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Only a number

A big age difference won't stop a Houston couple from celebrating another Valentine's Day together.

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HONORED: Local gay politicians honorees at brunch. Page 3



FIRED: Lesbian couple lose jobs after announcement. Page 5



PROTEST: Anti-gay group protests King funeral. Page 6



Robert Carp, a University of Houston political science professor, recently released a study that shows judicial appointments by President Bush hand down the most conservative rulings on record.

Carp: Bush appointed judges most conservative on record

U of H professor's study shows high percentage of conservative rulings

By ERIC ERVIN

When it comes to ruling on civil rights issues, including cases involving gay men and lesbians, judges appointed by President George W. Bush are the most conservative to date, according to a recent study by a political science professor at the University of Houston.

In the study "The Voting Behavior of George W.

Bush's Judges: How Sharp a Turn to the Right?," Robert Carp said Bush's judicial appointees are significantly more conservative than even the most conservative judges appointed by presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. He said that the judges appointed by the current President Bush are more conservative by 5 percentage points than those appointed by Regan and Bush.

"Our findings are significant because the general consensus is that President Reagan is the most modern conservative president on record, and yet the judges appointed by George W. Bush are even more conservative than the Reagan judges," Carp, who was the lead investigator on the study, said in a media release.

Please see **CARP**, on Page 4



Authorities say Jacob Robida died after shooting himself following a nationwide manhunt. Robida was wanted in connection with the Feb. 2 attack at a gay bar in New Bedford, Mass.

Mass. bartender lives in fear after attack

Gunman kills cop, self after assault on gay bar

By ELIZABETH WEILL-GREENBERG

Phillip Daggett, a Massachusetts bartender who stared down the barrel of Jacob Robida's gun, said he doubts he'll ever be able to forgive the gunman.

Robida, 18, aimed the gun at Daggett's head and squeezed the trigger. But in the luckiest of breaks, the gun was out of bullets, following Robida's rampage at Puzzles Lounge in New Bedford, Mass., in which he attacked gay patrons with a hatchet and the gun, injuring three.

"He's not around for me to get answers, to understand why it happened," Daggett said. "I'll never be able to understand without it coming from out of his mouth."

Please see **MASS. BAR**, on Page 4



local news
Gay couple Christopher Bown and Jerry Simoneaux to marry during Freedom to Marry Week. Page 3

theater
The production 'Manon Lescaut' is currently showing at the Houston Grand Opera. Page 13



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local new briefs

Victory Fund to recognize local, national gay officials

The Washington, D.C.-based Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund will host its second annual Houston Brunch on Feb. 19 at the Renaissance Hotel, 6 Greenway Plaza, at 11:30 a.m.

The event will feature five openly-gay elected officials who Victory Fund officials believe represent breakthroughs for gay people across the country. They include Houston City Councilmember Sue Lovell, Houston City Controller Annise Parker, U.S. Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass), Dallas County Sheriff Lupe Valdez and San Antonio City Councilmember Elena Guajardo. Lovell and Parker will be presented with the Victory Fund's Local Hero Award.

On Dec. 10, Victory Fund-endorsed Lovell won a runoff election for an at large seat on City Council. Victory Fund officials said with Lovell winning this election, she follows in the foot steps of Parker, who served three terms as an at large councilmember prior to being elected controller.

"In a state that recently passed an anti-gay amendment, the election of qualified candidates like Sue and Annise represents hope and progress for LGBT equality," said Chuck Wolfe, president and chief executive officer of the Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund. "By having a voice at the table we can fight back against this kind of discrimination."

The Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund provides strategic, technical and financial support to openly gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender candidates and public officials across the country. According to officials, in the past 14 years, the organization has helped increase the number of openly lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender officials across the country from 49 to more than 300.

Tickets are \$100 per person. To RSVP or for more information, visit www.victory-fund.org/events.



Houston City Controller **Annise Parker** and Councilmember **Sue Lovell** will be two of five public officials who will be recognized at this year's Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund Houston Brunch.

Futures Conference meeting set for Feb. 11

Officials with the Houston GLBT Futures Conference will meet Feb. 11 at the Houston GLBT Community Center, 3400 Montrose Blvd., from 1-3 p.m.

The meeting will include a discussion on the future of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or those questioning their sexual orientation that live in Houston.

In June 2005, officials held a conference to address issues and concerns of gay Houstonians. Officials said it was the culmination of several months' worth of work by community activists and allies. These individuals came together for regular meetings beginning in November 2004 at the Houston GLBT Community Center to plan the conference, which was inspired by a Town Hall Meeting at the AstroArena in 1989.

That meeting led to the creation of several nonprofit community organizations, including Montrose Clinic (now Legacy Community Healthcare Services), Montrose Counseling Center and the Gay & Lesbian Switchboard.

The June 2005 meeting produced a document, The Gay Agenda, with 54 resolutions approved by conference participants.

"We are honored to host this working group," said Christopher Bown, community center president. "At our first meeting, we heard about important progress on several resolutions presented at the Conference on Houston's LGBTI Future, and we expect to learn more at our February meeting."

A copy of the agenda can be read at the Community Center's website, www.houstonglbtcommunitycenter.org, or at Pride Houston's website, www.pridehouston.org.

Light refreshments will be served at the Feb. 11 meeting, which is open to the public. Individuals planning to attend should RSVP by calling the Community Center at 713-524-3818.

Officials with local gay-rights group attend Austin workshop

Officials with the Houston Equal Rights Alliance recently attended a day-long workshop for community activists and organizers from around the state of Texas.

On Feb. 4, the Equality Texas Foundation hosted "From Nonsense to Equality: The Next Steps." The workshop was an opportunity for community leaders to network, share best practices being utilized by their organizations and develop action plans for advancing the pro-equality movement in their local communities, officials said.

"This event is one more example of the focus that the Equality Texas Foundation has in terms of organizing and supporting local organizations and infrastructure across the state", said Tammi Wallace, president of the Houston Equal Rights Alliance.

A panel discussion allowed the 60 attendees to learn about practices currently being used by organizers in seven core program areas, including electoral work, lobbying, public education, community building, research, legal and fundraising. Panelists included, Wallace, Bryan Gerard (Stonewall Democrats of San Antonio), Dan Graney (Soulforce San Antonio), Martha Oestreich (San Antonio Alliance for Social Justice), Anne Webb (People for the American Way), and Heather Alden (Texas Freedom Network).

"Organizational development and resource-sharing are integral components for building and sustaining the pro-equality movement in Texas," said Chuck Smith, deputy director of the Equality Texas Foundation.

"The LGBT community will continue to face attacks on all fronts," Smith said.

There were two projects that involved group planning and prioritizing.

local news

Gay-rights group to celebrate Freedom to Marry Week

Same-sex wedding and attempt to receive licenses planned

By ERIC ERVIN

The Houston-based Foundation for Family & Marriage Equality, which supports same-sex marriages, is planning special events in observance of National Freedom to Marry Week.

Two events that could draw the largest protest from conservative groups include a mass same-sex marriage ceremony and an attempt to receive marriage licenses at the Harris County Clerk's office. These events have taken place for the past three years and have attracted protesters who believe marriage should only be the union between a man and woman.

"We have more events planned than ever before, so there will be something for everyone," President Jerry Simoneaux said in a news release. "But, if you can only make it to one event, then go to the wedding celebration on Feb. 18. There is still room for more couples, but you should hurry."

On Feb. 17, same-sex couples will ask the Harris County clerk for a marriage license. More than 30 same-sex couples will exchange marriage vows in a union ceremony on Feb. 18. Some 20 church leaders will perform the marriage ceremony at Community Gospel Church, 4305 Lillian St. A reception will follow the ceremony, complete with wedding cake and refreshments.

In addition to the wedding ceremony and demonstration at the clerk's office, foundation officials will sponsor a three-part discussion series on sexual orientation and gender identity.

"The discussion series is will take place over three days," Simoneaux said. "Dr. Jeff Vannice will present the first part on psychology."

"He will show how variations in sexual orientation and gender identity are perfectly normal and uncover the dangers of 'reparative therapy' practiced by the ex-gay ministries and some psychologists."

Simoneaux said the second discussion will focus on the church and same-sex marriages. Author Tom Allen will join church leaders from various denominations and explore how their religious views support same-sex marriage.

"We will show that the Christian right does not have a monopoly on God, and that there is more than one interpretation of morality," Simoneaux said.

The last discussion will explore how same-sex marriage laws have evolved in Texas, across the country and around the world. Last year, more than 76 percent of voters favored an amendment to



Couples exchange marriage vows last year as part of National Freedom to Marry Week.

the state's constitution to ban same-sex marriages. It was opposed by nearly 24 percent.

Simoneaux, who is also an attorney and professor at South Texas College of Law, will lead the discussion the evolution of same-sex marriage laws.

"As part of this discussion, we will examine the problems that arise when some states or countries recognize same-sex marriage, yet others still do not," he said. "We will also see how gender is defined differently for the purpose of marriage from state to state and country to country."

In its ninth year, the nonprofit group Freedom to Marry, a coalition of gay-rights and gay-friendly organizations that advocate equality for everyone, sponsors the week.

"This is a week to engage the people around us in this conversation about fairness," founder and executive director Evan Wolfson said in an editorial published Feb. 8 in the Rutland (Vt.) Herald. "Gay people — and our friends, families and allies — cannot assume that just because a person loves us and is generally a good guy that this person understands how the denial of marriage harms us."

"We have to challenge each other and ourselves to make a more substantive, moral case for what we stand for."

i MORE INFO

National Freedom to Marry Week
Feb. 12-18
Freedom to Marry
116 West 23rd St., Suite 500
New York, NY 10011
www.freedomtomarry.org

Foundation for Family & Marriage Equality Inc.
3400 Montrose Blvd., Suite 207
Houston, Texas 77006
713-227-1717
www.familyequality.org

cover story

Carp: Liberal judges usually extend gay rights

CARP, continued from Page 1

Carp said in the study that so-called liberal judges usually hand down rulings that extend people's freedoms in the areas of abortion, gay rights, women rights, rights for minorities and freedom of speech issues. He said conservative judges prefer to limit these freedoms.

However, Carp's research shows that the minority and women who are appointed by the president tend to be more liberal in their voting patterns, compared to the white men he has appointed to judgeships.

The study also found that 33 percent of the decisions handed down by Bush jurists were liberal. It shows that presidents Johnson, Carter and Clinton, scored 52, 51 and 44 percent, respectively.

"One key aspect of the success of chief executives in appointing a federal judiciary that mirrors their own political beliefs is the depth of their commitment to do so," Carp said. "Some presidents may be content merely to fill the federal bench with party loyalists and pay little attention to their nominees' specific ideologies.

"Some may consider ideological factors when appointing Supreme Court jus-

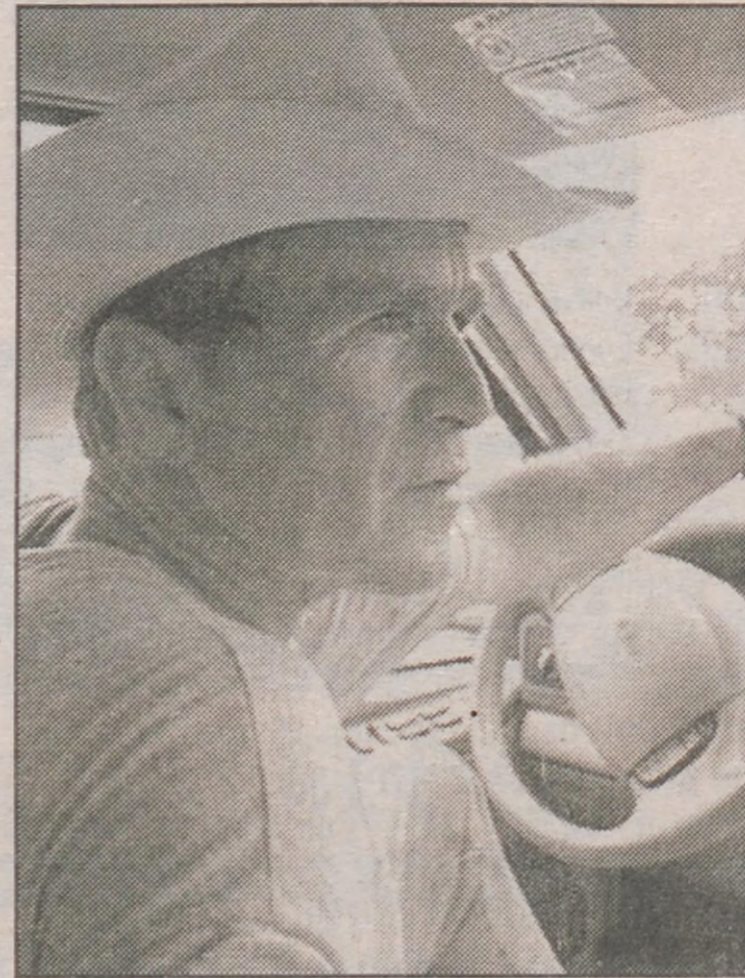
tices but may not regard them as important for trial and appellate judges," he said. "Other presidents may discount ideologically grounded appointments because they themselves tend to be non-ideological. Still others may place factors such as past political loyalty ahead of ideology in selecting judges."

In an August 2004 study on the same issue, Carp and his team of researchers predicted that if Bush was re-elected to a second term, the makeup of the federal judiciary could take an even sharper turn towards conservatism.

In 2004, the president's judicial appointees handed down rulings that were 27.9 percent liberal during cases involving civil liberties and rights. The latest study shows that that figure has decrease to 27.2 percent.

"As the Supreme Court becomes somewhat more conservative with the appointment of Justice (Samuel) Alito, and as more Bush judges are appointed to the policy-making appellate courts, the overall tone of the judiciary should be more conservative three years from now than it is today," Carp said.

The 2004 study also shows that the voting record of George W. Bush appointed



The judges appointed by President Bush were more conservative in their rulings by 5 percentage points, compared to judges appointed by presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. (Photo by AP)

judges was fairly moderate in the areas of Labor and Economic regulation. The latest study, which uses more data, indicates that the judges are very conservative

when it comes to this issue, and therefore could not be considered moderate in their voting habits.

Data on trial court decisions was taken from a database of more than 75,000 opinions, which were published in the Federal Supplement by a pool of almost 1,800 judges from 1933 through the fall of 2005. It included 795 decisions that were handed down by judges appointed by the president.

Elliot Minberg, vice president of the Liberal People for the American Way, said in the study that he sees the president's judicial appointees "as a way that the White House can continue to appeal to and mobilize the far-right base which sometimes may be disappointed with the president on taxes or on spending or on other kinds of issues."

Carp's research appears in the book "Principles and Practice of American Politics: Classic and Contemporary Readings, Third Edition." Assisting the political science professor was political scientists Kenneth L. Manning with the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth and Ronald Stidham, who teaches at Appalachian State University in North Carolina.

Robida fled to W. Va. where he picked up girl

MASS. BAR, continued from Page 1

Robida fled to Charleston, W. Va., where he picked up Jennifer Rena Bailey, and drove to Arkansas, where he allegedly shot and killed a police officer who pulled him over for a traffic violation, the Boston Globe reported.

A car chase and gunfight ensued with Arkansas police. Robida shot Bailey before shooting himself. Robida died at 3:38 a.m. on Feb. 5 in a Springfield, Mo., hospital from the injuries he suffered during the shootout Feb. 4.

Attacker 'very quiet'

Daggett's encounter with Robida began simply enough, with Robida asking him if Puzzles was a gay bar. After Daggett, 26, told him it was one of many gay bars in the area, Robida ordered a drink, which Daggett said he served after checking his ID.

"He was very quiet, standoffish," Daggett recalled. "One of the regulars said 'hi.' He responded back with a hello."

After taking a sip of his second drink, Robida stood up and walked over to the pool table, Daggett said. After a few minutes, Robida began attacking customers with his hands, a hatchet and a gun, according to Daggett, who called 911 and dropped the telephone so the operator could hear everything and trace the call.

The bartender said he and a customer tackled Robida to the ground, but he freed his arm and fired a shot in the air.

After attacking three customers who lay bleeding on the ground, Robida began "firing the gun aimlessly, anywhere he could shoot," said Daggett, who began to push people out of the bar.

"Jacob was standing four feet away from where I was standing," Daggett said. "He took the gun, pointed it at my head and pulled the trigger. Everything went blank around me."

After Robida saw he was out of bullets, he fled the bar, said Daggett, who followed the gunman outside and last saw him heading north.

The police showed up about a minute later. Daggett and a customer who recognized Robida from high school had called police emergency lines for help.

Daggett claims he told a police officer the direction in which Robida was headed, but the officer brushed him off and ordered him to leave the bar or risk arrest. Daggett, a licensed emergency medical technician, refused to leave and was eventually allowed to stay.

While Robida was on the run, Daggett lived in his car, driving around, looking over his shoulder, he said. And, even though Robida is dead, the fear hasn't left him.

"I'm absolutely terrified to go back to work at the bar or anything to do with the public now," Daggett said.

Piecing together why

Since the attack, Daggett and police investigators are trying to understand

the teenager's motive. So far, news reports have patched together a picture of Robida as a desperate outcast and high school dropout who loved the band Insane Clown Posse.

His room, according to the Boston Globe, contained neo-Nazi literature, skinhead paraphernalia and racist and anti-Semitic posters and a makeshift coffin. A police report released Feb. 6 said investigators also found weapons, including 85 rounds of ammunition, a Samurai sword, one knife and two knife sheaths in Robida's room. A knife without a sheath was found outside of Puzzles.

Authorities also found two bumper stickers in Robida's room, which read: "I dress this way to scare your kids" and "My day is not complete until I've terrified a complete stranger," the police report said.

But his friends expressed shock that Robida, who had never been in any serious trouble before, would commit such crimes.

"We're like the outcasts that nobody pays attention to," Robida's friend Keith Amarante told the Standard-Times newspaper.

Other friends told the newspaper his interest in Nazism was a "phase."

An official with the Southern Poverty Law Center, which tracks hate groups, said the group had not heard of Robida or Bailey before the attacks.

"It's very likely they didn't have direct or public connections to hate groups," said

Mark Potok, a spokesperson for the Southern Poverty Law Center. "It's very likely this was a troubled young man who was attracted to images of power."

Karen Franklin, a forensic psychologist who has studied men who commit hate crimes but does not know Robida, said these types of cases often involve a person who feels "alienated" and "disenfranchised" and takes it out on a group that he feels "deserves to be lashed out against." The violence, she said, can be an aggressive type of suicide.

"They project their anger and frustration at being excluded onto somebody else — it may be gays, women or other races," Franklin said. "What is happening that's allowing that level of exclusion and alienation to occur among young men?"

Call for action

Gay rights organizations condemned the crime, emphasizing the need for a federal hate crimes bill, which would provide resources to local jurisdictions to investigate and pursue hate crimes. The bill is awaiting Senate action, according to the Human Rights Campaign.

Some activists stressed the importance of stopping these crimes through education.

"The key is talking to youth to prevent this kind of thing from happening," said Pamela Garramone, executive director of the Greater Boston PFLAG.

Daggett said he plans to join a local sheriff's program to educate troubled teenagers about hate crimes.

national news

N.C. ski resort dumps lesbian photographers

Couple claims job bias after wedding announcement

By ANDREW KEEGAN

After enjoying a picture perfect wedding day in Massachusetts, the only state where gay couples can legally marry, a lesbian couple from Asheville, N.C., said they just wanted to share their good news with friends in the gay-friendly resort town.

But within a month of their wedding announcement appearing in an Asheville newspaper, a local ski resort allegedly told the pair that their photography services were no longer needed.

Laurel Scherer owns and operates All Terrain Images. Her partner, Virginia Balfour, a physical therapist, assists on weekends during the ski season. The duo maintains that Wolf Laurel Ski Resort ended their verbal business contract after discovering they were gay.

A representative at Wolf Laurel said the resort would not comment on the issue. But when contacted on his cell phone, a co-owner did not deny Scherer was dismissed

because of her sexual orientation.

"We are a private business and made a decision that was best for the business," Rick Bussey said. "Write your story any way you want — I have nothing else to say."

Scherer said she approached Wolf Laurel, located about 30 minutes north of Asheville in Mars Hill, N.C., about a business venture in January 2004.

"I proposed setting up a booth offering to take digital photos of skiers and snowboarders," Scherer said.

According to Scherer, resort manager Johnny Goin agreed and said the lodge would use some of Scherer's photos in exchange.

The deal worked well, and the relationship continued for the 2004-2005 ski season, Scherer said, leading her to believe it would remain for this season as well.

"Johnny even told me to leave my sales counter up and my marketing signs in place," Scherer said. "And their marketing person called me later to ask if the ski resort could list the company in their 2005-2006 brochure."

'Didn't make sense'

Scherer said she went to the resort Nov. 29, 2005, to set up her booth for the season. Orville English, a co-owner of the lodge, approached her after she spent several hours setting up computers, she said.



A ski resort near Asheville, N.C., allegedly refused to honor its verbal contract with lesbian photographers Laurel Scherer and Virginia Balfour.

"He told me that half the lodge had been sold and the new owner [Bussey] wanted this space to sell real estate," Scherer said. "I asked if I could move to another area or even pay rent for the space. He said no."

Scherer said as she began packing her equipment, she wondered if the couple's wedding announcement, published in the Asheville Citizen newspaper on Nov. 6, had anything to do with the sudden termination of the verbal contract she established nearly two years ago.

"It just didn't make sense," Scherer said. "The lodge is 42,000 square feet — they're not lacking for space."

Balfour, Scherer's partner, said she later called the new co-owner and asked if the published wedding announcement played a role.

MORE INFO

Wolf Laurel Ski Resort
578 Valley View Circle
Mars Hill, N.C. 28754
800-817-4111
marketing@skiwolf Laurel.com

Bussey said he wouldn't deny that it was one of the reasons, according to Balfour. Bussey went on to say the lodge was a "family oriented business" and having a gay person around could harm business, she said.

Immediately after her dismissal, Scherer sent out an email to numerous friends suggesting they contact the lodge in hope of having the resort reconsider.

But following the owners' comments, Scherer said she now has no interest in returning, although it is costing her an estimated \$25,000 this ski season.

"As hostile as they've been it would not be a good working environment," said Scherer, adding that she has retained an attorney and is seeking \$10,000 for the continued use of her photos in Wolf Laurel's marketing.

"If they refuse to pay me for publication rights, I will be looking at a lawsuit based on copyright infringement," she said.

Gay rights foe elected House majority leader

Boehner backed anti-gay marriage amendment, D.C. adoption ban

By LOU CHIBBARO JR.

Ohio Congressman John Boehner, elected Feb. 2 by Republicans to replace Tom DeLay as the new House majority leader, is a leading supporter of a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage and has voted consistently against gay rights.

Boehner won the second highest GOP leadership post in the House by a vote of 122-109 in a closed-door meeting on Capitol Hill.

The Human Rights Campaign, a national gay rights group that monitors Congress, has given Boehner a rating of "0" on gay rights and AIDS issues for every two-year session of Congress except one since Boehner first came to the House in 1991. The one exception came in the 106th Congress, when Boehner voted for increased funds for a federal housing program for people with AIDS.

In other sessions, Boehner voted across the board against gay rights bills or for anti-gay bills or amendments, according to a compilation of his voting record by HRC.

He also has repeatedly declined to sign HRC's pledge not to engage in sexual-orientation discrimination in the hiring of people on his congressional staff. By the end of the last legislative session, HRC reported that 148 House members, including 28 Republicans, had signed the pledge.

In 1998, Boehner voted for an amendment to the D.C. appropriations bill that called for prohibiting same-sex couples in the District from adopting children. The amendment lost in a bipartisan vote. In 1995, he supported a bill to give the federal government authority to cut funding from school libraries that carried books on gay-related subjects.

"He is a member of the conservative Republican leadership that controls the House," said Christopher Labonte, HRC's director of legislative affairs.

Like Boehner, like DeLay

The National Stonewall Democrats, which represents gay Democrats, joined their party's leaders in linking Boehner to campaign finance and lobbying scandals that forced DeLay to resign from the majority leader's position.

A Texas grand jury last year indicted DeLay on a campaign finance related charge. DeLay has pleaded not guilty.

The Stonewall Democrats noted that Boehner, 56, came under criticism in the

1990s for distributing checks from lobbyists on the floor of the House.

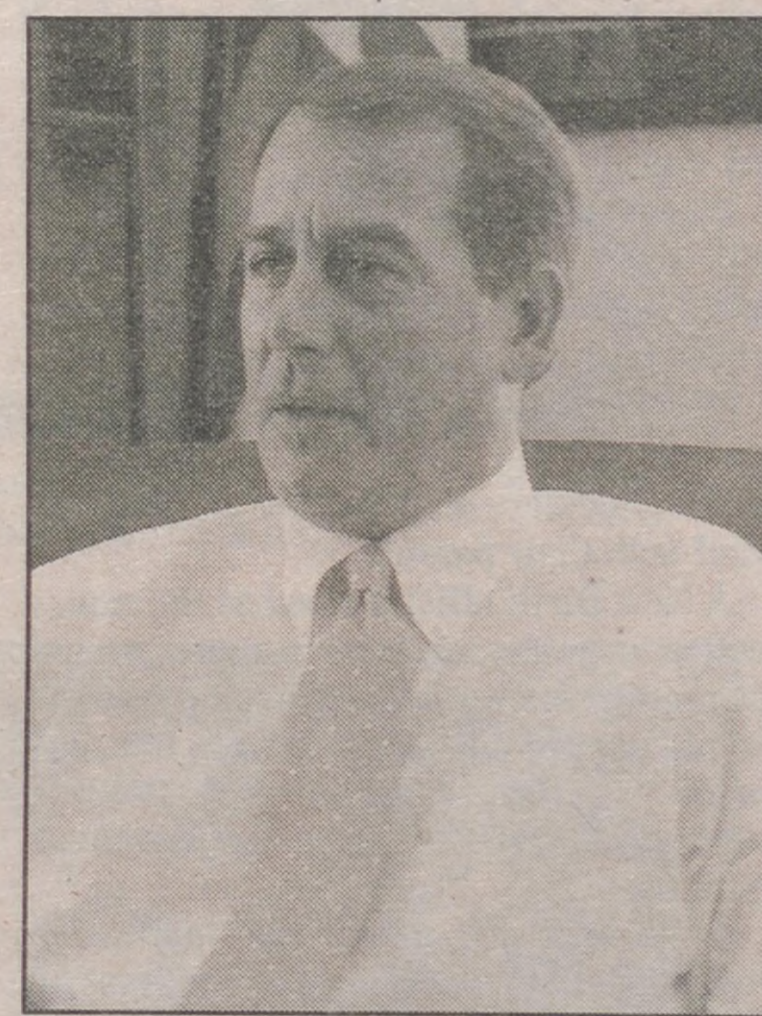
"Congressman Boehner, who famously handed out tobacco-lobbyist money on the floor of the House of Representatives, continues to be entangled with the most extreme anti-gay lobby interests in Washington," said Eric Stern, executive director of the Stonewall Democrats.

Patrick Guerriero, president of the gay GOP group Log Cabin Republicans, said his group would continue to push for fairness on gay issues among Republicans in Congress.

"We look forward to having a chance to work with the new leadership team," he said. "The GOP needs centrists and moderates in Congress and the electorate in order to retain its majority."

House leaders also need to listen more closely to the gay congressional colleagues, said Dave DeCicco, vice president of communications for the Victory Fund, a national organization dedicated to electing gay candidates to local, state and federal office.

"The House of Representatives and its Republican leaders continue to elevate staunchly anti-gay leaders to positions that underscore that gays and lesbians need to be part of the process from within such as folks like Tammy Baldwin [D-Wis.] and Barney Frank [D-Mass.], both members of Congress who are openly gay," DeCicco said.



Congressman John Boehner (R-Ohio), the new House majority leader, scored a '0' on HRC's scorecard in every term but one since coming to Washington. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

Rep. Jim Kolbe of Arizona, the only openly gay member of Congress, has announced that he will not seek re-election this year.

The current House leaders, said DeCicco, "are never going to listen, and enlightenment for some of them will certainly be elusive."

news

Anti-gay protesters target King funeral

Speakers cite civil rights icon's support for gay equality

By DYANA BAGBY

A group of nearly a dozen African-American women, marching in line with thousands of others to New Birth Missionary Baptist Church to pay their final respects to Coretta Scott King, broke into song as they passed a small group of anti-gay protesters picketing the civil rights icon's funeral Feb. 7 in Lithonia.

"Ain't gonna let nobody turn me around, turn me around, turn me around! Ain't gonna let nobody turn me around, I'm gonna keep on walkin', keep on talkin', marchin' down to freedom's land!" they sang from the popular civil rights anthem, briefly drowning out the catcalls from 12 members of the virulently anti-gay Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka, Kansas.

The WBC protesters made a name for themselves protesting funerals including slain gay college student Matthew Shepherd and, most recently, soldiers killed in Iraq. Camped out on the grass next to the church's sign, they held signs claiming King was in hell because she was a "fag enabler" who advocated for gay rights.

"Coretta Scott King hijacked the freedom train, and she has split hell wide open," some shouted as shocked mourners trailed past.

"Children, ask your parents what sodomy is," one WBC picketer yelled at startled toddlers who walked by hand-in-hand with their parents.

A New Birth official stood at the intersection near the church's campus where the protesters were located, urging mourners not engage the demonstrators in arguments or discussion. Several DeKalb County police officers were also stationed at the scene.

Jesse McNulty, an Atlanta youth and transgender activist known as Sir Jesse of Decatur, stood with another friend to mount a counter-protest as the Feminist Outlawz. They shouted to the WBC group "to take their hate back to Kansas."

Shirley Phelps-Roper, daughter of WBC pastor and founder Fred Phelps, acknowledged she received death threats from people disgusted with her picket at King's funeral.

On Feb. 2, the Wisconsin state Senate voted to ban protests within 500 feet of a funeral service. At least seven other states are considering similar legislation, all as a direct result of Westboro Baptist Church's



A dozen members of Westboro Baptist Church protested Coretta Scott King's funeral on Feb. 7, saying her advocacy for gay rights meant she was doomed to hell. (Photo by Dyana Bagby)

protests at the funerals of fallen soldiers that church leaders claim died to protect a "fag nation."

King 'frowned on homophobia'

The funeral for King, who died Jan. 30 at age 78, spanned several hours and included speeches by President George W. Bush and former presidents Bill Clinton, George H.W. Bush and Jimmy Carter, along with many other dignitaries, activists and celebrities.

But Dr. Joseph Lowery of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference was the first to mention King's support for gay civil rights, reminding the audience that she "frowned on homophobia."

Poet Maya Angelou, a close friend of King, reiterated that she "cared for gay and straight" people alike, adding that "we owe something so this gathering is not just a footnote in the pages of history."

King spoke out publicly against a proposed federal constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage and was also a vocal supporter of HIV/AIDS awareness.

Her stand on gay marriage put her at odds with one of her daughters, Rev. Bernice King, an elder at New Birth Missionary Baptist Church, where the funeral service was held. In December 2004, Bernice King and Bishop Eddie Long, pastor of New Birth, led a massive march through Atlanta calling on black churches to be more visible on several social issues, including opposing same-sex marriage.

Some black gay activists questioned the choice of funeral location, including author Keith Boykin, who described it as a "final twist of irony" on his blog.



news in brief

Canada could reverse course on same-sex marriage

OTTAWA, Ontario — Canada last year became only the fourth nation in the world to issue marriage licenses to gay couples, but that right could be scrapped after the new Conservative government took power this week. Party leader Stephen Harper, who campaigned on the promise that he would allow Parliament to vote on whether to reopen the issue, said he "would prefer to do it sooner rather than later, but not immediately," Reuters reported. If Parliament approved the idea, the government would then introduce legislation changing the definition of marriage back to that of a union between a man and a woman. The previous Liberal government brought in the gay marriage law after courts from almost all of the country's provinces ruled that the country's constitution requires it. Both sides agree the vote will be very tight, especially since Harper does not control a majority of the 308 seats in the House of Commons. The new prime minister's gay marriage pledge has pleased social conservatives unhappy the House voted 158-133 last June to allow same-sex marriages. Harper stressed he is committed to gay rights and promises to ensure the 3,000 gay marriages already in place would not be annulled.



Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper says he will let Parliament decide if the country's same-sex marriage law should be scrapped. (AP Photo/Jonathan Hayward, CP)

Gay group files lawsuit over domestic spying

WASHINGTON — A group dedicated to reversing the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy on gays in the military filed a federal lawsuit Monday, Feb. 6, to obtain information on the government's domestic spying program. A February 2005 protest at New York University was one of the events under government surveillance, NBC News reported last December. The protest, conducted near military recruiters, included a gay kiss-in. NBC reported that the law school's gay advocacy group, OUTlaw, was classified as "potentially violent" by the Pentagon. The lawsuit filed this week by the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network alleges that government agencies have "wrongfully withheld agency records" requested by the group. It also asks the court to "establish a date certain" by which time expedited processing of the original FOIA must take place and "order [the agencies] to disclose the requested records in their entirety."

Chicago Gay Games claims 8,000 participant signed up

CHICAGO — More than 8,000 participants from over 30 countries are committed to attending the Chicago Gay Games in July 2006, organizers said in a news release. "Our registration rates to date are ahead of expectations and we may exceed our forecast of 12,000 participating athletes and artists in Chicago next July," said Brian McGuinness, the group's executive director. Sailing and golf have already reached capacity. McGuinness stated that several other sports are close to full registration and will close in coming weeks. A competing international gay athletic competition, the Outgames in Montreal slated for two weeks after Gay Games, has claimed more than 9,000 participants, though no fee is required for registration.

Religious zealot convicted in Jerusalem Pride stabbing

JERUSALEM — Yishai Schlissel, 30, was convicted of stabbing three participants in last year's annual Gay Pride parade. "I came to murder on behalf of God. We can't have such abomination in the country," Schlissel told police during his interrogation, reported the Jerusalem Post. "He had no tolerance, not even minimal, toward the people who attended the parade because his worldview rejects any compromise. The accused was fully conscious and ready to pay a heavy personal price for his acts," the judges wrote in their ruling. The prosecutor has asked the court to impose a 10-year sentence.

Presbyterian minister faces church trial over gay marriages

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Rev. Jane Adams Spahr, a Presbyterian minister and a lesbian, faces a church trial March 2 for allegedly marrying two lesbian couples, the Presbyterian News Service reported. If convicted, Spahr could be removed from the ministry. The constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA) states that marriage is a covenant only between a man and a woman. "I'm just grateful that people will hear about our love and to move beyond stereotypes or mythology about who we are," Spahr said, according to the PNS report. The denomination's highest court ruled in 2000 that ministers may bless same-sex unions, but cannot confuse or equate them with marriage. The trial panel will consider four possible censures: rebuke, rebuke with rehabilitation, temporary removal from the church or permanent removal from church office or membership.

From staff and wire reports

out in houston

(Photos by Dalton DeHart)



Lesbian bishop and author Dr. **Yvette Flunder** leads a discussion on 'Developing and Maintaining Healthy Same Gender Loving Relationship' as part of events in recognition of Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. (Above) Flunder is joined by **Jeffrey Coleman**, **Deneen Robinson**, **Dennis Coleman** and **Alex Martinez**. (below) Members of Exclamation Dance Company at a Mukura Arts for AIDS event sponsored by AIDS Foundation Houston.



Loren Wilkerson unveils this year's Houston Pride logo at a recent logo unveiling and grand marshals election party.

Jay Poudrette, **Erin King**, **Shirley Knight**, **Melissa Ferrick** and **Vicky Ottmers** at the Houston Women's Winter Festival.



Annie Couch, **Ben Montalbano**, **Jim Kovach**, **Tim Martinez** and **Weldon Hickey** at the Krewe of Olympus Houston Captains' Reception.

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Forum

HOUSTON VOICE

FEBRUARY 10, 2006

PAGE 8

editorial

All the news straight enough to print

Editors at the Washington Post should stop 'straight-washing' stories when gay people are in the headlines.

By KEVIN NAFF

GAY NEWSPAPER READERS have become adept at reading between the lines. When someone is described as "flamboyant," "eccentric" or "a lifelong bachelor," we know what's being implied.

Whether straight readers get it is another question.

Readers of the Washington Post had better hone their gaydar skills, because in story after story, the newsgathering behemoth either ignores questions of sexual orientation or employs endless winks and nods to convey what would be better spelled out.

Take the Post's lengthy profile of figure skater Johnny Weir, which ran as the lead sports story on Feb. 7. The writer, Amy Shipley, describes Weir as eccentric and notes that some have nicknamed the Olympic medal contender as "Johnny Weird." She devotes extensive attention to Weir's costume choices, and references his penchant for hair dye, sequins, glitter and even chinchilla scarves.

The accompanying photo shows Weir, 21, on the ice sporting a costume with "one arm covered with fishnet and sequins, part of a silver-and-white cascade of glitter and sparkle designed to evoke his choice of music."

Weir's father is quoted as saying, "My child's not weird."

But the article never addresses the 800-pound gorilla in the room. Readers are left to wonder whether the "eccentric" Weir is gay. A profile like this should answer those questions, not raise them.

Of course, a news story reporting the outcome of one of Weir's competitions wouldn't include a reference to his sexual orientation, whatever it is. But in a lengthy personal profile, in which parents and colleagues are interviewed, the sexual orientation question is a glaring omission.

Unfortunately, this kind of "straight-washing" isn't limited to the Post's sports section.

WHEN RANDI MILLER WON A RECENT competition to record the "doors closing"

message for Metro, the Post published the obligatory profile story. The article contains no mention of family or significant other.

It does mention that when Miller won, she celebrated with friends. My gaydar went off, a Blade reporter made a couple of calls and quickly confirmed that Miller is, in fact, an out lesbian. You can read a more complete profile of her on page 40 in this week's Blade.

And the Post's straight-washing isn't confined to personality profiles.

Regular Blade readers know that the D.C. City Council passed — and Mayor Anthony Williams signed — a sweeping new domestic partnership bill that makes the city one of the most progressive in terms of extending rights to gay couples. Only Massachusetts, California, Connecticut, Hawaii and New Jersey offer comparable or greater D.P. benefits.

The Domestic Partnership Equality Act provides inheritance rights, child-support and alimony requirements, among other benefits and obligations, for opposite and same-sex domestic partners.

Williams signed the measure on Jan. 26 without fanfare in the privacy of his office. It's clear that Williams chose to avoid public attention to the D.P. bill because of a fear that conservatives in Congress will try to overturn it during the required 30-day legislative review period.

So is the Post in cahoots with Williams to keep the lid on news of the new law? The largest newspaper in the region has largely failed to report on the matter.

At a time when lawmakers in neighboring Maryland and Virginia are proposing constitutional amendments to ban gay marriage, D.C. is moving in a much more tolerant direction. But Post readers wouldn't know it.

ANOTHER STORY MAKING BLADE headlines recently is the apparent suicide of Sgt. Robert Schoonover of the D.C. Police Department's Fifth District. Schoonover was openly gay and co-founded the Gay Officer's Action League in the Washington area. Schoonover's death

merited just a one-sentence mention in a Post story about another officer who committed suicide while on duty.

Many newspapers have policies against reporting on suicides, so the initial failure to report Schoonover's death may appear insignificant. But a Blade report two weeks ago revealed credible allegations of homophobia, racism and sexism in the Fifth District that likely played a role in Schoonover's death. Again, Post readers wouldn't know about that.

These kinds of failures at the Post are not a recent phenomenon. The paper was woefully negligent in reporting on the myriad scandals that plagued the city's HIV/AIDS Administration, which eventually resulted in a City Council investigation and the firing by Mayor Williams of the agency's director.

Last year, the Post, along with other mainstream publications, was rightly criticized for ignoring the sexual orientation of several high-profile people in published obituaries, including Luther Vandross, Susan Sontag and Ismail Merchant.

It's time for mainstream media, including the Post, to grow up and take a more complete and honest approach to covering the news. If a reporter thinks that a medal-contending skater is gay, then ask him and report what he says.

When a famous gay person like Ismail Merchant dies, interview his longtime partner for the obituary. And if an openly gay police officer commits suicide amid charges of institutional homophobia in his district, then investigate it.

The very fact of an interview subject's sexual orientation should not be considered a private issue any more than a heterosexual person who is asked about having a spouse or children.

When straight athletes, stars and other public figures are profiled in the media, they are always asked — and always answer — questions about their wives, girlfriends and children. It's a frustrating double standard that those same kinds of questions are considered off limits to "eccentric" personalities.

@ Kevin Naff is managing editor of the Washington Blade and can be reached at knaff@washblade.com.



viewpoint CRAIG WASHINGTON



Coretta Scott King leaves behind a morally bankrupt nation sorely in need of a renewed fight for justice.

It's mourning in America for King

WHEN I SAW THE WORDS SLIDE ACROSS the bottom of my screen, I felt a sudden emptiness that filled me with dread. I began to fear not only for myself and my loved ones, but for the planet Coretta Scott King left behind, and the richest, most morally bankrupt country that happens to be my home.

All the names that I call myself, the masks and colors, the self-affirming drag I don everyday, peeled away. All that was left were two eyes staring into that bleak American morning.

Over the days and weeks to come, her praises will be trumpeted in notes as shrill as the highest note of our national anthem. And when the pageantry subsides, what will life be like in Mrs. King's wake?

Will those who shed a tear for her absence be transformed by her presence? Will the heads of state who recited rehearsed eulogies return to their offices and initiate anti-poverty programs in her honor?

Will the bigoted Atlanta church that hosted her funeral embrace its queer congregants after her body leaves its sanctuary? Will you use your pedestal of privilege as a platform to stand up for those who have less than you?

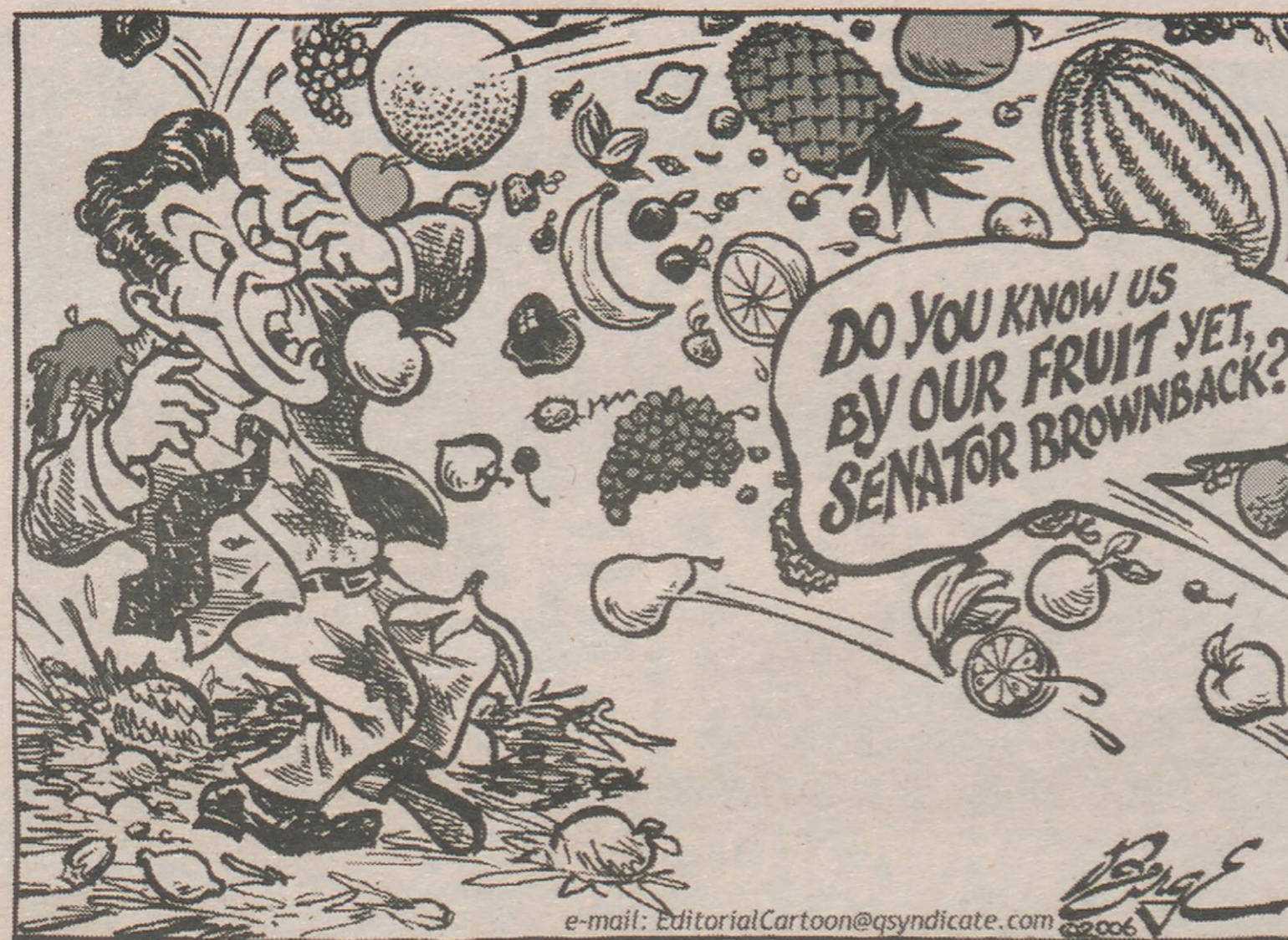
In a society that often chooses domination over cooperation and declares war as a means to resolve conflict, Coretta Scott

King offered an alternative state of being. She was no saint or superhero. She was no more or less than a natural woman who stood not behind but shoulder-to-shoulder with her natural man bonded by their common commitment to freedom and equality.

And when he was assassinated, she founded the King Center to continue the struggle for racial and economic justice and non-violent social change. In later years, she publicly drew parallels between sanctioned acts of homophobia and racism, which primarily due to the civil rights movement, had become less socially acceptable.

No doubt influenced by her close relationship with longtime assistant Lynn Cothren, himself a longtime gay activist, she challenged homophobia among black people and considered it a substantial barrier to AIDS prevention.

WHEN HER OWN SON, MARTIN LUTHER KING III, made prejudiced comments about gays, she welcomed local black gay and lesbian organizers to hold a summit at the King Center. I suspect the ironic unfolding of events closely following her departure has raised many a brow. Enough that the confirmation of Samuel Alito as a Supreme Court justice and President Bush's State of



the Union address shared the national stage with our mourning time.

Both these conservative pitbulls have introduced or supported policies that have undermined our efforts to fulfill the dream Mrs. King shared with her husband.

Then we heard that Mrs. King's funeral would be held on Feb. 7 (National Black AIDS Awareness Day) at New Birth Missionary Baptist Church, home of Atlanta's favorite mega pimp, Bishop Eddie Long.

The good bishop apparently fancies himself heir apparent to King, and last received the attention he sorely craved when he launched a "Re-Ignite the MLK Legacy March" in December 2004, which called for federal anti-gay marriage legislation. Mrs. King's daughter Bernice is an outspoken member of New Birth known for staunchly opposing gay rights.

We should not be surprised that, in death as in life, Mrs. King's presence summons the best and highlights the worst in us. I pray that this peculiar American mourning may bring not only inspiration, but agitation for a country that is divided,

distracted and depressively complacent.

AS WITH MANY DECEASED HEROES, Mrs. King's resplendence illuminates the potential for greatness and the desire to emulate excellence that is too often dormant.

May its purifying rays slice through the media-spun shadows and expose the demagogues who cut taxes to appease the wealthy and consider safety-net programs for the poor as "entitlement spending."

May its blinding glare force an apathetic majority to open their eyes and recognize the bigoted fundamentalists and conservative leaders who would lead us back to a McCarthy-esque future. Perhaps in death, Mrs. King may help awaken us to the dire state of this divided union and light the path back to our conscience and our outrage over "injustice anywhere."

@ Craig Washington is a long-time HIV and gay rights advocate in Atlanta. He can be reached at www.craigwerks.com.

THE Q

What are you and your same-sex partner doing this year for Valentine's Day?



My partner Wayne Brooks is performing in a 'Da Camera' concert at The Menil Collection. After the concert, we'll probably just head home for a glass of wine to celebrate our eighth Valentine's Day together.
RODNEY WATERS, 39
Houston Musician



What I'm going to do for my partner cannot be put in the paper.
RASHAD BURGESS, 30
Atlanta Student



Leon and I will use Valentine's Day as an opportunity to affirm our love and commitment. I will surprise him with something nice being delivered to him at his job and we will go out for a nice intimate dinner. As the evening continues, you can imagine what will happen next.
PAUL GUILLORY, 51
Houston Consultant



Going out to dinner without our kids.
SANDY LEIFESTE, 42
Houston Manager



A romantic dinner for three. Our daughter and we will be enjoying the day of love together, celebrating our family.
MELANIE HOGAN, 27
Houston Bartender

on the record

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"This picture is not as important as we make it. It's nothing unique. The only thing unique about it is they put it on the screen. And they make 'em cowboys. Howard Hughes and John Wayne wouldn't like it."

Actor **Tony Curtis**, 80, on "Brokeback Mountain," which is nominated for eight Oscars (Fox News, Feb. 5)

"I am so sorry, and I apologize for my nervousness. I would be absolutely horrified if my stage fright was misinterpreted as a lack of respect for the film, the topic and for the amazing filmmakers."

"Brokeback Mountain" star **Heath Ledger**, explaining his giggles while introducing the film at the Screen Actors Guild Awards last week (Los Angeles Times, Feb. 3)



"The Swedes are rather stand-offish."

German zoo official **Heike Kueck**, explaining why two female penguins from Sweden have been unable to seduce any of the penguins in two male-male couplings in the zoo (The Age, Feb. 9)

"One of the best films I ever saw. It's an incredibly moving movie. I wish that they would take this movie and force these assholes from the religious right, these perverts, these Taliban mother-fuckers, who want to sit there, and tell gay people they can't get married. ... It shows you how, when gays have to be closeted, how they ruin the lives of women, and families. Everyone goes through hell."

Talk show host **Howard Stern** on "Brokeback Mountain" ("The Howard Stern Show," Sirius radio, Feb. 7)

"Sexual orientation is a broad term. There are eight different sexual orientations, including pedophilia and bestiality. I think we'd be opening up Pandora's box and allowing judges to interpret what that means."

Virginia Del. **Mark L. Cole** (R-Fredericksburg), on an effort to ban workplace discrimination for state employees based on sexual orientation (Washington Post, Feb. 6)

"I'm a gay Mormon, which I think makes me an oxy-Mormon."

Actor **Steven Fales** in his one-man Off-Broadway show "Confessions of a Mormon Boy" (New York Times, Feb. 7)

"I oppose any legislation that would provide special rights for homosexuals. Instead of simply reaffirming God-given rights already guaranteed under the Constitution, ... this legislation would set aside a new category of Americans for special protection under the law. I do not believe in according special privileges."

Ohio Congressman **John Boehner**, elected by Republicans last month to be the House majority leader, on gay rights legislation (Republican Study Committee, Jan. 30)



"While homosexual activity is sin and impure, it is possible with God's help to change."

A pamphlet given to **Jamie Beiler**, a Kissimmee, Fla., lesbian, by her doctor's office, prompting her to file a complaint with the state health department (Express Gay News, Feb. 7)

"I can kiss Nandita Das twenty times but not THAT way."

Indian actress **Rehka**, one of the most famous of Bollywood, on why she turned down a role in the acclaimed film "Fire," a lesbian-themed movie that drew protests in conservative parts of India (SantaBanta.com, Feb. 7)



eclipse



Pole position

Danni Minogue, sister of gay icon Kylie Minogue, gets touchy-feely with a stripper at a nightclub.

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GAY HOUSTON NIGHTLIFE, ARTS & CULTURE

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FEBRUARY 10, 2006

Ageless love

Gay and lesbian couples cite benefits and drawbacks of May-December romances

By RYAN LEE

IN THE ALMOST 30 VALENTINE'S Days that passed since Houstonians Earl Kile and Leon Dodson became a couple, one of the chief sources of contention in their relationship is the computer's ever-expanding role in American life.

"He doesn't catch on too quickly about the computer," Kile says of Dodson. "Some of our biggest arguments have been about that."

The couple's disputes about the Internet and other tech-related issues are among the rare times when the 19-year age difference between Kile and Dodson becomes an issue in their relationship, they say.

It's important for gay men and lesbians involved in May-December romances — where there is at least a 10-year age difference between partners — to recognize and talk about the strengths and weaknesses each partner brings to the relationship, says John Ballew, an Atlanta psychotherapist and licensed counselor who focuses on gay mental health issues.

"When there's a difference in ages, there's sometimes a difference in power, but it's not all one-sided," Ballew says.

Just as a younger partner may have insecurities about not being as professionally established or wealthy as their mate, older partners may be intimidated by the opportunity and sexual esteem that accompanies youth, Ballew says.

Kile, 56, says he knows his technological superiority over Dodson, 75, doesn't make him the more valuable partner in their relationship.

"He's very competent in a lot of things that I am not," Kile says.

IN FACT, IT WAS DODSON'S COMPETENCE that first attracted Kile to him. A mutual friend introduced the men 29 years ago, when Kile was in his mid-20s and Dodson was in his 40s.

"I didn't have a lot of self-confidence at the time, and he was established, and had a business," Kile remembers. "He was everything I wasn't, but needed in my life. He kind of brought me out."

From growing up in a small town, to attending an even smaller college, to enrolling in the Army, Kile says he didn't explore his sexual orientation, and never really developed romantic connections with guys his age.

"I think I probably have always been drawn to older men," he says. "I think maybe the generation I grew up in was not very accepting of me, and I found I had more in common with older men."

In addition to helping Kile craft his identity as a gay man when he was younger, Dodson later patiently guided Kile through "a typical mid-life crisis" during his 40s, when he cashed in his savings to buy a new sports car.

Despite the guidance Dodson provided throughout their relationship, Kile says he was not searching for an easy leg-up, contrary to the preconceived notions some gay men and lesbians have about younger people who connect with older ones.

"All of our friends are generally supportive, but I think other people do have misconceptions about it — I wasn't looking for a father or anything like that,"

Kile says. "I think people have maybe mistaken that I depend on him too much for support, financially and otherwise."

Kile and Dodson now own a furniture finishing and antiques restoration business. Kile brings energy to the relationship, inspiring Dodson to run marathons and do other activities alongside him, according to the couple.

MOST SUCCESSFUL MAY-DECEMBER romances involve "a complementarity that involves the younger person bringing something to the relationship, and the older person bringing something different to the relationship," Ballew says.

Often, that manifests with the older partner representing stability, or even becoming a role model, and the younger partner bringing a freshness or new energy to the relationship. Still, it's especially hard for gay men to avoid the stereotypes of intergenerational unions, Ballew adds.

"The younger guys, sometimes there's the assumption that he's looking for a daddy or sugar-daddy, when most of the time that's not the case," he says. "And older guys don't want to be seen as a predator, or something undesirable like a 'Chicken Hawk.'"

Gay men and lesbians may be more open to entering a May-December relationship than heterosexuals, despite the "age-stratified community" that exists, Ballew says.

But like heterosexual May-December liaisons, a difference in professional status among gay and lesbian couples can at times be problematic, he says.

"If one person is at the stage of life where they're devoted to their career, and the other person is at a stage where

they're enjoying other parts of life, that could be an issue," Ballew says.

Miriam Carroll, a 76-year-old Atlanta resident, says being at different stages in life is the "hardest part" of her relationship with 55-year-old Vaughan Roundtree.

"The hardest part is waiting for her to retire, so we can take another look and see what's going on," Carroll says.

But beyond that, Carroll says she and Roundtree's 15-year relationship is free from dilemmas stemming from their 21-year age difference.

"Vaughan is just glad she's one year older than my youngest daughter," jokes Carroll, who adds that she was attracted to younger women when she moved to Atlanta because she didn't think many women her age would tolerate her busy social life and vocal activism.

"A lot of Southern gals could not put up with just me being out there," she says. "When we first started dating and I asked Vaughan why she wasn't afraid of me, she said the sweetest thing: 'You're the freest spirit I ever met and who the hell am I to squash you?'"

Carroll attributes the endurance of their relationship to such thinking.

"We leave each other alone, and we don't try to change each other," she says. "That's the key to our success."

DEKALB COUNTY, GA. RESIDENT EBONEE Bradford heard Carroll and Roundtree speak at a recent discussion panel entitled "She's Not My Mother, She's My Lover," at the lesbian-feminist bookstore Charis Books & More. Bradford says she saw many similarities between their union and her relationship with a woman 19 years her senior.

"She's kind of accepted who I am and has not tried to change me, and that's the key," says Bradford, an outgoing 39-year-old currently dating a 58-year-old woman who is "the total opposite of me."

Bradford's family members were surprised to learn that she was dating an older woman, but she says the relationship is more rewarding than past relationships with women her own age.

"To me, [older women] know a lot more — and I'm not speaking parental guidance," she says. "I'm talking about someone with experience, who's more seasoned, who knows a lot and can help lead me in that direction. I think there's a lot of suspicion and confusion around [May-December romances] from the community."

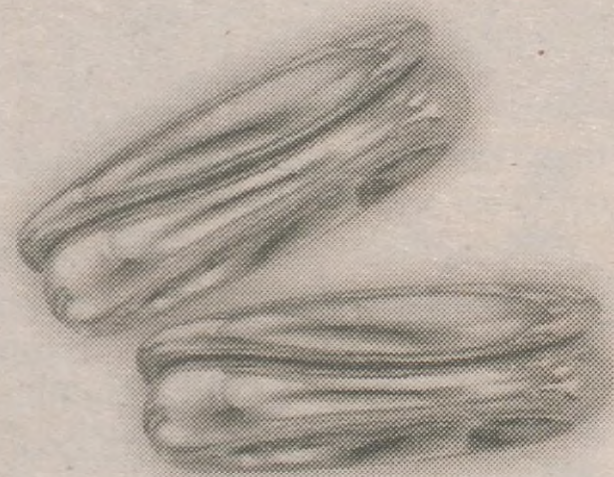
"People aren't familiar with what real love is, or what real connections mean," Bradford says.



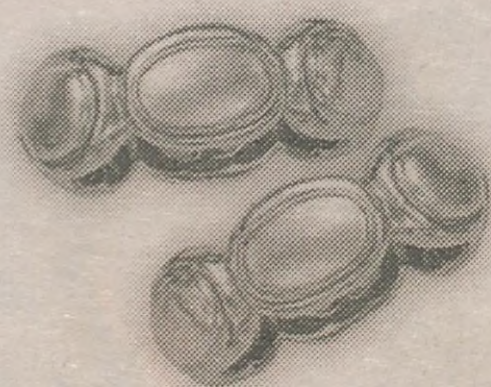
NIGHTLIFE: Party your hump off with all the upcoming events. Page 12

TRANS TV: 'Beautiful Daughters', an all transgender version of the 'Vagina Monologues', debuts on the gay MTV-owned Logo network. Page 14

For Adam
and Steve



For Anna
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nightlife JOHNNY HOOKS



There are so many events and parties
scheduled for this month, HotGG is
tired just from reporting on them.

Not enough days

HoVo on the go-go

ANOTHER WEEK SHOULD BE ADDED
to the calendar for this month because
the city is jammed packed with parties
and events.

South Beach and **Rich's** are both
featuring superstar DJs, **Grandmaster
Flash** plays the final **Jean-Michel
Basquiat** party at the Museum of Fine
Arts, Houston, gay-friendly entertainer
Kathy Griffin makes a stop here just
in time for Valentine's Day and those
Spoiled Boyz return with some more
fresh party ideas.

SATURDAY FEB. 11 IS SHAPING UP
to be bigger than New Year's Eve. First,
the final **Starbucks Music Series** at
the **MFAH** featuring The Beats of
Basquiat runs from 8 p.m. until 2 a.m.
with the legendary **Grandmaster
Flash**. Flash is doing a two-hour set
starting at 11 p.m. and this artsy party
also sees **Ceplus** and **House of Bad
Knives**, **DJ Jester**, **The Dum Dum
Crue**, visuals by **Microcinema
International** and **Kasumi**, a mid-
night showing of the movie "Sixteen
Candles" and a turntable exhibition
by **DJ Comp-1**.

You'll also find a cash bar and com-
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Lattes. Cost is \$40 with museum mem-
bership. Membership gets you in to
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line entrance and other perks.

DUELING DJ'S ARE ABOUT TO BEGIN.
In this corner we have SOBE's **Red
Party** on Saturday, Feb. 11 featuring **DJ
Chris Cox** of **Thunderpuss** and a live
performance by Aerial Artist **Neal
Everett**. Award winning resident **DJ
Jimmy Skinner** opens and Cox takes
to the decks around 11 p.m. Advance
VIP tickets are \$15 and can be found at
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information, call 713-529-SOBE or visit
www.southbeachthenightclub.com.

You'll be seeing red again as **Rich's**
host their version of a **Red Party**, pro-
duced by **The Texas Circuit Boyz**. It
will feature **Peter Rauhofer**, who
spins at The Roxy in New York City
and is considered the number one cir-
cuit DJ in the world. Word on the street
is that Rauhofer is Madonna's official
DJ darlings. This will be his only Texas
performance this year and first in
Houston.

HotGG fave **DJ Mark D** kicks the
evening off with **Rauhofer** taking over
from 10 p.m. till 5 a.m. and finally **DJ
Lydia Prim** comes on at dawn and will

spin until your feet fall off. For more
information, call 713-759-9606 or visit
www.richs-houston.com.

THE SPOILED BOYZ NATURALLY
chose this Saturday to host their
monthly event to completely wreck us I
guess! **Chas Soloman** and **BEYOND
Entertainment** present **GEM: The
Red Party Weekend After-Party** at
Opus, 412 Main St. at Prairie.

DJ Dawna Montel will be spinning
and of course red attire is encouraged.
Doors open at 3:30 a.m. Advance tickets
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Visit www.spoiledboyz.net for more
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IF YOU ARE STILL GOING ON
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ON VALENTINES DAY, PREPARE
yourself for the always sassy, if not
down right nasty **Kathy Griffin** per-
forming at the **Hobby Center's**
Sarafim Hall. Her Bravo channel reali-
ty show, "Kathy Griffin: My Life On
The D-List," is currently in production
for season two and with the recent
National Enquirer report about **Clay
Aiken** getting down with a former
Marine, expect Griffin to be merciless,
just like HotGG likes her. Tickets range
from \$32 to \$35 and can be purchased
by calling 713-629-3700 or visiting
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FINALLY ON THURSDAY, FEB. 16,
join celebrities from the LOGO
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the **MTV LOGO Network** event at the
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tonlogo@outblue.net](mailto:houstonlogo@outblue.net).

theater RICH ARENSCHIEDT



After a hiatus of almost 40 years from the stage at the Houston Grand Opera, a story of love and money returns.

Price of love

THE HOUSTON GRAND OPERA GIVES us Finland's star soprano Karita Mattila and Russian tenor Vladimir Galouzine as her amour in Puccini's "Manon Lescaut," an opera absent from its stage for almost 40 years.

The work is part of the trio of Puccini's first series of operas and marks the moment when he began to achieve prominence as a composer. All of his biggest hits, "La Boheme," "Tosca" and "Madama Butterfly," followed "Manon."

There are flashes of genius here but the dramatic and musical trajectory that Puccini is famous for is only partly present in "Manon." You can often wonder where exactly is this play going.

Based on the beloved period work by the Abbé Prevost, "Manon" is the story of a woman named Manon, who finds herself in the wrong place at the wrong time. She is convent bound, escorted by her brother Lescaut, wonderfully played and sung by opera favorite Teddy Tahu Rhodes, who is supposed to be protecting her virtue.

Instead, his momentary inattention allows his beguiling sister to fall in love with a penniless young Chevalier while simultaneously avoiding a kidnapping attempt by the wealthy Geronte (baritone Dale Travis) who, in this production resembles Bela Lagosi on a bad day. Manon flees with her new love, eventually tired of living in blissful poverty and subsequently moves in to an apartment (stunningly wrought by designer Frank Philipp Schlossman) paid for by the old geezer.

Manon, of course vacillates between wealth and love and is imprisoned for infidelity with the young Chevalier. The pair are deported to the "deserts of Louisiana" (geography wasn't the composer's best subject) and, following a 20 minute duet, she dies of dehydration.

Tenor Vladimir Galouzine had some difficulty as the work opened, but as the evening progressed he rose to the occasion with some wonderful moments in subsequent acts. He's got that rich vocal characteristic of Russian tenors—many sound like baritones with a three octave range.

Katrina Mattila possesses incredible vocal facility and produces amazing sounds regardless of what she is required to do



Manon (Karita Mattila) chooses wealth over love. (Photo by Jim Caldwell/HGO)

physically by sometimes misguided director Oliver Tambosi. Directorially the physical aspects of this "Manon" don't serve vocal moments, short changing the entire work.

Great voices are seldom contained within perfectly paired singers. In this case, the tenor is literally overshadowed by his beloved. This is only exacerbated by a two-foot period hairdo, which emphasizes her height.

The Act II bed chamber scene has both singers in such close proximity to one another that they just appear ungainly. These two great singers are just not the best match, and the stage direction provided does little to minimize the situation. It was reminiscent of a production of Puccini's last opera, "Turandot" where a diminutive tenor had to embrace a rather substantial soprano, eliciting giggles from the audience.

IN A RARE OPERA MISSTEP, THIS production of "Manon" suffers at the hands of its director. He often includes superfluous elements that are downright distracting. As the piece opens there's so much tacky stuff on stage it looks like leftovers from a story ballet.

Act III's prison scene is filled with women being branded stage right (complete with red-hot tongs and fake smoke from their seared flesh) while Manon and Des Grieux sing a final farewell duet. None of it makes any sense.

I had to ask myself, "Why aren't those women screaming?" Oh, because that would interrupt the music. But what music?

All I remembered was women getting their clothes ripped off and tortured. We get the point. The excess was disgusting, detrimental to the music and unnecessary.

The final act was musically amazing. Both singers at the top of their form in spite of the fact that they were required to negotiate a "Farscape" set riddled with boulders. Kudos for Katrina the contortionist, who produced such musicality while virtually hanging upside down.

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i MORE INFO

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television BRIAN MOYLAN



Logo's 'Beautiful Daughters' brings an all-trans version of the 'Vagina Monologues' to TV, but ultimately misses the mark.

V for very tame

EVERYONE KNOWS THAT VALENTINE'S Day is about hearts, flowers, candy, expensive gifts for that special person in your life and assorted other expressions of romantic love. These days, though, Valentine's Day is also about vaginas.

V-Day started in 1998 as an outgrowth of Eve Ensler's award-winning play "The Vagina Monologues" when productions of the work were held across the country on Feb. 14 to raise money to help combat violence against women. Since then, the organization (visit www.vday.org for more information) has raised more than \$25 million.

Last year there were 1,116 productions of the show to mark the event. The show's first all-transgender rendition began in 2004, including a new monologue written by Ensler about male-to-female transsexuals' relationships with their vaginas.

The documentary "Beautiful Daughters," which debuts on Logo on Saturday, Feb. 11, at 9 p.m., follows the creation of the monologue through Ensler's interviews with different trans women, the casting and directing of the play and parts of the performance itself.

IT WILL BE EASY FOR THE AUDIENCE to titter and joke about a group of trans women putting on the play, but really this artistic vehicle is the perfect conflation of emotion, biology and psychology to convey the complex feelings and procedures associated with gender reassignment.

Unfortunately, director Josh Aronson drops the ball and focuses instead on the lives of some of the women in the production. Most prominent is Calpernia Addams, the aspiring actress who was the girlfriend of Army Private Barry Winchell, who was murdered in 1999 by fellow soldiers.

Addams, the inspiration for the Showtime movie "Soldier's Girl," serves as the co-director of the V-Day project and is a transgender media darling, appearing in this and other documentaries.

More fascinating, however are Valerie Spencer, a spirited African-American mother who lives with and cares for her



'Beautiful Daughters' subjects Valerie Spencer (left) and Leslie Townsend get a little too personal in Logo's new documentary. (Photo courtesy of Logo)

elderly mother; Lynn Conway, a successful computer scientist who lives in "stealth" and is married to a man; and Leslie Townsend, a gorgeous woman who worked as a performer and escort and used that money to become a successful real estate developer.

Townsend, who hasn't publicly acknowledged her "past" — both professionally and biologically — until now, is a fascinating profile on her own, but the program really misses the mark as a whole. As gay men and lesbians (which is Logo's audience as well) we have been not only exposed to many media representations of transsexuals but also exposed to them in real life.

What would be moving and entertaining is footage from the performance and, specifically, the transgender monologue. Using "The Vagina Monologues" to really get into the heads and hearts of these women and understand their complex relationships to their physical bodies would be welcome. Thousands of transgender documentaries can't accomplish that feat, but one well-written creative product (like Ensler's work) could do it easily.

FOR THOSE LOOKING FOR A SOMETHING even heavier on Valentine's Day, the PBS documentary series "Frontline" premieres its special "The Meth Epidemic." In D.C., it airs on WETA on Tuesday, Feb. 14, at 9 p.m.

The show painstakingly discusses the history and impact of crystal methamphetamine on the country, including its origins and how it gets into the country.

What the program lacks, however, is any substantive discussion of how "tina" has affected the gay community and its rising HIV transmission rates.

i MORE INFO

'Beautiful Daughters'
Saturday, Feb. 11, 9 p.m.
Logo

'Frontline: The Meth Epidemic'
Tuesday, Feb. 14, 9 p.m.
WETA

If it's gay and on the air, it's at
www.houstonvoice.com
TV LISTINGS

dish There's a Fine Line Between Telling the Truth and Talking Trash

Workin' the pole

Kylie's sister parties with the ladies, Tommy Lee drinks with a transsexual and 'L Word' looks for writers

What a rare opportunity for inclusion! Diva-worshipping queens and hot-to-trot lesbians can all come together for a little bit of gossip. Let's just say that gay icon **KYLIE MINOGUE** has a sister who enjoys Georgia O'Keefe paintings, if you get my drift.

DANNII MINOGUE, a gay icon in her own right, especially in the U.K., was partying with a lesbian twist according to Britain's trashy News of the World.

Minogue the younger was hanging out at the Puss In Boots nightclub in London at the end of September 2005.

Minogue entered the club with a female friend and two guys, presumably for an evening of erotic dancing entertainment. By night's end, the singer was getting touchy-feely with a female pole dancer named Jupiter — possibly named after her planetary-sized breasts into which the singer reportedly thrust her face.

Dannii is no stranger to the pole-dancing scene herself. She took lessons in the art at the same club in 2002 when preparing for the video of her hit song, "Put the Needle On It."

The United Kingdom's club licensing rules dictate strip joints must have an in-house security camera that is on at all times, and bouncers have to monitor them. It took a few months, but that's how the paper got the tape.

Trans drinking contest

For as much as rocker **TOMMY LEE** is familiar with fake breasts, you would think he wouldn't mind hooking up with a transsexual gal.

Lee — best known as the drummer from the '80s metal band Mötley Crüe, as well as being the sometime husband of

mega-built, twice breast-implanted, KFC-hating "actress" **PAMELA ANDERSON** — headed out to the Ultra Supper Club while partying with friends in Toronto at the beginning of February according to the New York Post's Page Six.

While at the club, Lee called over what he thought would be his bodacious babe du jour. Sitting on his lap, she started drinking tequila with him, which she reportedly did with relish. After supposedly gagging on his own tequila shot, the lap lady called Lee a not-very-polite-term that rhymes with wussy.

Perhaps trying to recover his macho cool, Lee apologized and said he had



Dannii Minogue, little sister to Kylie, now has her very own lesbian-themed film footage. (Photo by Jennifer Graylock/AP)

been drinking tequila since early that morning.

One of the locals decided to drop the bomb and told Lee's bodyguard the lady-in-question was a transsexual named Nina Arsenault.

"That's when he took a good, long look at me," Arsenault told Canada's National Post.

Quickly after this revelation, Lee got up and announced he was heading out for a smoke. When Arsenault followed, a bodyguard stepped in between her and the musician.

"You're not coming with us," he said, and that was the end of Lee's dabbling with women who can drink him under the table.

Your inner writer

How many times have you sat at home and wanted to rewrite a scene or create something entirely new for your favorite TV characters?

Now Showtime's **"THE L WORD"** allows you to do just that! If you're tired of watching the same old lesbian drama, try spicing it up with inspiration from your own personal lesbian drama.

Showtime is making a contest out of "fan fiction," a growing internet phenomenon where creative diehards go online and write their own scripts for TV shows.

Head to www.lwordfanisode.com and register for the contest. Each week through March 31, fans can write, read, rate and discuss short scenes created by one another. The online community votes which scene is the best for that week, and the process will repeat each week, scene building on scene, until an entire episode is complete.

The episode will be one of 12 in the show's fourth season, which Showtime just announced will air next year.



Jennifer Beals

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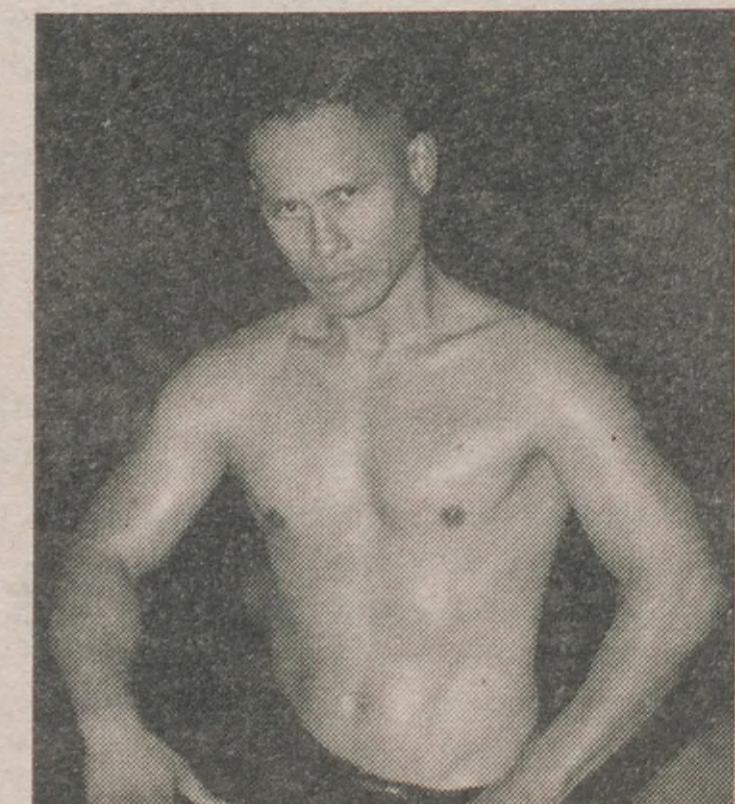
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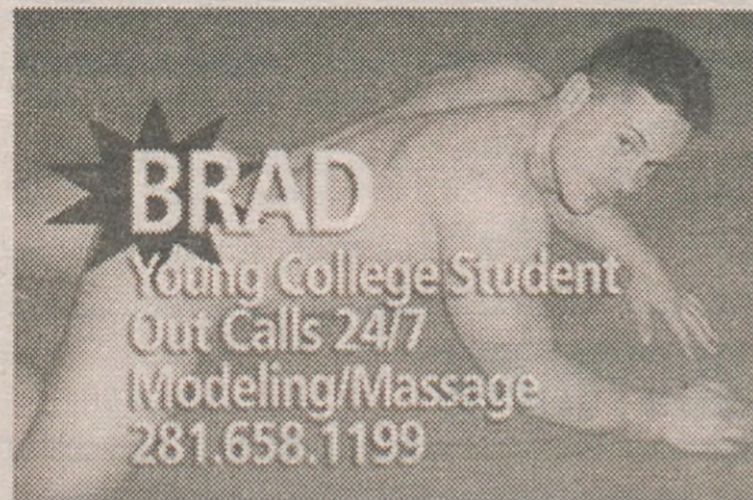
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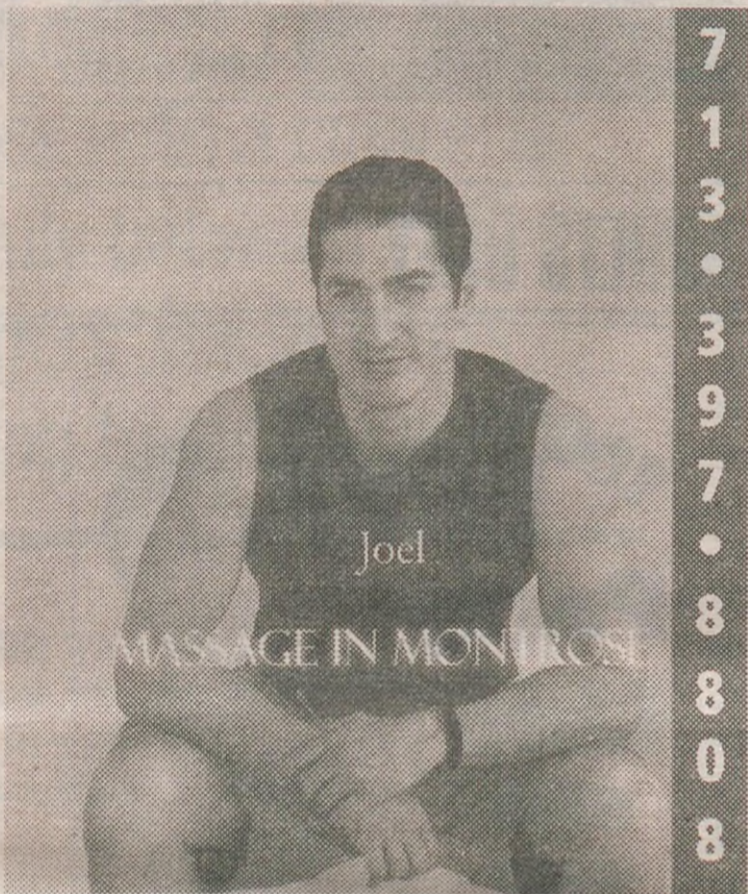


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Dykes To Watch Out For by Alison Bechdel



math anxiety

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I'LL HELP YOU, RAF.

YOU GET TOO CARRIED AWAY.

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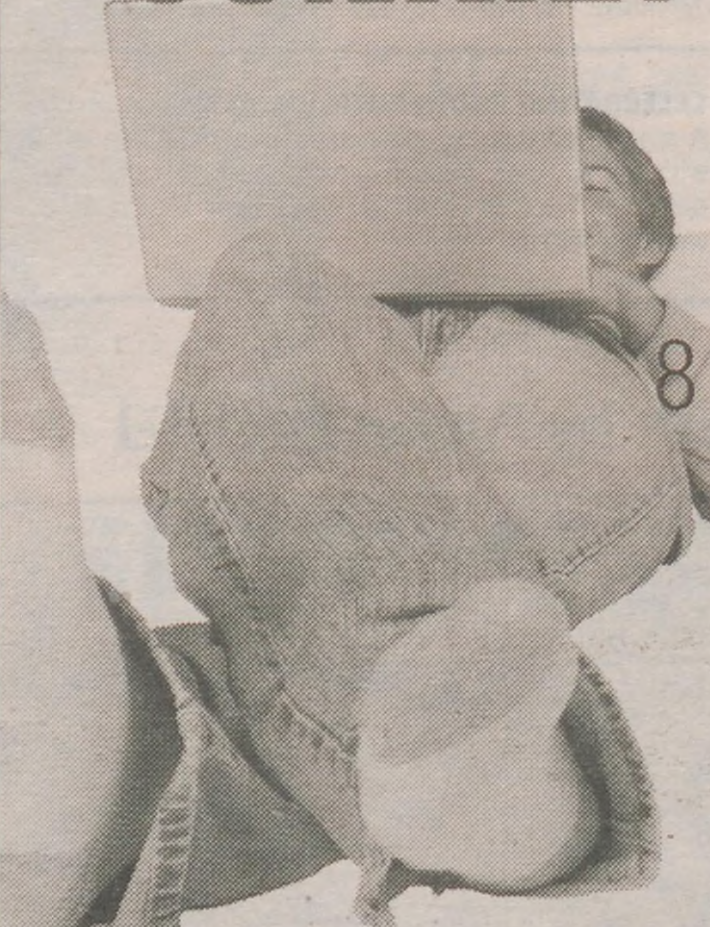
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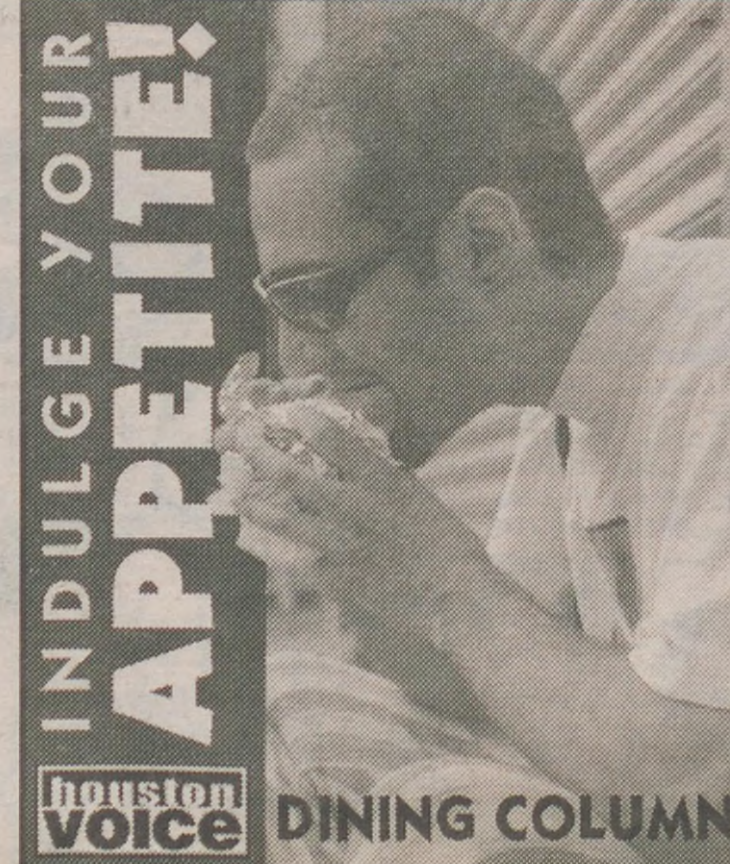
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bitch session

Neg queens who laugh at poz guys usually do so looking through a bottomless cocktail glass with a cigarette firmly between their fingers. Guess who's going to outlive you?

MAYBE WEARING GLASSES MAKES ME look like a geek, but at least I saw that bean in your teeth that let me know not to kiss a man who doesn't brush his teeth.

TO THE "LOOK AT THE BRIGHT SIDE"
Bitch: I know HIV-positive people who have made it to retirement and are grandfathers or even great-grandfathers.

I'VE BEEN HIV-POSITIVE FOR MORE than 20 years, but I "don't have to worry about saving for retirement"? I not only plan on retiring, I plan on outliving insensitive jerks like you.

ARE ELTON JOHN AND DAVID FURNISH concerned their U.K. marriage isn't recognized in most of the USA? Will this lead Elton and others to refuse to perform in places that won't respect his marriage? It's no different than Ray Charles refusing to perform in Southern states with Jim Crow laws.

WHAT IS THIS ABOUT BILL CLINTON sending a congratulatory video to Elton John for his wedding? Isn't this the same stupid hillbilly who signed the Defense of Marriage Act?

TO THE MAN WHO WANTED TO KNOW why lesbians never submit to "Bitch Session": It's because all you so-called men do all the bitching all the time.

HONEY, YOU QUEENS ARE A MESS! I work in a cube farm and I can't stop laughing at these bitches so I am always disturbing the breeders with my loud laughter. Life is too dull not to find an outlet to bitch!

Bitch Boy responds: A cube farm? I always wondered where they grew those office monstrosities!

MONOGAMOUS QUEER IS AN OXMORON.

WHY DO MORE THAN 75 PERCENT OF female conversations consist of "yeah," "I'm like," "you guys," and my personal favorite, "This is so cool!"?

WHY DO I GET SO BORED READING other people's bitches but get delighted when one of my own gets published? I could care less about the bickering of 40-somethings in the midst of mid-life crisis.

FOR THE UNEDUCATED INDIVIDUAL who said Western society's homophobia is because of the Torah. Many Jews, including me, are deeply offended by such a ridiculous statement.

Bitch Boy responds: People who can be "deeply offended" by anything printed in something called "Bitch Session" probably shouldn't be reading it.

KANSAS IS THE BUTT-HOLE OF America where holier-than-thou rednecks have nothing better to do but damn gay people to hell and use the government to force their beliefs on everyone.

CANADA IS ALL ABOUT WHAT YOU can do there that's illegal in the United States.

I'VE READ SOMEWHERE THAT ABOUT one out of four gay people in big cities is HIV positive. I've slept with more than four times that many guys and none has mentioned their status. What does that say about moral values?

Bitch Boy responds: What does it say about your math skills?

YOU MAY THINK YOU ARE "MS. Thing," but you really are no more than a "bar-maid."

I WILL GIVE YOU ALL THE PICS YOU want! Keep in mind it will cost you more than those that are already publicly displayed.

YOU'RE SO OFFENDED THAT A SKIN-ny guy like me would be attracted to you, but why else are you spending hours a day in the gym? Were you really thinking those steroids would make you healthier?

TO THE GUY TRIPPIN ABOUT MADONNA stealing every song: Lay off the E, honey. She is the one who pushed the envelope for 20 some years and paved the way for other female artists.

I TOLD MY BOYFRIEND THAT I WOULD do anything to keep him, and he believed me. Then he messed up, and I dumped his ass.

THERE IS AN OVERABUNDANCE OF lard among lesbians. Haven't my fat-ass sisters ever heard of deal-a-meal?

YEP, I DUMPED YOU BECAUSE YOU smoke.

TO THE GUY COMPLAINING THERE are no average gay men — all are either fat, unattractive or beyond gods — does that make you the only average gay man? If so, then yes, you will not find any others.

TO THE GUY WHO SAID GAY MEN ARE either fat, unattractive or "beyond gods": No, we aren't. Those are just the ones you notice.

TINA, TINA, TINA. I'M SO SICK OF hearing about it. I'm not for it, I'm not against it; it's just none of my business what other people choose to do. So dammit guys stop talking about it so much in "Bitch Session"!

I LOVE BI GUYS. THEY THROW 10 TOES to God faster than any self-proclaimed bottom out there. I guess their women have a problem wearing a strap-on?

DEAR "DOWN-LOW MEN": THE PROB-lem is not that you are on the "D.L." The problem is that you are a low-down dirty liar.

YOU'VE WAITED TABLES FOR 16 years, but do you honestly see it as a professional position?

TO THE IGNORANT BITCH WHO COM-plained about "male prostitutes": It's an

honest way to make a living and you have no right to look down on them. A "gay professional" is any hard-working gay man who doesn't cheat or steal to make a living!

JUST BECAUSE I DON'T UNDERSTAND why you pimp out your boyfriend so you can go get laid is not a judgment; it's just a question.

THERE IS NO SUCH FRIGGIN THING AS bisexual; that's just plain greedy!

WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH ASIAN GAY men not wanting to admit their background? If I ask you where you're from, I mean your ethnic background.

PEOPLE WHO POST ONLINE LOOKING for sex. The correct word is "discreet," not "discrete." Ask your boyfriend to get you a dictionary!

Bitch Boy responds: Thanks for that refresher; we offer it about once a year to our readers.

HOW COME I NEVER SEE ANY PHYSI-cally handicapped gay men?

HE IS SHORT, OLD, STOCKY AND A whole '80s look, but he works at the Louis Vuitton boutique? Oh, he is a babe!

FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVEN'T figured it out, my being gay means I am a man sexually attracted to men. Why then should I want some twink who looks and acts like one of the popular girls in middle school?

SO CALLED "PRO-LIFERS" MUST BE the most misguided people on earth. If you're against abortion, don't have one! If someone else gets pregnant, what she chooses to do about it is none of your business.

HAT ON BACKWARDS, EVERY OTHER word "dude," at the gym six days a week posing and blabbing about your hot new Jeep and leaving in your flip-flops and low-rise jeans: Hello, you're over 35, you still rent, you party every weekend. Grow up already and be a man.

Editors' note: These are real bitches, sent in by real readers, about gay life's little annoyances, and the big ones, too. Got a bitch? Call 1-800-858-8088 or e-mail: bitch@houstonvoice.com



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