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Married with secrets
 Anger and confusion are the emotions of those who learn their spouse is gay
 Page 13

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JULY 29, 2005

MARRIAGE: Campaign begins in earnest. Page 3



'I'M IN': Chris Bell to run for governor. Page 3



IRANIAN HANGING: Gay groups are outraged. Page 7



Participants in a recent Exodus meeting were told by Rev. Jerry Falwell that allowing their children to remain gay is as dangerous as allowing them to play on the freeway. (Photo by Jeremy Bigwood)

Scores seek help to be 'ex-gay'

Inside look at Exodus meeting

By EARTHA JANE MELZER

Grown men, teen-agers and a few women rushed to the stage and bowed down in front of it, forming a mosh pit of cuddling, not slam-dancing.

"You want a miracle in your life," intoned Rev. Jerry Falwell, the Lynchburg, Va.-based televangelist and conservative leader.

The lights were dim, a rock band played soft music as purple and blue spotlights patrolled the crowd slowly.

Men lined up in front of the stage facing outward toward prayer partners, and they embraced their weeping or silent counterparts who came forward asking to be delivered — delivered of their same-sex attractions.

"There's not really a time frame now," said Mike, the man assigned to accompany this reporter at all times during the meeting.

As sections of the crowd thinned, the guitar music continued and Alan Chambers, president of Exodus International, encouraged everyone to take all the time they needed, "to do their business with God."

Holding on to one another, swaying, they seemed in no hurry. With all the high emotion, dim lights and soft rock music, the auditorium felt a bit like a junior

Please see **EXODUS** on Page 6

Brownsville gay club fire is ruled arson

The Heart Rock Club opened two months ago with a giant rainbow flag draped over the entry

By BINNIE FISHER

In Brownsville, a coastal town of about 140,000 people that sits next to the Texas/Mexico border, fire investigators are looking for an arsonist who torched a gay bar that had been open for only two months.

Please see **HEART ROCK** on Page 4



Yellow crime scene tape cordons off Brownsville's Heart Rock Club, a gay bar that was torched by an arsonist. (Photos courtesy of the Brownsville Herald)



Local life
 From a blue to a red state, Jeff Reid coped by getting political.
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Dish
 Jai Rodriguez says he's not having an affair with 'Restaurant' star
 PAGE 18





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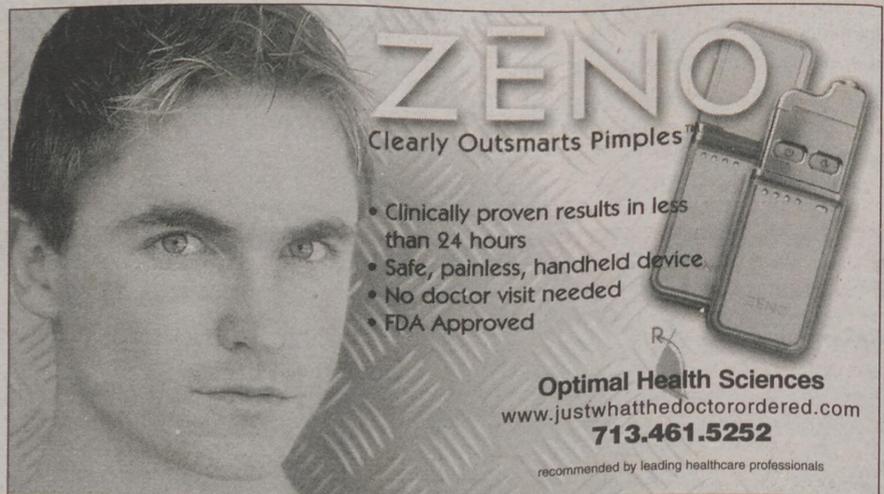
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local news briefs

Council candidate Sue Lovell snares key endorsements

Sue Lovell, a candidate for Houston City Council, recently received endorsements from three Houstonians who she considers to be "civil rights pioneers." The endorsements came from U.S. Rep. Al Green (D-Houston), Rev. Bill Lawson and businessman Howard Jefferson. In endorsing Lovell for the At-Large Position Two seat on the council, Green said, "As a city council member, Sue will be knowledgeable, capable and accessible. Sue is knowledgeable on the issues, which is important; she is capable of getting the job done, which is also important; but most importantly of all, Sue will be accessible when she is needed." Green is a former Justice of the Peace serving his first term in U.S. Congressional District 9. Lawson is Pastor Emeritus of Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church, and Jefferson is the 1997 recipient of the USAfrica Nelson Mandela Civil Rights Award. "To receive the endorsement of these three civil rights pioneers is a huge honor," Lovell said. "I pledge that I will work hard to deserve the trust they have placed in me." Lovell, a lesbian who is active in political, civic and neighborhood issues, ran for City Council in 2003 but did not make the runoff in her race.



Sue Lovell, a candidate for Houston City Council, has garnered the endorsement of three Houston civil rights leaders. (Photo by Dalton DeHart)

Bell tells supporters he will run for governor in 2006



Former U.S. Rep. Chris Bell announced on July 28 that he will run for Texas governor in 2006. (Photo by Dalton DeHart)

In an electronic communication to supporters on July 28, former U.S. Rep. Chris Bell, a Democrat, announced, "I'm in!" Bell said in the e-mail that he plans to announce his run for governor on August 14 in Austin. "We are going

in with eyes wide open, aware not only of the odds but also of the possibilities to achieve great things for Texas," Bell said. Texas Comptroller Carol Keeton Strayhorn has announced that she will challenge Gov. Rick Perry for the Republican nomination next spring.

HGLPC will endorse candidates at it's August 3 meeting

The Houston GLBT Political Caucus (PAC) will conduct its annual candidate endorsement meeting at 7 p.m. Wednesday, August 3. The meeting takes place at the Houston GLBT Community Center at 3400 Montrose Blvd., Suite 207. HGLPC members will participate in the endorsement of candidates running for office, but the public is invited to observe the process. Each candidate seeking endorsement completes extensive screening forms and is interviewed regarding his or her position on the issues and their commitment to fighting for civil rights of sexual minorities. For more information, contact the caucus at 713-521-1000. The caucus Web site is www.hglbtpc.org.



Former employee Smiley Maddox stands outside Montrose Diner, Thursday, July 28, reading a sign indicating that the restaurant is closed. (Photo by Dalton DeHart)

Montrose Diner closes its doors less than a year after opening

Employees who showed up for work at Montrose Diner on Thursday, July 28, were greeted by a sign posted by managers of the property leased by the restaurant. The sign read: "Due to unpaid rent, the management company exercises its option to change the locks. Any illegal entrance will be prosecuted." The gay-friendly diner, which served home-style specialties such as chicken-fried steak and mashed potatoes at the corner of Westheimer and Yoakum, had been open since February. The diner replaced Cabo Montrose. A TV news station that recently bestowed an award on the restaurant was outside Montrose Diner July 28 and interviewed workers who had showed up for their shifts only to learn they no longer had jobs. Other news stations showed up later. Owners of the restaurant could not be reached for comment.

From staff and wire reports

regional news

Voter turnout is key to defeating marriage amendment

A statewide campaign is being mobilized to educate voters about marriage amendment

By BINNIE FISHER

In any other off-year election, Houston would be ground zero for opponents or proponents of a hotly contested ballot initiative.

When it's an off year for presidential or legislative elections, it means there is a mayoral election in Houston, causing a higher than average voter turnout compared to other metropolitan areas in the state.

This year, a proposed constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage has emotions running high on each side of the issue.

Turnout in these elections is usually six to eight percent.

This November, though, all bets are off. Because a proposed amendment to ban not only same-sex marriage but also civil unions is on the ballot, Maxey said, "That makes this just a battle of who can turn out the most voters."

While he acknowledges that evangelical and fundamentalist pastors will be urging their congregations to vote, Maxey said, that doesn't mean that gays should step back and assume those groups will win the vote contest.

"If we can get our people to turn out and vote, then we can turn this into a real horse race," he said.

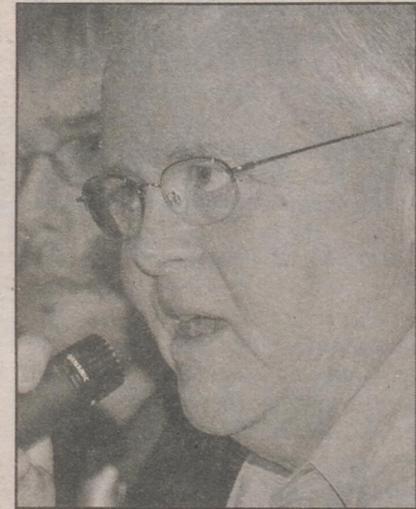
Maxey, who was in Houston July 23 for a town hall meeting organized by the Houston Civil Rights Alliance (HERA), said he is hopeful that between now and November, gays will educate enough voters on the issue to make a good showing.

HERA President Tammi Wallace said the group is gearing up for this election as they have in previous campaigns.

Although the amendment is seen as something that would affect only gays and lesbians, Wallace said, straights need to be educated as to its potential impact on common law marriages.

Maxey and Wallace are on the same page regarding what the issue really boils down to.

"Let's put this in perspective," she said. "What is most important, the education of the state's children and their future, and



Former State Rep. Glen Maxey, who is leading the effort statewide to defeat the marriage amendment, said he is looking forward to November with confidence. Photo by Dalton DeHart

that hasn't even been addressed.

Legislators convened early in the year with a mandate to overhaul the state's school finance system or risk finding that some districts in the state are forced to close their doors.

Two special sessions later, legislators failed in the first two to address the problem of funding public schools.

Down to priorities

Wallace said voters must understand that instead of finding a way to fund the schools, legislators spent untold hours on same-sex marriage and an attempt to prevent gays and lesbians from serving as foster parents. That measure was eliminated from legislation before it was brought to a final vote.

"Glen Maxey is right, this is nonsense," Wallace said.

Maxey has set up a Web site for the campaign to defeat the marriage amendment at www.nonsenseinNovember.com.

He said satellite offices will be set up in key cities around the state. Next week, he said, No Nonsense in November will announce the appointment of a campaign manager for the Houston office.

Wallace said she and HERA volunteers will work with the campaign manager to educate and identify supportive voters.

"We'll be doing block walks on August 13 and 27 and on Sept. 10 and 24," she said. "We'll be phone banking in between."

She said volunteers are being recruited to help with the effort.

Maxey said the voter identification efforts are strategically important in this election. He said it's about educating voters that by approving the amendment they are "giving a blank check (to legislators) so they can come back against other people's civil rights and civil liberties."

When it's all said and done, Maxey said, "I'm convinced we'll do better than other states that have voted on this issue so far."

MORE INFO

Campaign to defeat Marriage Amendment
No Nonsense in November
www.nonsenseinNovember.com

Houston Equal Rights Alliance (HERA)
713-522-HERA
www.Houstonera.org

regional news

Heart Rock Club fire mobilizing gays

HEART ROCK, continued from Page 1

The Heart Rock Club, a sports bar in a former life, went up in flames at about 4 a.m., on Sunday, July 24. Fire officials said six fire trucks spent the better part of the early morning extinguishing the blaze.

When the fire was finally tapped out, officials said although the exterior of the club appeared to have sustained minimal damage, the inside was completely gutted. In addition to the fire, investigators said, the club was vandalized before the fire was set.

The Heart Rock Club opened on May 20, with a rainbow flag draped over its entry.

At the time, club owner Sylvia Armente told the *Brownsville Herald*, "We accept all kinds of people. We use the rainbow logo because it is well known among the local gay community."

By opening the club, she said she hoped to "create an environment where people can enjoy themselves and not hide who they are."

As flames ravaged her business on July 23, a *Herald* reporter asked her whether she considered the fire a hate crime, and she replied, "What else could it be?"

Emiliano Diaz de Leon, director of the Men's Resource Center, a support group for gay and bisexual men, told the *Voice* that if arsonists torched the club to intimidate gays in Brownsville, they most likely defeated their purpose.

"Our hope is to organize around this incident," he said. "Hopefully we can host some sort of dialogue about hate crimes."

De Leon said several newcomers attended the Resource Center's weekly Monday night meeting this week and some said they came in response to the Heart Rock fire.

Mobilizing gays

"For this to happen in Brownsville, this is very frightening to us," he said. "It's generated a lot of fear and anger, but it's also mobilizing our local gay and lesbian community."

De Leon said gays in Brownsville tend to be fairly closeted.

The morning of the fire, Armente told the *Herald* that while the club had experienced no specific threats, there had been a few random acts of vandalism, including broken lights.

"Everyone's friendly here," she said, "but other people pass by and say nasty things."

Fire investigators said several cans of gasoline appear to have been used to start fires on the floor and on furnishings throughout the cinderblock building.

"There were multiple fires throughout that building," Brownsville Fire Marshal Ben Nuñez told the *Voice*. "They poured quite a lot of gasoline inside there."

From the moment investigators entered the bar, Nuñez said, there was no

doubt about the cause. "It was most definitely an arson fire," he said.

Under Texas law, arson is a second-degree felony punishable by from two to 20 years in prison and/or a \$10,000 fine.

Nuñez said Brownsville investigators are getting help with the case from the Department of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and from the Texas Fire Marshal's Office.

"We're still working on identifying suspects and a motive," he said. "It's a big scene. We want to take our time and make sure we do it right."

Nothing ruled out

The fire marshal said he would not label the fire a hate crime until the investigation is concluded. "We haven't ruled anything out," he said.

When it opened, the Heart Rock Club became the second gay club in the city. The manager of Ibiza, the other gay club in Brownsville, told the *Herald* in May that gays and lesbians in the lower Rio Grande Valley, where the town is located, don't tend to support gay organizations.

Max Smith said patronage has been up and down. He said just staying afloat is the challenge for gay bars in Brownsville.

Ibiza owners, who also operate a resort and club at South Padre Island in South Texas, closed their Brownsville club prior to the fire at Heart Rock.

The challenge now for the Heart



Although damage to interior of the Heart Rock Club is extensive, Fire Marshal Ben Nuñez said the exterior was not badly damaged.

Rock Club will be whether to rebuild. "It was the best club in town," Armente said. "If it's possible, we'll rebuild."

Nuñez said since the building did not sustain structural damage, "There's nothing there that can't be rebuilt."

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national news briefs

GOP officials withdraw names from Gay Games proclamation

CHICAGO (AP) — The five Republicans on a Cook County board withdrew their names from a routine proclamation welcoming the 2006 Gay Games to Chicago. The Illinois Family Institute is urging Democratic commissioners to do the same. "There's a big difference between tolerating and celebrating homosexuality," said Peter LaBarbera of the group. "For governments to be using taxpayer money and big corporations spending money to sponsor this, we think the average Joe sees that as being just a little bit off." The Cook County Board of Commissioners approved the ceremonial proclamation without opposition last month as one of a group of routine measures. "I must have been out of the room" when the proclamation came up, said Tony Peraica, one of the five Republicans on the 17-commissioner board. Organizers say the Gay Games, set for July 2006, could pump \$50 million to \$80 million into Chicago's economy. Gay Games spokesperson Tracy Baim said she was not surprised by the commissioners' move and was "actually more surprised" that the proclamation was approved unanimously.



Peter LaBarbera of the Illinois Family Institute urged politicians to remove their names from a proclamation welcoming the 2006 Gay Games to Chicago because "there's a big difference between tolerating and celebrating homosexuality." (File photo)

Signature-gathering can begin for Calif. gay marriage ban

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — California's attorney general this week released a summary of a proposed constitutional amendment that highlights how the measure would strip same-sex couples of most domestic partner rights while also banning gay marriage. The preparation of an official circulating title and language for the amendment means opponents of same-sex marriage may now begin gathering the 598,105 signatures they need to qualify the measure for the June 2006 ballot. Attorney General Bill Lockyer's analysis makes it clear that if the amendment passed, it would do more than ban gay marriage. Sponsors submitted a working title of "The Voters' Right to Protect Marriage Act," but the attorney general, a Democrat has renamed it, "Marriage. Elimination of Domestic Partnership Rights." The measure "voids and restricts registered domestic partner rights and obligations" from inheritance and adoption to insurance benefits and hospital visitation.

Navratilova settles lawsuit with sponsor of Rainbow Card

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Martina Navratilova has settled her lawsuit against a company that markets credit cards to gays. The tennis star sued Conshohocken, Pa.-based Do Tell, Inc., in federal court in Philadelphia in March because she disagreed with the way the company's Rainbow Card was being marketed. Do Tell had used Navratilova to market the card since 1995 with her permission, her lawsuit said. But in late 2004, Navratilova objected to the card being associated with the cable TV shows "The L Word" and "Queer as Folk," calling the shows "depraved," Do Tell claimed. The Rainbow Card helps fund the nonprofit Rainbow Coalition, which promotes gay health and rights. The terms of the settlement were not made public but Navratilova is no longer affiliated with the card.

ACLU asks court to make Mo. lesbian a foster parent over state's objection

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — The American Civil Liberties Union has asked a court to overturn the state Department of Social Services' decision to deny a woman's application for a foster parent license because she is a lesbian. At issue is an unwritten state policy that prevents people who are openly gay from becoming foster parents. The ACLU says that policy is the only reason the state would not allow Lisa Johnston — who hoped to raise a child with her partner, Dawn Roginski — to become a foster parent. Johnston, who has a bachelor's degree in human development and family, with special emphasis on child development, is an educational consultant who also has worked for an organization that trains foster parents. Deborah Scott, a spokesperson for DSS, declined comment.

Judge reverses custody restriction on Miss. aunt who is HIV positive

JACKSON, Miss. — Lambda Legal officials reported this week that they won the reversal of a temporary custody restriction placed by a judge that prevented a Mississippi mother from allowing her children to be in the presence of their aunt because she is HIV positive. In a news release, Lambda Legal said a judge in the Chancery Court of Jackson County lifted the order after testimony in the case of Keri Rowell, who received an extension of temporary custody of her three children in March with the condition that they be prevented from having physical contact with their aunt, Tanya Wilkins, who is HIV positive. Lambda Legal challenged the restriction, and the judge lifted it after hearing testimony from Dr. Jason Parham, an infectious disease specialist who offered the court information regarding the transmission of HIV.

From staff and wire reports

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national news

'Ex-gay' convention offers unorthodox advice

EXODUS, continued from Page 1

high school dance.

This was the Thursday evening, July 21, worship session of Exodus International's annual weeklong Freedom Conference, held last week in North Carolina at the Baptist Ridgecrest Conference Center, near Asheville.

The organization evolved from the first Exodus conference in Los Angeles in 1976 at a gathering that attracted 62 men and women "affected by unwanted homosexuality," according to the conference program and information on the organization's Web site.

Exodus now claims 125 ministries and says the organization has reached 400,000 people. Its purpose is to provide faith-based programs they say can enable gay men and women to change their sexual orientation to heterosexual.

Both the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association have condemned "reparative therapy" that seeks to change sexual orientation as ineffective and harmful to those who attempt it.

During the conference, which took place July 18-23 and attracted about 1,000 participants, this reporter was allowed to observe a portion of the events, if accompanied at all times by an Exodus volunteer.

During a news conference Thursday evening, Falwell, who was speaking for the first time at an Exodus conference, took issue with claims by other ex-gay advocates that even teens must at least consent to ex-gay "reorientation" for it to be successful.

The issue has been contentious ever since Zach Stark, a Bartlett, Tenn., teenager, touched off a nationwide debate by writing in his blog that his parents were forcing him to attend an ex-gay "camp" run by Love In Action, which is affiliated with Exodus.

Zach was scheduled to be released this week, and gay activists in Memphis planned a protest this Friday, July 29, to mark the occasion.

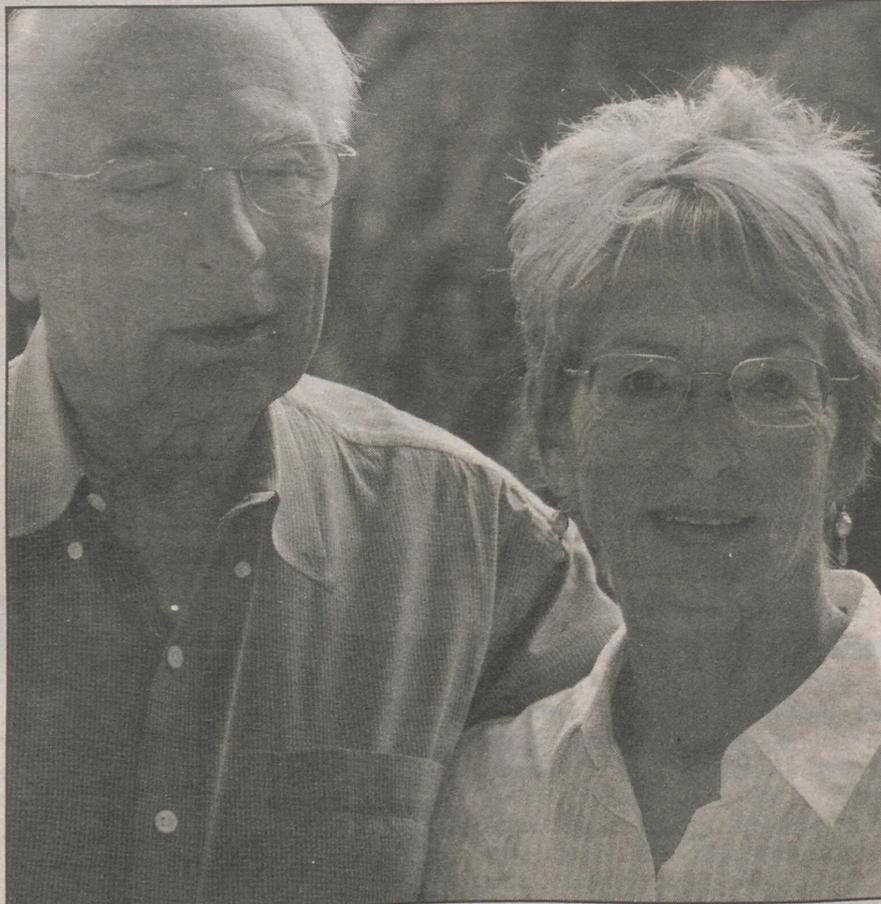
Dr. Warren Throckmorton, a psychologist and "sexual reorientation counselor," criticized the approach of Love In Action and Zach's parents, arguing that consent is critical to successful counseling, so parents shouldn't force their children to participate.

Falwell urges parents to save gay kids

Falwell said parents must intervene. Allowing a teen to be gay is as dangerous as allowing a son or daughter to play on the interstate, he said.

The conference involved daily worship sessions, support group meetings and workshops ranging from "Starting & Refining an Exodus Ministry" and "Countering Pro-gay Theology" to "Freedom from Masturbation? It's possible."

In the exhibit hall, a DVD featured Sy



Frank and Anita Worthen warned a group of ex-gay men and their would-be wives that it is best to avoid deep kissing until after marriage, and that prudent couples wait a year after wedding before attempting intercourse. (Photo by Jeremy Bigwood)

Rogers, who has a ministry in which he chats about overcoming his desire to become a woman. He said he found Jesus and learned how to act like a man.

Though most of the books on display at the conference seemed focused on issues faced by males struggling with same-sex attraction, there was a small area devoted to women's issues, including "Bridging



Chad Thompson, author of 'Loving Homosexuals as Jesus Would,' set up a display at the Exodus Freedom Conference. Thompson's book argues for a kinder, gentler approach to helping gay people become heterosexual. (Photo by Jeremy Bigwood)

the Gap — A Guide to Evangelizing in Women's Sports." The step-by-step manual gave instructions on how to identify lesbians on sports team and guide them toward Jesus and heterosexuality once a friendship is established.

'Making Your Marriage Work'

Mike suggested attending a workshop on "Making Your Marriage Work."

Frank Worthen, an Exodus founder, and his wife, Anita, offered tips on how the ex-gay male can marry a woman and meet the expectations of family and friends. They addressed a classroom packed with about 60 people, about half with what appeared to be their spouses.

"Men are ready for marriage when their desire to be protected becomes a desire to protect," Frank Worthen said. "A man should also have three years of celibacy," he added, "and have been free of pornography and masturbation for some time."

They were many questions.

A middle-aged man with a crew-cut wanted to know he needs to be "free of masturbation." He was seated next to a woman.

Frank Worthen asked the crowd, "What should be done if a man begins to have same-sex fantasies while making love to his wife?"

A man in the audience said he and his wife pray whenever they make love.

Anita Worthen told the crowd that married couples are responsible for keeping one another sexually satisfied, and that this can

present special challenges in a relationship with an ex-gay partner. A wife needs to be prepared to offer extra help so that her husband can have an erection, she said. Also, she said some men do not enjoy the feel of a woman's skin.

"How can this be overcome?" I asked.

Frank Worthen said men need to become "hard and masculine" in order to be able to enjoy the soft, mushy feel of a woman. To become firmer, it is OK for a man to work out a little bit, he said, just not too much.

He also said that many wives wonder whether their ex-gay husbands will expect them to engage in the "unnatural" sex practices to which they imagine their husbands have become accustomed. Not so, Frank said, and he recommended that couples avoid oral sex, which could stimulate gay fantasies.

The Worthens said physical intimacy should proceed slowly, and it is best to wait until marriage to experiment with deep kissing. There should be no commitment to sexual performance on the wedding night, they said, and some prudent couples wait a year after marriage before even attempting sexual intercourse.

Frank Worthen also warned the crowd that gay friends are a one-way ticket back to "the lifestyle."

His wife said wives should be prepared to submit to their husbands' plans. Her husband instructed audience members to practice communication: Be a good listener, put down the paper, he said, make eye contact, and pretend you care.

Distancing from 'radicals'

Chambers, the Exodus president, noted in an interview that Exodus tries to distance itself from "radical" groups.

For example, Exodus will not work with aversion therapists who use penis rings that deliver shocks when subjects respond to inappropriate imagery. Exodus also seeks to distance itself from "holding therapists" who try to heal people of homosexuality by touching them.

But Chambers said the strongest reaction to his ministry's work is from gay activists.

"We have received our fair number of death threats," he said. "We receive our fair number of piles of human feces in the mail."

Chambers said that society is very accepting of gay and lesbian people and that the idea that people are pressured into ex-gay ministries and therapies by an intolerant society is, "one of the funniest things I have ever heard."

"It is an increasingly sexual culture, and this related to the breakdown of our families, the breakdown of our Christian morals in our Christian nation," Chambers said. "I'm not saying we shouldn't respect and tolerate people that have different views on sexuality, but I don't think as a society we should promote anything that's outside of a ... monogamous, heterosexual marriage."

international news

Iranian executions prompt questions about Iraq

Rights groups dispute claims teens were hanged for being gay

By ELIZABETH WEILL-GREENBERG

A photo of two teenaged males being hanged in Iran last week swept across the Internet with claims they were executed for being gay.

The Human Rights Campaign, a Washington, D.C.-based gay rights group, released a letter to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice repeating the allegations and urging her to intervene. The U.K.-based gay rights group Outrage, as well as Belgian Foreign Minister Karel de Gucht, condemned the hangings.

But the circumstances that triggered the executions are now being questioned by human rights groups, which claim the teenagers, Mahmoud Asgari and Ayaz Marhoni, may not have been killed for being gay.

Research conducted by the International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International has found, so far, that the teenagers were convicted of and executed for sexually assaulting a 13-year-old male, a crime that occurred when the two teens may have been minors.

Asgari's lawyer, Rohollah Razaz Zadeh, told the Associated Press that Iranian courts are supposed to commute death sentences handed to children to five years in jail.

"The judiciary has trampled its own laws," Razaz Zadeh told AP.

But the lawyer said Iran's Supreme Court upheld the verdict and allowed the execution despite his objections.

It appears that reports claiming the boys were executed for being gay originated with the National Council of Resistance of Iran, an opposition group that is classified as a terrorist organization by the U.S. State Department. Accounts of the executions on gay news Web sites referenced reports by the group and its English language news site, www.iranfocus.com.

IGHRC, Amnesty and Human Rights Watch have not yet uncovered evidence that the charges were trumped up, officials with those groups said. Asgari and Marhoni also reportedly received 228 lashings while in detention for drinking and theft.

The human rights groups note that Iran's execution and torture of the teenagers remains appalling, no matter the circumstances.

'Not a gay case'

"It was not a gay case," said Paula Ettelbrick, executive director of the International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission, taking issue with the Human Rights Campaign's statement that was quick to condemn the execution as anti-gay.

"We would welcome HRC's involvement in demanding that our government speak

out on human rights violations. It was just the wrong case," she said.

Ettelbrick said she was also disturbed by the racially charged language used by some gay rights groups to condemn the execution, such as when Peter Tatchell of Outrage said in a statement, "This is just the latest barbarity by the Islamofascists in Iran."

HRC received their information on the executions in Iran primarily from news reports Thursday and Friday, according to Steven Fisher, the group's communications director.

"We don't give one of the most secretive, aggressive nations the benefit of the doubt," Fisher said. "We would be relieved if reports are erroneous that these young Iranian men were punished for something that should never be a crime in any nation."

Congressman Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), the ranking member of the House International Relations Committee, blasted the executions as violations of Iran's obligations under international law and signs of bias against gays.

"This sickening episode shines a bright light on the severe shortcomings of the Iranian legal system," Lantos said in a statement. "No matter what legal sources or traditions a country bases its law upon, there is no justification for whipping and executing people amid an angry mob — particularly not when the convicts committed offenses while they were minors, who are specifically protected under international law."

"And in this case, authorities apparently chose to play on deep-seated feelings of bigotry toward homosexuality, which can carry the death penalty in Iran," he added.

Noel Clay, a State Department spokesperson, said Wednesday afternoon that there were no plans to release an official statement about the executions, but the department did release a general statement about the Iranian justice system:

"We remain concerned about Iran's judicial process. Defendants are not receiving due process of law, and trials lack procedural safeguards."

"As noted in our country reports on human rights practices, the judge and the prosecutor are the same person, trials are frequently held in closed sessions without access to a lawyer and the right of appeal is not often honored."

"We call upon the government of Iran to vigorously pursue prison reform, cooperate with international investigations of human rights cases and respect international human rights law and practice," the statement concluded.

Nobel Peace laureate Shirin Ebadi, an Iranian human rights advocate, said on July 23 that as a result of the executions, her Center for the Protection of Human Rights will intensify its fight against the use of the death penalty in Iran on minors.

"My calls for a law clearly banning execution of under-18s has fallen on deaf ears so far but I will not give up the fight," Ebadi told the Associated Press.

Scott Long, director of Human Rights Watch's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Project, said the public hangings were a "horrific human rights viola-



Two Iranian teenagers, Mahmoud Asgari and Ayaz Marhoni, were executed last week, sparking an international outcry. (Photo by AP)

tion," whatever the alleged crimes. One of the boys was a minor when the alleged crime was committed. The International Convention on the Rights of the Child, of which Iran is a signatory, forbids the execution of juveniles.

There is also uncertainty about the exact ages of Asgari and Marhoni, according to Long. Marhoni may have been 19, which means he was not a juvenile when the alleged crime was committed about 14 months ago, he said. Some news outlets reported that Asgari and Marhoni were 16 and 18 respectively when they were executed.

"We hope that the gay community won't simply turn away from it if it may not be a 'gay rights' case," Long said.

According to Human Rights Watch, local Iranian news reports tell a detailed story of the alleged crime, including interviews with the victim's father and a description of how the 13-year-old's bike was stolen before he was abducted and sexually assaulted at knifepoint.

100 lashes for gay sex

While there are serious doubts about whether consensual gay sex was the crime at issue in Iran, the story has sparked debate about gay rights in that country and elsewhere.

In Iran, homosexual intercourse between two men is punishable by death and homosexual acts that do not involve intercourse are punishable by 100 lashes, according to Hadi Ghaemi, Human Rights Watch's Iran researcher.

Several countries in Africa, the Asia Pacific, the Americas and the Middle East outlaw homosexuality, including U.S. allies like Saudi Arabia and Uzbekistan, according to the International Lesbian & Gay Association Web site.

In about 70 nations, homosexuality is criminalized and in 12 countries, it is punishable by death, said Ariel Herrera, acting director of Amnesty International's OUTfront! program. In Saudi Arabia, some gays who are convicted of homosexuality are flogged with 2,000 lashings, he said. Five

years ago, two men were beheaded in a Saudi public square for engaging in gay sex.

Some countries that criminalize homosexuality charge the person with rape or molestation. That is often the case in Iran, according to "Dan," an Iranian gay man who was granted asylum in the United States. Dan spoke to the Blade on condition that his full name not be disclosed.

Dan, now 30 and living in the Washington, D.C., area, said he witnessed two public hangings of gay men in Iran. He speculates that Asgari and Marhoni were hanged for consensual sex but the government said otherwise to squash public outrage.

"The Shariah [Muslim] law says the person needs to admit to an act of homosexuality," he said. "Even if you don't admit, they torture you to make you confess."

When Dan came out, Iran's volunteer military that enforces Islamic law came to arrest him, he said. He ran away, and eventually escaped to the United States.

Questions for Iraq

Human rights advocates hope that Iraq does not follow its neighbor's path on gay rights. Some want the Iraqi constitution to explicitly protect minorities, including gays. The Iraqi penal code does not criminalize homosexuality but it is unlikely that gays will be afforded protection in the country's constitution, Long said.

The larger question for Iraq will be whether the country emerges as a Shiite religious or secular state, he said.

"[A discussion about homosexuality] would become so politicized in the context of religious disputes," he said. "It could create an atmosphere for a crackdown."

There are concerns that if Muslim law, of which there are several variants, is adopted in Iraq then rights for women and gays will be limited. The New York Times reported earlier this month that one draft of the constitution said that equal rights for women will be protected as long as they do not violate Muslim law, sparking protest from women's rights groups.

Making Texas more gay-friendly is on Jeff Reid's agenda

From a blue state to a red one, Jeff Reid is getting political to improve acceptance in Houston and Texas

By DAWN RORIE

When Jeff Reid was offered a job at Baylor College of Medicine, he was thrilled but full of trepidation. As he prepared to move from the gay-friendly city of Seattle to the more conservative Houston, it was more than a move from a blue state to a red state.

Reid says he felt as though he was moving into the land of mega churches, Ken Lay and the other super rich, Republicans and the Bush dynasty.

"Red states feel very different than blue states, to me," he explains. He knew that being gay in Texas was going to be a very different from his experience being gay in a city like Seattle, where he never gave a second thought to kissing and holding hands with his boyfriend in public.

Once Reid arrived in Houston and got settled into his home in Montrose, he discovered that his initial impressions were a bit extreme. The city did, in fact, display quite a degree of tolerance for sexual minorities.

There were gay bars, bookstores, restaurants, civil rights groups, and even a Pride parade. He was relieved to note that gays and lesbians were not being tarred and feathered or ridden out of town on rails.

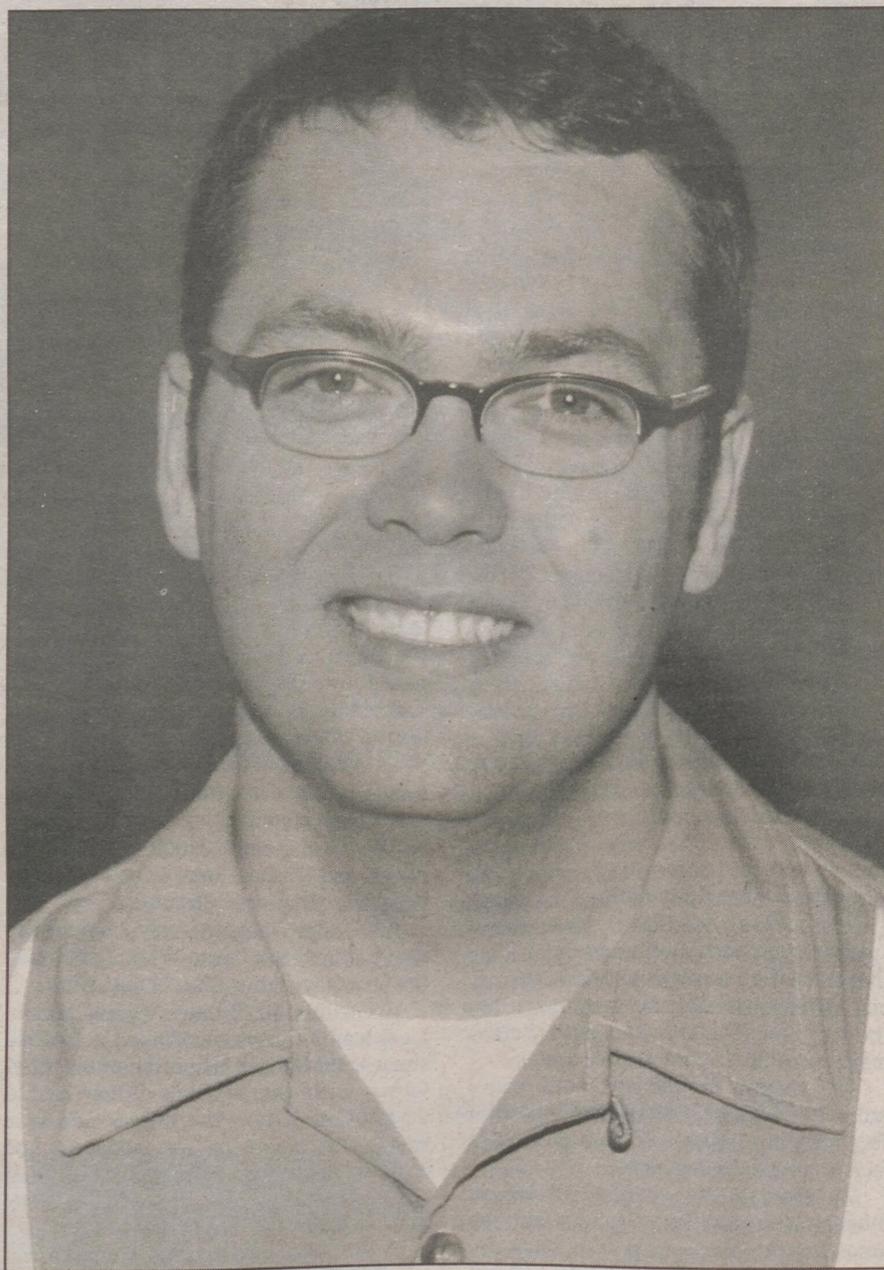
Tolerance, however, is a far cry from acceptance. He found that even Montrose, where diversity is generally accepted as the norm, is not insulated from hateful ideologies and violence.

In fact, people who express such ideologies often head into Montrose in order to find their targets. Reid describes several occasions in which he was walking down Westheimer after work, dressed in a nice shirt and a tie, carrying his bag and minding his own business, only to have teenage boys roar by in their cars, sneering at him and screaming "Faggot!"

"When I'd tell my straight friends at work about it, they'd ask me, 'Well, what were you doing to make them yell at you? You had to be doing something,'" he remembers.

It was clear to Reid that Houston had room for improvement in its acceptance of gays. He told himself, "I've got to do what I can to make this place better."

New to the city and unsure of where to turn, he went online and discovered the



Since moving to Houston from Seattle, Jeff Reid says he has devoted much of his spare time to making the city a better place for gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender persons. (Photo by Dalton DeHart)

Houston GLBT Political Caucus. Through the Caucus, Reid found Equality Knocks, a project that was working to identify fair-minded voters in the Houston area.

Reid began attending monthly Caucus meetings. After work and on the weekends, he devoted his time to volunteering with Equality Knocks. "Tammi Wallace (the president of Equality Knocks) had my number, so if there was a block walk or a phone bank, I'd be there."

After spending countless hours working with a close-knit group of volunteers, Reid found that Equality Knocks was more than a civil rights organization. It was truly "a close group of friends," he remembers.

He had relocated to a city where he knew no one, but suddenly he realized

that he had found a social circle – a family of sorts—as well as a way to volunteer and make a difference.

Making a difference

Making a difference in the world is important in every aspect of Reid's life. He says that he only took his job at Baylor after being assured that his sexuality would not be a problem. "No one at work cares, except to ask me where they can go and buy a nice tie," he laughs.

He quickly becomes serious as he discusses the plight of people who must hide their sexuality while at work for fear of losing their jobs. He says he feels a sense of obligation to be out and honest. "If the people who can do it don't, then no one will do it," he says.

JEFF REID

Age: 34

Home: Montrose

Occupation: Computational Biologist at

Baylor College of Medicine

Education: Bachelor's in physics from Harvey

Mudd College in Clairmont, Calif., Ph.D. in

physics from the University of Washington

Marital/Partner status: Met boyfriend, Jim

Duke, at this year's Bunnies on the Bayou.

Hobbies: Music (plays guitar and collects

records), playing video, card and board

games, and watching movies (preferably old,

foreign or weird).

Pets: A leopard gecko named Francis (who

enjoys eating crickets and sitting on warm

things).

Inspiring quote: "Patriotism is the virtue of

the vicious." —Oscar Wilde

Early this year, Equality Knocks expanded from a voter identification project into the Houston Equal Rights Alliance (HERA). In addition to voter identification, HERA focuses on advocacy and education pertaining to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender civil rights issues. The group is also building an alliance of like-minded organizations, in order to better create strategies and mobilize volunteers.

For months, Reid, along with Tammi Wallace, April Ayers, and a hard-working base of volunteers, spent their evenings, weekends, and days off at the GLBT Community Center, diligently working on the expansion. Now that HERA is up and running, Reid and the others are beginning to see the fruit of their labor.

Alliance partners include, among others, the Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas (LGRL), the Houston chapter of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), and the Human Rights Campaign. Alliance partners recently teamed up to host a town hall meeting to educate the public on the upcoming Texas constitutional marriage amendment and the repercussions that it could have on all Texans, gay and straight.

Although Reid admits that volunteer work does have its stressful points – he balances his role as HERA's treasurer with his career and a new boyfriend – he says that he is fighting for more than his own personal rights.

"One of the things that drives me is this idea that if there are people out there who are oppressed, even if I'm not necessarily that person, that damages me," he says. "Imagine being in the South during the Civil Rights era. There was a point in time when people stepped up and said 'Enough.' What a missed opportunity it would be to watch history being made around you and not step up and be a part of it."

out in houston

(Photos by Dalton DeHart)



Jay Calderon (left) and Dr. Dick Evans participated in a recent meeting of the Executive & Professional Association of Houston (EPAH) at Metro HisSpa



The staff at Metro HisSpa turned out to welcome EPAH members who toured the facility during their monthly meeting.



Leaders of groups that work toward civil rights recently participated in a town hall meeting to discuss strategies for fighting the proposed amendment to ban same-sex marriage and civil unions that goes before voters in November.



Among the performers in a fundraiser presentation by Midtown Arts Center, Glen Lambert (left) as a drag queen named Blanche Dividian, is the answer to a man's call for a mail-order bride. The event raised funds for the center and the Human Rights Campaign.



Jim Null (right), from Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), presented checks to (from left) Tammi Wallace of the Houston Equal Rights Alliance (HERA) and Matt Glazer of the Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas (LGRL).



The HRC Diversity Group posed for a photo at the Midtown Arts Center fundraiser.



Members of Bayou City Boys Club (BCBC) recently staged a fundraiser benefiting the Center for AIDS.

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Forum

editorial

Ask John Roberts one big question

The president's Supreme Court nominee won't say where he stands on abortion or gay marriage, but we deserve to hear him on the bigger picture.

By CHRIS CRAIN

I KNOW JOHN ROBERTS, the president's nominee for a seat on the U.S. Supreme Court. Not personally, but I know him, or at least I can relate to him.

He and I both grew up as a part of the same comfortable American majority — white, male, middle to upper-middle class, Christian — and that can shape your worldview every bit as much as growing up as a racial or religious minority, or a woman.

We learn to trust institutions of authority and embrace this country's Christian heritage because their rules are our rules, and they work well for us. Contrary to criticism from the left, we don't generally live by one set of rules and seek to impose another set on others.

But we also don't feel the true sting of those rules because they never stand in the way of our own "pursuit of happiness." We never face the agonizing choice of terminating a pregnancy, or struggle to find happiness as a gay American.

Well that, of course, is where John Roberts and I part ways.

But I wasn't dealing with being gay when I was in law school (the same law school that Roberts attended), working on a law journal published by the Federalist Society (the same organization that claims Roberts as a member, something he has shied away from acknowledging).

There was universal agreement among us in those days that *Roe vs. Wade*, the landmark abortion case, was decided incorrectly. I have absolutely no doubt that Roberts feels the same. The only disagreement we had in those days was over what case should be used to overturn it.

As part of the majority, we rejected the victimization rhetoric of minority groups and trusted fully in majority rule. Liberal judges who impose on the majority their own ideas were legislating from the bench, and presented a much greater threat to freedom.

So for us, limiting the role of the judi-

ary was an important way of defending freedom and democracy, not a zealous pursuit of minority oppression. It's important to understand that way of thinking, as we decide how we feel about Roberts sitting for two or three decades on the nation's highest court.

THERE IS NO RIGHT TO ABORTION written into the Constitution. There is also no right to sodomy, whether of the gay or straight variety. There's no right to buy or use condoms or birth control, either.

For some conservatives, that pretty much ends the inquiry. They point out that when the framers of the 5th and 14th amendments wrote that our government — the majority — cannot "deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law," they could not have imagined how judges have interpreted their words for the past 40 years.

From that constitutional protection of "liberty" against arbitrary governmental interference, the Supreme Court has fleshed out a "right to privacy," starting with *Griswold vs. Connecticut*, the contraception case in 1965. The idea behind this privacy right is that certain decisions are so personal, so private and so at the core of an individual's "liberty," that the government cannot interfere with them without a good justification.

In 1973, the court in *Roe vs. Wade* added "the right to choose" an abortion to that list of core personal decisions. But in 1986, the court drew the line, refusing in *Bowers vs. Hardwick* to add "homosexual sodomy" as a protected constitutional right.

Happily, the court threw out the *Bowers* decision two years ago, in *Lawrence vs. Texas*. In that case, five justices agreed that the decision by consenting adults to engage in private sexual conduct was too intimate, too much at the core of "liberty," for the government to interfere on the basis of nothing more than the majority's view of morality.

In a stinging dissent, Justice Antonin Scalia wrote on behalf of Chief Justice William Rehnquist and Justice Clarence Thomas that the logic of the majority's decision put outside the reach of the democratic majority much more than contraception, abortion and sodomy.

"State laws against bigamy, same-sex

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marriage, adult incest, prostitution, masturbation, adultery, fornication, bestiality and obscenity," Scalia wrote, can only be justified as the imposition of majority views of sexual morality. He's wrong about bigamy, incest and bestiality, but otherwise he's got a point.

FOR THOSE KEEPING TRACK AT HOME, that's five votes on the Supreme Court for a "right to privacy" that puts outside the reach of the majority these intensely personal, intimate decisions, and three votes against.

Who's the ninth justice, left over? That would be Sandra Day O'Connor, who voted with a 5-4 majority in *Bowers vs. Hardwick* and refused to join with the majority in *Lawrence* overruling that earlier decision.

Instead, O'Connor decided the court could strike down the Texas sodomy law — and similar laws in two other states — because it applied only to gay sex, making clear it was motivated by bias against homosexuals as a group. As for the nine states with sodomy laws that applied to both gay and straight sex, O'Connor said they would have to wait for another day and another case.

Don't expect John Roberts to tell us how he would have voted in *Roe* or *Griswold* or *Bowers* or *Lawrence*.

But whatever his sterling credentials, Roberts ought to be asked the bigger question before gaining a lifetime appointment to the nation's highest court:

Does he believe that some personal choices are so private, and so central to an individual's liberty, that the majority cannot tread on them for no good reason other than they believe it is immoral?

Before I came out, I never understood just how important that question can be for many Americans, whether they're gay or women or simply choose to live their lives in a way disapproved of by the majority.

John Roberts, who is married with kids, never got that comeuppance. He has lived his entire life as part of the majority, and my strong suspicion is that he sees no threat to freedom from the majority weighing in on those personal choices, and he sees no words in the Constitution giving courts the power to stop it.

If he says anything to suggest that hunch is right, then Democrats and fair-minded Republicans ought to do whatever it takes — including filibuster — to defeat his nomination.

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



viewpoint DAWN RORIE



Instead of crying 'conservative' at every turn, we should be asking, what qualifies John Roberts for the U.S. Supreme Court?

Experience is the real issue with John Roberts

WITHIN HOURS OF PRESIDENT Bush's announcement of John G. Roberts as his nominee for the U.S. Supreme Court, many civil and gay rights organizations and a slew of liberal blogs reacted in reliable knee-jerk fashion. They all issued an ear-splittingly shrill warning cry of "CONSERVATIVE!"

While my loyalties tend to lie with the liberal viewpoint and I, too, have my doubts about Roberts' qualifications for the job, I couldn't help but shake my head in amazement at the sudden outcry. My friends, I ask you, what did you expect?

Bush doesn't exactly have a history of attempting to appease those in the middle. His "political capital" was won because of voters on the far Bible-thumping, hellfire and brimstone, good old political right. Were we really shocked that his pick for Supreme Court nominee would be a (gasp!) conservative?

Even more alarming has been the direction of the attacks on Roberts. The reaction, particularly from prominent civil rights organizations, has centered around an intense focus on cases he argued during his years as deputy solicitor general for the George H. W. Bush administration. In a Supreme Court brief on *Roe v. Wade*, Roberts wrote, "Roe was wrongly decided and should be overruled."

In his reaction to Roberts' nomination, Human Rights Campaign president Joe Solmonese stated that a challenge of *Roe*

v. *Wade* could indicate a challenge to many civil rights, including the right to privacy that is the foundation of the freedom of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Americans.

For groups scrambling to build opposition to Roberts, the primary focus has been on cases that Roberts has argued and not on ones he has decided. This is because as a judge, Roberts' record is extremely short. In fact, Roberts has only been a judge since 2003, when Bush appointed him to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit.

In the time he has served, Roberts' decisions have provided little to no indication of what his stance will be on many civil rights issues, including abortion and gay rights. In fact, other than his argument against *Roe*, liberals have been unable to say exactly why Roberts is not an acceptable pick.

This makes our side uneasy. He has no judicial record, and therefore, we have little to which we can react. We have nothing specific to attack, and that is exactly where the problem lies. The left is so reactive, so dependent on focusing on the negative, that it constantly misses its chance to go on the offensive.

Why must we have a specific, bigoted, hateful judicial decision before we can rally our troops and have a clear plan of attack? The fact is, the lack of fodder for an attack on Roberts is his weakness. He has very little experience as a judge.



Amid all the outcry about what John Roberts did as a lawyer, nobody talks about his judicial experience.

OUR PRESIDENT HAS PICKED A MAN who has been a judge for barely two years as his best choice for Supreme Court Justice. Have we no pride in our highest court? Shouldn't pride, standards for our judicial leaders, and patriotism be our rallying cry, rather than fear and claims of injustice?

If the gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender citizens are ever to succeed in our fight for equality, we have to analyze winning strategies.

So far, the conservative strategy has been rather impressive. They claim to be on the side of religion, patriotism, family, and morality. They fire shots at us from their fortress of values and send us running and scrambling to defend ourselves.

We are so busy defending ourselves that we miss the obvious chinks in their armor. Isn't it time that we armed ourselves with a singular message, as the conservatives have? Neither side has ownership of patriotism or morality. Why do we shy away from taking these up as

our cause?

Instead of seeing the nomination of John Roberts as another situation in which we must duck and cover, screaming about unfairness and bigotry, we should take this opportunity to let conservatives know that we have pride in our country and our judicial system.

Conservatives are pleased that Bush has chosen a nominee with a conservative record. Our cries of "conservative" delight them. Our concern should be about Roberts' lack of a judicial record, not what cases he argued during the time in which he practiced law.

It is only in this way, by taking up the fight for justice and morality, that we can develop a unified message and, yes, even find a bit of common ground with those who are polarized against us.

@ Dawn Rorie is a student and freelance writer. She can be reached through this publication.

THE Organizations statewide are gearing up to fight the marriage amendment in November. What are you willing to do personally to campaign for full equality?



I would do as much as I can to make our voices heard, to get our equality

EUGENE DE LOS REYES, 24
Houston Student



Petition and call state legislators.

ERIC MC CARTHY, 46
Houston Retired



Discuss the ramifications of our current policies vs. full equality as to legal issues and basic human rights with our close friends and family.

JIM BENTON, 51
Houston Event planner/caterer



Offer education to people on the importance of rights on a person-to-person basis.

JASON SECHREST (aka-Ireka Phish), 34
Houston Event planner



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TRICIA LYNN 67
Spring Retired

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Interviews and photos by Dalton DeHart

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Golden girl
'Golden Girls' stars are rallying
around 'girl,' Estelle Getty,
whose health is declining.
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JULY 29, 2005

married with secrets

ANGER, CONFUSION ACCOMPANY REVELATION THAT A SPOUSE IS GAY

By ELIZABETH WEILL-GREENBERG

W

WHEN I FOUND out my boyfriend of four years was gay I felt a mixture of relief, disbelief and incredible guilt. He was the first person I went to with a personal

crisis. But he struggled with his anguish and guilt alone.

I learned that he had been with men during our relationship after I confessed to cheating on him. He told me he had been unfaithful too, also with men. Strangely, the significance of that didn't sink in at first. He insisted he wasn't gay; he was bisexual.

I believed him when he said he wanted to stay together. Until that point our relationship had felt close to perfect; breaking up was not something I ever considered. I saw our indiscretions as harmless, a need for sowing our wild oats.

So we both continued having affairs. We convinced ourselves this deceitful arrangement could work. But, of course, it couldn't.

We finally admitted to each other that we needed to break up when I fell in love with another man. We had become best friends and roommates — not lovers.

But even after we split he still would not acknowledge being gay. There was no Jim McGreevey-style news conference and definitive declaration that he is a "gay American." This grayness infuriated me. I wanted to understand how our relationship had deteriorated. If he was gay, then our problems made sense.

I kept expecting a meteor of revelation to hit us. He'd come out and admit our relationship had been a lie.

But there's the catch: Our relationship hadn't been a lie. He had been in love with me and, for years, sexually attracted to women. I once felt so desperate for answers I actually Googled: "I'm gay but I like having sex with women."

Results: None.

OFTEN MEN WHO COME OUT TO THEIR GIRLFRIENDS or wives are seen as liars who want the comforts and acceptance of a "straight" life. Author Terry McMillan filed for divorce from her husband, Jonathan Plummer, who inspired the 1996 novel "How Stella Got Her Groove Back." Recently, McMillan publicly accused



Author Terry McMillan learned last year that her husband, Jonathan Plummer, is gay. A messy divorce is now unfolding. Husbands and wives who find themselves in similar situations, on both sides, handle the news in different ways.

Plummer, who is gay and from Jamaica, of marrying her to gain U.S. citizenship.

"One of the biggest myths is they did it as a cover, as a way to pass in the world," says Alex, a member of the Washington, D.C. chapter of the Gay Married Men Association. Alex asked that his real name not be used.

He is married to a woman and they have three children. Alex told his wife he was bisexual before they got married but over the years his attraction to men has grown. Despite this, he tries to remain monogamous with his wife and they still have an active sex life with each other.

Even though Alex's wife knows about his desire for men and his past affairs, they want to stay together.

"Many men find themselves in their 20s, 30s and 40s realizing, 'My sexuality isn't what I thought it was,'" Alex says.

That was the case for Philadelphia resident Joanne Fleisher, a social worker who now counsels women coming out in marriage and is writing a book on the subject, "Living Two Lives: Married to a Man and In Love with a Woman," due out this fall.

"I had no suspicion or inkling of being gay," says

Fleisher, who described herself as "boy crazy" when she was growing up. Toward the last few years of her mostly happy, 12-year marriage she fell in love with a close female friend.

Fleisher and her husband, who had two children together, went into therapy to try to save the marriage but soon realized they needed to divorce.

Many women, like Fleisher, leave their husbands while still struggling with ambivalence about their sexual orientation.

"I left my marriage without having a sense of being gay," she says.

"There's no way to really know that without experiencing it over some time." For women who come out in marriage, their guilt can be overwhelming, Fleisher says.

THE BURDEN OF A WOMAN'S decision to stay or leave the marriage can be devastating. "[Women] feel every decision is the final decision," she says. However, "flip-flopping is a part of the process." Often women and their husbands will negotiate different arrangements to keep the marriage together.

"Any possible relationship women have tried — there's not a scenario you could imagine women haven't tried," Fleisher says.

"This is a tremendous ethical dilemma," she says. "It's very different from other women coming out because the decision involved is no longer a question of personal happiness. It, ultimately, will have a serious impact on the people that she loves."

That sense of responsibility is certainly not limited to women. When Vince, a member of D.C.'s Gay Married Men Association, acknowledged to himself that he is gay, he became severely depressed and even contemplated suicide. Vince asked that the Blade use only his first name.

"I had decided it had been better for everyone if I died," he says. "I had my plan in place, my method."

Vince said he successfully suppressed his attraction to men for most of his life. He was taught growing up in Tennessee that gay men were child molesters and perverts.

"I knew that wasn't me," he says.

In college he dated several women and fell in love with

Please see **MARRIAGE** on Page 19

COMPLETE DEAN: A recently released set of his three movies proves James Dean would have had a long career. Page 14

NIGHT FEVER: 'Turn the Beat Around' chronicles the history of the gay-friendly disco movement. Page 15

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MATTHEW FORKE

New boxed set showcases the enigmatic
James Dean in 'Giant,' 'East of Eden,'
and the sublime 'Rebel Without a Cause.'

Rebel without a pause

NEARLY A HALF-CENTURY AFTER HIS untimely death in a car crash at age 24, the memory of the enigmatic and reportedly bisexual actor James Dean remains a powerful force in modern pop culture.

Had Dean been allowed to age, gain weight and make bad movies like many of his contemporaries, would his legacy still hold the same mystique? No one can say. But Warner Home Video's new DVD boxed set "The Complete James Dean Collection" offers proof that his extraordinary talent would have afforded him a long and lasting career.

"REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE" (1955) WAS arguably the best examination of misunderstood youth on film. It resonates especially well with gay audiences who identify with the "surrogate" family formed by teenagers Dean, Sal Mineo and Natalie Wood. (Mineo was murdered in 1976; Wood drowned accidentally in 1981.)

At home, each young character feels alienated, lonely or rejected: Gay teen Mineo portrayed John "Plato" Crawford, who stares longingly at a photo of Alan Ladd hung in his locker in one scene and rarely sees his traveling parents. Wood's character, Judy, suffers from emotional abuse inflicted by her father. And Dean, who portrays Jim Stark, is appalled that his domineering mother frequently humiliates her husband, often forcing him to wear a frilly apron at mealtime.

"[Dean's character] was not a rebel in the sense that he was rejecting [his] parents," says co-star Wood in a vintage interview featured on the DVD. Instead, "He was really saying, 'Listen to me. Hear me. Love me ...' He was trying to get that connection."

The moment it opened in theaters (only weeks after his death on Sept. 30, 1955), "Rebel" launched Dean's cult status and inspired generations of young men who related to his brooding insecurity and risk-taking behavior. And because it portrays youths as complex human beings with real problems and needs, the film continues to endure with modern audiences.

Special features include a new documentary "Rebel Without a Cause: Defiant Innocents," audio commentary, a mid-'70s TV special "James Dean Remembered," unused scenes and cast screen and wardrobe tests. And like a poignant PSA from beyond the grave, Gig Young hosts a TV spot in which Dean urges young audi-



The 1955 film 'Rebel Without a Cause,' which starred James Dean, Natalie Wood and Sal Mineo, was arguably the best examination of misunderstood youth on film.

ences to drive safely, "because the life you save could be mine."

"EAST OF EDEN" (1955), DIRECTOR ELIA Kazan's film version of John Steinbeck's novel, garnered four Academy Award nominations, including Dean's first posthumous nod (as the anguished Cal) and a supporting category win for actress Jo Van Fleet (as Dean's wealthy brothel-owning mother).

Filmed on location in Salinas Valley, Calif., "Eden" also stars Julie Harris, Raymond Massey and Lois Smith. The two-disk DVD set features audio commentary, a new documentary "East of Eden: Art in Search of Life," the vintage special "Forever James Dean" and much more.

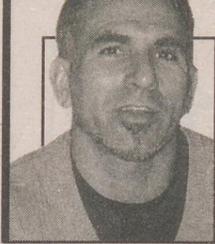
IN GIANT (1956), WITH A RARE "OPEN" interview from his book, "Celluloid Gaze," gay author Boze Hadleigh asks actor Rock Hudson what working with co-star Dean was like and why they did not get along: "Just because you work with someone, doesn't mean you can tell or find out what makes them tick," the gay actor says.

Fellow "Giant" actors Carroll Baker, Hudson (in archived footage) and Jane Withers share stories of Dean's eccentric and sometimes anti-social behavior in "Memories of Giant," a documentary included with Warner's DVD. Conspicuously absent is Elizabeth Taylor, who befriended the shy actor during production.

The film itself, a multi-generational Texas melodrama with a running time that lives up to its title (more than 200 minutes), was nominated for 10 Academy Awards, including Dean's second posthumous nomination, a record to this day.

MORE INFO

'The Complete James Dean Collection'
Warner Home Video
\$68.92
www.dvdb.com

books STEVE WEINSTEIN

New book details the secret history of the gay-friendly disco scene and how a new sound arose from New York's gritty streets.

Lovin' the nightlife

IF YOU ASSOCIATE DISCO WITH HAIRY chests, chains, Afros and sequined jumpsuits, then you need to pick up a copy of "Turn the Beat Around," by Richard Shapiro.

Though it starts in Berlin and Paris, the scene shifts to New York, where it pretty much stays through the '70s and into our own post-disco era.

Perhaps not in spite of but because of the fact that he's straight, Shapiro brings an altogether different perspective to the subject. Other books, most notably the equally excellent "Love Saves the Day: A History of American Dance Music," by Tim Lawrence (Duke University Press), and Mel Cheren's "Keep on Dancin': My Life and the Paradise Garage" (24 Hours for Life Inc.), have revealed the early days of the evolution of dance-music culture in New York.

Like them, "Beat" dutifully records the seminal parties at the Loft, a private space in a rundown building where David Mancuso, working on an unbeatable combination of instinct, love and hallucinogens, managed to forge together blacks, gays, tuned-in white, straight music lovers and freaks into a posse of dance disciples.

There were other clubs, such as the Sanctuary, New York's first gay disco, as well as holes in the wall, including a dive on Christopher Street named Stonewall.

In the wake of that came the first all-gay discos like the Tenth Floor and, in Cherry Grove, the Ice Palace. These clubs featured all-night dancing, with men increasingly dressed in a severe masculine style that became known as the "clone" look.

A distinct sound began to emerge from these clubs that combined the heavy bass of Motown, the percussion of rock, the syncopation of Tin Pan Alley and hi-hat hissing from the new synthetic music machines.

BY 1974, PEOPLE WERE PERKING UP their ears and moving their feet to music like Harold Melvin & the Blue Notes' "The Love I Lost," MFSL's "Love Is the Message" and Love Unlimited Orchestra's lush "Love Theme."

At the same time, Tom Moulton accidentally invented the EP (extended-play record), which allowed DJs to play a song continuously for longer than the few min-



Peter Shapiro's book, 'Turn the Beat Around: The Secret History of Disco,' sheds light on a subculture in the '70s that made scenes like Mick Jagger's first wife, Bianca, riding a horse in a club seem ordinary.

utes on a 45.

From here, the disco phenomenon exploded, until there were tens of thousands of clubs throughout the country.

New York, however, remained the undisputed capital of dance music, a title it has never relinquished.

It is altogether fitting that Shapiro devotes more space (six pages) to "I Feel Love," by Donna Summer, than any other record. Its mechanical, whirring music echoes Summer's passionless perfection.

Shapiro relates the Giorgio Moroder tune to the downgrading of human feeling to mechanical movements. Sex without passion, lovemaking without love, would prove to be disco's most unfortunate — and, ultimately, lethal — legacy.

Meanwhile, artists like LaBelle, Gloria Gaynor and the Pointer Sisters were incorporating soul music into the new 4/4 beat machine. If there was one song that epitomized this trend, it has to be "Fly Robin Fly" by Silver Convention.

If 1974 was disco's seminal year, 1977 was its undisputed height. In April, Studio 54 brought celebrity wattage, indiscriminate drug use and sex, a totally gay body aesthetic and the hated velvet rope to Midtown. In December, the film "Saturday Night Fever" enshrined disco as the zeitgeist.

But, as often happens, such dominance contained within itself the seeds of its own destruction. As Shapiro says, "I Feel Love" (released in 1977), created "not only the template for Hi-NRG but also for the mechanized, dehumanized feel that disco detractors hated."

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i MORE INFO

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dining J.A. CHAPMAN

713 Restaurant and Lounge hasn't quite arrived as a hip Asian fusion nightspot, but with sushi like that, it should happen soon.

An undiscovered gem

ASIAN FUSION CUISINE IS SO HIP IT'S almost passé. Once the province of inventive chefs, these days everyone wants to marinate their tuna in miso.

My experience with Asian fusion has been mixed. So it was with some trepidation that I ventured to the west side to visit 713 Restaurant and Lounge.

A sleek, modern restaurant, with curved walls, metallic tones, and strategic use of purple and red fluorescent lighting, 713 Restaurant and Lounge looks every bit the stylish spot it's hoping to be.

On a recent Saturday night, the restaurant was surprisingly sparsely filled.

Like many Asian fusion restaurants, the menu is a mixture of Asian classics and Western dishes, with a few crossovers. We couldn't resist trying the carpaccio of venison (\$12), paper thin slices of peppered venison, served with a truffle-mustard dressing. It was exquisite.

Also worth trying is the seaweed salad (\$4). Cool seaweed lightly tossed with sesame oil and topped with sesame seeds makes this a refreshingly cool choice in the hot summer.

Any restaurant with a sushi bar should be judged by the freshness of its fish. 713 Restaurant and Lounge passes the sushi test with flying colors. The unagi and the yellowtail (\$4) we sampled were both extremely fresh.

But other dishes beckon. Don't miss the Chilean sea bass (\$22), marinated in miso and served with baby bokchoy. The fish was cooked to perfection, while the balsamic soy reduction provided a perfect salty-sweet accent.

Less successful were the sautéed prawns (\$17). Served with Italian cous-cous, which was unfortunately chewy, the prawns were just a touch overdone and tough. The baby corn and shiitake mushrooms did their part to provide contrast, but couldn't overcome the salty lobster.

Desserts are a mixed bag. The delightful crème brûlée trio (\$6.95) consists of three small servings in vanilla, ginger and mint. They're so mild, we weren't certain if we'd been served two vanillas instead of a ginger, but they're a light and pleasant end to the meal.

Somewhat disappointing was the chocolate mousse (\$5.95). It tasted more like milk chocolate than the promised semi-sweet, and it was alarmingly dense.

Best of all was the blueberry tart that came with the bento box (\$9.95) that's available at lunch. With a thick, but flaky crust, and a zingy blueberry filling, it was an unexpected treat.

713 Restaurant and Lounge offers lighter fare at lunch, including salads, sandwiches and a few specials. The bento



713 Restaurant and Lounge passes the sushi freshness test with flying colors.

box, a daily special, is a real steal. Served in an attractive lacquer box, it includes five selections, plus miso soup to start and the impressive blueberry tart.

THE TEMPURA SHRIMP ARE WORTH the price of the bento box alone. Cooked to perfection with a light coating, they were generously sized and delicious. Also included with the tempura was an onion and sweet potato tempura "cake," which provided a sweet contrast to the shrimp.

The teriyaki chicken was enough for a meal by itself, and was nicely done with a light flavor. An accompanying Asian salad with a citrus dressing and a few Rainier cherries were a charming touch.

713 Restaurant and Lounge has a sizeable bar and lounge area, and a DJ spins tunes on the weekend from 10 p.m. onwards. An inventive drinks menu keeps things interesting, and a respectable wine list offers plenty of choice.

But try as they might, they didn't quite pull off the hip dining spot vibe. Perhaps it's the casually attired clientele. Or the tables in the back with upturned chairs atop them. Or the half-filled dining room.

Whatever the reason, 713 Restaurant and Lounge feels like it hasn't quite arrived. But with excellent sushi, and enough variety to keep everyone happy, it's really an undiscovered gem.



MORE INFO

713 Restaurant and Lounge
10001 Westheimer, Suite 1040
www.713restaurant.com

Food: 10 10 10 10

Service: 10 10 10 10

Value: 10 10 10 1/2

Scene: 10 10 10 1/2

☛ = Stay home and eat cereal

10 10 = Well, if you really must

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10 10 10 10 = Worth more than a

20-minute drive

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nitelife JOHNNY HOOKS



Montrose Diner is down, Mary's is the place for Space City Idol cattle calls, street market is calling and be ready for Beach/Boys/Balls

Restaurant Black Hole

HOVO ON THE Go-Go RETURNS AS July sizzles into August. This week we'll show you some one-of-a-kind shopping ideas for daytime and some community happenings for the nighttime.

FIRST UP THOUGH, **MONTROSE Diner** is no more! In what can only be described as a complete meltdown, employees showed up to work on Thursday, July 28 to find the doors closed. Longtime employee **Lance Fox** told HotGG that as he waited outside, the owner showed up and said that he was closing the restaurant. About that time, Fox 26 News showed up to begin interviewing employees, then KPRC Channel 2 arrived, quickly followed by a rep from the property management company who changed the locks, shut the doors and left. A lone employee, walking in uniform towards the front door simply hung his head, took his apron off and turned around, walking directly across the street and into Mary's. Atta girl!

SPEAKING OF MARY'S, WEDNESDAY, August 3 is the first of several "Space City Idol" open cattle calls. The contest begins September 1. Also, on Tuesdays you can enjoy "Tempting Tuesdays" with a **tight tush** contest at 9 p.m. 1022 Westheimer at Waugh.

LET'S GO DAYTRIPPIN! IF YOU wanna get out and about before the heat, here are a few destinations you should seek. **T'afia's** Saturday only farmers market has new summer hours. Among the oodles of items you'll find are fresh watermelon, tomatoes, squash, the last of the blueberries, figs, okra, greens, herbs, flowers and more. All are grown on local farms without pesticides or herbicides. Every Saturday (rain or shine) 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. at **3701 Travis Street**, one block north of West Alabama (next door to The Breakfast Klub.)

OFF THE BEATEN PATH IS THE **Indian Summer Lodge Art Garden and October Gallery** in the Heights. Need gorgeous last minutes gift ideas? This is the place! This complex is a dream, a secret that needs to be told. Wander the beautifully landscaped grounds and plan your planting with the area's only supply of non-invasive and timber bamboo, plus loads of tropical and other hot-n-humid friendly plants. All set within expansive decks and winding paths that lead to a grown-up size tree house and a 35 foot observation tower so you can see the nearby skyline. You can also rent this adult

HoVo on the go-go

playground for events. Stop by **606 Columbia**, near White Oak and see sexy owner **Jeff Law** and you may never leave. Call 713-869-0444 or go to www.indiansummerlodge.net.

MORE, MORE MORE! THE BEACH party of the summer is this **Saturday, July 30** at Rich's with "Beach/Boys/Balls 2005."

Get hot on the dance floor and jump in the pool, all while enjoying the eye candy from **Manwatch** direct from New Orleans. No cover in swim suit/under-gear till Midnight and a Best Chest & Buns competition upstairs in the Blue Bar. \$3 wells and domestics all night and the pool and hot tub will be open! **DJ Mark D** (XM Radio) spins you into a frenzy till 5 a.m. 2401 San Jacinto. 713-759-9606 or www.richs-houston.com

FEELING SPORTY? HERE YOU GO! **Lone Star Volleyball Association** (LSVA) is hosting its second open play date on **Sunday, July 31**. LSVA has been serving the gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders for more than 20 years you know. All are welcome and first-time members can attend open play absolutely **free**. Recreational play begins at 4 p.m. and Power and Competitive begins at 6:30 p.m. at the **Willowbrook Sports Complex**. For maps, full schedule, and more information, please see www.LSVA.org

DON'T FORGET THE 22ND ANNUAL Denim Party is at the **Brazos River Bottom** from 5 p.m. until Midnight on Sunday July 31. The BRB is located at 2400 Brazos in Midtown.

@ 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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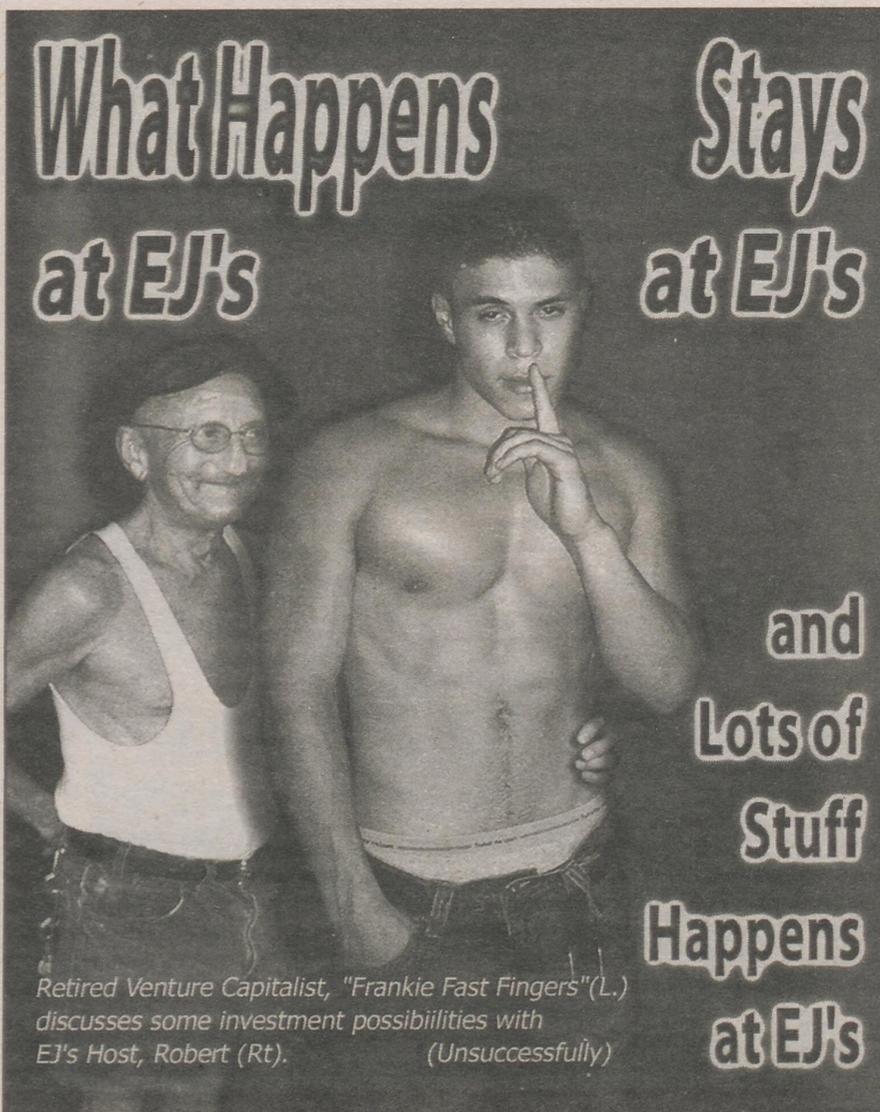


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dish

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

One of the girls

Estelle Getty's declining health, Jenna Jameson courting gays and Queer Eye's Jai refuting rumors

Growing up, Dish always loved TV's sassy "Golden Girls," especially because they reminded me of my grandmother. Because of this connection, it's especially sad to hear about the declining health of **ESTELLE GETTY**, who played feisty Sophia on the show.

Since 2004, it's been common knowledge that Getty suffers from dementia. But, apparently, it's getting worse.

RUE McCLANAHAN, who played Blanche on the show, told Entertainment Tonight: "Estelle doesn't know anything about having done a show called 'Golden Girls.' She doesn't recognize any of us; doesn't recognize us in person and doesn't recognize us over the phone. And she can't really carry on a conversation anymore."

By "us," she means herself, **BEA ARTHUR** and **BETTY WHITE**, who played Dorothy and Rose, respectively. Ironically, Getty, who played Dorothy's mother on the show, is younger than Arthur and White, and recently celebrated her 82nd birthday.

McClanahan, who currently is on Broadway in "Wicked," says that she still sees her fellow cast mates about once a year and that they are still very fond of each other.

Dish's heart goes out to Getty and her family. Sophia always made us smile.

Star is porn

One of the biggest providers of gay smut on the Web just got an interesting ally: **JENNA JAMESON**. The bisexual actress, and arguably the world's biggest hetero porn star, signed a deal with NakedSword.com, the leading provider of gay streaming videos on the Internet. She is to develop "products" for the company.

"Gay men and I have a lot in common," Jameson said on the Tim & Rona Show, a talk show about the adult industry that is broadcast online at www.timandronashow.com, where the deal was announced.

"I used to go to Gay Pride in L.A. and [gay] men were flocking to me saying, 'I'd go straight for you,' and that's hot."

The deal is still a bit vague and there's no word on whether Jameson will star in the gay videos sold on the site.

Darn, looks like Dish will have to



The beloved Golden Girls (clockwise, from left), **Bea Arthur**, **Rue McClanahan**, **Betty White** and **Estelle Getty**, have rallied around Getty's bedside in her time of need.

continue doing "research."

Reality rumor

"Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" member **JAI RODRIGUEZ** is finally addressing the rumors printed here and in other fine gossip sources that say he has been having an affair with "The Restaurant" star and celebrity chef **ROCCO DISPIRITO**.

"[The gossips] made it into something it wasn't," he told gossip Web site www.Jossip.com.

"We hang out, go to dinners, completely platonic. But I love him like a brother.

It's a little annoying. I used to feel very comfortable saying that Rocco was my gay boyfriend, but now I have to rephrase that. He's my straight boyfriend."

A straight boyfriend? No wonder he's annoyed.

Hands off

Bisexual folk singer **ANI DIFRANCO** announced this week that she is taking a year off from playing live shows. Apparently, the singer has tendonitis in her hands and wrists from too much strumming.

Her last show before the hiatus will be on July 31 in Floyd, Va. — about 300 miles from D.C.

While recuperating, DiFranco plans to concentrate on several recording projects for her Righteous Babe record label.



Jai Rodriguez



Jenna Jameson



Send comments, suggestions to Dish@houstonvoice.com

eclipse cover story



Living Two Lives

Married to a Man and In Love with a Woman

Joanne Fleisher

Pennsylvania social worker **Joanne Fleisher** counsels women coming out of marriages and is scheduled to release a book this fall titled 'Living Two Lives: Married to a Man and In Love with a Woman.'

'Grayness' of sexuality frustrates straight spouses

MARRIAGE, continued from Page 13

his wife. He never acted on his attraction to men. And until his early 40s, he and his wife had a "great sex life."

"I'm very disciplined; I worked full-time through college," he says. "This was another area of my life that required discipline. It wasn't normal so I simply ignored it."

At 41, he said, the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, forced him to face the truth. He often took the flight that was flown into the Pentagon.

"It shook me to the core," he says. "That could be me and I could die with my wife never knowing the truth."

Finally, he told his wife he is gay. Vince hoped, naively, he admits, that they could stay together.

"[My wife] very quickly made the decision she did not want to be married to a gay man," he says. "It's taken three, four

years to see that she's probably right."

But Vince said he is like many married gay men in that he doesn't regret marrying his wife. He does regret, however, the pain he knows he's caused her. His two children, he says, were more distraught about the divorce than his sexual orientation.

"I sure enjoyed the 20 years with her," he says. "I wouldn't have wanted to miss that."

The grayness of sexual orientation can be the most difficult part for both the gay and straight spouses. One woman e-mailed to say, "I will tell you up front that my husband denies being gay. We are in the process of divorce. ...Those whose husbands come out to them have a hard time and a lot to deal with, but at least they know/have confirmation and can move on with their lives."

Most important for the straight spouse can be a need for clarity. Several women said they had an endless stream of questions for their husband.

"Why wasn't there any intimacy? What was wrong with me? Why was he depressed? Why was he withdrawn? Why did he think he was in a prison?" says Amity Pierce Buxton of the Straight Spouse Network, recalling the questions she had about her own marriage. Her husband of 25 years came out after they separated.

Her ex-husband, a World War II veteran, compared getting married to going to war - "a moral imperative," she says.

Buxton has studied thousands of "mixed orientation" couples since the 1980s. When asked what the biggest misconception is, she said, matter-of-factly, "That gay men can't have sex with their wives."

I HAD MY OWN SET OF QUESTIONS for my ex-boyfriend, and still close friend. Since he's come out, he's patiently answered the questions he can. But some will always remain elusive to both of us - like just how did this happen?

i MORE INFO

Gay Married Men's Association a group for gay and bisexual men with straight wives
E-mail: GammainDC@yahoo.com or www.gay-married.org.

Gamma Wives/Straight Spouses, a support group for heterosexual spouses of gay men.
703-548-3238.

Women Coming Out of Marriage
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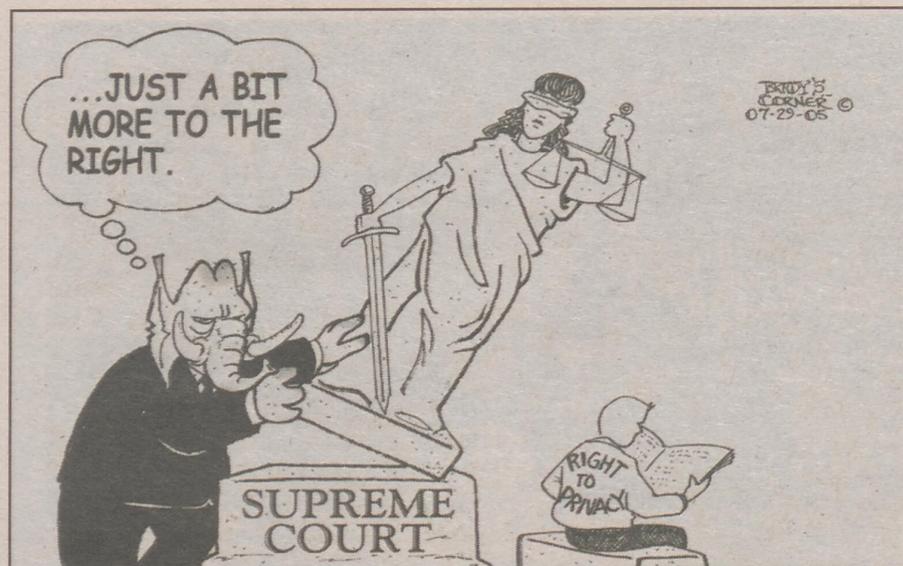
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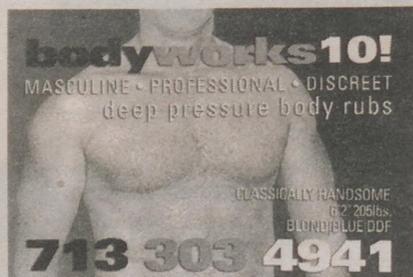


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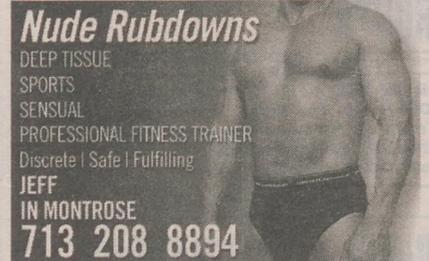
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bitch session

bitch session

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HOW COULD YOU MISQUOTE Leviticus and say I'm going to hell when your favorite food is shrimp? Well, according to Leviticus, you're going to hell, too!

IF YOU FOOLS ARE TOO BUSY WITH orgies and Tina to notice, we still aren't equal.

WHY IS IT THAT WHEN ONE boyfriend is noticeably hotter than the other, it's always the less attractive boyfriend who has the wandering eye?

I'M 41 YEARS OLD AND HAVEN'T had a boyfriend for 15 years. I wasted many of those years being bitter over the last one. As for lowering my standards, would you be happy to learn that your boyfriend lowered his standards and settled for you?

TO THE PROGRESSIVE QUEERS WHO say we should boycott Canada to "save the seals": Canada has the most progressive gay rights in all of North America. It's South Carolina we should boycott.

TO THE SISTER IN RED YELLING THAT you've seen me on the streets, and I "ain't got nuthin!": Bitch, you don't know me, my game or my ass!

WE CAN'T COUNT ON POLITICIANS to save us from the fundamentalists and ignorance-fueled hatred. We need a bio-tech "Manhattan Project" to become stronger, smarter and reproductively independent of our enemies.

SO — GAY BARS SHOULD NOT HIRE anyone who is straight, because they are straight? This is an admission that gay demands for "equal employment opportunity" are bullshit. You are advocating the very essence of discrimination and are too bigoted to know it!

WHY DID I LOSE INTEREST WHEN I found out you smoked? I'm not interested in dating a weak-willed, suicidal loser. If

you're stupid enough to smoke, who knows what else you're capable of?

I HAVE MET SEVERAL GUYS WHO SAY they like men with an "edge." Every one of them was a complete jerk or mental case. Will someone please tell me what an "edge" is and why jerks are interested in it?

I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY SO MANY people think Tom Cruise is gay. I mean, when would he get the time?

YOU THINK THIS IS A BITCH FEST? Imagine Hillary Clinton and Condoleeza Rice debating for the presidency in 2008!

NO OFFENSE TO THE "QUEER EYE" guys, but we need more Alan Turings and fewer Carson Kressleys.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY EVERY gay man in America wants to get married. Why would I want something that straight people still haven't figured out, since 50 percent of them get divorced?

WHY IS IT EVERY TIME AN attractive guy on the D.L. "books" me, his classification of gays are "they" and "them"?

SHOULD A PERSON WITH A NASTY staph infection be stripping? If I were you, I wouldn't dance too close to the edge of the stage.

THE PROBLEM WITH HAVING A self-centered boyfriend is he'll always have the best side of the bed and the sofa, take most of the space in the closet and dresser, and control the TV and your life.

WHY DO SO MANY GUYS ONLINE have "jock" or "muscle" in their profile name when their pictures suggest otherwise? Hello! Your screen name should describe you: more like "porky" or "tubby" or "troll."

FOR THE QUINTILLIONTH TIME, I don't want to hear you describe how you'd go down on me. Just go down on me.

THIS IS GOING TO SOUND SO PETTY, but I remember you from college. You were fit, beautiful, arrogant and cruel. I saw you last week: fat, homely, sullen and alone. Good luck with that!

IT'S SO ANNOYING ON THE FIRST DATE when you ordered the most expensive entree, an appetizer, a seafood soup and got liquored up with martinis at my expense. You made a lasting impression all right.

PLEASE DON'T TELL ME TO READ THE Bible and become a Christian. I was a Christian until I read the Bible.

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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