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APRIL 23, 2004



'At Last'

On her way to Houston, pop diva **Cyndi Lauper** has a lot to say. **Page 15**

Gay political kingmaker set to leave Houston

Martin's success as a consultant evident in city and state politics

By **CHRISTOPHER CURTIS**

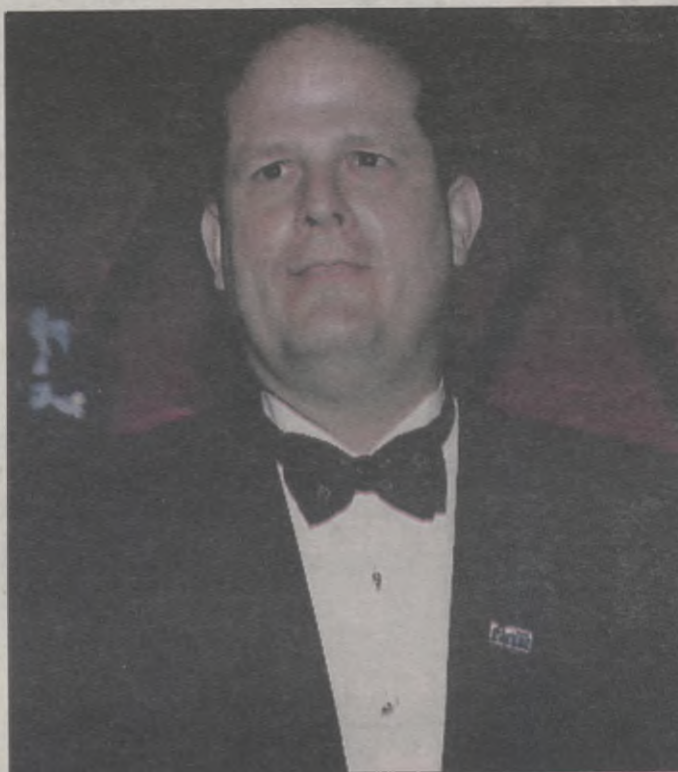
Houston's gay and lesbian community loses a powerful friend and ally on May 3, when Grant Martin, who has managed the campaigns of Controller Annise Parker, Council member Ada Edwards, Texas Rep. Garnet Coleman and Sue Lovell, is moving to San Francisco.

Back in 1996 it seemed the other way around: Martin had moved to Houston from San Francisco after ending a five-year relationship.

Sue Lovell, the former President of the Houston Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus (PAC), remembers first hearing of Martin through her friend, Roberta Achtenberg, the former Clinton secretary of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. "She called me and told me I have a dear friend who is moving back to Houston and I want you to take good care of him."

The two met and talked about politics for hours.

Later it would be Martin who would take care of Lovell when she ran for an at-large council seat in 2003. "Grant is one of those really unique kind of campaign managers who takes a candidate who doesn't have the resources of other candidates but uses his skills, his knowledge and his grass-roots organization to make that candidate competitive."



Political consultant Grant Martin, the man behind the campaigns of Controller Annise Parker, Council member Ada Edwards, Texas Rep. Garnet Coleman and Sue Lovell, is moving to San Francisco. (File photo by Dalton DeHart)

Lovell did not win that election, and Annise Parker had unsuccessfully run for city council twice before she met Martin.

Parker determined her third try would be her last shot at a council position. "I had scheduled a meeting with people committed to being a part of my finance council. And I

don't know how Grant found out about it, but he came and he stopped to chat. He worked in the campaigns—not any successful ones, mind you. He was shopping around for someone to work for. I don't know, over a few minutes of conver-

Please see **MARTIN** on Page 5



Curtis Kieffer and partner Walter Frankel speak with reporters after a circuit court judge heard arguments last week in a lawsuit filed by gay couples and the ACLU charging that banning same-sex marriages is a violation of the Oregon state Constitution. (Photo by Rick Bowmer/AP)

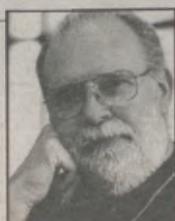
Gay marriage party ends for now

Ore. judge shuts down weddings, but orders licenses recognized

By **JOE CREA**

Both sides in the same-sex marriage debate claimed victory this week after an Oregon Circuit Court judge ordered Multnomah County to stop issuing same-sex marriage licenses, while striking down a law that prevents gay couples from marrying and ordering the state to recognize the 3,000 gay marriages that have already taken place.

Please see **MARRIAGE** on Page 8



JUST SAY 'NO': Gay activists are hoping to prevent a Hot Spot Task Force raid on a bar in Montrose. **Page 3**

PFLAG AND BAPTISTS: The Waco PFLAG chapter has named its new community center after a Baptist minister and his wife. **Page 4**

eclipse

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local news

Activists hope to prevent a police nightclub raid on Montrose

After-hours Montrose clubs operate legally, gay activist contends

By CHRISTOPHER CURTIS

Gay activist Ray Hill and Houston City Controller Annise Parker are hoping to prevent an after-hours bar raid like the one that took place last week in the East End from happening in Montrose.

"It was horrible," Hill said. "It looked like a relic out of the '50s or '60s to me."

For that reason, Hill said, he is working with city staff to schedule a meeting with Mayor Bill White and Police Chief Harold Hurtt.

"A time will be found when we will be able to sit down and talk about this," he said. "We're doing everything possible to prevent an assault on Montrose."

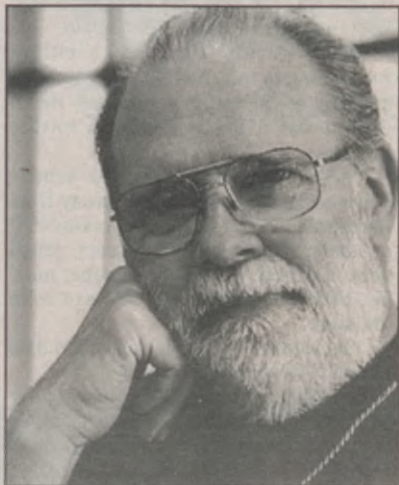
Parker, a six-term council member who last year was elected city controller, said she concurs.

"I completely disagree with this and I think the mayor is wrong on this," Parker said. "And I think people need to talk to him. Right now they're focusing on Hispanic clubs, but if we give them any leeway, they'll be at our bars. Gay Pride week is not that far away."

Hispanic activists are also calling for an end to the raids.

Early Saturday morning, the newly created Hot Spot Task Force converged on La Gaviota Nite Club, 8011 Harrisburg, and arrested about 30 people.

"The police rushed in, I know they said they didn't make any hard entries, but why would they? The doors were already open," Hill said. "They poured in, and said, 'Up



Gay activist Ray Hill will meet with Mayor Bill White and Police Chief Harold Hurtt to discourage a police raid on Montrose.



The popular gay nightclub South Beach is among a handful of after-hours clubs in Montrose that activist Ray Hill said operates meticulously within the law. (Photo by Dalton DeHart)

against the wall and everybody take out their identification' and basically terrorized people for an hour and a half."

Hill added, "According to the news reports, the club was not serving alcohol after hours. Police only arrested customers, most of them for public intoxication."

30 arrested for drunkenness

An arrest for public intoxication, Hill explained, legally means the suspect appears to be intoxicated to the extent that the individual constitutes a danger to himself, herself or others. "It's inherently a subjective judgment for the cops," Hill said. "It means the officers need no burden of proof."

Police said only one of the bar patrons was found to be in possession of drugs.

Many of the people jailed in the raid were released Sunday morning.

For Hill, what he witnessed last weekend conjures up a frightening picture of what might happen if a raid were staged on the clubs that operate in Montrose. He isn't sure club patrons are psychologically prepared to deal with what happens when a multi-agency task force descends on an establishment at 2:30 a.m.

For that reason, Hill said, he plans to monitor the movements of the task force on Friday and Saturday evenings.

There has been no confirmation that a raid on Montrose is imminent. But if police do move on Montrose, Hill said, he will be available to help club staff and patrons through the ordeal.

The task force, made up of police officers, firefighters, health inspectors, neighborhood protection investigators and representatives of the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission, was created by Mayor White and Chief Hurtt after rookie Houston firefighter Kevin Kulow died in a fire at an

after-hours club April 4th.

Police said James Alonso Guevara set the North Houston fire because he was involved in a child custody dispute with his estranged wife, who worked at the club. He has been charged with capital murder.

Mayor White said that incident came after an avalanche of complaints city officials were receiving regarding after-hours clubs. He staunchly contends that very little that is good takes place on Houston streets after 2 a.m.

White said he wants to keep clubs from operating past 2 a.m. He wants to change a city ordinance amendment passed in 1999 that made it easier for clubs to remain open after they stopped selling alcohol. Council members originally passed the bill in part to keep drunken customers off the road.

But now city leaders consider after-hours clubs not a solution but a new problem, especially since two incidents occurred after Kulow's death.

Police said on Sunday professional football player Marcus Spriggs and his cousin got into a fight with another customer at the Shame Nightclub after 4 a.m.

Police said as Spriggs drove away, someone fired at his car, grazing the player and hitting his cousin in the shoulder. His cousin had to be treated at a hospital.

On Tuesday at 6 a.m., a fire broke out at an after-hours club in the 4300 block of Wilmington. No one was hurt.

But Ray Hill said these problems will not happen at after-hours clubs in the Montrose area.

"I am confident that the management of the gay after-hours establishments are on par or superior to the management elsewhere. And I don't think gay people need to be herded around like animals. We welcome inspections. It's the up-against-the-wall raid that we hope to avoid."

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BILLBOARD FOR ROSS: Friends and family of Ross Allyn hope 15 billboards will help find his killer. Page 4



DOMA NIXED: An openly gay councilman in Chapel Hill, N.C. led efforts to ask the state to repeal DOMA. Page 7



'IRRATIONALITY' MADE HIM DO IT: Canada's first openly gay member of Parliament said "utter irrationality" made him steal a piece of jewelry. Page 9

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national news

Waco chapter opens first PFLAG center in U.S.

Chapter names center after Baptist minister and wife active in the family support group

By BINNIE FISHER

WACO, Texas — An ordained Baptist minister and retired religion professor at Baylor University and his wife were on hand recently when Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays dedicated the new PFLAG Community Center in Waco.

Eddie and Velma Dwyer were there because PFLAG named the center after them. Yes, it's true, out of 501 PFLAG chapters nationwide, the first one in the country to open a community center has named the facility after a Baptist minister and his wife.

"They are just totally non-judgmental and open minded," noted Daniel Hollingsworth, vice president of the Waco PFLAG chapter.

As people began arriving for the dedication on April 17, Hollingsworth said, he realized that the Baylor faculty was well represented.

"People came in honor and support of

Eddie and Velma," he said. "I was overwhelmed that they came."

The Dwyers, whose son, Paul, is gay and a graduate of Baylor, said they are honored that the PFLAG chapter, of which they are members, chose to put their names on the building.

"It makes me extremely proud," Velma Dwyer said.

Paul Dwyer said he had come out in the late 1960s, but took the advice of a faculty advisor at Baylor and said nothing to his parents.

There were moments when he mourned the fact that he wasn't truthful with his parents, people he knew to be loving and not judgmental.

"I never heard anything from them that was negative about any minority group," he said.

Still, he kept quiet and moved to Washington, D.C., where he now works for the Congressional Research Service. "I wanted to be totally out with everyone," he said, everyone but his parents, that is.

Unknown to Paul Dwyer, along the way his father had come to suspect that he and Velma were the parents of a gay son. An academician and a Biblical scholar, Eddie Dwyer, now 92, knew just where to turn for answers to the questions that were beginning to nag him: books written about homosexuality and to the Bible.

Eddie said the first question in his mind was, "Is there some reason for peo-



Ordained Baptist minister Eddie Dwyer and his wife Velma say they are honored to have Waco's new PFLAG Community Center named after them.

ple to be gay other than choosing it? I came to the conclusion that it's part of a person's inherent nature. It's not something they choose."

Though many of his fellow Baptist theologians claim the Bible to be the infallible word of God, Dwyer accepted that it was a work open to interpretation. It had to be taken in the context and light of the times in which it was written.

A thorough search of the document convinced him that there is no condemnation of gays and lesbians in the Bible.

Dwyer, who eventually penned a paper using the research he had done, wrote: "I am convinced that gays and lesbians are born with their respective natures. I long for the time when homosexuals will be treated as equals, respected for who they are, and allowed the freedom they deserve."

Velma Dwyer, 87, said Paul eventually came out to her and her husband.

"It was Easter weekend of 1992," she said. "Eddie had done a lot of research by then, and we were prepared to accept it. It was a beautiful experience that Easter morning."

Paul said that Easter morning talk with his parents confirmed what he knew in his heart. "I just knew they would be there for me. They are so loving and so nurturing."

Eddie said he hopes the Eddie & Velma Dwyer Community Center, housed in a former bar, will bridge a gap between PFLAG and Baylor. The school has been in the news recently for condemning a pro gay marriage editorial in the campus newspaper for canceling the scholarship of a gay student.

"Having been in the religion department, and with this coming out, I hope it will open the way to help parents and students," he said.

Billboards used to solicit clues in Allyn murder

Friends and family of murdered gay lobbyist hope new signs solve case

By BINNIE FISHER

Nixon Wheat, longtime friend of Ross Allyn, gazed up at a billboard bearing the slain gay lobbyist's photo and surmised, "He'd say it was great, but he'd wonder why it wasn't full length."

Other friends agreed that Allyn would be gratified to know that efforts to solve his murder included billboards with his photo.

Clear Channel Outdoor donated the billboard, installed Monday morning at the intersection of Dallas Street and Montrose Boulevard. The company is installing a total of fifteen billboards in Houston in an effort to help solve the murder.

Allyn was found early on the morning of November 20, 2003 inside his burning home at 919 Worthshire. Firefighters called the Houston Police Department to the scene after confirming that Allyn had been shot.

The Harris County Medical Examiner ruled the death a homicide and confirmed that Allyn died of a bullet wound in the back of his neck at the base of his skull.



Mary Lynn Miller, Ross Allyn's sister, addresses the media beneath one of 15 billboards donated by Clear Channel-Outdoor to solicit clues in the murder of the gay lobbyist. (Photo by Dalton DeHart)

Allyn's sister, Mary Lynn Miller of Philadelphia, flew to Houston for the Monday billboard installation and for a weekend of events staged to recognize National Crime Victims Rights Week.

Surrounded by friends of Allyn at the base of the billboard, Miller called on anyone with information regarding the murder to come forward.

"We're all suffering," she said. "This is a horrible nightmare that never gets bet-

i MORE INFO

HPD Homicide Division
713-308-3600
Crime Stoppers
713-222-TIPS

ter. Please, help Ross find some justice."

Kim Ogg, executive director of Crime Stoppers, said billboards have proven to be an effective tool in solving crimes.

"We hope these billboards will remind everybody that Mr. Allyn's case is still unsolved," she said. "Somebody knows what happened. We hope they will look at this billboard, look at this family and give us a call."

She added, "I can think of numerous cases where bill boards have been the catalyst that resulted in new information coming in."

Ogg stressed that even though months have passed, the person with the right information can solve the case quickly. She pointed to the recent case of Coral Eugene Watts, a violent offender and confessed serial murderer who was due to be released within two years from prison in Texas.

As news of the case spread across the country, and law enforcement officials in Texas voiced their concern, a tip was called in by someone with knowledge of a murder committed by Watts in 1979 in Ferndale, Michigan.

The witness to the Michigan murder came forward after learning that authorities in Texas would be unable to keep Watts behind bars once he completed his prison term. The woman, who had worked with the victim, called the office of the Michigan attorney general to report what she witnessed.

"Even 20 years later, a witness sees a story in the national media and responds to it," Ogg said. "Because of that witness, Watts will be extradited to Michigan."

More recently, she said, a citizen responding to information regarding the murder of artist and teacher Helen Orman was a major player in solving that case.

The woman, who spotted a vehicle resembling the one that sped away from the murder scene and a driver resembling an artist sketch of the suspect, jotted down a license number. It was that number that led to the arrest of Beau John Maloney.

"Sometimes you can just stimulate somebody into action," Ogg said.

Lee Vela, public affairs director for Clear Channel, said the company often donates billboards to enhance the efforts of Crime Stoppers in specific cases.

"We'll probably reach nearly 100,000 a day when all the signs go up," he said.

In addition to the Montrose location, billboards are being installed in the near town and downtown areas.

houston news

Martin will be difficult to replace, his clients say

MARTIN, continued from Page 1

sation, we just clicked. I thought about it—he didn't have a job so he worked cheap."

Parker credits Martin for being very aggressive with fund-raising. "It was really the most expensive council race to the point. I was able to spend toe-to-toe with the white-guy businessman."

Parker made history winning the position.

"It was a great day for the city and her and everybody," Martin recalled. Martin would subsequently run Parker's re-election campaigns as well as her successful bid to become the City Controller.

Love between campaigns

But in between the campaigns, Martin met someone at a Passover Seder, Paul Fromberg, an Episcopal priest.

"I thought he was cute and attractive and fun but I thought, how could I date a priest—I mean I don't even go to church!"

It took two and half years of thinking about the issue and missed opportunities before Martin took action.

"He was flirting with me, so I called him up and asked him out. And we've been together ever since. Apart from the U-Haul, we've had a 100-percent lesbian relationship and proud of it!"

The only problem with the relation-



Grant Martin arrived at a recent Greater Houston GLBT Chamber of Commerce luncheon with two of his clients, Sue Lovell (left) and Annise Parker. (Photo by Dalton DeHart)

ship was the leadership of the Diocese of the Episcopal Church of Texas. "The Episcopal Church nationally is progressive," Martin said, referring to the Rev. Gene Robinson being consecrated as the

denomination's first openly gay bishop. "But the diocese of Texas is not really a friendly place for openly gay priests."

The couple decided to relocate to San Francisco, thinking Fromberg could get a

job there and live an open and honest life as a gay man. "As soon as he got his job, which was a month ago, we set the date for moving," Martin said.

"The fact that Grant is leaving Houston because his partner cannot live the life he needs to lead underscores the fact that Houston needs people like Grant," said Parker. "And I will miss him tremendously."

Lovell echoed those sentiments. "This is not only a big loss for the gay and lesbian community with Grant leaving, but it's also a big loss for the city of Houston."

Martin admits to having mixed feelings. "I'm excited to build a brand new life with my lover, but I'm going to miss my friends and clients in the community terribly."

"I think that life is easy in Houston," Martin reflected. "It's got a low cost of living. You can have a nice lifestyle for relatively little money, but I think that breeds complacency. And just because they have economic comforts, people don't realize their freedom is at stake."

Martin said he hasn't ruled out running for a political position himself. But right now he's looking forward to helping other candidates like he's helped in Houston. "In many ways, if your ambition is to make a difference, you can almost make a difference behind the scenes."

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national news

Gay organizations join abortion rights march

Organizers expect more than 750,000 to rally on Sunday

By ADRIAN BRUNE

WASHINGTON — Beyond the manuscript-length march permit, the lengthy volunteer lists and the little piles of buttons on her desk, feminist organizer Alice Cohan keeps a very telling photograph. It's not a picture of her partner, or a close family member, but that of another Alice — Alice Paul, the chief strategist of the suffrage movement and author of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Paul has been a heroine of Cohan's since her early days at the Feminist Majority, and she said she looks at the black-and-white photo whenever she needs a reason to continue her work advocating for reproductive rights. It was taken long before Cohan, 53, actually met and got to know the legendary feminist, but Cohan said Paul was no less feisty on matters of emancipation for women.

"I remember visiting her in the nursing home, wanting to talk about her days fighting for women's right to vote," Cohan said. "She would always interrupt me to talk about strategy for amending the Equal Rights Amendment and more ways to further women's causes."



Lesbian Alice Cohan reached out to gay organizations to help out with this weekend's March for Women's Life event. She said the right to privacy arguments help activists in both the gay civil rights and reproductive rights battles. (Photo by Adrian Brune)

As she heads into the final days before Sunday's March for Women's Lives, Cohan, the executive director of the event, has been looking at Paul's picture a bit more frequently, especially as those days stretch into long nights. But with more than 1,300 co-sponsors, including several large gay organizations, and busloads of women coming from all over the country, Cohan hopes her grassroots, shoestring-budget demonstration impacts women's rights as significantly as her mentor's labors once did.

While she won't anticipate the outcome, Cohan said she expects attendance at the

MORE INFO

March for Women's Lives
1725 I St., NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20006
202-349-3838
www.marchforwomen.org

Pro-Life Alliance of Gays & Lesbians
P.O. Box 33292
Washington, DC 20033
202-223-6697
www.plagal.org

march to surpass that of the movement's 1992 rally, which organizers estimated at 750,000.

"Our goal is to assemble a crowd that is too big to ignore," she said.

Previously led by the National Organization for Women, this year's march directors reached out to several other civil rights contingencies, especially minority and gay advocacy groups. While the lesbian feminist movement has consistently made the connection between gay rights and reproductive freedom, it is now imperative for gay men to realize its importance, said Cohan, a lesbian and longtime activist within the gay community.

"The issues are so related when we think about control over our own bodies," Cohan said. "Sexual activity without reproduction gives gays and lesbians a fun-

damental tenet on which they base their legitimacy."

Seven gay civil rights groups are listed as co-sponsors of this weekend's march. They are the Human Rights Campaign; the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force; Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund; Equal Partners in Faith; Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Center; New York Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center; and the National Latina/o Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Organization.

March organizers say several decisions by President Bush have threatened reproductive rights, especially his November signing of a law banning partial birth abortions. But gay activists and reproductive rights advocates fear the Bush administration's influence over the Supreme Court, which many observers say is one vote away from overturning *Roe vs. Wade*, and with it eroding the foundation beneath *Lawrence vs. Texas*.

However, not all gay organizations see eye-to-eye with reproductive rights activists. Carrying signs that read, "1 in 10 aborted children are gay," members of PLAGAL, the Pro-Life Alliance of Gays & Lesbians will hold a counter-demonstration at the corner of 17th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue to voice their views.

"How can we support legislation that attacks helpless individuals, some who no doubt may be part of the future of the GLBT community?" said Cecilia Brown, PLAGAL's president.

NHL player arrested in alleged murder-for-hire plot

Intended target may have been player's boyfriend

By CYD ZEIGLER JR.

The FBI arrested Michael Danton, a forward for the National Hockey League's St. Louis Blues, on April 16 in California on suspicion of a murder plot. The criminal complaint mentions that Danton feared the intended target of the hit would "leave him," fueling speculation that the man may have been the hockey star's boyfriend.

Danton was attempting to board a plane in San Jose after his team was eliminated from the playoffs by the San Jose Sharks when he was arrested.

On April 15, the FBI reviewed a three-way recorded conversation made the day before among Danton, 23, Danton's friend Katie Wolfmeyer, 19, and Justin "Levi" Jones, also 19, the FBI's cooperating witness. Danton allegedly instructed Jones to enter his home and kill the acquaintance, whose name has not been revealed.

"Danton said law enforcement could be led to believe that two burglars came to Danton's residence and therein argued regarding some aspect of the burglary," the criminal complaint reads. "Danton

told the cooperating witness it would appear that, during the struggle, one of the burglars was killed, while one fled the scene with \$3,000 in cash and other valuable items."

That \$3,000 was to serve as a down payment for the \$10,000 Jones was allegedly promised for his services. When Jones, a part-time police dispatcher, realized that Danton was serious, he and Columbia, Ill., Police Chief Joe Edwards took the recorded conversation to the FBI.

On the night of April 15, Katie Wolfmeyer drove Jones to Danton's apartment. When a security guard called the acquaintance in Danton's apartment before letting them through, Jones fled the scene. Jones called Danton about an hour later and told him that the job was "botched."

"We'll fix this, and we'll do it soon," Danton told Jones, according to the complaint.

Afraid of losing lover?

When the FBI interviewed the acquaintance, who may have been living with Danton at the time, he told agents that he and Danton had a severe argument that Tuesday concerning Danton's "sexual promiscuity and drinking."

"Danton begged the acquaintance not to go to the general manager of the St. Louis Blues hockey organization and ruin his



Professional hockey player Michael Danton was arrested for allegedly plotting to kill a man who was living with him. The complaint alleges Danton was afraid the acquaintance was going to leave him. (Photo by AP)

career," the complaint reads. "The acquaintance threatened to leave Danton."

On April 16, the acquaintance agreed to record a phone conversation with Danton, according to the complaint. When the acquaintance asked Danton why he was going to have him killed, Danton broke down and sobbed.

"Danton explained that he felt backed into a corner and also felt that the acquaintance was going to leave him," according to the complaint. "Danton did not want to allow the acquaintance to leave him, therefore decided to have him murdered."

While the complaint did not detail the nature of the relationship between Danton and the acquaintance, within 48

hours after the story broke, sports reporters were concluding that they were romantically involved.

Danton's agent, David Frost, told the New York Daily News that Danton is not gay.

"Once the whole thing shakes down, everyone will understand exactly the circumstances of what happened," Frost told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

But in the last week, glimpses of Frost's own past — and his personal relationship with Danton — have spilled out from various sources.

Frost had been active in the youth hockey world of Canada for many years before taking on the role of agent for Danton and another player now in the NHL. Frost had a reputation for developing close relationships with some of the boys he coached, including Danton.

Rob Ciccarelli, owner of a hockey team for whom Danton once played, told the Sun. "What worried me is he had a cult-like attraction for the player."

In 2001, Danton changed his name from Michael Jefferson, allegedly due to the rift Frost caused in Danton's family.

"That man has ruined my son's life," Danton's father, Steve Jefferson, told the Brampton [Ontario] Guardian.

At press time, Danton was still awaiting extradition to Illinois, where Jones was first contacted.

national news

N.C. town council members want state to repeal DOMA

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. — In a unanimous vote, the Chapel Hill Town Council last week decided to ask state legislators to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act, WRAL-TV reported. The council plans to recognize same-sex marriages even though North Carolina does not do so under its Defense of Marriage Act, the station reported. The town leaders want the option of recognizing legal gay marriages from other states, according to WRAL. At the front of efforts to recognize same-sex unions in Chapel Hill is Mark Kleinschmidt, a gay council member who understands that state lawmakers may not even consider the town's request, WRAL reported. "I suspect it won't come up even in a committee," Kleinschmidt told the station. "That's fine. What we have now is the town of Chapel Hill saying, 'It's our public policy, here in our community, that we desire to treat all married people the same.'"



Mark Kleinschmidt, a gay member of the Chapel Hill, N.C. council, is leading efforts to recognize same-sex unions, despite the state's current Defense of Marriage Act limiting matrimony to opposite-sex couples.

Neb. police drop request for same-sex benefits

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The Omaha Police Union has announced that it is dropping its request for limited same-sex benefits. The union said in a news release last week that it was withdrawing the request for the benefits because "it is apparent that the controversy has overshadowed the importance of the overall contract and its savings to the city." The proposed contract for Omaha police would allow officers to seek sick leave to care for their same-sex domestic partners and their partner's relatives. They could also use paid leave to attend the funerals of their partners and their relatives. Tess Fogarty, a spokesperson for Mayor Mike Fahey, said the mayor's office could not comment on the contract, because it is still under negotiation. Details of city contracts are not made public until after negotiations are complete. Information about the limited benefits was leaked inappropriately and sparked a public debate on a single issue in the contract, the union said.

Straight couples say they were ejected from gay hotel in Key West

KEY WEST, Fla. (AP) — Three heterosexual couples said they were turned away from a hotel in this gay-friendly tourist destination because of their sexual orientation, which would violate city law. The six were vacationing with a gay couple and had reservations at Big Ruby's in downtown Key West when the three straight couples were turned away. "The manager literally said, 'We don't want you here,'" said Jim Pirih, who had vacationed at Big Ruby's last year with his partner, Jason Williams. The group, most of whom are from San Diego, was already settled in their rooms when the manager told the straight couples they would have to leave, citing a policy of not allowing heterosexuals on the property, Pirih said. "He said he had to appeal to the majority, and the majority of guests wouldn't want straight people there," Pirih said. Key West has a city ordinance that prohibits discrimination by sexual orientation in housing and lodging. The couples were kicked out the same day six same-sex couples sued in Key West in an attempt to overturn state laws banning gay marriage.

Pa. Supreme Court hears case over same-sex partners law

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — In the face of possible implications on the nationwide debate over gay marriage, the state Supreme Court heard arguments last week over whether a city ordinance granting benefits to same-sex partners of municipal employees usurps Pennsylvania law. Chief Justice Ralph J. Cappy cautioned both parties that the issue was not a religious matter, but rather a question of whether state law pre-empted the 1998 ordinance, which was struck down by the Commonwealth Court in August 2002. William Devlin — director of the Urban Family Council, a group that promotes marriage, abstinence education and fatherhood initiatives — challenged the law, saying the City Council didn't have the authority to extend benefits to same-sex partners.

Colo. judge faces impeachment after ruling in lesbian custody case

DENVER (AP) — State lawmakers this week were to consider whether to put a Denver district judge on trial for his ruling in a custody dispute between a former lesbian couple. On Thursday, Rep. Greg Brophy (R-Wray) planned to make the case for impeaching Denver District Judge John Coughlin for allegedly violating the religious liberty of one of the women involved in the case, who left the relationship after becoming a Christian. Coughlin ruled last April that Dr. Cheryl Clark must share custody of her adopted daughter with her former partner, Elsey McLeod. He gave Clark responsibility for the girl's religious upbringing but told her not to expose her to anything homophobic. Clark says that violated her First Amendment rights to religious freedom. Members of the House Judiciary Committee will decide after the hearing whether there is enough evidence to proceed. If the measure is backed in the House, the Senate would serve as the jury during the trial. Whether the case will get that far isn't clear. Senate President John Andrews and Gov. Bill Owens, both staunch conservatives, oppose the move.

From staff and wire reports

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national news

Mass. governor tries to stop gay wedding march

MARRIAGE, continued from Page 1

In a decision that he said gave "a little to everyone," Circuit Judge Frank Bearden said that the state Supreme Court — or voters — will ultimately decide the issue of same-sex marriages. He gave the Oregon Legislature 90 days before they reconvene for a special session in June, to change the law to extend marital benefits to Oregon gay couples who already have a marriage license.

The case, *Mary Li, et al vs. State of Oregon*, brought by the American Civil Liberties Union and nine gay couples, was heard in the Multnomah County Courthouse last week.

Supporters of gay marriage asserted that the constitution bans discrimination of any kind while opponents claimed that voters have the right to define marriage as the union of one man and one woman.

Paul Cates, a spokesperson with the ACLU, said Tuesday's victory was unprecedented in that it was the first time any judge in the U.S. had ordered a state to recognize marriage licenses issued to same-sex couples.

Cates said he was uncertain which side would file an appeal in the case since the decision, for now, has made "everyone a bit happy."

The county raised the constitutional question over the legalities of the marriages on March 3.

Democratic Gov. Ted Kulongoski, a former Oregon Supreme Court Justice, and state Attorney General Hardy Myers agree with gay rights supporters that a ban on gay marriage will likely be ruled unconstitutional, according to an Associated Press report. Before the trial, they had requested that the county cease issuing same-sex marriage licenses. The county refused.

The plaintiffs brought the lawsuit against Kulongoski, Myers and the Defense of Marriage Coalition, a group formed the day Multnomah County began issuing marriage licenses to gay couples.

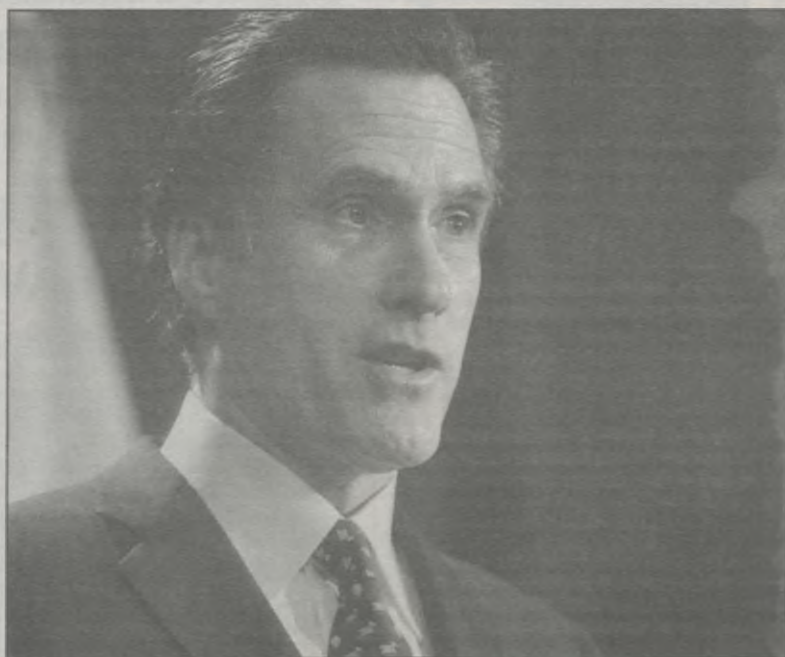
Cates said Judge Bearden rejected the opposition's main argument, made by Kelly Clark, a former Republican state legislator and the attorney for the Defense of Marriage Coalition, who contended in court that the framers of the Oregon Constitution never intended marriage to apply to gay couples.

Calls to the Defense of Marriage Coalition were not returned.

Calif. closer to legalizing gay marriage

In California, gay Assembly member Mark Leno's (D-San Francisco) same-sex marriage bill was approved by the state's Democrat-controlled Judiciary Committee by an 8-3 vote. AB 1967 would prohibit the state of California from denying marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

Testifying at Tuesday's hearing was Randy Thomasson, executive director of Campaign for California Families, who called the measure "illegal, unconstitutional and immoral."

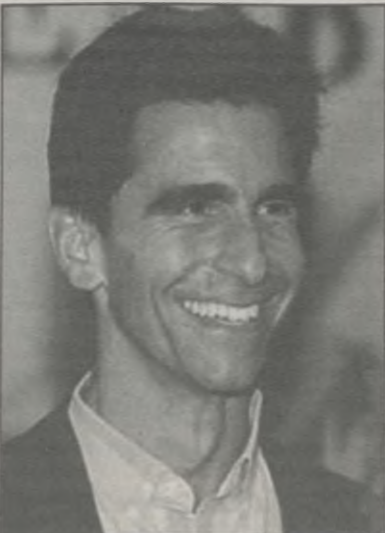


Mass. Gov. Mitt Romney is seeking emergency legislation in a last-ditch effort to derail same-sex marriage ceremonies slated to begin next month.

"This bill turns marriage upside down and utterly rejects the vote of the people to protect marriage for a man and a woman," Thomasson said at Tuesday's hearing.

Opponents maintain that AB 1967 contradicts the 14-word ballot initiative known as Proposition 22 that states, "Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California." The measure passed in March 2000, with 61 percent of voters statewide supporting it, and carries the weight of state law as a part of the California's Family Code.

Supporters of Leno's measure assert that his bill does not conflict with the state initiative since the 2000 measure deals with recognizing out-of-state gay marriages, not same-sex unions performed within the state.



California Assembly member Mark Leno's bill that would legalize same-sex marriage advanced out of a committee this week.

Vince Sollitto, a spokesperson for Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, said the office does not comment on legislation before it reaches the governor's desk.

Schwarzenegger's reluctance to discuss the bill, which Leno claims faces an uphill battle in the Assembly, has left its supporters confident that he would sign it while leaving social conservatives to ponder whether the Republican governor is "with them" on this issue.

Tony Perkins, executive director of the Family Research Council, said in a news release on Wednesday, Schwarzenegger "must" oppose Leno's marriage bill.

"Throughout his campaign and his short time in office, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has been ambiguous about his willingness, or lack thereof, to protect marriage from those who want to redefine it out of existence," Perkins wrote.

In a March appearance on "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno," Schwarzenegger said gay marriages, if approved by the courts or voters, would be "fine with me."

Mass. governor tries to stop weddings

In Massachusetts, Republican Gov. Mitt Romney, in a last ditch effort to prevent the issuance of marriage licenses to same-sex couples, said last week that he will seek emergency legislation to prevent licenses from being issued to gay couples on May 17, a date set by the Supreme Judicial Court in their historic gay marriage ruling last November.

If approved, the legislation would allow the governor to appoint a special counsel to argue, on his behalf, to the state's high court to delay the ruling until the state's constitution is amended to ban same-sex marriage.

MORE INFO

American Civil Liberties Union
125 Broad St., 18th floor
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www.aclu.org

The only legal figure who according to Massachusetts state law can represent Romney in court is state Attorney General Thomas Reilly (D), who last month rejected the governor's request to seek a stay from the SJC until November 2006, when the proposed amendment would be presented to Massachusetts voters. Reilly, who also opposes gay marriage but is considered a likely challenger to Romney when he runs for a second gubernatorial term, has said the court has ruled twice on this issue and is unlikely to consider it again.

Romney defended his actions as designed to "protect the constitutional process" and to prevent the "legal confusion" that is likely after 2 1/2 years of gay marriage. But he also conceded that he would begin holding informational meetings with city clerks to determine how to handle gay marriages should the legislature deny his request.

The Massachusetts Justices of the Peace Association, which represents the local officials who have the authority to perform wedding ceremonies, said a meeting was scheduled for next Monday between their members and Romney officials on how to handle gay marriages in May.

Massachusetts justices of the peace are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Governor's Council for seven-year terms.

While the legislature narrowly approved a constitutional amendment last March legalizing civil unions but banning gay marriage, many lawmakers are suffering from "marriage fatigue," according to Arline Isaacson, co-chair of the Massachusetts Gay & Lesbian Political Caucus. She said having debated the emotional issue ad nauseum, many lawmakers have no desire to take up the issue again.

While there may be support in the House for the emergency legislation, the AP reported that 22 of 40 senators oppose the effort, including Senate President Robert Travaglini, who supported the amendment.

And House Speaker Thomas M. Finneran, an ardent opponent of gay marriage, said last week that he does not intend to stop same-sex couples from marrying in May.

Josh Friedes, director of the Freedom to Marry Coalition, said many legislators and opponents of same-sex marriage "were in denial" following the SJC's decision in *Goodridge vs. Department of Health*. He added that there is a growing "understanding amongst opponents that there is no way to stop gay marriages from taking place without a constitutional crisis."

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

international news

Canada's first openly gay lawmaker takes leave after theft



Svend Robinson, the first openly gay member of the Canadian Parliament, took medical leave last week after he admitted stealing an expensive piece of jewelry.

BURNABY, British Columbia (AP) — The political future for Canada's first openly gay member of Parliament was unclear last week as Svend Robinson admitted pocketing an expensive piece of jewelry in a moment of "utter irrationality." Robinson fought for composure as he told a news conference he would take an immediate medical leave from his duties as an MP. Robinson said for now he's stepping down as the nominated New Democrat Party candidate in Burnaby-Douglas. "I will be meeting in the near future with my riding executive to discuss the longer term implications of this decision should an election be called while these issues remain outstanding," he said. The MP — who has battled for same-sex marriage, charter protection of gay rights and Palestinian autonomy — said he's waging a personal war against severe stress and emotional pain. "I have sought and received professional medical help to understand and deal with these issues," he said.

Newly elected Spanish prime minister pledges to legalize gay marriage

MADRID — Incoming Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero said last week the nation will legalize gay marriage and give gay couples equal rights, Reuters reported. Spain is one of Europe's most Catholic countries, and the move likely will spark debate, since the Vatican staunchly opposes same-sex unions, according to Reuters. Spanish dictator Francisco Franco banned homosexuality, and the nation's Catholic bishops already vocally oppose adoption of children by gay couples, Reuters reported. But Zapatero confirmed his intentions during debate in parliament that leads up to the vote to confirm him as prime minister, according to Reuters. "The moment has finally arrived to end once and for all the intolerable discrimination which many Spaniards suffer because of their sexual preferences," he said, Reuters reported. "Homosexuals and transsexuals deserve the same public consideration as heterosexuals. As a result we will modify the Civil Code to recognize their equal right to marriage with the resulting effects over inheritance, labor rights and social security protection."

Singapore officials deny registration to gay group

SINGAPORE — People Like Us, a gay support group, last week was refused registration by the Singaporean government, according to a column by its executive director published in the Straight Times. The Registrar of Societies in Singapore rejected the application of People Like Us, whose leaders say it has more than 1,000 members, and the group was ordered to dismantle, the Times reported. The registrar called People Like Us "likely to be used for unlawful purposes or for purposes prejudicial to public peace, welfare or good order," according to news reports. Despite softening its stance on some issues related to gays, Singapore maintains a law that bans gay sex as an "act of gross indecency," news outlets reported. Vivian Balakrishnan, government minister of state for national development, told reporters that the nation is not ready to accept gay rights organizations.

British lawmaker resigns post after debate over gay rights

LONDON — A conservative British politician resigned his post on the Welsh assembly's equal opportunities committee after a heated debate over gay rights, the BBC News reported. David Davies walked out of a committee meeting after he was criticized by other representatives for questioning Stonewall Cymru, a gay rights group, according to the BBC. Davies expressed opposition to gay adoption and school material on homosexuality, the BBC reported. "The issue was that I put questions to Stonewall Cymru and it was the reaction of other members I objected to, especially the minister [Social Justice Minister Edwina Hart] who accused me of having offensive and unacceptable views," Davies told the BBC. "I find that offensive and unacceptable because I really have to have the freedom to speak out." He decried what he called a "total waste of time" in the committee hearing regarding the gay rights group, the BBC reported. "The cult of political correctness means that if you do speak out and ask embarrassing questions, then you are going to find yourself being accused of racism, sexism, homophobia or some other form of 'ism' by everyone else," Davies told the BBC.

Australian court approves sex change for teen girl

MELBOURNE, Australia — A judge in Australia last week approved the decision of a teenage girl to begin a sex change, the Herald Sun reported. The girl, 13, now will take hormones as the first step in the process of becoming a boy, according to the newspaper. Family Court Chief Justice Alastair Nicholson ruled in favor of the girl, who is a ward of the state and estranged from her mother, the Sun reported. Referred to in court papers only as "Alex," the girl will take testosterone when she is about 16 to continue the sex-change process, according to the newspaper. Alex must be 18 before she is eligible for sex-change surgery, the Sun reported. She is reportedly the youngest person in Australia to be given the legal right to a sex change, the newspaper stated.

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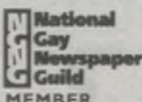
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Forum

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PAGE 10

editorial

Allow imported HIV/AIDS drugs

Abbott Labs' decision to raise by 500 percent the price of the AIDS drug Norvir underscores why the U.S. government must allow cheaper drugs to be imported into this country.

By MUBARAK DAHIR

t

HE FEDERAL government should stop the special trade protectionism it has for pharmaceutical companies, and allow the legal import of cheaper, generic drugs.

This issue has been a point of contention for years, for Americans with all kinds of illnesses, ranging from cancer patients to people with HIV and AIDS.

Now — finally — thanks to a particularly outrageous move by Abbott Laboratories to raise the price of its AIDS drug, Norvir, to 500 percent of its previous cost, this issue is getting some serious consideration.

Typically, whenever consumers and advocacy groups raise a stink and demand they be allowed to legally import drugs from Canada or Europe for a fraction of the price, there is a lot of government hand-wringing and more than just a little sweating from the drug companies.

The federal government's claim that Americans' health would be at risk because it could not guarantee the safety of foreign-imported drugs seems spurious. Are we really supposed to believe that citizens of Canada and Western Europe are putting their health at risk for the cheaper drugs?

We import all kinds of products from overseas, and they must undergo scrutiny for safety before they can be sold here. It seems unfathomable that the federal government couldn't devise regulations for the safe import of foreign drugs.

The drug companies try to tell us that they don't make huge profits from the drugs, despite the often enormous cost difference between those same drugs here and in foreign countries. They also say that a lot of the money that is made off of existing drugs gets put back into research and development, to work on discovering better drugs.

While both the arguments from the drug companies and the federal govern-

ment have a grain of truth, none is strong enough to present unsolvable barriers to allowing more affordable imported drugs into the United States.

THE MAIN REASON WE DON'T HAVE cheaper, generic drugs in this country is simple: greed.

The recent debacle over the AIDS drug Norvir illustrates why the government needs to stop pampering pharmaceutical companies, and start standing up for patients.

Abbott Laboratories began marketing Norvir in 1996. At the time, it was only the second in a class of revolutionary drugs known as protease inhibitors, which radically changed the course of medical treatment for people with HIV and AIDS.

In addition to the benefits of Norvir itself, doctors soon discovered this drug had the distinctive ability to enhance the benefits of other protease inhibitors. So Norvir also became widely used as a supplemental drug.

Norvir soon became an integral part of the so-called "cocktail" of drugs that so many people with HIV and AIDS take.

This made Norvir a huge success. Since its introduction, the total sales of Norvir have passed the \$1 billion mark.

Usually, as a drug becomes more widely used and more profitable, its price goes down, not up.

But in January, Abbott Laboratories decided to raise the average price of the drug, used by tens of thousands of Americans with HIV and AIDS, from about \$1,500 per year, up to about \$7,800 per year. That means the same dose of the drug today costs five times more than it did a year ago.

Compare the price here to the average cost of the same exact drug in Europe. The typical yearly cost of Norvir in Europe is somewhere around \$700 to \$750. That means Americans are now paying 10 times more for Norvir than are Europeans.

THERE'S ANOTHER IMPORTANT factor in the Norvir debacle, too. The ini-

tial research and testing of the drug was made possible by a federal grant to Abbott Laboratories from the National Institutes of Health. That federal grant money came directly from taxpayers.

"The grant was critical in allowing us to make the rapid progress that we made," Dr. John Erickson recently told the New York Times. Erickson was the former chief of Abbott Laboratories' drug research program.

Taxpayer money subsidized Norvir, which went on to be a huge profit-maker for Abbott Laboratories, a company that now is turning around and charging the public exorbitantly high rates.

The fact that Norvir was developed with the help of a federal grant is important for another reason, too: Part of the fine print in any such grant is that the government has the right to insist on "reasonable" prices for the discoveries made with its money.

A five-time, overnight increase in the cost of a billion-dollar, already-profitable drug is hardly reasonable.

Activists are pressuring the government to use its leverage in the Norvir case, and there is some evidence that at least a few politicians are finally listening.

The Department of Health & Human Services held a hearing Wednesday, April 14, on Norvir in particular, and on the question of cheaper imported drugs in general. The National Institutes of Health is also set to schedule hearings on the issues.

At least six members of the House have signed a letter to petitioning Tommy Thompson, Bush's health secretary, asking him to assert the right to "reasonable" prices.

One bill has already been introduced in the Senate to gradually allow imported drugs from Canada, Europe and Australia. And John Kerry, the presumptive Democratic presidential candidate, has voiced his support of legalizing imported drugs.

Activists are also encouraging a boycott of Abbott drugs. While Abbott has a monopoly on Norvir (and no one is suggesting that patients in need of the drug stop taking it to make a political statement), consumers can express their displeasure with Abbott's pricing by purchasing other brands on drugs where Abbott has competitors.

But in the long run, the solution to the problem of unaffordable drugs is to allow the import of foreign medicines. There's nothing like competition to keep down price gauging.

@ Mubarak Dahir is editor of the Express Gay News in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., a paper affiliated with this publication. He can be reached at mdahir@express-gaynews.com.



viewpoint BRUCE CARROLL



President Bush and the religious right didn't start the culture war over marriage. It's the radical gay groups' agenda.

A fine mess we're in now

THE BACKLASH OVER GAY MARRIAGE during the past few weeks doesn't come as a surprise to me. I predicted it months ago to a group of friends who are rabidly in support of pushing the issue.

I told them that while there was a gay-marrying frenzy breaking out in San Francisco, Oregon, and New Paltz, N.Y., most Americans were not at a place to accept this change.

Since two-thirds of Americans oppose gay marriage, and the same percentage support legal protections for gays in the workplace, then why, I asked, are the radical gay groups forcing marriage down the throats of America at this time?

But it wasn't the "religious right" or President Bush who started this round of the culture war. It was us.

The battle was clearly started by gay activists who adopted the tactic of challenging marriage laws across the country. The battle was joined, of course, by the conservatives now pushing for a federal constitutional amendment.

But we need to step up and admit that the responsibility of the gay marriage debate, good or bad, is squarely on the shoulders and the consciences of the so-called leaders of the Human Rights Campaign, National Gay & Lesbian Task Force, Log Cabin Republicans and their ilk.

Now the dominoes are falling against

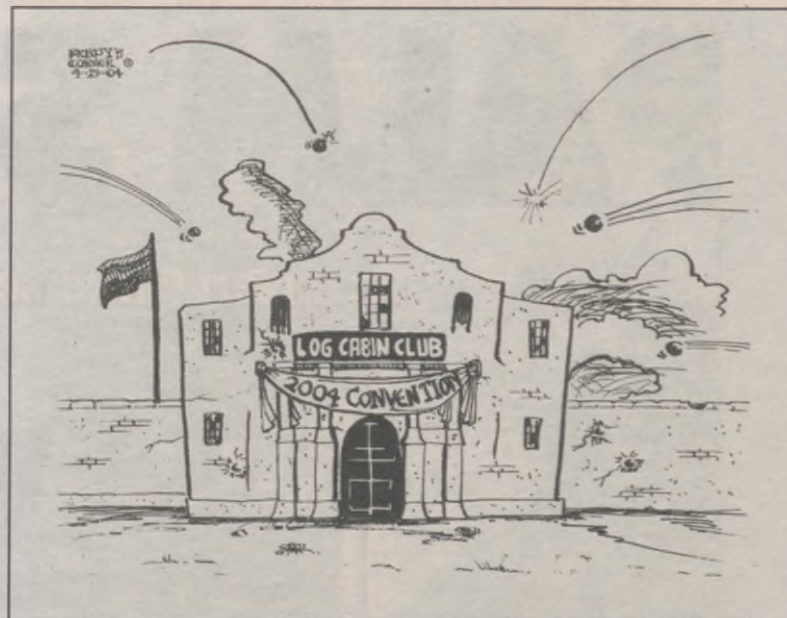
us, in Georgia, Kentucky and Mississippi. A state constitutional amendment banning gay marriage in those states will be put before voters. Georgia, Kentucky and Mississippi — not surprising, right?

But in Massachusetts, far from a bastion of the religious right, the state legislature adopted a constitutional amendment, though it still must survive additional legislative votes next year before it goes on the ballot there.

SO THERE WE HAVE IT. THIS DECISION by our supposed leaders to push gay marriage onto center stage in America at this time and in this election year has resulted in a colossal setback that is solely the fault of those same groups.

Why? Because instead of appreciating the feelings of most Americans and undertaking a long-term commitment to educate our nation about who we are, our leaders took the easy way and went to the courts to dictate one version of morality and forced tolerance from the bench. That strategy is faulty and will never work.

What we saw in Massachusetts, Georgia, Kentucky and Mississippi will be replicated in nearly every other state of the union. So the net impact of our activists launching this culture war will become discrimination enshrined into



state constitutions. That certainly doesn't seem a step forward for gay rights.

Gay leaders will scratch their heads and wonder what went wrong, but the fact that they don't "get it" is proof enough that we need to find a new way and new leadership.

Instead we get Rosie O'Donnell who says she's getting married in front of TV cameras merely because President Bush says he's opposed to it. Well, that's one sure way for opponents to question the sincerity of the true commitment to gay marriage, isn't it?

THE PATH TO GAY MARRIAGE IS NOT to force Americans to accept a morality they are not prepared to embrace. Instead of radical gay groups spending their precious few dollars, time and resources engaging in court fights and street battles, it's time to turn our attention to the hearts and minds of mainstream America.

What is needed is a fundamental and, most importantly, mature awareness campaign across the country about what it is to be a gay or lesbian American today. We all need to be willing to come out of our closets — proverbial or not — and let our

friends, family and work colleagues know who we are.

Let them know that we pay our taxes just like them. Let them know we experience the ups and downs of daily life just like them. Let them know that we want the same financial, job and relationship security that they enjoy. Let them know that we want to be as tolerant of their long-standing religious beliefs as we want them to be tolerant of ours.

Until the leaders of these radical gay groups come to grips that they have wasted precious years on counterproductive strategies, we will continue to face these predictable setbacks to gay marriage and other issues with increasing frequency.

Until all of us start reaching out to mainstream Americans, instead of shouting in their faces, we will continue to be responsible for our own failures.

@ Bruce Carroll lives in Alexandria, Va., and is a former member of Log Cabin Republicans; he can be reached at BruceC2K@aol.com.

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"It is an immense honor to be listed alongside heroes like Nelson Mandela. And I am thrilled to see this recognition that marriage equality for same-sex couples is a crucial civil rights struggle whose time has come."

Evan Wolfson, executive director of *Freedom to Marry*, on being named one of the "Time 100," a list in a special edition of *Time* magazine featuring the 100 most influential people alive today; Wolfson is included in the "Heroes and Icons" section of the list

"Some believe that gay marriage is our most pressing issue because the Bible tells them so. Of course, the Bible says some unusual things, for example, that it's permissible to stone to death adulteresses but not adulterers. Is that so state legislatures can maintain a quorum?"

Henry Riekert, a columnist writing in the *Lexington Herald-Leader* (Lexington, Ky., April 19)

"This has nothing to do with a gay lover or his relationship with any female. Once we get all the facts, we'll be able to realize what really happened. He's a good kid. He really is."

St. Louis Blues forward Mike Danton's agent, Dave Frost, after the FBI arrested Danton for allegedly arranging the murder of his roommate, who local law enforcement authorities say is his lover (*Sports Illustrated*, April 19)

"It brought shame and humiliation, shock and revulsion."

Attorney Michael Thorman, explaining why his client, **Michael Magidson**, 23, joined two others in brutally beating and then hanging to death **Gwen Araujo** when Magidson discovered after sex with Araujo that Araujo was born male (*Associated Press*, April 15)

"I thanked him for all that he had done and asked him not to support this. So in that sense, I guess I failed."

Patrick Guerriero, executive director of the *Log Cabin Republicans*, on how he approached President Bush at a White House Christmas party and asked him not to back the federal marriage amendment (*New York Times Magazine*, April 11)

"I'm still voting for Bush, ... but I have serious issues with the current team the president has put around him to cultivate the religious-right support."

John Karczynski, vice chair of *Log Cabin's* chapter in Orange County, Calif., who said many gay Republicans will vote for Bush but "with their eyes closed" (*Associated Press*, April 17)



"There's hardly a family that doesn't know that one of them — someone's daughter, sister, brother, father, mother, uncle, whatever — is gay. ... I think that's why we can't put this in the tube anymore."

Episcopal Bishop V. Gene Robinson, the church's first openly gay bishop, explaining in a speech at *Daniel Webster College* in Nashua, N.H., why gays are like toothpaste that won't go back into the tube (*Associated Press*, April 13)

"It could get very, very ugly in the next six months. I hope it's not, but the amount of hate we saw was hard to take."

Jennifer Crossen, a member of the *Kentucky Fairness Alliance*, after the Kentucky state legislature put a constitutional amendment banning marriage onto the November ballot (*Associated Press*, April 14)

"He's an embarrassment to religion everywhere. I think Fred Phelps thinks about homosexual sex more than any other person on the planet."



Southern Poverty Law Center spokesperson **Mark Potok**, on the group's efforts to track virulently anti-gay Rev. **Fred Phelps**, who is traveling the country demanding that communities with *Ten Commandments* monuments also erect memorials condemning **Matthew Shepard**, the gay Wyoming student beaten to death in 1998 (*Associated Press*, April 8)

"Forget making gay weddings illegal, Mr. President. If you want to make marriage more stable, make divorce illegal. If people knew they couldn't get out of it, they'd be more careful getting into it."

Satirist Andy Rooney in his "60 Minutes" commentary (*CBS News*, March 21)

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APRIL 23, 2004



Gay Wacko Jacko?

Liberace's ex claims
Michael Jackson
made the first move
Page 26

At last

No longer just a girl wanting to have fun, Cyndi Lauper talks about her new CD, 'Divas Live' and her support for gay marriage

By TYLER STEELE

ANYONE WHO'S SEEN HER on tour with Cher, with Meatloaf, at any number of gay pride events across the country, or in performance on one of her solo tours knows what to expect from Cyndi Lauper live.

She's on the road again in support of her new album "At Last", a collection of classic American songs like "Walk on By", "Stay", "At Last" and "Unchained Melody". The Houston Voice caught up with her the day after the live telecast of VH1's Diva's Live as she takes a break before heading to Texas for a string of concerts here.

Houston Voice: Congrats on the success of your new album, "At Last", and on Divas Live.

Cyndi Lauper: The show was a lot of fun and, it was great to see Patti (LaBelle) and Sheila E (who plays on "At Last"). The staging was tough for me with "Lady Marmalade" because I always walk into everybody. Not on purpose, but invariably people are going one way and I'm going in the other direction, so it's like an "AbFab" episode. I was really fortunate enough to have the director of the show know me from years ago, which helped. You can't always create a good musical moment on a live telecast, but I think we did a good job.

HOVO: The audience agreed. They were giving you and Patti LaBelle a standing ovation for "Time After Time" before you even finished the song. Did you ever expect that kind of reaction?

LAUPER: I wasn't aware of it at the time because I was really in the moment, playing my instrument, singing and listening to everything come together. Also, to be honest, I'm nearsighted and can't always see what's going on. Everything looks like an Edward Hopper painting from far away.

HOVO: You've been working non-stop the past few years performing at gay pride events, touring with Cher, making "At Last" and now you're on the road again. How do you juggle work and family?

LAUPER: Sometimes I'm just in the doghouse with my little family, so I'm really trying now to spend quality



Pop diva Cyndi Lauper leaves the New York skyline behind for a Sunday appearance at Verizon Wireless Theater in Houston.

time with them. Every morning we have our family time at breakfast. My son has a hockey game tonight, and I'll be there watching and freezing. It's a difficult balance, especially on tour, but I love to sing and I love creating music and I think it would kill me not to. I'm looking to Broadway now because (I live in New York and) I could be in a show and still have time to be with my son and to write music when he's in school.

HOVO: You've got the live DVD of this tour coming out in May?

LAUPER: The live DVD took a lot of effort, but I'm really pleased with it. Considering that our industry is on its knees, the fact that I got to do a live DVD is great. Plus, I've been threatening to do one forever so we called it "Cyndi Lauper Live—At Last", even though it covers material throughout my career.

HOVO: One of the many reasons you are so endeared in the gay community is your constant declaration that people accept who they are and relish their

uniqueness. Well, that and taking your husband on double dates with gay couples!

LAUPER: Well, Patti (LaBelle) is the Godmother of my son, but she shares that with a few of my gay and lesbian friends. My son has a lot of gay people in his life, and I'm so happy that he's able to experience these people and not see them as different.

HOVO: What's your feeling on gay marriage?

LAUPER: I don't get why people are up in arms over it. Who the heck is it hurting? Do we really need this to distract us from what's going on in the world? I know a lot of gay parents who are better parents and more caring about their families than some heterosexual families.

HOVO: Unlike most artists, you actually record new vocals for many of your dance remixes. Why?

LAUPER: Because sometimes when the music changes I feel the vocal needs to reflect the new sound and environment. It's the same with my live perform-

Please see LAUPER on Page 20

FRESHER THAN FRESH: Could the seafood at Mantra have been caught today? Page 18

OUT ON THE COURSE: Pro golfer Rosie Jones is out and sporting the logo of Olivia, a gay travel company. Page 19



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dining J.A. CHAPMAN

From its St. Augustine entry to its fresher than fresh ingredients, Mantra on Main Street is impressive.

Mantra has pan-Asian flair

WHAT IS ON THE FLOOR, I WONDERED as we walked into Mantra in the New Main Street section of downtown.

In the dimly lit entryway, it was hard to discern its origin, but it felt a lot like grass. A quick check revealed that indeed it was grass — St. Augustine sod, to be exact.

When asked how they'd come up with the idea of using grass to carpet the entry, a manager told me that they want to be memorable from the first step inside. That won't be a problem for this luxurious restaurant and its inventive pan-Asian cuisine. And not just because of the flooring choice.

Mantra's décor is eye-popping opium-den meets Bangkok chic. A lounge dominates the front section and is filled with spacious lounging couches upholstered in deep red velvet, and multitudes of throw pillows and ottomans in rich silks.

Bejeweled Buddhas keep watch over the area from nooks in the wall and a dual propeller-blade inspired fan twists lazily overhead.

A sushi bar and alcohol bar fill opposite walls in the middle of the restaurant, and the back offers sleek tables, two richly upholstered booths in secluded alcoves and two private dining rooms, one with an impressive wine rack.

The opulent, sensual décor even continues outside, where plush, jewel-tone upholstered chairs serve as patio furniture.

THE DÉCOR IS IMPRESSIVE, BUT IT'S the food that really stands out at Mantra. The fish is flown in fresh daily from Hawaii.

My dining companion and I started with two orders of sashimi, which arrived in generous four-ounce servings. The yellow tail (\$8) was firm and fresh, but the unagi (\$5) — smoked eel — really stood out. Served warm, with both white and black sesame seeds, its smooth, buttery flavor was a wonder.

For appetizers, we chose the jasmine tea crusted shrimp (\$9.99). The pan-seared shrimp had a pleasant hint of jasmine tea and the accompanying passion fruit coulis provided a sweet contrast.

If I'm being truly picky, the shrimp were just a tad overdone, but overall this dish impressed.

The smoked tofu with grilled mango and avocado appetizer (\$5.99) arrived layered, looking like a tropical lasagna. It was a challenge to eat with chopsticks, but the thinly sliced smoked tofu was a wonder of rich smoky flavor and the grilled mango complemented it nicely.

The avocado turned out to be more like guacamole, which somewhat overpowered, but overall this dish was a lively, inventive mixture.

For main courses we chose the ahi and the Arctic char (\$18.95 each). The seared ahi was just-caught fresh. Served with a crispy potato pancake and spicy Hunan shrimp in a garlicky sauce, this dish impressed.

The slightly sweet Arctic char again was extraordinarily fresh. Paired with noodles in a light honey-miso sauce and tatsoi (Japanese spinach), this dish was our favorite, with each ingredient playing perfectly off the others.

Mantra offers only two desserts, a cheesecake and a chocolate mousse cake. At the recommendation of our waiter, we chose the chocolate mousse cake, which turned out to be a decadent vertical layering of chocolate cake and milk chocolate mousse, covered in a hard dark chocolate coating.

Given its central downtown location, Mantra is a good choice for a workday lunch. The lunch menu is small, but it's possible to order from the sushi bar as well.

I chose the fresh Tasmanian crab cakes (\$13.95), which our waiter said was one of their most popular dishes.

Unlike some crab cakes, these were almost all fresh crab, with just a few bits of red pepper, green onion and corn for flavor. A roasted tomato sauce accented the crab nicely, while roasted vegetables and mashed potatoes rounded out the dish.

My friend opted for the Maui fish tacos (\$8.95). Two corn tortilla tacos filled with fresh white fish, tomatoes, purple cabbage and sweet caramelized onions were topped with an otherworldly smoky sauce. Accompanied by herbed rice and roasted vegetables these tacos can almost transport you to the islands.

Mantra is still a something of a secret, despite having been open for two months. They've kept a low profile while working out kinks and honing the menu and they're poised for an official grand opening in the near future. Once the word gets out, this place will be packed.



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sports GREG SMILEY



After years of being out to her family, friends and colleagues, professional golfer Rosie Jones comes out to the world.



Professional golfer Rosie Jones came out in March after entering a sponsorship agreement with Olivia, a company that provides travel services for gays. (Photo by Steve Mitchell/AP)

Rosie comes out swinging

LAST MONTH, DURING THE KRAFT Nabisco Championship, March 22-28, Rosie Jones teed off sporting the logo of a new sponsor, Olivia, a travel company catering to lesbians.

With her announcement in a news piece she wrote, and the New York Times published on March 21 about the sponsorship, the 44-year-old Jones, a 13-time winner on the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) tour, publicly came out of the closet.

Jones has been out to her family and friends for 25 years, even before she began playing on the pro tour in 1982. Most, if not all, of her colleagues on the tour knew of her sexual orientation. But it was not something she discussed publicly.

"I've been on tour for 25 years, and in fact, there's a wide group of lesbians on tour, but they don't wear it," she says. "In fact, on tour you don't always know it."

"You see people at parties and question things, but it's not a close-knit group of people," she adds. "People just don't go around and go, 'Is she? Is she? Is she?'"

CYNICS MIGHT SAY JONES' admission is hardly courageous, given that she is in the latter years of her career, is financially stable and, in fact, has timed this admission to an endorsement deal that will pay her significant amounts of cash.

But it was a brave move, and she brushes such comments aside.

"Hey, opportunity fell in my lap. I wasn't ready five or 10 years ago to make it public. I don't think my tour was ready," Jones says. "When Martina came out, she lost almost every one of her sponsors. That was the way corporate America was thinking. It was scary. It is scary."

"Ten years ago, they didn't have 'Grace,' Rosie O'Donnell, gays on mainstream TV," she adds. "[Today] it's becoming acceptable."

Jones says she doesn't really know what attitude mainstream sponsors hold toward openly gay athletes today. But she has not been a victim of backlash as a result of coming out.

"I still have my contract with Titleist," she says. "I have a new contract with Ecco shoes, with a clothing company. Everybody was fine with it ... I wasn't surprised, but I was relieved. Things are just different today."

Jones told the Voice she views herself as an athlete more so than a political activist. Whether she acknowledges it or not, however, what she did could be considered political, based on the current climate for gays in the professional sports arena and in general.

"My coming out was not to take a political stance," she says. "I'm looked at as someone who is stepping forward in those directions. I definitely have my viewpoints or opinions."

Regardless of the timing, Jones has done a great service for professional sports and for gay men and lesbians. And she's done it on her own terms, when she was prepared to face the consequences.

That is how it should be.

"Coming out is a personal thing for everyone — at whatever level you do it," she says. "I had come out personally years ago, but to open yourself publicly to the world? Most people, they don't walk into a grocery store and get recognized. There's a whole [other] level for professional athletes. They have to be pretty comfortable with themselves."

Then she adds, "And so what. I'm like a thousand other athletes looking for endorsements. I was probably passed over a couple of times. So why not [enter a sponsorship agreement with Olivia]."

It's a brave move that a lot of other golfers and professional sports figures have not yet been able to make.

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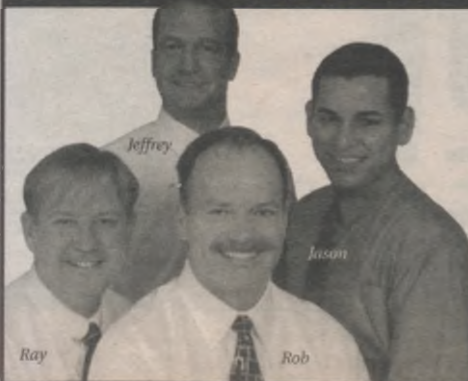


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sion, 9 a.m. Service. 11:15 a.m. 281-277-8882. www.buuc.org. Unitarian Fellowship of Galveston County. 502 Church St. Service. 11 a.m. 713-686-5876.

MONDAY APRIL 26

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 1-7 p.m. at the clinic.

215 Westheimer and 3311 Richmond. Suite 100; 4-8 p.m. at

Bricks, 617 Fairview; and 9 p.m. - 1 a.m. at 0. 710 Pacific.

713-830-3070.

Free HIV Testing. 4-8 p.m. at All Star News, 3415 Katy

Freeway. Health clinic with free testing for HIV and syphilis.

713-869-7878.

Gay Bowling Leagues. Women's league. 6:45 p.m. Dynamic

Lanes, 6121 Tarnel Drive. 713-861-1187.

Gay Fathers/Fathers First. Support group. 8-9:30 p.m. Bering

Memorial United Methodist Church. Tom. 713-726-8736.

www.geocities.com/gaydadsHouston/

Grace Assembly Church. Gay/gay-affirming congregation.

7 p.m. aerobics class. 567 Cedar Grove. Livingston, Texas.

77351. 936-646-7214. E-mail: leol@easttexas.net.

Grief & Divorce Support Groups. 7 p.m. Bering. 713-526-1017.

ext. 208.

Kolbe Project. Eucharist 7:30 p.m. 713-861-1800.

Lambda Center. Alcoholics Anonymous. 8 p.m. Beginner's

Group. 1201 W. Clay. 713-521-1243 or 713-528-9772.

www.lambdahouston.org.

Montrose Clinic. Offers weekly peer support groups for gay

and bisexual men with HIV. Spanish speaking group meets.

6:30 p.m. 215 Westheimer. 713-830-3050. Grupo de Apoyo

para Latinos gay y bisexuales VIH positivos. Lunes 6:30.

Para mas informacion llama al 713-830-3025.

Queer Voices Radio Show. 8-10 p.m. KPFT 90.1.

Houston GLBT Community Center. Lesbians Coming Out 7 p.m.

American Veterans for Equal Rights. 7 p.m. 3400 Montrose.

Suite 207. 713-524-3818.

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Grace Assembly Church. Gay/gay-affirming congregation.

7 p.m. aerobics class. 567 Cedar Grove. Livingston, Texas.

77351. 936-646-7214. E-mail: leol@easttexas.net.

Houston Pride Band. Open rehearsal. 7:30-9:30 p.m.

1307 Yale. 713-862-1488.

Houston Tennis Club. 7-9 p.m. Memorial Park at the Tennis

Center. houstontennisclub@aol.com

Spiritual Uplift Service. 7 p.m. Resurrection MCC.

713-861-9149.

Houston GLBT Community Center. Kick the Butt smoking

cessation seminar. 7 p.m., Houston Gay and Lesbian Political

Caucus. 7 p.m., 3400 Montrose. Suite 207. 713-524-3818.

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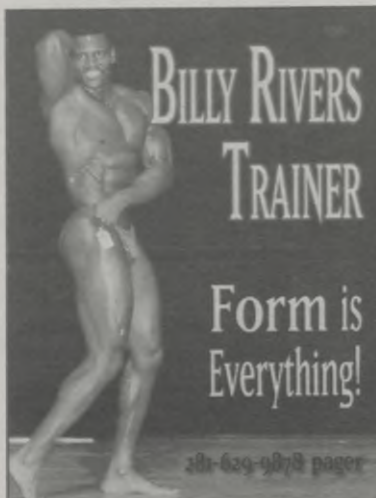
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dish

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

The whole truth?

Sophie B. Hawkins wins lawsuit, a president's possible paramour, and Jacko's gay fling



'Omnisexual' singer Sophie B. Hawkins recently won a lawsuit against a man selling her CDs on eBay.

By now, we're all sick of hearing about the troubles with file-sharing service Napster and music piracy, but singer **SOPHIE B. HAWKINS**, probably best known for her 1994 hit "Damn I Wish I Was Your Lover," took on a smaller fish in a related fight, and won.

On Tuesday, April 13, Hawkins, who identifies as "omnisexual" (your guess is as good as Dish's) won a lawsuit in a Los Angeles Superior Court against an unnamed merchant who was selling promotional copies of her latest CD, "Wilderness," on eBay.com for as much as \$300, Reuters reports.

The album, the first to be released on Hawkins' label Trumpet Swan Records, was released April 20.

"He was just making easy money off something that's my blood and guts," Hawkins said. "I had invested all of my life savings into this record, and he wouldn't stop. He pissed me off."

Hawkins told Reuters that she plans to use the \$346 she won in the case to pay back the fans who were ripped off and then buy them real copies of the album.

Confirmed bachelors

Some residents of Selma, Ala., say speculation about whether U.S. Vice President **WILLIAM RUFUS DE VANE KING**, and President **JAMES BUCHANAN** were a gay couple is much ado about nothing.

"Buchanan and King were lovers," claims author and historian James W. Loewen, who stated this in his 1999 book "Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong."

Daniel Fate Brooks, a leading authority on King, told the Associated Press that he is often asked about the relationship between King and Buchanan. "Hardly a month goes by that someone doesn't call," he says.

But the allegation angers members of the Selma chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, which is named for King.

"It's certainly nothing people in Selma talk about," chapter regent Edna Ledyard said. "It's a myth. Nobody has any way to prove it or disprove it."

King and Buchanan met in 1834 and shared a house together starting in 1836, according to Loewen. At the time



James Buchanan

critics referred to King, a major slave owner, as "Buchanan's wife."

Andrew Jackson, the nation's seventh president, described King as "Miss Nancy," a slang term for effeminate men at the time.

King was nominated as Franklin Pierce's vice president and inaugurated in March 1853, but died of tuberculosis less than a month later. Buchanan became president in 1857 and is the only person to hold that office who never married.

Off the wall

MICHAEL JACKSON just can't seem to avoid the limelight these days.

The New York Daily News reports that the tabloid National Enquirer's latest allegation against the pop star comes from **SCOTT THORSON**, an ex-boyfriend of the late pianist **LIBERACE**.

Thorson apparently passed a polygraph test in which he claims he had a sexual relationship with Jackson.

"[Michael] felt comfortable enough to make the first move on me, and I didn't resist," he says, claiming their two interludes happened in the early '80s. "Michael begged me to leave Liberace. I had to say no."

Thorson claims that while hanging out with Jackson, he twice saw gay porn magazines on Jackson's nightstand, one of which had pictures that "looked like young boys."

STEVE COCHRAN, the attorney defending Jackson against a child molestation allegation, dismissed Thorson's story as "false trash."

Liberace kicked Thorson out of his home in 1982 for an addiction to painkillers. Thorson later sued the Las Vegas legend for palimony.

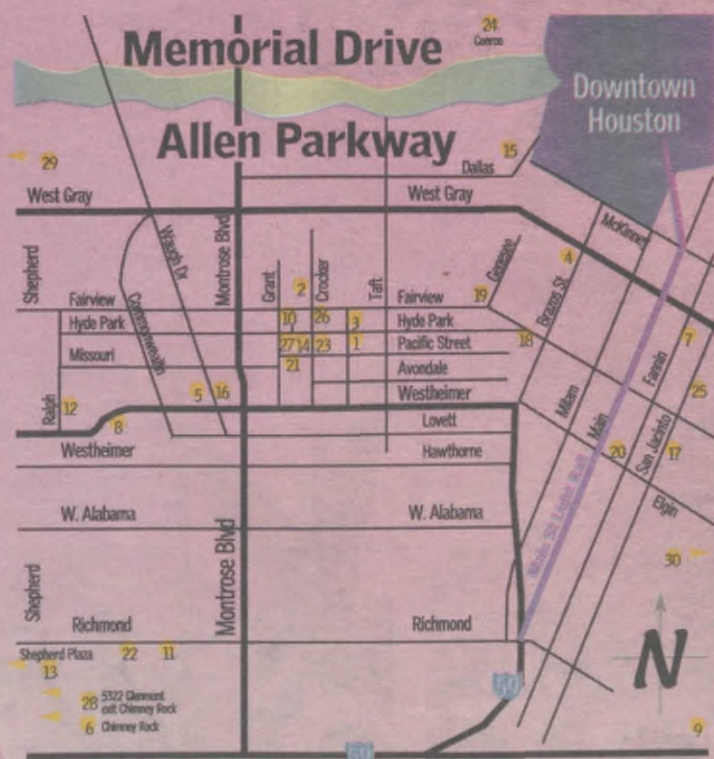


Michael Jackson

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