

At press time, Hurricane Rita was approaching the Gulf Coast, so delivery of the Houston Voice may have been delayed.

AIDS CONFAB: HIV groups gather in Houston. Page 3



SEX STUDY: Women report more same-sex acts. Page 5



OUT IN HOUSTON: Gay events draw crowds. Page 9



Accusations fly in Texas gay marriage fight

Sides cite competing claims of illegal campaigning, planned voter fraud

By BO SHELL

The fight over Proposition 2, the constitutional ban on gay marriage headed to Texas voters, heated up this week, fueled by accusations that amendment supporters are campaigning illegally and allegations that opponents plan to register fraudulent voters.

About 2,000 conservative ministers from around the state rallied Sept. 17 to register voters who would likely support the amendment when it appears on the Nov. 8 ballot.

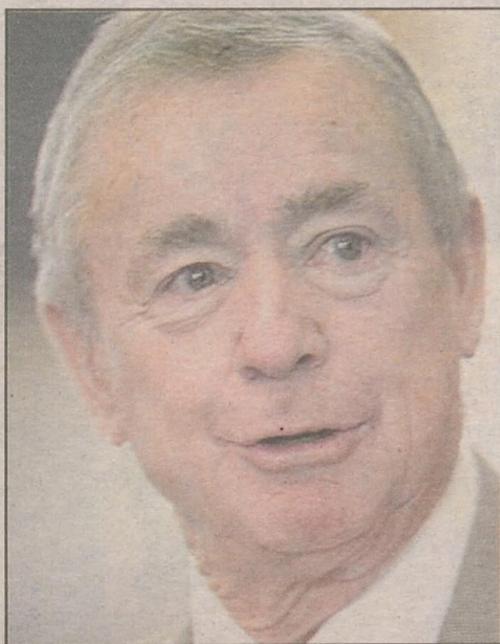
State law already restricts marriage to unions of one man and one woman. If passed, the amendment would enshrine the policy in the state constitution and prohibit any part of the state government from recognizing any legal status "identical or similar to marriage" for same-sex couples.

The Texas Restoration Project, founded in May, organized the voter-registration drive.

Touted as "Citizenship Sundays" by Rev. Laurence White, chair of the Project, the drives seek to register 300,000 voters who will "vote as Christians... not on the basis of their party affiliation or their economic status or their ethnic background," he told the Houston Chronicle.

White, pastor of Houston's Our Savior Lutheran Church, could not be reached for comment by press time.

While organizers maintain their mission is nonpartisan and not aimed at helping any candidate, critics say the Texas Restoration Project



State Rep. Warren Chisum (R-Pampa), co-author of a proposed constitutional amendment banning gay marriage, accused anti-amendment activist Glen Maxey of planning to provide addresses for illegal out-of-state voters in the Nov. 8 election. (Photo by AP)

is a tool to register voters to help re-elect Gov. Rick Perry, a Republican, in 2006.

"I think it's pretty easy for anybody who is looking at what [the Texas Restoration Project is] doing to see that they are marrying the re-election of Rick Perry to this issue of the marriage amendment to registering voters in conservative churches," said Glen Maxey, campaign director of No Nonsense in November, an Austin-based anti-amendment movement.

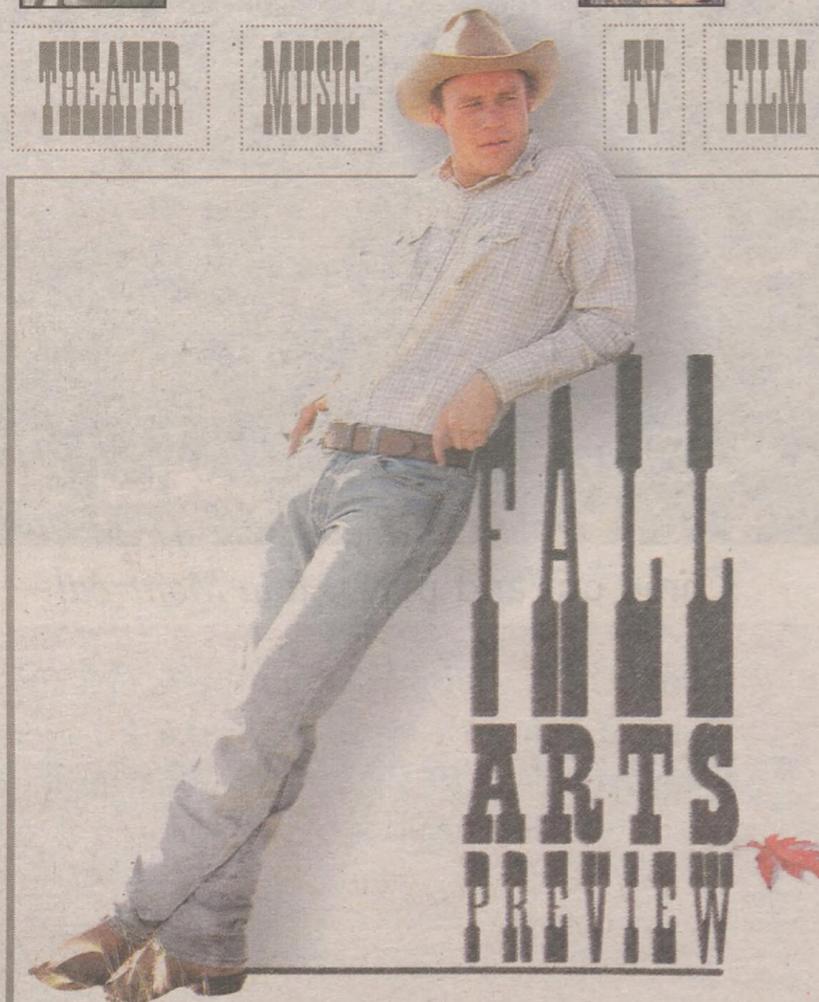
Please see **MARRIAGE FIGHT** on Page 3

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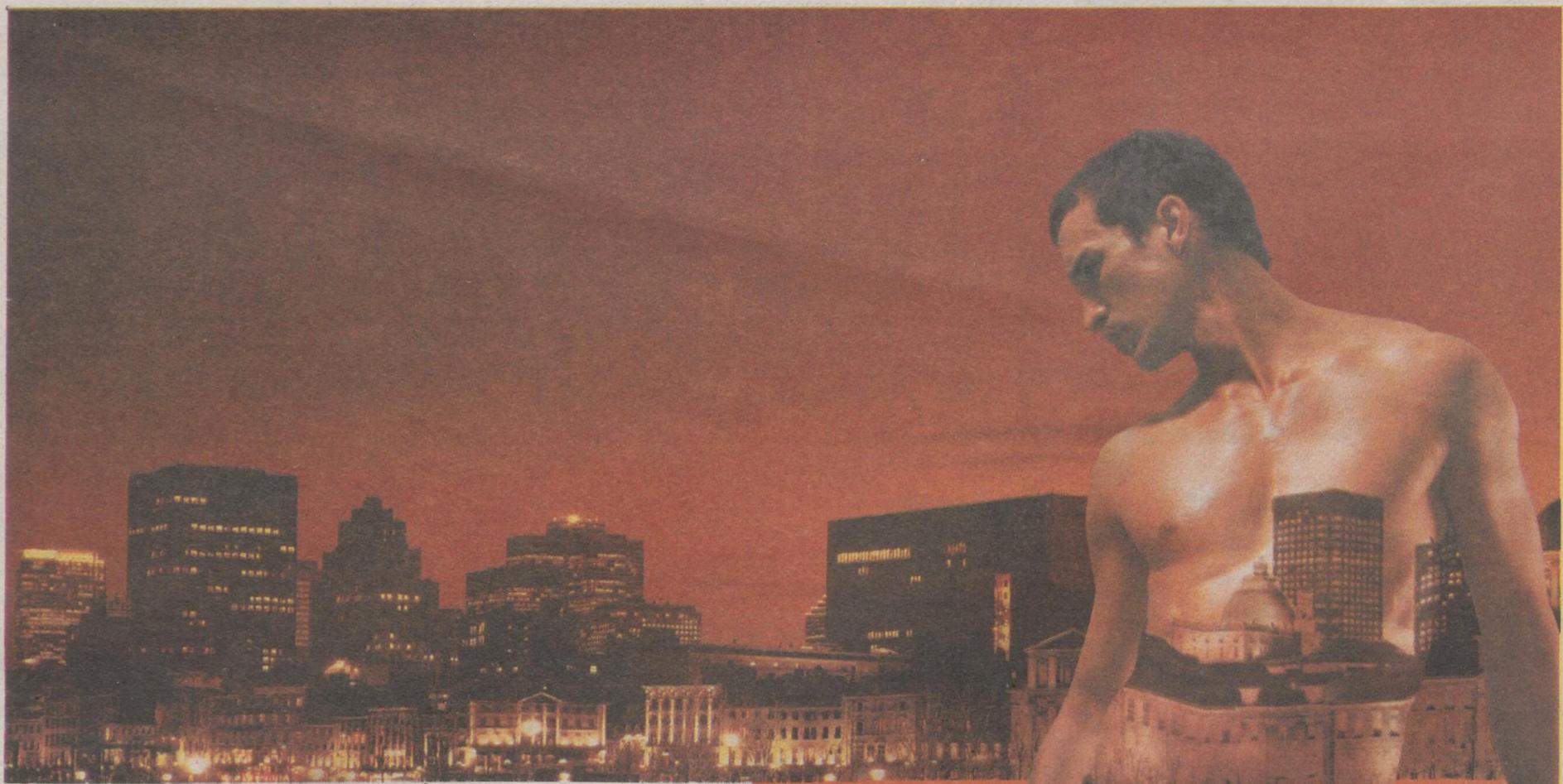
STARTING ON PAGE 12



news
Despite 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,' gay soldiers still sent to serve in Iraq war, other conflicts.
PAGE 6

local life
Gay fashion show producer Lenny Matuszewski reaches out to help hurricane victims.
PAGE 8





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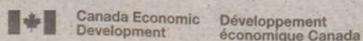
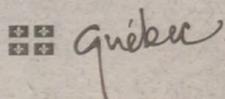
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local news

Nation's AIDS service providers to meet in Houston

Katrina on agenda for U.S. Conference on AIDS

By ANDREW KEEGAN

For the past three weeks, Houston has served as a destination of information and hope for evacuees of Hurricane Katrina. Next week, thousands of HIV/AIDS service providers and people with HIV will converge in the city on a similar quest.

But unlike Katrina, these activists say their "storm" has not subsided — it has infected more than 60 million people worldwide.

The ninth annual U.S. Conference on AIDS, which is scheduled for Sept. 29-Oct. 2, is sponsored by the National Minority AIDS Council and two dozen other national AIDS groups. The four-day event is expected to draw 3,000 participants, making it the most widely attended gathering of HIV/AIDS service providers in the country.

"Hurricane Katrina had a tremendous impact on the entire country and highlighted a number of issues just beginning to be discussed, including HIV/AIDS," said Damon Dozier, congressional liaison for the National Minority AIDS Council.

In light of the natural disaster, there was debate over whether the conference should be cancelled, according to Dozier.

"The people we serve urged us to con-



Carl Schmid, director of federal affairs for the AIDS Institute, said there are 'big, big issues' to be discussed when the U.S. Conference on AIDS convenes in Houston next week.

tinue, especially those in the affected areas," he said. "We realize there will be some folks who simply cannot come because of the storm's impact."

A full-day seminar will be devoted to organizations in the three states affected by Katrina so other agencies can understand what is needed to continue providing services, Dozier said.

'Big, big issue'

The second day of the conference features a seminar on what Carl Schmid, director of federal affairs for the AIDS Institute, describes as a "big, big issue." Effective Jan. 1, Medicare pays for prescription drugs for those who qualify. This includes HIV medications, said Schmid, who estimates 80,000 people with HIV are eligible.

But many of those affected don't realize there is a new health care law, Schmid said.

"We need to do a better job at getting the word out," he said, indicating information is available at major pharmacies.

Service providers also can attend a briefing on the reauthorization of the Ryan White CARE Act, which has sparked some dissent among organizations around the country.

The legislation, which allocates federal assistance with AIDS care and treatment, expires Sept. 30. The Bush administration's proposal of \$2.65 billion in funding constitutes no measurable increase, Schmid said.

"People are living longer but there is no increase in federal funding," he said. "We need that additional money."

The AIDS Alliance for Children, Youth & Families is also concerned with the reauthorization of the Ryan White legislation, as well as dissension among AIDS organizations over the law, according to its director, David Harvey.

"We cannot afford to lose the CARE act

to infighting," Harvey said. "Various AIDS organizations have issued their position on the current proposal. The southern portion, which has the greatest rise in HIV cases, legitimately is asking for more money. But how can that happen given no additional funding? What we need to come out of this conference is unity."

One of the more anticipated seminars, a treatment and research update, is hosted by the two men credited with discovering HIV. Working in separate labs, scientists Robert Gallo and Luc Montagnier both discovered Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) in 1983. The men established a partnership three years ago in hopes of hastening the discovery of AIDS vaccines.

Guy Pujol, executive director of the AIDS Treatment Initiative in Atlanta, conducts three seminars to discuss nutrition and HIV.

"I'll explain food restrictions on 26 medicines approved to treat HIV, and why. It's important to teach why because by being educated, it's easier to adhere to instructions," Pujol said.

MORE INFO

U.S. Conference on AIDS
Sept. 29 - Oct. 2
Hilton Americas Hotel, Houston
www.nmac.org/conferences

Marriage amendment opponents focus on voter turnout

MARRIAGE FIGHT, continued from Page 1

Perry's office did not respond to interview requests by press time.

Maxey, a Democrat who served six sessions in the state House representing Austin's District 51, said he believes the Texas Restoration Project is violating ethics laws because it is acting as a political action committee without registering as such.

"They are in violation of the law," Maxey said. "They may say they are doing nonpartisan work, but when they bring in

a candidate for election and their spokespersons at these events are talking about people registering to vote for a proposition that is on the ballot in less than 60 days, they have crossed the line and they are acting illegally."

The Texas Freedom Network, another amendment opponent, also accused the Restoration Project of illegal activity.

"They've been holding meetings around the state, pulling in hundreds of ministers and their wives free of charge," said Dan Quinn, communications director for the Texas Freedom Network.

"They're distributing material at these meetings to support the marriage amendment on the ballot in November. They have individuals that are singing the praise of the governor at every chance they get. The governor is speaking at all these events, yet his opponent in the primary is not," Quinn said.

Quinn also questioned the source of the "hundreds of thousands of dollars" in funding required to host the events. Because the group is not registered as a political committee, the Texas Restoration Project is not required to release the information.

Maxey said No Nonsense in November, which is a registered political action committee, is making efforts to register gay church members, but his group is more concerned with making sure those who are already registered actually vote.

Maxey did not provide registration



Glen Maxey, leader of No Nonsense in November, called allegations that his group plans to perpetrate voter fraud 'totally bogus.'

numbers, but said the group is receiving approximately 1,000 pledge cards every three days.

Voter fraud alleged

An effort to discredit anti-amendment groups has also stirred activists on both sides of the gay marriage debate in the past week.

Advocates for the ban have said they are concerned that amendment opponents plan to illegally bus out-of-state residents

to Texas to cast votes against the measure.

Kelly Shackelford, president of the conservative non-profit group Free Market Foundation, has brought the matter to Secretary of State Roger Williams, whose office said officials plan to watch for increased registration numbers, the Austin American-Statesman reported Sept. 19.

Unsigned handouts being distributed in downtown Austin and near the University of Texas campus touted the allegation, but Maxey said the information only serves to discredit conservatives advocating the ban.

"There is no evidence," Maxey said. "Nothing that that's based on at all, other than out of the thin air. It's an urban myth, totally a figment of their imagination."

The amendment's co-author, state Rep. Warren Chisum (R-Pampa), targeted Maxey in an interview with the American-Statesman.

"Maxey's going to do that, he's going to reach out to them and explain to them what they can do. All they have to do is get down here and register to vote. And I suspect they're going to furnish addresses for them. That wouldn't be hard to do... [You could] stuff ballot boxes with people who are not legitimate Texans," Chisum told the newspaper.

Maxey said he doesn't know the source of the information, but is angered that Chisum is repeating it as fact without "any level of checking anything."

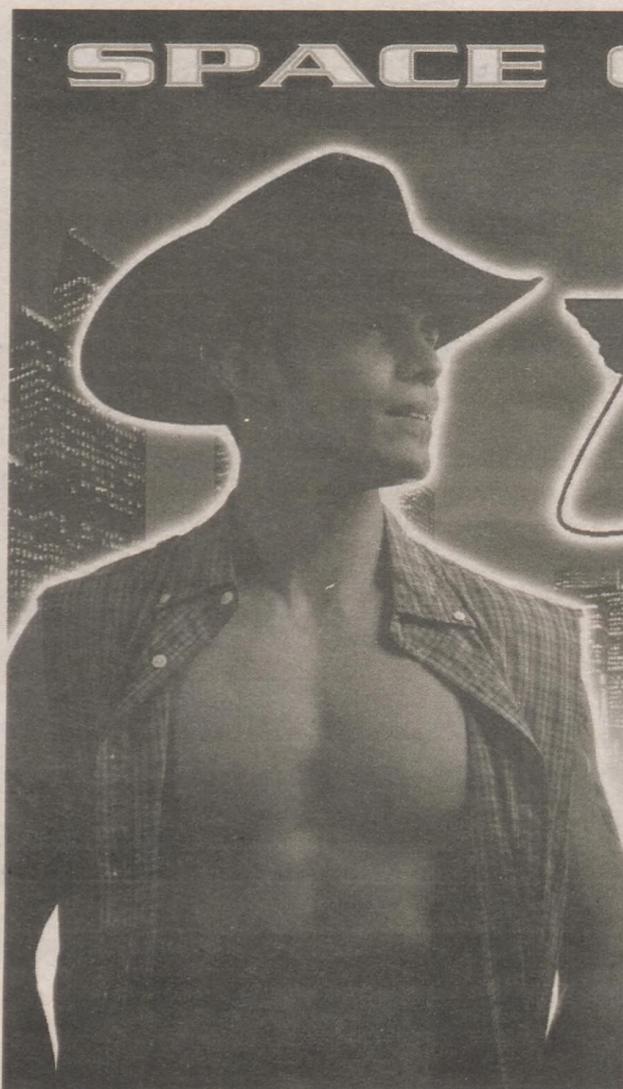
"It's totally bogus bullshit and they are repeating it as fact," Maxey said.

MORE INFO

No Nonsense in November
512 E. Riverside Dr. Ste. 203
Austin, Texas 78704
512-443-2019
www.nononsensein november.com

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

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national news

More women report same-sex encounters

Likelihood of engaging in female-female sex acts varies with age

By RYAN LEE

The percentage of women who report having a sexual encounter with another woman at some point in their lifetimes "increased substantially" over generations, according to two separate studies published this month.

In a study of 7,643 women ages 15 to 44, 11.5 percent said they had a sexual encounter with another woman during their lifetime, more than doubling the 4 percent of women who reported such encounters in a 1992 study. The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention published the new study Sept. 15.

"The levels [of reporting same-sex encounters] are higher for women in their 20s than they are for women older than that, so this appears to be a recent trend among younger women," said William Mosher, lead author of the National Survey of Family Growth, conducted by the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics.

In addition to seeing new trends among younger women, researchers conducting a separate study at the City University of New

York-Queens College and RTI International noticed that reports of female-female sexual encounters increased gradually throughout the 20th century.

Reviewing data from 12,336 adult females who participated in the National Data Program for the Social Sciences' General Social Survey between 1988 and 2002, researchers discovered only 1.6 percent of women born before 1920 reported ever having sexual contact with another woman. Some 6.9 percent of women born after 1970 acknowledged engaging in same-sex sexual behavior.

The findings in the CUNY-Queens College study, published in the fall issue of Public Opinion Quarterly, closely parallel the data collected by NCHS researchers. The studies indicate "a massive social change" in either the sexual behavior women are engaging in, what behaviors women are willing to discuss, or both, said Charles Turner, lead author of the CUNY-Queens College study.

"What we have is two samples, two independent studies, done by different investigators, with different instruments and both of us find substantial increases in the reporting of female-female sexual contacts," Turner said.

Women's roles 'more fluid'

Both studies also showed that the percentage of men who reported having sexual contact with another man remained statisti-

cally stagnant over the years, Turner said.

Only 6 percent of men in the NCHS study reported engaging in oral or anal sex with another man during their lifetimes, while the percentage of men reporting same-sex sexual behavior in the CUNY-Queens College study fluctuated over the years between 3.5 and 5.5 percent.

Women's sexual roles and mores have changed more than men's over the past several decades, which may help explain the rise of reported female-female sexual contacts, said Saralyn Chesnut, director of the Office of LGBT Life at Emory University in Atlanta.

"It makes a lot of sense because women's roles have changed so much over the 20th century, and one of the roles that changed was that of woman as a Victorian model for sex, where women didn't enjoy sex, or their only purpose was to provide men with children," Chesnut said.

"Young women are sensitive to being labeled lesbian — they just see it all as much more fluid," Chesnut added.

The NCHS data showed that while 11.5 percent of women reported a sexual encounter with another female sometime during their lives, only 4 percent reported having a sexual relationship with another female during the last year and only 1.3 percent reported having female sex partners exclusively.

The proportion of men in the NCHS



Saralyn Chesnut, director of the Office of LGBT Life at Emory University in Atlanta, said young women experience sexuality as 'more fluid' than their older counterparts. (Photo by Kay Hinton/Emory University)

study who reported anal or oral sex with another man was also staggered, with 6 percent engaging in such behavior at some point in their lifetimes, 2.9 percent reporting a male sex partner within the last year and 1.6 percent who said they only have sex with other men.

An identical percentage of men and women in the NCHS study, 4.1 percent, identified as homosexual or bisexual.

Katrina relief efforts turning to evacuees with HIV

Donations to gay relief groups slow

By ANDREW KEEGAN

Some 8,000 people with HIV are struggling to manage the disease in the wake of Hurricane Katrina without medication, service providers and support systems, though there are signs that the situation is improving.

In addition to HIV service providers assisting victims of the storm — an estimated 8,000 HIV-positive people, according to the Kaiser Daily HIV/AIDS Report — the federal government established a special needs unit that can be reached by calling 1-800-621-FEMA.

The AIDS Alliance for Children, Youth & Families, based in Washington D.C., was notified of the unit through a call from the Federal Emergency Management Agency on Sept. 13, according to Diana Bruce, the group's spokesperson.

"Their message was, 'if you are an evacuee with HIV, register for disaster assistance ASAP with FEMA by calling 800-621-FEMA,'" Bruce said. "When regis-

tering, tell the operator that you have special needs and are HIV-positive."

Kenneth Hopkins, the FEMA official that contacted Bruce, did not respond to requests for comment by press time. The phone number is answered by an operator who directs callers to the special unit.

FEMA officials have not responded to repeated efforts to reach them in the last two weeks.

Gay relief efforts

While the federal government is concentrating on a general relief effort, some gay organizations established relief funds to assist people with HIV.

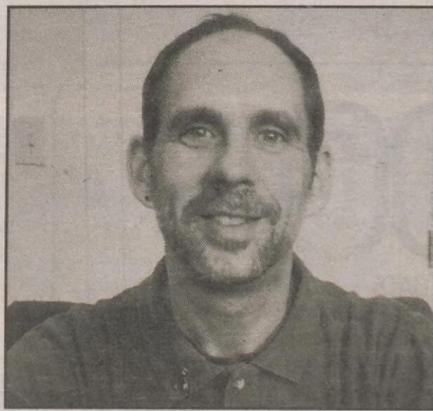
Under One Roof, based in San Francisco, raised and distributed \$5,000, according to the agency's director, Mike Marshall.

"We had a panel call HIV service providers in the affected areas," Marshall said. "We found three organizations that made it clear they need the money for food and housing, which are not covered in their normal grants."

The Baton Rouge AIDS Society and Mobile AIDS Support Services each received \$2,000, said Marshall. Another \$1,000 was sent to Montgomery AIDS Outreach.

"We know agencies in New Orleans will need assistance, but none are up and running yet. We need to plan for when they are on their feet," Marshall said.

Craig Bowman, executive director of the National Youth Advocacy Coalition, shares



Chris Daigle, director of Equality Louisiana, was hired in a temporary capacity by the Human Rights Campaign to provide assistance on Hurricane Katrina relief efforts.

that sentiment. His organization established the Hurricane Katrina LGBT Relief Fund through a coalition of national gay rights groups. The fund generated approximately \$75,000 as of Sept. 22, he said.

"Our network of GLBT agencies in that area was pretty much destroyed," Bowman said. "We're taking the time to investigate where the gaps are and who can benefit the most from the funds."

Bowman said the fund will disburse all of its donations by late October. He noted that individual contributions are slowing down.

The Rainbow World Fund is also noticing a decrease in donations, according to the

Director Jeff Cotter. The gay humanitarian agency raised more than \$300,000 to feed evacuees through America's Second Harvest, the nation's largest food bank network.

"We will continue to focus primarily on Katrina until October," Cotter said.

Howard Grossman, executive director of the American Academy of HIV Medicine, said it's not surprising that HIV agencies had "to take things into our own hands."

Grossman said the agency established a link on its Web site, aahivm.org, for medical personnel, social workers and benefits managers to join. The idea is to gather a pool of people who can step in when fatigue hits HIV service providers already helping victims of the storm, he said. Some 22 people have already signed up.

Accessing damage

The Human Rights Campaign hired the director of Louisiana's gay rights group, Equality Louisiana, to provide assistance and gather information on Katrina relief efforts. Chris Daigle was given a temporary two-month contract, according to Jay Smith Brown, HRC's senior communications manager.

"The biggest challenge is communication," Daigle said. "So many of our people have been displaced all over the southeast."

Daigle said the group has not confirmed any incidents in which gay evacuees were denied assistance from relief agencies.

HOUSTONVOICE.COM

Contact information for gay hurricane relief organizations

national news

Army sent out gay soldiers to Iraq

Regulation keeps straights from 'playing gay' to avoid war

By LOU CHIBBARO JR.

Members of the Army Reserves and the National Guard who inform their commanders that they are gay are routinely converted into active duty status and sent to the Iraq war and other high priority military assignments, according to a spokesperson for an Army command charged with deploying troops.

The spokesperson, Kim Waldron, a civilian who works for the U.S. Army Forces Command at Fort McPherson, Ga., said the active duty deployment of Reservists and National Guard troops who say they are gay, or who are accused of being gay, takes place under a Forces Command or "FORSCOM" regulation issued in 1999.

Waldron said the regulation is aimed at preventing Reservists and National Guard members from using their sexual orientation — or from pretending to be gay — to escape combat.

"The bottom line is some people are using sexual orientation to avoid deployment," Waldron said. "So in this case, with the Reserve and Guard forces, if a soldier 'tells,'

they still have to go to war and the homosexual issue is postponed until they return to the U.S. and the unit is demobilized."

Waldron was referring to the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy on gays, which Congress enacted in 1993. The policy states that gay people may serve in the military as long as they do not disclose their sexual orientation.

Disclosure by a service member that he or she is gay, the policy states, constitutes evidence that the service member is likely to engage in "homosexual conduct," which is prohibited under the anti-sodomy clause of the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Waldron said the FORSCOM regulation doesn't conflict with the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy because Department of Defense regulations that implemented "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" provide for a similar procedure for retaining service members who attempt to circumvent deployment by claiming they are gay.

Acknowledgement follows years of Pentagon denials

The existence of the 1999 FORSCOM regulation was revealed earlier this month by the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military, a think tank affiliated with the University of California at Santa Barbara. In a Sept. 13 news release,

the group said its researchers discovered the document while assisting the ABC television program "Nightline" with research on gays in the military.

Aaron Belkin, executive director of the CSSMM, said he was "astonished" that a military spokesperson has confirmed that commanders routinely deploy service members thought to be gay.

"The Pentagon has consistently denied that, when mobilization requires bolstering troop strength, it sends gays to fight despite the existence of a gay ban," Belkin said.

The CSSMM and gay rights groups have asserted for years that gay service members whose sexual orientation becomes known are often retained during wartime, only to be discharged after they return home.

Statistics released by the DOD show that the number of gay discharges rose steadily between 1993, when "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" was adopted, and 2001, when the U.S. deployed troops to Afghanistan following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

The number of gay discharges peaked in 2001 at 1,227, according to DOD figures. By 2004, as U.S. soldiers continued to fight the war in Iraq, the number of gay discharges dropped to 653.

Lt. Col. Ellen Kranke, a DOD spokesperson at the Pentagon, said the DOD has no comment on the FORSCOM regulation other than that the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy remains in effect.



Among the U.S. Army Reserves and National Guard service members, like these, serving in Iraq are some who are openly gay because of a little known policy that requires they be deployed into a war zone even if they are discovered to be gay before leaving the United States. (Photo by AP)

Belkin said the confirmation by FORSCOM further confirms that gay service members are retained during wartime and adds to what he says is a growing momentum calling on Congress to repeal the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

A repeal bill pending in the House of Representatives currently is expected to line up more than 100 co-sponsors by the end of this year, supporters have said.

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Amazing race

Houston man organizes donations in 24 hours to help partner's hometown

By JOHNNY HOOKS

The world of fashion is one of appearance and glamour. You might expect that in the wake of a disaster on the scope of Hurricane Katrina, fashionistas would mount a glitzy fund-raiser or famous models would donate their fees to relief efforts like Naomi Campbell did recently during New York Fashion Week.

But Lenny Matuszewski, producer of the Houston Fashion Show, rolled up his sleeves and got to work helping residents of Franklinton, La., the hometown of his partner, Michael Bingham.

Matuszewski secured an 18-foot truck from a client and then put out the word that donations — money, food and sweat equity — would be accepted during a 24-hour period. The response, he recalls, was fast and furious.

"We collected nearly \$5,000 in liquid monies that were spent at Sam's," Matuszewski says. "In donated food from clients, models, neighbors, friends, family and again strangers driving by, I measured that the amount of food we purchased to be near the \$15,000 figure. Not that the money value is important but what is important is that so much food, supplies, water and other essentials were collected."

Matuszewski and Gregg Klosz, the brother of a friend, then loaded up the truck and made the seven-hour trek to Louisiana.

"I knew I had to do something. After several days of not being able to reach Michael, I finally got through to him. I asked what he needed. He said what their community needed was food," Matuszewski says.

Donations in a 24-hour period were enough to fill the large truck, Matuszewski says.

"The show of love and support was incredible. With sweat equity, cash donations and the food drive we were able to completely load the cargo area of this very large truck. We received all of the food items and then some that Michael had said his small town needed," Matuszewski says.

'In a word, amazing'

Matuszewski and Klosz arrived in Amite, La., about 25 miles from Franklinton, late on Saturday to pitch black surroundings. Bingham met the

pair and led them to his hometown.

"While it was totally dark outside we were beginning to see the destruction of fallen trees, crushed homes and power lines down," Matuszewski says.

Early the next day, the trio unloaded the truck into the garage of Bingham's family and then took a driving tour of the destruction brought on by the hurricane.

"Trees that have lived over 100 years that have root structures larger than a Suburban SUV were on their sides or split in two. Tornado damage was evident, as you could see trees tops that were snapped," Matuszewski says.

The town had no power, but did have some limited water. Most streets had already been cleared of trees and other debris, making them passable. A single gas station was open while the town's Winn Dixie was opening to just eight customers at a time. Hardly anything was left on the shelves of the grocery store.

Later, residents of Franklinton came to the Bingham family home to take the donations and create food baskets.

"By mid afternoon on Sunday when it was time for Gregg and I to start our trip back to Houston, these food baskets were already in the back bed of pick-up trucks and flat bed trailers and this food was already making its way through the streets of Franklinton. It was, in a word, amazing," Matuszewski says.

Southern roots

A former international fashion model, Matuszewski (pronounced Mat-two-zoo-ski) was born in Abilene, Texas, on May 5, 1957, to Leonard Thomas Matuszewski and Theda Matuszewski. His mother was named after the silent film star Theda Bara.

"My father was in the oil industry so we moved around a lot when I was younger," Matuszewski says. The oldest boy in the family, he has four siblings, Melanie, Ted, Maxine and Bernie.

Matuszewski spend his elementary school years in New Orleans, where he developed "an affinity for all things Southern."

"I have had a lot of opportunity to move out of the South, but I love the gentility of the South. I am a Southern boy through and through," he says.

To anyone who knows Matuszewski, his compassion and generous heart for the people of Franklinton came as no surprise.

"I have amazing parents. My father passed in 1987, but growing up they always allowed us to make our own way. To fall down, as it were, but they were right there to help pick us back up if we



Houston residents Gregg Klosz and Lenny Matuszewski loaded a truck full of donations and delivered them to a Louisiana town hit hard by Hurricane Katrina.



Tamara Klosz Bonar (left), Linda Kuykendahl, Lenny Matuszewski, Nancy Lawton, Jeanette Lewis and Marianne DuBord organize donations brought from Houston to aid victims of the hurricane in Franklinton, La.

needed them. They raised strong kids," Matuszewski says.

A love of dance started at a young age and "that's what led to my passion for performance, theater and stage presence. It's basically what I do now, but on different level. A much larger scale."

"I take elements of lighting and sound, color and texture, wardrobe and styling and produce fashion shows," he says. "My job is very stressful, but also gratifying. Taking a group of people and

molding them into a seamless unit who work together as one."

Yet Matuszewski says he realizes his job pales in comparison to the power of people helping people.

"When something like Katrina happens, my spirit tells me that people are so willing to help out, all it takes is a faith in the goodness of man, and woman. That and a little know how. I will never forget the generosity that was shown to that small town of 4,400," he says.

out in houston

(Photos by Dalton DeHart)



Paige Mahogany, Sally Huffer, Sharli'e Vicks and Dynasty enjoyed GLBT Community Center night at Hollywood Vietnamese Restaurant.



Special guest Curator Kristian Salinas and Marian Luntz, venue manager of the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, at the Houston Gay & Lesbian Film Festival showing of 'Hate Crime.'



April Ayers, Carlisle Vandervoort, Beth Tudor, Tammi Wallace and Alex Martinez attended the Houston Equal Rights Alliance brunch fund-raiser.



Cool rides were the order of the day at the Houston Classic Chassi's car club show.



'Bent' actor Chris Poole and Joe Watts, artistic director of Theatre New West, at musical theater night at Meteor.



Actors in The Kings Feast at the Texas Renaissance Festival joined for a cast party on musical theater night at Meteor.



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Forum

HOUSTON VOICE

SEPTEMBER 23, 2005

PAGE 10

editorial

Gunning for Gannon is unhealthy sport

The intolerant voices of the loudest on the gay left are a greater threat to our movement than a few lonely voices on the gay right.

By CHRIS CRAIN

TO READ THE LETTERS and e-mails to this newspaper in response to a few opinion columns by Jeff Gannon, you would think he represents a grave threat to the achievement of

equality for gay Americans.

In fact, many of his loudest critics represent a much more serious obstacle to the success of the gay rights movement.

Gannon, of course, made headlines earlier this year after a softball question he asked President Bush at a press briefing led members of the White House press corps to do some digging into his background. They discovered that Gannon's legal name was Jim Guckert and the media outfit he represented, Talon News, was owned by a wealthy Bush backer and published reports severely slanted in the president's favor.

Then things got really interesting, when liberal gay blogger John Aravosis got a tip that before entering journalism, Gannon had advertised online as a gay male escort. Gannon largely evaded questions about the claim, suggesting he merely owned the sites or provided web consultation services.

Gannon also avoided questions about his sexual orientation, leading this newspaper to report in February that he attended a gay sex party in Virginia. A week later, we apologized for the story, saying that while accurate, we had unnecessarily reported on private details of Gannon's life that were not critical to the story.

Since then, Gannon has become a target célèbre for liberal bloggers, one of a handful of shorthand symbols they use for all they see wrong with George W. Bush's America.

So it came as a surprise to many readers when the same Jeff Gannon showed up on the opinion pages of this gay newspaper and its affiliated publications, arguing in his debut column that liberal gay bloggers were too far on the fringe of American politics, dragging down the rest of the gay rights movement with them.

THE OBJECTIONS TO GANNON'S column came pouring in, mostly encouraged by Aravosis and others who were the target of Gannon's first column and have

long been his chief critics. Some readers disagreed with the substance of Gannon's views, but most unleashed more anger at the messenger than the message.

The flurry of e-mails called Gannon every name in the book along with a few brand new entries. Predictably, many of the attacks were colorful if obscene references to the gay escort site. Others took aim at this newspaper and its editors, questioning whether we had taken leave of our senses or were merely stooping our standards to garner attention.

One particularly angry reader asked rhetorically if he could expect to pick up the following week's paper to read an opinion column by an "ex-gay" explaining the way out of homosexuality. "I wish!" was my reply.

The job of any good opinion section is to challenge readers, not just preach to the choir. For that reason, our Forum pages are open to anyone, gay and non-gay, whether or not they support the goals of the gay rights movement.

But Jeff Gannon doesn't represent that sort of challenge. He doesn't oppose gay equality. In fact, he confirmed just this week that he is bisexual. Even still, he is very clearly a conservative who supports the policies of the Bush administration, and that plus his headline-grabbing past has been more than enough to enrage some gay liberals.

LET'S SAY, FOR THE SAKE OF ARGUMENT, that the role played by newspapers isn't enough to justify publication of provocative views by someone as controversial as Jeff Gannon. Let's say that this man, or his opinions, somehow deserve to be excluded from this "tolerance" about which we all preach so much.

Then remember this: We gay Americans do not have the luxury of intolerance. When it comes to minorities, we are remarkably minor. Kinsey was nice enough to propagate the 10 percent myth, but subsequent surveys place us at even smaller numbers, well under half that amount. And about one-quarter of us — of us! — voted for the election and the re-election of George W. Bush.

If we cannot tolerate the viewpoint of someone who tries to explain why one-quarter of us like and support the president, then how can we expect the 96 percent of Americans who are heterosexual to listen

seriously to our demands for equality?

The growing polarization of American politics has taken root within gay America as well. The explosion of liberal gay bloggers, many of whom spend about as much time on the "gray" of most issues as Rush Limbaugh and his "dittoheads," has only exacerbated the proud queer tradition of disdain for gay Republicans ("Nazi Jews") and the caricature of conservative Christians ("religious right," "religious political extremists").

Whatever the public opinion surveys may say about the growing acceptance of gays, we have lost, and lost badly, every ballot measure to date on marriage, and the numbers haven't improved since Alaska and Hawaii voted on the issue almost a decade ago.

Our activists groups have grown quite fond of talking about the "conversations" we need to have with straight America. Well half of that conversation involves listening, not talking. And if we won't even listen to the heretical views of our own kind, then how can we be open to one of "them"?

CRITICS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY CLAIM that the issue is Jeff Gannon and not his conservative views or his support for George W. Surely there are better gay conservative spokespersons, they will argue. Except "they," to date, has not included a single gay conservative; only gay liberals have written in to demand more credible and upstanding right-wingers.

And what's more, the vitriol that followed Gannon's columns rings all too familiar to be just about him. In fact, almost a decade in gay media has taught me that Shakespeare had it wrong. Hell hath no fury like a gay liberal crossed.

When Cyd Zeigler, then a journalist with the *New York Blade* and now author of a blog called "The Dooryard," dared to praise the legacy of Ronald Reagan, he incurred the same ugly vitriol.

So did Bruce Carroll, who now writes under the nom de blog *Gay Patriot*, when he argued in these pages that gay activists, not President Bush, started the gay marriage war, and they ought to have waited for more public support before pushing the envelope.

You don't have to agree with Carroll or Zeigler or Gannon. I didn't agree with any of them, on any of the subjects they wrote about for our publications. But that's not the point.

If we can't hear them out, and others like them, then we are woefully unprepared to make the case for our equality. For that reason, the intolerance of the loudest voices on the gay left is a greater threat to our movement than a few lonely voices on the gay right.

@ Chris Crain is executive editor for Window Media and can be reached at ccrain@window-media.com



viewpoint WAYNE BESEN

After 9/11 and now Katrina, our country turned to Ellen DeGeneres to lift our spirits, and she did.

Our very own American hero

ELLEN DEGENERES TOOK THE STAGE as this year's Emmy host with the Herculean task of brightening the nation's somber mood following the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina.

"New Orleans is my hometown, and I have family in Mississippi," Ellen said, striking just the right note. "It's times like this we really, really need laughter."

Ellen could just have easily been talking about her career, which was derailed by the storm of controversy that followed her very public coming out in 1997.

In the oddly named "Puppy Episode" of her hit sitcom *Ellen*, the actress announced to an enormous audience of 42 million viewers that she is a lesbian. This monu-

mental eruption of honesty introduced a lesbian to one out of every six Americans.

The positive impact her coming out had on the lives of gay people cannot be overstated. However, it came with a huge personal price for Ellen. Even fans questioned the affect the comedian's forthrightness would have on her future.

Indeed, the storm came, the levees broke and it seemed like Ellen was washed up on the rocky shores of the Isle of Has Been, located three knots west of the center seat on Hollywood Squares.

Ellen quickly fell from her perch as Hollywood's darling and was virtually banished overnight from the entertainment world.

MEANWHILE SHE ALSO HAD TO DEAL with the public meltdown of her voluptuous blond girlfriend, Anne Heche, who claimed to have a second personality, an alien named Celestia, and who then left Ellen for a man. Adding to the tumult was a right-wing smear machine led by Rev. Jerry Falwell, who derisively referred to her as "Ellen Degenerate".

We can only wonder what was going through Ellen's head during this bleak period in her life. The self-doubt and pain she must have endured would have crushed a lesser person. But, Ellen didn't fold.

She coped with her tribulations the same way she deftly handled the unenviable task of hosting the Emmy's following both 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina.

"It's times like this we really, really need laughter."

Ellen kept cracking hysterically funny jokes with her gift of superb, quirky timing. Eventually, Hollywood honchos could not help but burst out laughing. It didn't matter if Ellen were gay, straight or even an alien, like her ex gal pal. She was simply funny and her talent could no longer be denied.

Her perseverance paid off. She provided the wildly popular voiceover for "Dory" the fish, in the 2003 animated film "Finding Nemo."

In September 2003, she launched "The Ellen DeGeneres Show," which was nominated for 11 Daytime Emmy Awards in its inaugural season, winning four, including "Best Talk Show."

There are literally tens of thousands

of gay and lesbian actors who have rolled into Hollywood with dreams of fame and fortune. Yet, only one of these individuals, Ellen, had the courage to come out at the height of her success. To the rest of us, she is a one in a million shining star.

WITHOUT ELLEN'S BOLD STEP INTO the unknown, there would likely be no "Will & Grace" or gay characters sprinkled throughout network and cable television. Rosie O'Donnell would probably still be rhapsodizing about a dream date with Tom Cruise. The new gay MTV cable network, Logo, would likely have never made it past the drawing board.

After coming out, Ellen continued to shatter barriers. Who will ever forget her tension-breaking joke while hosting the Emmy's in 2001: "We're told to go on living our lives as usual, because to do otherwise is to let the terrorists win, and really, what would upset the Taliban more than a gay woman wearing a suit in front of a room full of Jews?"

It was fitting that Ellen left Hollywood, returning home to Louisiana to help with the relief effort. She is the rare superstar who has reached the pinnacle of success, yet has never forgotten who she is or where she came from. Ellen DeGeneres is a living legend and a true American hero.

@ Wayne Besen is a New York-based author and former spokesperson for the Human Rights Campaign, and can be reached at www.WayneBesen.com.

viewpoint CHRISTOPHER STEVENS

What the world needs now is more nelly straight men and fewer gay men claiming they're really gay.

It's so past time for the Clocking Game

IN THE QUEER EYE, THERE IS NO straight guy.

I recently spent an evening with a dear friend in a really nice restaurant. It was agony. The agonizing part was the friend of my friend, who spent the whole time, cocktail to dessert, participating loudly in that favorite gay pastime, Clocking Everyone as Gay.

The waitress wore no makeup and was efficient. Verdict: lesbo. The bartender was cute and well-constructed. Verdict: homo.

The television (an abomination in any restaurant) was tuned to a program about bicycling, and the athletes were, naturally, spandex-clad and fit. Verdict: a buncha pickle-smokers if ever there was one.

Aside from actual sexual activity, there's only one true indicator of homosexuality in a male. Preoccupied with concluding

that everyone is gay? Verdict: tiresome fag.

IF A GUY'S NOT TOTALLY BUTCH, IF HE has just a hint of anything not stereotypically masculine about him, he's gay. The thing is, if he is totally butch, he's over-compensating, and therefore a closet case.

If he's hot, he's gay. If he's not hot, he will be as soon as he comes out and discovers gyms and hair gel, and develops an overweening vanity.

There's a UPS driver at my job. (Hot profession. Gay right away, right?) He grows roses, and loves spending Saturday mornings lazing in bed with his dogs on his gazillion thread-count sheets.

He's also a raving Republican, a fan of head-banger metal bands, and over the moon in love with his new wife. But, "Oh,

she'll learn," you titter, "Just wait until she finds another UPS man in those sheets!"

Media stars come in for a lot of this. Tom Cruise's recent manifestation as the poster child for lunatic assholism has done little to diminish his stratospheric gay-because-hot rating.

There's actually a Web site called "Elijah Wood is very, very gay," with lots of damning evidence, like photos of the (yes, very adorable) actor with his mouth open (the "international mouth sign for blow-job"), and carrying a messenger bag ("very, very gay").

There are probably quite a few bicycle messengers who at one time or another have opened their mouths, but would be rather surprised to find out that they're gay, don't you think?

Stop it. Why is it fun, and how is it productive, to "accuse" everyone who draws breath of being gay, based on stereotypes you despise having applied to yourself? It's illogical, insulting to gay and straight men, and none of your business.

That your expert pronouncements are handed down in words and tones usually reserved for people found guilty of particularly heinous crimes indicates that you need to examine — or pay a professional to examine — your own self-hatred.

Why are you "accusing" others of something you profess to be so proud of? Stop it.

WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS NOW, REALLY, is more nelly straight men. They're out there, believe me.

They're just in the closet, afraid to come

out about their interest in flowers or fashion, their tendency to speak expressively, or their preference for ballet over baseball, because they know that, sooner or later (no, sooner), they'll hear you lisping, "Oh, her. All she needs is some of this up her ass and she'll come screaming out of the closet."

Granted, there are still plenty of homos who need to come out, but I'd like to see straights do it, too. This year on National Coming Out Day, I want to see straight men proudly checking out fabric samples, weeping over "The Phantom of the Opera," dancing shirtless to bad music, and generally wearing and doing whatever they please, and not giving an airborne intercourse what you or anyone else thinks.

The great thing about the Clocking Game, for the player, is that he can't lose. You will never have a chance to hit on Tom Cruise or Elijah Wood — both of whom have hilariously gay last names, by the way. Guilty! Guilty! Guilty! — and therefore you will never have sex with them (proof that they're gay) or be shot down by them (proof that they're stuck-up homos with no taste).

So you will always get the last word in your one-sided debate. But here's a news flash: Even if they are gay, and you do get the chance to hit on them, they will shoot you down, not because they're stuck-up, but because you're a jerk.

@ Christopher Stevens is an Atlanta-based writer and designer and can be reached at boyohboy@mindspring.com.

eclipse



Material girl
Gay bars, get ready!
Madonna returns with
new dance music CD.
Page 17

GAY HOUSTON NIGHTLIFE, ARTS & CULTURE

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SEPTEMBER 23, 2005

Reasons to tune in

Fall TV offers new treats, old favorites well worth the wait

By BRIAN MOYLAN

AFTER A SUMMER OF WARMED-OVER CONTENT on the tube, the new fall television lineup is more than welcome.

There are 16 gay or lesbian characters in major broadcast roles this year, according to the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation. And so far, the portrayals are positive representations.

Possibly the best new addition to the gay pool is Regina Barnes, played by Paula Marshall on CBS' "Out of Practice." Regina is an ER doc in a family of other doctors, including a cardiologist mom (Stockard Channing) and gastroenterologist dad (Henry Winkler). Everyone knows Regina is a lesbian, and she comfortably discusses her sex life.

The WB's "Twins," from "Will & Grace" team David Kohan and gay producer Max Mutchnick, is also promising. The show features a mismatched couple (Melanie Griffith and Mark Linn-Baker) who hand over their successful lingerie business to their equally mismatched twin daughters (Sara Gilbert and Molly Stanton).

Their gay assistant Neil (Christopher Fitzgerald) is heard, but not seen, in the show's pilot. He is afforded more screen time as the season progresses.

Also from a gay creator is Fox's "Kitchen Confidential" from Darren Star ("Melrose Place" and "Sex and the City"). The show follows former hotshot chef Jack Bourdain (Bradley Cooper) as he gets a second shot at running a chic New York restaurant.

On staff is gay waiter Cameron (gay actor Sam Pancake). Nicholas Brendon, who played Xander on "Buffy the Vampire Slayer," plays one of the other guys in the kitchen.

Fox's forensic show "Bones" offers gay actor Eric Millegan in a straight role, but the only new drama with gay characters is NBC's "Inconceivable," which is about a fertility clinic. Scott Garcia (David Narona) portrays the facility's gay lawyer. We also meet his partner Jim (Jonathan Slavin), a dad caring for the couple's child.

It's refreshing to see a show follow a gay character home to see his personal life. It's also nice to finally see a primetime family headed by gay parents.

Please see FALL TV on Page 19

The upcoming television season offers 16 gay characters in major roles on network series, up from last season's seven characters but down from an all-time high of 28 gay characters in 2001-2002, according to the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, a gay media watchdog group.

Here are the representations of gay life this season, which includes some old favorites as well as a new batch of hopefuls.



'Will & Grace'
Premieres Sept. 29, 8:30 p.m.
NBC

Eric McCormack and Sean Hayes reprise their roles as Will Truman and Jack McFarland in the final season of the Emmy-winning sitcom.



'ER'
Thursdays, 10 p.m.
NBC

Laura Innes reprises her longtime role as ER doctor Kerry Weaver. This season, she raises her son after the death of her partner.

'The Simpsons'
Sundays, 8 p.m.
Fox

Marge Simpson's sister, Patty Bouvier voiced by Julie Kavner, came out last season and still visits the family with sister Selma.



'Desperate Housewives'
Premieres Sept. 25, 9 p.m.
ABC

Shawn Pyfrom plays Andrew Van De Camp, a sexually confused teen who came out to his parents as gay, but told his minister he is bisexual.



'Out of Practice'
Mondays, 9:30 p.m.
CBS
Paula Marshall portrays Regina Barnes, a lesbian doctor in a family of physicians.

'Half & Half'
Mondays, 9:30 p.m.
UPN

Alec Mapa is Adam Benet, a wisecracking assistant at a record company in the sitcom's fourth season.



'Inconceivable'
Premieres Sept. 23, 10 p.m.
NBC

David Noroña and Jonathan Slavin play gay couple Scott and Jim, who recently became dads through surrogacy.



'Kitchen Confidential'
Fox

Mondays, 8:30 p.m.
Sam Pancake is a gay waiter in Fox's new culinary comedy.



'Twins'
Fridays, 8 p.m.
WB

Christopher Fitzgerald plays Neil, a gay assistant at the undergarment company where the show is set.



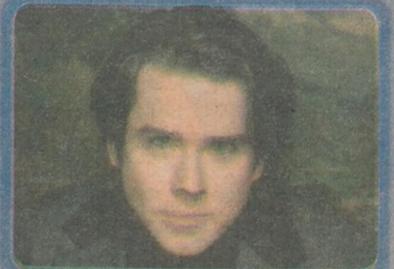
'The War at Home'
Sundays, 8:30 p.m.
Fox
Rami Malek plays closeted gay teen Kenny, son Larry's best friend.



'Crumbs'
ABC, premieres midseason
Fred Savage is Mitch, a failed actor who returns home to run a family business where no one knows he's gay.



'Emily's Reasons Why Not'
ABC, premieres midseason
Khary Payton plays Josh, the title character's best friend, who helps navigate her through life and relationships.



'The Book of Daniel'
NBC, premieres midseason
Christian Campbell portrays Peter, the gay Republican son of an Episcopalian priest.

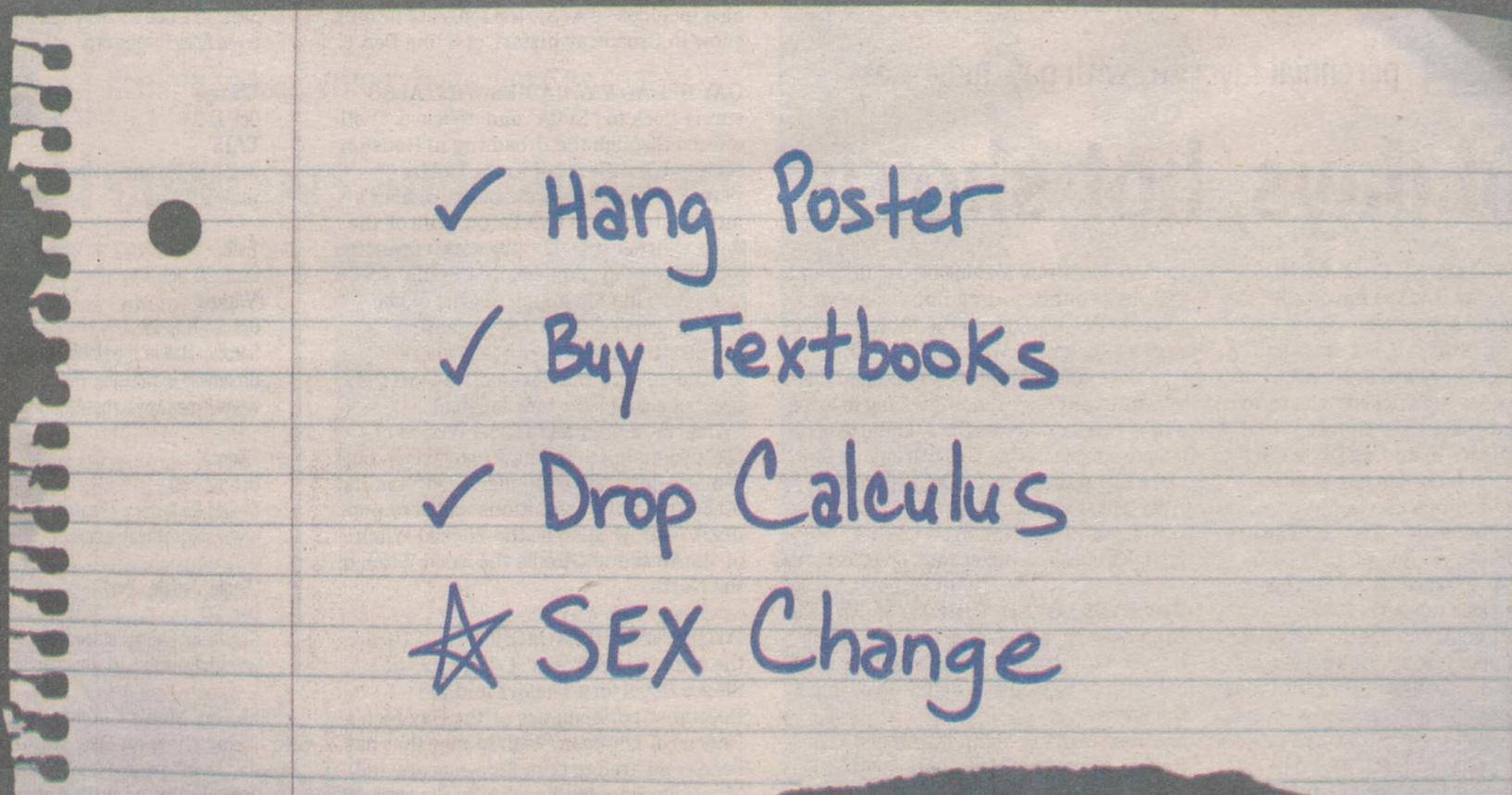


'Love Monkey'
CBS, premieres midseason
Christopher Wiehl is Jake, a gay former Major League Baseball player.

HOT HOUSTON STAGES: Local theater season offers divas sure to delight gay audiences. Page 14

IF IT AIN'T BROKE: Long-awaited 'Brokeback Mountain' tops list of gay films coming out this fall. Page 15

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theater JOHNNY HOOKS



Houston stages offer fall line-ups packed with performances that are perennial favorites with gay audiences.

Cool days, hot shows

WHEN THE WEATHER COOLS AND fall makes its way into the Bayou City, the local performing arts season is just beginning to heat up. This fall, it's divas galore as Houston looks forward to a visit from the witches of Oz in "Wicked," the return of gay-popular plays like "Chicago" and gay-favorite actors including Dixie Carter.

Still, Houston lacks the gay theater scene present in cities like Dallas or Austin, according to Joe Watts of Theatre New West, who is considered the godfather of local queer theater, having produced shows since the early 1980s.

"Being without a gay ghetto per se, the interest in supporting an exclusively gay theater group has waned to the point that no one can conceive and execute a season of exclusively gay themed shows, I'm sorry to say," Watts reflects.

But gay theater fans should still find plenty of interest on Houston stages this fall, including the Sept. 30 world premiere of "Be My Baby" at Alley Theatre. The comedy by Ken Ludwig features Dixie

Carter, who drew legions of gay fans and spawned countless drag impersonations as Julia Sugarbaker on the hit television series "Designing Women."

Carter and Hal Holbrook play characters who must put aside their bickering to bring a newborn baby across the Atlantic to her adoptive parents. Gay fans can enjoy a special night at the show on Oct. 6 as part of Alley Theatre's second annual ActOUT series, a gay subscription series that includes pre-show mixers and other benefits.

GAY FANS LOVED "CHICAGO" ON Broadway, then loved the Oscar-winning big screen version. Now the famous musical returns to Houston at Theatre Under the Stars.

After aspiring nightclub singer Velma Kelley shoots her cheating husband, she makes headlines and lands on Chicago's murderess row, where she meets Roxie Hart, who dreamed of stardom before taking revenge on an abusive lover. The show features numbers that virtually every gay

man can hum at the drop of a hat, including "Cell Block Tango" and "When You're Good to Mama."

Theater Under the Stars' fall season also includes "CATS," the longest-running show in Broadway history, starting Dec. 6.

GAY BROADWAY BABIES WILL ALSO surely flock to "Evita" and "Wicked," both offered through the Broadway in Houston series at Sarofim Hall in the Hobby Center. "Evita," Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical tribute to Eva Peron, wife of the former Argentine dictator, was a favorite among gay fans long before the film version, starring Madonna, put the dance mix of "Don't Cry for Me Argentina" on the play list at gay bars everywhere.

And anyone who loves a good girl fight must check out the new musical "Wicked," a prequel to "The Wizard of Oz" promising to tell how two girls — one "smart, fiery and misunderstood" and the other "beautiful, ambitious and very popular" — grow up to be the Wicked Witch of the West and Glinda, the Good Witch of the North.

OTHER FALL HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE the regional premiere of "Silence" at Stages Repertory Theatre and the December performance of the Gay Men's Chorus of Houston. With humor that has been compared to both Shakespeare and Monty Python, "Silence" tells the story of a tenth-century feminist princess who gets a shocking wedding night discovery when she enters an arranged marriage with a naïve Englishman.

i MORE INFO

'Be My Baby'
Sept. 30 - Oct. 23 Alley Theatre
www.AlleyTheatre.org

'Chicago'
Oct. 11-23
'CATS'
Dec. 6-18 Theatre Under the Stars
www.TUTS.org

'Evita'
Sept. 20-Oct. 2
'Wicked'
Oct. 26-Nov. 13
Sarofim Hall in the Hobby Center
Broadway in Houston
www.BroadwayacrossAmerica.com

'Silence'
Oct. 12 - 30
Stages Repertory Theatre
www.stages theatre.com

'Jingle, Jangle, Jive!'
Dec. 20
Gay Men's Chorus of Houston
www.bayoucityperformingarts.org

The Gay Men's Chorus offers its annual holiday show on Dec. 20. "Jingle, Jangle, Jive!" promises "traditional holiday fare combined with outrageous fun, fantasy and folly," as well as the debut of the Bayou City Women's Chorus.

Laura Douglas-Brown contributed.



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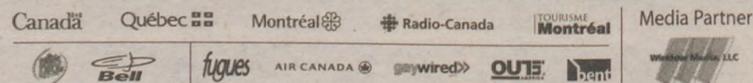
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film TRAY BUTLER



There are more gay movies than just that certain cowboy picture and horror flick coming to big screens near you this season.

Beyond cowboys and vampires

BY NOW, GAY MOVIE FANS KNOW THE story: An unlikely pair of lovers meet in a remote locale, form a unique "friendship," then watch their romance crumble when they return to civilization.

Gay Tinsel Town buffs spent the summer trading gossip and searching for clues on two movies: "Hellbent," which is beginning to make the rounds as the first gay slasher movie, and "Brokeback Mountain," gay director Ang Lee's forthcoming drama about two cowboys in love.

Everyone wants to know: How gay-friendly is "Brokeback"? Does Lee stay true to the Annie Proulx short story? And do stars Jake Gyllenhaal and Heath Ledger really knock boots?

Inquiring minds just have to wait until "Mountain's" December release to find out. Luckily, the multiplexes have plenty of noteworthy titles on tap in the meantime.

September

"Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang": Val Kilmer, anxious for a film that doesn't suck, plays a gay private eye giving hands-on law enforcement lessons to Robert Downey Jr., a criminal mistaken for a movie star. Keep dreaming, Val. **Now playing in limited release; no Atlanta date set.**

"Dorian Blues": A coming-out story for "The OC" generation. High-schooler Dorian faces up to his budding same-sex attraction, but gets little help from his sports-star brother or sexy therapist. **Now playing in limited release; no Atlanta date set.**

"Capote": A look at the life of the "Breakfast at Tiffany's" author, played by Philip Seymour Hoffman, which focuses on his "In Cold Blood" years. Oscar bait? You bet. **Sept. 30.**

October

"Guys and Balls": After getting kicked off his soccer team for being gay, Eeki forms his own squad. Zaniness apparently ensues. **Oct. 7.**

"Domino": When socialite-turned-bounty hunter Domino Harvey died in June, tabloids reported that she was a les-



Heath Ledger (left) gives fellow ranch hand Jake Gyllenhaal the eye in 'Brokeback Mountain.'



Many faces from the original cast of 'Rent' reunite for the big screen treatment by director Chris Columbus.

bian. Subsequent sources challenged those claims, and this Keira Knightley vehicle portrays her as straight. **Oct. 14.**



"The Dying Gaul": A slimy studio exec offers a screenwriter \$1 million for a script. The catch: The writer must recast the role of his deceased lover — as a woman. A hit at last year's Out on Film, Atlanta's gay film festival. **Oct. 28 in limited release; no Atlanta date set.**

November

"Gay Sex in the '70s": Director Joseph Lovett serves up an uninhibited documentary tracing the years between Stonewall and the start of the AIDS epidemic. His archival footage of the piers will curl your toes. **Nov. 4.**

"Unveiled": An Iranian refugee escapes persecution by disguising herself as a man in this German export. **Nov. 4.**

"Rent": Nearly a decade after Jonathan Larson's era-defining musical brought AZT to Broadway, members of the original cast reunite on screen for this Chris Columbus project. But will audiences still buy Taye Diggs and Idina Menzel as East Village bohemians? **Nov. 11.**

"Breakfast on Pluto": Neil Jordan ("The Crying Game") directs the story of an Irish orphan who grows up to join the IRA and do drag, though not in that order. **Nov. 16.**

December

"Brokeback Mountain": If you haven't heard of this film, then welcome back from Africa. Jake Gyllenhaal and Heath Ledger rustle up some trouble as two ranch hands who fall in love in 1960s Wyoming. **Dec. 9.**

"Memoirs of a Geisha": Every gay book club in America read Arthur Golden's 1997 bestseller. Now director Rob Marshall ("Chicago") brings the saga of Sayuri and her bitchy foil Hatsumomo to the big screen. **Dec. 9.**

"The Producers": Broadway diva Nathan Lane again joins Matthew Broderick in the Mel Brooks' musical. Uma Thurman rounds out the cast as Ulla. **Dec. 21.**

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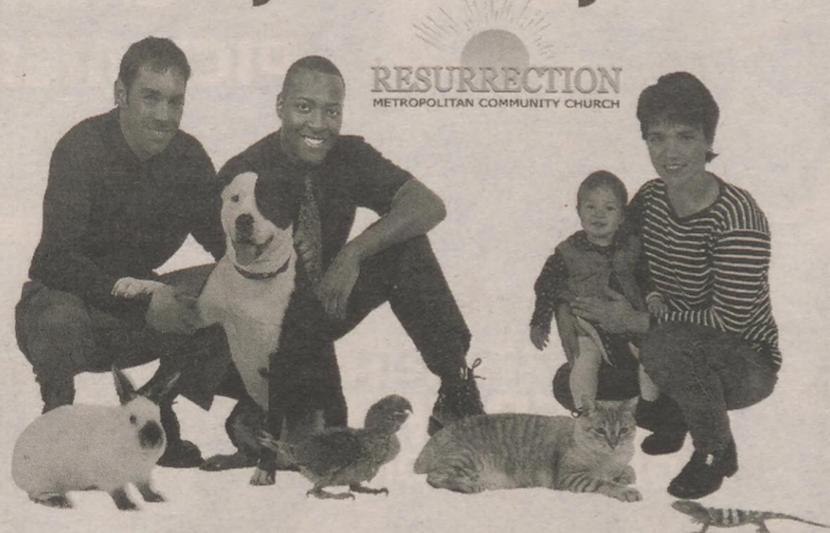
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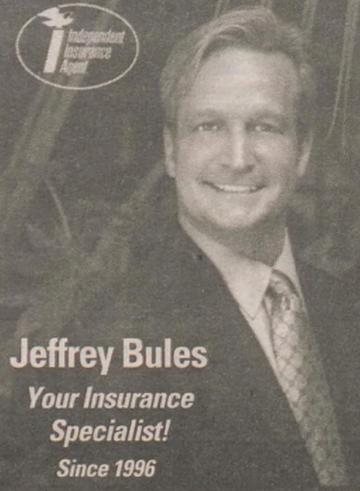
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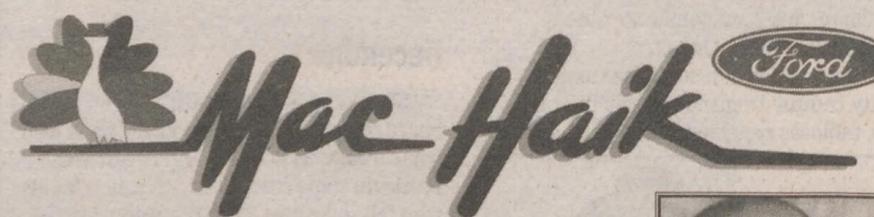
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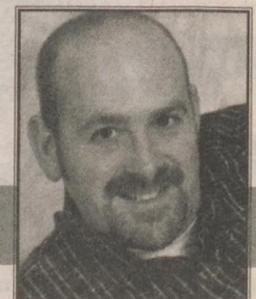
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music BUCK C. COOKE

Outside temperatures may soon be headed south, but fall heats up with new CD releases from gay artists and gay favorites.

Hot tracks for autumn

THE END OF SUMMER IS TYPICALLY slow for CD releases, as record labels gear up for big releases with the approaching holiday season. But a slew of gay artists and other old favorites will be setting your iPod on fire with a spate of new music coming out this fall.

For autumn 2005, look for new albums appealing to just about any taste, from dance music to bluegrass, greatest hits compilations to a Judy Garland tribute.

Sarah McLachlan "Bloom (Remix Album)": Released by Arista Sept. 6, Our Lady of the Lilith Fair goes for gay club boys as opposed to lesbian festival goers with her second domestic remix collection.

Six of the 10 tracks are from 2003's "Afterglow," and several were not previously released in the U.S. McLachlan also includes three older songs from her repertoire ("Ice," "Fumbling Towards Ecstasy" and "Vox"), but those remixes fail to fully ignite like the others.

Sheryl Crow "Wildflowers": Crow releases her first collection of new material since 2002's "C'mon C'mon" on Sept. 27 on A&M Records.

The beautiful and talented singer/songwriter was so busy with activism, advocacy, benefits and her cycling fiancée that it is surprising she found time to write new music at all, much less record an album. "Wildflowers" should find Crow's faithful fans waiting with baited breath.

Andy Bell "Electric Blue": The gay half of the synth-pop duo Erasure releases his debut solo album overseas on Oct. 4 on Sanctuary Records. Check online for an import version. The whole CD offers a vibe similar to Erasure's signature sound, but it also includes collaborations with gay rocker Jake Shears of Scissor Sisters and Claudia Brucken.

Melissa Etheridge "Greatest Hits: The Road Less Traveled": The poster girl of Lesbian Rock releases her first greatest hits collection Oct. 4 on the Island label. The collection contains 14 of Etheridge's most popular songs with four new tracks, including covers of Tom Petty's "Refugee" and Janis Joplin's "Piece of My Heart."

On Oct. 18, Etheridge releases the deluxe CD/DVD edition of "Greatest Hits" with interviews about her fight against breast cancer, a small selection of music videos and a trivia game.

Linda Eder "By Myself: The



Madonna returns to her DJ sensibilities on 'Confessions on a Dance Floor.'

Songs of Judy Garland": What's gayer than gay? A Judy Garland tribute album. What's even gayer? A Judy Garland tribute album by Broadway diva Linda Eder.

With an uncanny resemblance to Garland's voice, Eder provides loving renditions of some Garland classics and indulges fans with medleys of others. Drag queens everywhere must be dusting off their vintage couture and up-do wigs in preparation.

Dolly Parton "Those Were the Days": Parton pays tribute to songs of the past with this Oct. 11 release on Sugarhill Records. The bluegrass-flavored album contains covers of "Imagine," "Me and Bobby McGee," and 10 other classics.

The country music icon teams up with Keith Urban, Alison Krauss, Norah Jones, Nickel Creek, Kris Kristofferson, and Yusuf Islam (better known as Cat Stevens).

Ricky Martin "Life": On Oct. 11, Sony releases Martin's first collection of new material since 2003's "Almas del Silencio" and his first English album since 2000's "Sound Loaded."

Madonna "Confessions on a Dancefloor": Madonna answers rabid fans' prayers Nov. 15 with Sony/Maverick a dance CD from one of the biggest divas in the industry today.

"Confessions" is the singer's return to her roots after the abysmal returns for "American Life." Fans are waiting with baited breath to see if "Confessions" turns out as profitable, critically acclaimed and popular as 1998's "Ray of Light."

A clip of the first single, "Hung Up," already graces the newest Motorola commercial and should spawn some exciting remixes.

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CLOSED MONDAYS

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eclipse

Gay players still reality TV staple

FALL TV, continued from Page 12

THE GRANDDADDY OF GAY SHOWS, NBC's "Will & Grace," returns for its final season on Sept. 29 with a live episode. Look to learn more about last season's plot twists for Will (Eric McCormack), Grace (Deborah Messing), Jack (Sean Hayes) and Karen (Megan Mullally).

Another longtime character, lesbian doctor Kerry Weaver (Laura Innes) on NBC's "ER," is also back. But her role this season is downgraded from supporting character to a recurring role.

Marc Cherry, the gay creator of "Desperate Housewives," has hinted that he's planning something even gayer for the show's new season on ABC. It could include Ryan Carnes, the actor who played Andrew Van De Kamp's (Shawn Pyfrom) gay sex buddy last season.

A FRESH INJECTION OF GAY CHARACTERS is scheduled during midseason replacements.

On ABC, "Crumbs" finds former child star Fred Savage ("The Wonder Years") as a gay man who moves back to his small hometown to help his dysfunctional family, and Khary Payton stars as Josh, the gay best friend of the title character in the comedy "Emily's Reasons Why Not."

On "Book of Daniel," a dark drama on NBC, Christian Campbell plays the gay

son of an Episcopalian minister who talks to Jesus and tries to kick his prescription drug problem.

CBS gets in on midseason action with the comedy "Love Monkey," which includes a gay former baseball player.

REALITY SHOWS ARE USUALLY ONE of the havens for gay people on network TV, but this year looks pretty fallow in that department.

CBS' "Survivor" and "The Amazing Race" don't appear to have any gay contestants, but CBS doesn't disclose the sexual orientation of participants unless it comes up on the show.

NBC's "The Apprentice" offers its first openly gay contestant when Martha Stewart takes over her own boardroom. Two gay men compete on "The Apprentice: Martha Stewart" to become the lady's right-hand man: Chuck, an interior decorator, and Jeff, a graphic designer.

On UPN's "America's Next Top Model," gay fashion guru Nolé Marin is gone, but gay runway coach J. Alexander joins the show. Also this season, look for Kim, a lesbian model vying for the win.

Cable reality shows include Bravo's "Project Runway," which returns in December with gay designer Michael Kors. The winner of the first season, gay designer Jay McCarroll, is also set to have his own Bravo show. No release date is set yet.

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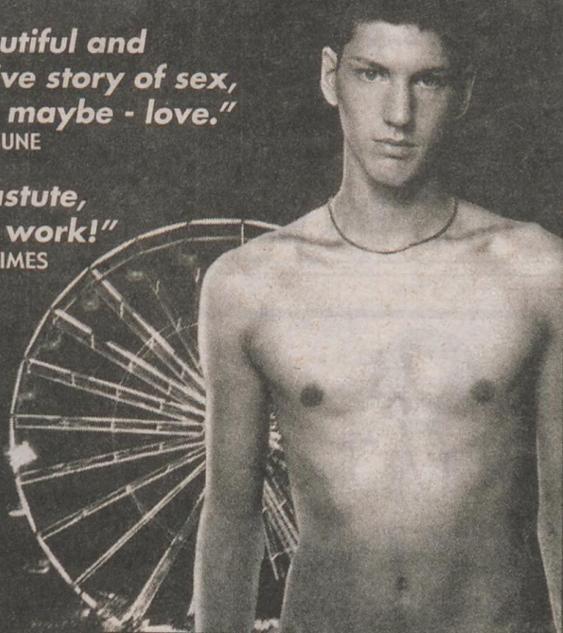
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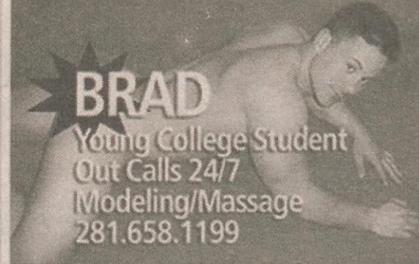
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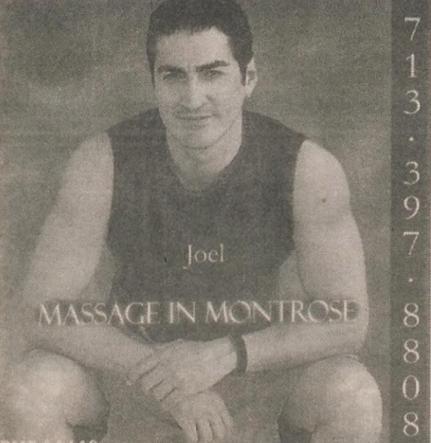


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I CREATED THE UNIVERSE IN 7 DAYS, AND VERILY, HERE BENEATH THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE, YOU WILL HAVE 7 MINUTES TO EAT ADAM'S FORBIDDEN FRUIT -- USING ONLY YOUR MOUTHS.

REMEMBER, ADAM, IF THOU PICKEST THE SERPENT, YOU LOSE AND IT'S BACK TO STOCKING SHELVES AT WALMART FOR YOU!

ADAM SHALL JUDGE WHO PARTAKES OF HIS FRUIT IN THE SEXIEST WAY.
SKY AND JAMAAL, WHEN THOU HEAREST GABRIEL BLOW HIS HORN, THOU SHALT BEGIN!

BRUCE ALMIGHTY

READY?
UH... YEAH, I SUPPOSE SO...
YAH, I JUS' HOPE MY MAMA AIN'T WATCHIN'!

ADAM, ART THOU READY?
DAMN STRAIGHT! TWO DUDES WORKIN' ON MY FORBIDDEN FRUIT?! LET'S GO!

Too Too Too!!
YEAH, YOU LIKE THAT FRUIT, DON'T YA?
TIC TIC TIC
PEEL!
SURP!

THAT'S IT, CHOKE ON MY FRUIT!
I'VE NEVER FELT SO DEGRADED IN MY LIFE... JUST KEEP THINKING... MY OWN EXHIBIT AT MOMA, MY OWN EXHIBIT AT MOMA...

Too Too Too!!
OKAY, TIME'S UP! THE COMPETITION HATH ENDED! AND I THINK I'M DEAF IN ONE EAR.

BRUCE ALMIGHTY

SO, MY SON, THE MOMENT HATH COME TO CHOOSE THY PARTNER IN PARADISE! WHO SHALT IT BE...?

UHHH... THIS IS, LIKE, A TOTALLY TOUGH DECISION, BUT I GUESS I WOULD HAVE TO CHOOSE...

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DEADLINES: 8am Wednesday for online submissions only.

5:30pm Tuesday for all other submissions.

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When it comes to the dating scene, gorgeous people are best thought of as expensive, high-maintenance real estate in a seller's market.

THE LESS ATTRACTIVE BOYFRIEND usually has the wandering eye because he now thinks he's all that for having bagged your relatively better looking ass as his boyfriend!

I LOWERED MY STANDARD ON LOOKS to have a relationship with a guy with a seemingly good heart only to be dumped by him when he couldn't cope with my character flaws, and I didn't share in his obsessive workaholic traits. I won't settle again.

TO YOU GUYS WHO SUFFER THROUGH relationships with a self-centered boyfriend who treats you always like crap because you find him so damn hot: Remember that great looks can fade over time, but a rotten personality can last a lifetime.

IF YOU INSIST ON PAYING FOR MY meal and say I can have "anything" I want, don't bitch if I choose things that are pricey. Don't ever say things you don't really mean.

FAG BAG HAS A BETTER RING TO IT than man purse.

TO THE GAY MAN WHO DOESN'T wash his hands after he pees because he doesn't think he pees on his hands. What about what you pick up on the urinal handle or the bathroom doorknob? You

also handled your penis, didn't you?

DON'T JUST ASSUME THAT BECAUSE I'm single I'm a slut. It's the guys with boyfriends who are getting all of the action on the side.

TO THE GUYS WHO THINK THEY ARE getting too old because they just turned 30: The only thing that is old is your bar-hopping lifestyle more befitting a 21-year-old. It's OK to grow up.

LET ME GET YOUR STORY STRAIGHT: Everybody thinks you're a player, but you're really not. Oh, so everybody else is wrong, and you're the only one who is right.

TO THE LESBIAN WHO THINKS IT'S obvious that all gay men are obsessed with their looks. Honey, the only thing that is obvious is that there are not enough lesbian hairstylists. Do something about the bi-level '80s hair-don't!

WHY DO SO MANY GUYS ONLINE have "muscle" in their online names? What I see is every twink growing a mustache and beard and calling themselves "muscle bears" because now it's "in." Pick you're own damn subculture and leave us alone!

I'M SO HAPPY THAT SO MANY OF MY bitches get printed, but I'm too embarrassed to tell my friends I wrote them.

I DON'T WANT TO HAVE SEX WITH you, so why should I acknowledge your existence?

WHY DO SLENDER 30-SOMETHING males get ignored by the more "masculine" gay 30-something guys? I'm so tired of being looked past because I'm not teeming with testosterone!

WHY DO ALL THE PEOPLE IN PRADA ads look dead?

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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