

# On page 3: The story of the new, emerging gay lib movement in Mexico

STAR NEWSPAPER CHAIN

## MONTROSE★STAR

Houston's Free Weekly Gay Newspaper / Issue #137 / April 27, 1979

### Here it is, folks: The Houston Gay Pride Week Calendar of Events

HOUSTON — Gay Pride Week this year in Houston will be climaxed with a parade down Westheimer Road, according to near-definite plans of the Gay Pride Week Coordinating Committee, an organization made up of volunteers from other gay groups in the city.

The parade, to take place Sunday, July 1, would begin at about the 1800 block of Westheimer and end near the 300 block. There is a possibility that a rally would then be held in the fields around Allen Parkway where fireworks and disco music would be featured.

Former White House aide Midge Costanza and former National Gay Task Force co-executive director Jean O'Leary are scheduled to be in Houston that day and efforts are being made by the Gay Political Caucus to have them participate in the parade and rally.

Local activist Carol Fennema was selected earlier this month to head a three-person committee with Bill Puryear and Jay Goodman to coordinate Gay Pride Week activities.



PHOTO: JAMES JASON

Mary Thelma (Disco Grandma, above, left) is set to reign over Houston's Gay Pride Week. Also attending will be (right, top to bottom) Jean O'Leary (former co-executive director of the National Gay Task Force), Troy Perry (founder of the MCC churches), and Midge Costanza (former White House aide).



Mary Thelma, more popularly known in the community as "Disco Grandma," was picked to reign over the festivities in a honorary position.

The complete Gay Pride Week schedule, as tentatively adopted at a public organizational meeting April 9 at the Montrose Activity Center, is:

FRIDAY, JUNE 22: Kick-off celebration. (Gay bar owners are being encouraged to have their own special events for customers.)

SATURDAY, JUNE 23: Second annual "Thank You Miss Ima for Memorial Park" gay community picnic at Memorial Park.

SUNDAY, JUNE 24: Rally. (Time and place of rally is not definite. "Wild and Stein" gay radio program host Ray Hill was appointed to coordinate this event. One possible site mentioned has been the school yard at Lanier Junior High School, 2600 Woodhead.)

MONDAY, JUNE 25: Gay Awareness Day. (An assortment

of events, mostly in the evening, are being considered.)

TUESDAY, JUNE 26: Candlelight vigil either in the plaza at the downtown library or at City Hall.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 27: National Day of Remembrance. (Evening memorial service planned at Metropolitan Community Church with Rev. Troy Perry, founder of the MCC churches nationwide.)

THURSDAY, JUNE 28: Youth Day.

FRIDAY, JUNE 29: Minorities Day. (The Gay Chicano Caucus and the black-oriented Houston Committee are scheduled to organize events.)

SATURDAY, JUNE 30: Women's Day. (A lesbian workshop is being organized by the University of Houston's Gay Resource Services.)

SUNDAY, JULY 1: Parade, with the different bars, clubs and businesses being encouraged to enter floats, and possibly a rally.

Organizers stress that many volunteers are needed to serve on the various committees, such as the parade, picnic, rally, gay awareness, memorial, youth, minorities, women's, publicity and finance committees.

Persons interested in joining a committee or finding out more information can call Fennema at 777-5664 or Puryear at 529-4349.

L. Greer Price, who has been appointed interim publicity chairman, can be reached at 526-5921.

Price, who is also an official in the Gay Political Caucus, pointed out that there will be some major expenses that can't be erased simply by using volunteers, including a \$750 parade permit fee to the city. Donations were being solicited from gay businesspeople to cover these expenses.

### They're lining up to oppose anti-gay City Councilman Mann

HOUSTON — Anti-gay City Councilman Frank Mann apparently will have plenty of opponents when he seeks reelection this November.

Homemaker Kathryn Ross, who polled one-fifth of the vote in her race two years ago, and former TV news reporter Joe Allen Mallott, have already announced plans to oppose the

seventy-year-old Mann.

Houston school board president Eleanor Tinsley is also expected to announce her candidacy, according to the Houston Chronicle's political editor, Joe Nolan.

"Mrs. Tinsley, president of the Texas Council of Child Welfare Borads, will no doubt be

the best financed challenger to Mann and probably should be considered the councilman's strongest opponent," Nolan said.

Mann aggravated many Montrose residents several years ago when he used the word "odd-wads" to describe gay people. T-shirts then began appearing in Montrose saying, "I'm an Odd-

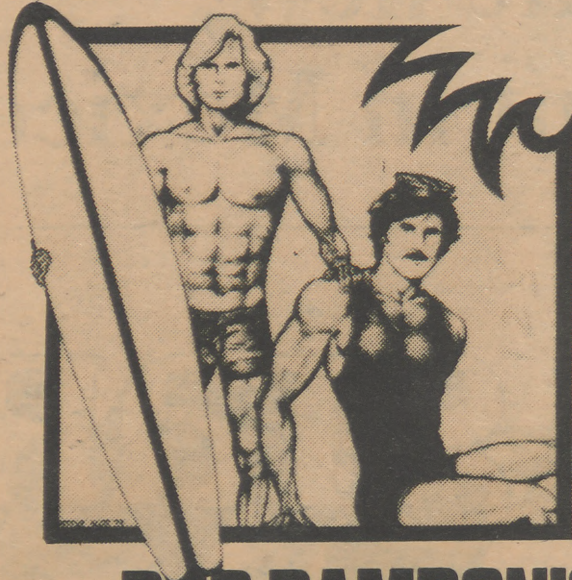
Wad."

Mann has survived strong challenges in the past and isn't as easy a target as some would like to think, Nolan pointed out. Incumbency apparently is a hard factor to overcome.

There were rumors that Mann planned to retire this year but Mann says he plans to run.



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# News magazine devotes issue to gay lifestyle

NEW YORK — For the third time in the past ten years, Time magazine has featured the subject of homosexuality on the front cover. The principal reporting this time was by senior correspondent Ruth Gavin, whose publisher concluded, "Ruth Gavin learned from (gynecologist William) Masters and (psychologist Virginia) Johnson (see last week's Montrose Star) that gays and straights have more in common than perhaps most people thought."

Responded Ms. Gavin: "My biggest surprise was to discover how much heterosexuals could learn from homosexuals about closeness, warmth and communication. I had always assumed that it was the other way around."

Time's article was divided into: "How Gay is Gay?," a report on gay life around the country; and a story on Masters and Johnson's new book, *Homosexuality in Perspective*.

Among Time's observations:

- "Homosexual men and women are coming out of the closet as never before to live openly. They are colonizing areas of big cities as their own ... even founding churches in conservative small towns."

- "Homosexuals form the most amorphous and isolated — though also the most pervasive — of all American minorities."

- "Today, the gays lack a recognized leadership; the heads of their organizations speak only for a tiny minority of a minority."

- "Whatever course the organized gay movement may



Time magazine devotes cover and major story on the gay lifestyle. Writer Ruth Galvin (right) did most of the research.



take, and whatever its victories or defeats, the outlook is for more and more homosexuals to come at least partly out of the closet."

- "Heterosexual society (can not) again ignore the subject of homosexuality, as many straights devoutly wish it could."

## Horoscope

### Your secrets told here

We've been asked just who writes the Star's horoscope predictions. The answer is: These predictions are written by a team of specialists who write individually, then compare notes and consolidate their views, in order to give you the most accurate horoscope possible. In fact, we dare say, there's not a more accurate horoscope prediction available anywhere in the Cosmos.

**TAURUS** (April 20-May 20): It's out of the chorus line and into the spotlight. Are you prepared? If not, you'd jolly-well better start getting prepared, you old bull, you. Study your lines. Know your cues. Possible replacement wars in the wings. Waiting, Hoping.

**GEMINI** (May 21-June 20): Excess emotional baggage you've been dragging around must be dumped, NOW. Once you accomplish this, you discover hidden energy source. On last day you bask in the warmth of sincere compliments as well as the April-to-May sunshine.

**CANCER** (June 21-July 22): Old truth sashays into view wearing a new face. The dawn of understanding arrives. Finally. Week of personal reflection ends on key of D for druthers. (You get yours, Moon-baby.)

**LEO** (July 23-Aug. 22): Secret fear is not real. It is just another of your internal recordings. Don't just turn down the volume. Click it off! New cycle shaping up. Get ready.

**VIRGO** (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Give priority to that which touches the most private corner of your life. Many sacrifices have been made in the name of freedom. This week it's your turn. Be a brave disco baby. Colorful week changes to a noisy finale.

**LIBRA** (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): If you

have any grand plans for seeking new, greener pastures this weekend, you should know that you are being observed by one at a distance. This polecat has 20/20 vision and a mouth like the Grand Canyon. Get it put to use for something besides talking.

**SCORPIO** (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Closed door can be opened. But you must turn the knob first. Along with the fresh summer breezes come the inevitable mosquitoes. No matter. On last day curl up with a good book (or friend) and put subordinate in charge of swatting.

**SAGITTARIUS** (Nov. 22-Dec. 22): You long for more freedom but the chains bind. Begin to think of freedom as a way rather than just a goal. Message clears. Weekend snuggles to a torrid close. Well, summer is virtually here, you know.

**CAPRICORN** (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Good weekend to put your mind in "park." Find a shady nook (near a babbling brook), keep a cool drink handy and just snooze your worries away. If snoozing doesn't come easily, then read a trashy novel. Or just daydream. Tell those who nag to go sit on their Sunday hats.

**AQUARIUS** (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Toe-to-toe, nose-to-nose confrontation due. Cash is involved. Self-interest may turn minor drama into old-time brouhaha. Advice: Talk softly but carry a big stick. You will understand.

**PISCES** (Feb. 19-March 20): Unusual bird (with fancy feathers) may try to invade your territory. Don't for one minute be intimidated. Squawk loudly. And often. And don't go flying off into the blue leaving your nest unguarded either. Week ends with a flap.

**ARIES** (March 21-April 19): Advice for the weekend: Play with friends but do business with strangers. Message clears. Enticing deal of questionable nature may be made. Be wary. Emotional/financial fruit is ripe. Pluck it.

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## Mexico's gay liberation movement just gearing up

MEXICO CITY — Out of Mexico City's fourteen million citizens, there are only about ten thousand visible gay people. This is because of the long and oppressive "macho" mentality that has restrained gay activities, according to Jacobo Hernandez, 37, a Mexico City University professor and one of the prime movers in the beginnings of the gay liberation movement in this country.

Many of those out-of-the-closet ten thousand are students or "lower class" Mexicans, Hernandez said.

Hernandez emphasized that the more wealthy, upper class gay people are, unfortunately, not visible in the rights movement and their needed financial backing has not been offered.

Hernandez, interviewed by reporter David Noel Hinojosa

of San Francisco's Bay Area Reporter, revealed that a series of homosexual murders, rapes, assaults and police raids on gay groups last summer gave rise to a new activism and the formation of FHAR, which, in Spanish, stands for "Homosexual Front for Revolutionary Action."

FHAR now has grown to 300 members and 25 "core" leaders, Hernandez said, and they have demanded a cessation of police repression, the right of access to the media and the right of all gay people to legal and medical assistance.

"It will be a long, hard struggle, but it is the only way," he said.

Another gay rights group, the Gay Liberation Front, was formed in Mexico City in 1971 with ten rap groups but was disbanded in 1973. It was similar

to the early Mattachine groups in the United States in the late 1950s.

The first small victories included the publication of letters in the public press protesting homophobic comments made by an alleged homosexual actor, Roberto Cobo, and against a play by a Uruguayan theater group that stereotyped gay people.

The most dramatic action to date, however, was participation in a march last July 26 when hundreds of gay people marched as part of the tenth anniversary commemoration of a 1968 student demonstration when police killed many students. The gay presence in the march startled many who had never seen gay people together before.

Hernandez said, "The political right and left did not know

what to do with us. All of a sudden, we were in their midst and we were a new group to be contended with."

There is not a gay area in Mexico City such as the Montrose in Houston, so it was not

until the July demonstration last year that so many gay people were visible. There have been two all-gay demonstrations since, including a brazen one on the steps of police headquarters.

FHAR also publishes its own materials explaining what gay people's legal rights should be and illustrating that gay people are not a threat to the family or society. FHAR's latest announced project is to start an informational switchboard.

"A victory for one of us is a victory for all of us. A defeat for one of us is, likewise, a defeat for all of us — everywhere," Hernandez said, drawing a connection between the gay rights drive in Mexico and the drive in the United States.

FHAR's mailing address is Apartado Postal 13-320, Mexico, 13, DF, Mexico.

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### Methodists say homosexuality hot issue

HOUSTON — The Rev. Leon Smith, director of family ministries for the United Methodist Church, said April 20 that the United Methodist Church is moving toward a greater acceptance of homosexuals and the gay lifestyle.

"Homosexuality is the hottest issue now in the Methodist Church," he was quoted as saying.

Smith was the keynote speaker for a three-day conference of United Methodist sex educators. The meeting was sponsored by the Committee on Human Sexuality of the Texas Annual Methodist Conference and the Board of Discipleship of the United Methodist Church. The meeting brought together some forty persons certified as qualified sex educators by the United Methodist Church.

Smith said he personally believes that "one's sexual orientation is not one of morality. One's sexuality is something one discovers but does not choose." Morality involves what is done with that sexuality, he said.

He added that the United Methodist Church has already said the "homosexuals, no less than heterosexuals" need the love and support of the church.

### Methodists to keep lesbian on staff

CINCINNATI — A gay Texas woman may keep her job as field representative of the Women's Division of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, the division decided.

Associated Press reported April 24 that the 75-member body rejected a request from its own personnel committee that Joan Clark, 32, of Dallas, be asked to resign.

She interprets programs and helps units of the United Methodist Women in Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma and New Mexico.

### Gay playwright asked to deliver commencement

PHILADELPHIA — Gay playwright Tennessee Williams will deliver the commencement address at the University of Pennsylvania's 223rd commencement exercises May 21, AP reports.

Williams, who lives in Key West, Fla., received Pulitzer Prizes for two of his plays, *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.





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# Jury selection begins in S.F. trial of Dan White

SAN FRANCISCO — Jury selection in the murder trial of former city supervisor (councilman) Dan White began Wednesday, April 25, with the judge pointedly questioning each panelist on his or her attitude about gay people, UPI reported.

The start of the jury selection

started two days after attorneys for White failed in an attempt to disqualify the judge assigned to the trial.

White, 32, a former police officer and firefighter, is charged with killing San Francisco Mayor George Moscone and gay, fellow supervisor Harvey Milk.

Five men and seven women from the panel of 250 prospective jurors were seated in the jury box and questioned by Superior Court Judge Walter Calcagno during the Wednesday morning session.

Two of the judge's questions, asked of each panelist, pertained

to prejudices that may arise due to Milk's open homosexuality.

They were, UPI reported: "Have you formally participated, belonged to or supported any group or organization that supports or is opposed to homosexuality?"

And: "Have you been involved in any cause or contributed to any organization that has taken a stand pro and con on the subject of homosexuality?"

Jury selection was expected to take a week.

Questioning by attorneys for both sides was scheduled for Monday, April 30.

When the final jury, along with four alternates, is selected, it will decide whether White is guilty of the murders of the two officials in their City Hall offices last Nov. 27.

If White is found guilty, the state has alleged "special circumstances" that would permit him to receive the death penalty. The special circum-

stances are multiple murder and murder of elected officials while performing their duties.

Calcagno told the prospective jurors that they would be sequestered for an estimated "fifteen to twenty days of actual court trial" and during their deliberations.

During Calcagno's questioning, one woman said she would not be able to render an impartial verdict because she knew Moscone socially. Four others said they were unalterably opposed to the death penalty, including one who also said she participated in a gay rights parade because "I believe in equal rights."

Among the questions that the judge asked each of the individuals was whether they had "campaigns for George Moscone, Harvey Milk or the defendant, Dan White, in any election."

None of the first twelve answered that question affirmatively.

## N.J. in uproar over new penal code

TRENTON, N.J. — New Jersey parents, concerned about teenage Romeos and Juliets, are mounting a statewide petition drive to amend the state's new penal code that lowers the legal age of sexual consent to thirteen, the Associated Press reported.

"I don't think thirteen-year-olds, fourteen-year-olds or fifteen-year-olds are psychologically mature enough to make a

decision about sex," said Joseph Delaney, a Paramus police lieutenant, the father of three and a key mover in the attempt to retain sixteen as the age of sexual consent.

Signatures are being collected on petitions at shopping centers, churches and other places where people gather, Delaney said. The petitions will be sent to state legislators.

Defenders of the code say, however, that it looks realistic-

ly at the sexual revolution and decriminalizes sexual experimentation by teenagers.

"The reduction of the age from sixteen to thirteen was, and is, an effort to protect all of our children and in no way licenses or advocates adolescent sexual activity," said a joint statement from the New Jersey Coalition Against Rape and the National Organization for Women.

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### Little boogie in China

PEKING — Dancing can have a bad effect on work habits, according to a letter published by Peking's People's Daily newspaper.

"People can attend balls if they like dancing, provided their normal work will not be affected. But it is wrong if production is hampered," said reader Xiao Li.

It is necessary for workers to have a colorful cultural life in their spare time, Xiao Li said, but "sometimes bad characters take advantage of this opportunity and display all kinds of unhealthy and disgusting actions."

### Idaho to test ERA

BOISE, Idaho — Idaho officials are girding for a court battle that legal scholars say could reshape the constitutional amendment process and doom the proposed Equal Rights Amendment, the Associated Press reports.

Idaho's Legislature approved the ERA in 1972 but rescinded that approval in 1977.

With bipartisan support from Gov. John Evans, congressmen and senators, Attorney General David Leroy says he will challenge federal contentions that a state cannot rescind approval of an amendment. He says he also will challenge Congress' right to extend the ERA's ratification period from the original cutoff date of March 22, 1979 to 1982.

The federal General Services Administration has refused to recognize rescission resolutions from Idaho and four other states: South Dakota, Tennessee, Kentucky and Nebraska. The GSA still counts the five among the 35 that have approved the amendment. Only three more states must ratify the ERA before it becomes law.

### Gacy pleads innocent

CHICAGO — John Wayne Gacy Jr., a contractor who is charged with more murders than any one person in the nation's history, entered an innocent plea Wednesday, April 25, to new charges that he killed 26 young men and boys, AP reported.

Gacy, 37, previously had been indicted on seven counts of murder to which he entered a plea of innocent through his lawyers. He was indicted Monday, April 23, on charges of 26 other sex-related killings.

Twenty-nine bodies were found buried under his home and grounds. The other four were pulled from area rivers.

Following his arraignment, Gacy then was taken to the courtroom of Judge Louis B. Garippo to appear at a pretrial hearing.

Gacy remains in custody at the Cook County Jail's hospital. He is being kept in the hospital for security reasons and because he says he has a weak heart.

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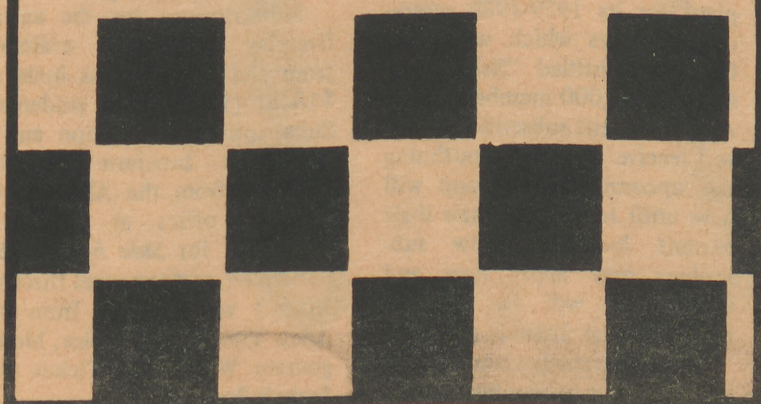
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## How about a "Red-Neck Alert Line"

I bet we can name two of your pet peeves involving your life in Montrose.

Number One: Punks and rednecks who ride up and down the streets throwing things at (assumed) gay people walking up and down the streets.

Now this is no small matter. During a weekend there are probably dozens of these fools at any one moment on the streets of Montrose in their pick-up trucks or souped-up jalopies.

Many times what they do is not serious. You only get wet with some water or beer, or they miss altogether. But other times you might get hit by the beer bottle.

Going hand-in-hand with these idiots are the police, who are never there when it happens. And if you call the police to report it, they make it plainly clear that they consider you a troublemaker.

Number Two Pet Peeve: The employees at most of your Stop-N-Go and U-Toten stores in Montrose.

Now I understand these companies have a very difficult time getting employees. It's a high risk job. (They're robbed constantly.)

This number two pet peeve is something we'll have to live with, I suppose. It's the price we pay for the convenience that the store offers just for *being* there 24 hours.

But back to Number One. We can do something about this, if you're willing.

These morons can dangerous, so . . . when it happens to you the ne

These morons can be dangerous, so . . . when it happens to you the next time (I bet it's already happened before) — Think Quick.

1) Duck.

2) Then try and get the license number and a description of the vehicle . . . then disappear. Those goons are so stupid that they can be dangerous.

3) Then, call the police. Tell them someone just attempted to (or did) assault you and you want an officer to come to the scene.

Now the police may likely try to talk you out of doing anything. After all, it was probably "just a bunch of good-old-boys throwing stuff at some fags," so why bother.

Insist! They have to fill out a report if you insist.

(Now, prepare yourself for this: The police may give you a harder time than the assaulters did. But stand your ground. They have to fill out a report if you continue to maintain you were assaulted or an attempt was made. That's all they have to do, of course. And that may well be all they do. But make 'em do it.)

4) Note the time it took the police to arrive. That's another favorite tactic of theirs — taking what seems like weeks to get to the scene if the crime occurs in Montrose.

5) Now, if we had a "Red-Neck Alert Line," you could call it and report the license number. Harris County officials will then tell who the vehicle belongs to.

(Texas is the only state in the country where they will give this information over the phone.)

you were rudely treated by police and you want to pursue that, we can help you there too.

Once these troublemakers realize that someone is onto their little game (or once the punk's father realizes what his kid's been doing with the family car on Saturday nights), they're likely to cool it.

One by one we could get these people out of the Montrose on the weekends.

Is there a group out there that would like to take this project? If so, call the Star and let us know. We'll do what we can to help too.

HM

## Reader disagrees slightly with Bonney

Editor:

I've been wanting to write and tell you how much I enjoy the Montrose Star and to subscribe. I've been out registering voters and have but a moment.

## Hot Shot



PHOTO: JAMES JASON

Mitchell, bartender upstairs at the Inside/Outside, Houston.

I was strangely affected by Hank Bonney's "Lovers" viewpoint piece (last week's Montrose Star). Of course, the topic is much too provocative for a column, but, alas, who has the resources for more?

It is a topic that I often write about and, in fact, have a collection of stories in press that explore some of the attitudes and styles of coupling.

My approach is a bit more psychological, for we *are* complex beings just as everyone else.

Hank does not preclude the psychological aspects and touches on some of them, but I think a bit too lightly on the emotional needs some have for other persons. He enumerates diverse ways in which these needs can be met, but the lover relationship can fulfill needs in a unique way that none of the other relationships can; to attempt to prescribe lifestyle is dangerous.

Perhaps my main objection to Hank's piece is that he suggests that some of us were brought up as heterosexuals and that this might be the motivation for the

couple relationship in some cases. I think it would be never, or close to never, that gay coupling would be an apeing of heterosexuals, though in some cases patterns of heterosexual cohabitation might be used.

To suggest that gay people ape straights denigrates gay people. Gay people have enough ego-strength to work out their own styles. Many areas of human need in relationships, as Hank points out, have *no* sexual basis — only a human basis.

Much has been written on the gay married lifestyle and its direction in the future. I, for one, think it will thrive now that obstacles for gay cohabitation are falling by the wayside.

I did like Hank's piece and am especially pleased with his stimulating this discussion among his readers. And I'm especially pleased with his having reopened a discussion within GPC last week about some very basic attitudes of gay people toward gay people who are in the minority within our minority.

BARNEY O'REILEY  
HOUSTON GAY WRITERS

## Fine Arts

## "Side by Side by Sondheim" opens at Houston's Alley

A banquet of songs by lyricist-composer Stephen Sondheim which opened first in London and then Broadway, made its Houston debut Thursday, April 26, when Alley Theatre began a five-week run of the musical, *Side by Side by Sondheim*.

The retrospective revue traces Sondheim's career from his early collaborations with Leonard Bernstein on *West Side Story* and *Gypsy* with Jule Styne through such other Broadway blockbusters as *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, *Company*, *Follies*, *A*

*Little Night Music* and *Do I Hear a Waltz?* with a potpourri of songs.

The cast includes Robert Symonds as the narrator, with Judy Rice returning from the Alley's 1973 production of *Jacques Brel*, and two Alley newcomers: David Christmas, who created the role of Dick in the off-Broadway play, *Dames at Sea*; and Cathy Brewer-Moore, who joins the Alley directly from the off-Broadway revival of *Mary*.

Director of the production is Beth Sanford, with musical direction by Sterling Tinsley, settings by Matthew Grant, costumes by Ellen Ryba, technical direction by William C. Lindstrom and piano by Don Looser.

With the opening of *Sondheim*, the Alley also announced plans for its 1979-1980 season of five plays which will open Oct. 18. Entitled "Super Season," all 24,000 members of the Alley's current subscriber-family will receive a brochure outlining the upcoming season and will have until June 3 to renew their current locations. New subscribers may apply now and their seats will be assigned following the June 3 deadline.

Plays currently under consideration for production during

the 1979-1980 season include:

Agatha Christie's *Black Coffee*, written in 1930, featuring master sleuth Hercule Poirot.

*Sizwe Bansi Is Dead*, a play about justice by South Africa's Athol Fugard.

*Once a Catholic*, which would be an American premiere of a new play by Mary O'Malley.

*Bedroom Farce* or *Relatively Speaking* by Britain's Alan Ayckbourn.

*The Royal Family*, the American stage's first family, as depicted by Kaufman and Ferber.

*Uncle Vanya* or *The Cherry Orchard* by Russia's Anton Chekov.

*The Gospel According to St. Matthew* in a special Alley theatrical adaptation.

*On Golden Pond*, a current Broadway play by young playwright Ernest Thompson.

Subscriptions for the entire five-play season are available from the Alley for as little as \$18.00 (\$12.50 for students). Subscription information and a descriptive brochure can be obtained from the Alley's subscription office at 228-2333.

Tickets for *Side by Side by Sondheim* performances through June 3 are available from the Alley Theatre box office, Montgomery Ward, Top Ticket and Joske's Post Oak.

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## Cinema

# French film shows there's no "best way" to be a man

**THE BEST WAY**, not rated. Directed by Claude Miller. Screenplay by Miller and Luc Béraud. Starring Patrick Dewaere, Patrick Bouchitey and Christine Pascal.

Two boys attempt headstands. One, confident, demonstrates for the other. They push their feet upward; the first succeeds, and the second, shaky, quickly fails. The picture freezes.

This evocative image is the first we see in *The Best Way*, a delicately textured French film detailing a sexual identity crisis in a boys' summer camp.

An implicit competition between two men, not unlike that between the boys learning headstands, is the subject of *The Best Way*. The issue, however, for Philippe (Patrick Bouchitey) and Marc (Patrick Dewaere), two counselors at the camp, isn't who can perform the better headstand, but who is the better man.

Marc is muscular and athletic; he takes his group of boys hiking and teaches them sports. He is best characterized by a marching song he teaches his campers which proclaims: "The best way to walk is the way we walk."

Philippe is a bookworm who teaches his group of boys theater and dance and who

prefers to watch a foreign film on television over playing poker.

Simply put, Marc is a "macho jock" and Philippe a "sensitive intellectual."

One night after the boys are in bed, Marc is playing cards with three other counselors when there is a power failure. Bursting into Philippe's room to borrow candles, he unexpectedly finds Philippe dressed in women's clothes, in makeup, wearing a wig.

Surprisingly, Marc keeps Phil-

ippe's secret to himself. But by failing to respond directly to what he has seen, he forces Philippe to come to him. Late one night, Philippe visits Marc in his room, and never mentioning the embarrassing incident, he tries to determine Marc's attitude toward him.

He tells Marc that he'd like for them to be friends. Marc is vague, responding, "What does it mean 'to be friends'?"

Thus begins an ambiguous relationship that develops be-

tween them over the course of the summer. Philippe can never shake the feeling that Marc holds something over him, but no matter how hard he tries to confront Marc directly, Marc evades the issue, or is contradictory.

He'll say that he is repulsed by Philippe and wants nothing to do with him; then he'll demand "favors" that he never specifies.

Philippe's girlfriend, Chantal (Christine Pascal), is drawn into the conflict. Philippe is anxious to prove his masculinity and there is a poignant sequence in which the two attempt to make love for the first time.

Later, provocative as always, Marc makes a pass at Chantal. In this way, Marc repeatedly baits Philippe, luring him into increasingly violent confrontations.

This complex story of sexual conflict is set against the background of the summer camp where sexual repression is the order of the day. One revealing incident depicts a counselor degraded and fired when pornographic photographs are found in his room. The penalties for sexual indiscretion at camp, even for sexual feelings, are only too clear.

The conflict — or is it a flirtation? — between Philippe and Marc escalates to a climactic confrontation at a costume party held to mark the end of the summer. Chantal dresses as a man, and Philippe ... as a woman.

Thus stripping himself of the pretense Marc has held over him, Philippe erupts in this brilliantly conceived sequence of sexual ambiguity.

*The Best Way* is writer-director Claude Miller's first feature film, but he has had years of experience working closely with such distinguished French filmmakers as Truffaut and Godard. His handling of intimate material — the quieter scenes between Marc and Philippe and between Philippe and Chantal — is especially rewarding.

The fine, mature performances by the young leads, Patrick Bouchitey, Patrick Dewaere and Christine Pascal, suggest that we are likely to see all three again.

The story unfolds seamlessly as Miller makes his point: there is no "best way" to be a man and to think so leads only to feelings of insecurity, to cruelty and even to violence.

SETH CAGIN



Actor Patrick Dewaere takes his boys marching in "The Best Way."

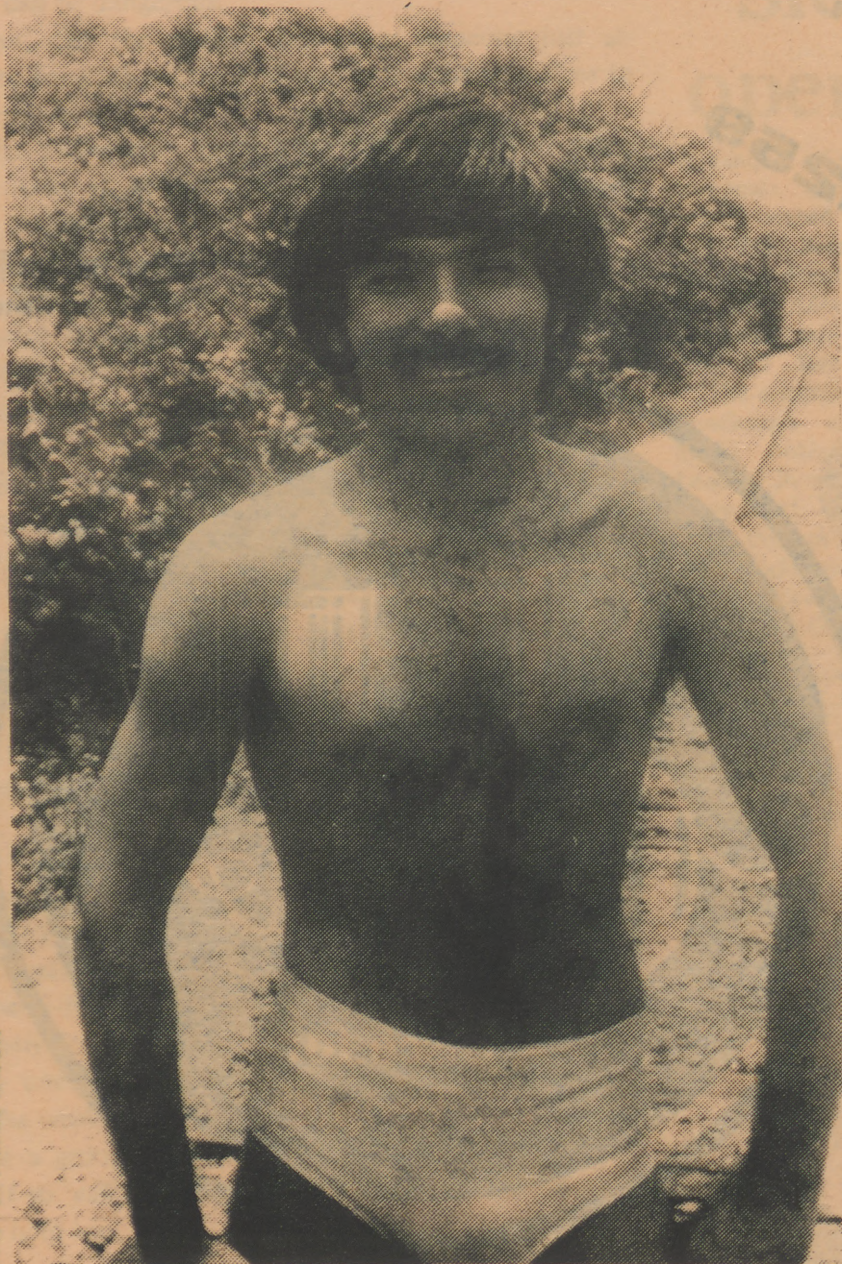


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