



HOUSTON

VOICE

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Page 4

JUNE 20TH 1997 • ISSUE 869

Gay and Lesbian Pride of Yesteryear

The 20th Anniversary of Houston's Anti-Anita Bryant Protest

**HOUSTON
VOICE
EXCLUSIVE**

by T.F. Mann

This is the story of one particular Houston day, Thursday, June 16, 1977, when gays and friends of gays just plain got mad and had their say in a very dramatic way. Two decades ago the gay political movement was just getting started everywhere in the country. Houston's gay "political" activity was now two years old if measured by the beginning of the first Houston gay political organization, the *Gay Political Caucus*.

The gay movement in Houston was still in

The Largest in History GAY MARCH IN HOUSTON

its political infancy, but growing fast. The event which happened 20 years last week, jump started Houston's gay activists into action and by doing so, brought the Houston movement into the national, state, and local spotlight, even if only for a moment of time. It was the kind of event that once experi-

enced, would never be forgotten by those there. It also a matter of gay pride back then.

Several months ago you may have read stories that ran in several of our community publications about the 20th anniversary (January, 1977) of the Dade County battle

that took place down in Florida when the issue of gay rights got on the ballot and passed. The religious right was outraged and put together a referendum which called for the reversal of the January vote. The vote would be held on June 7th. Heading up the gay side of the political fight was Floridian Bob Kunst.

Opposing was a group named *Save Our Children*. It was headed by another Floridian named Anita Bryant. She made her fortunes as a popular singer and also by being the official spokesperson for the Florida orange juice industry in their ad campaigns. The political battle was a harsh one filled with the same type of lies which we, ourselves, would experience eight years later in the Houston's 1985 referendum. When it came time for Dade County to vote, the votes were sharply against us. Bryant had successfully led her forces into victory.

When the news reached Houston, local political activist Gary Van Ooteghem sent a telegram to Anita Bryant which read in part,

See BRYANT page 15

Robin Unmasked

An Interview with 'Boy Wonder' Actor Chris O'Donnell

by Tim Nasson

Much has changed, in the almost nine years (yes nine, count 'em), since Chris O'Donnell first graced the world with his boyish and charming presence on the big screen in *Men Don't Leave*, as one of Jessica Lange's children. Most may remember seeing him first in *Fried Green Tomatoes*, only months later, as the heart stopping handsome teen who meets an untimely death when getting his foot stuck on a railroad track.

Quickly rising to heights that some stars twice his age have not yet ascended to, with a role that earned him a Golden Globe nomination opposite Al Pacino in *Scent Of A Woman*, and then as D'Artagnan in the very successful *The Three Musketeers*, O'Donnell continued to astound. His biggest break until then (not including the McDonald's television commercial he did that caught Hollywood's attention of course) arrived in 1995 when he was cast as Robin in the third *Batman* film.



As outstanding as that all may seem, he was mostly relegated to second billing (except for the dreadful *Mad Love*). Fast forward a year. In October of 1996 O'Donnell was finally seen as a leading man in *The Chamber*, a film most industry insiders thought would become another successful John Grisham novel to screen transition, opposite Gene Hackman no less. It wasn't.

Grisham's *The Chamber*, was the fifth in a series of the author's books to make the leap from page to screen. Unfortunately for all involved in the making of the film, it bombed big time, earning less than \$10 million at the box office.

Nonetheless, there were some positive effects from the making of *The Chamber* (now on video) for O'Donnell, and he talked about them as well as reprising his role as Robin in what is sure to give *The Lost World* a run for its money this summer and, resultingly, put O'Donnell back 'on top'.

"I'm finally glad to be playing some-

See O'DONNELL page 22

Police Arrest Man for Murder of Stacey Ellis

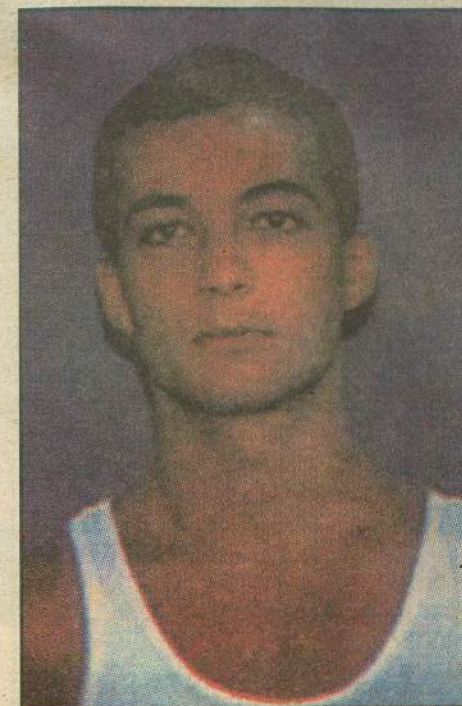
by John Toups

Houston police homicide investigators have arrested a California man for the murder of Stacey Leon Ellis, 29. Ellis was found beaten to death in his apartment at 2727 Briarhurst on Monday, April 7.

HPD Sgt. T.M. Ladd and Officer R.F. Huseman said that after a lengthy and complex investigation they traced Ellis' killer to California where he was arrested by HPD investigators and Fullerton police. The man, identified at Robert Lynn Gonzales, Jr., gave a confession to Houston authorities admitting to killing Ellis.

Ladd said they learned that Gonzales and his girlfriend had been staying with Ellis. Gonzales caught Ellis attempting to assault his girlfriend so he picked up a blunt object and struck Ellis several times. After the killing, Gonzales fled, taking Ellis' Chevy S-

See MURDER page 14



Robert Lynn Gonzales, Jr.

The Center For AIDS —

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Information

The staff of The Center for AIDS, from left to right, Donna Rochon, Michael Peranteau, Sara Steen, and L. Joel Martinez. see related story on page 14.

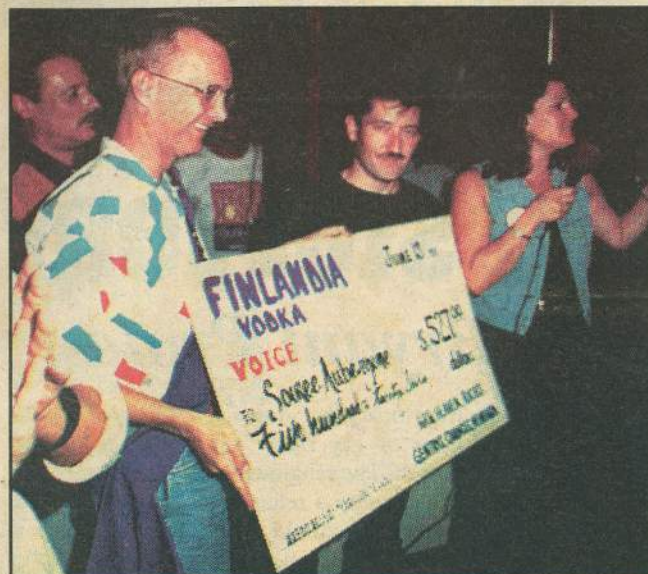


MONTROSE AREA UPDATE

by Lee Davis

Fun(d)raisers!

The Montrose Softball League would like to thank everyone for showing at Rich's last Saturday night for the league's final fundraiser of the year. Raising a record amount of money, Steven's House was



Finlandia Vodka presents a check to Soiree Aubergine.

selected at the beginning of the year as MSL's chosen charity. Also on hand was the largest crowd ever to attend the event.

with 225,000. This first, and certainly not last, event pulled in over \$2500. Oh, Daddy!

Bering Community Service Foundation through Soiree Aubergine was the recipient of \$527 through the Houston Voice/Finlandia Best Bartender Contest. Held at Gentry, the competition was fierce between David Crowson of BRB; Val of Gentry; Wiley from Chances; Vanna of The New Barn; Matthew of Heaven and Yvonne from Rich's. The final result was Vanna taking top honors with Val losing by only one point. Congratulations to all of the bartenders for really putting their imaginations to the test!

AVES received over \$2000 through the "Date with a Daddy Auction" & "Show Me The Booty" events held at Gentry last Sunday. A tip of the hat to Gentry bartender Kip, who brought in a whopping \$1300 after offering a quaint, little picnic with him and the highest bidder. Wow, all that for a picnic!! That's great for AVES.

At the Venture-N last Saturday, Crystal Rae Lee Love & Sean Carter hosted

RSICSS and "21 & Growing" (not Crystal's age!) benefiting Colt 45s. In an outrageous show, over \$450 was raised. It was great see-



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Community Calendar /

HOUSTON

VOICE

One Community! One Voice!.

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Mary's mural changing soon.

Thanks to the management and staff of Rich's for their support who contributed to the event's success. Special congratulations to Al Critz who won the highly coveted title of Miss MSL '97. Great job, Al!

PWA Holiday Charities (LVL) was the beneficiary of several fundraisers this past weekend! The Mr. Montrose Contest held at the Brazos River Bottom netted \$622. Congratulations to Johnny Montgomery for being selected the new Mr. Montrose. Over at Marys, naturally, bartenders on the patio raised over \$375. Good work, people!

Q-Patrol was the recipient of over \$200 at the "Friday the 13th" show held at Chances.



Daddy of Montrose, '96 Ken Claude

Emcee Fancy Pace-Lawrence brought on a cast of versatility, including Sean Carter, Lexy and Billie Bailey. Fabulous show, Fancy!

Steven's House was the beneficiary of the Daddy/Master Auction I at the Ripcord last Friday. Topping the action was Ken Claude who won 1st with 350,000 Daddy bucks. Dirk won 2nd with 240,000 and Don 3rd

ing Crystal get paddled—again!!

Something New?

If you haven't driven past Mary's, naturally in the past week, you don't know what you are missing. In an effort to show their pride, they have gone shocking pink! The mural, shown here, was up for the last six years and it seems it was "time for a change". Famed artist Scotty has been busy working on the mural and is doing a Don't Rain dance to finish in time for Pride Week. Every day that you drive by, a little more is done. Look for the final product during Pride Week!

She's Back!

Lazy J has turned things around! **Erica Lane** is returning for Saturday evening shows beginning at 10:30pm. She has brought back Bill Gonzales as D.J. Performing with Erica Saturday, June 21 will be Tricia Blaque, Frankie Lane and Miss T.T. Drop by Lazy J and welcome Erica back. You won't want to miss this show!



A great turnout for the Daddy of Montrose Contest.

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Initialed names: William O. Douglas, Walt Whitman
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Charter Member



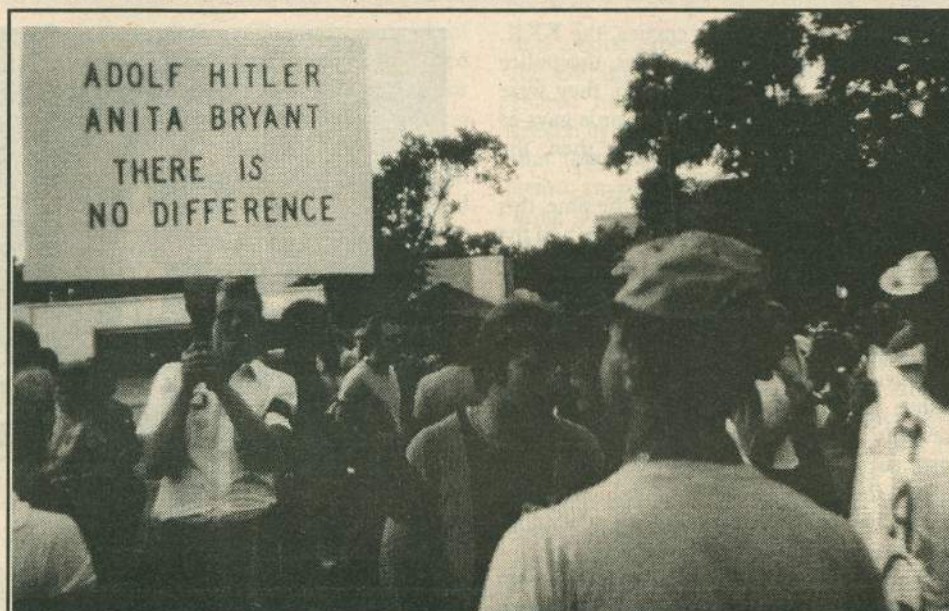
Greater Houston Gay & Lesbian
Chamber of Commerce

BRYANT/from page 1

"You have ruined our evening, but we won't let you ruin our lives." At a Dade County press conference the next day, she announced publicly that she decided to expand her fight against gays by going national with it; creating more *Save Our Children* type organizations around the country.

"With God's continued help, we'll prevail in our fight to repeal laws which attempt to legitimize a lifestyle that is both perverse and dangerous," she said. "All America and all the world will hear what the people have said." She was about to become, unknowingly perhaps to herself, an icon to gays everywhere of the stereotypical anti-gay bigot willing to tell lies about us just to win their cause.

Her next public engagement following the Dade County vote, as it turned out, would be here in Houston. She was to perform at the Hyatt Regency Hotel (downtown) before the State Bar of Texas' annual convention



The setting sun meant it was about time to begin the march. The staging area crowd shows its' approval by something said by one of the last speakers on stage.

decisions on responses could be made on the fly.

The group was not granted a permit to march from Montrose to City Hall on the evening that Bryant was to perform before the attorneys gathered at their annual con-

vention. This would be the first logistical problem for the group. Other problems faced almost simultaneously dealt with security problems, finding financial resources sufficient to cover the costs of putting on this march, getting the word out in very short

order to promote the planned march, locating an adequate staging area of suitable size, inviting notables and public figures to stand with us, and just plain learning about how to pull a march together so that all pieces fit. None of the team had ever been involved in putting on a march before. None of them. But they were determined and they continued.

Once base considerations and decisions were dealt with, they focused their attention on developing a plan to implement their strategy and which would be easy enough for the marchers to follow.

The Los Angeles ACLU responded to a plea for help by giving directions on how to contact celebrities who were known to support gay and human rights causes. As it turned out, there were several that said they would be pleased to assist in any way they could. So they were asked to help. Notable among this group was Norman Lear, successful producer of TV hits such as *All in the Family*, *Maude*, and many other shows running at the time. Via a telephone call with Van Ooteghem, Lear indicated his anger at Anita Bryant's involvement in the Dade County referendum.

So were many others that he knew out

See **BRYANT** page 16

Friday June 20th

BOOTS

&

BOXERS

Come See Your Favorite Employee in Boots & Boxers

Sunday June 22th • 8pm

The infamous Anita Bryant

and dinner.

At that particular time, Gary Van Ooteghem was a short time out of office as the GPC's president. Most of Van Ooteghem's former team of now-experienced volunteers were still accessible to him for special projects, if needed. This was one of those times and he asked them to join in a special project with a very short preparation time: respond to Anita Bryant and her hate campaign, publicly. The committee that came together had no official name. It was chaired by Van Ooteghem. Other team members included Robert (Mort) Schwab, Keith McGee, Ray Hill, Steve Shiflett, Nick Escobedo, Jim Vilven, Bill Whiting, and Hugh Crell, to name a few. They began work immediately.

The first decision was not to make this just a gay issue, but instead the bigger human rights issue. They believed then - as many still do today - that Human Rights naturally includes gay as part of a mixed and multi-faceted package of rights which include equality for all. They also believed the Human Rights approach provided a much larger base of humanitarians (like-thinkers to us) who would stand with and beside us to let Anita Bryant know she wasn't welcomed in Houston. Houston would be the first city to have an opportunity to let her know she was wrong. Houston's response could well set the tone for other cities to follow. The organizers continued to develop its action plan.

The next decision was to make this a protest march: a big one, albeit a peaceful one. The march was to make a positive and impact-full statement which hopefully the local straight and gay press would report on. By design, there would be no violence in what was being planned. Nevertheless, an alternate plan was prepared based on the possibility of violence being directed at us from the other side. Should this happen,

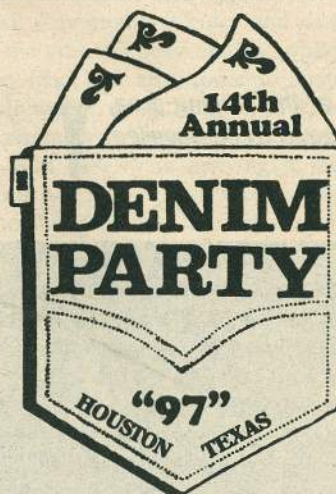
Sunday June 22th • 8pm

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M.C. SHELBY ST JOHN

AND A CAST OF SOME OF HOUSTON'S FINEST ENTERTAINERS



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Open Til 7pm Everyday of the week
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Free Pool Table-Side Bar Open til 7pm

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BRYANT/from page 15

there, he said. Lear agreed immediately to Van Ooteghem's request for financial help by agreeing to underwrite the march's related costs. He made that decision after parts of the Action Plan were described to him. He also believed that something should be done. With Lear's verbal guarantee in hand, the organizers began implementing the plan they developed.

Their first celebrity contacts directed them to still others who could help. It was through this growing list of supporters that the team found a convent in Maryland that had openly gay-friendly nuns who were willing to lend a hand, too. Gay-friendly priests were also found and included. Having funds now, we purchased plane tickets for our guests: the nuns and priests and our VIPs. Once they arrived, they were given a special assignment much different than the others. Since Anita Bryant was using religion to hit us over the head, the organizers would use religion in their plan, as well. You will read about their unique assignment a little further on.

Movie stars were starting to send in telegrams and messages of support to the Houston marchers. Jane Fonda even sent a telegram of support from the site of her filming location where *Electric Horseman* was being shot at the time. Rod McKuen sent a taped message of support which he asked to be played to the assembled marchers. Ed Asner sent a strong message of support for us and an equally strong condemnation on

would likely come from crazies, the KKK, or the police department. (Yes, the police department! Back 20 years ago, they were often as ruthless and brutal towards gays as skinheads are today. And back then, the police could get away with it.)

While it wasn't thought of at the time, this march was about to make politicians and the police sit up and take notice of our movement locally. The days of them thinking of us a small, gay community of no real political importance or power was about to end.

David Goodstein, the former owner/publisher of *The Advocate*, assisted us with security planning by making available his own security people. They were professional and their advice was very good. The organizers had to be cognizant of all safety considerations in their overall planning.

They eventually wound up obtaining two emergency vehicles which were to creep along on parallel streets to our march route. These vehicles were for the VIPs. They would always be at a point closest to where the invited VIPs were located in the march line, itself. Walkie-Talkies would be used for communication and vehicle positioning while the march progressed on its way toward the downtown rally site. Each of the VIPs were assigned a monitor (monitors will be described in just a few moments) who would get them out of harm's way should trouble appear along our route.

The second security concern, the safety of the marchers, was a little more complicated. How does one keep a crowd from being possibly provoked into actions (or reactions)



Hollywood actress Liz Torres, sharing her personal reasons why she came to Houston to march with us.

marchers could and could not do on the evening of the planned anti-Anita Bryant march. One restriction they imposed was that the marchers would not be permitted to walk in the streets, only on sidewalks. Further, marchers must obey all traffic signals; no jay walking would be permitted.

Anyone violating these rules would be arrested or ticketed on the spot. So, the question was how to march downtown without breaking the law which the police were so adamant we obey. The team came up with a novel solution.

The problem was handled by pulling all the monitors and other volunteers together a few days prior to the march. Again, a couple hundred people or so came forward and patiently waited while the march leaders

pace down to that which would be needed to cross intersections on a timely basis. It seemed to work. One of the monitor's duties was to be sure that every group moved across each intersection in the prescribed time and pace allotted; not faster, not slower.

Here is a better description of the monitors and their duties: They were to be the backbone of the march on the night that it takes place. Authority and responsibility for keeping the march on course and on time would be in their collective hands. They would come to serve very well that night.

At each corner along the proposed march routes, a monitor was stationed. Their assignment was to keep the lines moving. Monitors were also stationed across the street for the Hyatt Regency as well as inside





the Dade County referendum.

One young rising star from Hollywood flew in to march with us. Previously she expressed a concern that her appearance here in open support of Houston gays might have an adverse effect on her future career as an actress. (Remember, this was 1977 and being associated with anything gay could prove disastrous to the person involved.) Nevertheless, she wanted to be counted with the Houston marchers and so she flew here, too. Her name is Liz Torres. In 1977, she was appearing in *All in the Family* and *Phyllis*. She last appeared in the TV sitcom called *The John Larroquette Show* (now off the air) as a regular. She played Larroquette's assistant at the bus station.

Some gay national leaders also came to town to be with us: David Goodstein (then owner of *The Advocate*), Reverend Troy Perry (UFMCC), Ginny Apuzzo (Gay Rights National Lobby; now known as Human Rights Fund), David Kunster (the gay activist who led the Florida fight down there) were some who were known to have attended.

Security problems were next addressed. Security was separated into two elements: the safety of the special invited guests who were brought in from all over the country, and the safety of our marchers. Both were important, but each required totally different planning.. Any threat to the marchers

As early crowds began gathering at the staging area, placards and marching banners began to be unveiled.

that would or could expose themselves to serious safety concerns? The team realized that they needed to maintain some kind of discipline from start to end. They decided policing themselves would be the best way to keep the march peaceful and under control.

When the call went out for monitors, two hundred plus volunteers came forward in just a matter of days. To identify themselves as monitors to the marchers, the monitors would each wear an armband especially made for the occasion; color coding identified higher authority. (Monitors was the name used most often to identify this internal special force so that is what they were called.)

One of the rules that all marchers were to abide by was to follow the monitors' directions, if and when given. The monitors were educated as to what their respective roles were and how they were to handle problems might arise. Problems they could not resolve were to be brought to the attention of the monitor supervisors for resolution.

The police became a problem, too, when then became very specific as to what the

ple hundred people or so came forward and patiently waited while the march leaders tested and experimented with several ideas they had. After an hour, one plan developed as the best. Using stop watches, traffic light changes were timed.

Then through experimentation, a count of how many people could safely be assembled together in small groups that could cross street intersections before traffic lights changed. The best sized groups were less than 60 people. Now that the formula was known, another hour was spent testing it by having our volunteers separate themselves into groups of 60 or less and walk towards downtown paced at traffic-light speed, pretending that they were under actual march conditions.

It took several tries before they got the

Monitors were also stationed across the street for the Hyatt Regency as well as inside the hotel. Near the end of this article, you will find out what their mission was and how it blended in with everything else being done.

Despite the apparent negative police attitude towards the march, several attempts were made to establish communications between the march leaders and the police. Harry Caldwell was police chief at the time and wasn't exactly friendly towards gays. The march organizers wanted the Houston Police Department's action and/or reaction to be kept at a minimum so as to prevent any possible confrontation or injury to any marcher.

While at first resistant or reluctant to discuss the matter with march leaders on a face-to-face basis, they finally agreed to a meeting. A call came in to Van Ooteghem's office saying that two high-ranking assistant police chiefs would like to come over to the office for a visit, right now, and discuss more march issues. Van Ooteghem agreed and

See BRYANT page 17



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See BRYANT page 17

As early crowds began gathering at the staging area, placards and marching banners began to be unveiled.



BRYANT/from page 16

they said they would be on their way immediately.

Instinctively, Van Ooteghem sensed a need to have an independent observer present. Something did not feel right. Van Ooteghem called a friend from the ACLU, Chuck Humphrey, for advice and help. At the time, Humphrey was the president of the Texas Civil Liberties Union. Humphrey agreed to drop what he was doing and headed immediately over to the office. He arrived about fifteen minutes before the chiefs did.

The office was a beehive of activity what with march volunteers everywhere. It was a day out from the event at this point. Van Ooteghem's personal office was set up so that only four people could sit in for the meeting: Humphrey, Van Ooteghem, and the two police chiefs. The doorway between the office and the anteroom did not have a door. After the chiefs arrived, the place went silent. Volunteers quietly positioned themselves near that doorway so that they could hear what was being said at the meeting.

One assistant police chief was known to Van Ooteghem from his earlier days as president of the Caucus. The other was not and was introduced as the officer that would be in charge of the police assigned to cover the march. Chuck Humphrey was introduced to them as an impartial ACLU observer. The meeting began.

The chiefs again stressed the rules which must be followed. Van Ooteghem stressed the importance in establishing a live communication link between the march leaders and the police. This was important to march

well as the day before. Tens of thousands of flyers promoting the march were distributed around various parts of the city asking for people to show up; but team leaders had no idea if anyone would even show, or if they even cared. A feeble response would be both embarrassing and unproductive. (What if nobody showed?)

Early on, the staging area and rally site downtown had been selected based on their ability to handle large numbers of people. Portable sound systems were rented. Dual march routes had been laid out: Smith Street and Louisiana Street. These two streets ran on both sides of the Hyatt Regency. The ACLU was going to send over approximately fifty impartial observers to walk beside the marchers and document any problems which might be encountered. The march leaders felt ready. It was time.

The staging area selected was the large parking lot at the corner of Brazos and McGowen Streets. There was plenty of parking available on the streets in the immediate launch area. Its location was good, too. It belonged to the Depository 2, a popular disco bar of the time. Team managers and monitors arrived earlier and were in position. The planners had allowed for adequate assembly time before the march was to begin. Slowly at first, people began arriving. It was beginning. Were we fully prepared for whatever lay ahead?

Gays were especially prominent in the early crowds, but not for long. Others had come to join us. A surprise no one expected was the number of mothers bringing their toddlers with them. More than a few moms were pushing baby carriages. These were

and unique experiences encountered during the evening's activities. Sister Grammich shared how she was swamped after her speech by young gay Catholics who told her that this was the first time they had ever heard anyone from the church say something good about being gay. She said one young man was so moved by her that he could not stop crying because he was so happy and enlightened.)

The last staging area speaker was Liz Torres who spoke about what all this meant to her and why she was here. She told of having a gay high school teacher who "taught me all the beautiful things in life. He gave me music, poetry, love and theater. Without him, I would probably be a lady's room attendant," she said to cheers and applause. By this time, the marchers had

grouped and were all pumped up and ready to go. They were again reminded to follow the rules described to them earlier and reminded to obey the monitors. It was now 8:30 p.m., time to leave the staging site and hit the streets.

By the time the march was set to begin, monitors had already been sent ahead to their respective positions along the dual march routes. Each intersection from the staging area to the rally site had a monitor waiting to help and assist. Outside and inside the Hyatt Regency Hotel were more march monitors waiting for their cue to begin their assigned tasks. It turned out that we would be marching outside the Hyatt at approximately the same time that Anita Bryant was actually on stage doing her show

See BRYANT page 17



MARYS

1022 WESTHEIMER

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SCHNAPPS

the office and the anteroom did not have a door. After the chiefs arrived, the place went silent. Volunteers quietly positioned themselves near that doorway so that they could hear what was being said at the meeting.

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The marchers were about to moved off crowded sidewalks and on to the streets. Soon after, they came to fill it, curb to curb.

leaders: they wanted no problems and sought to reduce or eliminate any chance of violence or injury. The chiefs answered back repeatedly that they would not assist in establishing this communication link.

It was at this point that the heretofore silent Chuck Humphrey interrupted the conversation between Van Ooteghem and the chiefs by raising his voice while speaking to the directly to the police chiefs in obviously controlled anger. He reminded them that there was an attempt being made here to avoid or prevent people from possibly getting hurt at this upcoming march.

Humphrey then went on to identify himself as being the current foreman of the

our brothers and sisters coming over from other parts within the human rights movement to give us support.

More surprises: a bus pulled up from the Jewish Community Center and discharged into the crowd a bevy of little white-haired ladies who had also come to support us. People were coming from all over Houston. The assembly area was fast becoming crowded. Still they were arriving in numbers. Parking had by now spilled over into adjoining neighborhoods as latecomers arrived.

Under the timing schedule in place for this event, the first speakers were to begin. The march was officially being called to order. It was the intent of the organizers to rev every-

MARYS

1022 WESTHEIMER

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SCHNAPPS THURSDAY

GAY PRIDE

SAT. JUNE 28

OPEN 7AM-2AM



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Humphrey then went on to identify himself as being the current foreman of the grand jury currently in session and that should anyone get hurt at this march, that he would personally hold both of them responsible and that he would bring them before his grand jury on possible charges. He told them in no uncertain words that he "would have their ass if there was trouble." That changed the tone of the meeting immediately. It could be felt by everyone in the meeting. It could be felt outside in the anteroom, too. The tide had shifted. The chiefs were stonewalling.

The meeting ended shortly after that. The chiefs still had not committed to establishing that communication link, but would consider the matter. Between then and the evening of the march, the chiefs would not be heard from again. The marchers would be on their own. They had tried.

Every part of the plan was in place. They were ready to march. VIP guests were coming into town both the day of the march as

our brothers and sisters coming over from other parts within the human rights movement to give us support.

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Under the timing schedule in place for this event, the first speakers were to begin. The march was officially being called to order. It was the intent of the organizers to rev everybody up with good speakers; also to give them the rules they were playing under this evening. Time allotments had been assigned to the various speakers. Telegrams and messages of goodwill were read first to the assembled, much to the delight of the crowd. Next were the nuns.

They were the big hit of the early evening crowd as they shared one inspiring gay-positive story after another. The crowd ate it up. One nun, Sister Mary Grammich from the school of Sisters of Notre Dame in Baltimore, Maryland, gave a stirring speech about why what happened in Dade County could not be allowed to ever repeat itself again. Her remarks about feeling good about being gay moved many in the crowd to tears, especially some gay Catholics present.

(Later that evening, after the march was over, the VIPs and key volunteers met back at the home of one of the march organizers. Stories were shared of each others separate

SCHNAPPS THURSDAY

GAY PRIDE

SAT. JUNE 28

OPEN 7AM-2AM

PATIO BAR OPEN

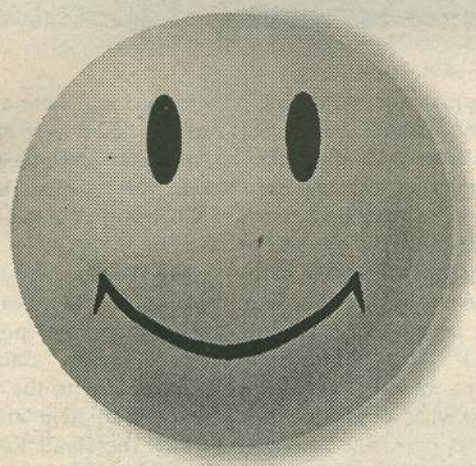
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COVER STORY

BRYANT/ from page 17

for the attorneys. It hadn't been planned to be that exact, so the timing coincidence was just a stroke of good luck for the marchers.

Early on, march organizers decided to march in dual columns. They thought the visual impact would be more meaningful. Smith & Louisiana Streets were selected because they ran along both sides of the Hyatt Regency. They wanted the marchers to be seen no matter which way you looked out of the hotel.

The march had two perspectives depending on which of the two streets you were marching on; the remainder of this story is from the Louisiana Street perspective. Because of the narrow sidewalk width, marchers walked two-astride. This writer's vantage point was from near the front of the Louisiana Street column, but not at the head of it. Instead, at the very front our march column would be the nuns. (Did I mention the nuns were clothed in their full habit regalia and to the hilt? There was no question of who and what they were.) That idea was intentional and by design.

The sisters were told of where their positions would be and why. They knew this in advance and still they agreed to come march with us. It was a dangerous assignment.

ran over to Van Ooteghem and said that one of the police chiefs they had both met earlier now wanted to see him. Humphrey suggested that he run over and thank the chief for their cooperation so far.

The Chief told Van Ooteghem that the crowd was now getting too big and that he was giving the marchers permission to move themselves into the street, supposedly for safety reasons. The sidewalks needed repair for being uneven and broken in places. At night under packed conditions, walking on the sidewalks became dangerous because it was easy to trip and fall. The streets were somewhat better, except for potholes.

The marchers now moved into the streets continuing their same slow pace. They quickly grew in size as groups merged until there was only one huge group left. It did not take long for everybody to abandon the sidewalks in favor of the streets. It was quite impressive to look back and see thousands of people stretching out of sight.

The marchers were now getting close to the Hyatt Regency Hotel. A radio reporter ran up to Van Ooteghem at one point and asked if he was aware that the KKK was ahead waiting for us. He said no, but that it made no difference. They were still continuing forward. The reporter left after a few more questions but his words left some with



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Actress Liz Torres, addressing assembled marchers at the staging area. She told of her gay high school teacher who "taught me all the beautiful things in life. He gave me music, poetry, love and theatre," she said to cheers and applause.

They would be the buffer, if you will, between the marchers and any enemies that might be confronted as the march progressed forward. This idea came to us from David Goodstein's security people. Liz Torres's position in the march was near the front. Her walking partner was the late Keith McGee. Nearby was Troy Perry and Van Ooteghem. Behind them was David Goodstein.

As the first group to head out, all felt exhilarated. The pace was brisk as it had to be. And this pace had to be maintained because directly behind, less than a minute away, was the next group of marchers.

The lead group was now quite a few blocks down the way, but still a good distance from the hotel. Reverend Troy Perry pulled up alongside Van Ooteghem in the first group and told him that speed walking in a march just doesn't cut it. Instead, Perry suggested walking at a slow shuffle-your-feet

apprehension and fear. Liz Torres began to cry softly. She was scared, but still with us. Keith McGee had his hands full. Was something going to happen to the marchers? Were they really doing the right thing? Tensions were growing. Most marchers, including this writer, were very apprehensive.

The Hyatt was now less than a block away. On the Louisiana Street side, marchers had to pass under an overpass which crosses the street near the hotel. It had a cave-like appearance and was pitch black in some spots, or at least it appeared so. Moving figures could be seen ahead appearing shadowy and indistinguishable in front of the hotel. Now the marchers were there, not stopping, passing through the edge of darkness as the hotel was about to come up alongside. And then it began.

The lead marchers did not know whether or not all hell was about to break loose upon them. The adrenaline was pumping. Most

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The impact of doing that was seen and felt within minutes as group after group coming from behind crashed into the one before it. The crosswalks filled. The sidewalk marchers expanded from two abreast to four abreast, but still the crowd grew. By now, there were thousands of marchers on the street. Back at the staging area, monitors were still discharging marchers onto the streets.

Chuck Humphrey was one of the ACLU observers working the Louisiana Street side that night. At one point along the way, he

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The lead marchers did not know whether or not all hell was about to break loose upon them. The adrenaline was pumping. Most marchers were somewhat frightened, truth be told. But nobody talked about it. The shadowy figures seen earlier now began moving onto the street in the path of the marchers.

Bright flashes of light began bursting. Just a few at first, but then they began exploding from here, there, everywhere. The marchers appeared as though illuminated by strobe lights. The shuffle speed accentuated that appearance. The camera flashes were followed by the bright lights of news cameras being turned on to record this event. The lights temporarily blinded the lead marchers, but they could still see that

See BRYANT page 19

COVER STORY

BRYANT/ from page 18

the crowd ahead still growing as more shadowy figures poured out of the hotel and onto the sidewalk.

The front line, like the rest of the column that followed, had grown to a width of curb-to-curb. The front line was comprised of nuns and gay activists, joined arm-in-arm, as they came up alongside the hotel where *she* was performing. The sidewalk crowds were slowly becoming recognizable as TV news cameras turned to catch our passing. Seconds earlier we knew they were friendly as shouts, cheers, and applause suddenly greeted our arrival. There wasn't a dry eye among the marchers; everybody was crying. They slowly and proudly passed by. A block over, the Smith Street column could be seen having the same success as the Louisiana side. Fear had been overcome. Somehow that became the defining moment of the march. But there was still more to happen. We had a point to make.

Right after both columns were on both sides of the Hyatt Regency Hotel, the monitors stationed outside the hotel went into action. They got word to the inside monitors, who were pre-positioned, to pass the word along to our gay attorney friends inside the convention that we had arrived. A number of gay attorneys, members of this legal association, had agreed to act in concert with our march.

While some would have attended this legal convention anyway, most were attending the convention at the request of march organizers who had this idea. Each attending attorney carried one of the march's inverted pink triangle armbands with them that evening. When they got word from the inside monitors, they each stood up (turns out she was in the middle of a song when this occurred), slowly put on their armbands, and then walked out of the convention in protest and joined the marchers outside. From those that were inside the convention, it was learned that it had the dramatic effect intended. Bryant got the message. So would the rest of Houston the next

woman," he said as marchers clapped and shouted their approval.

Stalling until other column marchers caught up and came onto the plaza, he led the group in song by singing "We Shall Overcome," the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," and "God Bless America." The next wave of speakers came forward out of the crowds with their speeches. The rallying speeches were short and to the point. Goodstein intoned that "It isn't just our (gay) rights at stake, but the civil rights of everyone in this country." More speeches about why we did not like the outcome of Dade County's vote on the issue of gay rights; that we certainly did not like Anita Bryant's role in it nor her pledge to take that fight nationwide; and why, as human rights activists, we must fight this kind of thing whenever and wherever it should show its ugly head next. (They were preaching to the choir.)

Across the street, in front of city hall, approximately 200 people led by Dr. Joe West, a San Antonio Baptist minister, gathered to protest our protest. Their signs mostly contained religious condemnations of gays: READ YOUR BIBLE, DOWN WITH QUEERS, and PROTECT OUR CHILDREN. A couple of catcalls were made but were drowned out by our side. More noticeable was their silence after they saw just how big our turnout size became.

Before the speeches ended, the assembled marchers lit candles furnished at the staging area. Each candle had a small white paper cup through which it passed. March organizers were advised earlier when they obtained permission to use the Plaza that they would be responsible for removal costs of any dropped wax on the Plaza, itself. The cups prevented that and actually added to the effect of the evening because of their now muted, soft glow. Thousands of lighted candles softly lit up the Plaza. It was a beautiful sight.

Eventually, activities ended and we all headed back. The security cars were now parked on the street outside the rally site carried our VIPs back to where they started.

Crad Duren, M.D.

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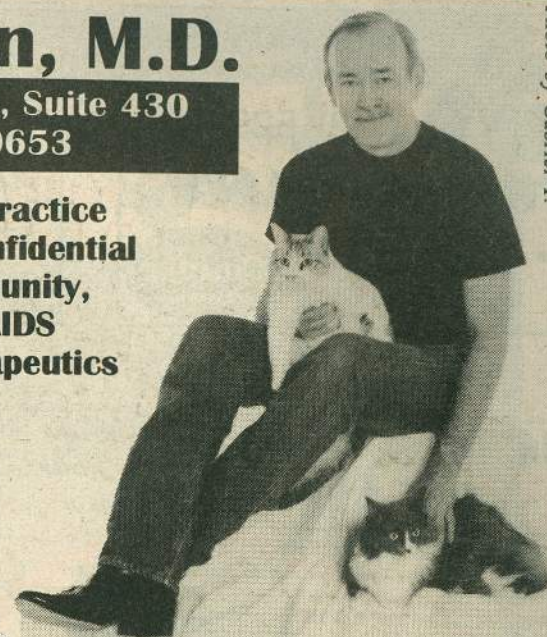
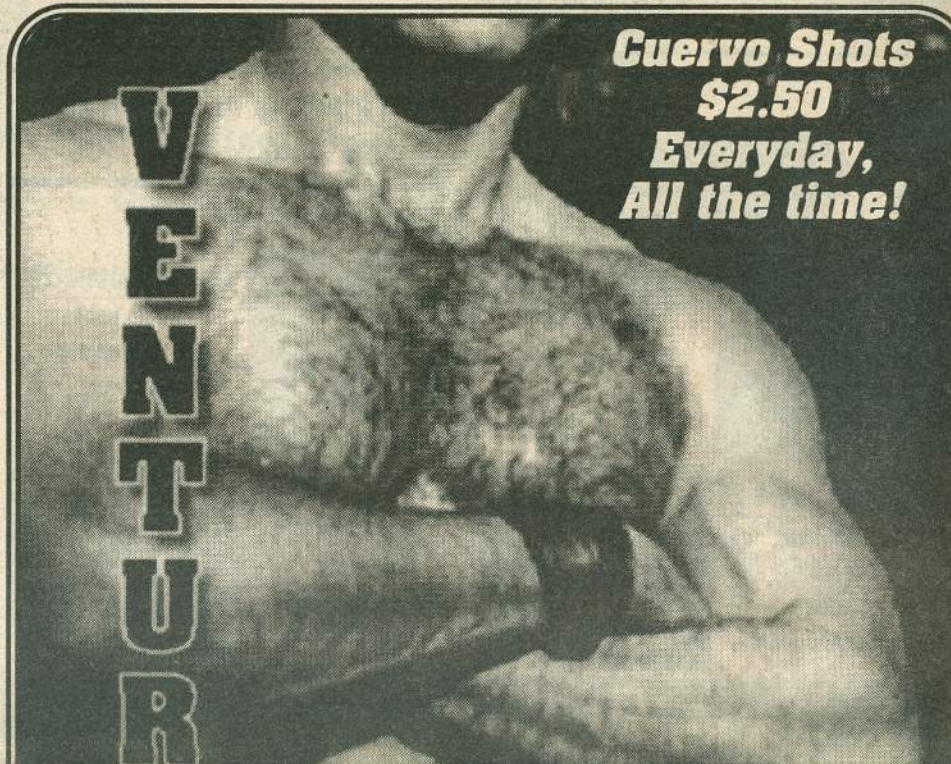


Photo by Gabriel T.



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this occurred), slowly put on their arm-bands, and then walked out of the convention in protest and joined the marchers outside. From those that were inside the convention, it was learned that it had the dramatic effect intended. Bryant got the message. So would the rest of Houston the next day as they viewed march photos and read stories which appeared in both the Chronicle and the Post.

Back on the streets there were only a few more blocks to go before reaching the rally site: the Houston Library Plaza across the street from city hall. It didn't take long for the Plaza to fill to capacity while others spilled out into the street. Reverend Perry got to the plaza microphone first and proceeded to crank the crowd up again into one cheering mass. "We're gonna haunt that

now muted, soft glow. Thousands of lighted candles softly lit up the Plaza. It was a beautiful sight.

Eventually, activities ended and we all headed back. The security cars were now parked on the street outside the rally site carried our VIPs back to where they started. The rest just walked back. It was a major success, everybody there knew it. Ten thousand marchers had turned out. That was (and still is) the largest march ever held in Houston, Texas.

Now you know about *Houston's Twentieth Anniversary* of what we, as a community, did back in 1977 to reflect our anger and disgust of that vote and of Anita Bryant, newly crowned queen and icon of the anti-gay movement in the United States.



CORRECTION

IN APPRECIATION

Anthony Wright

The Appreciation/In Memoriam in last week's issue of the *Houston Voice* for Tony Marlois was inadvertently printed incorrect. Tony's last name was Wright. A memorial service was held last week at Geo H. Lewis & Sons.

Born April 16, 1957 in Coffeyville, KS, Tony died June 11, 1997 in Houston after a short illness. Tony is

survived by Art Fleming, Life Partner of 6 years, his mother Marlois Rush, his sisters Susie, Sherry and Candy, brothers Mark and Johnnie, 9 nieces and nephews and a host of friends and cast of thousands.

The *Houston Voice* apologizes for the misprint and for any inconvenience the matter may have caused.



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