

HIV TESTS: Montrose Clinic's stunning Pride results. **Page 3**



NO BULLIES Coleman adds amendment to bill. **Page 3**



BUSH'S CLOSET: Paper outs Bush appointee. **Page 7**



Michael Leshner and Michael Stark, of Toronto, became the first gay couple to get married in Canada after an Ontario court ruled that the government could not exclude gays from marriage. The Canadian House of Commons this week approved a gay marriage bill. (Photo by Fred Chartrand/AP)

Canadian House OKs gay marriage

Spanish Parliament: 'We do.'

By ELIZABETH WEILL-GREENBERG

Canada's House of Commons voted Tuesday night, 158 to 133, to approve legislation allowing gay couples to marry, and on Thursday, Spain's Parliament gave its approval to same-sex marriage.

Gay rights advocates in Canada expressed confidence that their country will become the next nation in the world to legalize same-sex marriage, as early as next week. The legislation now moves to the

Senate, which is an appointed body with no veto authority, where the measure is expected to pass easily.

Gay marriage is currently authorized in eight provinces and one territory of Canada, partially the result of court rulings; it remains in legal limbo in two additional jurisdictions.

"Our parliamentarians have said that the Canadian thing to do is to end discrimination and to extend full citizenship to lesbian and gay people," said Alex Munter, spokesperson for Canadians for Equal Marriage. "We call on the Senate of Canada to

Please see **MARRIAGE** on Page 6



The crowd for Houston's Pride Parade last Saturday night has been estimated at more than 200,000, a record. (Photo by Dalton DeHart)

200,000+ watched the Pride Parade

Pride Houston organizers say the parade turnout was a record, and the festival surpassed expectations

By BINNIE FISHER

Organizers of Pride rallies, festivals and parades worldwide reported record turnouts last weekend, and Houston was no exception.

Pride Houston President Nick Brines said police working security at the June 25 parade unofficially estimated the crowd to be in excess of 200,000, an all-time city record.

"It was the biggest crowd I've ever seen," Brines said.

Walking the parade route, Brines said, he noticed that the crowd was thick from the beginning at Westheimer and Woodhead to the end at Westheimer and Whitney.

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Local life
Judy Reeves and pal, Jimmy Carper, are keepers of Houston's gay past
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dish
From the Strangerettes to an appearance by Sophie B. Hawkins, Pride Houston in living color
PAGE 14



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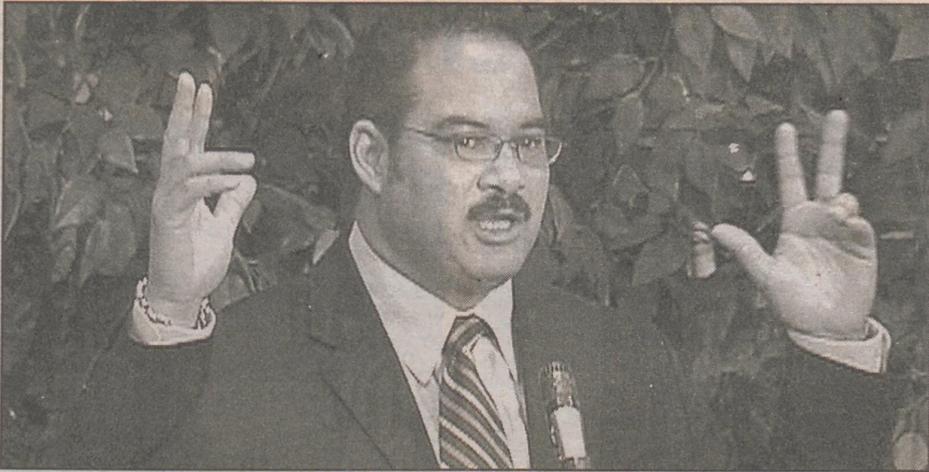
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local news briefs



State Rep. Garnet Coleman (D-Houston) successfully added an amendment to a school finance bill that would call for a study regarding bullying and discrimination in Texas schools.

Coleman champions safe schools in last-minute amendment

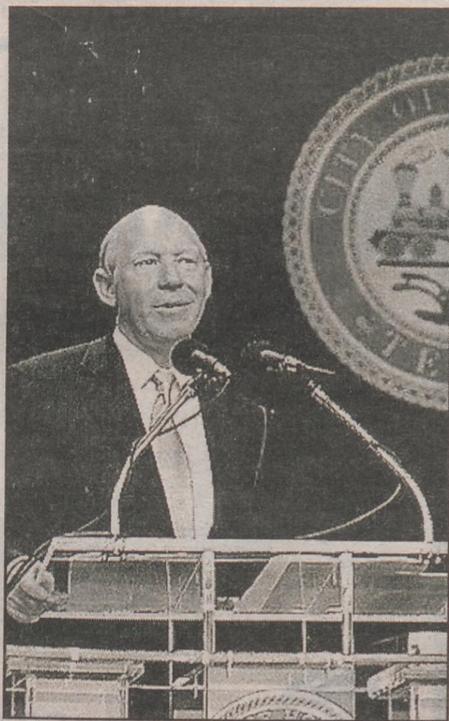
Texas Rep. Garnet Coleman (D-Houston) successfully tacked an amendment onto a school finance bill that would call for a study of bullying and discrimination in Texas schools. The amendment specifically calls for the Texas Education Agency to collect data on the reasons for and frequency of school bullying and discrimination. "Governor Perry has called us back to Austin to fix some of the fundamental ways we fund and educate our Texas youth," Coleman said. "During this important debate, we must remember that every Texas student has the right to a public education. When students are discriminated against in school, and the school does nothing about it, we are failing them in a very fundamental way. This amendment will give lawmakers the necessary information to better understand and address the issue of bullying and discrimination against LGBT youth in our public schools." A separate bill filed by Coleman, House Bill 60, would go a step further. The Dignity for All Students Act would protect students from being harassed and bullied based on ethnicity, color, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, religion or national origin.

LOGO is calling all Gay Republicans

LOGO, the new gay channel from MTV Networks, has issued a casting call for gay Republicans to be featured in a documentary now being planned. Gay Republicans interested in telling their stories are invited to send an e-mail to producers explaining how their political beliefs are affecting their lives and relationships. LOGO is especially interested in hearing from persons who are: reaching a life milestone this summer, working on a political campaign that will be decided soon, dating a liberal, experiencing discrimination from other gays or coming out to friends as a Republican. Interested persons should e-mail their name, address, phone numbers and times when they can be reached to logogop@mtvstaff.com.

Town hall meeting called regarding homeless youth in Montrose

A group of Montrose residents has called a town hall meeting at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday to address the problem of homeless teens in the area. The group is encouraging anyone who lives or works in the area to attend the meeting and talk with Mayor Bill White about the problem. A flyer circulated by the group says, "We all share in the problems of litter, prostitution, drugs and worse. Now is your chance to do something about it." The flyer mentions social service agencies that work with the youth and says, "Stop the enablers. Stop them from giving out food with no toilets or trash pick up. Stop them from giving out clothes and showers but no shelter. Stop



Mayor Bill White will participate in a town hall meeting next week to address the problem of homeless youth in Montrose.

them from promoting loitering at all hours of the day. These kids need shelter, structure and comprehensive help, not just a band aid for one night." The flyer indicates the group is looking for ideas and not complaints. The meeting is planned at the West Gray Multi-Purpose Center, 1475 West Gray.

From staff and wire reports

local news

HIV tests at festival yield surprising results

A new oral swab test for HIV encouraged 65 people to be tested at the Pride Festival

By BINNIE FISHER

Never having conducted HIV testing at a Pride event before, staff at the Montrose Clinic wasn't sure what to expect when a booth was set up this year at the Houston Pride Festival.

Would anyone show up at the booth to be tested at an event where the primary focus was to celebrate Pride, listen to music and have fun?

"We hoped for 50," said the clinic's Director of Education Eric Roland. "We were swamped."

By the end of the festival at 8 p.m. Saturday evening, Roland said, 65 individuals had visited the booth to be tested for HIV.

While the number of tests conducted was better than anticipated, Roland said, it was the outcome of those 65 tests that astounded the clinic's staff.

"Out of 65, there were no positives for the day," Roland said. "It was very surprising."

Roland added that he is glad to have good news to report regarding the clinic's work when, "We usually have negative information to report around HIV."

Clinic Executive Director Katy Caldwell said she is encouraged not only by the outcome of the testing but also by the fact that so many people took advantage of the service.

"The willingness of people to take advantage of our free testing is encouraging," she said, "especially at such a visible and popular event. It demonstrates the importance of organizations such as the Montrose Clinic providing alternative testing sites in places that at-risk communities

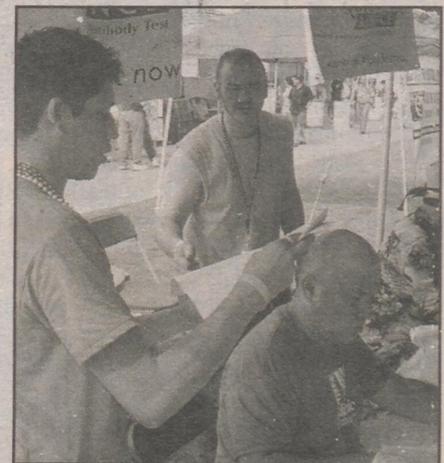
congregate, not just at the doctor's or clinic's offices."

A couple of factors may have worked to the advantage of clinic staff on Saturday.

For the first time, Roland said, clinic staff used the new OraQuick oral swab method of testing.

"We just trained on it Tuesday," he said.

Not only is the new method painless and as accurate as other forms of testing, the results are available in a matter of minutes rather than weeks with previous



Montrose Clinic staff who conducted HIV tests Saturday at the Houston Pride Festival included (from left) Bob Lopez, Carlos Escobar and Jack Marsh.

methods that required drawn blood.

No more finger pricks

The earlier version of the rapid test that required a finger prick but also returned results in minutes has doubled the number of people willing to be tested at outreach locations such as bars and bathhouses. Roland said he hopes the new oral method will be a further enticement.

The other factor that contributed to the turnout was privacy. Roland said the Buyer's Club, located on Yoakum near the clinic's booth, offered its facilities for testing and consultation.

"Fred Walters was very generous to let us use his space," he said.

Although the majority of the 65 who were tested probably fall into the high-risk category, Roland said, "It was pretty much a mixed crowd of people."

Demographics on those who were tested are still being compiled, but clinic staff reported that 40 percent of those tested were young gay and bisexual men, the group considered to be at highest risk of contracting HIV.

Caldwell said that news is gratifying. "We are encouraged that the message of safer sex and caring for one's health is reaching the next generation of at-risk youth," she said.

Sonna Alton, the clinic's director of community relations, said the testing that took place at the festival on Saturday is an example of how peer pressure can work in a positive way.

"There was a lot of peer support," she said. "If you saw your friend get tested, then you wanted to get tested, too. Also, the fun atmosphere of the festival lessened the anxiety."

Roland said that by the end of the summer, the clinic will have moved exclusively to using the oral swab at outreach sites.

"We're waiting on CDC (Centers for Disease Control) approval before we move to the oral swabs," he said.

MORE INFO

Montrose Clinic
215 Westheimer
713-830-3000
www.montroseclinic.org

local news

Pride jumped to 'the next level' in 2005

PRIDE, continued from Page 1

"The other thing that was amazing to see was how early people lined up along the parade route," he said.

When he saw lawn chairs and coolers already lining Westheimer at 4 p.m. Saturday for a parade that started at 8:45, Brines said he had a feeling, "It was going to be huge. People really staked out their space early."

There were other early indications. By Saturday, Pride Houston had received 2.4 million hits on its Web site for the month of June. Jack Valinski, the group's executive director, said 300,000 of those hits came on the day of the parade and festival. Total hits for the year topped 5 million, Valinski said.

"It's just amazing," he said. "I would never have dreamed it."

The estimate of 200,000 parade watchers exceeds the 2004 estimates of 150,000.

Although Pride Houston has staged festivals on parade day in the past, those events usually consisted mainly of booths that showcased organizations and gay-friendly businesses.

In 2005, the group decided to offer a real festival, with booths as well as nationally known entertainers such as singer Sophie B. Hawkins. The Hollyfield Foundation donated enough funds for most non-profit organizations to have a

free booth at the event.

"We budgeted for 1,800 (attendees)," Brines said. "Anything above and beyond that would be revenue."

When they tallied up the gate receipts for the festival, he said, organizers had another pleasant surprise in store.

"We had 2,600 paid admissions," he said.

At \$10 per person, Brines said the admissions and sponsorships more than paid for the festival.

Festival on track for 2006

While this year's festival was a prototype, Brines said, "I think we're on track to build it."

This year, Brines said, Pride organizers touched on a question that is haunting Pride groups nationwide, whether to move from the gay neighborhood for areas that are more conducive to a festival and parade.

For next year, he said, Pride Houston decided to set that question aside.

"It looks like we're going to stay in the same location next year," Brines said.

Valinski said beyond that, the organization must do some in-depth soul searching.

"Our challenge for the festival is finding room to do it," he said, adding that by moving to another venue Pride Houston could solve a major problem, parking.

Parade broadcast nationally

In another first this year, Valinski said, the

parade was broadcast live on Pacifica Radio and carried live on Q-Television. He said the network sent a crew to cover the event.

"The feedback I heard is that we were the most organized parade," he said. "We're very proud of our community."

He said the crew from Q-Television seemed very impressed with the high-kicking, drill-team performance of the Strangerettes, who came from Dallas to participate in the Houston parade. The Dallas parade is in September.

"I watched them as they were watching the Strangerettes perform, and they were just amazed," Valinski said.

Adding Houston's attendance to the numbers worldwide, organizers said, it's obvious that Pride 2005 was a hit.

News organizations from around the world reported astounding attendance numbers: 1.8 in Sao Paulo, Brazil; a million in both San Francisco and Toronto; 800,000 in Rio de Janeiro; 700,000 in Paris; a half-million in New York City; and 450,000 in Chicago.

As she walked the parade route, Houston City Controller Annise Parker said the crowd seemed larger than in years past. She said she can't speak for gays in Europe and other countries, but for those in the United States, Parker said, she has an idea why the Pride turnouts were so impressive.

"I think many of us in the U.S. feel like we're under assault by the right wing,"



Singer Sophie B. Hawkins was among the national entertainers who performed at the Houston Pride Festival. (Photo by Dalton DeHart)

she said.

Organizers in Houston said they believe the large turnout could be a sign that gays and lesbians are galvanized in the wake of marriage advancements in some countries, setbacks in others and harsh rhetoric from conservative politicians.

"I think it's empowering, big-time," said parade chair Lynn Sixkiller. "It certainly makes me want to do it again."

Valinski added, "This is the one day when we all get together. I just hope we can translate it into people getting out and voting."

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national news briefs

Ore. Senate panel OKs civil union, non-discrimination bill

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — Gay couples would get benefits similar to those of marriage and gain protection against discrimination in jobs, housing and public accommodations under a bill approved by the Senate Rules Committee. The Senate was expected to vote on the measure this week in the first vote in either chamber of the legislature on creating a civil union law giving same-sex partners virtually all the legal rights available under marriage laws. Such rights could include inheritance benefits, like entitlement to pensions or to other property when a partner dies, and the right to make medical decisions for a partner. The bill also adds sexual orientation to a law that forbids discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations based on race, color, religion and several other factors. Sen. Kate Brown (D-Portland) chief sponsor of the bill and Senate majority leader, believes the measure can pass in the Senate, where it has bipartisan support. But the bill's chances aren't considered good in the Republican-run House.



Oregon Sen. **Kate Brown** (D-Portland) hopes a bill to provide civil unions for gay partners will now pass the state Senate after approval by a committee. (File photo by Rick Bowmer/AP)

Mo. suit over gay-themed T-shirts dropped after school district lifts ban

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — The American Civil Liberties Union dropped its lawsuit last week against a southwest Missouri school district after it lifted its ban on T-shirts with messages on gay rights. The suit was filed in April after LaStaysha Myers, a 15-year-old heterosexual girl at Webb City High School, was twice punished for wearing shirts with messages of support for gays. The Webb City R-7 School District previously filed a motion saying it intended to end its policy against such clothing. The ACLU said it got written intent this week that the district would follow through with its earlier statement and students sporting such tees would not be disciplined. "All I ever wanted was to get my school to stop silencing me and allow all students to express their opinions," Myers said.

Wash. committee investigating mayor over gay chat room meets

SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — A panel that will decide whether Mayor James West violated city policies in his dealings with young men he met in a gay chat room plans to read tens of thousands of pages of e-mail. Retired Spokane County Superior Court Judge Harold "Pete" Clarke will chair the panel appointed by City Attorney Mike Connelly. The committee, which met for an organizational session last week, will report to the City Council and deputy mayor. Last month, the Spokesman-Review began publishing articles alleging West had used his city-owned computer to enter a gay Internet chat room and offer City Hall jobs and perks to men he met there. The newspaper also reported allegations that West sexually abused two boys decades ago. West has also been accused of sexually harassing an openly gay man he recommended for a position on the city's Human Rights Commission. The mayor, who has denied sexually abusing boys or any wrongdoing in his internship programs but acknowledged having affairs with adult men, has refused calls to step down.

Penn State formally offering same-sex benefits to employees

STATE COLLEGE, Pa. (AP) — Penn State University is now formally offering health benefits to workers with same-sex partners, adding one of Pennsylvania's largest employers to the dozens of colleges and universities around the country offering such benefits. The change went into effect in January. Faculty and staff were told of the new benefits then, though the school didn't issue a news release. About two dozen workers have signed up for the benefits, school spokesperson Tysen Kendig said last week. Penn State is the seventh-largest employer in Pennsylvania, with nearly 39,000 people, just over half of them full-time, at its 24 campuses. "We make changes to the benefits package all the time, and don't issue a statement or news release on it," Kendig said. "We're dealing with such a small number of people who have signed up to receive the benefits."

Attorney general defends 1913 Mass. marriage law

BOSTON (AP) — State Attorney General Thomas Reilly, defending a 1913 state law prohibiting out-of-state couples from marrying in Massachusetts if their weddings are prohibited in their home states, argues in court documents that the nearly century-old law is not being used to discriminate against same-sex couples. The 1913 law has been hotly debated since May 17, 2004, when Massachusetts became the first state in the country to allow gay marriages. Gay-rights advocates have argued that the 1913 law is unconstitutional and has been unfairly applied to out-of-state same-sex couples since Massachusetts began allowing gay couples to marry here. The law is being challenged in a lawsuit filed on behalf of eight same-sex couples from six other states who wanted to marry in Massachusetts but were denied. Reilly argues that the law is being applied evenly to heterosexual and gay couples.

From staff and wire reports

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national news

Spanish Parliament approves gay marriage

TENN. TEEN, continued from Page 1

give speedy passage to this legislation.”

To those who opposed the bill, Munter said, “No one minority is diminished when another minority is acknowledged.”

The controversial legislation was almost derailed several times. Earlier this month the Liberal Party survived four no confidence votes based on an unrelated financial scandal implicating party leaders. Passage has depended upon leadership from the governing Liberal Party and its allies in the National Democratic Party and the Bloc Quebecois.

Canadian newspapers reported Tuesday that a Liberal cabinet minister, Joe Comuzzi, resigned just hours before the landmark vote because of his opposition to the same-sex marriage bill.

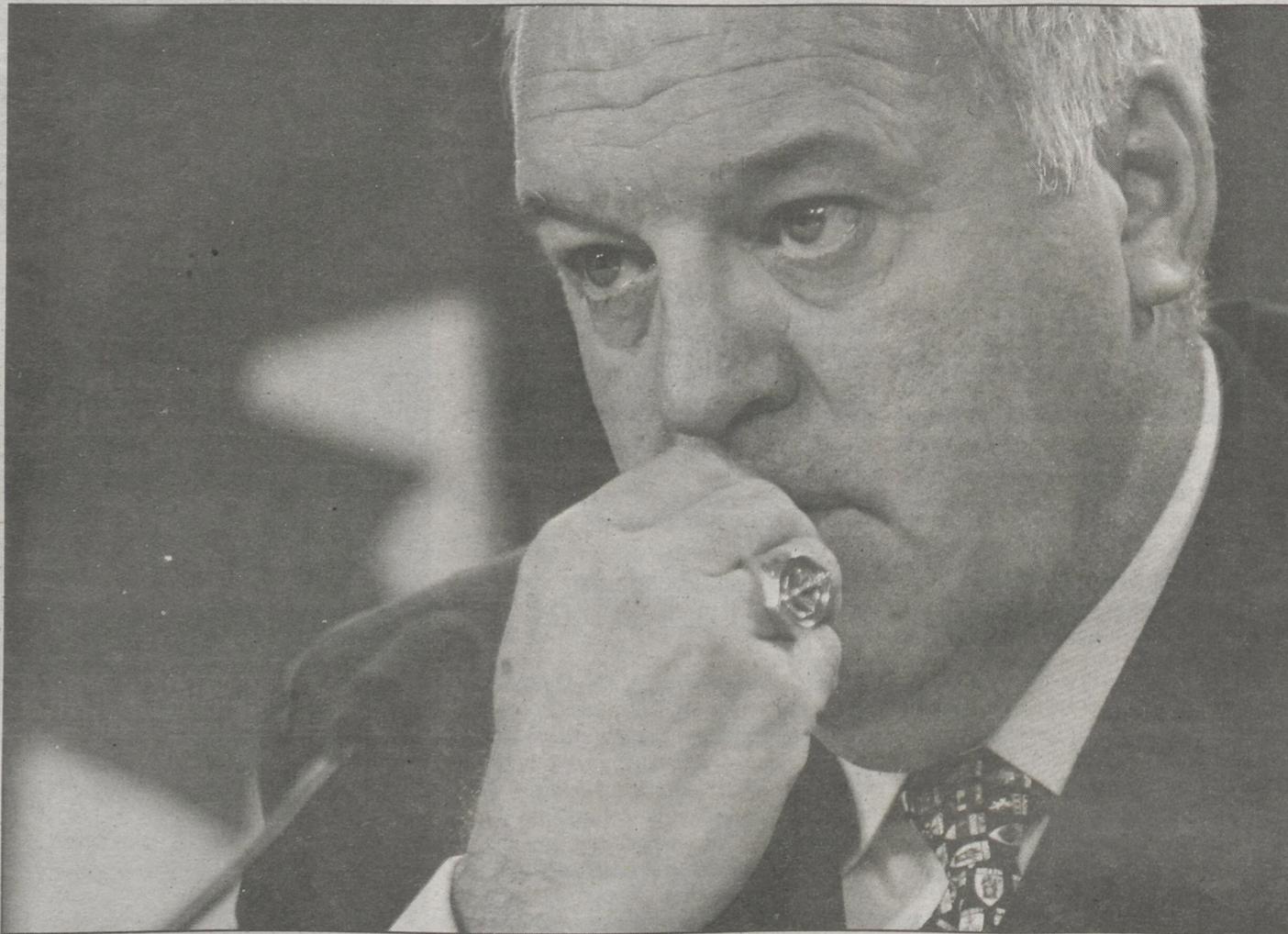
Spain takes the plunge

Spain's Senate defeated a same-sex marriage bill last week after it previously passed the lower house. That action did not, however, derail the legislation, which is supported by the governing Socialist party.

The final bill passed Thursday in the lower house of Parliament. The measure makes marriage gender-neutral, opening up the institution to gay couples in a way even more dramatic than in the Netherlands and Belgium, which created a separate marital institution for same-sex couples.

Gay married couples in Belgium and the Netherlands still lack some second-parent adoption rights afforded to opposite-sex married couples, but in Spain all such rights will be equal.

A Catholic group in Spain this week delivered a petition containing 600,000 signatures to lawmakers protesting the gay



Canadian MP Pat O'Brien left the Liberal Party because he was upset his party was pushing through legislation to legalize gay marriage. Canada's House of Commons voted this week to do just that. (Photo by Tom Hanson/AP)

marriage law and calling for a referendum on the issue, according to a report in the Guardian newspaper.

“We are asking for a referendum, and then we'll know what Spaniards really want,” Luis Carbonel, president of a group that is part of the Catholic forum, told the Guardian.

Effect south of border?

Activists are still debating what the Canadian action will mean in the United States.

Because Canada does not have residency requirements for marriage, American

gay couples have been marrying in parts of Canada since 2003, according to Lara Schwartz, senior counsel at the Human Rights Campaign.

As some nations march toward marriage equality, the United States is moving in the opposite direction, according to gay rights groups.

Twenty-one states are considering constitutional amendments to ban gay marriage, according to HRC. In April, Kansas voters approved a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage and civil unions, and Texans will vote on a similar proposal in the November 8

election.

Gays can marry in Massachusetts if they are residents of the state, and civil unions are available to gay couples in Vermont and, soon, in Connecticut. Domestic partnerships carrying some form of legal recognition are open to gays in New Jersey, Hawaii and California, where the Assembly narrowly failed to pass marriage legislation last month.

Schwartz said she hopes that Canada will soften Americans' opposition and show that “the sky is not going to fall” if gays marry.

 MORE INFO

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national news

Newspaper outs Bush nominee to Commerce post

By LOU CHIBBARO JR.

The White House and the gay GOP group Log Cabin Republicans have so far remained mum on a report by the New York Daily News that President Bush has named a gay man to become an assistant secretary of commerce and head of an international trade office.

In a June 24 column, Daily News columnists George Rush and Joanna Molloy reported that Israel "Izzy" Hernandez, 35, a White House adviser and personal aide to Bush during his term as Texas governor, came out to the president last year.

"One source tells us Hernandez waited until Bush was sworn in for a second term to formally tell him he is gay," the columnists reported. "By then, says a source, he'd brought his partner to several official events."

A White House spokesperson did not return Voice calls.

During his first term as president, Bush appointed two openly gay men to head the White House AIDS office and named a gay foreign service officer as U.S. ambassador to Romania. The president also appointed several gay members to the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS and named a New York gay Republican activist and businessman to the National Commission on Fine Arts.

The gay appointments stopped as the 2004 presidential election approached, and

Bush's chief White House political adviser, Karl Rove, helped orchestrate Bush's support for a constitutional ban on gay marriage as part of a strategy to woo evangelical Christian voters.

If the Daily News report is true, Hernandez, a Texas native, becomes the first known gay appointee to a major post in the Bush administration since the election. He also becomes the administration's first known gay Latino appointee.

Second Rove deputy to face gay questions

Prior to being nominated for the assistant secretary's post, Hernandez worked from 2001 to May 2005 in the White House as an assistant to Rove as well as a deputy assistant to the president.

Hernandez is the second Rove deputy whose sexual orientation has become the subject of interest in the media.

Ken Mehlman, who worked as Rove's No. 2 assistant at the White House and managed Bush's re-election campaign, has refused to answer questions about his sexual orientation. Mehlman now chairs the Republican National Committee.

From 1995 to 1997, Hernandez served as a personal aide to then Gov. George W. Bush in Austin, Texas, according to a questionnaire Hernandez submitted to the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science



Israel Hernandez

& Transportation, which is overseeing his confirmation.

According to news reports, he worked as Bush's travel aide during Bush's 2000 presidential campaign and often provided the candidate with breath mints before speaking engagements, earning him the nickname "Altoid Boy" from the future president.

In his June 16 confirmation hearing, Hernandez told members of the Senate commerce panel that his sister, mother and father were present at the hearing but made no mention of a domestic partner.

In the questionnaire submitted to the committee in advance of his testimony, he listed his residence as a Falls Church, Va.,

townhouse that, according to tax records, is owned and occupied by another man, Albert A. Gallegos.

A male voice on the telephone answering machine of the home identified himself as "Al," but messages left seeking comment about Hernandez's nomination were not returned by Voice deadline.

Log Cabin stays mum

Christopher Barron, a spokesperson for Log Cabin Republicans, said the group had no comment on reports about Hernandez's sexual orientation. In the past, Barron has said Log Cabin opposes the practice of "outing" public officials or other people.

Daily News columnists Rush and Molloy did not return a call seeking comment about their basis for claiming Hernandez was gay or "openly gay."

Hernandez received a bachelor's degree in political science and philosophy at the University of Texas at Austin in 1992 and a master's degree in public administration from Texas A&M's George Bush School of Government in 1999, he stated on the questionnaire.

Gay Republican activist Carl Schmid said Hernandez accompanied Bush during the 2000 campaign when Bush met with a dozen gay Republican leaders at his campaign office in Austin. The gay attendees became known as the "Austin 12."

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A preserved past means fewer steps in the future

Jimmy Carper and Judy Reeves are passionate about preserving the history of gay Houston

By DAWN RORIE

As the AIDS epidemic ripped at the heart of gay Houston in the late '80s and '90s, one scene played out repeatedly: gay men succumbed to the disease and their family members swooped in, went through their belongings, giving away or disposing of pictures, clothing, books, and many items that they saw as having little value.

As these individual items disappeared, Houston began losing something much larger – its collective gay history.

Ricky Hurt (Rainbo de Klown) was the first person to notice the trend. Other cultures had ways of preserving their history. Why were gays and lesbians in Houston allowing theirs to slip away? "Where's our museum?" he asked.

According to friends and activists Judy Reeves and Jimmy Carper, that question was the catalyst for the creation of the Gulf Coast Archive and Museum (GCAM).

Age and the AIDS epidemic were robbing Houston of many of its gay activists and role models, and with them went their stories and colorful histories. Reeves, Carper and eleven others founded the Museum in 1999 in order to house a wide variety of items and documents that are essential to preserving the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender history of Houston.

Reeves is the organization's president, while Carper serves as vice-president.

In an age when many younger people are completely uneducated about the impact of the AIDS epidemic and are clueless about what occurred at the Stonewall Riots, preserving this history is more important than ever.

GCAM holds a diverse assortment of items that have been donated by individuals and organizations – from books and CDs to pride parade trinkets and matchbooks from long-extinct bars.

Visitors to the GCAM Web site at www.gcam.org can browse through more than 12,000 photographs in the online archive. The GCAM library boasts more than 25,000 books, including an extensive erotica collection. A variety of gay-themed publications is also available.

Houston's first lesbian newsletter

"We even have a complete bound set of



Activists Jimmy Carper and Judy Reeves are doing their best to preserve Houston's gay and lesbian past. (Photo by Dalton DeHart.)

The Ladder," boasts Carper. Eager to educate, he and Reeves are happy to explain the reason for their excitement.

The Ladder, circulated in the 1950's, was the first monthly lesbian-themed newsletter. This seems unimpressive, Carper explains, until one realizes that this was before the days of word processors and e-mail. The mimeographed pages were cranked out by hand and secretly passed from person to person.

"You can open the pages of any of these newsletters and find that the problems that the women were having in the fifties are the same problems women are having today," says Reeves.

The collection of clothing is impressive, containing costumes worn by drag divas, an extensive assortment of leather and zany getups donated by the Krewe of Olympus.

Browsing through the collection turns up T-shirts from gay events and organiza-

tions spanning back many years. GCAM has T-shirts and logos for Houston's annual Pride Parade for every year since the first celebration in 1978.

"We have items that are colorful and interesting to look at. We have a lot more than books and magazines," says Reeves.

Since its inception, funding and space has been an issue for GCAM. Over the years, the collection has moved from a warehouse to its current location in a one-bedroom apartment at 1609 West Main Street. Individuals and organizations have kept the Museum alive through monthly donations and sporadic fundraisers.

Although Gay Pride month has sparked renewed interest in gay history, the number of visitors to the Museum has been low. As a result, the archive will soon be moved into a climate-controlled storage facility.

This is not the end of GCAM, however. Thanks to assistance from the Houston GLBT Community Center and Tim Brookover, GCAM is developing an increased presence at the center, marked by glass-encased displays of artwork from the collection.

Rather than exhibiting a large number of items in one location, GCAM's central focus will now be constructing mini-exhibits in a variety of places in order to educate the public.

Taking GCAM to the people

"If the people don't come to us, we have to go to the people!" says Carper.

"And we don't mind going to the people!" adds Reeves.

GCAM has also started a video history project. With a grant from the Hollyfield Foundation to purchase high-quality video equipment, GCAM will be working in conjunction with the GLBT Community center to videotape live oral histories of various activists and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender leaders in Houston.

The next taping, on August 21, will feature John Kellet of the Kellet Foundation. Audience members are encouraged to attend the tapings.

In addition to GCAM, Carper and Reeves are active in other gay and lesbian organizations.

For more than seventeen years, Carper has hosted "After Hours" on 90.1 KPFT-FM. The show, which airs from 1 to 4 a.m. each Saturday morning, is an eclectic mix of music, talk, and interviews. Carper also volunteers with the Imperial Court of Houston (ICOH), which raises money for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender organizations.

When she is not working as "the brains of GCAM," Reeves volunteers at Theatre Suburbia, where she directs at least one play a season. Many of the plays Reeves directs are gay-themed, and the theater often does benefit performances for gay and lesbian charity organizations.

She is also involved with ICOH. In fact, she and Carper have paired up for duet performances at several ICOH fundraisers.

"I have a face for radio," Carper jokes about being in the spotlight. "I love doing radio, but being on stage is scary."

While they see working with other organizations as important, GCAM remains a passion for Reeves and Carper. Regardless of what the future holds for gay politics and culture, they see the importance of documenting every step of the way and preserving that history for generations to come.

"When you have a history, you don't have to recreate yourself every generation," explains Carper.

EDITORIAL & PRODUCTION

Executive Editor CHRIS CRAIN

Editor BINNIE FISHER

Correspondents DYANA BAGBY, LOU CHIBBARO, JR., MUBARAK DAHIR, LAURA DOUGLAS-BROWN, MIKE FLEMING, MATTHEW HENNIE, JOHNNY HOOKS, PHIL LAPADULA, RYAN LEE, BRIAN MOYLAN, KEVIN NAFF, YUSEF NAJAFI, KEN SAIN, RHONDA SMITH, STEVE WEINSTEIN, ANDY ZEFFER

Contributors DON MAINES, DAWN RORIE, ELLA TYLER, J.A. CHAPMAN AND RICH ARENSCHIELDT

Photographers DALTON DEHART,

KIMBERLY THOMPSON

Production Manager JAMES NEAL

Webmaster ARAM VARTIAN

SALES & ADMINISTRATION

General Manager

JASON WILSON

jwilson@houstonvoice.com

Sales Executive

MICHAEL B. CANNON

mcannon@houstonvoice.com

Classified Sales / Office Administrator

JOHNNY HOOKS

jhooks@houstonvoice.com

National Advertising Representative

Rivendell Media • 212-242-6863



Publisher- WINDOW MEDIA LLC

President- WILLIAM WAYBOURN

Editorial Director- CHRIS CRAIN

Corporate Controller- BARNETTE HOLSTON

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500 Lovett Blvd., Suite 200
Houston, Texas 77006
(713) 529-8490
Fax: (713) 529-9531
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editorial

Chicken Little won't stop HIV

Scare tactics from the left won't prevent HIV

anymore than scare tactics from the right.

It's time to tell the truth about this disease.

By CHRIS CRAIN

p

RESIDENT BUSH AND his conservative colleagues think the best way to prevent the spread of HIV is to preach "abstinence only until marriage."

He's right, of course, that chastity until marriage is a surefire way to stop HIV in its tracks, if it bore any relation to the real world outside of Sunday school.

Unfortunately, the alternative offered for years by HIV/AIDS organizations is every bit as impractical. You could call their strategy "scared into using condoms every time until death."

For years now, we've heard from "alarmed" HIV prevention workers about the AIDS "crisis" that demands that everyone, and gay men in particular, be scared by the prospect of a sure and wretched death into using a condom every single time they ever have sex for the rest of their lives.

Once upon a time, that story was true. Many of us who came out in the late 1980s and early '90s remember the scores of gay men dying every week from AIDS, and the fear that instilled in us to practice "safe sex" every time. Some gay men even wore condoms during oral sex, as unlikely as that sounds today.

But happily, those dire prospects are no longer what HIV-negative gay men face as we make decisions about sex, and pretending otherwise has about as much credibility with us as President Bush's exhortation to "Just Say No" until marriage — which, by the way, he opposes for us anyway.

In fact, the unwillingness or inability of HIV/AIDS groups to dream up more realistic prevention strategies can be blamed for opening the door to the "abstinence only" crowd, who can rightly point out that the same-old "safer sex" message has failed for years to slow the rate of new HIV transmissions in the U.S.

BUT WOE UNTO THOSE HERETICS who dare to question the Chicken Littles of HIV prevention, who you better

believe are ready to pounce on any description of HIV that isn't utterly dark and desperate, and any prevention strategy that dares to stray from the party line of "scared into using a condom every time until death."

Just ask Andrew Sullivan. The gay political pundit and author penned a provocative column, entitled "Still here, so sorry," in the June 21 issue of *Advocate* magazine. In it, he apologized — with tongue firmly planted in cheek — for not dying earlier from HIV, thereby doing his part to keep HIV-negative gay men sufficiently "scared into using a condom every time until death."

To make matters worse, wrote Sullivan, his 12 years living with HIV haven't been that wretchedly horrible, and he's even found ways to use the lessons of HIV to make his life — and even his sex! — richer and more meaningful. Blasphemy!

The reaction was swift and depressingly predictable, and nowhere more so than from Michelangelo Signorile, the gossip columnist turned ACT UP activist turned columnist again. In an angry screed of an open letter, Signorile plays right into Sullivan's hands, proving the latter's point about how intellectually bankrupt old-school HIV prevention is.

Outraged that anyone with HIV should dare to live happily or take away positive lessons from the disease, Signorile slams Sullivan for supposedly "extolling the virtues of having HIV and the wonders of being positive."

"I must say," writes Signorile, "very effective. It was enough to make any young gay man declare, 'I gotta go get some of that hot poz seed!'"

Does this ring a bell? Can't you just hear Church Lady scolding us that handing out condoms will only make young men declare, "I gotta go have some hot sex with some girl!"

Putting aside Signorile's lengthy armchair psychoanalysis of Sullivan — sum it up as, "I am jealous of Andrew Sullivan" — the message from Signorile is as out of touch with the reality of gay sex in the 21st century as President Bush's abstinence mantra.

Telling the truth about HIV — that while incurable it is treatable through

drugs whose side effects are becoming less and less problematic — will no more make young gay men seek out HIV as handing out condoms in schools will encourage young people to copulate like rabbits.

Hearing lefties like Signorile exaggerate drug side effects and statistics on HIV transmission and AIDS deaths is really no different than hearing righties exaggerate the failure rate of condoms and the supposed emotional devastation from premarital sex.

The Taliban on both ends of the spectrum just don't get it, for their own very different reasons: People act more responsibly when they're told the truth.

AS MUCH AS IT MIGHT ENDANGER alarmist AIDS grant proposals, Sullivan is right that, "HIV is fast becoming another diabetes," and it's about time that prevention strategies adapt to that not-so-new reality.

Rather losing all credibility by trying to scare people into abstinence until marriage or safe sex until death, HIV prevention ought to arm people with useful information from which they can make their own judgment about what risks to take.

If you're at a high risk for diabetes, your doctor wouldn't dream of scaring you with warnings like, "Don't you ever eat another chocolate cake in your life!" Or, "Don't even think about skipping a cardiovascular workout for even one week!"

Instead, people with diabetes risk are told the general steps they can take to lower their risk of acquiring the disease: eat healthier, exercise, and so on.

A new HIV prevention strategy would take a similar approach.

Gay men, who are by nature at higher risk of getting HIV, can take certain steps to lower their risk: explore safer sexual activity like oral sex and frottage; stick to being a top in anal sex if you do not want to wear a condom; remember to ask your sex partner if he has been recently tested for HIV before making a decision about condom use; limit bareback sex to monogamous relationships after you and your partner have been tested.

Gay men who already have HIV should also be hearing a message grounded in reality: explore non-risky sexual activity like oral sex and frottage; stick to being a bottom in anal sex if you do not want to wear a condom; if you really want to bareback as a top, make sure your partner knows your HIV status.

Will messages like these absolutely eliminate the risk of HIV? Of course not. But only completely unrealistic strategies — like "abstinence only until marriage" or "scared into using a condom until death" — can make that claim. And neither is working.

@ Chris Crain is executive editor of the *Houston Voice* and can be reached at ccrain@houstonvoice.com.



viewpoint STATE REPS. GARNET COLEMAN & JESSICA FARRAR

An open letter to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Texans regarding the resignation of LGRL's Randall Ellis

Courage under fire

IF THERE IS ONE THING THAT STAYS the same in politics, it is that everything changes. Much to our disappointment, another change arose right after session when Randall Ellis of the Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas announced he is stepping down from his position as the organization's executive director and chief lobbyist.

As two of the progressive leaders in the Texas House, we often sought Randall's guidance on issues related to the LGBT community. While we know that Randall's presence will be sorely missed by each of us, we also know that Randall will be missed by many in our local community and at the capitol.

The past two legislative sessions have been extremely difficult for us in Austin. Real American values of acceptance and inclusion have been pushed aside for a radical agenda based on intolerance.

Many legislators are scared to vote against the radical right agenda for fear of political backlash. Trampling on the rights of LGBT individuals has been at the forefront of the radical right political agenda.

Obviously, it takes a very skilled person to navigate through the Capitol during these tough times. Over the past two and half years, through two extremely difficult sessions and four special sessions of the Texas Legislature, Randall has displayed remarkable leadership. At a time when minority and progressive issues are under relentless attack by the radical right, Randall has been focused, shrewd and level headed in his approach to educating and lobbying lawmakers on LGBT issues. This session we had two huge battles.

First, we had to take a stand against the proposed constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage. Next, we had to work to keep the ban on LGBT foster parents out of the CPS bill. What you read in the newspaper did not tell the whole story.

What you did not hear about was the late night meetings that we had with other legislators and Randall to talk strategy. What you did not see was Randall running from office to office tracking down legislators to help communicate strategy.

WE DID HAVE SUCCESS. THE GAY marriage amendment barely passed out of the House. We had a strategy session before the bill came to the floor in order to educate legislators on how to talk to their constituencies about the amendment. Our goal was to lessen the fear of political backlash from the religious right.

Our strategy worked, and we were amazed to see members either walking the vote or voting a white light (present but not voting). Given the political climate of our legislature, this was a success that we attribute to Randall's ability to educate.

One of the most remarkable traits about Randall is his ability to reach out to everyone. We have a great admiration for his ability to reach out to those who disagreed with him. Even people who would stand up and say hateful things on the House floor, when they met Randall, they inquired about his well being and said "Hello" to him in the halls.

A friendly demeanor and the ability to clearly articulate a vision of better state for all Texans has allowed Randall to

develop the relationships and trust on both sides of the aisle. It takes courage and a strong sense of self to be able to shake hands with someone who completely misunderstands your entire being.

Randall has worked non-stop to represent the entire Texas LGBT community by combining an understanding of the issues and the process with a deep passion for fairness and equality. The visibility of the entire LGBT community has risen at the capitol as coalitions were built and hundreds of Texans turned out to voice opposi-

tion to the attacks upon LGBT Texans to form and protect their families.

It truly has been a pleasure to work with Randall in his capacity as the Executive Director of LGRL. It is important the LGBT community maintain the momentum and political savvy that Randall has brought to Texas politics. We wish him the best in his future endeavors and look forward to working with him in the future.

@ State Reps. Garnet Coleman and Jessica Farrar are both Democrats from Houston.

Gay political establishment not honest with contributors

To the Editors:

Re: "Keep your eyes on our 'allies'" (editorial by Chris Crain, June 10). For far too long, the left-wing gay political establishment has not been honest with gay people while bilking them of millions of dollars to bash Republicans for every sniffle in life.

Meanwhile, so-called gay-friendly Democrats are completely excused if they practice double-talk or turn their backs on gays after receiving campaign money and hours upon hours of volunteer campaign work.

Such favoritism toward unreliable Democrats often leads gays to believe that we gays vote Democrat when the truth is that in both the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections, more than one million gay Americans voted for George W. Bush.

The truth is that the Republican Party is not as bad as it is made out to be by gay Democratic activists, and the Democratic Party is not as good or reliable as the partisan drama queens make it out to be.

There is a long history in the past 25 years of Democrats turning their back on gays while gay voters give them millions. Do these gay Democrats have any idea how tragic they look as they beat their leftwing drums throughout the gay ghetto and work like semi-slaves for the Democratic Party?

MATTHEW TSIEN
Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

THE

Q What are your thoughts on Gov. Rick Perry's assertion that gay Iraq war veterans should find another place to live if they don't like the anti-gay marriage law in Texas?



Gov Rick Perry should find another place to live! His ties to big business and the religious right make him an enemy of any minority group, and his views on gay marriage make him an enemy to be fought more aggressively than any insurgent in Iraq.

SHANE NELSON, 37
Houston
Self employed



This is more of the venomous bile that the Republican party is so noted for.

ROY GREEN, (Legal)
Houston
City employee



I think Rick Perry should find another place to live!

DON ALCHORD, 51
Montrose
Self-employed



As a professor of government, I was aware the United States Constitution guaranteed "certain unalienable rights" such as life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness and equality under the law...unless you are gay. Perhaps Gov. Perry should RE-READ it!

STEVE DAY, 37
Houston
Ph.D. student and adjunct professor

Sound off about what's happening in your world at www.houstonvoice.com/soundoff.

Interviews and photos by Dalton DeHart

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The after-Pride
Pride in Houston in
living color: floats, politicians
and Strangerettes
Page 14

JULY 1, 2005

at long last, Logo

MTV'S GAY CABLE SISTER NETWORK HAS FINALLY ARRIVED!

By DYANA BAGBY

a

AFTER YEARS OF PLANNING AND promises, MTV Networks' Logo, the nation's first gay-themed basic cable network, was set to launch on June 30 in some 10 million homes with a slate of original programming alongside previously released movies and series.

But chants of "I want my gay TV" from some in the nation's larger cities, including Houston, might not initially be quelled with the network's launch. Time Warner, the main cable provider in New York City amid other major markets, is set to carry Logo.

David Bittler, Logo's spokesperson, has just announced that Logo is being carried by DirecTV as part of its Total Choice Plus and Total Choice Premier monthly packages. Dan Fawcett, DirecTV's head of programming acquisition, said the network was part of the satellite provider's strategy of providing "a diverse

array of quality programming for our customers. Logo is unique and it's clear that MTVN has developed yet another compelling network that is certain to resonate with its target audience."

On the advertising front, Logo has signed up numerous national companies for its launch, including Miller Lite, Motorola, Tylenol PM, Lions Gate Films and Showtime Networks, according to a Logo statement.

LOGO FEATURES MORE THAN 200 GAY-THEMED feature films, an ongoing documentary series, newscasts tailored for gay viewers and original shows and specials in which "LGBT viewers can see themselves and be themselves," Bittler says.

"TV is a broad medium, and we're a new conversation to put into the mix," he adds. "Logo is programmed like any other general entertainment network with all kinds of genres, but ours are gay-themed."

Documentaries make up a great portion of Logo's original programming. A series titled "Momentum" is set to air, focusing on first-person experiences of real-life gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people. Profiles of a gay rugby team, gay rappers, lesbian surfers, as well as gay Muslims and Latinos are on tap for the series, Bittler says. There are about 20 "Momentum" documentaries planned for the first season.

The network is also home to a new comedy series, "Wisecrack," and the original series "Noah's Arc," a serial drama about Noah, an African-American gay man navigating love and life in Los Angeles with his three best friends. The show has screened across the country at special events.

The channel also dives into reality TV in the fall with "Open Bar," an original series that follows one man's coming-out process as he works to open a West Hollywood gay bar. Other original programming includes "The Ride," a first-person look at some of the participants traveling the 585 miles from San Francisco to Los Angeles in the annual AIDS/Lifecycle fund-raiser; and "First Comes Love," a comedy/reality series from Canada hosted by actor/comedian Scott Thompson of "Kids in the Hall." That show attempts to fulfill the wedding dreams of gay couples in just two weeks.

Numerous concerts are to play during the first few weeks of Logo's broadcast, including shows by the Indigo Girls and Melissa Etheridge. Bittler says movies expected to air early on include "Six Degrees of Separation," "Jeffrey," "Torch Song Trilogy" and "Even Cowgirls Get the Blues." Other films in the Logo library include "Angels in America," "Mulholland Drive," "Kissing Jessica Stein," "High Art," "Philadelphia," "Latter Days," "Far from Heaven," "A Home at the End of the World," "Chuck and Buck" and "Fried Green Tomatoes."



'Curl Girls' is a documentary about lesbian surfers. Yes, lesbian surfers.



'Noah's Arc' is a series about African-American gay men living in 'L Word' territory, Los Angeles.



'The Ride' profiles riders in the 585-mile AIDS/Lifecycle fund-raiser. (Photo by Stanley Appleman)

Logo also will present the first-ever telecast of the GLAAD Media Awards, featuring Jessica Lange, Alan Cumming, Marcia Cross, Felicity Huffman, Margaret Cho, Liza Minnelli and John Stamos.

i MORE INFO

LOGO

Launched June 30

Advertiser-backed basic cable network

Original programming including documentaries, comedy specials and reality shows plus previously aired movies and series.

www.logoonline.com

HERETV

Launch date: September 2003

Pay-service cable network; the network is available in more than 40 million households.

Carried by Comcast, Cox Communications and Charter Communications Inc.

Original programming includes "Julie Johnson," a film about two suburban housewives who leave their husbands and move in together; "Third Man Out: A Donald Strachey Mystery," film series starring Chad Allen as a gay detective; and "Dante's Cove," a gothic horror film series.

www.heretv.com

Q TELEVISION NETWORK

Launch date: September 2004

Pay-service cable network; estimated to be available in 16 million homes.

Carried by RCN satellite services.

A gay lifestyle channel that broadcasts live from gay events. On June 25-26, the network has been providing 24 hours of live programming from Pride celebrations in Atlanta, San Francisco, Houston, New York City and Berlin on the original series "On Q Live."

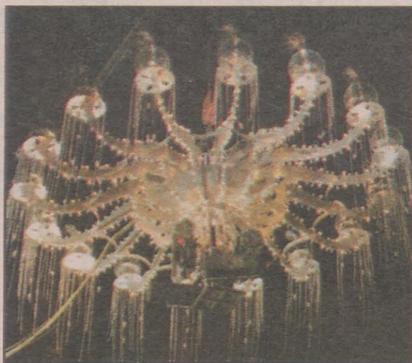
www.qtelevision.com

NEW HEIGHTS: Glenn Close and a stellar cast walk viewers through one emotional day in "Heights." Page 15

GAY DIVORCE: Author Terry McMillian is making a mess of her divorce from her gay husband. Page 18

houston pride

All photos by Dalton DeHart



When the chandelier goes up and is lighted on Westheimer, the Houston Pride Parade is about to begin.



The Strangerettes from Dallas won two parade awards for their high-kicking antics.



Houston's finest seemed ready and able to protect festival performer Sophie B. Hawkins as she approached the stage Saturday afternoon.



Bayou City Boys Club, went back to ancient Greece to illustrate the theme of Houston Pride, "Equal rights! No more! No less!"



Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays won an award for this float.



Houston City Controller Annise Parker (left) walked along side the car that carried her partner, Houston accountant Kathy Hubbard.



The award for best for-profit float went to Smirnoff Vodka.



Actor Chad Allen, who played the son of "Dr. Quinn Medicine Woman," on the hit TV show, was among a contingent of national entertainers who turned out for Houston Pride.



Someone along the parade route displayed a sign that read, "God loves gays."



Texas Rep. Senfronia Thompson (D-Houston) waved to the crowd as she walked the parade route Saturday night.



Roula and Ryan, morning drive hosts from Mix 96.5 FM, introduced Sophie B. Hawkins at the Pride Festival.

film VAN GOWER



'Heights,' an ensemble drama set in New York City, depicts tough life choices a cast of characters face in one portentous day.

A delicious drama

WHEN OUR MOST INTIMATE relationships are at stake, we sometimes must endure heart-wrenching pain before developing enough wisdom to determine what comes next.

Such is the dilemma faced by characters in "Heights," an engrossing ensemble drama from Sony Pictures Classics and Merchant Ivory Productions, the company helmed by the late Ismail Merchant, his partner James Ivory, and Ruth Praver Jhabvala.

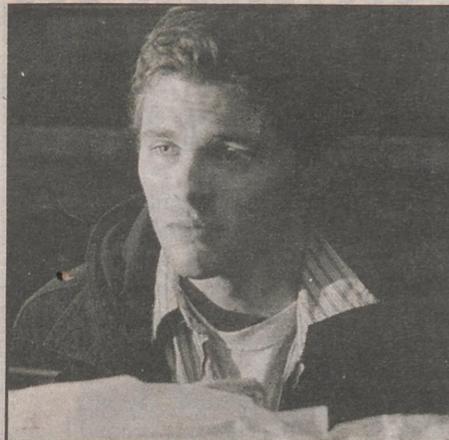
Unfolding over 24 hours in contemporary New York City, "Heights" follows intersecting paths five adults take during their quest for solutions to life's puzzles, most of which pertain to love. With razor-like precision, the film reveals in an almost matter-of-fact manner the difficult terrain often traversed in personal relationships regardless of sexual orientation, though homosexuality ultimately plays a leading role in this film.

JONATHAN (JAMES MARSDEN) plays an attractive, conflicted lawyer engaged to Isabel (Elizabeth Banks), a charming though naïve, photographer.

Isabel's stage-actor mother Diana (Glenn Close) is highly respected in the New York theater world, but her own life appears to be quite another story. As a result, she embarrasses herself by sometimes flagrantly flirting with much younger men. This seems to fill an emotional void caused by an open marriage and the changes life inevitably throws at most every middle-aged woman or man.

Diana sets her sights on the refreshingly handsome Alec (Jesse Bradford), an aspiring actor with his own perplexing dilemma who auditions for a play she's directing.

Peter (John Light) portrays a seemingly sensitive gay author commissioned by Vanity Fair to write a profile about his emotionally abusive lover, Benjamin Stone, a notorious photographer who viewers never see on screen. Because of Stone's arm-twisting, the magazine hires Peter to profile a bevy of gorgeous men who appear in an exhibition of the photographer's work. The sadistic catch is that all the models are Stone's former



In Sony Pictures Classics' 'Heights,' James Marsden portrays Jonathan, a man whose conflicted feelings about his attraction to men puts his engagement to a woman in jeopardy. (Photo by K.C. Bailey/Sony Pictures Classics)

lovers, a fact he fails to share with Peter.

EXQUISITELY HELMED BY FIRST-TIME director Chris Terrio, "Heights" accurately captures the varying degrees of happiness, vulnerability, sadness and resilience that can characterize life in a big city. Terrio, 28, makes Manhattan's cosmopolitan hustle and bustle, as much of a compelling lead character in the film as the ones played by the stellar cast.

Merchant, who recently died, gave the script to Terrio, whose longtime relationship with Merchant Ivory Productions began when he worked as an assistant on "The Golden Bowl" in 1999.

The emotionally rich screenplay by Amy Fox, based on her one-act stage play, reveals a keen understanding of human nature and how the smallest moments can be the most revealing.

After her overwrought performances in the "101 Dalmatians" films and "The Stepford Wives," it's nice to see Close return to the thoughtful, skillful acting that made her a star. It's also been on display recently on FX's "The Division." In "Heights," Close's Diana is instinctively foxy and maternal, steely and vulnerable.

Marsden breaks away from his "X-Men" persona and delivers a startlingly nuanced performance. Bradford, a former teen actor, graduates to full-fledged hunk status in his role as Alec.

The film also features strong supporting turns by Matthew Davis, who plays an old flame of Isabel's, George Segal as a rabbi, Isabella Rossellini as a magazine doyenne, and Eric Bogosian as a player in the theater world.

Even gay singer Rufus Wainwright makes a passable acting debut, as one of Stone's bitter ex-lovers.

MORE INFO

'Heights'
Opens July 1
Landmark Greenway 3
713-866-8881
Angelika Film Center
713-333-FILM
Sony Pictures Classics
www.sonypictures.com/heights

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dining J.A. CHAPMAN

The Thirsty Cactus Cantina hits the mark with the hip Midtown crowd, offering generous and creative drinks with cuisine that is still undergoing invention.

Aiming at Midtown

THE MUSIC IS PUMPING. THE DRINKS are flowing. The customers are happy. It's just another Saturday night at the Thirsty Cactus Cantina.

The owners of the Mercury Room, Boaka Bar and Zula's have opened the Thirsty Cactus Cantina in the former Casa Manhattan location. Serving up contemporary Tex-Mex and a wide variety of drinks, it's the perfect spot for happy hour or a club night nosh.

The chips and two salsas arrive promptly. The chips are thin, but still robust, just as they should be. The tangy green tomatillo salsa has just a hint of warmth. The vigorous red packs plenty of heat. We're off to a good start.

Our waiter recommends the house margarita (\$6.50), made with fresh lime juice. They're generous with the tequila and the margaritas are good. We settle into a happy chip-fueled Tex-Mex contentment.

And then things begin to shift. Our waiter, while very helpful, disappeared for long stretches. It took ages for our food to arrive, and when it did, my dining companion's drunkin' salmon (\$12.95) was half raw, despite requesting it be cooked through. Clearly there are still a few kinks to be worked out.

The salmon was fresh and tasty though, despite the preparation snafu. And it comes with some of their addictive voodoo sauce, a sweet and spicy treat. It's a nice choice if you're not in the mood for Mexican food.

But the Thirsty Cactus is mostly about Tex-Mex, and the sombrero sampler (\$14.95) appetizer plate is a good place to start. With six different items, it could be lunch for two people. As you'd expect, it comes with both guacamole and queso, both of which are passable, but nothing special.

The chicken and mushroom quesadillas are worth trying. They're filled generously with smoky chicken and fresh mushrooms. Or check out the inventive eggrolls, with chicken, corn and a tangy green chili salsa all wrapped in a Mexican version of a wonton.

THE CHICKEN FLAUTAS ARE GOOD enough, but seem to favor the crunchy wrapper at the expense of the filling. The homemade jalapeno poppers, filled with cheese and deep-fried, range from bland to knock-your-socks-off hot.

The sampler is a good overview of the food at the Thirsty Cantina. It's typical, modern Tex-Mex, with a few standouts.

For a main course with variety, try the three-taco combination plate (\$10.95). The sizzlin' shrimp tacos, served with more of that outstanding voodoo sauce, were tender and smoky. The fajita beef was juicy



and came with delicious caramelized onions and peppers. Surprisingly, though, the chicken, which was excellent in other dishes, was tough and dry.

The Tex-Mex dishes come with the usual refried beans and rice. Sadly, these dishes are little more than plate fillers. The beans are bland and pasty, while the rice is dry. I've had much better versions of both at roadside taquerias.

I'd heard good things about the tres leches with coconut sauce (\$5.50), so we decided to give it a try. It's acceptable, but doesn't approach the quality of the best versions. The topping seems to be made with marshmallow, there's not enough milk to keep it truly moist, and the coconut sauce is too subtle to have much impact. Overall, it hardly seems worth the calories.

But the Thirsty Cactus Cantina is not trying to make a culinary statement. It's aiming for the hip Midtown crowd, especially at happy hour and for pre- or post-club noshing. And it hits that mark.

The food is filling. The drinks are generous, inventive, and well-made. It's open late on the weekends, with a DJ spinning tunes on the breezy porch. And it's close to a variety of clubs.

With a relaxed décor, including a wooden bar that looks straight out of Key West, brick walls, and hammered tin stars hanging from the ceiling, it's got just the right feel for a casual, but fashionable Tex-Mex watering hole.

Thirsty Cactus Cantina

2416 Brazos St, Suite C
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www.thirstycactuscantina.com

Food: 10 10 10
Service: 10 10 10 1/2
Value: 10 10 10
Scene: 10 10 10 10
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nitelife JOHNNY HOOKS



After Pride weekend, Houston gets ready to ring in the Fourth with LaFitte's naughty puppets, cheap drinks, hot tubs and fireworks

Pride to fireworks

WELCOME BACK HOUSTON! WELL another Pride has come and gone, but not without raising the bar for 2006. Let's review shall we?

"HELLO QUEERS!" THAT'S HOW HotGG kicked off our introduction of Pansy Division at the Pride Festival. What an amazing sight to look out over the crowd and see all your smiling faces! Performers **Symphony Oz** and **Virginia Slims** kept the energy going in between sets for **Rachael Sage**, muy caliente **Jade Esteban Estrada**, **Pansy Division** (their drummer **Luis** had me swooning!) and of course **Miss Sophie B**. Over **2600** people attended! With a start like this, there is nowhere to go but up. Bravo to **Matthew Stone** and **Todd Amdor** for thinking outside the wigbox and bringing in all that faboo national entertainment. Kisses to **Jack Valinski** too, just cause. And again thanks to all of you who came up and said, "Hello. Love ya!"

LET'S LOOK AT A FEW OF THE winners from that unbelievable parade:

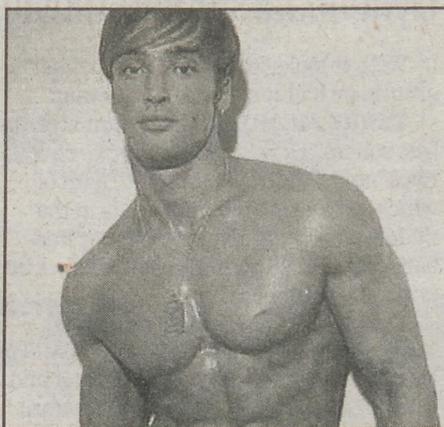
- Judges' Choice** - Bunnies on the Bayou, Continental Airlines, Houston Gay & Lesbian Film Festival.
- Fabulous (best costumes)** - Inergy Club
- Ruby Slipper (best walking)** - PFLAG Houston
- Best interpretation of the 2005 theme** - E.J's Priscilla (best float by a non-profit group) - Community Gospel Church
- Spirit of Montrose (best overall)** - The Strangerettes of the Turtle Creek Chorale

Got ideas to make next year even better or wanna volunteer?

Pride Houston will host an informal Pride '05 wrap-up meeting at 7 p.m., **Tuesday** at the Metropolitan Multi-Service Center, 1475 W. Gray. For more information and a complete list of winners see www.pridehouston.org.

OK. FIREWORKS. ISLAND BOUND? This weekend sees the return of the "Robert The Mouth" Puppet Show at **Robert's LaFitte**, 2501 Avenue Q at 25th. This is a twisted patriotic show that only rolls around twice a year, so get there early. Saturday and Sunday at 10:30 p.m. And don't forget the **Miss Firecracker** pageant, Friday, July 1, also at 10:30. 409-765-9092

OTHER GALVESTON SPOTS TO SEE and be seen in this weekend include **The Pink Dolphin** at 9th and Seawall, 409-621-1808, the legendary **Garza's Kon Tiki**, 315 Tremont, 409-765-5805, **Undercurrent** at 2409 Market, 409-750-8571 and **3RD Coast Beach Bar** at 3102 Seawall, where you'll have a perfect view of the fireworks over the gulf on Monday night. 409-765-6911 for more info.



Boy 4th reigns over Rich's Fourth of July Weekend.

STAYING IN TOWN THIS WEEKEND? You know every bar will be hopping to get you started. **Charles Soloman** is a madman! How else can you explain his tireless efforts to make you party hard way into the dawn? Over the July 4 weekend, **Spoiled Boyz & Beyond Entertainment** are producing three parties called the **Independence Day Weekend**. The clubs and times are easily found on their Web site www.spoiledboyz.net and advance tix are at M2M on Montrose.

SPEAKING OF TIRELESS, **NASSIM Joseph** and **Mark D** from Rich's (with a whole lotta **Michael De Medici** thrown in!) wowed the crowd at the debut of the pool and spa at Rich's last weekend. The music, the drinks, the waiters! Delicious was the food and the crowd. Rich's Freedom Weekend looks tempting to say the least. Saturday's are **Sinful** with \$2.50 wells all night, \$2.50 domestic longnecks all night and **no cover** from 9 p.m. until 11! Only \$5 after. Dance till 5, 21+ only. Sunday's are **Hot, Wet & Wild** with no cover and \$1 vodka from 2:30 p.m. till 6. Don't forget the pool, hot tub and a fab patio with complimentary food thrown in. Make sure to bring your own towel, appropriate footwear and a lock as lockers are provided. www.Rich's-Houston.com or 713-759-9606.

FINALLY ON THE FOURTH, YOU CAN settle in on the patio at **Keys West**, 817 W. Dallas, to view the fireworks from downtown. They explode literally right over your head. www.keyswest.com or 713-571-7870.

Or you can finish off with **DJ Jimmy Skinner** at **SOBE**, 810 Pacific.

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@ If you have any club announcements or events, email them to jhooks@houstonvoice.com or call 713-529-8490. See you on the Go-Go!

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"EXCEPTIONAL!"

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

Losing her groove

Terry McMillan's gay divorce, Rocco DiSpirito's queer eye and Jake Gyllenhaal's homo movie



Author Terry McMillan is in the middle of a bitter divorce after her much-younger husband came out.

Well, it looks like Stella has lost her groove, or had it stolen by a gay man. **TERRY MCMILLAN**, the author of the best sellers "How Stella Got Her Groove Back" and "Waiting to Exhale," both of which were made into movies, is in the middle of a bitter divorce from her husband, Jonathan Plummer, who told her he is gay in December.

The pair met in Jamaica, Plummer's home, in 1995 when he was 20 and McMillan was 43. They married three years later and lived together outside San Francisco until December. Their courtship was the inspiration for "Stella," which starred **ANGELA BASSETT** and **TAYE DIGGS**.

Plummer alleges that, since the breakup, McMillan has been behaving like one of the tough-but-wronged women in her novels. In the declaration that he submitted as part of his divorce papers in Contra Costa County Superior Court, Plummer says McMillan wrote him a letter in February that in part says, "The reason you're going to make a good fag is because most of these guys are dogs anyway. All of you guys are fags and you have no power except in your dicks ... and your loose assholes."

He also claims that she delivered a bottle of Jamaican hot pepper sauce with the words "Fag Juice Burn Baby Burn" scrawled on it to the dog-grooming business he owns in suburban San Fran.

"Sometimes I'm just afraid of answering the phone and it might be her lashing out at me," Plummer told Dish this week. "She hates my guts, based on the fact that I came out to her. She thinks I deceived her, but that's not the case. I find her attractive, I fell in love with her. As I got older, things changed."

Plummer says he realized he was gay about a year ago and, though single now, had relationships with men while married to McMillan.

"This is a very sad situation," McMillan's lawyer Jill Hersh told Dish. "My client feels she has been betrayed in every conceivable way, both emotionally and financially. And I think that Mr. Plummer has made a concerted effort to portray himself as a victim when he has systematically victimized my client."

Hersh says McMillan is seeking an annulment because she believes Plummer entered into it solely to gain "advantages through marriage."

The couple signed a pre-nuptial agreement, but Plummer now says the agreement was unfair and one-sided and he is contesting it. On June 17, a judge ruled against stipulations in the pre-nup and decreed that McMillan must pay Plummer monthly spousal support as well as his attorney fees until the final trial pertain-

ing to the agreement's validity and the annulment request takes place in October.

Rocco my world

Dish has been burned by half-baked Internet rumors before, but this meal was way too yummy to miss.

Gossip Web site www.Gawker.com says



Rocco DiSpirito

that celebrity chef **ROCCO DISPIRITO**, star of the defunct NBC reality show "The Restaurant," and "Queer Eye's" **JAI RODRIGUEZ** have been spotted all over New York City together, including at "a midtown gay bar recently sucking face."

It may not be true, but Dish would find it interesting if DiSpirito, who used to cultivate his image as a ladies' man, had switched sides.

Round the 'Mountain'

It's been hard enough waiting this long with all the hype, but audiences will have to wait until later this year to see the long-anticipated gay cowboy movie "Brokeback Mountain" starring hotties **JAKE GYLLENHAAL** and **HEATH LEDGER**.

Gyllenhaal recently told Entertainment Weekly about the movie, "I really did approach it like I would any love story. No matter how weird people might think it is or how fucked up they might consider a certain relationship to be, if there is love there, then that's all that matters."

When asked about the movie's love scenes, which some reports say are chaste and some say are steamy as a horse ride through the desert, Gyllenhaal just chuckled and said, "I don't know ... Um, all I can say is that they're there."



Jake Gyllenhaal

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Dykes To Watch Out For by Alison Bechdel

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AS CLARICE, TONI, AND RAFFI ENTERTAIN GUESTS, RIFTS SEEM TO BE EMERGING IN THE MARRIAGE EQUALITY MOVEMENT... NOT TO MENTION IN SOME MARRIAGES.

YEAH, BUT TONI, EVEN IF THE LEGISLATURE DOES PASS THE AMENDMENT, THEY'D HAVE TO PASS IT AGAIN IN THE NEXT SESSION. SO WE'D HAVE TIME TO ORGANIZE.

BUT WE ABSOLUTELY CAN'T LET IT COME TO A BALLOT INITIATIVE. EVEN THOUGH WE'RE A BLUE STATE, PEOPLE ARE FROZEN IN. LIKE, 3000 B.C. ON THIS.

MO MMM!

YEAH, CAN WE SKIP THE SHOP TALK? I'M GAY-MARRIAGED OUT.

ME TOO. ENOUGH ALREADY. IF WE HADN'T BROUGHT IT UP, THE REPUBLICANS COULDN'T HAVE FED US TO THE FUNDAMENTALISTS, AND KERRY MIGHT HAVE WON.

OH, RIGHT. DON'T PUSH FOR YOUR CIVIL RIGHTS BECAUSE THERE'LL BE A BACKLASH THAT'S ALWAYS BEEN A WINNING STRATEGY.

CLARICE IS RIGHT. WITH ALL THESE STATE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS, WE'RE LOSING GROUND.

WE? I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU OUT THERE CAN-VASSING.

STELLA, I JUST LEARNED HOW TO RIP THE GUY'S SKELETON OUT OF HIS MOUTH IN "MORTAL KOMBAT." LET'S GO PLAY!

RAFFI, STELLA'S YOUR GUEST. ASK WHAT SHE WANTS TO PLAY.

I BROUGHT MY NEW HAMTARO GAME, "HAM HAM HEARTBREAK."

I'M JUST SAYING, WE'D BE BETTER OFF COMPROMISING. GIVE US THE RIGHTS, AND CALL IT WHATEVER YOU WANT. CIVIL UNION, I DON'T CARE.

ANA ACTUALLY PREFERS "CIVIL UNION." IT'S SO MUCH LESS INTIMATE.

EXCUSE ME. I HAVE TO CALL THE HOSPITAL.

I SWEAR SHE CAN WILL THAT THING TO GO OFF.

OKAY, SO THIS EVIL HAMSTER MADE ALL THE HAM HAMS STOP LOVING EACH OTHER AND WE HAVE TO GET THEM BACK TOGETHER.

HAMHA!

CAN WE RIP THE EVIL HAMSTER'S SKELETON OUT?

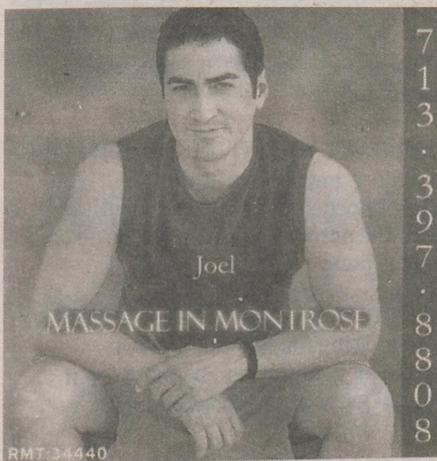
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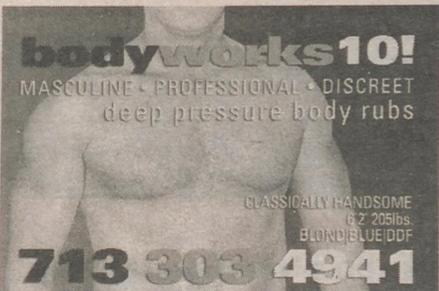
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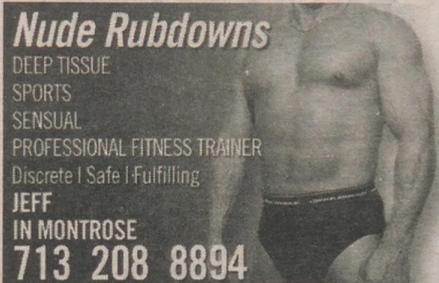
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I REALLY DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY guys who don't work out bitch and moan about the lack of attention they receive while in a gay social situation.

TO ALL OF YOU BITCHIN' BITCHES: half of us don't want to hear it; the other half are glad it's you with the problem!

TO YOU GUYS ONLINE: JUST BECAUSE I am not interested doesn't mean you should call me an asshole and label me as a "typical nigger." Grow up. It was just an online rejection.

WHY ARE THERE NO FEMALE PHONE chat lines advertised in this publication? Do you think lesbians grow on trees?

WHAT IS IT WITH ALL THIS MODESTY in gay gyms with no gang showers, only individual, private ones? You expect this in a women's locker room, but not the men's. Then I see guys changing clothes in toilet stalls or otherwise hiding, or arriving and leaving in their gym togs without showering. Still others cover their crotches with towels in the saunas and steam rooms. Are these people all ashamed of being men? Why would gay men be so uptight and closeted? Have some pride.

WHY IS IT THAT SO MANY OF THESE bitches start with rhetorical questions?

I'M NOT RACIST. I hate all ugly people.

THE DOCTOR ASKED IF I HAD EVER had a "homosexual encounter." I asked him why he needed to know. He took 10 minutes writing in his little pad and before he handed me a prescription. Not a good day!

YOU SAY YOU'RE A "THIN, WARM AND caring guy who is too pretty"? Thin? Who cares? Warm and caring guy? Come right this way! "Too pretty"? Now you need to get hold of yourself!

TO THE OFFENDED GAY SOUTHERN Baptist: Your denomination firmly believes being gay is sinful and perverse. When you practice a faith, be prepared to be judged as a member of that religious group, no matter your personal opinion.

ARE YOU GUYS SHOPLIFTING OR bitching? Because every time you open your mouth, a purse falls out.

WE COULD BE FRIENDS AGAIN AND move forward if only you'd swallow your stubborn bull-headed pride and apologize. It doesn't matter if you don't want to acknowledge that you were wrong. All that matters is that I do.

IT'S SUCKS GOING TO THE BAR EACH weekend and seeing the one guy you want but can't have. I just think he's so hot but alas, he doesn't seem to feel the same. It's even worse when I catch him looking at me. Can anything ruin your evening quicker than unrequited lust?

I HATE REPUBLICANS! SMALLER government means leaving me and my family the hell alone to live our life in peace.

I MET SOMEONE AND WE ENJOYED A pleasant time together. There was nothing to bitch about. That must really be disappointing for a lot of people here!

WHY DID OUR FIVE-HOUR DATE GO perfect but I never heard from him again?

YOUR BACK WALKOVER WOULD HAVE been more impressive at the bar if you hadn't knocked over my cosmopolitan! Leave the acrobatics at the circus — or the bedroom.

WHY DO YOU COME INTO A GAY CHAT room looking for sex, but show a picture of yourself and a girl? Sure it could be your sister or cousin, but it's just not right!

SOMEHOW STILL BEING A SEXUAL superfreak at 60 doesn't have quite the same ring or zing to it as it did at 20.

AS A BLACK LESBIAN, I ALMOST exclusively date white women. Why? Because I can. And they aren't your average-looking, frumpy white clueless women either.

IF YOU HAVE A GIRLFRIEND WHO says she'll need space, she wants to cheat

ALL GEMINIS ARE BISEXUAL. THEY have two sides to them, and they don't know what they want most of the time.

LARRY KRAMER'S NEW BOOK IS THE beach "must read" of the summer. Maybe it will inspire some of you to do more than work out and surf the 'Net for a lay.

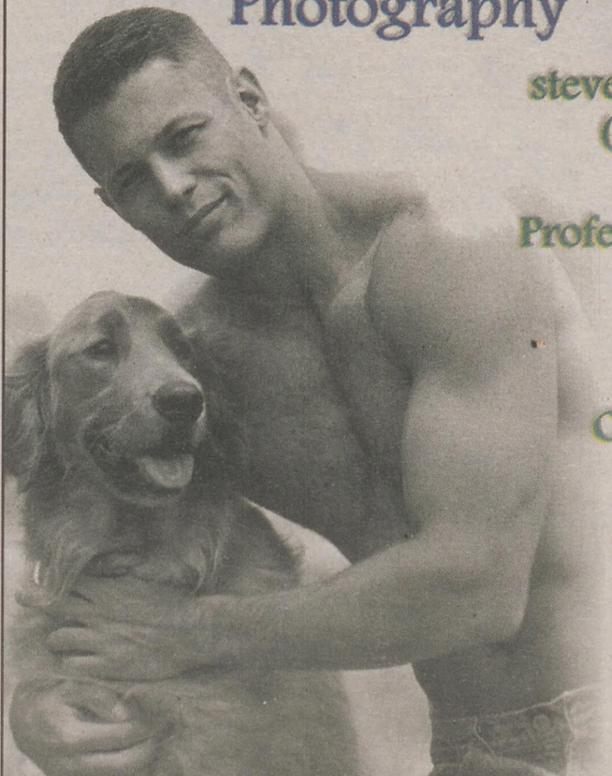
Editors' note: These are real bitches, sent in by real readers, about gay life's little annoyances, and the big ones, too. Got a bitch? Call 1-800-858-8088 or e-mail: bitch@expressgaynews.com

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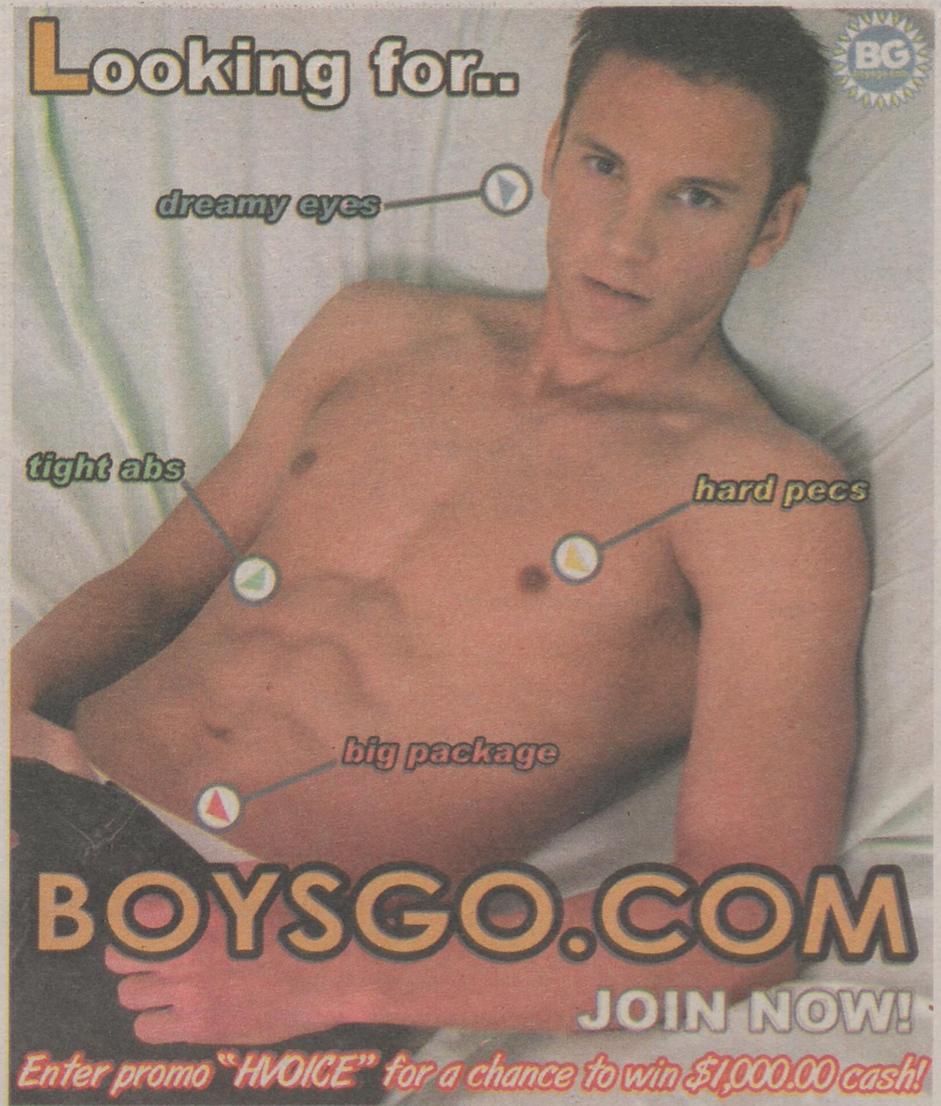



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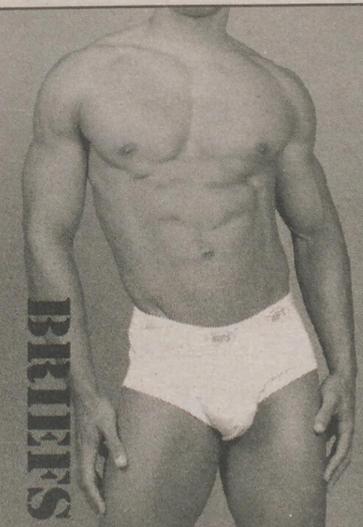
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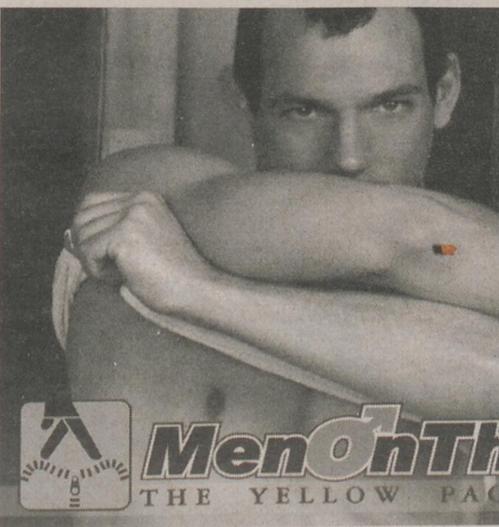


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