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A rainbow vision
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TRANS CUSTODY: TG wins in Miami court. Page 5



IT'S 'WRONG': Sox hitter rags on gays. Page 12



Teen blogs on forced trip to 'ex-gay' camp

16-year-old says coming out prompted action by parents

By DYANA BAGBY

A Tennessee teen is claiming in a blog that he was forcibly admitted into an "ex-gay" camp by his parents after coming out as gay, gaining attention from media outlets and gay activists.

Zach, a 16-year-old from Bartlett, Tenn., was sent to the camp Refuge, associated with Love In Action near Memphis June 6 and is to remain there at least until June 20, according to his June 3 blog entry.

Love In Action, an ex-gay ministry, is accredited by the ex-gay group Exodus International and supported by numerous area churches in Memphis. Officials with the ministry on Wednesday would not confirm whether the teen was enrolled. A friend contacted by this newspaper would not confirm Zach's full name. His parents could also not be identified.

Gay activists tracking the teen's plight have organized daily protests since June 6 outside Love In Action's facility in Memphis. The organization scheduled a press conference for June 16, after this publication's press deadline, to address the growing controversy.

"LIA is calling upon the community to extend open-minded consideration and tolerance towards young people with same-sex attraction who are currently undergoing the organization's youth program called Refuge," according to a press statement from the organization.

Wayne Besen, a gay author who tracks the "ex-gay" movement, said the teen is likely to experience psychological damage.

"This is significant child abuse," said Besen, author of "Anything But Straight: Unmasking the Scandals & Lies Behind the Ex-Gay Myth."



Wayne Besen, a gay author who tracks the 'ex-gay' movement, said 'ex-gay' programs for teens inflict 'child abuse' on participants.

'Raised me wrong'

On May 29, the teen blogged that his parents sat him down and told him he was going to a "fundamentalist Christian program for gays."

"They tell me that there is something psychologically wrong with me, and they 'raised me wrong.' I'm a big screw up to them, who isn't on the path God

Please see **TENN. TEEN** on Page 6



Texas Gov. Rick Perry intends to win a tough Republican primary election by appealing to social conservatives on issues like gay marriage, political observers in the state said. (Photo by AP)

Re-election bid takes anti-gay turn

Rick Perry appeals to anti-gay conservatives, and tries to distance himself from past gay rumors

By ELIZABETH WEILL-GREENBERG

Outsiders might be scratching their heads at the recent anti-gay statements and actions of Texas Republican Gov. Rick Perry. But insiders aren't confused at all. They see Perry's moves as

Please see **PERRY** on Page 4



Local life
Ruth Ann Eldridge and Peggy Roush won straight supporters with education.
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dish
A new book claims Hillary was part of a 'culture of lesbianism' while a student at Wellesley.
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local briefs

Resurrection MCC honors Rev. Carolyn Mobley

Rev. Carolyn Mobley, associate pastor of Resurrection Metropolitan Church, will be honored June 24 at the church's Casino Night Fundraiser. Mobley served as youth director at Shiloah Baptist Church in Orlanda, Fla. and as interim chaplain for the Women's Pre-Release Center and deacon at the MCC in Atlanta, Ga. before moving to Houston. Casino night runs from 7 p.m. to Midnight at the Sheraton Brookhollow Hotel, 3000 N. Loop West, and features a silent auction as well as casino games. For more information, contact the church at 713-861-9149.

New state-wide coalition forms to fight marriage amendment

Steering committee members from Human Rights Campaign chapters around the state met recently in Austin to strategize about ways to fight the upcoming ballot referendum on marriage. Matt Burrus, a steering committee member from Houston, said the idea is to pull together individuals and organizations from around the state in an organized effort to fight the amendment. "We mainly discussed strategy for what we can do to fight this marriage amendment," he said. Randall Ellis, executive director of the Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas (LGRL), also attended the meeting. "LGRL presented the initial outline of a strategy," Burrus said. The meeting was attended by about 30 leaders from around the state, and Burrus said that was more than expected. The next step, he said, is for HRC and LGRL to lead the effort to create a third-party organization that will organize groups around the state in a united effort. He said a paid director will be hired in the next week or two to coordinate the effort. Much of the discussion at the meeting centered on the fact that since Texas already has a Defense of Marriage Law, marriage can't be expected to become a reality for gays and lesbians in Texas anytime soon. "We're just arguing that you shouldn't write discrimination into the constitution," he said. He added that gays and lesbians in Texas will be hearing more about the group as the Nov. 8 election nears. When that day does roll around, Burrus said, "We're going to be much stronger and have a coordinated effort."

Center for AIDS will conduct a training for AIDS service providers

The Center for AIDS Information and Advocacy project presents a training for service providers entitled, "A New Definition of AIDS - Trends in Survival and Mortality Service Provider Training. The training takes place from 10 a.m. to Noon June 28 at the center, 1407 Hawthorne. More information is available by calling Bernie Vazquez at 713-527-8219.

From staff and wire reports

local news

New organization will fight for gay and lesbian civil rights

The Houston Equal Rights Alliance grew out of the Equality Knocks project

By DAWN RORIE

Members of the voter identification project t previously known as Equality Knocks-Houston are announcing the launch of the Houston Equal Rights Alliance (HERA), a new civil rights organization dedicated to achieving full equality for all people.

Catapulting off of the hard work and success of Equality Knocks-Houston, HERA's mission is to create an alliance of individuals and organizations that are committed to promoting equality and respect for all people. In addition to alliance building, HERA will focus on educating the public on GLBT civil rights issues, community mobilization, and advocacy.

By reaching out to gay civil rights groups as well as their straight allies, the organizers say HERA will leverage the strengths of many organizations in order to build a sustainable strategy to fight discrimination and anti-equality legislation.

Alliance partners include Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas, the Houston GLBT Political Caucus, the Houston GLBT Community Center, and the Foundation for Marriage Equality.

"HERA is not an organization that is simply focused on serving its own purpose. HERA is, in and of itself, an alliance organization," says HERA president Tammi Wallace.

She says she believes that tremendous strength lies in the unification of like-minded organizations. "Collectively, we are stronger than our individual efforts," she says.

In the coming months, HERA is gearing up to fight the anti-gay marriage amendment that will face voters at the polls this November. Volunteers with the group will conduct a variety of actions including block walks.

HERA will be talking with voters face-to-face in order to educate them about the effect that this amendment could have



Activist Tammi Wallace is one of the organizers of the Houston Equal Rights Alliance (HERA), a new civil rights organization. Photo by Dalton DeHart.

have, not only on gay couples and their families, but on heterosexuals, as well.

If passed, the proposed amendment would go beyond banning same-sex marriage, and could also jeopardize a variety of legal contracts between unmarried parties, gay and straight.

HERA is also working with alliance partners to plan a town hall meeting for the month of July.

"The purpose of the town hall will be to educate Houstonians about the impact the amendment will have on Texas families and how individuals can get involved with the effort to defeat this measure," says HERA vice president April Ayers.

Voter identification, the central objective of Equality Knocks, will continue to be a key focus for HERA. Members of the group are currently distributing pledge cards that will enable voters to identify themselves to their legislators as being supportive of equal rights for all Texans.

According to Wallace, identifying voters who will support equality will allow the GLBT community and their allies to "mobilize and organize, because we do have political strength, and we need to be recognized. This is a long-term goal that extends long beyond the amendment vote in November."

Through voter identification efforts, HERA and its alliance partners have gathered a database of over more than 45,000 voters who are supportive of their mission for equality.

By Through mobilization of these supporters and various organizations throughout the community, HERA intends to hold legislators accountable for their actions while in office. Martha

Wong, whose District 134 covers half of the heavily gay Montrose, is cited as a legislator who has repeatedly supported anti-equality legislation.

"To say the least, Martha Wong's actions have been inconsistent with the views and values of the majority of her constituents, both straight and gay. We believe that this, in and of itself, jeopardizes her potential for re-election," says Wallace.

Wong, however, did vote against a measure that would have prevented gays and lesbians from being foster parents, and she abstained from voting for the proposed constitutional amendment because it also bans civil unions, which she has said she favors.

Volunteers for HERA will be out in force at Houston's 2005 Pride celebration. They will be manning there will be a booth at the Pride Festival, and organizers will walk as well as walking the parade route, meeting and talking with individuals one-on-one and distributing pledge cards.

"We are looking for volunteers to come and be part of the HERA team for the Pride celebration," says Ayers. "This is a great chance to get out and meet other people in the community while supporting the fight for equal rights."

HERA's official launch party will be at 6:30 p.m. be held on Tuesday, June 21 at Meteor, 2306 Genessee. at 6:30 p.m. The event will include hors d'oeuvres, a cash bar, music, and a chance to meet the people behind the organization. For more information or to volunteer, visit www.houstonera.org or call 713-522-HERA (4372).

MORE INFO

HERA Launch Party
6:30 p.m., Tuesday
Meteor
2306 Genessee
713-522-HERA
www.houstonera.org

local news

Perry's gay comments rattle activists

PERRY, continued from Page 1

a sophisticated campaign to bring out his religious right base in the 2006 primary to beat his most likely — and formidable — opponent, U.S. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (R).

And the sum total impact of Perry's recent moves also served to bury long-standing gay rumors that forced the governor to hold an unusual press conference last spring reaffirming his heterosexuality.

Just this past month, Perry told a reporter that gay veterans might want to move out of state if they don't like Texas laws. He also signed an anti-gay marriage amendment bill — which did not require his signature — in an evangelical Christian school, flanked by preachers.

A spokesperson for Hutchison's campaign, Terry Sullivan, said the senator has not made a decision on her candidacy for governor yet. He would not comment on the location of the bill signing at the evangelical school but said Hutchison agrees with the legislation signed there.

Perry could not be reached for comment.

Dr. Robert Stein, dean of Social Sciences at Rice University in Houston, said that Perry's popularity rating is probably below 50 percent. But an opinion poll is far different from an election — especially a primary in Texas.

Republican primaries in Texas, according to several experts contacted for this article, tend to bring out the most conservative voters. Stein said that between 30 and 40 percent of Republican primary voters are social conservatives. To many, the Perry campaign strategy appears to be to cast Hutchison, an extremely popular politician, as a moderate. Calls to Perry's office were not returned.

"[Perry] can hold a majority of a small plurality," Stein said. If Hutchison wins the primary, he hypothesized, she could "win the general election easily."

The Texas election will act as a test case for other Republicans to see if the party has moved too far to the right, Stein said. "If Hutchison wins the race, it shows [Senate Majority Leader Bill] Frist — what you're doing doesn't work," he said.

There is a reactionary tendency among Republican primary voters, agreed Jim Dallas, who runs the Texas political site, www.BurntOrangeReport.com. "There's a method to the madness," he said.

"If it was an open primary [Bailey] would win in a walk," he said. "[Republican primary voters] are not just average 'red state' Bush people. They're a whole different breed."

But the strategy could backfire if he



Gov. Rick Perry uses the backdrop of a Fort Worth Christian school to put his signature to a bill that will advance the issue of same-sex marriage and civil unions to the statewide ballot in November. (Photo courtesy of the Associated Press)

gets too extreme, said Dallas, who is supporting the likely Democratic challenger, Chris Bell.

Dan Quinn, spokesperson for the Texas Freedom Network, said Perry's election campaign has national repercussions. It is part of a coordinated campaign to elect candidates supported by evangelical Christians across the country. Central to this network are state-based evangelical, conservative organizations called Restoration Projects that mobilize right-wing voters, Quinn said.

As reported on Houston's KHOU, Channel 11, Texas preachers have recently developed their own Restoration Project. According to KHOU, 800 ministers will work on the Restoration's get out the vote drive in Texas.

"We have never seen such a sophisticated, such a broad effort by a political candidate in this state to pander to religious conservatives," Quinn said.

The election of Bush provided a model for how it can be done successfully, Quinn said. And, as Rep. Garnet Coleman (D) noted, if Perry is successful in Texas then his strategy may be duplicated elsewhere.

The gay marriage referendum is another piece of the strategy, Quinn said. It's a way to identify voters and donors who Perry can pursue for the primary race, he said.

"Do I want a governor who is willing to sacrifice [gays and lesbians] on an altar of fundamentalist Christianity in order to win an election?" he said. "The governor is willing to stab [gay veterans] in the back to pander to the religious right."

State Representative Senfronia Thompson, (D), said she was not surprised by Perry's recent actions even though when he began his political career he had "some degree of humanity."

Perry, originally a Democrat, was a legislator in the Texas House of Representatives, from 1985 to 1991. He switched to the Republican Party, a common practice at the time, before he ran for agricultural commissioner in 1990. Perry was George Bush's lieutenant governor before he became governor in December 2000. He was elected governor in November 2002.

It's difficult to know if Perry is acting out of personal conviction or simply pursuing a political strategy. State Representative Warren Chisum (R), who authored the gay marriage amendment, said, "He's doing what his convictions are. He's a committed Christian."

Stamping out gay rumors

Internet rumors for years have whis-

pered that Perry, who is married, is a closeted gay man. Last spring, the rumors became more specific, alleging that Perry and his wife were planning to divorce because he is gay.

Perry held an unusual press conference in March 2004 to denounce the "smear campaign" that he said was an "obvious, orchestrated effort." He declined to name names, but slammed Texas Democratic Party Chair Charles Soechting for referring to the rumors at a political rally. Protesters outside the governor's mansion held signs such as, "It's OK to be gay, guv," calling on Perry to come clean about his sexual orientation.

"[The rumors] are not correct in any shape, form or fashion," he said at the time. "These are irresponsible. They're salacious. They're hurtful to my family."

Experts interviewed for this report said no credible evidence to support the rumors has emerged, but the brouhaha could have created image problems for the governor among conservative Christians.

Whatever his motivations, Perry's comments and actions are hurting Texans, some said.

"Whether someone believes it or not it's harmful to society," Coleman said. "Even if it's a political strategy it sends the wrong message."

MORE INFO

Texas Freedom Network
P.O. Box 1624
Austin, TX 78767
512-322-0545
www.tfn.org

national news briefs

Judge approves trans man's shared custody rights

MIAMI (AP) — A Florida judge last week approved a shared-custody settlement reached in mediation by a transsexual man and his ex-wife over their two children, ending a bitter dispute that wound up on national television. "I just think there is a great message of hope that comes out of this," said Karen Doering, attorney for the husband, Michael Kantaras.



Michael Kantaras, who underwent a sex-change operation in 1987, won shared custody of his two children last week after a bitter dispute with his ex-wife. (Photo by Mark Guss/AP)

Kantaras, born Margo Kantaras, underwent a sex change operation in 1987. He married Linda Forsythe in 1989, and they settled in the St. Petersburg area. They had two children, a boy from a prior relationship of Linda Kantaras adopted by Michael Kantaras, and a daughter she bore in 1992 following artificial insemination with sperm donated by her husband's brother. The couple divorced in 2002, and he was awarded custody of the children. She appealed, even though both lawyers said the judge deemed the husband to be more fit as a parent. A Florida appeals court in Lakeland said there was no legal marriage for a court to dissolve, and remanded the custody challenge to a lower court for further proceedings.

Lawsuit asks federal court to nix Mich. anti-gay marriage measure

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (AP) — A new federal lawsuit seeks to strike down Michigan's constitutional amendment that defines marriage as a union between a man and a woman, saying it violates the U.S. Constitution. Bangor attorney Jessie Olson is named as a co-plaintiff with her partner in the suit filed last week in U.S. District Court in Kalamazoo. She said the amendment is stripping away job benefits such as health insurance from gay and unmarried heterosexual domestic partners, and their children. Michigan voters approved the amendment, which adds Section 25 to Article 1 of the state's constitution, with November's passage of Proposal 2. "Section 25 applies at all levels of state, county and municipal government, imposing a special disability on people in same-sex relationships whether they seek protection for their relationships from government employers, administrative agencies, cities, towns or the state legislature," the lawsuit says.

Two gay former high school students awarded \$300,000 in Calif. lawsuit

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Two gay former high school students in San Diego County were awarded \$300,000 after a jury found school officials failed to protect them from harassment. Jurors determined Joseph Ramelli and Megan Donovan, both 19, were harassed with the knowledge of officials at Poway High School in Poway, about 20 miles northeast of San Diego. Both students were harmed after authorities didn't do enough to prevent harassment, jurors said. Ramelli was awarded \$175,000 and Donovan \$125,000. Plaintiffs' attorney Bridget J. Wilson argued during trial that school officials took "minimal or no action at all" even though the two were verbally threatened, and Ramelli was spit on, punched, kicked and had his car vandalized. Both students left the school following their junior year and enrolled in an independent study program before graduating.

Ore. Senate panel OKs civil unions, as Maine kills marriage amendment

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — A Senate panel passed a bill to create civil unions last week, the latest step in the legislature's battle over whether gay couples should have legally recognized relationships. The bill to extend the benefits and rights of marriage to gay couples passed on a partisan 3-2 vote, with Democrats in favor. It will now head to the full Senate, where it is expected to pass, setting up a tug-of-war with the Republican-controlled House, which is considering its own bill. That legislation would provide a more limited set of reciprocal rights to any two people over 18, including relatives. Sen. Charles Starr (R-Hillsboro) argued that the bill goes against the will of the voters, who passed a ban on gay marriage last year. Meanwhile, a proposed constitutional amendment in Maine seeking to ban same-sex marriages is dead for the session following a Senate vote last week. The amendment would have needed a two-thirds vote of approval in the House and Senate to be sent on to voters. Early in the week, representatives denied the bill even a majority vote of approval as they rejected it 88-56.

After fight, N.Y. GOP adds gay group to executive committee

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Over the objections of one of its more conservative leaders, New York's Republican State Committee voted last week to give a seat on its executive committee to a group that represents gay GOP members. The vote to give the Log Cabin Republicans representation on the executive committee came at a closed-door meeting of the state GOP leadership and over the objections of state Sen. Serphin Maltese, the Queens GOP chair. "I felt a group should not be recognized strictly on sexual orientation," Maltese said.

From staff and wire reports

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national news

Teen's blog sparks protests at 'ex-gay' facility

TENN. TEEN, continued from Page 1

wants me to be on. So I'm sitting here in tears, [joining] the rest of those kids who complain about their parents on blogs — and I can't help it," Zach wrote.

"I've been through hell. I've been emotionally torn apart for three days... I can't remember which days they were ... time's not what it used to be," the teen wrote in his last blog entry, posted June 3.

The teen also posted what he said were an exhaustive set of rules for Refuge that were e-mailed to his parents: "No hugging or physical touch between clients. Brief handshakes or a brief affirmative hand on a shoulder is allowed ...

"[Love In Action] wants to encourage each client, male and female, by affirming his/her gender identity," the rules continued. "LIA also wants each client to pursue integrity in all of his/her actions and appearances. Therefore, any belongings, appearances, clothing, actions, or humor that might connect a client to an inappropriate past are excluded from the program.

"These hindrances are called False

Images," according to the rules. "FI behavior may include hyper-masculinity, seductive clothing, mannish/boyish attire (on women), excessive jewelry (on men), mascot-ing, and 'campy' or gay/lesbian behavior and talk."

Camp participants are also forbidden specifically from wearing any clothing by Calvin Klein or Abercrombie & Fitch.

Refuge offers a two-week program for \$1,500 and a six-week program for \$4,000, according to its Web site. Since its inception three years ago, the program has hosted more than 20 participants, according to Rev. John Smid, Love In Action's executive director, who is married to a woman and claims to have left behind "the homosexual lifestyle," if not same-sex attractions.

'Founded upon deception'?

Gay bloggers and allies who track the teen's thoughts about being sent to the program created additional blogs to support the teen and refute the reparative therapy practiced by Love In Action.

Supporters also took part in daily demonstrations that started June 6, Zach's apparent first day in the program, at Love In Action's Memphis headquarters.

"The history of organizations like Love In Action are founded upon deception and have been proven ineffective and damaging to people," said Morgan Fox, an organizer of Queer Action Coalition who said she is a friend of Zach's.

The coalition formed in direct response to the teen's blogs, Fox said.

"He's probably been there about two weeks. But they shut you off from the world when you're in," Fox said.

Zach's blog indicates that his cell phone had been taken from him and he only accessed his computer to post a blog entry by waiting until his parents were asleep.

About 30 people take part in the daily



Blogger 'Zach,' 16, of Bartlett, Tenn.

protests, said Kevin Gilliland, a member of the Memphis Gay & Lesbian Community Center.

"We're in the buckle of the Bible Belt, and [the teen] has brought a lot of attention to [the ex-gay movement]. A lot of the people protesting are teens. This is an issue of psychological abuse," Gilliland said.

'Obligation' of parents

Supporters of the teen are e-mailing Love In Action to express their opposition to the program, said Smid, who underwent the program in 1987 and is now the center's executive director.

"It appears to me, from what I am hearing, they feel a sense of bond with other young people and they desire to rescue them," Smid said in an interview Wednesday.

Smid declined to comment specifically about Zach. But he said parents of gay teens have an obligation to teach their children to live "healthy lifestyles."

"There has to be a safeguard ... other

than a condom. We need to work with the mind and intellect [of gay teens]," he said.

Smid acknowledged the teen blogger's posts highlighted a breakdown in communication among the family members and that Refuge works as a "bridge" to facilitate a better relationship between teens and their parents.

Smid said Refuge's rules, including a ban on secular music, specifically including non-Christian classical music by Bach or Beethoven, are critical to the success of the program.

"While here, they only listen to Christ-centered music to help ponder their lives," Smid said. "We try to minimize external resources and make sure they're not bombarded."

'Message in a bottle'

Love In Action International, founded 32 years ago, is the oldest known "ex-gay" organization, said Besen, author of "Anything But Straight."

"These organizations hold them captive, basically as prisoners. They are boot camps," he said.

Besen commended Zach's courage in taking his story to the Web.

"It's the modern-age message in a bottle," he said. "Here he is on this hideous island of ignorance, and he's sent his message out and now people are trying to rescue him."

"This is a new spin on a terrible old story. He's very innovative — it shows the power of the Internet for our community," Besen added.

The author said "ex-gay" organizations that focus on adolescents are more difficult to track than programs for adults because they often market their programs as church camps.

"These groups inflict significant child abuse. They destroy and demolish the self-worth of young men and women," he said.

MORE INFO

Zach's blog

<http://blog.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=blog.ListAll&friendID=7428306&Mytoken=20050604221047>

Love In Action

4780 Yale Rd.
Memphis, TN 38128
901-751-2468
www.loveinaction.org

Queer Action Coalition

www.fightinghomophobia.blogspot.com

Task Force honors Daschle for opposing amendment

By EARTHA MELZER

Calling him the "architect of the defeat of the Federal Marriage Amendment," the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force honored former Senate minority leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) with a leadership award in a ceremony held at New York University last week.

Organizers said that an estimated 250 people attended the event and that it raised \$110,000 for the organization.

Daschle was the Senate Democratic leader when the Federal Marriage Amendment was first introduced last year. The FMA, which would have amended the U.S. Constitution to prevent recognition of same-sex marriage, did not garner the support needed to proceed to a vote on the Senate floor.

Social conservatives have argued that it is necessary to amend the Constitution because federal courts may one day overturn the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act. DOMA banned

same-sex marriage recognition under federal law and specified that states would not be required to recognize same-sex relationships recognized by other states.

Daschle was among the many Democrats to vote for DOMA, which passed the Senate 85-14 and was signed into law by President Clinton.

'Classic legalese' from Daschle?

Last year, in a May 7 Washington Blade editorial, Task Force Executive Director Matt Foreman took direct aim at Daschle for caving along with other Senate Democrats on a pledge to kill the FMA. He expressed frustration that gay groups were spending money lobbying to defeat the FMA, rather than state constitutional amendments, because the Democrats were not living up to their pledge to stop the federal measure.

"We've since learned that the Daschle pledge was a classic display of Washington legalese," Foreman wrote then. "For me, it's appalling — indeed sickening — that scarce resources are being sucked into [fighting the FMA]."

Foreman said this week that shortly after his Blade editorial was published, he participated in a meeting where Daschle reassured FMA opponents that he was serious about fighting the measure.

"Daschle gave his word and kept his word," Foreman said, crediting Daschle with gathering 51 Democratic votes against moving the amendment toward a vote.

"He took a stand for us, and it hurt him, and it hurt his political career and that is something that deserves to be honored and recognized," Foreman said.

Mixed record on gay rights

Foreman said that during Daschle's 2004 reelection campaign, his opponents

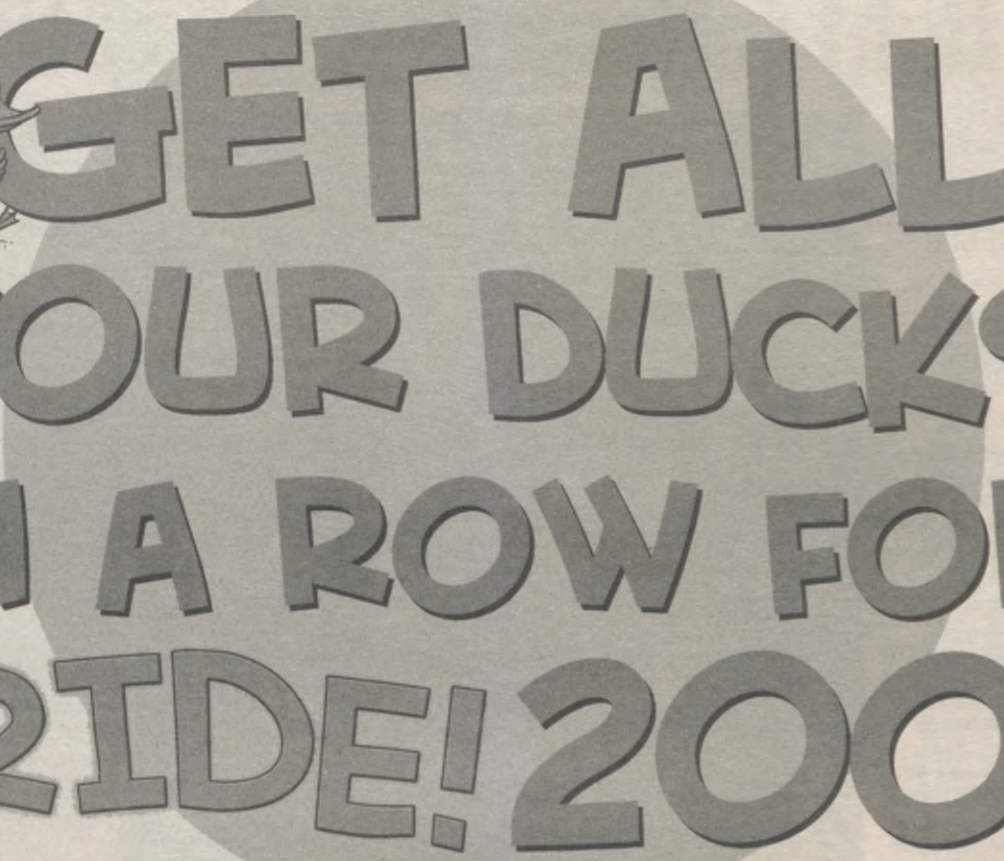
used Daschle's stance on the FMA against him, arguing that he was out of touch or too liberal for South Dakota.

"He always supported the hate crimes bill and ENDA, he was a champion for Native American rights, he had a very strong environmental record, a strong labor record and a good, though not perfect, record on choice," Foreman said.

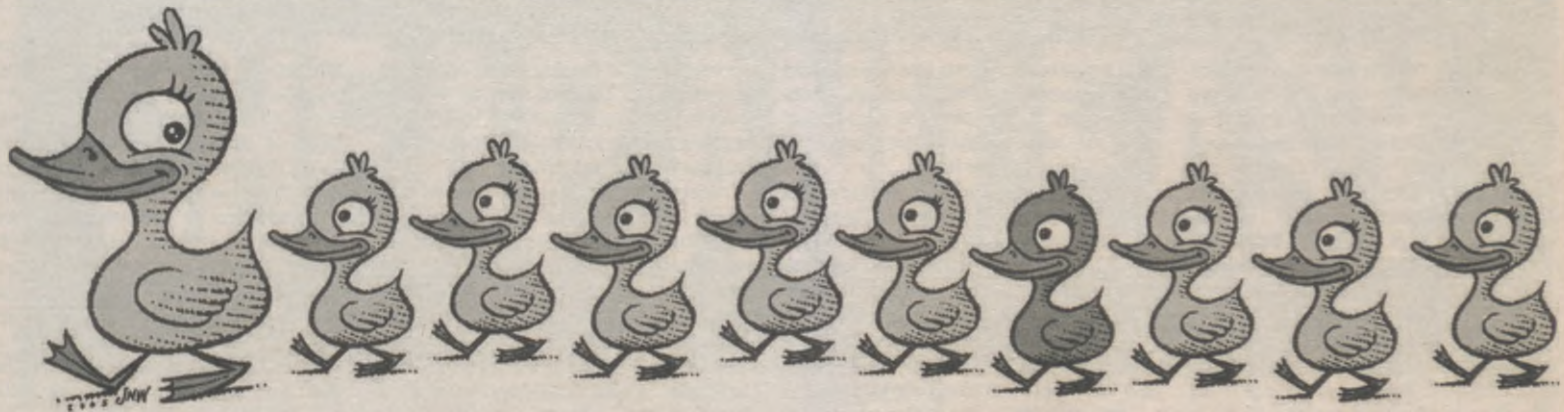
Daschle received a 63 percent pro-gay voting record from the Human Rights Campaign for his final year in the Senate.

During his reelection campaign last fall, Daschle countered criticism about his opposition to the FMA by emphasizing that he had voted for the Defense of Marriage Act.

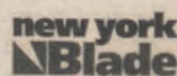
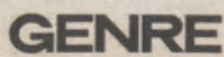
"This was a pathetic attempt to keep his seat," Andy Thayer, of the Gay Liberation Network and DontAmend.com said. "He tried to appease the bigots and he still was not bigoted enough for them. He should not be trying to sell our civil rights down the river to help his career."



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Local Life

HOUSTON VOICE

JUNE 17, 2005

PAGE 8

In the fight for equality, education is key

Ruth Ann Eldridge and partner, Peggy Roush, found that one-on-one interaction wins straight allies for gays

By DAWN RORIE

It is hard to find a congregation that is more warm and affirming than the one at Bethel Evangelical Lutheran United Church of Christ (UCC). Unlike many other churches in which members only see each other briefly before and after weekly services, the congregation at Bethel is like one big family.

Members at Bethel keep in touch throughout the week, having dinner with one another and going out of their way to care for sick or ailing members who need a helping hand.

When Ruth Ann Eldridge and her partner, Peggy Roush, walked into Bethel Evangelical Lutheran UCC for the first time, they were immediately welcomed into the family.

Even though Bethel was not yet officially "open and affirming" of sexual minorities (as United Church of Christ leaves this decision up to individual churches), the openly lesbian couple was accepted as one of the flock.

When they returned for a second service, Eldridge said members of the congregation not only remembered them from their first visit, but also knew their names.

"I had never gone to a church like that in my entire life," she says. In time, Eldridge became president of the church's Board of Christian Education, while Roush began serving as secretary.

In 2004, Bethel decided to follow in the footsteps of other UCC churches when it began the yearlong process to officially become "open and affirming" of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons. The church scheduled a series of "open and affirming" sessions in order to educate members about the lives and struggles sexual minorities.

Even for a congregation as warm and



Ruth Ann Eldridge and Peggy Roush were instrumental in helping educate members of Bethel Evangelical Church (UCC) at a time when the church was considering whether or not to become an open and affirming congregation. Photo by Dalton DeHart.

loving as the one at Bethel, the process was a controversial one that encountered some opposition. While many members were open to attending the educational sessions, some balked at the prospect of being exposed to gay issues.

"Some people said that we had taken over the church. I politely told them that we had not," says Roush.

The couple responded by inviting hesitant members to their home for dinner. "We didn't talk about the open and affirming sessions," Eldridge remembers. "We just chatted and let them see that we are normal people just like everybody else."

One woman in particular would not even take the informational flyers about the sessions, let alone attend one. Eldridge decided to approach her and have a private, one-on-one conversation about the subject.

While the woman made it clear that although she did not approve of homosexuals in general, she had no problem with Eldridge and Roush. Eldridge tried to explain to her that she and her partner were just like everybody else in the gay community.

"How can you know if you approve or disapprove unless you educate yourself?" Eldridge asked her. After their conversation,

the woman attended every session, finally voting in favor of the church becoming open and affirming. The final vote was 50 to 10, with the majority in favor of officially opening their church to gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender individuals.

Eldridge says she believes in the power of one-on-one interaction and reaching out beyond, as well as within, the gay community to find allies. Over the years, she and Roush have been involved in various gay rights organizations, including Lesbians Over the Age of Fifty (LOAF) and the Lesbian Health Initiative, where Eldridge served as a board member.

During her time working with such groups, Eldridge noticed a lack of coordination among many of the organizations—they were all working on individual projects while hoping to achieve the same goal of equality.

In addition to the fragmentation she has noticed in the struggle for equality, Eldridge points out that the separation of gays and straights is another factor that can only hamper the fight.

"We have divided everything into the gay community and the straight community. It just needs to be our community," she says.

Because of her views on these issues, Eldridge is enthusiastic about her new position as Outreach Chair for Pride Houston. She is currently in the early stages of planning a conference for 2006 that will bring together and educate gays and lesbians, as well as their straight allies.

In addition to educating the public about gay civil rights issues, the conference will feature presentations that teach smaller organizations skills such as how to fundraise and how to put together a board of directors.

Eldridge and Roush point to their church as an example of how interaction and education can bring gay and straight people together for a common cause. They say they both feel that being honest about who they are, as well as being willing to reach out to others has made a difference in the way many members of the Bethel congregation see gays and lesbians. Eldridge says that one lady told them, "Well, if they're all like you, let 'em all come!"

With a marriage amendment pending and anti-gay sentiment rising in many areas around the country, Eldridge says that the time for the barriers to come down is now. "If we are going to get anywhere in the future, we're going to have to do it together."

MORE INFO

Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church (UCC)
1107 Shepherd Dr.
713-861-6670
www.bethelhouston.org

Pride Houston
www.pridehouston.org

out in houston

(Photos by Dalton DeHart)



The Houston Bears were the last group to turn in an application for the Houston Pride Parade June 25.



Activist Ray Hill (back center) was the subject of a roast recently by (from left) Nancy Ford, Ron Mock, Mark Wood, Houston City Controller Annise Parker, Michael de Medici and Sue Lovell.



Rob Hugos and Jack Jackson were among Houstonians at a recent Pride Houston event.



Entertainers (from left) Lisa Whitley, Marsha Carlton, Keith Caldwell and Clay Howell performed recently at the Miss Mint Julep kickoff at Riva's Italian Restaurant.



Houston City Controller Annise Parker and State Rep. Senfronia Thompson (D-Houston) spoke at the recent spring social staged by the Houston Chapter of the Lesbian & Gay Journalists Association.



Mr. and Ms. Gay Pride took their bows recently.

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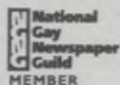
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Forum

HOUSTON VOICE

JUNE 17, 2005

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editorial

HRC's numbers game

If HRC plays fast and loose with its membership numbers, how are we supposed to trust anything else the organization tells us?

By MUBARAK DAHIR

W

HERE IS A T-SHIRT hanging in my closet that dates back to the 2000 march on Washington for gay and lesbian rights.

My then-lover and I bought the matching T-

shirts because of the funny, double-entendre statements on them.

"I can't even walk straight," mine says. His read, "I can't even think straight."

Mostly, we bought them both for fun, because they were clever. But naturally we were aware of the political suggestion behind them. It was, after all, a political march on the nation's capital.

We bought the souvenir T-shirts at the Human Rights Campaign store, just off DuPont Circle.

Neither of us intended our nonchalant purchases to be construed as any kind of political endorsement of HRC, or membership in the organization.

But after discovering the rather crafty way that the group that bills itself as the nation's largest gay and lesbian rights organization counts its membership, I can't help but wonder if I am an unwitting member of an organization I never intended to join.

And I can't help but wonder just how many other gay men and lesbians around the country are, too.

Even worse than feeling deceived about whether I am counted as a member of HRC against my will, I can't help but think: If HRC fudges its membership numbers simply to get political clout, how else are they misrepresenting the organization that claims to be the most powerful group in the country fighting for gay and lesbian rights?

And if they would misrepresent even this most basic, elementary issue, why should I trust them on other, more important things? Indeed, how can I trust them?

HRC CLAIMS TO HAVE A MEMBERSHIP OF 650,000 people.

That number easily makes it the largest national gay and lesbian rights

group in the country.

In fact, that number dwarfs the reported membership of other name-brand gay rights groups.

The National Gay & Lesbian Task Force, also located in Washington D.C., reports a membership of approximately 20,000.

Parents & Friends of Lesbians & Gays, better known as PFLAG, weighs in at just about 44,500 members.

The National Center for Lesbian Rights registers it has about 9,000 members.

All of this makes HRC's number look pretty impressive. Until you know how the group counts its "members."

As detailed in a recent Washington Blade news article, HRC's bylaws define members as anyone who has contributed \$1 or more, whether as a gift or payment for goods and services delivered by HRC."

The group's spokesperson, Steven Fisher, told the Blade that once someone gives or pays \$1 or more to HRC and provides a name and address, they're counted as a member for life.

He defended this unusual way of counting members by saying, "The GLBT movement is unique. When we come out of the closet, we commit for life."

Apparently, we commit in death, too.

HRC does not proactively clean out its membership rolls. The agency pays for a service that tracks when an address is no longer valid, but otherwise those who know the member must inform HRC for a name to be removed from the rolls.

GIVEN THIS ODD ACCOUNTING SYSTEM, it's no wonder that HRC's membership rolls have skyrocketed since 1990.

That year, the group listed a membership of 20,000 people. Just five years later, reported membership had increased five-fold, to 100,000.

In the past decade, HRC's official membership numbers increased 650 percent, to today's whopping 650,000.

It's easy to understand why HRC, or any political rights organization, would want to have the highest possible membership it could record.

There is not only safety in numbers, but power in them, too. When you are lob-

bying Congress, the more people you can claim to represent, the more likely members of Congress will be to pay attention, and ultimately vote in your favor.

But it's disgraceful that HRC would engage in such a misleading representation of who they are and how many gay and lesbian Americans support it.

It appears that HRC does know how many real members it has, but they're not telling.

Prospective members are told on HRC's Web site and in membership materials that dues are \$35 and must be paid annually.

"Active members" of HRC are those who pay dues annually. Someone who buys a product at an HRC store would not be counted as an "active member."

HRC spokesperson Fisher acknowledged to the Blade that the organization's number of "active members" is substantially less than its number of total "members."

But he refused to tell what that number was.

"We do know the current number of 'active members,'" Fisher told the Blade. "But we don't publish it because our enemies would love to know."

Well, guess what, Mr. Fisher. I'm not an enemy of gay rights, and I'm pretty curious to know, myself.

THE TRUTH IS, IT MATTERS LESS TO ME, and to most people, I suspect, what the actual HRC membership number is than it does that the organization has deliberately obfuscated the truth behind the numbers.

Most of us are not as politically naïve as the HRC would believe.

We understand the tremendous difficulty of lobbying Congress on gay rights, particularly in an age of neo-conservatism in this country.

And, in the grand scheme of things, the size of an organization shouldn't be what determines support for the group from its constituents.

But HRC is not only a group that is apparently full of size queens, it's a group that lies about its size, too. And I hate being lied to.

Now, when I look at that T-shirt in my closet, rather than thinking about the political impact of the message on the shirt, I feel a little taken.

And I can't help but wonder: What's HRC really trying to sell us these days?

@ Mubarak Dahir is editor of the Express Gay News and can be reached at mdaahir@express-gaynews.com



READER FEEDBACK: Send letters, comments and suggestions to forum@houstonvoice.com.

letters

HRC says keeping filibuster justified compromise

To the Editors:

By insinuating that our support for the compromise that preserved the filibuster somehow signaled support for the nomination of Judge William

Pryor, the Houston Voice editorial seriously misled readers ("Keep your eyes on our 'allies,'" by Chris Crain, June 3).

The reality is that we faced the destruction of the filibuster and a flood of extremist judges. Instead, this compromise preserved the filibuster and resulted in a floor vote on a handful of extremist judges.

HRC has always believed that nominees like Pryor pose a threat to our community. In opposition to Judge Pryor's nomination, we've been ringing the alarm bells since he was first nominated in April 2003, and we're going to score his nomination vote in our congressional scorecard so that our allies and opponents alike will know that their votes count.

Despite Houston Voice's indifference on having the filibuster as a future option, having this legislative tool available when there is even more at stake is critical.

JOE SOLMONESE
President
Human Rights Campaign
Washington

NGLTF sharply critical of filibuster deal

To the Editors:

In his editorial, "Keep your eyes on our 'allies'" (June 3), Executive

Editor Chris Crain said that we and other national LGBT groups offered "political cover" for the nuclear option compromise.

Contrary to Crain's observation that

our statement was "navel-gazing," we pointed out that (a) the wholly unlawful 'nuclear option' was retained; (b) three of the most dangerous, extreme and activist candidates ever nominated to the U.S. Court of Appeals would get votes on the Senate floor; and (c) the filibuster was conditioned to be used only in 'extraordinary circumstances,' which are to be decided, effectively, by only 14 senators. (The statement is available at www.thetaskforce.org.)

We amplified this statement in interviews with gay and straight press.

Unlike Crain, the Associated Press got it right. In its lead story on the compromise, it called our response and that of the Black Congressional

Caucus "sharply critical" of the compromise and noted that we did not go along with the response suggested by Senate Democratic leaders that the deal was "victory over the radical right."

MATT FOREMAN
Executive Director
National Gay & Lesbian Task Force
New York

Our support for allies must be 2-way street

To the Editors:

This letter is in response to Chris Crain's June 3 editorial ("Keep an eye on our 'allies'"). As a volunteer, I raise significant gay political dollars in Chicago for Democrats, from presidential candidates to judicial candidates.

I am always viewed fund-raising as a means to elect our own to office and to have access to non-GLBT elected officials and candidates so we can press our views.

In May 2002, when the Federal Marriage Amendment was first introduced into the U.S. House with six co-sponsors — three Democrats and three Republicans — I went after the one Democratic co-sponsor from Illinois, David Phelps, and pushed other elected Democrats here to refuse to help him



"I'm now a lesbian. But the good news is that you being an unattractive, selfish jerk had nothing to do with it."

with fund-raising.

I also encouraged many of those in this area who financially support federal candidates not to write a check for Congressman Phelps' reelection. The unions and trial lawyers continued to support Congressman Phelps, but Jews and other progressives refused to and, by his own admission, he was greatly short of funds.

Then-House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt called to ask me to back off since control of the House could be decided by one vote. I responded that he wasn't going to become House speaker

on our backs, and we argued loudly before hanging up.

Congressman Phelps lost his reelection by 10 points.

My purpose is to say that Chris Crain's editorial hit a bull's eye. Far too many write checks to candidates hoping they will acknowledge us and like us. But it's more important to make sure they respect us and understand their political support is necessary in return for our political support.

MICHAEL BAUER
Chicago

THE Q

What should gays and lesbians do to prepare for the Nov. 8 referendum on same-sex marriage and civil unions?



Spread the word, especially to heterosexual friends and encourage everyone to vote.

ULLI MC COWN, 43
Fort Worth
Aviation maintenance and service



We need to mobilize now and educate the uneducated at the grass-roots level. Until the voters identify the issue of same-sex marriage with a face, we are fighting an uphill battle. In reality, we all want the same thing.

CINDY DURHAM, 41
Houston
Educator



We should make everyone aware of and encourage everyone to vote.

STAN MC DONALD, 45
Houston
Massage therapist



Register your family and friends to vote. The power is at the polls. This is a civil rights issue.

DR. JEWEL DAY, 48
Houston



Have a voter encouragement party to get all of your friends to vote.

THOMAS PRUITT, 44
Watauga, Tex.
Baker

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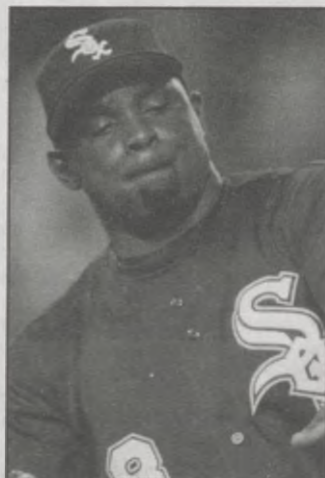


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on the record



"Gays being gay is wrong. Two women can't produce a baby, two men can't produce a baby, so it's not how it's supposed to be. ... I don't believe in gay marriages. I don't believe in being gay."

Chicago White Sox designated hitter Carl Everett, who admits he has had gay teammates, quoted in the July issue of Maxim magazine (Chicago Tribune, June 14)

"We put warning labels on cigarette packs because we know that smoking takes one to two years off the average life span, yet we 'celebrate' a lifestyle that we know spreads every kind of sexually transmitted disease and takes at least 20 years off the average life span. ... Something is wrong with this picture."

Rev. Bill Banuchi, executive director of the New York Christian Coalition, reacting to a Pride event in New Paltz, N.Y. (Mid-Hudson News, June 12)

"It was a miscalculation on my part."

California Assemblyman Mervyn Dymally, co-sponsor of the gay marriage bill that failed by four votes earlier this month, when asked why he missed returning to the chamber in time for the vote (San Francisco Chronicle, June 13)

"I had four others who were willing to join in if Dymally had been there to vote."

California Assemblyman Mark Leno, who is gay and sponsored the gay marriage bill (San Francisco Chronicle, June 13)

"Meeting the man of my dreams and then meeting his beautiful husband."

Singer Alanis Morissette, changing the lyrics to her hit song 'Ironic' to please her gay fans (teentoday.co.uk, June 12)

"We already have laws on the books that fully address the gay issue. That's not even in the top 10 of the people's issues. Leave it alone. People in Virginia are fed up with the Republican Party's anti-schools, anti-transportation, anti-gays — goodness, what aren't they anti?"

Virginia state Sen. Russ Potts (R-Winchester), who is mounting an independent run for governor (Washington Post, June 14)

"[Texas] Governor [Rick] Perry and his people are just not as good as [President] Bush and [political adviser Karl] Rove. Governor Perry knows the steps, but he's got no rhythm."

Southern Methodist University political scientist Cal Jillson, about Perry's attempts to reach out religious voters by suggesting gay Texas veterans should consider leaving the state (Associated Press, June 12)

"Until then, it had been my feeling that AIDS was a disease largely spread by reckless and voluntary sexual and drug-abusing behavior, and that it would probably be confined to those in high risk populations. I was wrong."

Former Senator Jesse Helms, apologizing in his forthcoming book "Here's Where I Stand," for his opposition to government spending on AIDS, when he later learned of its toll on heterosexual families in Africa (Associated Press, June 9)

"The traditional teaching of the church has proven to be the only failsafe way to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS."

Pope Benedict XVI, admonishing Roman Catholic bishops from five sub-Saharan countries that the church opposes the use of condoms to prevent HIV transmission (BBC News, June 10)

"I'd go back into porn before I'd go back to work for a large law firm."

Atlanta attorney Rich Merritt, who was fired by Powell Goldstein, a large firm, after he wrote "Secrets of a Gay Marine Porn Star," his autobiography (Fulton County Daily Report, June 6)

"Let me remind those Republicans [that the Bible mentions helping the poor] 3,000 times. I have not yet seen gay marriage mentioned in the Bible."

Democratic Party chief Howard Dean, the former Vermont governor and presidential candidate, speaking to the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition (Chicago Sun-Times, June 13)



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The balls

Ben Affleck refers to his gay pranks on the set as 'fruit basket,' but to gay strip clubbers, it's 'teabagging.'

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JUNE 17, 2005

a rainbow vision for the rainbow people

RAINBOW VISION IN SANTA FE
WILL BE THE NATION'S FIRST GAY
RETIREMENT COMMUNITY TO
ALSO INCLUDE ASSISTED LIVING



By BINNIE FISHER

S

EVERAL YEARS AGO, WHEN HIS mother moved into the Bayou Manor retirement community, Houstonian Eric Liston thought the concept was great if only there were communities that were tailored for gays and lesbians.

Probably about the same time, Joy Silver was having a vision of such a community in a gay-friendly city that was rich in the arts and that was surrounded by nature's beauty.

Today, her vision is known as Rainbow Vision, a retirement community that caters to gays and les-

bians and that is now under construction in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

There are other gay and lesbian retirement communities in scenic desert landscapes and in beach communities, but when it is completed, Rainbow Vision will be the first to also include a full-service assisted living facility.

Silver, who will be in Houston this weekend to make a presentation at Empower's Equality 101 Conference, said although Santa Fe is a perfect setting for Rainbow Vision, she isn't sure she chose it.

"I think it chose us," she said. "It was the spiritual calling of the land that chose us, as well as the open atmosphere for our population."

Brilliant red sunsets as a backdrop for adobe dwellings dripping with red chili ristras provided a stunning landscape for the community Silver had in mind.

The journey was a long one, but when she and her partners closed late in 2004 on the property on St. Francis Drive and Rodeo Road, south of the city center, Silver said she thought to herself, "This has been a fantastic journey."

IT'S A JOURNEY THAT CONTINUES AS construction in Santa Fe is beginning to reveal visible signs of what will be. The journey brings Silver to

Please see **RAINBOW** on Page 22

BACK TO BABYLON: 'QAF: The Ancient Babylon Tour' lands at South Beach this weekend. **PAGE 17**

PIZZA TO DIE FOR: Candelari's opens a new pizzeria in the Heights, and it may be some of Houston's best. **PAGE**

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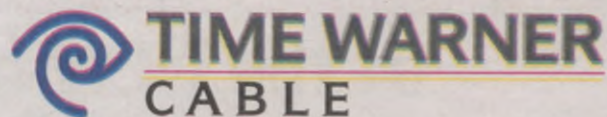
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


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music JOHNNY HOOKS



The 'Ancient Babylon Tour' comes to Houston Saturday with the QAF club as it might have appeared in Babylonia, circa 200 B.C.

Time of decadence

TO PARAPHRASE "AND THE BEAT Goes On" by Sonny and Cher, "Circuit parties were once the rage, uh huh, but history has turned the page, uh huh."

Let's face it the era of the mega circuit scene is over. Gone are the long weekends in exotic cities, with shirtless men remaining awake for days on end.

According to Adam Gill, president of Embrace Productions, the company bringing "Queer as Folk: The Ancient Babylon Tour" to South Beach on Saturday, "It all happens for a reason. The original scene grew out of a need to feel the bonds of the AIDS crisis slip off us. It was liberating. Now the scene is more mature. Less commitment, yet all the fun and atmosphere without spending a lot of money and taking a week off."

Gill knows of what he speaks. In association with Showtime Networks, Gill's Embrace Productions has criss-crossed the country over the last three years with different versions of the Babylon Tour.

"Queer As Folk: The Ancient Babylon Tour" builds on the momentum of the highly successful "Queer As Folk: The Babylon Tour of 2003," which recreated the club from the popular cable show and "Queer As Folk: Future Babylon Tour" of 2004, which re-imagined the club as it would look in 2200.

For the "Queer As Folk: Ancient Babylon Tour" Showtime Networks and Embrace Productions reinterpret what Babylon would look like as the birthplace of decadence, the ancient city of Babylonia, in the year 200 B.C.

Houston will be treated to Superstar DJ Abel, spinning the tunes that he highlights on his new CD "Queer as Folk: Club Babylon." A slew of dance floor faves by icons of gay America are remixed on the new CD including Kristine W, Carl Cox, Loleatta Holloway, Murk and Gadjo. The name DJ Abel is familiar to many remix aficionados.

Born in New Your City, Abel Aguilera has always had a love for music. At thirteen, Abel moved to Miami where his fever for the turntables began. In 1980, Abel was offered jobs spinning at nightclubs on Miami's famous Bickell Avenue.

Local radio producers caught on to his infectious rhythms and soon Abel had his own mix show on Miami's Super Q FM 107. Abel's notorious show ran nearly



seven years. In March of 1996, Salvation opened in South Beach. The promoters brought Abel in to spin Saturday nights, and he has never looked back.

Soon afterward, Abel and famed remixer Ralph Rosario partnered and created the production and mixing team known as "Rosabel." Together they have had the opportunity to work with Otmar Liebert, Gloria Estefan, Donna Summer, Jeanne Tracy and others. Abel is now the resident DJ at Orbit Miami.

HOUSTON BABYLON REVELERS WILL once again be treated to a performance by RKM, also known as Rubio and Kidd Madonny. They may have begun as simple go-go boys in 1995, but Rubio and Kidd's vision has evolved into the present day artistic arena of RKM Design and Production, Inc.

Gill still speaks in awed tones when he discusses RKM from his Toronto office. "They are amazing. Sometimes I don't know how they do it. They create the entire set and all the different elements that go into them. The stunning visuals, the lights, everything. They set it all up, it takes about 24 hours at each stop, perform at each stop, then somehow manage to break it all down and get to the next location."

Gill looks forward to returning to Houston's South Beach. "Houston has been great to us. We love it." And, Jim McDermaid and Gill are longtime friends.

Make sure you get there early, since the first 200 people through the door will receive a free CD from tour sponsor Midori and Centaur Music.

"Queer as Folk: The Ancient Babylon Tour" Saturday from 9 p.m. until 4 a.m. at South Beach, 815 Pacific. \$15 advance tickets including the VIP line entrance are on sale at Meteor, JR's, South Beach, M2M Fashions and Hollywood Superstore. VIP tickets to the event can also be purchased online at www.Circuitticket.com.

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television BRIAN MOYLAN



Showtime's new documentary, 'Same Sex America,' offers an inspiring look at the fight for equal marriage rights in Massachusetts.

Here comes the pride

DURING JUNE, WITH ALL THE PRIDE celebrations, rallies and parties, it's easy to get swept up in the joy and forget that there are still plenty of people who oppose our fight for civil rights.

On the flip side, with those increasingly vocal and powerful anti-gay activists spearheading the passage of constitutional amendments barring same-sex unions, it would be easy to forget that the fight for equal marriage rights might one day be won.

Into this storm of opposing viewpoints strolls "Same Sex America," a new documentary that premieres on Showtime Monday, June 27, at 8 p.m. This film, which got its debut at the Tribeca Film Festival in April, does a great job balancing both sides while looking at the state of same-sex marriage rights in Massachusetts.

Yes, I know what you're thinking: not another documentary about same-sex marriage. But this one is probably the best of the bunch since the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ordered the state to begin issuing marriage licenses to gay couples in 2004.

EQUAL PARTS CIVICS EXERCISE AND human interest, directors Henry Corra and Charlene Rule follow the action up until the court-appointed deadline, on May 17, 2004, when the state had to start issuing marriage certificates to same-sex couples. The documentary also looks at the lives of gay and lesbian couples who planned to say "I do" once the state granted them the right to do so.

Along with controversial topics, there are always activists, lobbyists, orators and champions on both sides of the issue, and all of those get their due in discussing this topic.

The most amazing feat in this film is the balance Corra and Rule offer both sides, while also showing gay couples living and loving with their families. Second on the list of accomplishments is making the many votes, laws, decisions, referenda and stipulations involved in this case seem easy to understand for most any viewer.

But all that bland political mess is balanced out with the raw emotion of the citizens at the statehouse. The directors intersperse anti-gay activists singing hymns with gay activists shouting slogans and conservative lobbyists' frustration with gay couples' elation.



Gay couple Jon and Paul Cronin-Swalboski share their big day with all of America in 'Same Sex America,' a new Showtime documentary that follows the fight for marriage rights in Massachusetts and documents several couples tying the knot. (Photo courtesy of Showtime)

And once the big day comes and goes, the weddings begin. But the events are a bit anti-climactic. As one gay male couple notes while leaving their town hall holding a marriage license, "So, this little thing is going to destroy the country?"

Whether at the county clerk's office or on a country club lawn, it's thrilling to watch how these couples express the love and joy they feel when that their relationships are officially recognized by the state. If you are one to cry at weddings, these ceremonies are really going to make you bawl. And, for the record, a lesbian couple, not gay men, throws the most lavishly fabulous ceremony.

Although you might weep at the gowns and tuxes, cakes and rings, this is still really a story about civil rights and the gay movement.

One Massachusetts lesbian, who decides that she and her partner aren't ready to take the plunge, says after watching other couples do it, "It's not that we can get married. It's that the world is going to change and it's going to get better."

Informative and uplifting, this is the rare gay documentary that should be as rewarding for gay viewers, who are often already well-versed on these issues, as it is for those who have never met a gay person before.

i MORE INFO

'Same Sex America'
Showtime
Monday, June 27, at 8 p.m.

dining J.A. CHAPMAN

Ingredients are fresh and the toppings generous as Candelari's Pizzeria expands to the Heights with with copious garlic, fennel and family recipe sausage.

Pizza at its best

THE CHEESE WAS STILL BUBBLING when the waiter placed the pizza on the raised stand atop our table. Garlic and fennel wafted towards us, and the crispy yeast crust begged for us to dig in.

We were sitting in the new Candelari's Pizzeria. I had stumbled across it when a construction detour sent me for a spin around the new Washington-on-Westcott roundabout. A sign that read, "Now Open" caught my eye. Candelari's had arrived in the Heights.

Candelari's Pizzeria opened a few years ago in Bellaire. A storefront pizzeria, with mostly take-out business, it's been a hit from the beginning. Owner Michael Mays, the self-proclaimed King of Sausages, had been making his outstanding sausages from his grandfather Candelari's secret recipes for many years. Opening a pizza joint gave him the chance to serve them to the public.

The Heights restaurant is the second location for Candelari's and offers much more dine-in seating as well as beer and wine. But would the pizza quality hold up in this fancy new space? I'm pleased to report it's as good as ever.

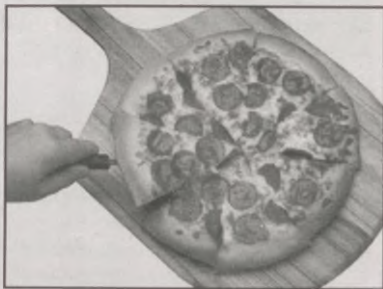
Candelari's is a straightforward place. The menu is on the wall, and you order at the counter. Get your own drinks and silverware and they'll bring your food out to your table.

Whatever you do, be sure to order something with Candelari's Italian sausage. It's loaded with garlic and fennel and has a spicy kick. It shows up all over the menu, from the pizzas to the pastas and sandwiches. It's simply some of the best Italian sausage you'll find anywhere.

Candelari's offers the usual collection of signature pizzas (\$14 - \$20), which are loaded with toppings. The Papa Albert's offers a good mix of sausage, pepperoni and vegetables, and plenty of mozzarella. Vegetarians might like the Spinaci, which comes with a parmesan crust, spinach, tomatoes, feta and basil, which provides a bright burst of flavor.

The ingredients are fresh, and they're generous with the toppings. If the crust sometimes gets a little soggy, or the cheese is a bit gloopy, these are minor quibbles. Overall, Candelari's offers some of the best pizza in town.

If you're not in the mood for pizza, pastas and sandwiches are on the menu as well. Try a grinder - a large sub sandwich. The meatball grinder (\$6.95) was served on a crisp baguette and topped with marinara sauce. The meatballs were a little plain, but the sauce was zippy. All grinders come with mustard sauce or Italian dressing, which struck me as odd considering the whole thing was dripping with marinara. I



used my not-too-spicy mustard sauce as a dip for my potato chips.

THIS TIME OF YEAR, A CHILLED SALAD is a welcome option. The house salad (\$5.95) is crisp and cool and loaded with goodies. The robust vinaigrette is a good topper. Or try the snappy Caesar (\$5.95), which is tossed with plenty of parmesan and a respectable dressing.

For a good overview of Candelari's pizza varieties, try visiting at lunch time for the all you can eat pizza buffet. For \$7.95 you get a salad, drink and all the pizza you can manage. They don't skimp on the pizzas, offering many of their signature pizzas, as well as some simple one-topping pizzas.

I sampled the Pollo Arrosto pizza from the lunch buffet, and while I'm not normally a chicken pizza fan, I found the roasted garlic, sun-dried tomato and feta cheese combination irresistible. The T-Rex, loaded with meats including the excellent Candelari's andouille sausage, is a carnivore's dream.

Candelari's in the Heights is already busy. It can be packed in the evening and very loud, helped along by the wood floor and copper-topped tables. There's a spacious deck on two sides of the building, but, despite the fans, it's really warm this time of year. With the first cool breeze in fall, no doubt it will be prime real estate.



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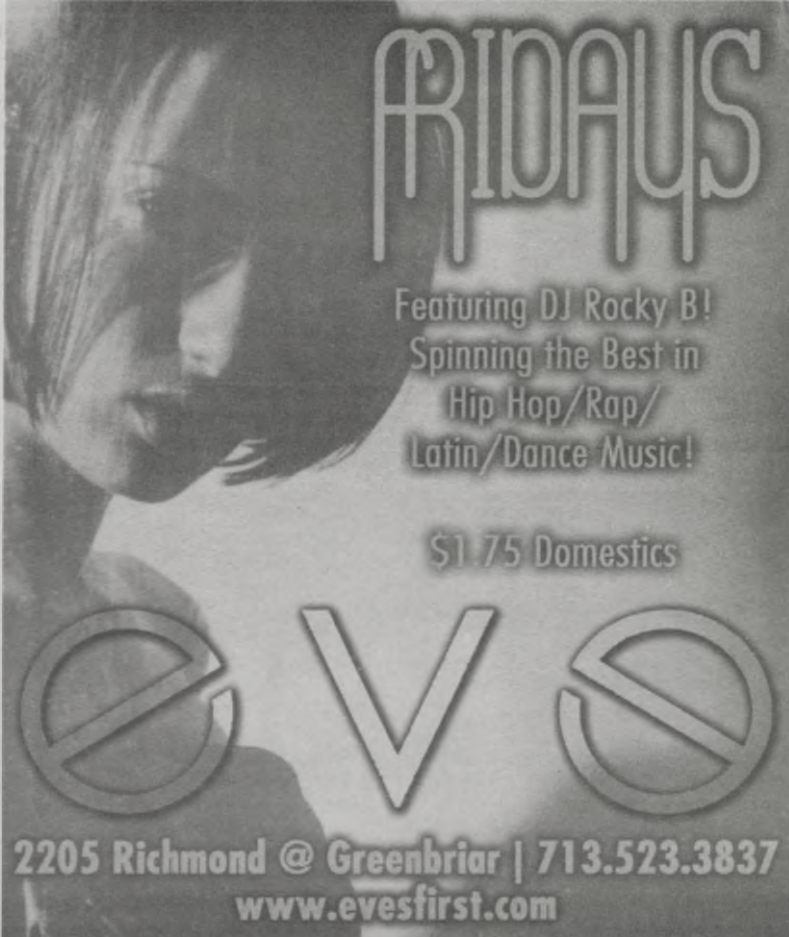


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nitelife JOHNNY HOOKS



A beach party, jocks in dresses, a loft party, Jade Esteban Estrada, a take on Rodgers & Hammerstein and a visit from Lady Bunny

Hello Lady Bunny

LOVE IS IN THE AIR, EVERYWHERE I look around! Can you feel it? HotGG sure can as Houston gears up for Pride 2005.

IT CAN FINALLY BE REVEALED. HotGG recently mentioned a Texas-sized surprise was coming to Rich's. You are NOT going to believe this, but I got the exclusive word from the sizzling Michael de Medici of Houston Stonewall Democrats and sexy DJ Mark D from Rich's Houston and XM Satellite radio. Starting on Sunday June 26 at the "Night in Oz" party at Rich's and continuing for the next 11 Sundays, Rich's is throwing a pool party, at their new fully working pool and hot tub! Partnering with Aquafest Cruises, this is a T-Dance with a twist. Grab your swimsuits and get ready for a day of decadent indulgence. The entire patio will be transformed into a mini-Promenade deck, complete with décor, delicious bites from Baba Yega, Brown Bag Deli, Niko Niko's, Kam's and Barnaby's, tons of door prizes (including cruises to Belize and Alaska) deck chairs and sexy boy and girl deck waiters.

THE FUN KICKS OFF AT 4:30 P.M. ON the 26th but the start time will move up to 2:30 every Sunday thereafter. This Saturday at Rich's Houston we'll see "Jocks in Dresses," a benefit for the Montrose Softball League, AssistHers and the Houston GLBT Community Center. No cover from 10:30 until 11 p.m. See your favorite softball players as they turnabout and perform some wacky hits! "Jocks in Dresses" is from 6 until 10 p.m. and is 18 and up. 21 and up after please. See www.RichsHouston.com for all the breaking news.

IF YOU NEED A SEXY SWIMSUIT FOR Sundays at Rich's, stop by Male UWear at 415 Westheimer. They are the exclusive carrier in the Southwest for Aussie Bum suits.

A NOTABLE ARRIVAL THIS WEEKEND is sure to keep you wiggling your bum! This Friday, the one and only Lady Bunny arrives in Houston for the Guava Lamp second coming. Her shows are at 10 p.m. and Midnight and admission is free. Say hi to DJ Chris Allen if you can make your way through the throngs. 570 Waugh (713) 524-3359.

MORE FOR FRIDAY. THIS MONTH Zeke Ziliak and DJ Surain's "The Loft Project" is privileged to be the official kickoff dance party for Pride 2005. Houston Pride will be having their Pride kickoff party from 7 until 10 p.m. in the lobby of the Chase Bank building on Travis Street. Then from 10 p.m. until 2 a.m., DJ Surain



Lady Bunny pays a visit to Houston this weekend.

will be spinning just two blocks away at Glo, 507 Main Street. That night you can walk from one event benefiting Pride to another, as a portion of "The Loft Project's" proceeds will go to Houston Pride!

AND FOR SATURDAY! SEXY QUEER artist Daniel Kayne Edwards is having an art opening at Mind Puddles at 2305 Dunlavy. The opening is from 7 to 9 p.m. Phone 713-529-6463 for details.

MORE FOR YOUR WEEKEND!! THE exciting third and final concert of the Gay Men's Chorus of Houston season is here. Come hear 100 men's voices, outstanding vocalist Sharon Montgomery and the GMCH band bring you the magic and very best music of Rodgers and Hammerstein, with a GMCH twist. It will be a grand night of singing Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sunday, 3 p.m., at The Wortham Center, Cullen Theatre. For tickets call 800-494-TIXS or www.boxofficetickets.com/gmch. Tickets range in price from \$15-\$35. More information can be had by visiting their website at www.gmch.org.

FINALLY DEARS, LATIN POP STAR Jade Esteban Estrada will debut his Award-winning solo musical comedy "ICONS: The Lesbian and Gay History of the World", Vol. 1 at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Resurrection Metropolitan Church, 2025 West 11th Street. This anticipated performance is a benefit for the Gulf Coast Archive and Museum of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender History. Tickets are \$15 at the door. For more info see www.GetJaded.com, www.gcam.org or call 713-692-8735.

@ 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!

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

School's out

Ben Affleck's ballsy pranks, Hillary Clinton's classmates and Bob Jones' boxers

Just because he graduated from high school a long time ago doesn't mean that actor **BEN AFFLECK** can't still be sophomoric.

His friend **KEVIN SMITH**, who directed the star in the lesbian-themed "Chasing Amy" and "Jersey Girl," told the British edition of men's magazine *Maxim* that Affleck had a very gay prank he liked to play on set.

"I'd be sitting in the director's chair and I'd be watching a playback, and he'd stand behind me," Smith told the magazine.

"Every once in a while I'd feel something on my neck. I'd be like, 'What the fuck was that?' And I'd turn around and he'd have his [balls] out and resting on my neck."

Apparently class clown Affleck, who shares an Oscar with his writing partner and best friend **MATT DAMON** for the script for "Good Will Hunting" and is currently dating **JENNIFER GARNER**, called the gag a "fruit basket." But anyone who has ever been to a gay strip bar would call it "teabagging."

Smith wasn't very amused. "I was like, 'What the fuck is wrong with you, dude? What if it got out in the press that's the kind of thing you do?' He's like, 'No one would ever fucking believe you.'"

Oh, honey, we believe it. We *all* believe it.

School chums

A new book resurrects the rumor that **HILLARY CLINTON** was part of the "culture of lesbianism" when she attended Wellesley College, outside Boston, in the late '60s.

"The Truth About Hillary" by Ed Klein is set to be published later this month and alleges that Clinton was more than friends with classmate Nancy Wanderer, who later came out as a lesbian.

"Yes, I am a lesbian but I wasn't at Wellesley or for 20 years afterward," she tells *New York Post* gossips Page Six. "There was no lesbian culture there at the time. If there was, it was underground."

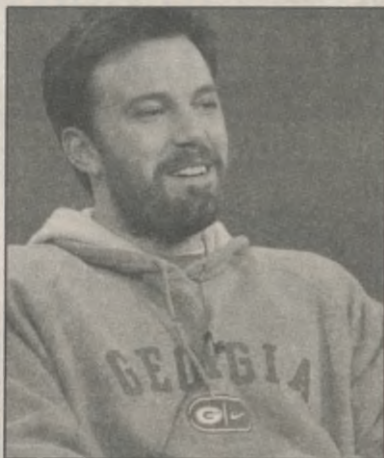
Another classmate that Klein makes a big deal over is Nancy Pietrafesa, who moved to Little Rock, when Hillary and husband **BILL CLINTON**, who was then governor, were living there.

Pietrafesa told Page Six she did not have an affair with the former first lady.

Klein never talked to either woman and repeatedly misspells Pietrafesa's name throughout the book. He refused to comment to Page Six on the matter.



Hillary Clinton



Actor Ben Affleck likes tea bags. And we're not talking the tiny little tea leaves from Tetley.

Philippe Reins, Clinton's rep, told the column, "We don't comment on works of fiction, let alone a book full of blatant fabrications and errors."

Undress code

Conservative Greenville, S.C., school **BOB JONES UNIVERSITY**, which, according to its Web site, is dedicated to "developing Christ-like character in every student," has made a strange change to its demanding dress code.

"Abercrombie & Fitch and its subsidiary Hollister have shown an unusual degree of antagonism to the name of Christ and an unusual display of wickedness in their promotions," the school's dress code policy, found on the Web site, reads. "In protest, we will not allow articles displaying their logos to be worn, carried, or displayed (even if covered or masked in some way)."

Guess that rules out boxers, too.

The brand, and especially its former magazine/catalog "A&F Quarterly," became popular with gay men for its delicious pictorials of men, mostly wearing little A&F clothing (if any at all) and often in homoerotic situations. The magazine was discontinued in December 2003 after conservative groups threatened to protest because of the racy marketing to younger shoppers.

Other regulations in the code for men stipulate, "Hair ... not shaved, spiked, tangled or shelved... colored or highlighted," "Hats may not be worn indoors except in the gym," "men are not permitted to get tattoos or wear body piercing."

Aside from going to the gym, this place sounds like gay hell.



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eclipse cover story

Rainbow Vision founder looks to Houston to expand

RAINBOW, continued from Page 14

Houston, where she is not only hoping to find residents for Rainbow Vision, but where she also hopes to find others interested in establishing another community in the Gulf Coast area. Another community is being planned for Palm Springs, Calif.

Eric Liston said he could be a future Rainbow Vision resident who won't need to be recruited. He began checking into the community the minute he heard that it was on the drawing board.

"I'm interested in that sort of concept," he said.

He remembers looking around his mother's surroundings when she lived at Bayou Manor and thinking, "What I would like to find is a gay version of this."

Since he's a frequent visitor to Santa Fe, he said, he's wondering if

he may not have found what he's looking for in Rainbow Vision.

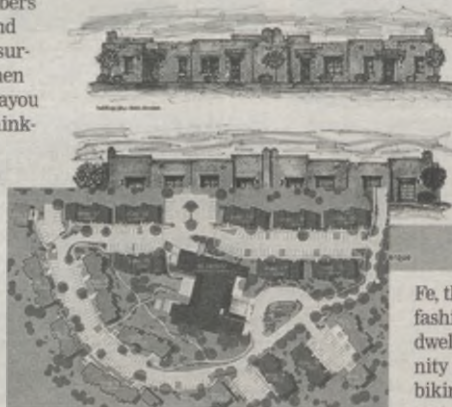
When he retires from his position as financial director at the Assistance Fund in Houston, he says he may rent a condo in Santa Fe and keep his house in Houston just in case.

"I thought I could go for a few months after I retire and see if it's the Shangri-La it seems to be when you're a tourist," he said.

He said he loves the landscape, and he is a collector of American Indian art, so it seems as though it should be a fit. If he decides Santa Fe is right, Liston said, "I would like to buy into something like Rainbow Vision."

The community will offer 40 club condos and 20 independent living condos for purchase, 60 independent living rentals and 26 assisted living rentals. Square footage ranges from 700 to 1,250 square feet. Condo sales are expected to start at around \$220,500.

In keeping with the ambiance of Santa



Fe, the community will be fashioned along an adobe dwelling motif. The community consists of walking and biking trails, hot tubs, shops, restaurants and a rooftop bar.

ALTHOUGH MANY GAYS AND LESBIANS have expressed interest in the community, Silver said, Rainbow Vision practices diversity. She said people in their 40s have expressed interest as well as straights who figure Rainbow Vision could be more fun than other communities that are available.

The community, she said, welcomes anyone who celebrates diversity.

While the journey to Santa Fe began in earnest in the mid-1990s as Silver began looking for investors and for others who were game to hop on board, she said Rainbow Vision probably started much, much earlier.

"We sort of trace our roots back to the Stonewall event," she said, mentioning the infamous riot outside a New York gay bar in 1969.

"At that point, we kind of thought of ourselves as having rights," she said. "It's a long vision, the vision of the rainbow people."

Now, she said, gays and lesbians are realizing that when they retire, they need options beyond those available to their parents.

"We're definitely envisioning our future ourselves," she said. "We're not going to be thrust into a situation that might not be right for us."


At the end of the day, when residents of Rainbow Vision are eating dinner, having a drink or lounging around the pool, Silver said, "They'll be able to share experiences with people who have had similar experiences, who had similar cultural icons."

i MORE INFO

Empower Equality 101 Conference
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www.ghgcc.org

Rainbow Vision
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www.rainbowvisionprop.com

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Dykes To Watch Out For by Alison Bechdel

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WHAT'S A LESBIAN REPUBLICAN TO DO?

OF ALL THE TIMES TO COME OUT TO YOUR FAMILY, I HAD TO DO IT RIGHT BEFORE THE LAST PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE. DAMN THAT JOHN KERRY!

CYNTHIA, I'M SORRY YOUR PARENTS ARE HAVING A MELTDOWN, BUT IT'S HARDLY JOHN KERRY'S FAULT.

WHEN HE CALLED MARY CHENEY A LESBIAN, I FELT LIKE I'D BEEN DROP-KICKED.

WELL, MARY CHENEY IS A LESBIAN, AND YOU'RE A POLITICAL FOOTBALL WELCOME TO THE CLUB.

BUT IT WAS A NASTY RHETORICAL TRICK! A CODED MESSAGE TO SCARE OFF BUSH'S EVANGELICAL BASE.

HEY, THE CHENEYS ARE THE RHETORICAL CONTORTIONISTS! THEY MANAGED TO SIMULTANEOUSLY GAY-BASH THEIR OWN DAUGHTER AND BLAME IT ON KERRY! IT MAKES MY BRAIN HURT!

THEY WERE JUST TRYING TO PROTECT HER. MY PARENTS ARE THREATENING TO CUT OFF MY TUITION.

OH, THEY'LL CALM DOWN. GIVE THEM A LITTLE TIME.

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. THEY HOME SCHOoled ME BECAUSE THEY WERE AFRAID OF THE VALUES I'D PICK UP IN THE PUBLIC SYSTEM.

THEY WANTED ME TO GO TO A RELIGIOUS COLLEGE. I HAD TO REALLY STRUGGLE WITH THEM TO COME HERE. AND NOW LOOK! THEIR WORST FEAR HAS COME TRUE.

OH, JEEZ. WELL, UN... MAYBE YOU SHOULD TALK TO SOMEONE.

I THOUGHT I WAS.

MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE COLLECTIVE...

THIS K-8 SCHOOL HAS BEEN OKAY FOR HER. BUT WHAT ABOUT NEXT YEAR?

IF ONLY WE HAD A QUEER HIGH SCHOOL.

WHY DON'T YOU HOME SCHOOL JONAS? I MEAN, JANIS. THAT'S WHAT I'M GONNA DO WITH J.R. SHE'S NEVER SETTING FOOT INSIDE ONE OF THOSE CONFORMITY MILLS.

BUT SHE'LL BE DOING STUFF LIKE ALGEBRA AND FRENCH.

I WAS QUITE A DAB HAND AT MATH. HAD AN AFFAIR WITH MY TRIG TEACHER.

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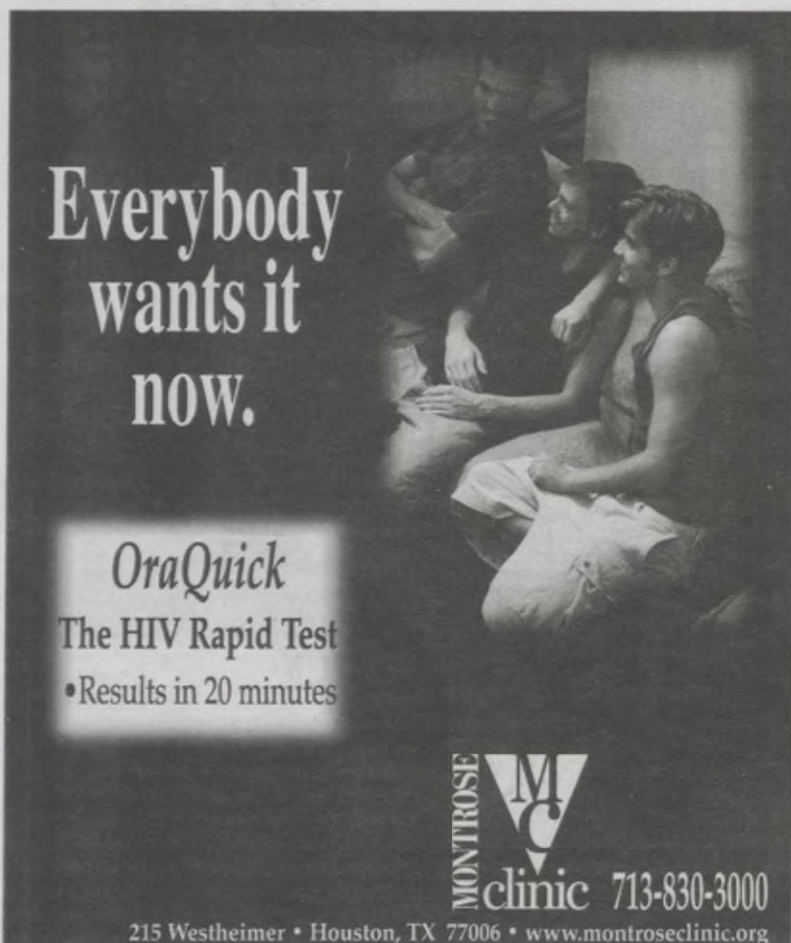
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Whatever happened to gay being glam instead of grunge?

MAYBE WE GAY MEN WOULD GET along with lesbians if the butch dykes weren't trying to be more masculine than we are.

WILL THE GUYS WITHOUT FACIAL hair please leave my bar! We moved there to avoid you. Come back when you look like real men — except for the cute young ones we all want to do badly.

TO THE GUY WITH THE HUGE ONE AT the gym. When I saw you swinging while toweling off before I went into the shower and steam room, I was impressed. But when I returned, 20 minutes later, and you were still drying off, I was a bit creeped out.

I AM TIRED OF PEOPLE WHO HAVEN'T had substance abuse issues preaching about something they've never been through. As a gay man, I have never been with a woman. Who am I to go around telling lesbians and straight men about oral sex with their partners?

AXE BODY SPRAY IS WRONG ON SO many levels, the first of which is that your dumb ass believes it should be used instead of deodorant.

THE TRULY SCARY ONES ARE THOSE still bathing in Polo or Drakkar Noir 20 years after it was only kinda cool.

WHAT IS IT WITH MEN AND FLIP-flops? The only thing nellier would be a skirt. For God's sake, guys, put on some old sneakers or loafers.

I'M SORRY I MISSED YOUR promotion to "God's gift".

JUST BECAUSE I AM A DANCER AT A strip bar doesn't make me a slut or a druggie.

AS A GAY MAN, I FIND "THE L WORD" to be much more intelligently written and acted than "Queer As Folk." I have always felt that lesbians are more intellectual and emotional, whereas gay men are primarily sexual.

TO ALL YOU BUTCH DYKES: WE ARE lesbians because we like women. What's

the point of being with a woman who wants to be, or look like, a man?

YOU GET ME ALL EXCITED IN THE club and tell me that I'm hot. Then you reach in my pants and tell me you're looking for someone a little bit bigger. Well I'm sorry you have such a gaping hole to fill.

AM I THE ONLY GAY MAN WHO washes his hands after using the restroom? These queens will spend hours getting ready to go out at night, stand in line for 10 minutes for a watered-down and overpriced drink, but can't spend 20 seconds at the sink!

I HAD A GREAT BOYFRIEND WHO I treated like crap and dumped. Now I'm fighting like hell to win him back, and he's putting me through the same B.S. I used to give him. So, to all you queens who complain about not having everything you deserve: be careful. I got exactly what I deserve, and it's not fun.

WHY DO GAY PEOPLE WANT TO become part of a belief system that doesn't want us? Judaism, Christianity and Islam want nothing to do with gays, unless we give up our lifestyles, and that leads to a lot of guilt.

YOU TOLD ME I HAD ISSUES BECAUSE I did not want to go out with you again. I wouldn't go out with you again because you did everything you could to put me down under the guise of being playful. That is the classic sign of an abuser.

WHY ARE MOST GUYS WHO ARE landscapers hot as hell?

SO YOU THINK SLEEPING AROUND IS easy, pretty boy? Try looking like a shaved monkey for a week, then come talk to me.

EVER NOTICE HOW MANY PEOPLE criticize us for our supposed lack of sexual morality and personal responsibility? Ever notice how few of those people do such a good job of leading by example?

HAS ANYONE NOTICED ALL THE news about kids missing and being killed? It's sure not the gay guys that everyone seems afraid of who are committing these crimes. It's the straight mothers, fathers and stepfathers. Why isn't that making any headlines?

TO THE PERSON WHO STATED: "My partner and I are not looking for sex. Is that such a hard concept?" Please preach it again. As a lesbian, I honestly didn't know so many other lesbians were into coupled sex as well. But, maybe those types of people are better off not trying to be our friends.

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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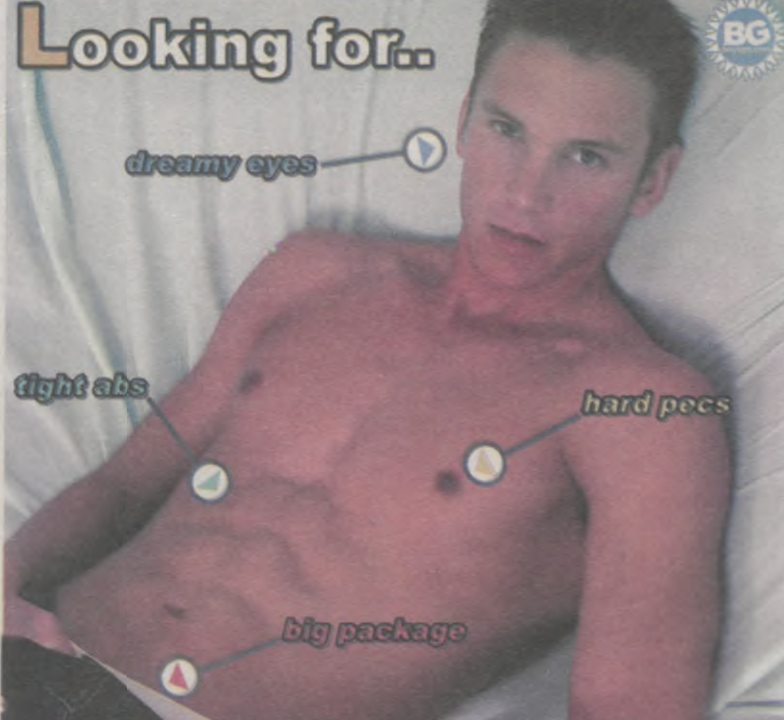
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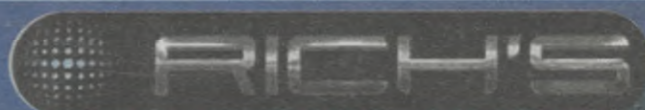


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