

# houston VOICE

in this week's eclipse

Gay actor Todd Waite says he's comfortable with Hastings in Christie's 'Black Coffee.'

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JULY 2, 2004

**TOUGH ON TINA:** Montrose Clinic declares war. Page 3



**JONES AFFAIR:** Stories differ in Grace Jones' no show. Page 4



**HILL OUTINGS:** Congressional staffers scrambling in light of activism. Page 7



## Gay filmmaker's 'diary' beats out Moore's '911'

Former Houston resident's film of life in a dysfunctional family earns him international accolades

By JOHNNY HOOKS

It was in 1986 at Visions, a Houston teen club, where this reporter first saw Johathan Caouette. He couldn't have been older than 11 or 12, but he was beautiful with a wicked smile and mischievous eyes. He stood out.

Caouette was the boy who sometimes brought his movie camera to the club.

In 1996, a fledgling theater group called Free Range staged a leather-clad, S&M version of Oscar Wilde's "Salome," and Caouette was cast as John the Baptist. I was the Young Syrian.

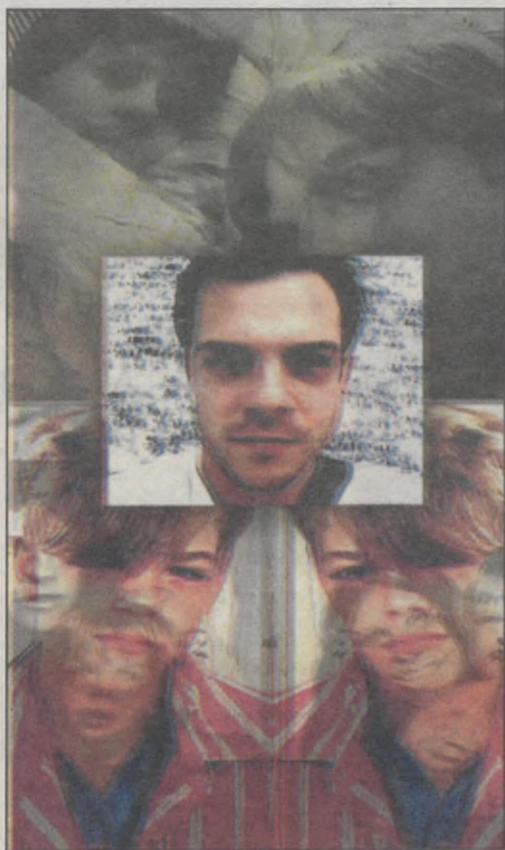
Caouette was haunting as the raving, troubled John, a part he wore like a comfortable sweater.

It wasn't too long after the play ended that Caouette headed for New York to seek fame and fortune.

When it was announced last week that his soon-to-be-released documentary, "Tarnation," had beat out Michael Moore's "Fahrenheit 911" for Best Documentary honors at the Los Angeles Film Festival, his old friends in Houston were not surprised.

Caouette was in Houston when he heard the news last week. He had come to town for a special screening at the Aurora Picture Show of

Please see **TARNATION** on Page 20



Jonathan Caouette's documentary about his troubled life, 'Tarnation,' recently beat out Michael Moore's Fahrenheit 911 for Best Documentary honors at the Los Angeles Film Festival. (Photo illustration by Joey Carolino)



Virginia Sen. George Allen announced his support for the Federal Marriage Amendment over fears that judges are 'negating the will of the people in the states.'

## Senate vote looms on marriage amendment

Lawmakers take sides before July vote

By JOE CREA

WASHINGTON — With an expected Senate vote on the Federal Marriage Amendment less than two weeks away, Virginia Republican George Allen has announced he plans to support the measure, ending several months of indecision over the matter.

In April, Allen said he would only support the FMA, which would ban same-sex marriage, as a "last resort." But he told the Associated Press last week that federal law was unlikely to protect the traditional definition of marriage based on research and legal developments.

"Unfortunately, the last resort of amending the Constitution will be necessary to effectuate that goal," Allen said.

He expressed his concern that judges "will be making these decisions and obviating, negating the will of the people in the states."

Please see **FMA** on Page 6



### local life

When clouds parted for the Pride Parade, Nick Brines knew Mother Nature was a lesbian.

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### dish

Rumor says Colin Farrell isn't wearing anything underneath in 'Alexander.'

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## national news

## Houston declares war on crystal meth

Montrose Clinic's Eric Roland insists gay men are facing a formidable foe in meth, or 'Tina'

By JOSEF MOLNAR

At times sounding more like a battlefield general than a counselor, Eric Roland called on concerned individuals to rise up and fight an enemy that he and others consider a clear and present danger to gay men in Houston.

Roland's comments came during an event last week at the 1415 Grill hosted by the Montrose Clinic entitled: "Tweaked: A Community Forum on Crystal Meth and its Link to HIV/STDs."

Roland, director of education for the Montrose Clinic, led the discussion.

"This is nothing to be proud of," Roland said. "Our gay men are getting sick, they're getting addicted, they're getting high out of their minds for days at a time, losing weight, tooth loss, all the things that go along with crystal meth."

If that wasn't enough, Roland added, "And on top of that, they're getting [sexually transmitted diseases] and HIV. It's not something to be proud of, and it's something we can change."

The event, attended by about 30 individuals, is the second forum of its kind offered in Houston. It was staged to coincide with Pride Week.

Roland and other speakers used the event to tell those in attendance about the physical and mental threat posed by crystal meth.

Roland said the drug's increasing popularity in the club circuit and among sex groups has overwhelmed local groups, and organizations are now rising up to fight its presence in Houston.

Crystal meth, also known as "Tina," "speed" or "T," has its roots as a psychoactive drug during World War II and later as a cheaper alternative to cocaine in the 1970s, when it became the drug of choice for bikers roaming along Route 66.

Crystal meth has since evolved into a highly versatile and just as addictive drug used by people from circuit party-goers to middle-aged professionals. The powerful combination of dangerous chemicals used to make crystal meth create a long-lasting high that removes inhibitions and gives users heightened sensory impressions.



Roland said the threat is greater than any drug that came before it, mainly because of its highly addictive nature and its relatively inexpensive price. He said Tina is forcing gay organizations to band together to combat its dangerous influence.

"Cocaine is a walk in the park compared to crystal meth," he said. "It is so much worse and only going to get worse."

#### Tina's 'Suicide Tuesdays'

Marc Cohen, president of the United Foundation for AIDS in Miami, Fla., talked about the drug's "suicide Tuesdays." That's when weekend users find their bodies are drained after a weekend of partying with Tina.

"Coming down requires the body to produce its own dopamine," Cohen said. "It might take hours or an entire day to do that, but until then you can be severely depressed."

Given the see-sawing effect of using crystal meth, many users eventually find themselves craving the drug more and more to avoid downswings.

In the meantime, the inhibitions that prevent unsafe behavior eventually erode away completely, leading to a rise in unsafe sex and a subsequent rise in infections of HIV and sexually transmitted diseases.

Roland said crystal meth has created an extreme public health crisis.

"I think before, we'd see crystal meth as

a drug problem, not an HIV or STD problem," Roland said. "Now, we start seeing that connection and we see that the increase in HIV and STDs could be because we're seeing increases in the use of crystal meth."

The Montrose Clinic, Montrose Counseling Center and other organizations have begun to reach out to users in the community. The groups help users get in touch with information and available resources through Internet chat room services such as Project CORE, or Cyber Outreach Education.

#### Tougher law enforcement

The courts recently recognized the dangers posed by the drug and have fiercely reacted. While drug possession is treated severely by Harris County courts, the 1996 federal Methamphetamine Control Act made crystal meth possession a federal crime and imposed stiffer penalties for those caught in possession. The charges and penalties are even more stringent for persons caught trafficking in crystal meth.

Anyone suspected of possessing even pipe residue can be arrested, with small-time violators sentenced to from 180 days to two years in a state prison and a \$10,000 fine. The highest-level violators can receive up to 99 years in jail.

Attorney John Nechman sometimes defends those caught with crystal meth. He said many Harris County judges reject any

attempts at bargaining for lighter sentences.

"You go before the judge, and he rips it up and says, 'I don't want it. This is too easy,'" Nechman said. "To some of them, possession is the same as selling it to elementary kids: they have a zero-tolerance policy about it."

Brent Pendleton, a former user and Montrose Clinic education outreach staff member who told his story to the attendees, said his involvement with crystal meth could have easily led to prison.

"I was lucky," he said. "You hear a lot about jail and all of that, and thank God it wasn't me."

He has been clean for three years now, and is happy he made the decision to kick the drug.

"I feel wonderful that meth is not a part of my daily life," he said. "But I don't like seeing what it does to other people. I feel like it's destroying our community, and I don't want to see our brothers and sisters using drugs like that."

Cohen developed an ad campaign being run in Miami called "Meth=Death," which shows the physical and mental deterioration suffered by long-term users of the drug.

"We decided to use this ad campaign because we had to take the candy coating off of the crystal meth," Coehn said. "For the first time, we're taking the veil off. This is no longer going to be our community's dirty little secret."

#### MORE INFO

Crystal Meth Support Group  
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## houston news

# Tongues wag, stories differ in Grace Jones affair

Rich's says promoter failed to pay Grace Jones, but promoter claims club was closed

By JOHNNY HOOKS

The Pride event that was talked about most on Monday was the one that never happened: Grace Jones' much-publicized appearance at Rich's.

The fans who gathered at the club heard an announcement that Jones was in the building and was preparing to take the stage.

The next announcement informed patrons that due to circumstances beyond the control of the club, Jones would not be appearing.

The rumor mill and wagging tongues suggested that a near mini-riot ensued with patrons pulling posters of Jones down and shredding them, as well as tearing fixtures from the walls.

Rich's owner, Nassim Joseph, who purchased the club in October 2003, said there was no riot.

"There was no mini-riot, nothing was destroyed, and people were very understanding," he said.

Joseph said the problem had nothing to do with Grace Jones but rather with the Miami promoter, Margarito Guajardo.

Joseph, who said he plans to turn the club over to a new group that will market it to a straight audience, wanted Rich's, as it has been known for 20 years, to go out on a high note.

When contacted about an appearance by Jones, Joseph said, he booked the show.

Joseph said Jones was in the building around 4:30 a.m. and per her contract with Guajardo and Joseph, was to be paid the second half of her \$25,000 fee, in cash upon arrival at the club.

"The promoter tried to finagle with Jones, asking her to accept less money, or a check, to which Jones replied she would not," Joseph said. He said the promoter indicated he had lost the key to his lockbox and was unable to pay Jones what her contract stipulated.

"She was very nice about it to me, but refused to go on and returned to her hotel," Joseph said.

### Attached by bodyguards?

Joseph made the announcement that Jones would not appear, then headed to her hotel to try and work something out.

When he arrived at the hotel, Joseph said he was attacked by the promoter's



The appearance by Grace Jones at Rich's last weekend didn't happen, but stories differ as to why.

bodyguards, leaving his face bloodied.

When Jones realized what was happening, Joseph said, "She offered to go ahead and do an intimate show for the remaining attendees, to which I replied it was not necessary. There were only staff left then anyway."

Contacted by phone in Miami, promoter Guajardo claimed that Grace Jones did not appear at Rich's because when she arrived,

she found the club locked.

A faxed, hand-printed statement from Guajardo reads: "The Artist was on their way to the club. When we all arrived, the club was closed. The Artist had the decision to perform anytime before noon, as on contract."

The document bears signatures that read: Grace Jones, Chris Robert Jones (personal assistant) and Margarito Guajardo.

In the aftermath, Joseph has threatened to sue the promoter, and Guajardo has threatened a countersuit.

### No more gay Rich's

Joseph, who said he was at Rich's opening in 1983, said the weekend and the rumors that followed have left him devastated.

"I just am sick to my stomach that this is how Rich's is going out," he said.

Certainly after the events of Pride weekend, Joseph said, he has no choice but to change the club.

"It may be the same old Rich's for one more weekend, then it will change," he said. "I will retain ownership, but I cannot continue to hemorrhage money. I think it's sad."

He added, "We we're already only open on Friday and Saturday nights and to be honest, this is a business and the gay community has not been supportive of the club since I took it over."

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**national news**
**Gay Congressman Barney Frank eyes Kerry's Senate seat**

NEW YORK — Gay U.S. Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) said he would run for the U.S. Senate seat now held by Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry in a 2005 special election if Kerry wins the presidency this year and if Republicans retain control of the House. Frank, is in line to become chair of the highly influential House Committee on Financial Services if Democrats win control of the House in the 2004 congressional elections. Frank discussed his plans for a possible Senate race at a June 26 appearance before the National Lesbian & Gay Journalists Association's annual conference in Brooklyn. He said becoming chair of



Rep. **Barney Frank** is in line to chair the House Committee on Financial Services if Democrats retake control of the House.

the House financial services committee would give him an unprecedented opportunity to help shape U.S. policy on a wide range of domestic and international issues, including housing, banking and urban development. If Democrats win control of the House, Frank said, he would forgo a run for the Senate. But most political observers believe the Republicans are likely to retain control of the House. Over the objections of Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, a Republican, the Democratic-controlled Massachusetts Legislature is completing work on a bill to strip Romney of his authority to appoint someone to fill a vacant Senate seat for a two-year period before the next scheduled statewide election. The bill would clear the way for Frank and other Democrats to run for Kerry's seat in a 2005 special election. Frank and his domestic partner, Sergio Pombo, marched together on Fifth Avenue in New York's June 27 Gay Pride Parade.

**Mayors fail to reach consensus on gay marriage amendment**

BOSTON (AP) — A deeply divided gathering of the nation's mayors could not reach consensus Monday on a proposed resolution opposing a federal constitutional ban on same-sex marriage. The U.S. Conference of Mayors voted 46 to 44 to table the resolution, and an attempt to revive it was also defeated, 47 to 45. Stamford, Conn., Mayor Dannel Malloy, a Democrat running for governor, and an opponent of a constitutional amendment, said he believes the mayors wanted to avoid the issue in a year many of them are seeking reelection. The close votes, Malloy said, also indicate "there is no broad-based support in the nation to amend the Constitution of the United States to discriminate." The resolution was co-sponsored by three Democratic mayors — Thomas Menino of Boston, Richard Daley of Chicago and Gavin Newsom of San Francisco.

**Anti-gay marriage campaign under way in Mo. churches, homes**

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — In churches and homes in cities big and small, the campaign for and against an Aug. 3 ballot measure that would add a gay marriage ban to the Missouri Constitution is playing out person-to-person instead of over the air. The proposal, Amendment 2, will offer the nation's first statewide vote on same-sex marriage since the highest court in Massachusetts ordered that state to allow it, sparking a national debate on the issue. While there may be TV and radio ads in the future, the campaign in Missouri is focused foremost on getting people to go to the polls — and persuading them to bring along friends. The Coalition to Protect Marriage in Missouri, a group supporting the ballot measure, has distributed hundreds of fliers to be placed in church bulletins around the state. The Constitution Defense League, a group opposing the amendment, has been holding house parties and campaigning door-to-door twice weekly in St. Louis, Kansas City, Springfield, Columbia and St. Joseph.

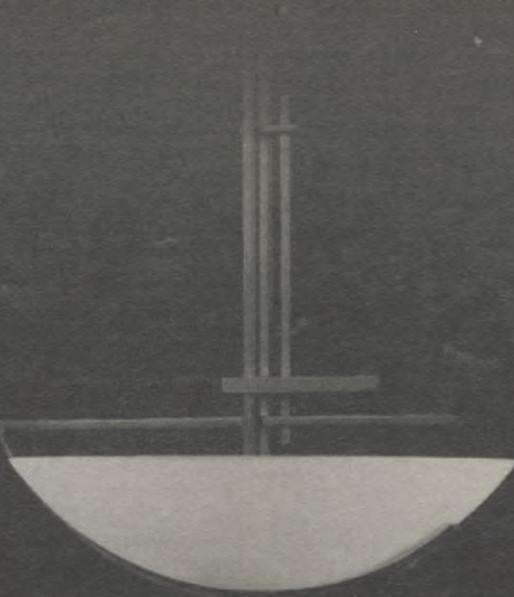
**Supporters of marriage amendment confident of place on Ore. ballot**

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Sponsors of an initiative that would ban same-sex marriage like their chances of getting the proposed constitutional amendment on Oregon's fall ballot. The backers said last week that they might submit as many as 130,000 valid signatures to the state Elections Division. It takes 100,840 signatures to get on the ballot. The extra signatures would provide a cushion against duplicate names and signatures from unregistered voters. The signatures are due July 2. "Signatures are pouring in every day," said Tim Nashif, political director of the Defense of Marriage Coalition. Nashif, however, wouldn't guarantee that his group would gain a spot on the ballot. The state has been scrutinizing each petition sheet for signing and dating errors. Recent enforcement of signing and dating requirements has cost sponsors of other initiatives perhaps thousands of signatures. "We have a team checking for what we know are the secretary of state's rules," Nashif said.

**Iowa education board backs off sexual orientation protections**

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa (AP) — The Iowa Board of Educational Examiners backed off of a proposal to add sexual orientation to anti-discrimination language in its conduct codes for licensed educators. Board members, who met here June 25, said alternative phrasing will still provide some protection to gay students. Some board members thought lawmakers would delay adoption of the rules or object to the changes altogether if the phrase "sexual orientation" remained in proposed code revisions. The language appeared in a new code of educators' rights and responsibilities, and a revised code of professional conduct and ethics that the board has worked on for 2 1/2 years, documents show.

From staff and wire reports

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## news cover story

## Black clergy face off in competing news conferences

FMA, continued from Page 1

Allen has long opposed marriage rights for gay couples. But he did not initially join GOP colleagues sponsoring the FMA and earlier this year said that the Defense of Marriage Act, passed in 1996, was sufficient in protecting marriage.

Some say that Allen, who was undecided on the amendment for months, was likely feeling pressure from conservative colleagues and lobby groups for casting a favorable vote in June to add "sexual orientation" as a protected category to the federal hate crime law.

"We met with him and urged him not to let that political heat push him into a position where he felt he had to support some version of this amendment, but I think that is the reason why he supported it," said David Lampo, president of the Virginia Log Cabin Republicans, a gay partisan group.

GOP leaders in Congress have indicated they will schedule a vote on the FMA sometime during the week of July 12.

Sen. John Warner (R), the other senator from Virginia, remains undecided about the FMA.

In Maryland, Democratic Sen. Barbara A. Mikulski, who has a generally pro-gay voting record, has not issued a position on the Federal Marriage Amendment, and her office did not respond to repeated Blade inquiries on the subject.

A spokesperson for the state's other Senate Democrat, Paul S. Sarbanes, said

the senator will oppose the FMA.

Equality Maryland, a gay rights group, is asking its members to contact Mikulski and Sarbanes to urge them to oppose the FMA.

## Combating 'judicial supremacy'

Last week, the House Subcommittee on the Constitution heard from two social conservatives who have long opposed gay rights.

Phyllis Schlafly, president of the Eagle Forum, testified in support of the FMA along with former Rep. Bill Dannemeyer (R-Calif.).

The Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest gay rights group, noted that Schlafly once said gays should not work in the food-handling business and that Dannemeyer once compared the gay rights movement to Nazi Germany.

"Featuring testimony by two long-time opponents of equality proves the argument that this is about discrimination," said Cheryl Jacques, president of the Human Rights Campaign.

## Dueling news conferences

Last week, the National Coalition of African-American Ministers held a news conference on Capitol Hill to voice its support for the FMA. Meanwhile, another news conference, sponsored by HRC and the National Black Justice Coalition, was also held on Capitol Hill and featured black clergy supportive of gay and lesbian equality.

Jasmine Cannick, media director of the



'My opinion is that I don't care one way or the other,' said California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, responding to a question about his position on gay marriage.

National Black Justice Coalition, said that social conservatives and evangelical Christians are pressuring African-American churches to support the FMA.

"Some ministers are really thinking that if we get this right, black gay people are going to rush to their churches and demand marriage," she said. "Well, that is not true."

## One-third of Americans unaware of FMA: poll

In a nationwide survey conducted by the Barna Group, an independent cultural analysis group in California, one-third of all adults are not even aware of the FMA.

The survey of 1,618 adults shows that 37 percent were unaware of the FMA.

Eighty-three percent of evangelicals, 58 percent of conservatives, 56 percent of Republicans, 49 percent of Protestants and 47 percent of non-evangelical born-again Christians favor the amendment.

However, 55 percent of self-described liberals, 51 percent of atheists and agnostics and 43 percent of college graduates oppose it.

George Barna, who conducted the survey, said that based on his findings, many born-again Christians do not want to codify their definition of marriage into law.

## Romney criticized over FMA

In Massachusetts, Mitt Romney is being criticized by some constituents who say the first-term Republican governor is focusing too heavily on national politics and not enough on Massachusetts issues. Romney was in Washington last week to testify in support of the FMA.

Last week, as the California State Assembly voted 42-27 on a resolution opposing the FMA, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) said he doesn't care if gay couples wish to wed.

"My opinion is that I don't care one way or the other," Schwarzenegger said in response to a question by a gay constituent at a restaurant last week.

California Senate President John Burton (D-San Francisco) told the Associated Press the governor's positions were sound.

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## national news

# Outing rumor sparks panic on Capitol Hill

## Closeted staffers scrambling in wake of activist campaign

By ADRIAN BRUNE

WASHINGTON — Their center of operations occupies not one, but two top-floor apartments located directly across from each other in a nondescript Adams Morgan high-rise, where the two friends and activists have both lived for years.

Their information comes to them via a network of insiders, mostly planted at various gay and lesbian bars across Washington. And their modus operandi for fighting a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage consists of well-placed phone calls to closeted congressional aides who work for members supportive of the amendment, declaring their intent to publicly reveal the aides' sexual orientation.

From that high-rise, with a view of the nation's epicenter of public policy, the ongoing outing campaign loosely headed by gay activists Michael Rogers and John Aravosis evoked panic and precaution behind the Capitol's closed doors last week, signifying the resurrected, yet still controversial, tactic's scope and impact.

The reactions on the Hill came in various formats: e-mails from staffers of prominent gay advocacy groups to anonymous lists of Hill employees warning them of impending outings; admonitions against the practice in public forums and on television; and meetings between Senate chiefs of staff and aides that reaffirmed office nondiscrimination or zero-tolerance policies.

The responses Rogers said he received ranged from "donations to death threats," but both he and Aravosis said they are undeterred in their pursuit to expose what they call the duplicity of policymakers pushing for the Federal Marriage Amendment.

"In the words of Harvey Milk, 'Let the bullet that pierces my brain blow open every closet door,'" Rogers said. "We are engaging in an activist campaign that educates people; it makes them aware of the hypocrisy of America's right wing."

"This is not about kids who are folding the mail or answering the phones because their parents suggested they come work for

the government. This is about highly visible people — press secretaries, legislative directors, chiefs of staff — people who influence leaders and put a face to their policies."

News about the activists' outing efforts, which they said has grown from six to 13 offices in less than 10 days, began to spread through downtown Washington by word of mouth early in the week of June 21, sources from several gay advocacy groups said, landing in Capitol office buildings shortly thereafter.

An e-mail memorandum sent by Human Rights Campaign lobbyist Matthew McTighe to a group of gay government professionals warned that the Washington Blade, a publication affiliated with the Houston Voice, planned on publishing a story listing the names of closeted congressional staffers.

"We're hearing that the Blade may run a story tomorrow listing the names of gay staff members from the White House or who work for members who support the FMA," McTighe wrote. "We're doing everything we can to stop it from happening, but frankly there's only so much an organization like HRC can do to stop the Blade or any other activists from doing this."

A spokesperson for HRC said McTighe obtained his information from Hill aides who reportedly received phone calls from an activist impersonating a Washington Blade reporter, asking questions about the personal lives of aides and alleging that he or she was outing people in an article.

Rogers insisted that he had never impersonated a reporter in his outing campaign.

"I am a strong believer in an independent media and would never misrepresent myself as a member of [the Blade] or any other publication," Rogers wrote in an e-mail. "As you know, our campaign focuses on informing people of the truth, not covering up who we are and lying."

### Outing mania

The political newspaper the Hill also contributed to the discussions among the inner circle of gay congressional aides by publishing an article on June 24 headlined, "If you're gay, you're out!"

Local TV news programs also pounced on the outing rumors, with CBS affiliate WUSA and Fox station WTTG airing stories on the subject last week.

Newsweek's Washington bureau contacted the Washington Blade about the rumor but did not publish an article on the subject.

"We received a significant number of phone calls reporting that the Blade was publishing this article," said HRC spokesperson Steven Fisher. "Our staffer [McTighe] sent off an e-mail to some of the people on his contact list that this may be happening, and that we were looking into it and trying to block it."

HRC President Cheryl Jacques also con-



HRC President Cheryl Jacques told gay Senate staffer that she had heard a rumor that the Blade was preparing to out gay congressional staffers.

firmed at a luncheon sponsored by two gay congressional associations that she, too, had heard a rumor about a pending article in the Blade outing gay Hill staffers.

In fact, HRC never contacted the newspaper to verify the existence of an outing story.

"I can confirm that at no time has the Blade staff discussed, assigned or worked on an article that would 'out' gay congressional staffers," said Chris Crain, executive editor of the Blade and the Houston Voice, who also outlined the circumstances under which both papers might consider such a story.

"Public officials and public figures are routinely asked on the record by the Blade to identify their sexual orientation, and their response is published, even if the response is to refuse to answer the question," he said. "The Blade would investigate the veracity of such a response only under unique circumstances in which the story subject's sexual orientation would present issues of hypocrisy that are highly newsworthy."

Responding to the rumor, some aides fearful of losing their jobs contacted other Hill staffers, such as Lynden Armstrong, a founder of the Gay, Lesbian & Allies Senate Staff Caucus, to ask for resources to prepare for their outing.

Many chiefs of staff among the handful of senators and representatives who have signed sexual orientation nondiscrimination policies held office-wide meetings to notify employees of that policy.

### Dole reassures staff

Several senators whose offices do not have nondiscrimination policies also met

with staffers to express their general tolerance of gay employees, HRC said.

Among those was Sen. Elizabeth Dole (R-N.C.), according to a source who spoke on the condition of anonymity. Dole opposes the Federal Marriage Amendment; her office did not respond to interview requests.

But the offices of members of Congress with strong records opposing gay rights subtly re-enforced their objections to having openly gay employees, leaving them "very nervous about [the outing]," according to Armstrong.

"I emphasized to friends and colleagues who called me that I didn't think they should panic and pre-empt the outing by outing themselves," Armstrong said. "All of this was still a ways from landing in the lap of a member who has no connections in the gay community or thinks that he or she doesn't have any connections in the gay community."

The Washington Blade hit newsstands June 25 without an article outing congressional staffers. But in Adams Morgan, the actual outing campaign continues.

Rogers said the activists, now up to a loose contingent of 15, have decided to take a different course in their outing endeavor.

Rogers said he first ascertains whether members of Congress who back the FMA also have an active anti-gay agenda. If so, Rogers will not reveal a gay aide's sexual orientation to the office. If not, Rogers said he will go through with the outing — a tactic opposed by the HRC and most other gay advocacy groups.

"I think that outing an individual is only appropriate when that individual is in a position to make law or policy and makes anti-gay policy. It's totally inappropriate in any other situation," said Matt Foreman, the executive director of the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force.

"But the Federal Marriage Amendment is not going anywhere. So to resort to this kind of behavior for a piece of legislation that's not going anywhere is troublesome," Foreman said.

Rogers said he continues to contact several offices each week. According to Rogers, a senior legislative aide in the office of U.S. Rep. Max Burns (R-Ga.), an FMA proponent, is the latest person to come out prompted by Rogers' overt persuasion.

Across the hall, John Aravosis continues to call for the names of more gay and lesbian staffers through his Web site. For now, the activists said they aren't planning on abandoning what they have called the most effective way of furthering gay rights.

"We have accepted for far too long fellow gays who work for horribly anti-gay politicians and thus help those politicians bash our community," Aravosis said.

"It's time we stopped tolerating this situation as normal. These people need, at the very least, to be confronted over their hypocrisy, and when we see them in public we ought to tell them we don't approve."



Pride Committee President Nick Brines calls Pride 2004 a success, but he's not sure what role he'll play in the organization for next year's event.

## **i** Nick Brines

Age: 33

Residence: Montrose

Birthplace: Shullsburg, WI

Education: Almost a master's

Occupation: Director in charge of corporate sponsorships, American Heart Association

Personal: Married to Greg Decker

Pets: None

Tidbit: Loves Pride and traveling

er has her own personal hairdresser in the family.

Growing up on the farm in Wisconsin, Brines said, he had absolutely no exposure to gay life.

"I grew up in the same house my father grew up in and his mother grew up in. It was very Norman Rockwell," he said.

"That's why Houston blew me away. A whole new world opened up to me here."

It didn't take Brines too long to find the Pride Committee. He said it was a fortuitous find for many reasons.

"It's great for networking," he said.

"The reason I have the job I have today is because of the Pride Committee. They looked at all the fundraising I had done for the Pride Committee. I put it right, smack on my resume. There's no reason to hide it."

To anyone looking for a place to connect in Houston's gay and lesbian community, Brines recommends the Pride Committee. "All they have to do is just show up and do it," he said. "There is a lot of work to be done."

In addition to that, Brines said, there is the satisfaction of doing something for the community.

The committee works hard to keep the parade relevant, he said. Although the group wants to highlight the community, Brines said, corporate entries have their place.

"It's a way to show the community what corporations are friendly and which ones are supportive of their gay and lesbian employees," he said.

Contrary to what was aired on conservative talk radio prior to the parade, Brines said, the parade does not place a cost burden on the city.

"We've been hearing that the parade costs the city a ton of money," he said. "We pay for the trash to be picked up afterward. We leave Montrose cleaner than we found it."

In addition to hiring additional security, Brines said, parade fees cover the salaries of Houston Police Department officers.

The Pride flags that are hung on light poles lining Westheimer during the month of June, Brines said, "We pay for those, the installation, the upkeep and the insurance."

And, as for the conservative radio jock who kept complaining that he hates to see men in leather thongs, Brines said, "I didn't see any of that this year."

## 'Mother Nature must be a lesbian'

### Weather forecasts foretold the worst, but the clouds dissipated just in time

By BINNIE FISHER

As if on command, the clouds that had threatened the worst for most of Pride Saturday parted just in time for Pride as Big as Texas.

Nick Brines, president of Pride Committee Houston, had visions of rain pelting parade participants, and ankle-deep water on Westheimer.

"The last thing I saw on the news was a hundred-percent chance of rain and flooding," he said.

When the clouds went away and the sky turned blue about an hour before parade time Saturday night, Brines remarked, "Mother Nature must be a lesbian."

Brines, who has been involved with the Pride Committee for a decade, said

the parade that made its way down Westheimer was one of the best ever.

"My first impression was that it was thrilling and completely awesome," he said. "The quality of the entries in this year's parade was terrific."

It was a satisfying culmination to a year of work, a year that begins immediately after Pride ends.

"We're already starting to plan 2005," he said. "We have our next meeting next Saturday."

The fiscal year for the Pride Committee ends Aug. 30, and Brines said, he doesn't know what his place will be next year. He has been president for two years.

"I don't know what my leadership role will be," he said. "I'll have to work it out with my husband."

Brines is partnered with hairdresser Greg Decker, who recently opened Azur Salon in Houston.

The two had a commitment ceremony at the Magnolia Ballroom, but Brines said, they aren't likely to fly off to Massachusetts to make it legal.

"We just did it for ourselves," he said.

In attendance were Brines' parents, retired dairy farmers from Wisconsin who now live in Corpus Christi. Their attendance at his wedding to another man spoke volumes.

### Coming out in college

Brines came out when he moved to Houston to attend college at the age of 17.

"I didn't come out to my parents until I was 21," he said.

Their initial reaction was "horrible," he said. "But it took me 17 years to come to grips with it. I can't expect them to accept it overnight."

But, accept it they did. Now that his parents live close, Brines said, his moth-

**appts.****SUNDAY**  
JULY 4

The main Fourth of July celebration in Houston is at Eleanor Tinsley Park on the banks of Buffalo Bayou and features the only joint appearance this year of the Judds, Naomi and Wynonna. The Judds will celebrate the holiday as well as 20 years of performing together. Events also include performances by other artists, a Symbols of Freedom exhibit highlighting military artifacts and vehicles, and a Kid's Zone. The day will be topped off by "Wish Upon a Lone Star" - A Blast of Fireworks from Walt Disney World. The pyrotechnic display will span Buffalo Bayou. [www.ci.houston.tx.us](http://www.ci.houston.tx.us).

Additional Fourth of July celebrations include: Fourth of July at Miller Outdoor Theatre, the Red Hot & Blue Festival in Town Center at the Woodlands, the annual celebration at Six Flags Astroworld and the East Beach Bash in Galveston.

**TUESDAY**  
JULY 6

Theatre Under The Stars (TUTS) and the Ensemble Theatre will present a free symposium entitled "The Broadway Musical as Moral Compass: How a New Production of Big River Changes Attitudes Toward Race, Ability, and Cultural Differences" at 6 p.m. at the Ensemble Theatre, 3535 Main Street. Based on "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," "Big River" brings to the stage the story of a runaway boy, Huck, and a runaway slave, Jim, on a journey along the Mississippi River. "Big River" plays at 8:15 p.m. nightly, July 13-18 at the Miller Outdoor Theatre 100 Concert Drive. 713-558-2600 or [www.tuts.com](http://www.tuts.com).

**THURSDAY**  
JULY 8

It's the deadline for entering the Amazing Race Houston, an annual event staged by the Greater Houston GLBT Chamber of Commerce. The Houston knock-off of the TV reality series begins at 6 p.m., on July 10 when teams are formed and compete against one another to be the first to reach specified destinations, accomplish tasks and gather information. Along the way, teams have the opportunity to partake of the hospitality offered along the way and to network at host businesses. Cost is \$20 for chamber members and \$25 for non-members. Participants may register by mailing checks to the Chamber at P.O. Box 66129, Houston 77266-6129 or by registering online at [www.ghlcc.org](http://www.ghlcc.org). 713-523-7576.

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Correspondents BRYAN ANDERTON, ADRIAN BRUNE, LOU CHIBBARO, JR., JOE CREA, MUBARAK DAHIR, LAURA DOUGLAS-BROWN, MIKE FLEMING, MATTHEW HENNIE, PHIL LAPADULA, RYAN LEE, BRIAN MOYLAN, KEVIN NAFF, KEN SAIN, RHONDA SMITH, CHRISTOPHER SEELY, STEVE WEINSTEIN, ANDY ZEPPER, CYD ZEIGLER

Contributors JOHNNY HOOKS, JOSEF MOLNAR, JASON VICTOR SERINUS, MUBARAK DAHIR, J.A. CHAPMAN, AND ARJAN TIMMERMANS

Photographers DALTON DEHART, KIMBERLY THOMPSON

Production JOEY CAROLINO, RAY BERG, RONNIE GANDHOK, IRMA ALLEN

Webmaster ARAM VARTIAN

**SALES & ADMINISTRATION**General Manager JASON WILSON  
jwilson@houstonvoice.comAccount Executives  
DONA BOZKA - dbozka@houstonvoice.com  
JENNIFER HOLLAND - jholland@houstonvoice.com  
DAVID TRUONG - dtruong@houstonvoice.comClassified Sales / Office Administrator  
JOHNNY HOOKS - jhooks@houstonvoice.comNational Advertising Representative  
Rivendell Media • 212-242-6863Publisher- WINDOW MEDIA LLC  
President- WILLIAM WAYBOURN  
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Established 1974 as the *Monroe Star*.500 Lovett Blvd., Suite 200  
Houston, Texas 77006  
(713) 529-8490  
Fax: (713) 529-9531  
www.houstonvoice.com

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# Forum

**editorial**

## Don't cry for gay Hill staffers

If ever there were a definition of a gay Uncle Tom, it is these semi-closeted congressional aides who work for anti-gay politicians and fear being outed.

By CHRIS CRAIN

**A** CHILL WIND IS BLOWING these days on Capitol Hill, where closeted gay congressional staffers are facing the growing threat of being outed by a small but determined group of activists.

Speculation that the *Washington Blade*, the *Voice's* sister paper in D.C., was planning to publish a list closeted gay staffers only added to the tumult, as some scared aides acted as if they were scrambling for their very jobs.

It's a curious Washington irony that the fear of being outed has mobilized the Hill's gay aides in a way that threatens to their civil rights seem never managed to before.

But lest we feel too much sympathy for the plight of these congressional staffers, or too much indignation for the activists who are targeting them, we should keep in mind just who we're talking about. Or, better yet, who we're *not* talking about.

*Not* at risk are gay congressional staffers open about their sexual orientation.

*Not* at risk are gay congressional staffers working for members of Congress who oppose or haven't yet taken a position on the Federal Marriage Amendment, an unprecedented measure that would forever usurp from the states the definition of marriage and deprive gay couples of their access to the courts to challenge heterosexual-only marriage laws.

*Not* at risk are gay congressional staffers at the lower echelons of authority, who work as legislative aides answering constituent mail or answering the telephones. The activists have said they are focusing only on aides with real influence on public policy.

*Not* at risk are gay congressional staffers who are deep in the closet. As a practical matter, the only way an aide's name can make it onto one of these activists' lists is if the staffer is out within the gay community. These are not people struggling to figure out their sexual orien-

tion; they are well-adjusted gay men and lesbians who attend gay social functions and patronize public gay establishments.

So who *are* we talking about? Semi-closeted Hill staffers who happily play in gay D.C. but who work in positions of authority with real influence over members of Congress who support an amendment to the United States Constitution that would prohibit states from legalizing marriage, civil unions or even domestic partner registries for gay couples.

IF EVER THERE WERE A DEFINITION of a gay Uncle Tom, it would fit these people. These are not dishwashers or short-order cooks at Cracker Barrel, facing poverty if their redneck bosses learn they're big homos.

These are smart, talented, well-educated professionals who could find success in any number of highly paid positions on or off the Hill but who instead have chosen to devote their professional lives to advancing the careers of politicians who would strip them and their friends of basic civil rights protections and even redress of their grievances in the courts.

The level of rationalization and denial it must take for these people to show up for work each day must be mind-boggling. Add to that their newfound paranoia that an activist — or even the gay press — might reveal their sexual orientation, and thereby their hypocrisy, and you have some pretty unhappy people about whom all of us should feel absolutely no sympathy whatsoever.

DOES THAT MEAN THAT THE RUMORS are correct, and the *Washington Blade* or the *Houston Voice* would out this narrow group of semi-closeted, influential and yet hypocritical Hill staffers? Yes and no.

No, neither the *Blade* nor the *Voice* has worked on a story revealing the names of closeted aides.

Yes, we would investigate and report about whether influential Hill aides are gay

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if facts about their sexual orientation raise highly newsworthy questions of hypocrisy in the stands taken by the anti-gay members of Congress for whom they work.

The *Blade* and the *Voice* are, after all, gay papers and as such, our reporters regularly ask almost every person they interview about their sexual orientation because it is invariably relevant to the story and to our readers.

It is 2004, not 1954, and sexual orientation in and of itself is no longer a "private fact" beyond the pale of inquiry.

If the subject of an interview is a private citizen and not a public figure, then their expectation of privacy is understandably higher, and we would respect their desire not to have their sexual orientation discussed in print. We would not, for example, publish photographs from gay-themed events without first asking the individuals for permission.

But if the interview subject is a public official or a public figure — in government, entertainment, sports, wherever — then that person's privacy expectations are a lot lower. Those who choose to live their lives in the limelight ought to expect, at this point, to be asked "the question" and have ready an answer about whether they are gay or straight.

Asking the question does not by itself amount to outing. Neither does printing the response, whether it is the truth or a lie or a refusal to discuss the matter.

Outing someone involves going "behind the answer" and investigating a response (or non-response) and publishing the facts that suggest which side of the bread that someone in fact spreads their butter: gay, straight, bisexual or otherwise.

Looking into someone's sexual orientation doesn't necessarily mean monitoring their bedroom or invading their privacy. It could mean simply reporting that they have a same-sex love interest with whom they flit about town, or that they regularly show up at gay parties or bars.

We reported in 2000 that John Paulk, the prominent "ex-gay" who had appeared on the cover of *Newsweek* magazine with his wife, an "ex-lesbian," was seen cavorting with gay guys in Mr. P's.

The "activists" at the Human Rights Campaign apparently consider it their sworn duty to protect closeted Hill staffers who work for anti-gay members of Congress, but it is the antithesis of journalism to hide such hypocrisy when the facts can be clearly ascertained.

It is not the job of the gay press — and ought not be the job of HRC — to protect the identity of semi-closeted congressional aides who have important questions to answer about why they have not acted to protect their fellow gay citizens.

@ Chris CRAIN is executive editor of *Houston Voice* and can be reached at [ccrain@houstonvoice.com](mailto:ccrain@houstonvoice.com).



**point** JOHN ARAVOSIS

Gay staffers for anti-gay members of Congress are aiding and abetting the enemy and deserve neither our pity nor our protection.

## Gay Hill staffers should be outed

ONE YEAR AGO, I WOULD HAVE opposed "outing" gay congressional staffers who work for anti-gay members of Congress. After all, I was once one of those staffers, working for a Republican, no less. Today, while outing still gives me pause, I believe recent events have made it necessary.

When President Bush and anti-gay members of Congress teamed up with the radical right to push for passage of the anti-gay Federal Marriage Amendment, all the rules changed.

The FMA is the legislative equivalent of a nuclear bomb. Its passage will ban same-sex marriage from now till eternity, ripping apart thousands of already-married gay couples. Worse yet, the amendment is so broadly written that it could overturn

every pro-gay federal, state and local law, and private industry policy in the country.

Facing such an unprecedented threat, it is time we considered an unprecedented response.

We once laughed off the gay staffers who worked for Jesse Helms or Pat Buchanan. We loathed their self-loathing, but figured that for the most part they were hurting themselves more than us.

In post-FMA America, we no longer have that luxury. President Bush and anti-gay members of Congress have declared war on gay people.

GAY STAFFERS WHO WORK FOR SUCH politicians are hardly innocent bystanders simply exercising their right to free speech.

They are hired guns defending policies intended to destroy our relationships. Such staffers are, at best, enemy combatants; and at worst, war criminals. Those who would choose to aid and abet our enemies deserve neither our pity nor our protection.

Some say that congressional staff members are hardly responsible for the anti-gay positions of their bosses. That is simply absurd. We're not talking about young kids who simply walk the dog or stuff the mail.

There are gay men and lesbians serving anti-gay members in the most senior levels of Congress, from chiefs of staff to press secretaries to lawyers and other senior advisers. To suggest that their role in policy-making is negligible is naive or disingenuous.

It's high time we stopped treating grown men and women as children who simply need a hug. These people don't need a hug; they need a swift kick in the ass. They are, for the most part, well-educated, highly paid adults who are perfectly aware of the harm they are causing.

Yet still they choose to perform their roles. To suggest that all, or even a majority, are closet cases living on the fringes of gay life, and thus deserving of our pity, is a fiction. They may work against our civil rights by day, but they surely enjoy its benefits by night.

BUT WHAT IF THE MARRIAGE amendment is doomed, as some say, so no harm, no foul? That's nice, but it's hardly a defense to admit you tried to kill me, but failed.

And in any case, it's not at all clear that the amendment is dead. Only a fool crows victory before the votes have been counted. It would hardly be unprecedented for our "allies" in Congress to cave when faced with a hard-to-oppose anti-gay vote.

And even if the amendment doesn't pass this year, the gay marriage debate is hardly over. It's only a matter of time before the issue is again ripe for future congressional consideration.

What will outing really achieve? An outing campaign takes troops away from the enemy, teaches members of Congress and their staff that there is a price to be paid for legislating "family values," and ultimately helps create an environment in which legislative gay-bashing and working for the enemy is less and less acceptable.

In the end, LGBT staffers working for anti-gay members of Congress ask of us what they are unwilling to give in return. They condemn the use of their sexual orientation as a weapon while brandishing our own against us.

They demand their private lives be protected and kept off limits while helping their bosses turn our private lives into criminal acts. And they ask us to ignore our own self-interest and defend them with our silence, while they refuse to consider anyone's well being but their own.

**@** John Aravosis is a longtime Washington lobbyist and activist. He can be reached at [john@gayadvocacy.com](mailto:john@gayadvocacy.com).

**counterpoint** LYNDEN ARMSTRONG & MAT YOUNG

It's easier to terrorize than organize, but activists only hurt our cause when they out Hill staffers.

## Don't out gay Hill staffers

SOMETIMES, WHEN WE ARE UNDER assault, it's easier to attack our own rather than fight those who are actually causing us harm. In politics and in war, this is often referred to as a circular firing squad.

As reported in Southern Voice, that is exactly what some gay activists seem to be doing through their efforts to out gay and lesbian staffers on Capitol Hill.

As co-chairs of the Gay, Lesbian & Allies Senate Staff Caucus, we forcefully condemn any campaign that would "out" lesbian or gay congressional staff. The GLASS Caucus has been working to create a more positive, safe and affirming environment for gay and lesbian staffers; we believe that outing staff is counterpro-

ductive and will only encourage some staffers to go even deeper into the closet.

It may seem exciting to threaten staffers by outing them if they don't come out themselves and to shock members of Congress about the unknown sexual orientations of their staffers. But if these activists were truly committed to ensuring equal rights, they would be organizing gay people to educate the public and members of Congress about public policy issues affecting our lives.

BUT WHY ORGANIZE WHEN YOU CAN terrorize?

Anyone who would threaten to out gay and lesbian staffers — potentially costing them their careers and their economic

security — is not only cruel, they are doing nothing to further the fight for equality. This will do nothing to stop the Federal Marriage Amendment from coming up for a vote in mid-July.

In fact, the FMA will most likely fall far short of the necessary 67 votes for passage. So, we're left wondering: What exactly are these activists hoping to accomplish?

They certainly aren't changing anyone's value systems. They certainly aren't using logic and reason and the values of inclusion and fairness to sway members of Congress. Rather, the only likely outcome of this campaign would be to potentially cost some people their jobs and to give our opponents ammunition by showing the country how we treat our own.

Staffers may advise their bosses, but at the end of the day, it is the member of Congress who is accountable for his or her vote. Many gay staffers don't even advise their bosses on gay rights, but on a host of other issues or serve in administrative or technical positions.

Outing a staff assistant, a legislative correspondent, or even someone as senior as a legislative director or a chief of staff will not change a member's beliefs.

There are LGBT people on Capitol Hill making changes in both small and large ways everyday. Some do it by being out and actively contributing to policy discussions. Others do so by coming out to select coworkers and slowly and subtly changing the atmosphere in their offices.

Outing is not a panacea to convincing anti-gay politicians that we are full citi-

zens deserving of equal rights. Rather it is an incredibly reckless, misdirected, and lazy form of activism.

COMING OUT AND SPEAKING OUT for ourselves is a personal journey, and it is one that some seem to have forgotten.

The coming out process is a difficult one for almost all of us. Often the last step is in our workplace to our colleagues and bosses.

That last step is usually taken only after we are reasonably confident that we will be judged on our skills and contributions and not our sexual orientation.

LGBT people — even Capitol Hill staffers — must be allowed to go through the process of coming out and merging our personal and professional lives at a pace that is comfortable.

An individual's sexual orientation should not be an issue for employment and by outing staff to their employers, these activists reinforce the notion that there is something wrong with being gay or lesbian.

While some may disagree with the mindset of closeted LGBT staffers who work for members of Congress who do not support LGBT equality, we believe those are the personal decisions to be made by each staffer.

We call on these activists to stop attacking LGBT staff and direct their energy toward more constructive causes.

**@** Lynden Armstrong, a Republican, and Mat Young, a Democrat, are the founding co-chairs of the GLASS Caucus and can be reached via [www.glasscaucus.org](http://www.glasscaucus.org).

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## action! alert

# Too 'Hot' for Texas

Austin radio station  
vows to block gay  
romance novel

By BRYAN ANDERTON

FOR FAR TOO LONG, GAY MEN HAVE been deprived of their own versions of the lurid romance novels read by millions of straight women in the United States. But that changed in late 2003, when a gay couple from Boston started a line of books called "Romantics" targeting a gay male audience.

Written by real-life couple Scott Pomfret and Scott Whittier, the line currently includes four self-published novels: "Hot Sauce," "Razor Burn," "Nick of Time" and "Spare Parts."

Next year, one of the books, "Hot Sauce," is scheduled to be released nationwide by Warner Book Group, the book publishing arm of Time-Warner, Inc.

But one Texas radio station is asking its listeners to lobby Warner to drop plans to publish the book, saying it is too "scandalous" to be released.

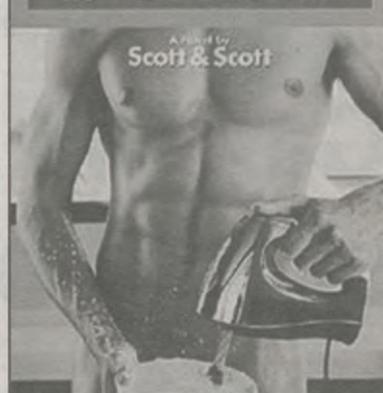
Under the heading "The War Rages On," a post on the Web site for KIXL, a Christian radio station based in Austin, Texas, states, "If you think traditional romance novels are scandalous, just wait until Time-Warner Books starts distributing a new line of homosexual romance novels."

The post goes on to encourage listeners to "let Warner Books know how you feel about its decision to distribute books in this Romantic series" by contacting Warner's chair and chief executive officer Laurence J. Kirshbaum by phone or fax.

Pomfret and Whittier said Warner had received numerous complaints about the books from KIXL's listeners, but that Warner has assured them that it is still fully behind the project.

"[This campaign] was a bit of a shocker," Pomfret said. "To use the terminology of war on a series of love stories tells me all you need to know about these guys. It couldn't have been more mean-spirited or un-Christian, as far as I'm concerned."

## hot sauce



A Christian radio station in Texas has asked listeners to lobby Warner Book Group to stop plans to publish 'Hot Sauce,' a gay romance novel.

Directly below the posting about the books on the station's Web site is another one about "Marriage Protection Sunday," an event being planned by the anti-gay American Family Association on July 11, the day before the U.S. Senate is reportedly to vote on the Federal Marriage Amendment.

Representatives of KIXL and Warner Books could not be reached for comment by press time.

## 'Romantics' for men

The two authors, who affectionately refer to themselves as "Scott & Scott" on the books' covers, said they developed the idea after realizing the number of romance novels Whittier's mother and grandmother read every month, and realizing there was an absence of any such material for gay men.

So the couple brainstormed some ideas, and churned out four novels from late 2002 until mid-2003. In November 2003, they self-published the books and began selling them on their Web site. They sent the novels to several agents, one of whom sold Warner Books on the idea, Pomfret said.

Warner Books decided to publish and distribute "Hot Sauce," which is scheduled to hit shelves in June 2005. According to Pomfret, the company is also considering re-publishing the couple's three other novels.

Whittier said the publisher reassured the two men that the company remains committed to the project even after receiving phone calls from KIXL listeners. But even so, Whittier and Pomfret began asking fans to contact the company, too.

"I think they were very pleased when we asked our readers and supporters to get in touch with them, because they are so much more diverse from the people who go to KIXL's Web site," Whittier said. "It really said that straight women with kids, entrepreneurs, and a wide range of others really support this idea, and it's about time."

## ACTION! INFO

'Romantics'  
www.romantics.com

Warner Book Group  
1271 Ave. of the Americas  
New York, NY 10020  
212-522-7200

KIXL 970 AM  
11615 Angus Road, Suite 120B  
Austin, TX 78759  
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ABOUT ACTION ALERT: Action Alert is a Forum section feature that informs readers of issues for response and lobbying. Send suggestions and comments to forum@houstonvoice.com.

# on the record

"There will be a purge on God's orders, and evil will be eliminated like shadows. Gays will be eliminated, the three Israels will unite. If not, then they will be burned."

Rev. Sun Myung Moon, founder of the Unification Church, which owns the Washington Times, at a ceremony in a Senate office building in the presence of several members of Congress who said they were duped into attending; Moon's speech was given in Korean and later translated (Washington Post, June 23)



"How do gay people make love? How? You may know. Even animals don't do this. ... We must end the false viewpoint of human rights that is promoting homosexuality."

Rev. Sun Myung Moon, at the Washington, D.C., ceremony, speaking in Korean but later translated into English (Washington Post, June 23)

"Sodomite Eye for the Man Righteous Before the Lord"

Title suggested by satirist Rob Kutner for a TV show identical to Bravo's "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" except inspired by the success of the "Left Behind" religious novels and "Passion of the Christ"; Kutner imagined that each episode would end "with the Fab Five being stoned to death" (New York Times, June 24)

"Acting is no longer about lying. It's now about revealing the truth. People are at ease with me now."

Gay actor Sir Ian McKellan at the Cannes Film Festival on why he would never have become an international film star if he had not come out (Times of London, June 14)

"The breakdown of the family over the past 35 years is one of the root causes of some of our society's most intractable social problems: criminal activity, illegitimacy and the cyclical nature of poverty."

Jack Ryan, GOP nominee for the U.S. Senate in Illinois, on why he supports a Federal Marriage Amendment and opposes civil unions and domestic partner registries; Ryan withdrew from the race this week after it was discovered that his ex-wife alleged in divorce proceedings that he forced her to go to sex clubs with him and pressured her to have sex in front of other people (www.jackryan2004.com)



"Does your candidate support gay marriage?"

Signs held up by volunteers for independent presidential candidate Ralph Nader at a Washington state Gay Pride event gathering signatures to put Nader's name on the state's November ballot (Washington Post, June 28)

"It wasn't a horrible weekend. The gays and Christians didn't help us, but our local regular customers and the Midtown party crowd kept coming in."

Sue Morgan, marketing director for the Cheetah strip club in Atlanta, on the effect of having the annual Gay Pride festival and the Christian Mega Fest the same weekend ("Peachbuzz," Atlanta Journal Constitution, June 30)



"Here are my standards: I refuse to pose nude, I refuse to do nude scenes, and I refuse to ever actually be nude."

Lesbian talk show host Ellen DeGeneres, asked in the tongue-in-cheek feature "The Last Word" whether she "lived up to a standard" (Details Magazine, June/July issue)

"Who all's a bottom here today?"

Janet Jackson, on stage during a surprise appearance at the Dance 18 event at the Chelsea Piers as part of New York's Gay Pride festival (June 27)

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HoYo Dining Column

## Dig In!

HOUSTON VOICE

**PRIDE '04**

# Pride as Big as Texas



Photos by: D. Dehart

# PRIDE '04



Photos by: D. Dehart



**Yoko goes gay**  
New version of old song  
addresses gay marriage.  
Page 17

JULY 2, 2004

## Alley Theatre serves up

Gay actor Todd Waite says the stretch from Christie's Hastings to Shakespeare's Orsino is what brought him to the Alley Theatre

By BINNIE FISHER

**O**ver almost two decades in the theater, Todd Waite has played his share of intriguing characters created by likes of Shakespeare, Albee,

Tolstoy and Shaw.

Yet, as he rehearsed for his most recent role in the Alley Theatre's production of Agatha Christie's "Black Coffee," Waite said, "I've done about a hundred plays. This may be only the second Agatha Christie. I have not played Capt. Hastings before."

Waite, who came to the Alley four seasons ago from the Shaw Theatre Festival in Canada, is cast as the assistant to the famous Belgian Detective Hercule Poirot, played by Alley veteran James Black.

"Black Coffee" is one of Christie's earlier works. The play opened Dec. 8, 1930 at London's Embassy Theatre.

"The funny thing about this work is that of all the Agatha Christie plays that were turned into movies, she did not at the time turn this one into a novel," Waite said. "She had to wait 50 years for someone else to do it."

When Christie's heirs finally did have the play turned into a novel, Waite said it was done shoddily.

"It still contains some of the stage directions," he said.

Waite is no stranger to the British mystery. He played Holmes in the Alley's production of "Sherlock Holmes" last



season. The two shows are similar in that the character combinations work together in the same way.

"Hastings and Poirot are like Sherlock and Watson," he said. "It's their synergy that makes it work."

Where Holmes is often detached and existing in his own crime-solving mind,

Poirot is fussy and fastidious about every detail. It is Watson and Hastings who humanize the scenes and reel the star detectives back to earth from time to time.

Waite, who has taught classes in British scene study that included mastery of British dialects, said he finds that he fits easily into the

character of Hastings.

"It's just so easy to speak and act the part," he said.

Although Christie's most famous play is "The Mousetrap," Waite noted that "Black Coffee" was her first.

Please see GAY ACTOR on Page 22

**BEHIND THE GARAGE DOOR:** It ought to be a garage, but thank goodness District 7 Grill is a restaurant. Page 18

**DRAG PUPPETS ARE IN:** Local nightlife options include Jimmy James and a drag puppet show. Page 19

## music ARJAN TIMMERMANS



World peace will always be job-one, but Yoko Ono is taking on a new cause, marriage equality for same-sex couples.

## Ono gives equality a chance

LEGENDARY POP CULTURE ICON Yoko Ono shows no signs of slowing down. At age 71, she is enjoying a career renaissance with remixes of her classic "Hell In Paradise" hitting the top ten of the Billboard Club Play Chart.

Later this summer, the human rights advocate plans to release the controversial song, "Every Man/Every Woman," which is a daring statement that tackles the gay marriage issue head-on.

The first thing Yoko Ono asked me when we spoke for an exclusive interview was to pray with her for world peace. Ever since her relationship with John Lennon in the late sixties, she has become a spokesperson for the peace movement. Her request seemed bizarre at first, but Ono's relentless devotion to her ideals deserves nothing but praise.

Ono is now determined to take a stand in the national debate about equal rights for gays and lesbians in her ongoing pursuit of peace and justice. "A lot of people are testy and angry about the situation in the world and they're trying to find a scapegoat," argued a feisty Ono. "The result is that people focus on things that really are not an issue, like civil rights for gays."

Ono has built a reputation as a musical pioneer and visionary artist since the sixties. She spearheaded an avant-garde group in New York City that put her in touch with painters, writers, musicians and eventually John Lennon. After Lennon's murder in 1980, she has continued to carry their torch of love and understanding through music and art.

Over the last few years Ono has used dance music as a way to spread her message. "I was always interested in dance music. I have been dancing since I was four," Ono laughed. "We have to dance through life. Let's come together and keep dancing."

The pulsating remakes of Ono's "Hell in Paradise" from dance floor heroes Murk and The Orange Factory, as well as duo Chus & Ceballos and Los Angeles production team Minge Binge, have transformed Ono from a sixties hippie symbol to a new millennium club heroine.

Her successful collaboration with the Pet Shop Boys on a remixed cover of Lennon's "Walking On Thin Ice" in 2003 broke the ice for other remixers/producers to collaborate with her.



Yoko Ono is speaking out on the issue of marriage equality for gay men and lesbians. (Photo by Ole Christians)

FOR YEARS ONO DID NOT WANT TO touch any of her old recordings because they represented something special that she and Lennon did together. But now she feels that others should have the opportunity to work on them. "When I put out my first records in London in the 1960s, I used to title the tracks 'Unfinished Song 1,' 'Unfinished Song 2' and so on," she said. "So in a way, the DJs are now finalizing what I started."

Ono is scheduled to release an EP with remixes of "Every Man Has A Man/Every Woman Has A Women." The controversial track is a reincarnation of her original song "Everybody Has A Woman Who Loves Her," which first came out on the Lennon/Ono 1980 "Double Fantasy" album. The single will feature remixes from Basement Jaxx, Ralph Rosario and Dave Aude.

Ono re-cut the vocals of the song and inserted the new lyrics "every woman has a woman who loves her" and "every man has a man who loves him." The remix EP is a diverse set of remakes that combines carefree dance floor escapism with Ono's bold message about same-sex rights.

The artist has always felt a special closeness to the gay community during the course of her career. "Their struggle is a human rights issue to me," she said. "I have suffered myself from racism and sexism all my life. I know what it feels like to be an outsider. I understand what position gays have been put in."

Ono said she also feels a very personal connection to gays. "Many of my friends were and are gay," she said. "Many people I tune into turn out to be gay, so on a spiritual level, I'm in love with all my gay friends."

### **i** MORE INFO

Yoko Ono  
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## dining J.A. CHAPMAN

Surely it was a garage in a past life, but the District 7 Grill in downtown Houston turns out to be a great lunch spot with charm.

## A gem in old downtown

On the southeast side of downtown, hidden among a mixture of dilapidated houses, empty warehouses and newly built lofts, is a gem of a lunch spot, the District 7 Grill.

The place radiates barbecue joint ambience while looking like it could have been a garage in a former life, complete with roll-up doors. A large smoking barbecue grill sits on the porch.

Rough wood paneled walls line the main room and a Formica floor and wooden tables add a certain rustic charm. It even smells like a barbecue joint. But barbecue isn't on the menu. Instead, it's a simple, straightforward place to get a salad, sandwich or a bowl of pasta.

Orders are taken at a brick counter from the basic menu or from the daily specials, which are on display up front. The menu has a section called "Bowls", which contains pasta dishes and salads. On a recent visit, the crusted chicken parmesan and linguine marinara (\$8) arrived in a huge white pasta bowl.

A serving of perfectly al dente linguine large enough for two was topped with a pleasant homemade marinara sauce and ribbons of fresh basil. More sauce would have been welcome considering the amount of pasta, but the crunchy-coated, oregano-infused parmesan chicken made up for it in flavor.

The special of the day was a catfish sandwich (\$8). The deep-fried, thick catfish fillet was tender and moist. Served on a honey-wheat bun slathered with a chunky homemade tartar sauce and topped with cilantro and cabbage, this sandwich really worked. Satisfying without being heavy, it's a good choice on a warm day.

The thick cut fries on the side were hearty and clearly homemade.

District 7 Grill is known for its half-pound District Burger (\$7). Big enough to share and served with the same chunky fries, it definitely satisfies. A smaller version (one-third pound) is available, as is a lower fat buffalo burger.

For something a little lighter, try the spinach salad (\$7). Baby spinach is topped with feta, pecans, raisins and a honey-tinged, garlicky balsamic vinaigrette. A wedge of crusty, parmesan focaccia comes with it. For an extra dollar, you can add either crusted pork or grilled chicken. I chose the chicken, which was hot off the grill, and full of

smoky, rosemary goodness.

If you aren't low-carbing, you can also order the spinach salad with penne pasta. It's all served together in one large bowl. I wanted to try this, but a communications mix-up resulted in my pasta being served in a separate bowl. It was a fortuitous mistake, however, as the penne was tossed with olive oil, a hint of marinara sauce and caramelized onions. Delicious.

District 7 Grill is very laid back. Drinks are self-serve, and silverware is on the table. Waiters, clad in T-shirts, serve the meals and check on customers from time to time.

Don't forget about dessert. District 7 offers cakes made by the same folks who create those delicious Empire Café treats. A slice of the decadent carrot cake (\$4) made with pineapple and walnuts and coated in rich cream cheese frosting is more than enough for two people. Brownies and other goodies are also available.

District 7 is family owned and operated, and the staff couldn't be friendlier. While the place does have a certain rustic atmosphere, the ambience includes added little touches like flowers in the corners and French art prints on the walls. Black and white photos of early Houston add historical interest.

An old live-oak tree shades the restaurant. A large deck outside has plenty of tables, as well as the two inside rooms. The deck is surprisingly cool and breezy, even on warm summer days, and it boasts a great view of the downtown skyline.

District 7 Grill is a pleasant spot for lunch in the middle of old Chinatown. The service is quick, the food is good, and the staff is friendly. It's hard to go wrong at District 7 Grill.



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## nitelife JOHNNY HOOKS



The island has sea, sand and  
and drag puppets this weekend,  
but Houston has Jimmy James.

## Of drag and drag puppets

Welcome to HoVo on the GoGo — that's HotGG for those of you keeping score at home — your new guide to everything hip, happening, cool and queer in Houston gay and lesbian nightlife.

### Song & dance

**HAPPY FOURTH OF JULY! CHILD,** there's nothing like a good old fashioned three-day weekend to get the girls and boys jumping. Therefore, this weeks HotGG is all about song and dance.

**IF YOU'RE LIKE MANY QUEERS,** Galveston will be your destination of choice for the holiday weekend. You simply *cannot* miss the infamous puppet show at Robert's LaFitte's on Saturday and Sunday at 10:30 p.m. It's difficult to describe this hilarious, patriotic-themed drag/puppet show.

Officially titled "The Many Faces of Robert the Mouth," it involves stars, stripes, drag queen heads on puppet bodies and a penis nose that actually drinks from a cocktail — usually mine!

This show is celebrating 15-plus years as an annual event on July 4th and Labor Day weekends. Robert includes his supporting cast of friends and this year, LaFitte's welcomes a new addition: a fabulous working pool, dahlings! That's right, on the new and improved patio LaFitte's will be serving hotdogs and hamburgers around the pool. As always, there's never a cover at this 37-year-old institution on the isle. 2501 Avenue Q at 25th Street. 409-765-9092.

### Dancers in Speedos

**ALSO ON THE ISLAND THIS WEEKEND,** check out the Manhunt.net and Ketoco 4 Men party at Undercurrent. This club has fabulous upper and lower level decks, awesome lighting and a big dance floor to shake it on. Did I mention the dancers in Speedos, the terrific views of the Gulf, and some yummy daily drink specials! Happy Hours run from noon to 8 p.m. every day, that's hours plural. Color me in attendance! Undercurrent is located at 3102 Seawall, 409.750.8571 or undercurrentgalveston.com.

### Divas R 4-Ever

**FOR THOSE OF YOU STAYING IN TOWN,** fear not there is lots to Go-Go to. The ever amazing, super-fab Jimmy James is back! Jimmy James, famous as the voice and face of Marilyn Monroe for so many years is back with a new show



Robert Gant from 'Queer as Folk' parties with the Dion twins, Kara (left) and Tara at South Beach during Pride weekend. (Photo by Dalton DeHart)

called "Divas R 4-Ever"! While not a drag show per se, James simply inhabits the vocal styles of the women he impersonates. Close your eyes and you're at a Judy Garland, Barbra Streisand or Norah Jones concert. James is a seasoned performer, with a wit as sharp as Babs nails. He performs Friday and Saturday at 8:30pm at 1415 California, formerly Sonoma, 713-522-7066.

### HAPPY BIRTHDAY EJ'S

Can you believe EJ's is celebrating her 30th birthday this weekend? That's right; she's left her 20s behind and is heading into decade No. 3. That's a lot of shots, and short shorts honey at the club's always rowdy Amateur Strip Contest held every Monday night. You can be sure there will be fun, food and festivities all day long and of course, Jody will be singing for the masses. The birthday celebration is Sunday, stop on by and wish owner Ed and his friendly and fun staff a happy 30th. Tell 'em HotGG sent you! EJ's is located at 2571 Ralph Street at Westheimer, 713-527-9071.

### Karaoke @ Cabo

**SPEAKING OF CELEBRATIONS,** HAVE you heard about Show Your Voice Karaoke at Cabo Montrose, hosted by the Houston Voice each and every Tuesday night? Now you have! Holly Hicks, Jason Wilson along with DJ Patsch and moi are all about the local vocals. You will also find yummy live boiled crawfish specials, \$2 martinis, well drinks and draft beer and \$3 margaritas to help you find your nerve. Staffers, the precious and perky Abby with 2 B's and the adorable Gregg with 3 Gs are happy to the keep cold drinks and hot food coming! 1111 Westheimer at Yoakum, 713-942-CABO.



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

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## cover story

## 'Tarnation' gets special showing in Houston

TARNATION, continued from Page 1

"Tarnation," the documentary of his troubled life that he shot, produced and edited for a total cost of \$218.

Honors at Los Angeles were preceded by an 8-minute standing ovation at the Cannes Film Festival and the label "masterpiece," given the film at Sundance.

Along the way, Gus Van Sant and John Cameron Mitchell, the star, writer and director of the cult classic "Hedwig and the Angry Inch," signed on as executive producers. Critic Roger Ebert made "Tarnation" the centerpiece of his "Overlooked Film Festival."

Part documentary, part Punk-Rock-art-house-stream of consciousness, Tarnation follows Caouette through 2 decades of life experiences that would have killed most people.

The film is dominated by a bizzaro world filled with his mother's struggle with mental illness, his adopted parents (Adolf and Rosemary, actually his grandparents) surreal day-to-day life and his own brush with insanity caused by smoking two PCP-laced joints.

"Tarnation" is a raw, ravishing, funny, sad and painfully honest walk in someone else's shoes. Every moment is right there: his tearful reaction to his mother's lithium overdose, his search for his unknown father, his mother's years of shock treatments and her rape by a stranger that he witnessed, his meeting and falling in love with partner, David (pronounced Dah-veed).

The audience at Aurora, many of them friends, watched stunned, realizing they knew someone, but they didn't really know him at all.

Insanity overwhelmed the audience. Some were unsure whether it was OK to laugh at such tragic images.

They needed only to look at Caouette, who howled at times as he watched the insanity that was his life.

"Tarnation" is a diary splayed open for all to see, a scrapbook of memories.

The Houston Voice had the rare opportunity to sit down with Caouette and his friends after viewing the film, set for a fall release across the United States.

When he sat down to talk about his film, he explained that even though he had 20 years of raw, real movie footage, his first thoughts were of producing a fictional account of his life.

**Caouette:** Originally I had written this 97-page screenplay which was me, my boyfriend, David, and my mother, Renee, under these completely imaginary circumstances living in our New York apartment. The structure of the film was basically "Rosemary's Baby." It was going to be an elongated "Twilight Zone" episode. I was in a place where I was in a real safety net zone about it. I wanna use all this footage I have but I'm really scared to give myself away. I don't know if I want to do this, to go on this cathartic, exorcism journey. So I wrote the screenplay and I wanted to incorporate all the things you

see in "Tarnation" now as flashback and flash-forward sequences.

**HoVo:** You were looking to do that as fictionalized people?

**Caouette:** Completely. I was going to show the 11-year-old-me, but he was a character based on me, and a character based on Renee, and I was going to cut it in a way where I used the actual footage of us, but our names were never referenced. Then I got really fatigued with the idea and then realized one day that the screenplay and the footage were two totally different entities. God forbid if it had turned out that way.

**HoVo:** Would you trade those life experiences, and therefore this experience for just a nice, normal life with your mom growing up?

**Caouette:** No. I'm really glad I went through everything I went through because this wouldn't have happened. If anything, at the end of the day, this is a great film that's going to hopefully change some lives. Even if this movie can allow people to have more empathy for the mentally ill, and not simply round them off to the nearest scumbag or drug addict.

**HoVo:** Something most people seem to take away from your film is that it's a love story.

**Caouette:** It is a love story.  
**HoVo:** How do you edit your own life? How did you go through 15 or 20 years of your own life and decide, well this scene doesn't work?

**Caouette:** That's where the filmmaker overrides everything else.

**HoVo:** The filmmaker in you?  
**Caouette:** The filmmaker in ME. That's where the really disassociative aspect comes into play. I don't know how I did it, I was able to step back and objectify everything. I have always disassociated myself from my nuclear family, whether I was half listening or tuning them out or, most importantly, by videotaping.

**HoVo:** By being behind the camera rather than in the moment?

**Caouette:** Yes! By being sort of scared, or realizing this is so freaky and crazy, I HAVE to videotape this! This is gonna come in handy one day.

**HoVo:** Is that why you started taping? If you have it to look back on it you can figure it out?

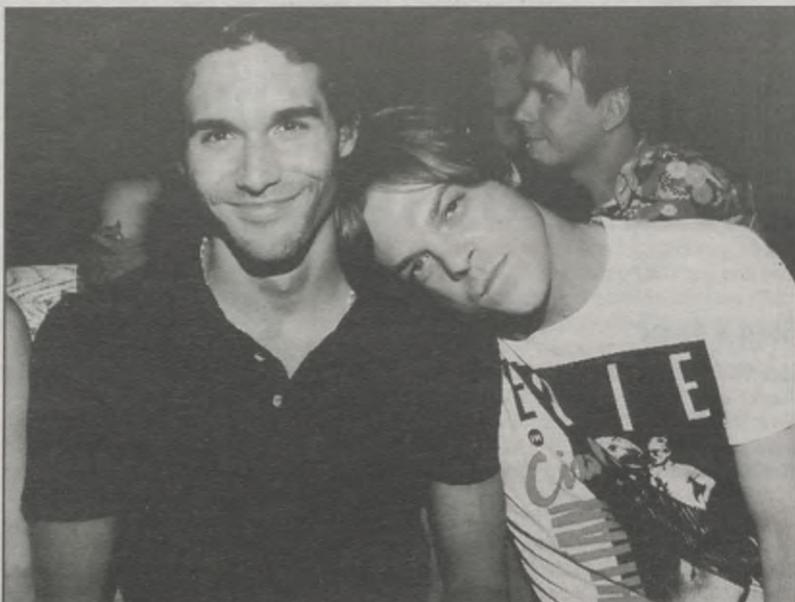
**Caouette:** Well, it's a diary, why do you keep a diary? It's to look back and reflect and hope to make some sort of sense of it. That was my sole objective when I started.

**HoVo:** In the same vein, how do you edit the actual soundtrack to your life? You use Low, Nick Drake, Marianne Faithful and all these amazing pieces of music. How do you put the final stamp on it and let it go?

**Caouette:** I literally started with a song and worked my way out, cutting to the emotional resonance of the song.

**HoVo:** Do you hear songs in your head often?

**Caouette:** All the time...I'd think OK, what needs to go over the cello, because when I feel like my heart is being pulled out and stomped on, what do I need to put up there to make that work and match that up? That's the whole idea of "Tarnation."



Jonathan Caouette (left) and his partner, David Sanin, were in Houston recently for a special screening of the documentary, 'Tarnation.' (Photo by Dalton DeHart)

**HoVo:** Whats up with that title? It's not said in the film.

**Caouette:** Well it's implied...I almost wanted to have my mother say it. You know it's a form of damnation...hellfire and tarnation. It was never said organically so I never manipulated it to happen. It's also the name of one of my favorite bands, a band that never got the attention I thought it deserved, so I thought it'd be great name for the film.

**HoVo:** Some people have called you a gay hero. As much as that is a compliment, the film transcends sexuality.

**Caouette:** Well, let me tell you, there was some hoo-hah at the Roger Ebert Festival. One of the first questions I got, some guy stood up and said, "What do you think about this being a gay film, and you being gay and introducing yourself to the entertainment industry as gay...and don't you think that being gay is a disease?" And Roger Ebert stood up and shredded the guy. It is so besides the point.

**HoVo:** In "Tarnation" when your father, whom you have sought out, asks you on the phone, "Are you Gay? You sound Gay...you don't have AIDS do you, cause I don't want anything to do with you if you do..." That was rough, very gripping and sad.

**Caouette:** And that was in the first 5 minutes of our conversation.

**HoVo:** Yet, you were big enough to ask him to visit you at your home with your partner David and Renee

**Caouette:** I just really wanted the opportunity to be around my parents together in the same room after 19 years.

**HoVo:** And watching the film, clearly the love of lip-syncing & performing really runs in your family. Your mom loved to lip-sync...even some of your earliest shots.

**Caouette:** I know. It must be in the genes.

**HoVo:** The lip-syncing part of the film is so amazing, to actually see Visions again. Do you remember the other clubs?

**Caouette:** BJ's, Nitecage, Visions, Pearls, Pillows

**HoVo:** The lip-syncing wasn't gender specific.

**Caouette:** And it was not about drag

**HoVo:** It was something else entirely  
**Caouette:** We were like the third sex or something. Wow! It was like this window, this vacuum that existed for a brief period of time, did what it needed to do to everybody, everybody got what they needed...

**HoVo:** And then it disappeared!

**Caouette:** I don't know what it's like living in Houston now, but that time was probably one of the only times, when there was a window when you could be anybody you wanted to be. You could be gay and 12 years old and be in drag and getting into these nightclubs as a Goth girl, or whatever. It was such a free time...brief but free. I mean 1986 & 87?

**HoVo:** A movie like "Tarnation" is powerful, raw and really touching. Even if someone didn't know you before, it is devastating in a way. Is that why you put the text in the film in the third person?

**Caouette:** That's why I had to separate myself. The text in the original version was actually a character, along with Renee and I. You know I made the film in sequential order, from beginning to end, just like you see it. Totally organic. And in a way, the film has its own breakdown.

**HoVo:** What do you see when you're watching the film for the 50th time?

**Caouette:** This is my mother and me having a good time. It's precious and sacred and I know the film can occasionally be dark and insane, but my mother and I really are having a good time.

(It is at this moment that an important call comes in for Caouette.)

**Caouette:** I have just won Best Documentary at the Los Angeles Film Festival over "Fahrenheit 911!"

(The room erupts in applause.)

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

## Hung out to dry

Colin larger than life, Rupert gives up Bond-age, and Elton scores a new musical

WHAT GAY MAN OUT THERE DOESN'T have a crush on Irish actor COLIN FARRELL? Well, if you don't, you might after you read this.

We hear that a scene from his new movie, "A Home at the End of the World," in which Farrell plays the crux of a love triangle with a gay man and a straight woman, had to be cut because he is so well endowed that it was distracting.

The Sun in London reported that at a test screening for the movie, audience members were shocked when they saw Farrell, and "little Colin" in a nude scene.

"The women were over-excited and the men looked uncomfortable," a source told the paper. "It was such a sight it made it difficult to concentrate on the plot, so the decision was made to get rid of it."

Let's hope they mean the shot, and not Farrell's gift.

A flack for Warner Bros., the studio producing the movie, told New York Daily News gossip hounds Rush & Molloy that the full-frontal scene was "distracting to the content and quality of the film" but that it wasn't cut because of the size of Farrell's manhood.

The movie opens July 23, but Dish can't wait for the DVD, on which she hears the scene will appear.

Apparently, those on the set of "Alexander," where Farrell plays Alexander the Great and cutie JARED LETO plays his lover, have gotten to see the real thing. An "insider" on the movie told Rush & Molloy that Farrell couldn't fit himself into the skimpy shorts made to wear underneath his tunic. Instead, he wore nothing at all, and had an opportunity to flash crewmembers between takes.

We can only hope that Farrell's gay brother, Eamon, has the same type of genes in his jeans.

### Not Holmes alone

Looks like gay British actors RUPERT EVERETT and STEPHEN FRY are gearing up for a catfight.

Both have been picked to star as famous literary detective Sherlock Holmes in movies scheduled to air on British television, according to the Mirror newspaper in London.

Everett will star in the BBC version, which will air first in December with Ian Hart as his sidekick Dr. Watson. Fry (who



It's rumored that Colin Farrell isn't wearing anything under his tunic in his upcoming movie 'Alexander,' and has a lot in common with the horse he's riding. (Photo courtesy of Bigmoviepix/Warner Bros. Pictures)

played OSCAR WILDE in "Wilde") will star with his longtime collaborator Hugh Laurie in an ITV movie, which will become a series if it's popular.

Though Everett has been picked to play Holmes, he has given up trying to be the next JAMES BOND.

"I would have loved to have been asked to be the next James Bond but I knew that would happen over MGM's dead body," Everett told the Calgary Sun about the studio that makes the spy films. He believes that the studio doesn't want an openly gay actor in the role.

At least Everett gets to play a straight spy. In the upcoming movie "A Different Loyalty" he plays real-life British spy Kim Philby opposite SHARON STONE, who portrays his wife.

Too bad for Everett, but hunky BRENDAN FRASER gets to play a "Gay Secret Agent," in Revolution Studio's movie of the same name.

"He is the best secret agent in the world, and being gay helps him in the job, because he is charming and well-mannered," said Jennifer Todd, the movie's producer, who also worked on the "AUSTIN POWERS" series.

"We are shooting for a very broad, silly comedy," she said.

### Songs for 'Billy'

At a recent performance, SIR ELTON JOHN performed four of the 17 songs that he has written for a musical version of the film "Billy Elliot," the Associated Press reports.

The film highlights the story of a blue-collar English boy who takes ballet classes instead of boxing lessons, much to the chagrin of his family.

The show premieres in Newcastle, England, in November before opening in London in March.

@ Send comments, suggestions to Dish@houstonvoice.com

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Rupert Everett

## eclipse

# Gay actor Todd Waite finds fit in Christie's Hastings

GAY ACTOR, continued from Page 16

"She saw a murder mystery on stage and said to herself, 'I could do that and do it better,'" he said. "Indeed she did."

Waite, a gay actor, said Christie often wrote obvious gay characters into her plays and novels.

Her characters were intriguing, but had she written herself into a plot, that character would have been equally fascinating.

She was, after all, a woman who took a job in a hospital dispensary during World War I to learn about poisons.

Though she's best known as a mystery writer, Christie also wrote romance novels under the nom de plume of Mary Westmacott.

Then, there was her own little real-life mystery: Christie disappeared mysteriously on the evening of December 3, 1926.

By then, she already had a following of loyal mystery fans, and she left them trau-

matized. The police were certain her philandering husband, Col. Archibald Christie, had murdered her.

Eleven days later, probably acting on a tip, police found the mysterious Mrs. Christie in a hotel in Yorkshire.

The official line at the time was that she had suffered an attack of amnesia, but in a book written about the disappearance, Australian Jared Cade, claimed Christie staged the disappearance to embarrass her husband.

Cade said sources close to the family told him that when Christie was found, she was checked into the hotel under the name of her husband's mistress.

That plot might have made for a best-seller, but Christie stayed mum on the subject of those eleven days in 1926.

In "Black Coffee," Poirot and Hastings are called to a Surrey manor house by Sir Claude Amory, a world-renowned physicist who fears someone is trying to steal his formula for a weapon that is critical to the defense of the realm.

The two men end up investigating their client's untimely death.

As Waite delves into Hastings, he has just finished the Alley production of "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum."

"I had a lot of fun doing 'Forum.' It is so goofy and vaudevillian," he said.

He likened the experience to dining on gourmet food and suddenly diving into a hamburger and potato chips.

Waite said the variety at the Alley is found very few places. The offerings range from new plays by unknown writers to the works of Edward Albee, Horton Foote, Shakespeare and others.

It took that to lure him away from the Shaw Festival, the second largest company of its kind in Canada.

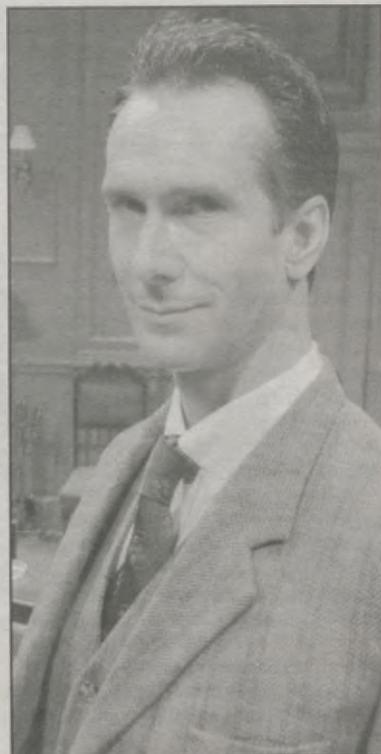
"I came down here from Canada because the Alley was acknowledged as a premier theater," he said.

The fact that he will soon get his U.S. citizenship sounds as though he plans to stay a while.

Although he's single, Waite said he is involved with someone, and that relationship has potential. He likes to take it slow because when he does commit, he wants it to last.

"I've said 'I love you' in that romantic way three times in my life, and those are my three best friends," he said. "The first guy I had sex with was in Amsterdam. I was 14 and he was 16. I still talk to him every year."

The Alley Theater is staging 'Black Coffee' as part of its Exxon Mobil Summer Chills Series. The next installment in the series, "Dial M for Murder," runs July 23-August 8.



Todd Waite is cast as Capt. Hastings in the Alley Theatre production of Agatha Christie's 'Black Coffee.'

### **i** MORE INFO

'Black Coffee'

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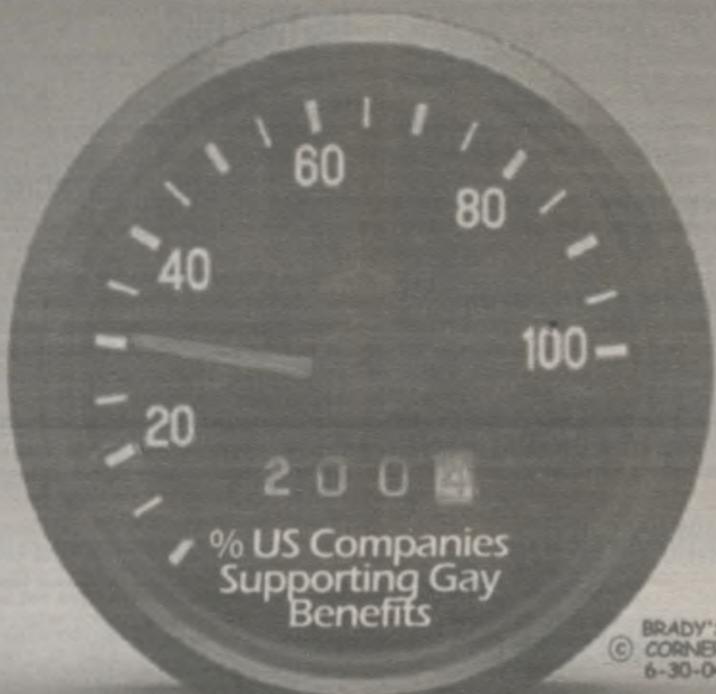
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**OBITUARIES**



**JOE CORONADO, 52**, a long time resident of Houston passed away peacefully on June 27, 2004 in Homestead, Florida. His mother, Maria, nine siblings and life partner, Carlos Tellez, survive him. Joe began his retailing career at Foley's and in 2002, ended his twenty-year career as Director of Training and Development at Fiesta, Mart Inc. He never met a stranger and never forgot a face, qualities that made him a natural for retailing. Joe cherished his many friends among his coworkers at Fiesta. Those whose lives he touched will dearly miss his caring and generous spirit. In his life, he most enjoyed playing with his dogs, Tanya and Frida, gardening, traveling and running. An avid runner, Joe completed forty-eight marathons including Houston, Boston, New York, Chicago, Dallas, Minneapolis and Diluth marathons. He was an active member of All Saints Catholic Church. Funeral services and burial, under the direction of Branam Funeral Home, 305-247-3131, in Homestead, Florida, on June 30th. A celebration of Joe's life will be held at All Saints Catholic Church in Houston at a later date. Memorials, in lieu of flowers, may be made to AIDS Foundation, Houston, 3202 Wesleyan, 77027.

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# bitch session

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**SUMMING UP OUR "LESBIANS leaders":** They're in immediate need of fashion advice, a professional hair style over \$10, gym membership, severe anger management counseling, and a definite need to get laid and chill out.

**TO PARAPHRASE AL Sharpton,** gays supporting George W. Bush is like chickens supporting Colonel Sanders.

**I'M TOTALLY AGAINST BI-racial (black white) gay couples.** It's hard enough for Middle America to accept two white guys dating, much less accepting

a black and white gay couple.

**HMMMMM! WELL LET ME SAY** this, first of all — it's like, that's the way most gay men of queer attitudes are the way they are and none can't really change the way they act or think. However I just don't pay too much attention to it. But in some ways, it's a good way most of the time — bitching, that is!  
**Bitch Boy responds:** Listen to Whitney and put down the pipe and back away slowly...

**IF YOU ARE IN YOUR 40S,** single and looking, in better shape that most 40-year-olds and average

If you think "Oh Mary!" is a scathing comeback to everything, you're not the latter-day Dorothy Parker you think you are.

looking, please do not think you are Brat Pitt. Drop the attitude and perhaps you'll find a husband.

**AS A VERSATILE OPENLY GAY** man, it's my pleasure to be on top of a down low brother (a.k.a. low down brother). Now who's on top?

**ARE THERE ANY LESBIANS** out there who can commit and cherish just one girl or do you all lie to keep women around while it's convenient? Some of us do have hearts, you know.  
**Bitch Boy responds:** And they say lesbians and gay men have nothing in common!

**MARRIED GUYS THAT HAVE** "opened" their relationship need to see they don't love each other that way anymore, and should stop pretending, move on and remain friends.

**IT'S BAD ENOUGH THAT GAY** friends are the first to assume any health problem you have is an STD,

but why do gay doctors always leap to that conclusion as well? Sometimes gay men just get sick!

**TO A CERTAIN WASHED-UP** circuit patriarch whose milkshake doesn't taste much better: There is no speed in this queen! Isn't it time you take a good look in the mirror and ask yourself the same?

**WHAT IS IT WITH TRIFLING** queens who feel they need to degrade others to make themselves feel better? Do they not realize that doing so makes them look like trash?

**DEAR BITCH BOY: I JUST WOKE** up from dreaming I was totally topping you, from behind, which figures because I've never seen your face. I need to be sponged off now, but meanwhile, there must be photos of you naked, or at least barefoot, floating around. How can I

access them?  
**Bitch Boy responds:** My first name ain't baby, nasty boy. Play on, playa!

**TO THE GUY WHO SAID HE** wasn't a racist because he was not "into blacks": Yes jerk, you and all others who make statements regarding race like you do are racists as well as stupid.

**HAIR VS. BALD DOESN'T** matter. Any guy who has lived through basic training in the military will tell you that hair doesn't make the man, especially when you're standing in a shower room with 10 totally hot "shaved head" raw muscle men. It is abs, pecs, biceps, rock hard buttocks and swagger. 'Nuf said!

**TO THE 21-YEAR-OLD WHO** said his generation doesn't need drugs and backrooms: Well, I'm in your generation, and I see plenty of evidence to the contrary.

**TO THE PEOPLE WHO SAY,** "There is someone out there for you," or "When you stop looking, you'll find him": Where did you ever find a crystal ball that works? Maybe you should look for stock market prices instead of offering empty platitudes to guys who've already been hurt enough!

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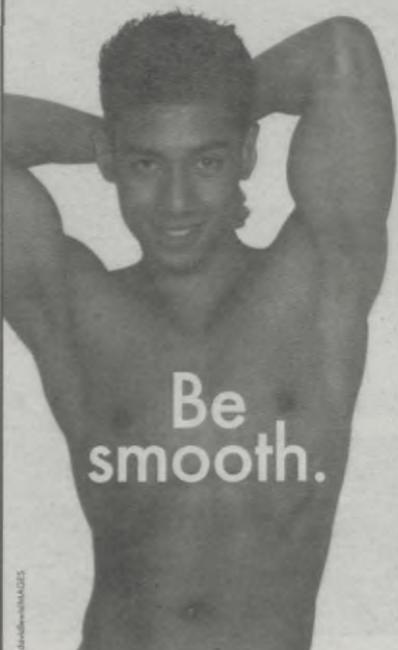
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