gay rights is more positive than negative. He does not appear to be at all homophobic like Senator Jackson, for instance.

DANCERS ARRESTED

Box 22104: I understand some gays have been arrested lately in some of the discos for dancing "too close together." Is this true, and what does the law say about dancing?

Editor: Yes, it is true. Several gay couples have been arrested for their manner of dancing. Although the charge is not serious, Texas law says there should be no touching of private

parts or lewd contact between persons while dancing in a public bar. So, save that heavy petting for when you get your partner home.

WE ALL WANT TO BE STARS. . .

Box 22104: How do I go about getting my picture on the cover of TWIT?

Editor: If you are interested in becoming a photo subject for TWIT, we encourage you to write to us and submit a snapshot of yourself. Please include your address and phone number, which will, of course, be kept confidential. If we can use you, we'll be in touch within the week.

. . . OR TO KNOW ABOUT THEM

Box 22104: I have been reading your Starscope and enjoy it very much, but some of the things in it confuse me. Like what does it mean when you say a planet is retrograding? And what about the different houses?

Editor: Our Starscope column is written by a professional astrologer who tells us that when a planet is retrograding it is going backwards. From time to time a planet will reverse its apparent motion in the sky and when this happens its power is diminished. There are 12 houses. As the planets move through these houses they affect the mundane characteristics of each house. For instance, the second house rules money, the fourth house rules the home, the sixth house rules health, the seventh house rules marriage and partnerships, and the tenth house rules career. Astrology is really too complicated a science to be successfully explained in this column. However, a good introductory book is

How to Write Your Own Horoscope.

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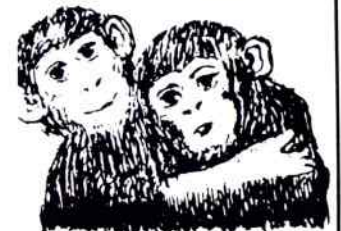
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CALENDAR TEXAS

DALLAS

Sunday, July 25

- Drag shows at the Entre Nuit, Old Plantation, Bayou Landing, 10 p.m.
- Free draft beer at TJ's, 7-8 p.m.
- Pool tournament at the Olive Branch Saloon, 6 pm
- Oldies but goodies night at TJ's, 9 pm

Thursday, July 29

- Mr. Club Dallas Contest at the Bayou Landing with Tiffany Jones and C.J. Harrington, 9 pm. See ad for details.

EL PASO

Wednesday, July 28

- Benny sings and plays the piano at the Apartment

Saturday, July 24

- Benny sings and plays the piano at the Apartment
- Discotheque with Angie at the Apartment

FORT WORTH

Monday, July 26

- Entertainer of the Year Awards at the Bailey Street Warehouse

Tuesday, July 27

- Free food with special drink prices at the 500 Club, 8-10

Wednesday, July 28

- 500 Follies present "Midweek Madness" at 9:30 pm, 500 Club

Friday, July 29

- Country Western night at the 500 Club. Special drink prices if you wear western hat. Show at 10:30 featuring special guest Roxie

HOUSTON

Friday, July 23

- Annual Bartender's Show, a benefit for the MCCR, at The Levi's — 7:30 pm curtain. The Levi's beer bust is cancelled for tonite only and will return Sunday

Saturday, July 24

- "Saturday's Child" rap session from noon 'til 2 pm at the MCCR

Sunday, July 25

- Softball game between the Lamp Post and the Loft, 1 pm, in the Ball Park at Fairview and Yupon. Free beer courtesy of the participating bars.
- Jambayala at The Barn, 1 pm.
- Beer bust at Levi's, 3-6 pm—\$1.00, 75c if wearing western hat.

Tuesday, July 27

- Free movie at The Locker, 9:30 pm.
- Mr. Club Houston Contest at The Depository with Tiffany Jones, C.J. Harrington, and "Mixed Company." Showtime is 9:30 pm.

Wednesday, July 28

- Midweek drag show at the Old Plantation, 9:30 pm
- Spaghetti night at Levi's

Thursday, July 29

- Country and western band at Just Marion and Lynn's, 9:30 pm. No cover, no minimum.

SAN ANTONIO

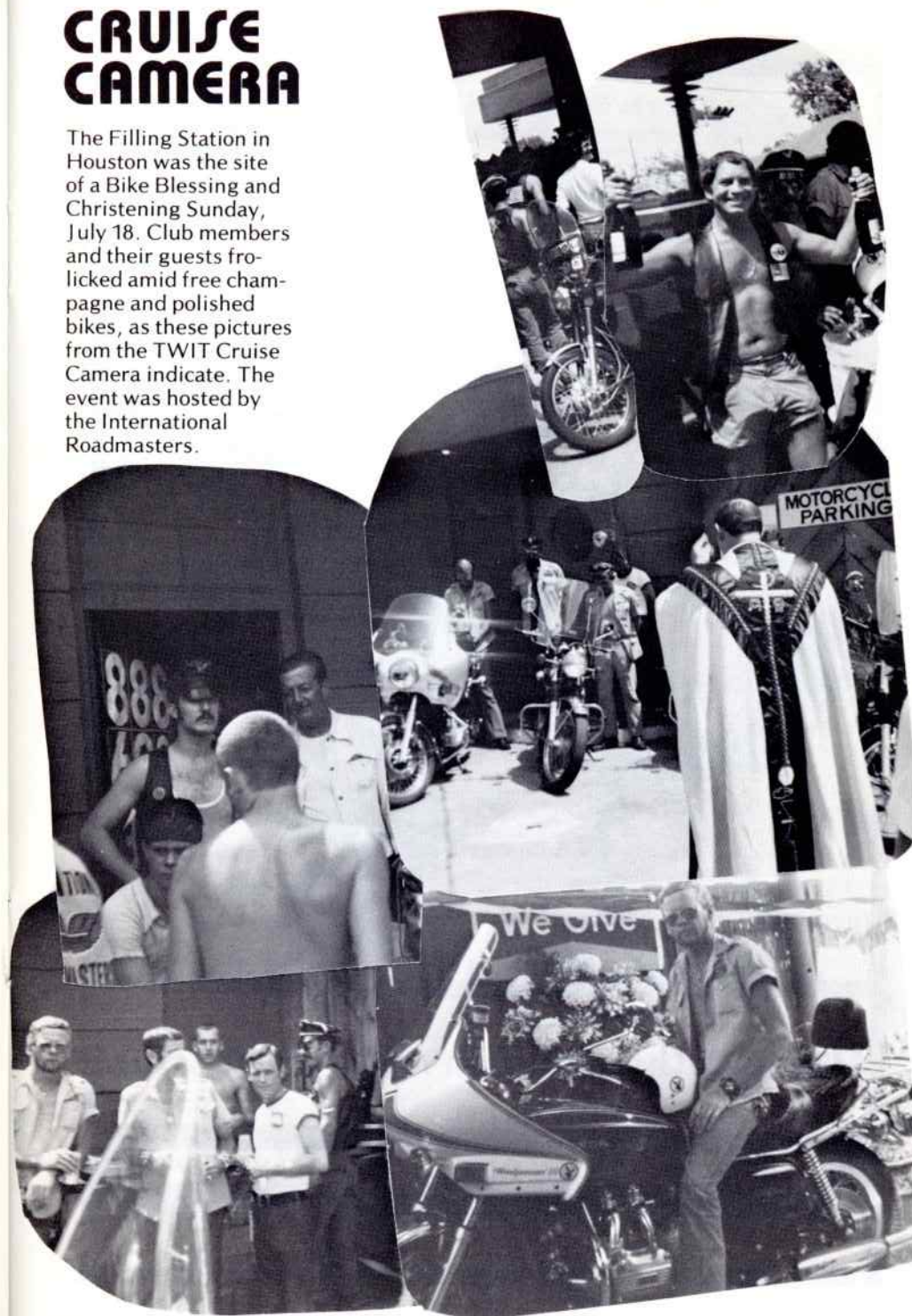
Friday, July 30

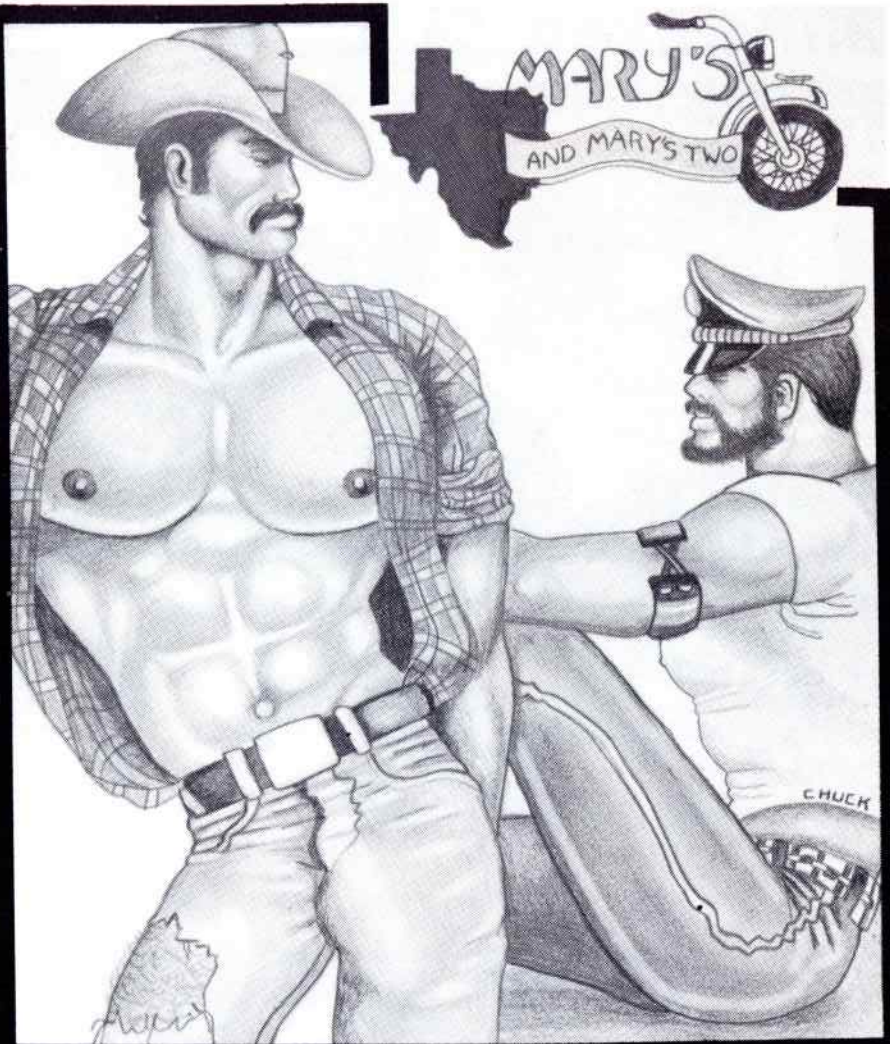
- "Mr. Hy Contest for Girls" at the Hypothesis, 10:30 pm.

I won't sleep in your bed because your sheets don't match.

CRUISE CAMERA

The Filling Station in Houston was the site of a Bike Blessing and Christening Sunday, July 18. Club members and their guests frolicked amid free champagne and polished bikes, as these pictures from the TWIT Cruise Camera indicate. The event was hosted by the International Roadmasters.





Home of the Houston Motorcycle Club

HOUSTON

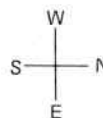
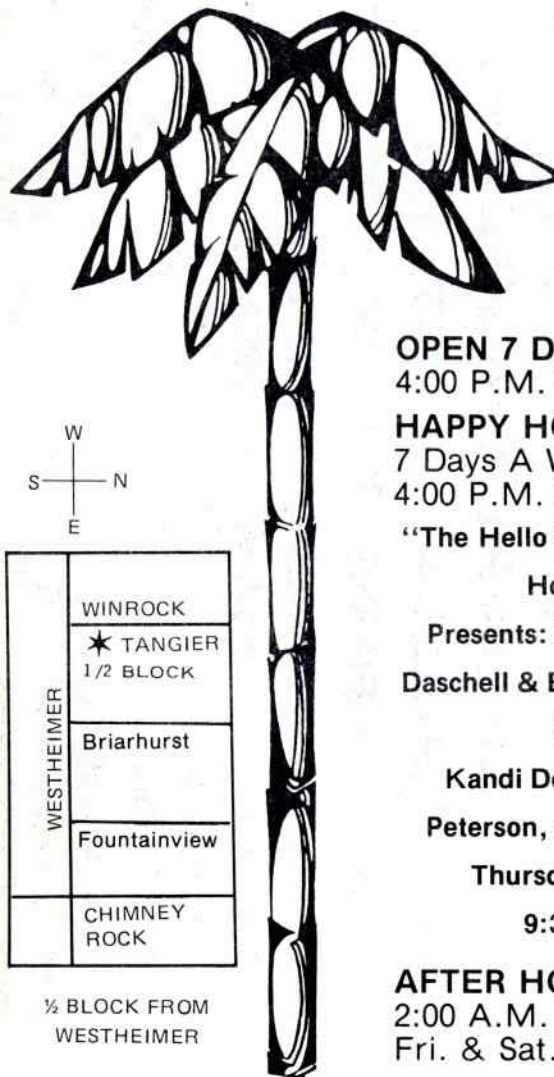
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TUESDAY JULY 27, 1976

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Held at **THE DEPOSITORY**

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For The 2nd Annual
**MR CLUB DALLAS
CONTEST**

THURSDAY JULY 29, 1976

Contestants must register at

CLUB DALLAS

by Wednesday 7/28/76

Held at the **BAYOU LANDING**

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bulletin board

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3-room apartment to share in the Montrose area. No drugs, No fems. Must be clean-cut and honest. Call Gary after 6. 522-5863.

LIFE WITH VERA

A Soaper by John Gardner

Dear Diary,

I hope you're not offended by my shaky handwriting tonight, but you know how hard it is for me to write when I'm lying in bed. Even on a Phipps Foam Extra Firm Mattress. But diary, I just don't have the strength left to get up and get out of bed and go to the desk. I've just had another Killer Day.

That job I told you about turned out to be nothing. They were recruiting for the Navy. The Navy! Of all things. I was half-way signed up for a four-week training session in Florida before I found out. I thought it was for some kind of travel service catering to hunky guys. I began to think something was wrong when I asked them which of my bathing suits I should take. The turquoise see-through or the Gucci Sheer Silk, with side slits and baby-doll canopy! And then I asked the man where the best gay bars were in Pensacola. The man in the ushers uniform turned green and the good looking guy in the white bell bottoms pulled a book about guns out of his desk and started fanning himself. And rather badly, I might add. It's not proper to fan yourself with your right hand. But before I could take him aside and give him a private etiquette lesson, the man in the usher uniform started screaming about the decadence in our society and how John Paul Jones must be turning over in his grave! I was then informed that I was not the sort of person they were looking for. I curtsied and exited.

Then I went over to see about that job at the library. Who could know more about books than me. I've been

reading them for years. And I really did get off to a great start. But I will let you in on a secret dear book-of-my-life, the library does NOT arrange its books according to color. And I had felt so proud. I had the start of my section beginning in dark blue, which then led right into all the books which were light blue. I had blended them so carefully that you couldn't even tell where the dark blue books ended and the light blues began. It had taken me hours!

Well anyway, I kept working on it all day until I had the blue fading into the shelves of red, and red into yellow, etc., etc. A veritable rainbow of knowledge! But my supervisor was not impressed. I don't think he's ever taken any classes in art appreciation. He told me the books go in order according to those little-bitty numbers written on the backs. I always wondered what those numbers were for! I thought it was some sort of secret code to keep people under 18 from checking out certain books. Not only did I lose the job, but they made me turn in my library card. So now I'm not only without a job, but I've been put on the library's public enemy list.

I was so upset on my way home. My ever-so-light soft-brush mascara had run all the way down my pants and ruined my best pair of socks by the time I got home. That's the last time I wear white socks to job interviews.

If I don't get some money soon, I'm going to have to start selling my house or my body. Guess I'd better start calling real estate agents, huh? I really will hate to give up the old home place. And all the good memories of this house. Remember the time

CRUISE CAMERA

If you've never attended a Sunday afternoon Ball Game in the park, you've missed a very good time as these pictures taken by TWIT's Cruise Camera show. Here, two of Houston's bars, The Locker and the Lamp Post lock bats and balls as spectators enjoy beer and a sunny afternoon of good wholesome fun. Oh, the final Locker 20 Lamp Post 19

There is much interest in the community about forming a league as gays in sports flourish more than ever.



we all got stoned and painted a mural on the living room—in Revlon #41 nail polish! Or that time Burt's brunch eggs Benedict set fire to the kitchen. And burned down the house next door! And who could forget the time Mary Lou's 110 gallon aquarium exploded following a collision with a cheerfully tossed champagne glass. The neighbors are still finding dead goldfish amid the burned-out rubble of their former home. Yes, diary, it will be hard to give up the old home, but I guess some things in life are necessary.

But there is a good side. I think I'll move into one of those apartment projects for swinging singles. Looks like fun. Surely there are some guys who are gay living in places like that. And if gay guys don't swing, I don't know who does. And these kinds of apartments not only have a swimming pool, but usually a club house and a sauna (hubba-hubba). And I'd love to give them some decorating tips on the club area. Will keep you informed, diary.

Vera



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REVIEWS

Theatre

It was closing night of the New Texas Theatre's **Stories for Americans** and we couldn't help but regret that such a fine production received so little publicity from the media. Those of us who complain about the lack of professional theatre in Houston should go to the trouble of seeking out such an organization as the New Texas Theatre in lieu of the syrupy, overproduced alternatives around town.

Housed in an alarmingly handsome building on Lamar, NTT's proscenium stage is large enough to enhance ensemble works, but not so enormous as to lose the subtlety of smaller, less conspicuous productions. Its cathedral-like ceiling makes for hollow, well sounding acoustics. The lighting is carefully designed and engaging. The stage itself seems somewhat dwarfed by the long cavernous room; and yet, all the intimacy of the action remains intact.

Stories for Americans was the most un-bicentennial bicentennial production we have yet to experience. Devised by Nancy Brooks and Alfred Hyslop, the "stories" were a collection of myths and fables from around the world; stories whose characters included monkeys, trees, snakes, spiders, even God Himself. These characters were presented under Hyslop's careful scrutiny and woven into a series of most unusual and interesting tales. Strictly G-Rated, **Stories for Americans** was a musical fantasy that deserved more than the usual low key attendance.

We anxiously await NTT's next production, "The Queen and the Rebels" which opens Friday, July 23, 8:30 p.m., also directed by Hyslop. If **Stories** is any indication of what we may expect from NTT, then perhaps Houston Theatre is finally going to advance beyond the monotonous stalemate which seems, at present, to enclose it.

by Tom Goreman

J E M

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news

the park at the corner of Fairview and Yupon. Last week, the Lamp Post lost to the Locker in a close one, 20 to 19, and Biff of the Locker treated his winning team to a free steak dinner. Norma's team is looking for a victory but late reports indicate The Loft is really up for this one. Oh yes, Free Beer courtesy the participating bars, so drop by and see the action. It's free!

INSIDE OUTSIDE COUNTRYSIDE


Ed Moniger of the Inside Outside informs us that the country side of the Inside Outside in Houston and these are Ed's words "should probably, likely, hopefully open in mid-August." The Inside Outside has taken over the nudie joint next door and is sprinkling much decorative dust over the old place in an effort to butch up the bar's image for all the Texas Dudes who will be moving in to take over.

RAGS TO RICHES

The Emporium's new boutique at the Old Plantation in Dallas is open and doing well. New fashionable clothing for the with-it gay arrives daily. So ditch them torn jeans and grungy T-shirts and get into something spiffy.

NEW HOURS

And a final note. Dallas' Swamptrash has changed its hours. It now opens at 4 p.m. Monday through Friday, and on Friday and Saturday nights it is open after hours with free coffee, juice and soft drinks.



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FICTION

DEREK'S WEAKNESS by Max Baumgardner

I crawled back into bed before tackling his letter. It was typewritten, singlespaced (naturally) on the back of about a dozen VOTE FOR LAMBES-CO handbills.

Derek was always forgetting to buy stationary, and so I had grown accustomed to receiving his letters on anything from cocktail napkins to grocery bags. It didn't bother me. It simply annoyed me (like so many other things he did).

"Dear George,

I feel like shit. Last night I drank myself into a coma and on my way back to the apartment fell down and busted my head open. The two old ladies next door attended to me like I was a winged sparrow. They bandaged me, fed me, even put me to bed. Before leaving, one of them warned me about "queers" in the area. I thought it was funny.

The apartment is coming along fine, I'm withholding any major changes until you get here. It needs painting, and except for a bed, I haven't bought anything. We both know my taste is terrible, and I can't stand any more of those looks when I bring home something awful.

It's been a chore and a half getting this place clean. In a way I kinda wish we had gotten a real apartment instead of a duplex. Oh, sure, like you said, it's got great possibilities, but it's been hell making it livable.

One thing I've discovered about Houston that will thrill you is that they have roaches here. And I don't mean roaches. I mean ROACHES. Big mothers. They helped me move in. I'm serious, George, I've never seen anything like it. The landlord said he just exterminated last week and it takes a while for the stuff to work, but I'm going out tomorrow and buy about fifteen cans of RAID.

The plumbing is not good. I think we got the side of the house with the

make shift pipes. Sometimes there's hot water, sometimes there's not.

I miss you. There are a lot of pretty people in the bars but I've been a good boy. Welllll, I kinda led one guy on a few nights back in a disco. We talked together awhile and when we slow danced, I let him rub his cock against my leg and fondle my ass. (Well, it was *late and I was drunk.*) He kept buying me drinks. I guess I should've told him right off I wasn't interested, but it was *late.*

When the moment of truth finally came and I suddenly got lock jaw of the sphincter, there were some harsh words and snide remarks and I thought I was gonna have to beat him up, but his roommate walked in about that time with a trick and things cooled down. I felt terrible about it the next day. I hope I see the guy out again so I can apologize."

I laid the letter in my lap and took a sip of decaffeinated coffee. My mind was exhausted from I LOVE LUCY reruns and insurance claims and farewell dinners. Poor Derek. I skimmed through another page or so of a nice dyke he had met with a monkey named Bushrod and how his new boss had bad breath and got right down in his face to talk to him.

Derek was a draftsman, and in my opinion, a very good one. Reasonably uneducated, I had talked him into going to drafting school when he was twenty, and he had latched on to it with more enthusiasm than I expected. He wasn't the most intelligent person I had met, but he was good with his hands and his mind was quick and perceptive. My attention was caught on page six again.

"Montrose is sort of the homo heights of Houston. A lot of old houses being restored. Outdoor restaurants New Orleans style. Topless go-go clubs. Dirty book stores. Palm trees."

Derek loved palm trees. One time

Continued on page 34



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OUTDOOR POOL OPENING SOON

WATCH FOR SPLASH DAY

fiction

he told me he might have been one in a past life.

"Art galleries. Craft shops. It's neat. I like it. The only thing missing is George Butts."

He used my last name somewhere in every letter he wrote me. He got a big kick out of introducing me, not as George, but as George Butts.

"I know sometimes I may not sound like the most romantic person in the world. I can write things easier than I can say them. Like I can sit down and write that I love you and think about you every day, but if we were on the phone together right now, I'd clam up and not be able to express myself as well. I know that doesn't make any sense . . ."

He was right. It didn't.

" . . . but when we first decided to move to Houston, I have to tell you. I was terrified. I didn't know anyone here and I was afraid you'd end up leaving me once we got settled."

Poor Derek. I skimmed another page or so of more of the same. Then came the show stopper.

"Oh, by the way, I bought a skunk. Now don't say anything."

(Say?)

"It was a real good deal. It's trained and everything. I know you are gonna fall in love with it. It uses a litter box just like a cat. It's housebroken."

I sat there and reread his last paragraph. I couldn't believe it. Yes, I could believe it but I didn't want to believe it. (Enough, Derek. You turned our San Francisco apartment into a zoo. The dogs and cats that managed to find their way to our doorstep, the parrot that was a steal, the boa constrictor you promised me wouldn't bite. Our friends had started calling us Captain Kangaroo and Mister Green Jeans. Well, Captain Kangaroo is tired. He's sick to death of your animals.)

I closed my eyes and tried to visualize Derek and his skunk. I tried to picture the three of us sitting in front of a fireplace on a chilly winter evening. Roasting marshmallows. Derek with

his guitar. A skunk curled up at my feet.

"I named him Danny after Danny Steinberg who gave me my first job in San Diego. You remember Danny. I introduced you two on Christmas Eve last year. I don't remember what bar it was in but we had stopped off after buying that parakeet for your mother."

My mother hated parakeets. She told me, after Derek had given her the present and while he was in the kitchen making Santa Claus apples, that she intended to "flush that goddam bird

Continued on page 41

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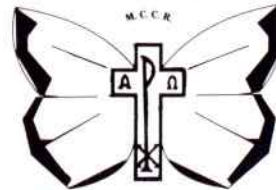
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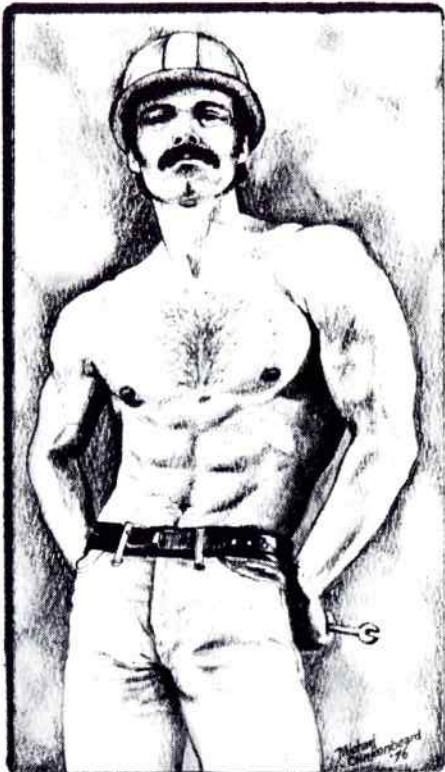
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fiction

down the commode" as soon as we left.

(A fast word about my mother: She despised Derek. She knew that I was gay and she knew that Derek was my lover and she insisted that that had nothing whatsoever to do with it, but sometimes I wondered. She was out and out rude to him on several occasions, but Derek was so good natured he never seemed to notice. He would ignore her, or worse, laugh at her. He never complained about going over for a visit or said anything nasty when we ended up staying longer than I had planned. He could amuse himself for hours on end with her hundreds of jigsaw puzzles which he managed to strew from one end of the living room to the other. My mother certainly didn't go out of her way to make him feel uncomfortable, but if the situation presented itself, she certainly didn't let it slip by.)

"I thought the name was appropriate. I have enclosed a picture of Danny taking a nap in the kitchen sink. Cute, huh?" I thumbed through the rest of the letter for a snapshot, but there was none. Then I looked back in the envelope and pulled out what looked like a pile of dirty rags in the sink. Yeah, Derek. Cute. Real cute.

I looked down wearily at the re-

maining pages of his letter. The seemed endless. I was developing a mild headache, and realized it would only worsen if I finished reading it before lunch. I yawned and stretched. I dreaded getting out of bed and starting the days routine. Melrose and Jack had to be fed. Petunia had to be picked up from the vet's and brought home to recuperate. And then there was work this afternoon.

Beside me, Jerry mumbled something.

"Mmmmmm?"

Jerry rubbed his eyes and then pulled me over for a kiss. "I said ... is that from Derek."

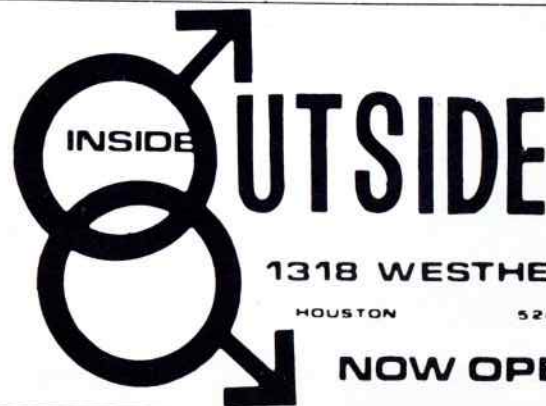
"Oh. Yeah."

"When are you going to call him and tell him?"

"I was planning on writing him."

Jerry frowned. "You're weak."

I didn't deny it, I couldn't. Derek was waiting for me in Houston. Wide-eyed. Anxious to start a new life. And me? Well, Jerry had come along and everything, and Jack had picked up the mange somewhere and Petunia had broken her leg and *I had been busy goddamit!* (I'm sorry, Derek, but I have been busy. You'll be waiting a long time. If you wait at all.)



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